

Le Corbusier: Sport and Stadia.

Toby Mackay
BDes(ArchSt), M.Arch

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School of Architecture
Faculty of Creative Industries
Queensland University of Technology

Principal Supervisor: Dr Simone Brott
Associate Supervisors: Dr Janice Rieger and Prof Paul Makeham

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Abstract

In Le Corbusier's seminal book on town planning, *Urbanisme*, he wrote, "sport at the very door of one's house is needed... The sports ground must be at the door of the house. To bring about this Utopia the city must be built vertically..." Sports grounds were ubiquitous throughout the architect's urban plans *Ville Contemporaine* (1922), *Plan Voisin* (1925), and *Ville Radieuse* (1930). He envisaged a city where sport would be everywhere. Then, in the 1930s Le Corbusier designed his first stadium: The *Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants* (1936). This stadium was proposed to host an array of spectacles including sport, political rallies, music, film, and theatre. Beyond this, it was not until the 1950s that stadia again appeared in his *œuvre* with *Stade Chandigarh* (1950-65), *Stade Firminy* (1965 - his only built stadium), and a posthumously and only partially built project, *Stade de Baghdad* (1956-73). This thesis will trace the progression of sport from Le Corbusier's urban plans of the 1920s and stadia throughout Le Corbusier's *œuvre* by presenting an historical analysis of the aforementioned projects. It reveals the significance of sport in Le Corbusier's theories and projects, as well as presenting a largely untold history of sport and stadia in Le Corbusier's body of work through the political and theoretical frameworks surrounding the architect.

Key Words

Architecture, Architectural History, Architectural Theory, Baghdad, Fascism, Le Corbusier, Paris, Politics, Sport, Stadia, *Stadiums*, Syndicalism, Taylorism, Urbanism.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	I
KEY WORDS	I
LIST OF FIGURES	III
STATEMENT OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP	IV
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	IV
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
THE BEGINNING OF SPORT AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR LE CORBUSIER:.....	2
CHAPTER II: RESEARCH DESIGN	7
CHAPTER III: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
LITERATURE ON LE CORBUSIER, SPORT AND HYGIENE:.....	9
LITERATURE ON SPORT AND POLITICS:.....	14
LITERATURE ON LE CORBUSIER'S STADIUMS:.....	22
CHAPTER IV: SPORT IN THE 1920S AND 1930S URBAN PLANS	29
THE TOWN AS AN IMMENSE PARK: A PRECURSOR FOR SPORT IN THE CITY:.....	29
VILLE CONTEMPORAINE, 1922:.....	32
PLAN VOISIN, 1925: A CENTRE FOR BUSINESS AND AN HYGIENIC CITY:.....	36
VILLE RADIEUSE, 1930:.....	39
CHAPTER V: UN CENTRE NATIONAL DE RÉJOUISSANCES POPULAIRES DE 100,000 PARTICIPANTS 1936	47
1937: THE DESIRE TO BUILD:.....	51
1938: THE QUEST TO BUILD CONTINUES:.....	55
CHAPTER VI: SPORT AND STADIUMS IN LE CORBUSIER'S LATE WORK: FIRMINY AND STADE DE BAGHDAD	60
FIRMINY:.....	63
BAGHDAD:.....	64
1955-56: THE INITIAL BRIEFING:.....	66
1957: A DETAILED DESIGN IS DEVELOPED:.....	70
1958: THE INITIAL PROPOSAL IS SUBMITTED TO IRAQ:.....	72
1959-1963: FURTHER DELAYS TO CONSTRUCTION:.....	76
1964-1965:.....	81
1965 AND BEYOND:.....	82
CHAPTER VII: DISCUSSION ON THE SPORTS GROUND AND STADIA	86
PARTICIPATION VS. SPECTACLE:.....	86
THE STADIUM AND THE CROWD:.....	87
THE STADIUM AS A REGIME OF POWER:.....	92
CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION	96
BIBLIOGRAPHY	100

List of Figures

Figure 1. Tony Garnier's <i>Cité Industrielle</i> . Le Corbusier, <i>Towards a New Architecture</i> , 55.	29
Figure 2. Perspective Drawing of Maison Monol (1919). Le Corbusier, <i>Towards a New Architecture</i> , 242-43.	30
Figure 3. Streets with Set-backs. Le Corbusier, <i>Towards a New Architecture</i> , 62.	32
Figure 4. Plan for the Freehold Maisonettes. Le Corbusier, <i>Towards a New Architecture</i> , 246-47.	32
Figure 5. <i>Ville Contemporaine</i> . Housing with set-backs located in the inner region. Houses on the honeycomb principle in the outer regions. Le Corbusier, <i>The City of To-morrow and its Planning</i> , 176-77.	34
Figure 6. The city pattern of Ville Radieuse. Housing with large set-backs. Le Corbusier, <i>The Radiant City</i> , 157.	44
Figure 7. <i>Ville Radieuse</i> . The housing quarters are no longer separated by class. Le Corbusier, <i>The Radiant City</i> , 170.	46
Figure 8. Le Corbusier, Perspective view of model of stadium. Photograph From the FLC Archive L2-14-32-001, 1936. ...	48
Figure 9. The four locations proposed for the stadium presented in four different master plans. Le Corbusier, <i>Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938</i> , 96-97.	49
Figure 10. Section through the stadium showing the embankment and large tilted column supporting the tensile roof structure. Le Corbusier, <i>Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938</i> , 92.	50
Figure 11. Diagrams showing the different uses of the stadium with the associated crowd participation. Le Corbusier, <i>Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938</i> , 94.	51
Figure 12. Site Plan for the Stadium Complex at Bois de Vincennes. Le Corbusier, <i>Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938</i> , 96-97.	54
Figure 13. The master plan of Paris sent to the Prime Minister showing the stadium as item 7. Le Corbusier, <i>Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938</i> , 49.	55
Figure 14. The Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux, 1937. The stadium is located on the wall in the top-left of the image. Photo by Albin Salaün.	58
Figure 15. Le Corbusier, <i>Le Maisons Murrondins</i> . Le Corbusier, <i>Œuvre Complète 1938-1946</i> , 96.	61
Figure 16. Rooftop gymnasium, pool, and play areas at <i>Unite d'Habitation</i> Marseille. Jean-Louis Cohen and Tim Benton, <i>Le Corbusier Le Grand</i> , 426.	62
Figure 17. Left: Gymnasium, Baghdad. Right: Youth Centre Firminy. Fondation Le Corbusier/ADAGP/Caecilia Pieri, "The Le Corbusier Gymnasium in Baghdad: discovery of construction archives (1974-1980)."	65
Figure 18. Baghdad Sports Centre Master Plan. Image from Fondation Le Corbusier (FLC) BAG 420.	66
Figure 19. Master Plan for Baghdad, 1956. Plan produced by Minoprio, Spenceely, and P.W. Macfarlane, Architects and Town Planning Consultants.	69
Figure 20. Le Corbusier, 1957. Initial location plan indicating site. FLC 418.	69
Figure 21. Stills from the Electronic Poem, Philips Pavilion, Le Corbusier, 1958. Accessed from Fondation Le Corbusier, "Pavillon Philips, exposition internationale de 1958, Brussels, Belgium."	71
Figure 22. Elevations of the Baghdad Sports Complex. The top elevation shows the hyperbolic paraboloid shade structure to the stadium. Jean-Louis Cohen and Tim Benton, <i>Le Corbusier Le Grand</i> , 705.	73
Figure 23. Early sketch of hyperbolic paraboloid for the Baghdad project (probably the gymnasium) by Xenakis which Le Corbusier rejected. It is remarkably similar to the Philips Pavilion (Right). 1958. Iannis Xenakis, <i>Music and Architecture</i> , 92.	73
Figure 24. Le Corbusier, Masterplan submitted as part of the 1958 proposal. Image from Fondation Le Corbusier (FLC) BAG 420.	76
Figure 25. Le Corbusier, 1961, Plan of Stadium from dated 1961. Images from FLC P4-13-8-001-003 & p4-13-9-001-003	79
Figure 26. Le Corbusier, 1961, West Elevation of Stadium. Image from FLC P4-13-10-001-002.	79
Figure 27. Le Corbusier, 1961, Section through Stadium. Image from FLC P4-13-14-001-002.	80
Figure 28. Le Corbusier, 1961 Paper Mache Model of Stadium. Image from CCA, Reference no. DR1993:0127:038:021, accessed April 18, 2018, https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/search/details/collection/object/394763	80
Figure 29. Le Corbusier, 1961 Paper Mache Model of Gymnasium. Image from CCA, Reference no. DR1993:0127:038:026, accessed April 18, 2018, https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/search/details/collection/object/394768	81
Figure 30. Aerial view of how the site currently exists, taken from Google Maps. The Gymnasium and Amphitheatre by Le Corbusier are located in the top-right of the image. Across the road from the Gymnasium is the Gulbenkian Stadium.	85
Figure 31. Le Corbusier, Rendering of the stadium as it would look in full use. The crowd and the participants on the field are depicted as dots. Image from the FLC archive. L2-14-36-001, 1936.	91
Figure 32. Diagrams showing the different levels of crowd participation. Le Corbusier, <i>Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938</i> , 94.	92

Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: [QUT Verified Signature](#)

Date: 15/08/2018

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Chapter I: Introduction

In Le Corbusier's second book on urban planning, *Urbanisme*, he wrote "*sport at the very door of one's house is needed...The sports ground must be at the door of the house. To bring about this Utopia the city must be built vertically...¹* Sports grounds were ubiquitous throughout the architect's urban plans and housing schemes, most notably in *Ville Contemporaine (1922)* and *Ville Radieuse (1930)*. The architect envisaged the city as an "immense park" where "there would be parks for sport and pleasure contiguous to the dwellings..."² Sport was everywhere. In the 1930s Le Corbusier continued to develop his thoughts on the sports ground in his urban plans, however this time containing the activity within an arena. The *Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants (1936)* was a stadium included in his *Plan de Paris* where sport, politics, and theatre all converged in an arena where activities such as sport, previously reserved for daily life in his urban plans, became a spectacle. Beyond this it was not until the 1950s that stadia again appeared in his *œuvre* with *Stade Chandigarh (1950-65)*, *Stade Firminy (1965 - his only built stadium)*, and a largely neglected, posthumously and partially built project, *Stade de Baghdad (1956-73)*.

This thesis will explore the relevance and importance of sport and stadia in Le Corbusier's *œuvre*, beginning with a background of how Le Corbusier came to be enthused by sport and why it became so significant in his urban plans and theories (Chapter I: Introduction). This chapter is followed by an outline of the research design (Chapter II), which explains in brief the background and importance of this topic, as well as defining the scope, aims, limitations of the research, and methods used to conduct the research. The Literature Review (Chapter III) is divided into three sub-topics around sport that the existing literature on Le Corbusier has covered. These topics are, sport and hygiene, sport and politics, and Le Corbusier's stadiums. The conclusion from the Literature Review is that sport has only been dealt with under the umbrella of these other topics, and has not been specifically written about as a theme in its own right. Chapter IV is where the body of the thesis begins. This chapter further elucidates the themes introduced in Chapter I to do with the beginning of sport in Le Corbusier's career, focusing on his urban plans and housing schemes from the 1920s and 1930s. It presents in detail how Le Corbusier included sport throughout his work during this period. The thesis continues to follow the progression of Le Corbusier's thought around sport through his career chronologically with Chapter V and VI exploring two key stadia that have been largely neglected in the literature: *le Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants* from 1936 (Chapter V), and *Stade de Baghdad* in the later period of his career from the 1950s (Chapter VI). The

¹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover, 1987), 202. Originally published by Payson & Clarke Ltd, New York, 1929 from the 8th French edition of *Urbanisme*.

² Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 102.

historical analysis from each chapter is then tied together in a discussion chapter where the theoretical implications of the research are pursued (Chapter VII). This is followed by the conclusion (Chapter VIII) which provides an overall summary of the research as well as potential avenues for further research on the topic of sport and Le Corbusier.

The Beginning of Sport and its Significance for Le Corbusier:

Le Corbusier's affinity with sport began in 1920 when he was first introduced to his long-time friend Dr Pierre Winter. Winter recounts the moment the two first met in his office at Rue d'Astorg.

I found Le Corbusier in a bad sports condition...He despised his body and thought himself a "galette." He worked day and night...and worked a seven day week...did not mind his sleep...had forgotten his breath...his muscles.³

The doctor introduced Le Corbusier to the benefits of physical activity, not reserved for the athlete, but also for the common man:

I had the opportunity to tell him my little stories about the healthy man...Observe, sleep, etc...exercise. He did not follow all my prescriptions...but one evening he arrived at the gym...For 16 years he has never failed to come and we play basketball with passion and blows...two times a week...In the meantime he [Le Corbusier] noticed that he knew how to run...that he liked to run...In recent years, he has perfected his swimming...all alone on long journeys.⁴

Not coincidentally, after 1920, sport began to appear in Le Corbusier's housing schemes, beginning with the concept of *Streets with Set-Backs* (1920), which was included in *Vers une Architecture* where sport was depicted in the open space of the set-backs.⁵ Before 1920 he was already producing housing schemes on a garden city theme, where the ground plane was dedicated to greenery and open space via either large setbacks or elevated buildings. He cites a housing scheme from Tony Garnier's *Cité Industrielle* (1917) where "only one half of the area would be occupied by buildings, the other half being for public use and planted with trees: hedges and fences would not be allowed...the town would really be like a great park."⁶ This concept was establishing the framework for Le Corbusier's later inclusion of sport in his urban plans as it provided an open ground plane free of fences and structures

³ Dr Pierre Winter, "Le Corbusier, Biologiste, Sociologue," in *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 14. Translation by Toby Mackay, from hereon all translation of this source by Toby Mackay.

⁴ Winter, "Le Corbusier, Biologiste, Sociologue," 14.

⁵ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 62. Originally published by John Rodker, London, 1931 from the 13th French edition of *Vers une Architecture*.

⁶ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 53.

to allow free movement and greenery. Le Corbusier's own housing schemes from this period such as *Maisons Dom-ino* (1915)⁷ and *Maison Monol* (1919)⁸ took on this theme of openness and presented the town as a "great park." These schemes form the basis of what would become the housing districts in *Ville Contemporaine*. They were a response to the cramped, unhealthy conditions of Paris, as Le Corbusier stated, "it is time that we should repudiate the existing lay-out of our towns, in which the congestion of buildings grows greater, interlaced by narrow streets full of noise, petrol fumes and dust; and where on each storey the windows open wide on to this foul confusion."⁹ This need for healthier open town plans was also interlaced with industrial organisation, as he wrote,

Let us base our present observations on the ground of actual needs: what we need is towns laid out in a useful manner whose general mass shall be noble (town planning). We have need of streets in which cleanliness, suitability to the necessities of dwellings, the application of the spirit of mass-production and industrial organization, the grandeur of the idea, the serenity of the whole effect, shall ravish the spirit and bring with them the charm that a happy conception can give.¹⁰

In *Vers une Architecture*, the implications these concepts would have on the city pattern becomes evident, as the sports ground would replace the "unhealthy" courtyard:

Instead of our towns being laid out in massive quadrangles, with the streets in narrow trenches walled in by seven-storeyed buildings set perpendicular on the pavement and enclosing unhealthy courtyards, airless and sunless wells, our new layout, employing the same area and housing the same number of people, would show great blocks of houses with successive set-backs, stretching along arterial avenues. No more courtyards, but flats opening on every side to air and light, and looking, not on the puny trees of our boulevards of to-day, but upon green sward, sports grounds and abundant plantations of trees.¹¹

By 1922 sport appeared in almost all of his mass housing schemes, and an interest in stadia also burgeoned with a study for a stadium (1922) appearing in crude sketch form for an unspecified location.¹² In a rent-purchase housing scheme from 1922, the *Freehold Maisonettes*, Le Corbusier wrote, "each maisonette has its own gymnasium and sports room, but on the roof there is a communal

⁷ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1910-1929*, ed. Willy Boesiger and Oscar Stonorov, (Zurich: Les Éditions d'Architecture, 1948), 23-26.

⁸ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 242-243.

⁹ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 54 & 57.

¹⁰ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 40.

¹¹ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 61 & 63.

¹² "Étude pour un stade, Not located, 1922," Fondation Le Corbusier, accessed April 18, 2018, <http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=5710&sysLang=fr-fr&itemPos=24&itemCount=215&sysParentName=&sysParentId=65>.

hall for sports and a 300 yards track...There is the great covered court, on the roof of the underground garages, for tennis."¹³ Then in his first major urban plan, *Ville Contemporaine* (1922), the city is filled with open space for sport. The two districts dedicated to housing, one for "luxury dwellings" and the other for the working class inhabitants consist of 85 and 48 per cent open space respectively for gardens and sports grounds.¹⁴ The "luxury housing" scheme was referred to as *the housing blocks with set-backs*, and the working class housing scheme was entitled *the housing blocks on the cellular principle*. The set backs, or buildings *à redents* would "permit of vast architectural perspectives. There are gardens, games and sports grounds."¹⁵ For the working class in the *housing blocks on the cellular principle* he wrote:

Now it ought to be possible to indulge in games and sports generally at any time on any day right at one's door, not in "sports grounds," which are really only suitable for professionals or people of leisure...Around the blocks of flats or maisonnettes large playgrounds for football, tennis, etc., to the tune of 150 square yards per house. The logical study of the cell and its functions in relation to the mass may furnish a solution rich in results.¹⁶

Sport in *Ville Contemporaine* was integral to its function as an industrial city. In *Urbanisme*, in the chapter entitled "The Hours of Repose," Le Corbusier wrote about the eight hour working day and the problems presented by the eight hours of repose:

The eight-hour day. Then the eight hours of recreation. Here is the problem which the town planner must provide for. The possibility of engaging in sport should be open to *every inhabitant of the city. And it should take place at the very door of his dwelling*. This is the programme of the garden city.¹⁷

Sport was a tool to create the producer-inhabitant, it was to serve as a method of recovery after work, and Le Corbusier demanded so, "modern life requires the recovery of nervous energy; you have to do sport."¹⁸ He also wrote:

The inhabitant comes back from his factory or office, and with the renewed strength given him by his games, sets to work on his garden...this new type of housing scheme turns the inhabitant of the garden city into an agricultural labourer and *he becomes a producer*.¹⁹

¹³ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 246-49.

¹⁴ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 172.

¹⁵ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 177.

¹⁶ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 250-251.

¹⁷ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 199.

¹⁸ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1910-1929*, 76.

¹⁹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 206.

Throughout his projects in the 1920s these themes continue to apply, and sport continues to appear in his urban plans and housing schemes, such as *Cite Audincourt* (1925), *Pessac* (1925), *Plan Voisin* (1925), *Projet pour le Mundaneum* (1929), *La Cité Mondiale* (1929), and *Projets Wanner, Genève* (1928/29).²⁰ In this last project an inhabitant of an apartment is depicted boxing inside his dwelling: sport is not just at the doorstep, it is within the home.

These same principles of the open ground plane and sport at the foot of the house continued into the 1930s in *Ville Radieuse*. The principles of *Ville Radieuse* are summarised by Le Corbusier,

Building area: 12% of total floor area.

Free surface: 88% of the total floor.

Main buildings on piles on the ground floor, the effect of which is to make 100% of the floor available to pedestrians. Finally separation of the automobile and the pedestrian. Sport at the foot of the houses.²¹

A common theme, and an underlying reason behind the advocacy of sport by Le Corbusier was to produce a hygienic city by increasing the health and vigour of its inhabitants. In *Vers une Architecture* Le Corbusier wrote "we are to be pitied for living in unworthy houses, since they ruin our health and our morale. It is our lot to have become sedentary creatures; our houses gnaw at us in our sluggishness, like a consumption...We are becoming demoralized."²² Health was a question of morals, and it was to conform to the new spirit, the "spirit of mass production,"

A great epoch has begun.

There exists a new spirit.

*There exists a mass of work conceived in the new spirit ; it is to be met with particularly in industrial production.*²³

He demanded, "we must create the mass-production spirit. The spirit of constructing mass-production houses. The spirit of living in mass-production houses. The spirit of conceiving mass production houses...the mass-production house, healthy (and morally so too)..."²⁴ And the famous quote, "A house is a machine for living in" is followed by "baths, sun, hot-water, cold-water, warmth at will, conservation of food, hygiene, beauty in the sense of good proportion."²⁵ Therefore the notion of hygiene was interrelated with the spirit of mass production.

²⁰ See Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1910-1929*, 72-76, 108-19, 190-97, & 180-82.

²¹ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 31.

²² Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 14.

²³ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 87.

²⁴ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 6-7.

²⁵ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 95.

In *Urbanisme* Le Corbusier wrote "hygiene and moral health depend on the layout of cities. Without hygiene and moral health, the social cell becomes atrophied. A country's worth can be measured by the vigour of its inhabitants."²⁶ He also noted that in the old densely populated zones of Paris "tuberculosis, demoralization, misery and shame are doing the devil's work among them."²⁷ Le Corbusier attributed this demoralized and unhealthy Paris to high density and cramped conditions, hence why he proposed to decrease density and increase open space to allow room for sport and physical activity. He complained that there was "a lack of decent amenities for sport, recreation and relaxation."²⁸ For Le Corbusier, sport was a fundamental contributor to solving all of these town planning issues. His solutions:

Increase the area of green and open spaces; this is the only way to ensure the necessary degree of health and peace to enable men to meet the anxieties of work occasioned by the new speed at which business is carried on.²⁹

The town would, in fact, be one immense park...there would be parks for sport and pleasure contiguous to the dwellings...³⁰

It was apparent that the tenets of Le Corbusier's famous urban theories of mass production, mass housing, and industrialisation had open space for the hygienic activity of sport as a fundamental driver of the urban plan and overall function of the city. This interest and inclusion of sport in his work continued throughout his career, leading to an interest in the role of the stadium in the urban plan when he proposed his first stadium design in an urban plan for Paris in 1936, and later a sports master plan in Baghdad in the 1950s, both of which will be explored later in this thesis as outlined in the following chapter on the research design.

²⁶ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 84.

²⁷ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 284.

²⁸ William Curtis, *Ideas and Forms*, (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1986), 65.

²⁹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 100.

³⁰ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 102.

Chapter II: Research Design

Research Background: Le Corbusier included sports fields throughout his urban plans and wrote extensively on the benefits of sport to society. He designed three significant stadiums, of which only one was built. Despite this, as a theme in his work, sport and stadia have not been extensively covered by the existing literature on Le Corbusier, therefore a gap in the literature exists around this theme.

Aims: The aim of this thesis is to present an historical account and a theoretical analysis of sport and stadia in Le Corbusier's body of work by constructing a logical narrative around the role of sport and stadia in Le Corbusier's *œuvre*.

Research Questions: What was the role and significance of sport in Le Corbusier's major urban plans? How did sport as a theme progress in Le Corbusier's work throughout his career? Was Le Corbusier's use of sport and stadia in his urbanism a reflection of his political views? Was sport a significant factor in Le Corbusier's urban plans and his politics? How did sport as a theme in his urban plans progress through to his stadium designs, and were there similarities and relationships between the two?

Significance: This thesis fills a gap in the literature on Le Corbusier. Scholarship on Le Corbusier is vast, however accounts on sport and his stadia are scarce. There is no literature that has compiled a thorough overview of the history of sport and stadia in Le Corbusier's work.

Research Approach: This research is a qualitative, historical thesis consisting of empirical analysis of primary sources, synthesised into an historical account, followed by a theoretical interpretative discussion of the empirical analysis.

Research Methods: The initial phase of the research consisted of a literature review. This literature review consisted of a comprehensive examination of secondary sources, focusing on the existing literature on Le Corbusier's urbanism. It highlighted that very little has been written about Le Corbusier's urbanism and the significance of sport, but that much has been said on his urbanism and hygiene. Also reviewed was literature on Le Corbusier and politics and the authors who have connected his politics to his emphasis on hygiene, health, and sport. The literature on his stadiums was also reviewed, and is very limited in comparison to the literature on his urbanism.

The second phase of research involved collecting primary sources which consisted of books written by Le Corbusier such as his eight volume *Œuvre Complète*, as well as edited volumes that have

compiled various primary sources of Le Corbusier's work such as *Le Corbusier Le Grand*, which includes original letters and sketches. Also collected were original sources from the Fondation Le Corbusier, which included material from Le Corbusier's archive consisting of letters, images, and sketches. The primary sources were then analysed, translated where necessary, interpreted, and synthesised into a logical, chronological narrative to create an historical account of sport and stadia in Le Corbusier's career. When analysing the books, all information and quotations relating to the overall theme of the thesis were extracted and ordered in relevance of topic. Archival material was examined and ordered chronologically as well as thematically. Finally, a comprehensive examination of theoretical secondary sources was conducted to produce a theoretical discussion surrounding some of the themes that emerged from the historical account surrounding Le Corbusier's use of sport and stadia in his urban plans.

Limitations: Almost all of the primary sources are written in French and have not been published in English. In these cases I have used a combination of Google Translate and my own limited knowledge of the French language to obtain the most accurate translation possible without the employment of a translator. For some of the secondary sources that have not had an English translation published, I have used either my own translation, or Simone Brott's translation (refer to footnotes). The archive on the Baghdad Stadium was vast, and without physical access to the Fondation Le Corbusier, it was not possible to obtain every document in the archive, however a large portion of the archive was sent electronically from the Fondation Le Corbusier.

Chapter III: Literature Review

Literature on Le Corbusier, Sport and Hygiene:

Despite Le Corbusier's emphasis on sport as an essential component of town planning, citing it as "the programme of the garden city" in *Ville Contemporaine*, it has not been particularly well documented throughout scholarship on Le Corbusier. The focus of the existing literature tends toward the body and hygiene, not sport.

In *Le Corbusier: the Garland Essays*, Jerzy Soltan who worked with Le Corbusier mentions the importance of Le Corbusier's daily exercise of swimming. Alan Colquhoun discusses the fusion of 17th century classicism with German idealist historicism in Le Corbusier's *L'Esprit Nouveau*, and the importance of technology and architecture in Le Corbusier's urban plans of the 1920s, but does not mention sport at all. Vincent Scully alludes to the formal qualities of Le Corbusier's work in the neo-platonic, ancient Greek and overall classical tradition, whilst also alluding to a shift from an emphasis on the machine in the 1920s to an affinity with primitive heroisms in the 1930s, but again does not include sport at all in his analysis, focusing primarily on formal qualities.

Formal qualities are also what William Curtis has primarily focused on, however he does allude to the hygienic dimension of Le Corbusier's visions brought about by creating free open space by elevating his buildings on *pilotis*. Curtis writes,

He presents us with a finely proportioned steel and glass box poised on robust concrete pilotis, facing south over a field destined to become an athletics ground...Carefully composed groups of young men in shirt sleeves are strategically placed so that they may casually demonstrate the role of the pilotis as liberators of terrain and circulation. These photographs give us glimpses into an ideal world of healthy bodies and healthy minds, in which mechanization and nature run along in harmony, and those "essential joys" of space, light, and greenery are available to all.¹

Peter Serenyi emphasises the collective life proposed in Le Corbusier's *Immeubles Villas* as being in the leftist utopian tradition of Fourier. Serenyi only mentions the sporting function of the open spaces surrounding the unit blocks, but does not treat them with any importance. He states, "the entire building revolves around an open courtyard, which provides recreational facilities for the inhabitants."

¹ William Curtis, "Ideas of Structure and the Structure of Ideas: Le Corbusier's Pavillon Suisse, 1930-1931," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 40, no.4 (December 1981): 295.

He goes on to say “communal facilities, such as restaurants, common rooms, and the like are placed on the top floor so as to make domestic life free of dirt and drudgery,”² alluding to the health and hygienic concerns Le Corbusier had in his housing schemes, but he does not correlate this to the sports fields surrounding the apartment blocks.

Reyner Banham in *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* describes Le Corbusier’s housing blocks, the *Immeubles Villas* from *Vers une Architecture* and *Urbanisme*, but only briefly mentions sport even though it was a significant function in the housing schemes. Banham writes:

In which dwelling units, each consisting of a modified Citrohan house with a garden court alongside it, are assembled into gigantic blocks five or six houses high, and up to twelve units long, facing inwards on to garden courts and with complicated multi-level services and roads running between the backs of neighbouring pairs of blocks. Food, drink and domestic service were to be provided on an hotel basis, car-parking underground, below the gardens and sports fields.³

He later mentions the layout of the housing scheme, emphasising the patterns produced in plan as a result of the generous setbacks Le Corbusier provided. Banham does not continue to discuss any other implications the setbacks and the spaces for sport in between them may have on the function of the *Immeubles Villas* within the context of the overall city plan. In other words, he focuses only on the city pattern as a result of the setbacks, not the function within the open space, namely sport. Sport is not pursued or mentioned again, he only emphasises the formal qualities of the plan.

The other main class of accommodation envisaged for the Ville Contemporaine, seems to consist of entirely middle-class housing, of the Immeubles Villas type, grouped either in hollow squares as they had appeared in *Vers une Architecture*, or à redents, that is, in setbacks that advance and retreat symmetrically on either side of the street, a device that does much to account for the elegant abstract pattern of the overall plan.⁴

The setbacks are only described by Banham as significant in relation to the "elegant abstract pattern of the overall plan" and not the function of the overall plan. But Le Corbusier stresses that these

² Peter Serenyi, “Le Corbusier, Fourier, and the Monastery of Ema,” *The Art Bulletin* 49, no.4, (December 1967): 277.

³ Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, (New York: Praeger, 1967), 244.

⁴ Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, 254.

spaces provided by the setbacks are for sport, as he wrote, "the "set-backs" permit of vast architectural perspectives. There are gardens, games and sports grounds."⁵

In *Modern Architecture: a critical history*, Kenneth Frampton also mentions the housing schemes and their setbacks, this time in *Ville Radieuse*, comparing them to the perimeter block *Immeuble Villas* from *Ville Contemporaine*.⁶ For both the *Ville Radieuse* setback housing and the perimeter block *Immeuble Villas*, Frampton mentions the space dedicated to recreation and green space, stating these "terraced duplexes opened at ground level to bounded rectangular green space, equipped with recreational facilities for communal use."⁷ Frampton gives a description of the cross section of *Ville Radieuse*, highlighting how the architecture and plan would accommodate for parks for the "essential joys of sun, space, and green."⁸ He writes:

A typical section through the entire city showed all the structures raised clear of the ground, including the garages and access roads. By virtue of elevating everything on *pilotis* the ground surface would have become a continuous park in which the pedestrian would have been free to wander at will.⁹

But Frampton does not pursue the sporting, health, or hygienic purpose of the city as a continuous park, however he does recognise the "biological metaphors" Le Corbusier used in his sketches of the city plan.¹⁰

Robert Fishman in *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century* highlights Le Corbusier's early thoughts on Paris as cramped, noisy, and inefficient, all qualities that "excited his horror and disgust" and were killing the city.¹¹ Fishman also notes the use of parks and recreational space in *Ville Contemporaine* as a result of 85 per cent of the ground being free space, stating "the ground would be left free for rolling lawns, playing fields, and gardens."¹² He also notes the inclusion of gymnasiums for indoor sports in the residential housing blocks.¹³ Fishman recognises that one of the reasons for so much space dedicated to lawns and playing fields was a direct result of the need for leisure time with the advent of the eight hour working day. He writes, "in the Contemporary City the dehumanizing effects

⁵ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover, 1987), 177. Originally published by Payson & Clarke Ltd, New York, 1929 from the 8th French edition of *Urbanisme*.

⁶ Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: a critical history*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 178.

⁷ Frampton, *Modern Architecture: a critical history*, 156.

⁸ Frampton, *Modern Architecture: a critical history*, 180.

⁹ Frampton, *Modern Architecture: a critical history*, 180.

¹⁰ Frampton, *Modern Architecture: a critical history*, 180.

¹¹ Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Le Corbusier*, (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 182.

¹² Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*, 200.

¹³ Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*, 197.

of eight hours of work would be overcome by eight hours of productive leisure.”¹⁴ Fishman also mentions Le Corbusier’s relationship with Pierre Winter, noting “both men were physical fitness enthusiasts,” and that “Le Corbusier absorbed many of Winter’s ideas on public health.”¹⁵ But he does not go on to detail how this was instrumental in Le Corbusier implementing sport throughout his urban projects.

Anthony Vidler approaches the open space of Le Corbusier's urban plans from a Foucauldian perspective in its transparency and control. He states:

Equally following Foucault, attention has largely been concentrated on a specific kind of space: that *transparent* space theorized as a paradigm of total control by Jeremy Bentham and recuperated under the guise of "hygienic space" by modernists led by Le Corbusier in the twentieth century.¹⁶

And in Christine Boyer's extensive work *Le Corbusier, Homme de Lettres* she only mentions sport in Le Corbusier's work once, referring to the *Pavillon de l'Esprit Nouveau*,

The pavilion consists of two parts: the first on the right representing in exact dimensions a mock-up of the cell of habitation, an example of the machine of living where reason and the heart can be satisfied. This cell becomes a house-type, good for the city or the country. Urbanism assembles many of these cells, organizes them, allows for hanging gardens, modifies the streets, the lots, putting sport at the foot of the house, creating the type “immeubles-villas.” It introduces a new module into the city, a new order of grandeur.¹⁷

She does, however, mention Le Corbusier's emphasis on health and hygiene more frequently than she does sport, saying, "man would be given rational functional tools in the city, housing, and health, and new moral values to liberate his personality."¹⁸

Paul Overy in his book *Light, Air, and Openness* alludes to the general preoccupation European architecture had with hygiene during the 1920s and 1930s, stating “throughout the 1920s and 1930s hygienist and sometimes eugenicist objectives (along with aims of a more generalized social control) were advanced through the regulated provision of social housing, and healthcare and hygienic facilities.”¹⁹ He places Le Corbusier within this context through

¹⁴ Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*, 201.

¹⁵ Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*, 224.

¹⁶ Anthony Vidler, "Spatial Violence," *Assemblage*, no.20 (April 1993): 84.

¹⁷ Christine Boyer, *Le Corbusier, Homme de Lettres*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2010), 372.

¹⁸ Boyer, *Le Corbusier, Homme de Lettres*, 493.

¹⁹ Paul Overy, *Light, Air, and Openness: modern architecture between the wars*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007), 57.

his connections with Dr Pierre Winter and both the architect's and the doctor's fascination with the body and hygiene, stating:

In 1922, Dr Pierre Winter contributed an article on 'Le Corps nouveau' (The New Body) to *L'Esprit nouveau*, the magazine edited by Le Corbusier and Amedée Ozenfant, in which he contrasted the harmony of the body achieved by the Greek and Romans with the 'modern' body sapped by overwork and dependence on drugs. Winter argued that modern science and sport had created renewed interest in the healthy body, and that artist and architect should devote themselves to its promotion. Later Dr Winter presented Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin and his social housing at Pessac in the fascist magazine *le Nouveau Siècle* in 1927, praising the way in which his designs prioritized health, hygiene, sunlight and fresh air.²⁰

Rémi Baudouï and Arnaud Dercelles wrote an Essay published in *Le Corbusier: The Measure of Man* entitled "The Corbusian Sportive Body." This essay gives a brief overview of sport in Le Corbusier's work, but, given its length, does not provide significant detail on the topic. They oppose the view of Marc Perelman, which is that the "Corbusian body" was placed in a totalitarian view "in which body culture is made to serve the technology of power."²¹ They go on to say:

we do not subscribe to all of Marc Perelman's analyses... The Corbusian sportive body cannot be reduced *ipso facto* to a political idea. In many ways, it can at most be equated with the productive body still required by a mass-consumer society for leisure purposes, in order to engender, as Jean Baudrillard proclaims, a society whose ultimate purpose is no longer the production of goods and services, but simply the reproduction of its own existence.²²

But the productive body invariably provokes political connotations. The authors describe Le Corbusier's participation in sport from a young age, and establish his broader take on sport's role in society, stating, "Charles-Édouard Jeanneret had no particular views on the athletic bodies of top sportsmen or Olympic competitors. For him, what was really at stake was the

²⁰ Overy, *Light, Air, and Openness*, 57.

²¹ Rémi Baudouï and Arnaud Dercelles, "The Corbusian Sportive Body," in *Le Corbusier: The Measures of Man*, ed. Olivier Cinquandre and Frédéric Migayrou (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2015), 79.

²² Baudouï and Dercelles, "The Corbusian Sportive Body," 79.

interaction of the everyday body with modern life.”²³ The authors mark Le Corbusier’s introduction to Pierre Winter as a pivotal moment in his discovery of sport, noting that they both shared the “Nietzschean vision as expounded in Also sprach Zarathustra...remaining true to the earth.”²⁴ The authors provide a direct connection from this view to the introduction of sporting facilities in Le Corbusier’s social housing projects, stating “the physical and moral regeneration of its [the city’s] inhabitants required, in their eyes, healthy housing that was aerated and open to nature, a state to be achieved not least through the democratization of sport.”²⁵ But democratization is not an entirely accurate description, but a sign of the authors’ attempts to distance Le Corbusier’s use of sport from a totalitarian reading, as they state, “by advocating one cause, that of individual physical and mental well-being and public health, Le Corbusier’s approach to the body of the “new man” never had anything in common with the way it was defined by Nazism and Italian fascism.”²⁶ The remainder of the essay mentions examples of Le Corbusier’s projects where sport was a major theme, however they do not cover these projects in detail, therefore it is evident that sport is mentioned throughout the broader scholarship on Le Corbusier, however it does not appear that any comprehensive treatise on the topic has taken place. Given Baudouï and Dercelle’s clear disagreement with Perelman, there is an apparent division in the understanding of why sport was so important to Le Corbusier and how it was politicised. Perelman gives a totalitarian reading, while Baudouï and Dercelles distance themselves from this reading by using Le Corbusier’s claims that sport was to be practiced by everybody, everyday, as an example of the democratisation of sport.

Literature on Sport and Politics:

The sporting city, the town as an immense park, was Le Corbusier’s effort to rejuvenate Paris to increase the "vigour of its inhabitants" and eliminate disease, misery, and demoralization. The man who introduced Le Corbusier to sport, Dr Pierre Winter, was also a member of one of the first French fascist groups *Le Faisceau des Combattants et Producteurs* formed in 1925, and according to art historian Mark Antliff, Winter was Le Corbusier's "Faisceau convert" who "as early as 16 May 1926...cited the architect's 1925 book *Urbanisme* in an article in *Nouveau siècle* [a fascist journal] devoted to the hygienic dimension of fascist town planning."²⁷ Thus a direct correlation between sport, hygiene, and politics emerges, with sport being one of the initial conduits to the fascist group through Pierre Winter, as Winter writes,

²³ Baudouï and Dercelles, “The Corbusian Sportive Body,” 80.

²⁴ Baudouï and Dercelles, “The Corbusian Sportive Body,” 80.

²⁵ Baudouï and Dercelles, “The Corbusian Sportive Body,” 80.

²⁶ Baudouï and Dercelles, “The Corbusian Sportive Body,” 83.

²⁷ Mark Antliff, “La Cite Francaise: Georges Valois, Le Corbusier, and Fascist Theories of Urbanism,” in *Avante-Garde Fascism*, edited by Mark Antliff, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 114.

What Le Corbusier wrote in "Vers une Architecture" was true in many other areas of biology, science and sport that were familiar to me...I boiled with rage and impatience before the general incomprehension, the academic nature of official schools - yes; Towards an Architecture...towards a new equipment of life...towards a new health...towards a new medicine for healthy people...towards a new social status...freeing the man of today - This is how we came to Le Corbusier in Sport...in Biology...and soon to social problems...in the course of exchanges, discussions, collaborations which have not ceased since...²⁸

The sentiment expressed by Le Corbusier in regards to the lack of hygiene and health contributing to the demoralization of Paris, was shared by various French fascists, as fascism scholar Robert Soucy states,

For what preoccupied one French fascist writer after another - and what was one of the most distinctive features of their ideology - was their overwhelming sense of national decadence, their feeling that France was debilitated and weak, that it was sunk in torpor and somnolence. The underlying premise of so much of their thought was that France had declined drastically since her former days of glory and that this was largely due to the moral and physical degeneration of her people.²⁹

Morals and physical health were intertwined, and so too were politics. Recently three books on Le Corbusier and Fascism, all critical in their indictment of him as a fascist, have produced some controversy surrounding Le Corbusier's politics. These books are Marc Perelman's *Le Corbusier: Une froide vision du monde*, Xavier de Jarcy's *Le Corbusier une Fascisme Français*, and François Chaslin's *Un Corbusier*. Chaslin mentions sport, particularly the role it played in the relationship between Pierre Winter and Le Corbusier,³⁰ but Marc Perelman in his book not only dedicates a whole chapter to sport in Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse*, his critique of Le Corbusier's theories and works as a whole is conducted through the lens of the body, stating, "the culture of the body, this is the master message of the architect!"³¹

²⁸ Dr Pierre Winter, "Le Corbusier, Biologiste, Sociologue," in *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 14.

²⁹ Robert J. Soucy, "The Nature of Fascism in France," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no.1 (1966): 49, accessed May 6, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259648>.

³⁰ François Chaslin, *Un Corbusier*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2015), 99 & 155.

³¹ Marc Perelman. *Le Corbusier: une froide vision du monde*, (Paris: Michalon Éditeur, 2015), 240. Translation by Simone Brott, from hereon all citations of Perelman's book from this translation.

Perelman's chapter "le Stade du Spectacle Sportif" in his book *Le Corbusier: Une froide vision du monde*, investigates the sporting function of the open spaces provided by the setbacks in the *Immeubles Villas* in *Ville Radieuse*. He states, "the entire urban area is organized and subjected to the sports project that structures the city in its image."³² He posits that the function of these spaces is fundamental to the overall framework of Le Corbusier's city plan, that is, one based on production, economy, and competition, through the assertion that the body is a resource:

But this ideology of the healthy, sporting body, which exacerbates the reign of sporting leisure, combines with...the establishment of the body-commodity, the productive body, the "resource" by the appropriate aggressive technique, sport. In other words, a body adapted to the principle of...sport standardization.³³

During the 1920s Le Corbusier's admiration for mass production, industry and scientific management models such as Taylorism, "a method of labour discipline and plant organization based upon ostensibly scientific investigations of labour efficiency and incentive systems,"³⁴ are well known. Historian Mary McLeod wrote extensively on Le Corbusier's Taylorist tendencies during the 1920s in her dissertation *Urbanism and Utopia: Le Corbusier, from Regional Syndicalism to Vichy*:

Like many European professionals, Le Corbusier saw Taylorism as a means of breaking with pre-war society, a key to social renewal. The word "Taylorism" appears in almost every one of his books from *Après le cubisme* (1918) to *La Ville Radieuse* (1935); the *Ville Contemporaine* and the *Plan Voisin*, premised upon speed, efficiency, and economy, were architectural visions of the American industrial utopia made manifest.³⁵

Le Corbusier also admired the industrial processes of Ford, and in his *Méditation sur Ford* he wrote, "The experience of Ford, repeated in a thousand activities of the modern world, in the industrious production, gives us its lesson. Let us accept the lesson. For good, let us work for the good of men."³⁶

For Perelman, sport and Le Corbusier's industrial politics are intertwined. He states that in the architect's plan the "sportivisation of urban life and indeed of everyday life, is parallel to the sportivisation of economic life."³⁷ Le Corbusier stated, "economic law inevitably governs our acts and

³² Perelman, *Le Corbusier: une froide vision du monde*, 237.

³³ Perelman, *Le Corbusier: une froide vision du monde*, 240.

³⁴ Mary C McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia: Le Corbusier from Regional Syndicalism to Vichy Volumes I and II" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1985), 40.

³⁵ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 40.

³⁶ Le Corbusier, "Méditation sur Ford," in *Les Plans de Paris 1956-1922*, ed. Le Corbusier (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1956), 115.

³⁷ Perelman. *Le Corbusier: une froide vision du monde*, 230.

our thoughts."³⁸ Perelman goes on to emphasise the seamless integration between sport and production, in an "urban continuum" of sports fields and factories:

The profound unity between sport and urbanism, in the design of Le Corbusier, endorses the mechanization of social life: competition is everywhere present, extending and structured in a vast urban continuum of sports fields, factories, housing - these 'machines for living'.³⁹

This "sportivisation" is a politicization of sport in Le Corbusier's city plan, premised on a politics of efficiency. Le Corbusier's political persuasions, particularly that of Taylorism and other productivist concepts, linked to fascism by Perelman, although well-known and documented, have not been so heavily correlated with sport in the way Marc Perelman does. Like Baudouï and Dercelles, Simon Richards in his book *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self*, takes an opposing view to Perelman's, reducing sport simply to a social activity devoid of politics:

The 'politics' of the Ville Radieuse, just like those of the Ville Contemporaine, are reduced almost to nothing, and social activity likewise. 'Participation' in this city is reduced to simple 'maintenance': one participates in sport to maintain the body, and participates in 'civic institutions' to maintain the regular production and flow of goods and services.⁴⁰

Mary McLeod evinced much of the detail surrounding Le Corbusier and Taylorism, but did not emphasise its connection with sport and the body like Perelman, nor does she use it as a method to condemn Le Corbusier as a fascist.⁴¹

Perelman limits his analysis only to *Ville Radieuse*, stating, "as early as 1930, Le Corbusier is interested in sport. The urban planner and architect, decides in his Ville Radieuse to create sport-specific places."⁴² But sport appeared in Le Corbusier's urban plans well before 1930 and *Ville Radieuse* as both Baudouï and Dercelles have revealed, it began to appear around 1922.⁴³ Therefore Chapter IV of this thesis will investigate sport and its politics of production in Le Corbusier's urban plans throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, not only in *Ville Radieuse* as Perelman does, but also in *Ville Contemporaine* and *Plan Voisin*.⁴⁴

³⁸ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 6. Originally published by John Rodker, London, 1931 from the 13th French edition of *Vers une Architecture*.

³⁹ Perelman, *Le Corbusier: une froide vision du monde*, 231.

⁴⁰ Simon Richards, *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 50.

⁴¹ The matter of Le Corbusier's politics is contentious and under review at the time of writing.

⁴² Perelman, *Le Corbusier: une froide vision du monde*, 229.

⁴³ Baudouï and Dercelles, "The Corbusian Sportive Body," 80.

⁴⁴ Perelman states that "As early as 1930, Le Corbusier is interested in sport. The Urban planner and architect decides in his Ville Radieuse to create sport-specific places." However sport in Le Corbusier's urbanism begins much earlier than 1930 and Ville Radieuse.

Le Corbusier's introduction to *le Faisceau* through Pierre Winter was premised on Winter's admiration of the hygienic dimension of Le Corbusier's town planning, but for *le Faisceau's* founder, Georges Valois, it was the industrial rationalist model of Taylorism imbued in the urbanism of Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* and *Ville Contemporaine* of the 1920's that interested *le Faisceau* in the first place, with the principles of the productive citizen and the productive city being most pertinent for Valois, as Antliff states,

To Valois' mind, one had only to look to American industry to see the productivist spirit in action,⁴⁵

Georges Valois, the leader of the French Faisceau movement (1925-1928), and Philippe Lamour, founder of the Revolutionary Fascist Party (1928), both wished to incorporate Le Corbusier's architectural plans into their visions of a Fascist corporative order of 'industrial producers...'⁴⁶

Robert Soucy also alludes to the technocratic values of French Fascism where he states, "under fascism, political representation would be based upon new criteria, upon professional rather than geographical lines, but economic life would operate according to traditional capitalist principles."⁴⁷

This connection between *le Faisceau* and Le Corbusier's admiration and inclusion of productivist models in his urbanism is the underlying presumption of Marc Perelman's analysis asserting sport as the tool to create what he calls the "commodity-body, the productive body."⁴⁸

McLeod, at times, positions Le Corbusier's political involvements as a series of syncretistic associations where he was attempting to find the group that best suited him, an opportunistic syncretism of political groups and ideologies more aligned with Jerzy Soltan's description as Le Corbusier's "youthful eagerness to land good work."⁴⁹ McLeod states, "he was still searching for a pragmatic solution, an alternative to American productive models that offered both social redemption and the practice of his craft."⁵⁰ And that "Le Corbusier also looked to the other side [fascism] of the political spectrum."⁵¹ The first statement implies a clear break from one model, the American productivist model, toward an 'alternative' more suitable ideology. "To the other side" suggests that this change or shift was a clear transferral in Le Corbusier's politics from the 'left' to the 'right,'

⁴⁵ Antliff, "La Cité Française," 139.

⁴⁶ Mark Antliff, "Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity," *The Art Bulletin* 84, no.1 (March 2002): 152, accessed May 6, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3177257>.

⁴⁷ Soucy, "The Nature of Fascism in France," 37-38.

⁴⁸ Perelman, *Le Corbusier: une froide vision du monde*, 240.

⁴⁹ Jerzy Soltan, "Working with Le Corbusier," in *Le Corbusier: the Garland Essays*, ed. H. Allen Brooks (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 3.

⁵⁰ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 99.

⁵¹ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 99.

where she is referring to his involvement with French Fascism in the second half of the 1920's.⁵² This group was Georges Valois' *Faisceau des Combattants et Producteurs*.⁵³ But Le Corbusier's involvement with *le Faisceau* has been argued not as the result of a clear shift *from* the 'left' to the 'right,' as McLeod seems to imply, but a result of existing ideological functions analogous to *le faisceau's la cité française* already embedded within Le Corbusier's Taylorist productivist models of urbanism in the 1920's. Simone Brott in her article "The ghost in the city industrial complex: Le Corbusier and the fascist theory of Urbanisme" describes the lineage of French Fascist thought and its connections to Le Corbusier, revealing the productivist tendencies, stating, "Valois himself praises Le Corbusier's "productivist" models of urban purification."⁵⁴ This connection is further emphasised by how interconnected sport, the body, and hygiene were along with their role to create the producer-inhabitant, a sentiment shared by *le Faisceau*. Brott also establishes the connection between the intellectual tenets of *le Faisceau* and modernism in her article "Architecture et Révolution: Le Corbusier and the Fascist Revolution," stating:

Historians have depicted the embrace of Le Corbusier by the *Faisceau*, who believed Le Corbusier's plans represented their mythic *La Cité*, as naïve or not fully grasping Le Corbusier's work. These representational schemata fail to engage the question of how philosophical fascism was instrumental to the conceptual methodologies of the avant-garde, to dominant modernism as *imaginaire* and the formulation of architectural objecthood. It is possible that fascism was not the enemy of modernism, but its principal technique.⁵⁵

McLeod had documented Le Corbusier's contact with the fascist group *Faisceau des Combattants et Producteurs*, but she merely suggests he had contacts with the group, and that he "identified with the Faisceau's advocacy of technical innovation and was undoubtedly flattered by the group's admiration of his program. Though he never joined the organization, he was frequently exposed to its ideas and members through Dr Pierre Winter..."⁵⁶ For McLeod, fascism is but a brief coincidence of associations in Le Corbusier's political history. This is the dominant interpretation of Le Corbusier's political history surrounding the topic of fascism, typified in Jerzy Soltan's essay recounting the period he worked for Le Corbusier, he treats Le Corbusier's connection to fascism and later his participation in Vichy France as accidental and opportunistic:

⁵² McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 99.

⁵³ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 99.

⁵⁴ Simone Brott, "The ghost in the city industrial complex: Le Corbusier and the fascist theory of Urbanisme," *Journal of Architecture and Urbanism* 40, no. 2 (2016): 140.

⁵⁵ Simone Brott, "Architecture et Révolution: Le Corbusier and the Fascist Revolution," *Thresholds: Journal of the MIT Department of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology* 41, Special Issue: Revolution (Spring 2013): 154.

⁵⁶ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 99-100.

There were political objections to him. After all, he did go to Vichy to sniff out the Pétain regime. Nothing came of it, but for those who want to see the worst, the fact remains. These same people forget that some twenty years earlier, Corbu had worked in the Soviet Union... Politically, nonetheless, Corbu represents a confusing, contradictory picture and one easily subject to different interpretations according to the bias of the observer... Again, some would see in his dealings with the Vichy regime evidence of fascist sympathies, while others would emphasize his quick retreat from that group. My own contact with Corbu led me always to think of him as a man full of boyish eagerness to try everything to win a commission, a tempting piece of work, an exciting project...For those who are not able to accept the depth of his youthful eagerness to land good work, Corbu will always remain a political mystery.⁵⁷

Robert Fishman was the first to allude to Le Corbusier's fascist connections as merely that: associations.

Winter was active in the party [le *Faisceau*] and occasionally expounded Le Corbusier's town planning theories in Valois's daily newspaper. In 1926, he concluded an article on the Plan Voisin with his own commentary: "Only a strong program of urbanism - the program of a fascist government - is capable of adapting the modern city to the needs of all." Le Corbusier was still attached to capitalism and to technocracy in 1926. By the late twenties, however, he was more receptive; through Winter he met some of the leading syndicalist intellectuals. At that time the *Faisceau* no longer existed.⁵⁸

He suggests the end of *le Faisceau* in the late twenties was the end of fascism for Le Corbusier, and goes on to discuss his "transition" to Syndicalism. Alan Colquhoun notes Le Corbusier's views as "quasi-fascist" as he suggests Le Corbusier's "view of a society dominated by technology, and the quasi-fascist politics that this view entailed."⁵⁹ He also states:

Both Le Corbusier's connection with French syndicalism (which in its belief in direct action and its concept of cultural renewal had close analogies with fascism) and his interest in the development of regional and peripheral cultures date from this period.⁶⁰

After this so-called brief encounter with fascism McLeod also notes that Le Corbusier then moved on to Syndicalism. She notes "Le Corbusier's introduction to syndicalism came through his association

⁵⁷ Soltan, "Working with Le Corbusier," 3.

⁵⁸ Robert Fishman, "From the Radiant City to Vichy: Le Corbusier's Plans and Politics, 1928-1942," in *The Open Hand: Essays on Le Corbusier*, ed. Russell Walden (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), 255.

⁵⁹ Alan Colquhoun, "The Significance of Le Corbusier," in *Le Corbusier: the Garland Essays*, ed. H. Allen Brooks (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 18-19.

⁶⁰ Colquhoun, "The Significance of Le Corbusier," 23.

with these members of the Faisceau,"⁶¹ however she downplays any further fascist tendencies found in the Syndicalist movement of the late 1920s and early 30s. Similarly, Simon Richards outlines Le Corbusier's political history chronologically "from a technocratic first phase, through a syndicalist second phase and into the outright despotism of his Vichy period."⁶² Contrarily there are a number of authors who disagree with the conclusions presented by Fishman, McLeod, Richards, and Soltan, that Le Corbusier was merely associated with fascism. These are the three controversial books on the topic: Francois Chaslin's *Un Corbusier*, Xavier de Jarcy's *Le Corbusier, un fascisme français* and Marc Perelman's *Le Corbusier: Une froide vision du monde*, as well as articles by Mark Antliff, and Simone Brott that also question the mainstream interpretation of Le Corbusier's association with fascism. In 2016 an open letter in reaction to an exhibition in 2016 at the Pompidou Centre was signed by Brott, de Jarcy, and Perelman, along with fascist scholar Zeev Sternhell, and writer Daniel de Roulet. The letter was incredibly condemning of Le Corbusier, stating, "Le Corbusier was an immense, brilliant ideologue. A militant of the fascist or fascist far Right for over twenty years, and a Vichyite, he also admired and looked eagerly towards Mussolini, Salazar and Primo de Rivera – not to forget Hitler."⁶³

Where McLeod and Richards suggest Le Corbusier moved on from fascism to syndicalism, Chaslin and de Jarcy imply that this is where the most incriminating evidence of Le Corbusier's fascism begins because unlike Fishman, McLeod, and Richards, de Jarcy indicts the Syndicalist journal *Plans*, which Le Corbusier was on the editing committee, as a fascist journal.⁶⁴ Chaslin quotes Benjamin Bordachar, priest and friend to all editors on *Prélude* (another Syndicalist journal which Le Corbusier was an editor of), stating, "*Prélude* was not merely a journal but a fascist group, of which one of its heads was "Le Corbusier."⁶⁵ Brott is less condemning than Chaslin and de Jarcy, and focuses on revealing the intellectual genealogy of French fascism and its connection with Syndicalism, citing the

⁶¹ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 102.

⁶² Richards, *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self*, 21.

⁶³ Simone Brott, Zeev Sternhell, Xavier de Jarcy, Daniel de Roulet, and Marc Perelman, "Le Corbusier's Ideal is a Barracks." Verso Books, January 6, 2017, <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3034-le-corbusier-s-ideal-is-a-barracks>.

⁶⁴ Zeev Sternhell, *Ni Droite Ni Gauche*, 4th ed. (Folio, 2012), 511. Quoted in Xavier de Jarcy, *Le Corbusier un Fascisme Français*, (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2015) iBook edition, 152. De Jarcy quotes Sternhell, saying that "Plans embodies "an almost perfect type of a fascism technically oriented toward skyscrapers, toward the city of Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier, toward the art of Fernand Léger, but also to an organic society, harmonious society "l'homme réel."" Translation by Toby Mackay, from hereon all citations of de Jarcy's book from this translation.

⁶⁵ Chaslin, *Un Corbusier*, 203. Translation by Simone Brott, from hereon all citations of Chaslin's book from this translation.

Syndicalist Georges Sorel “as the parent of twentieth-century fascist thought, cited as key inspiration by both Hitler and Mussolini.”⁶⁶ She further states:

For Le Corbusier’s fascination with the anarcho-syndicalist theory of the French city in 1927 invokes the entire trajectory of industrial ideas and glorification of labour in French thinking about cities since the eighteenth century, exemplified in the figures Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier. Furthermore, it is the singular re-emergence of this line of technocratic ideas in the revolutionary chassis of French syndicalism whence the meeting of Valois and Le Corbusier becomes significant for modernist history.⁶⁷

In fact it was through a Syndicalist lens in which Le Corbusier's first stadium was designed, therefore this indictment of syndicalism as a fascist movement further intertwines the lineage of sport and politics through to Le Corbusier's first stadium in 1936, which there is very little mention of in the literature on Le Corbusier.

Literature on Le Corbusier’s Stadiums:

By the mid-1930s Le Corbusier was not only concerned with sports grounds at the foot of houses. To continue to develop sport in his city, deploying sport as a determinative framework in his urban plans, in 1936 he introduced his first detailed design of a stadium. This project was an un-built stadium for 100,000 people planned for Paris called *le Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants*. In the previous decade he wrote “exhibition sport has nothing to do with real sport; it is more allied to the theatre, the circus etc. The stadium provides a spectacle where other people’s marvellously developed biceps and calves can be seen.”⁶⁸ With this stadium for 100,000 people, the sports ground for Le Corbusier is now not only reserved to be “at the door of the house,” but also includes a vast public arena to not only participate in, but to witness the spectacle of sport.

This project was part of an urban plan for the reorganisation of Paris presented at CIAM 5, *Plan de Paris* (1937)⁶⁹ and was displayed in Le Corbusier's exhibition in the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* in 1937. Although this project plays a role in the history of CIAM it is not mentioned in Eric Mumford's

⁶⁶ Brott, “The ghost in the city industrial complex,” 133. But see also the paper Brott published that year which discusses the controversy: Simone Brott, “The Le Corbusier Scandal, or, Was Le Corbusier a Fascist?” *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies* 6, no. 2 (2017): 196-227.

⁶⁷ Brott, “The ghost in the city industrial complex,” 133.

⁶⁸ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 202.

⁶⁹ Le Corbusier to le Président du Conseil (6 March 1937), Fondation Le Corbusier Archive, I1-19-21-001 (Translation by Toby Mackay, from hereon all citations of archival material from the Fondation Le Corbusier translated by Toby Mackay, and Fondation Le Corbusier shortened to FLC), and see also, Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d’Architecture Zurich, 1947), 46-47.

The CIAM Discourses on Urbanism, which is a representation of how little this project is mentioned throughout scholarship on Le Corbusier in general. The theme of CIAM 5 was *Logis et loisirs* (Housing and Recreation), which Le Corbusier had decided upon, which makes Mumford's exclusion of the stadium more perplexing.⁷⁰ Mumford proposes that the theme in general was used by Le Corbusier to propel a Syndicalist agenda:

This focus on everyday leisure-time activities, rural urbanization, and the biological advantages of the new urbanism, are related to the syndicalist rejection of both capitalism and parliamentary democracy. CIAM 5 was used by Le Corbusier to advance the syndicalist agenda of the *Prélude* group in the strange French political climate of the time.⁷¹

Syndicalism was a syncretistic political movement of regionalism with origins in the trade unionists. Le Corbusier's affiliation with Syndicalism is well known. Mary McLeod, in her dissertation on Le Corbusier's politics *Urbanism and Utopia: Le Corbusier from Regional Syndicalism to Vichy*, states that 1930 was the "first year of Le Corbusier's explicit association with the movement [syndicalism]."⁷² The *Prélude* group that Mumford refers to was responsible for a Syndicalist review, formed in 1933, of which Le Corbusier was an editor.⁷³ Prior to *Prélude*, Le Corbusier was part of another Syndicalist review, *Plans*, which was first published in 1931.⁷⁴ Part of the Syndicalist agenda was concerned with "man's biological needs," as McLeod notes, "the Plans group stressed health and athletic activities as important dimensions of l'homme réel."⁷⁵ Their concern with biological needs, health, and hygiene were of a regenerative nature, a continuation of Le Corbusier's obsessions from the 1920s.

Robert Fishman explicitly implicates *le Centre National* within a Syndicalist vision, claiming "Le Corbusier put forward his most revealing vision of political life in a syndicalist society: the National Centre of Collective festivals for 100,000 people."⁷⁶ As well as Fishman, Robert Lewis emphasises that politics is integral to this project, where he concludes that the stadium was "equally essential for politics and sporting activity."⁷⁷ Le Corbusier described this stadium as a "national centre responding to newly arisen social functions,"⁷⁸ to be used for politics and mass demonstrations, amongst other

⁷⁰ Eric Mumford, *The CIAM Discourses on Urbanism*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000), 110.

⁷¹ Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism*, 110.

⁷² Mary C McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," *Oppositions* 19, no.20 (1980): 56.

⁷³ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 141.

⁷⁴ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 108.

⁷⁵ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 132.

⁷⁶ Fishman, "From the Radiant City to Vichy," 269.

⁷⁷ Robert W Lewis, "From the "Phoenix of Legends" to the "Ultimate Monument" of the Times: Stadia, Spectators, and Urban Development in Postwar Paris," *Journal of Urban History* 38, no.2 (2012): 321.

⁷⁸ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, 90.

functions as well as sport. He writes, "the construction of this centre for popular celebrations is completely new and exists nowhere. The solution was to design a single building with various dramatic and sporting purposes, theatre, gymnastics, politics, etc, etc..."⁷⁹ Therefore Fishman and Lewis are not wrong to describe this project as so explicitly political, however this is all their analyses are limited to. The project was also mentioned in Baudouï and Dercelle's "The Corbusian Sportive Body" essay, however it is only mentioned, not discussed.⁸⁰ Scholarship on this stadium is scarce, even though it is so important in the chronology of sport and urbanism in Le Corbusier's work. It marks the progression from his emphasis on everyday sport, to a conception of sport as spectacle, as an element in an interconnected continuum of other functions such as theatre and politics. Ironically this new vision of sport as spectacle in the city is what led to the project never being built, as one of the major political figures Le Corbusier was trying to convince to build his stadium was the minister for Sport and Leisure Léo Lagrange who wrote that he "would not give a single cent for 50,000 people to watch 22 athletes" and to quote Robert Lewis, Lagrange "would instead concentrate on promoting sporting participation across the nation."⁸¹ Lagrange, it seems, was more aligned with Le Corbusier's sporting visions from the previous decade.

The stadium for 100,000 people, although never built, was not produced in vain, as it led to the Government of Iraq in 1955 commissioning Le Corbusier to design an Olympic stadium and sports complex in Baghdad. In Le Corbusier's 1960 book *My Work* he states that "the Government of Iraq [Iraq] were the first to show a practical interest [in *the Stadium for 100,000* people], when, twenty years later, they commissioned their Sports Centre for Bagdad."⁸² Between 1936 and the 1950s, Le Corbusier mysteriously did not produce any stadium designs. This long omission of the typology from his *œuvre* is unexplained. This stadium in Baghdad is the next major project in the lineage of stadia in Le Corbusier's work, and is an appropriate example for an analysis of sport and stadia in Le Corbusier's later period of work.

Le Corbusier's post WWII work is often described in an apolitical liberal democratic way, typified in one of his more famous projects, the master plan of *Chandigarh* and the symbol of the *Open Hand*, which William Curtis suggests "was the emblem for the new, democratic, liberal and liberated India...Le Corbusier's symbol of international peace, transcending politics, caste, religion, and race."⁸³ But his politics leading up to and during WWII should not simply be dismissed. During the war Le Corbusier's involvement with Vichy France was not that of a passive bystander. Simon

⁷⁹ Le Corbusier to Georges Huisman, Director General of the Beaux-Arts (31 March 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-27-001.

⁸⁰ Baudouï and Dercelles, "The Corbusian Sportive Body," 82.

⁸¹ Lewis, "From the Phoenix of Legends," 321.

⁸² Le Corbusier, *My Work*, trans. James Palmes, (London: Architectural Press, 1960), 132. Originally published in French as *L'Atelier de la Recherche Patiente*, 1960.

⁸³ William Curtis, *Ideas and Forms*, (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1986), 194.

Richards in his 2003 book *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self*, makes an account of Le Corbusier's participation in Marshal Pétain's Vichy France, however he emphasises just how much Vichy rejected Le Corbusier's work, that his urban plans for Algiers were "rejected on the grounds of being part of a Jewish-Bolshevist conspiracy."⁸⁴ Richards quotes the Minister for Vichy's planning ministry as saying "the Minister does not envisage co-operating with Le Corbusier in any way."⁸⁵ Richards's view of Le Corbusier's participation in Vichy is summed as follows, "Le Corbusier's passage through Vichy assumes the aspect of dark pantomime. It was doomed from the outset."⁸⁶ However he is clear of the fact that Le Corbusier was not simply trying to be opportunistic, claiming "it is clear that this was not mere opportunism, for Le Corbusier consistently went for a particular kind of politics."⁸⁷ More recently in 2015 the works of Francois Chaslin and Xavier de Jarcy provide a more thorough account of this period of Le Corbusier's life, proposing a more active and incriminating role of Le Corbusier in Vichy. Chaslin notes the Vichy Government in 1941 commissioned Le Corbusier along with two other architects to produce a study for a national housing scheme.⁸⁸ Chaslin highlights the relationship between Le Corbusier and eugenicist Alexis Carrel, and that in 1943 Carrel appointed Le Corbusier Technical Advisor of the Department of Bio-Sociology, which was part of Carrel's research institute founded in Vichy.⁸⁹ De Jarcy notes under Vichy, Le Corbusier was appointed Director of Historical Monuments and in 1941 promoted to Councillor for Urban Planning.⁹⁰ Marshal Pétain assigned Le Corbusier as head of the Committee for study of housing and urbanism of Paris (CEHUP) in which he included in the committee eugenicist Alexis Carrel and anti-Semitic and pro-eugenics playwright Jean Giraudoux.⁹¹ Could one transition from Vichy France to a liberal democratic notion of the World after the war? Continuing to trace the progression of sport and stadia through to Le Corbusier's post WWII period of work may reveal a different political reading of this era.

The political context in which this project was conceived, and eventually built, was tempestuous, it is a project, like *Stade de 100.000 places*, that has until recently been largely neglected by Corbusean scholarship. It briefly appears in Le Corbusier's 1960 Book *My Work*,⁹² but was mysteriously excluded from his *Œuvre Complète*. Subsequently, it appeared briefly in *The Le Corbusier Guide* by Deborah Gans,⁹³ and mentioned in Baudouï and Dercelles's essay.⁹⁴ It was the topic of a lecture by

⁸⁴ Richards, *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self*, 64.

⁸⁵ Richards, *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self*, 62.

⁸⁶ Richards, *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self*, 62.

⁸⁷ Richards, *Le Corbusier and the Concept of Self*, 64.

⁸⁸ Chaslin, *Un Corbusier*, 186.

⁸⁹ Chaslin, *Un Corbusier*, 217.

⁹⁰ Xavier de Jarcy, *Le Corbusier un Fascisme Français*, (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2015) iBook edition, 383.

⁹¹ de Jarcy, *Le Corbusier un Fascisme Français*, 409.

⁹² Le Corbusier, *My Work*.

⁹³ Deborah Gans, *The Le Corbusier Guide* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 254-55.

⁹⁴ Baudouï and Dercelles, "The Corbusian Sportive Body," 83.

Rémi Baudouï,⁹⁵ and Mina Marefat and Caecilia Pieri have conducted significant work on the Gymnasium, which was the only built component of the project.

Thanks to their research, a brief chronological account of the project is available, synthesising information from original texts and letters, and revealing original drawings. In Marefat's "Mise au Point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium" she argues for the project to be considered as *Corbusean* in authorship, breaking down any misconceptions that Le Corbusier may not have taken full control of this project or taken it seriously. She derives this position from the sheer amount of work existing in the architect's archive as she states that the "many letters and the sheer number of drawings alone – close to 1,500, many of which bear Le Corbusier's signature – make it clear that the work was firmly in his hands."⁹⁶ She continues the account of the first half of the project, describing the years from 1955 to 1959 in more detail than the later years from 1960 to 1965 and beyond into the posthumous construction. 1955 was the first year of contact between Le Corbusier and the Iraqi Development Board and Ministry of Development, with a letter sent to Le Corbusier dated the 22nd of June 1955, appointing Le Corbusier's atelier "as consultants."⁹⁷ Le Corbusier replied shortly after on the 15th of July 1955, with a letter to the Development Board requesting further documentation in order to begin the project.⁹⁸ However it was one year later, on the 2nd of July 1956, until the next correspondence took place. A reply on the 28th July 1956, from Nadim Pachachi, the then Minister of Development ensued, responding to Le Corbusier's initial requests for documentation in 1955.

Baudouï explains this lapse in communication as "not due to the architect's lack of interest for the project,"⁹⁹ but because of the vast amount of projects Le Corbusier's studio was working on at the time such as Chandigarh and the stadium and youth centre in Firminy. Marefat also refers to "delays and communication gaffes involving both parties" which she suggests "dragged out well into the end of 1957."¹⁰⁰ In a letter to Le Corbusier by Jean Goutail on the 23rd July 1956, it appears that the one year delay between 1955 and 1956 was due to the negligence of the 2nd Technical Section of the Ministry of Development, which was the section who was in direct correspondence with Le Corbusier in relation to the project. 1957 was also the year Le Corbusier engaged the engineering firm of Georges Marc Présenté,¹⁰¹ who was a critical figure throughout the project, even after Le Corbusier's

⁹⁵ Rémi Baudouï, "To Build a Stadium: Le Corbusier's Project for Baghdad, 1955-1973," *Azara* 33 (2008): 271-80.

⁹⁶ Mina Marefat, "Mise au Point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium," *DOCOMOMO journal* 41 (2009): 32.

⁹⁷ Minister of Development Iraq to Le Corbusier (22 June 1955), FLC Archive, P4 (3) 33.

⁹⁸ Le Corbusier to Director General of Legal Affairs and Contracts Iraq (15 July 1955), FLC Archive, P4 (3) 36.

⁹⁹ Baudouï, "To Build a Stadium," 271.

¹⁰⁰ Marefat, "Mise au Point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium," 32.

¹⁰¹ Gans, *The Le Corbusier Guide*, 254.

death and into construction.¹⁰² Baudouï states that “the implementation of Baghdad’s stadium is guaranteed by Présenté’s Studies Office,”¹⁰³ and that after Le Corbusier’s death in 1965 “it seems almost granted that it was Présenté’s office which assumed the biggest workload of this complex dossier management...”¹⁰⁴

Throughout the project Le Corbusier made only two visits to Baghdad. His first was in November 1957 where a project brief was received. It was in 1958, on July 13 when Le Corbusier was informed that his design had been accepted,¹⁰⁵ and only one day later on the 14th that King Faisal was assassinated and superseded by General Kareem Kassem who then declared himself President of the Republic of Iraq.¹⁰⁶ Despite this, and other political changes throughout the remainder of the project, Baudouï maintains that the Iraqi political events did not seem to significantly affect the project,¹⁰⁷ however Marefat points out that along with the acceptance of Le Corbusier’s design by the King, construction was supposed to commence that very year (1958).¹⁰⁸

The proposal in 1958 consisted of a Stadium for 50,000 spectators.¹⁰⁹ The program of the stadium is relatively consistent with that of the initial brief, however Le Corbusier had introduced the *Jeux Electroniques*, or electronic games, which was a new art form developed by Le Corbusier and introduced in the *Pavillon Philips, exposition internationale de 1958* in Brussels, with which one of his assistants, Iannis Xenakis, was heavily involved.¹¹⁰ The pavilion in Brussels comprised of a series of complex hyperbolic surfaces, which he proposed for the gymnasium in Baghdad, and as a sun shading device for the Western side of the grandstand. It was in turn declined due to the infeasibility of it being implemented in the climatic and economic context of Baghdad with what Le Corbusier expressed as having a climate and labour force incapable of carrying out such a design, not to mention budget constraints.¹¹¹

Also included in the proposal was a gymnasium that was to be an enclosed and air conditioned building to accommodate 3,500 spectators. The North wall was to fully open using a door not unlike those used in aircraft hangars with the side walls being solid.

¹⁰² Marefat, “Mise au Point for Le Corbusier’s Baghdad Stadium,” 32.

¹⁰³ Baudouï, “To Build a Stadium,” 277.

¹⁰⁴ Baudouï, “To Build a Stadium,” 278.

¹⁰⁵ Marefat, “Mise au Point for Le Corbusier’s Baghdad Stadium,” 30.

¹⁰⁶ Marefat, “Mise au Point for Le Corbusier’s Baghdad Stadium,” 30.

¹⁰⁷ Baudouï, “To Build a Stadium,” 276.

¹⁰⁸ Marefat, “Mise au Point for Le Corbusier’s Baghdad Stadium,” 30.

¹⁰⁹ Le Corbusier, “The Olympic Stadium Baghdad” (31 May 1958), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 163.

¹¹⁰ Sven Sterken, “Travailler chez Le Corbusier: le cas of Iannis Xenakis,” in *Massilia, 2003, Annuaire d’études corbuséennes* (Fundacion Caja de Arquitectos, 2003), 209. Translation by Toby Mackay, from hereon all citations of this article from this translation.

¹¹¹ Sterken, “Travailler chez Le Corbusier,” 209-10.

There was also a swimming pool area that was to accommodate 5,000 people with an amphitheatre structure and an Olympic swimming pool of 50 metres in length, a dive pool, and exercise pool of 19x19 metres each. Le Corbusier introduced the idea for a wave pool with water used from the Tigris River. This was to be used for recreation for the general public. This area also included a restaurant opening out on to an esplanade, which could be accessed by the non-paying public.

Baudouï describes the next couple of years of the project, stating that “most of the year 1959 and also 1960 seem to have been devoted to technical matters, especially to plumbing, water supply and electricity management for the whole complex.”¹¹² The remainder of the project whilst Le Corbusier was alive (to 1965), consists of a series of compromises. 1963 is the year Baudouï suggests the most dramatic changes take place.¹¹³ These changes were the abandonment of the wave pool, abandonment of the stadium’s west cover, abandonment of the gymnasium’s translucent roof cover because of the thermal issues, expensive air-conditioning system, management of fixing cables to bad foundation, maintenance, leaking, climate etc. and the abandonment of the gymnasium’s door.

The project was eventually only partially constructed in 1973.¹¹⁴ Marefat and Pieri’s “The modern landmark in Baghdad in search of its future: Le Corbusier’s Gymnasium” focuses on the current condition of the gymnasium, which was the only built component of the project and was “inaugurated in 1980.”¹¹⁵ Baudouï concludes by stating that this is a “forgotten project” that “seems to be the greatest absence within the architectural history of modernity after the second world war,”¹¹⁶ and that its “ideas fall within a long deliberation about sport, the city and its leisure facilities.”¹¹⁷ It is these ideas which I intend to pursue and establish as being essential elements within the long lineage of sport and politics in Le Corbusier’s career.

¹¹² Baudouï, “To Build a Stadium,” 277.

¹¹³ Baudouï, “To Build a Stadium,” 278.

¹¹⁴ Baudouï, “To Build a Stadium,” 279.

¹¹⁵ Mina Marefat and Caecilia Pieri, “The modern landmark in Baghdad in search of its future: Le Corbusier’s Gymnasium,” *The Middle East in London* 8, no.5 (Jun-July 2012): 17.

¹¹⁶ Baudouï, “To Build a Stadium,” 279.

¹¹⁷ Baudouï, “To Build a Stadium,” 279.

Chapter IV: Sport in the 1920s and 1930s Urban Plans

The Town as an Immense Park: a precursor for sport in the city:

Before the early 1920s when Le Corbusier introduced sport into his urban plans, he laid the foundation for the urban plan to include sport through his concept of the town as a park. His conception of the city as outlined in *Vers une Architecture* was based on the theme of a garden city. In *Vers une Architecture* Le Corbusier cited Tony Garnier's *Cité Industrielle* (1917) as an innovative example of town planning, where "only one half of the area would be occupied by buildings, the other half being for public use and planted with trees: hedges and fences would not be allowed...the town would really be like a great park."¹



Figure 1. Tony Garnier's *Cité Industrielle*. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 55.

What Le Corbusier assessed from Garnier's scheme was that private land ownership would be dissolved, "the public would have complete control of all building sites."² The plan presents itself as a series of maisonettes placed within a vast sea of green space - an open plane with solid volumes interspersed throughout. The concept of the town as a park, and the plan as a vast open plane with minimal area taken up by building footprint would prove to be fundamental when later Le Corbusier would introduce sport into his town plans, the first of which was *Ville Contemporaine* (1922).

¹ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 53. Originally published by John Rodker, London, 1931 from the 13th French edition of *Vers une Architecture*.

² Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 53.

These themes appear in Le Corbusier's own early housing schemes. His *Maison Monol* (1919) eliminates the barrier of fences, implementing the idea of the town as a park. Volumes of houses are placed within greenery and open space. On the *Maison Monol* he wrote,

A well mapped-out scheme, constructed on a mass-production basis, can give a feeling of calm, order and neatness, and inevitably imposes discipline on the inhabitants. America has given us an example by the elimination of hedges and fences, rendered possible only by the modern feeling of respect for other people's property which took its rise over there; such suburbs give a great sense of space; for hedges and fences are removed, light and sunshine reign over all.³

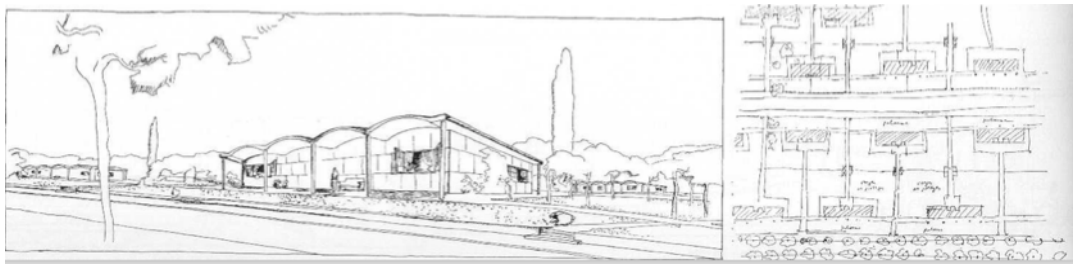


Figure 2. Perspective Drawing of Maison Monol (1919). Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 242-43.

One reason Le Corbusier desired to lay out the housing schemes in this way, with the concept of openness, was to create a hygienic town plan, a response to the unhealthy, cramped conditions Paris was contaminated with, and which he blamed on poor town planning, stating "it is time that we should repudiate the existing lay-out of our towns, in which the congestion of buildings grows greater, interlaced by narrow streets full of noise, petrol fumes and dust; and where on each storey the windows open wide on to this foul confusion."⁴ Naturally, this pursuit of the hygienic town plan, combined with his introduction to the benefits of sport via Dr Pierre Winter, led to Le Corbusier including sports grounds in the vast open spaces in his housing schemes.

Le Corbusier and his fascist neighbour Dr Pierre Winter met in 1920 in his office at Rue d'Astorg. Although Le Corbusier had not been exposed to the benefits of sport, nor had he advocated them, Winter noted Le Corbusier's acknowledgment of the body:

Our first encounter took place in the office of Rue d'Astorg - I brought an article entitled "the new body." Well before the arrival of the youth sports literature, he exalted the joys of the body and gave them in the modern view their true meaning and their true place...and long before Carrel's fine recent book, he demanded a

³ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 242-43.

⁴ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 54 & 57.

certain knowledge of the body, and revealed the necessity of an applied biology, of a Science of Man at the service of the balance of our life daily...⁵

It is well known that Le Corbusier was an athlete himself, an avid swimmer as well as basketball player, but not before he met Pierre Winter. Winter recounts,

I found Le Corbusier in a bad sports condition...He despised his body and thought himself a "galette." He worked day and night...and worked a seven day week...did not mind his sleep...had forgotten his breath...his muscles.⁶

Winter credits himself for sprouting Le Corbusier's interest in sport and as the one who realised Le Corbusier's potential as an athlete, as he stated,

An athlete who was unaware of himself and whom I believe I helped to reveal himself...I had the opportunity to tell him my little stories about the healthy man...Observe, sleep, etc...exercise. He did not follow all my prescriptions...but one evening he arrived at the gym...For 16 years he has never failed to come and we play basketball with passion and blows...two times a week...In the meantime he noticed that he knew how to run...that he liked to run...In recent years, he has perfected his swimming...all alone on long journeys.⁷

These themes would appear throughout Le Corbusier's housing schemes and urban plans – themes on the healthy man, the healthy body.

The concept of an open town plan led Le Corbusier to a new planning concept in 1920 of the "streets with setbacks" (à redents), a concept that would appear in *Ville Contemporaine* (1922), and more prominently later in *Ville Radieuse* (1930). Setting the housing blocks back significantly from the street for the first time created space for sports outside the housing blocks. Le Corbusier described the scheme:

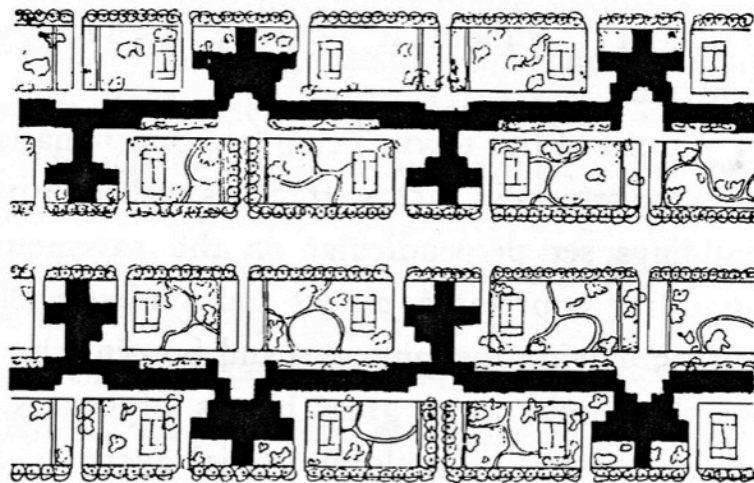
Instead of our towns being laid out in massive quadrangles, with the streets in narrow trenches walled in by seven-storeyed buildings set perpendicular on the pavement and enclosing unhealthy courtyards, airless and sunless wells, our new layout, employing the same area and housing the same number of people, would show great blocks of houses with successive set-backs, stretching along arterial avenues. No more courtyards, but flats opening on every side to air and light, and looking, not on the puny trees of our boulevards of to-day, but upon green sward, sports grounds and abundant plantations of trees.⁸

⁵ Dr Pierre Winter, "Le Corbusier, Biologiste, Sociologue," in *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 14.

⁶ Winter, "Le Corbusier, Biologiste, Sociologue," 14.

⁷ Winter, "Le Corbusier, Biologiste, Sociologue " 14.

⁸ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 61 & 63.



LE CORBUSIER, 1920. STREETS WITH SET-BACKS

Figure 3. Streets with Set-backs. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 62.

By 1922 almost all of Le Corbusier's housing schemes included space dedicated to sport. One example was the *Freehold Maisonettes* which was a rent-buy housing scheme where "each maisonette has its own gymnasium and sports room, but on the roof there is a communal hall for sports and a 300 yards track...there is the great covered court, on the roof of the underground garages, for tennis."⁹

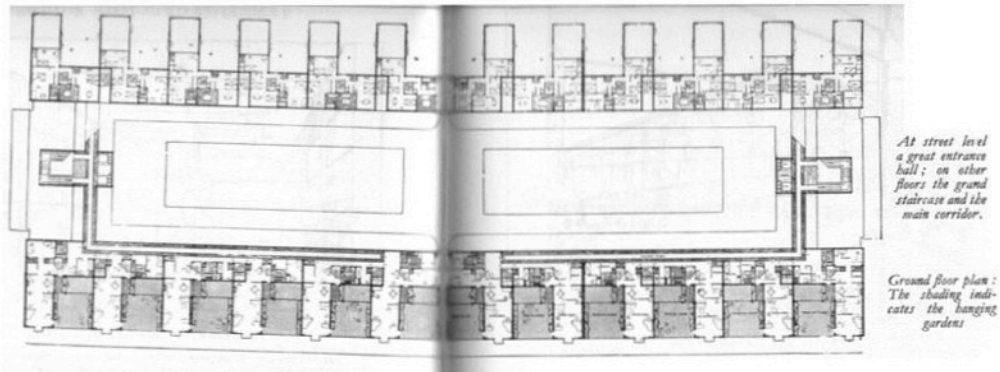


Figure 4. Plan for the Freehold Maisonettes. Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover Publications, 1986), 246-47.

Ville Contemporaine, 1922:

In Le Corbusier's first major urban plan, *Ville Contemporaine*, or the *Contemporary City for 3 Million Inhabitants*, sports grounds appear throughout the residential districts. In this plan he continued to include the *streets with set-backs* concept, but also included another housing scheme referred to as *the housing blocks on the cellular principle*. The *housing blocks with setbacks* was applied to the "luxury" housing quarter and the *housing blocks on the cellular principle* was reserved for the working class residential district. They both featured sports grounds prominently.

⁹ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 249.

The *dwelling with set-backs* residential quarters would consist of rectangular lots 400x600 yards in area, with only 15% of area dedicated to built form, leaving 85% area as open space.¹⁰ This 85% open space would consist of gardens and sports grounds.¹¹ The luxury housing quarter with set-backs would "permit of vast architectural perspectives. There are gardens, games and sports grounds."¹² The *housing blocks on the cellular principle*, also referred to as the *honeycomb system*, consisted of blocks 400x200 yards in area. Open space in these blocks only amounted to 48%, however the rooftops were utilised, containing solariums and running tracks.¹³ On the *housing blocks on the cellular principle* Le Corbusier wrote,

Now it ought to be possible to indulge in games and sports generally at any time on any day right at one's door, not in "sports grounds," which are really only suitable for professionals or people of leisure...Around the blocks of flats or maisonettes large playgrounds for football, tennis, etc., to the tune of 150 square yards per house. The logical study of the cell and its functions in relation to the mass may furnish a solution rich in results.¹⁴

He noted how the "sports grounds" were suited only to the professional and not for the everyday user, hence why he included sporting amenities in the housing blocks. In his concern with sports for the everyday citizen he in turn revealed somewhat of a disdain for the stadium-type sports ground, even though he dedicated some portion of the urban plan to this kind of sports ground, it is located on the periphery of the plan, in the garden city. His thoughts on the stadium-type sports ground were revealed when he writes,

Exhibition sport has nothing to do with real sport; it is more allied to the theatre, the circus etc. The stadium provides a spectacle where other people's marvellously developed biceps and calves can be seen. *Sport at the very door of one's house is needed*, so that everyone – men, women and children – on reaching home, can change their things and come down for play and exercise, to fill their lungs and relax and strengthen their muscles. But if it means taking a tram...travelling miles...sport becomes impossible under such conditions. The sports ground must be at the door of the house. To bring about this Utopia the city must be built vertically.¹⁵

¹⁰ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover, 1987), 228-29. Originally published by Payson & Clarke Ltd, New York, 1929 from the 8th French edition of *Urbanisme*.

¹¹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 172.

¹² Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 177.

¹³ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 222-23.

¹⁴ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 250-251.

¹⁵ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 202.

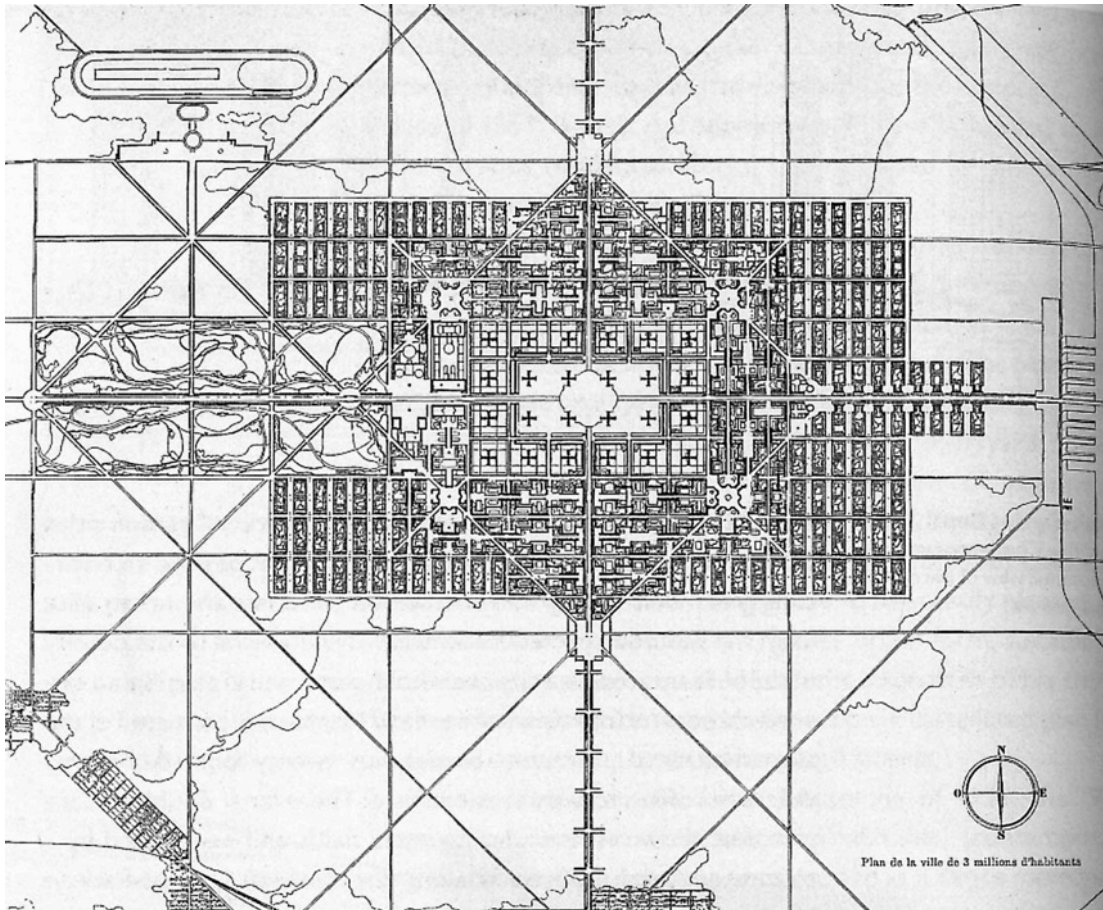


Figure 5. *Ville Contemporaine*. Housing with set-backs located in the inner region. Houses on the honeycomb principle in the outer regions. Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover, 1987), 176-77. Originally published by Payson & Clarke Ltd, New York, 1929 from the 8th French edition of *Urbanisme*.

This sporting “Utopia” he described was a continuation of earlier principles in his housing schemes, that of the city as a park, providing open space for health and hygiene. In fact increasing parks and open spaces was one of four fundamental principles of *Ville Contemporaine* outlined by Le Corbusier.¹⁶ Again, he was concerned with hygiene and curing Paris of its sickness, its poor, unhealthy conditions. He attributed the sickness, and invariably the cure, to town planning, stating “hygiene and moral health depend on the layout of cities. Without hygiene and moral health, the social cell becomes atrophied. A country’s worth can be measured by the vigour of its inhabitants.”¹⁷ A nation of “vigorous inhabitants” could be achieved through physical exercise, hence his emphasis on sports grounds and their daily use. Le Corbusier attributed this demoralized and unhealthy Paris to high density and cramped conditions, which is why he proposed to decrease density and increase open space to allow room for sport and physical activity. He complained that there was “a lack of decent

¹⁶ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 170, and Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1910-1929*, ed. Willy Boesiger and Oscar Stonorov, (Zurich: Les Éditions d’Architecture, 1948), 38.

¹⁷ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 84.

amenities for sport, recreation and relaxation.”¹⁸ His solution: “Increase the area of green and open spaces; this is the only way to ensure the necessary degree of health and peace to enable men to meet the anxieties of work occasioned by the new speed at which business is carried on.”¹⁹ Like he had earlier conceived of the town as a park, so too was *Ville Contemporaine*, as he stated, “the town would, in fact, be one immense park...there would be parks for sport and pleasure contiguous to the dwellings...”²⁰

Sport was intertwined with the notion of the “industrial producer” as sport in *Ville Contemporaine* was integral to its functioning as an industrial city. The time at which sport was to take place was reliant upon the eight hour working day. It revolved around industry and the worker’s timetable.

The eight-hour day. Then the eight hours of recreation. Here is the problem which the town planner must provide for. The possibility of engaging in sport should be open to *every inhabitant of the city. And it should take place at the very door of his dwelling.* This is the programme of the garden city.²¹

Sport was a tool to create the producer-inhabitant, it was to serve as a method of recovery after work, and Le Corbusier demanded so, stating “modern life requires the recovery of nervous energy; you have to do sport.”²² He described the producer-inhabitant as such:

The inhabitant comes back from his factory or office, and with the renewed strength given him by his games, sets to work on his garden...this new type of housing scheme turns the inhabitant of the garden city into an agricultural labourer and *he becomes a producer.*²³

There would be no break for the worker as every activity, including sport, under the guise of leisure, was to assist in creating more efficient producers. The use of sport in *Ville Contemporaine* was part of the overarching industrial rationalist models in which *Ville Contemporaine* was conceived, such as Taylorism, the American scientific management model of labour discipline and efficiency, and incentive systems.²⁴ Mary McLeod has written extensively on Le Corbusier’s affinity for Taylorism, and she states,

Like many European professionals, Le Corbusier saw Taylorism as a means of breaking with pre-war society, a key to social renewal...the *Ville Contemporaine*

¹⁸ William Curtis, *Ideas and Forms*, (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1986), 65.

¹⁹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 100.

²⁰ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 102.

²¹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 199.

²² Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1910-1929*, 76.

²³ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow, and its Planning* 206.

²⁴ Mary C McLeod, “Urbanism and Utopia: Le Corbusier from Regional Syndicalism to Vichy Volumes I and II” (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1985), 40.

and the Plan Voisin, premised upon speed, efficiency, and economy, were architectural visions of the American industrial utopia made manifest.²⁵

Even so-called leisure, the practice of sport throughout the city was a tool within a system of speed, efficiency, and economy, providing the worker with renewed strength as an incentive to continue to work productively, and to “become a producer.” The efficiency of *Ville Contemporaine* was designed right down to the detail of how the inhabitant spent their leisure time.

Plan Voisin, 1925: a centre for business and an hygienic city:

The *Plan Voisin* was named so because it was financed by the Avions Voisin car company after Le Corbusier proposed to the heads of Peugeot, Citroën, and Voisin, stating, “the motor has killed the great city. The motor must save the great city. Will you endow Paris with a Peugeot, Citroën or Voisin scheme of rebuilding...?”²⁶ Peugeot and Citroën both declined Le Corbusier’s proposal, but M. Mongermon from Voisin agreed to finance the architect’s research into the replanning and rebuilding of the centre of Paris.

The *Voisin* scheme differed from the *Ville Contemporaine* in that it was concentrated to the Centre of Paris, proposing real locations for rebuilding. It was a synthesis of ideas from *Ville Contemporaine* applied to Paris. Both plans were placed side by side at the *Pavillon L’Esprit Nouveau* in 1925²⁷ and conceptually *Plan Voisin* borrows heavily from *Ville Contemporaine*. In his book *Urbanisme*, the *Voisin* scheme comes under the chapter entitled “Concrete Case: the Centre of Paris”²⁸ giving the impression that this is an example of how the conceptual ideas from *Ville Contemporaine* could be applied to a real location. The new plan for the centre of Paris was proposed with two main zones with one functioning as the commercial city and the other the residential city. Le Corbusier outlined the specific locations of each zone. The commercial city would occupy “from the Place de la Republique to the Rue du Louvre, and from the Gare de l’Est to the Rue de Rivoli.”²⁹ These regions he described as “antiquated and unhealthy.”³⁰ The residential city would “extend from the Rue des Pyramides to the circus on the Champs Élysées, and from the Gare Saint-Lazare to the Rue de Rivoli, and would involve the destruction of areas which for the most part are overcrowded, and covered with middle-class houses now used as offices.”³¹

²⁵ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 40.

²⁶ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 277.

²⁷ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1910-1929*, 108.

²⁸ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 249.

²⁹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 277-78.

³⁰ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 277.

³¹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 278.

The underlying concept of the *Plan Voisin* was the same as *Ville Contemporaine*: build vertically to create vast open space on the ground plane. 95% of *Plan Voisin* was to be open space, and the city was conceived of as one large garden:

The remaining 95 per cent is devoted to the main speedways, car parks and open spaces. The avenues of trees are doubled and quadrupled, and the parks at the foot of the skyscrapers do, in fact, make the city itself one vast garden.³²

This was a departure from the narrow street, which Le Corbusier thought of as the scourge of Paris, likening it to Dante's *Inferno*.³³ He saw the wide open space of *Plan Voisin* as engendering "the spirit of initiative."³⁴ The spirit of initiative must have been a priority considering this plan was rooted in business and industry, funded by a car manufacturer, and proposed by Le Corbusier as the "Business General Headquarters" of France.³⁵ The business centre consisting of 18 cruciform skyscrapers would house up to 700,000 workers, or as Le Corbusier describes them as "the army engaged in the direction of business."³⁶ There are two main themes in the *Plan Voisin*, that of business/industry, and that of hygiene. Le Corbusier states, "this plan makes a frontal attack on the most diseased quarters of the city, and the narrowest streets..."³⁷ The *Plan Voisin* would demolish slums, "purifying old neighbourhoods."³⁸

This notion of the hygienic town plan holds with it a sinister background. Pierre Winter, the man who introduced Le Corbusier to the benefits of sport, also introduced Le Corbusier to one of the earliest French fascist groups, formed in 1925, *Le Faisceau des Combattants et Producteurs*.³⁹ Winter cited Le Corbusier's book *Urbanisme* in an article devoted to the hygienic elements of fascist town planning in the fascist journal *Nouveau siècle*.⁴⁰ Winter's relationship with Le Corbusier and sport was coupled with biology, science, and hygiene. Winter groups all these fields together, referring to Le Corbusier not only as an athlete and of course architect, but also as a *Biologiste* and *Sociologue*.⁴¹ Winter writes,

What Le Corbusier wrote in "Vers une Architecture" was true in many other areas of biology, science and sport that were familiar to me...Towards an Architecture...towards a new equipment of life...towards a new health...

³² Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 281.

³³ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 284.

³⁴ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1910-1929*, 118.

³⁵ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 283.

³⁶ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 286.

³⁷ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 280.

³⁸ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1910-1929*, 111.

³⁹ Mark Antliff describes Winter as Le Corbusier's "Faisceau Convert" in Mark Antliff, "La Cite Francaise: Georges Valois, Le Corbusier, and Fascist Theories of Urbanism," in *Avante-Garde Fascism*, edited by Mark Antliff, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 114.

⁴⁰ Antliff, "La Cite Francaise," 114.

⁴¹ Winter, "Le Corbusier, Biologiste, Sociologue," 14.

towards a new medicine for healthy people...towards a new social status...
freeing the man of today -

This is how we came to Le Corbusier in Sport...in Biology...and soon to social
problems...in the course of exchanges, discussions, collaborations which have
not ceased since...⁴²

For art historian Mark Antliff, this obsession of Winter's and Le Corbusier's about hygienic town
planning was not only about the city and its physical health, but Antliff also describes the hygienic
replanning of Paris in *Plan Voisin* through the lens of racism and purification:

Pierre Winter cited Le Corbusier's statements concerning the hygienic problems
arising from urban congestion, which reveal further racist views by evoking a
"zone of odors, [a] terrible and suffocating zone comparable to a field of gypsies
crammed in their caravans amid disorder and improvisation." The section quoted,
taken from a chapter of *Urbanisme* titled "The Great City:" was related to a larger
thesis concerning humankind's progress from nomadism, exemplified by the
"disorder" of gypsy encampments, to the creation of order in the form of sedentary
rural and urban development...Here as well as elsewhere in his book Le Corbusier
cast himself in the role of a doctor who would "cure" the ills created by urban
congestion through the "radical surgery" of his *Plan Voisin*.⁴³

Antliff continues:

Winter approved of the metaphor, which resonated well with the fascists'
palingenetic aim to resuscitate an ailing France through the institutional and social
changes prescribed by the *Faisceau*...By drawing attention to Le Corbusier's
language of social hygiene Winter emphasized that aspect of the Architect's
program most conducive to the metaphorical vocabulary of Italian fascism. In that
way he made Le Corbusier's urban designs more palatable to those steeped in a
fascist mentality."⁴⁴

Le Faisceau's founder, George Valois stated "Le Corbusier's conceptions reflect our deepest
thoughts"⁴⁵ and by 1927 Le Corbusier was featured on the front page of the fascist publication
Nouveau siècle, and *Plan Voisin* was the subject of praise in one of its articles.⁴⁶ Aside from hygiene,
the other aspect of Le Corbusier's town planning from *Plan Voisin* that intrigued *le Faisceau* was the
emphasis on corporatism and production. For Georges Valois, it was the industrial rationalist model
of Taylorism imbued originally in *Ville Contemporaine* and subsequently in the business centre of

⁴² Winter, "Le Corbusier, Biologiste, Sociologue", 14

⁴³ Antliff, "La Cite Francaise," 144-45

⁴⁴ Antliff, "La Cite Francaise," 144-45

⁴⁵ Georges Valois, "La nouvelle étape du fascisme," *Nouveau Siècle* (29 May, 1927).

⁴⁶ Antliff, "La Cite Francaise," 115.

Plan Voisin that interested *le Faisceau* in the first place, with the principles of the productive citizen and the productive city, being most pertinent for Valois, as Mark Antliff states,

To Valois' mind, one had only to look to American industry to see the productivist spirit in action,⁴⁷

Georges Valois, the leader of the French *Faisceau* movement (1925-1928), and Philippe Lamour, founder of the Revolutionary Fascist Party (1928), both wished to incorporate Le Corbusier's architectural plans into their visions of a Fascist corporative order of 'industrial producers...'⁴⁸

The idea of the producer-citizen relies on an open city plan with room for sport where the citizen could be healthy and actively engaged in sport in order to produce. These ideas originally presented in *Ville Contemporaine* under the umbrella of Taylorism and carried through to *Plan Voisin*, subsequently captured the imagination of French Fascism. By 1928 *le Faisceau* had disbanded and Valois had renounced fascism.⁴⁹ Le Corbusier's other associates in *le Faisceau*, namely his close friend Pierre Winter as well as Philippe Lamour introduced Le Corbusier to Syndicalism, a syncretistic political movement of regionalism with origins in the trade unionists. Mary McLeod attributes 1930 as the "first year of Le Corbusier's explicit association with the movement."⁵⁰ It was Syndicalism in which his next major urban plan was conceived.⁵¹

Ville Radieuse, 1930:

In 1930 Le Corbusier proposed his *Ville Radieuse* (the Radiant City), which was first published in the Syndicalist journal *Plans*.⁵² This urban plan was not dissimilar to *Ville Contemporaine* and *Plan Voisin*, in fact Le Corbusier thought of *Ville Radieuse* as a progression of thought from his urban plans *Ville Contemporaine* (1922) and *Plan Voisin* (1925), referring to *Ville Radieuse* as "the logical sequence to my previous researches."⁵³ He also states,

After my research programs in 1922 and 1925, [*Ville Contemporaine* and *Plan Voisin*]⁵⁴ after my books *Urbanisme* (1925) and *Précisions* (1930), I continued my advance through the undergrowth...I discovered truths that seem to me...fundamental...architecture in everything, city planning in everything. My

⁴⁷ Antliff, "La Cite Francaise," 139.

⁴⁸ Mark Antliff, "Fascism, Modernism, and Modernity," *The Art Bulletin* 84, no.1 (March 2002): 152, accessed May 6, 2013. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3177257>.

⁴⁹ McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 102.

⁵⁰ Mary C McLeod, "Le Corbusier and Algiers," *Oppositions* 19, no.20 (1980): 56.

⁵¹ There is currently debate as to whether Syndicalism was indeed fascist. I outline this debate in the Literature Review of this thesis.

⁵² McLeod, "Urbanism and Utopia," 213.

⁵³ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, trans. Pamela Knight, Eleanor Levieux, Derek Coltman, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1964), 91. Originally published in France under the title *La Ville Radieuse*, 1933.

⁵⁴ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 91. See footnotes 1 & 2 of this page.

*Reply to Moscow*⁵⁵ became the logical sequel to my previous researches. Its publication... was a continuation of my efforts towards a manifestation of the new spirit of our age.⁵⁶

Ville Radieuse began simply as a response to a questionnaire sent to Le Corbusier from who he referred to as “the powers that be in Moscow”⁵⁷ requesting he provide them with “solutions for the future of the Russian capital.”⁵⁸ His response was distributed to planning experts in Russia by the planning director for the expansion of Moscow, Sergei M. Gorny.⁵⁹ Along with his response to the questionnaire, Le Corbusier produced numerous sketch plans that then became *Ville Radieuse*, as he writes, “one fine day, the title *Reply to Moscow* was submerged by something larger and deeper. It became a question of humanity as a whole. And then I chose the new title: *The Radiant City*.”⁶⁰

In *Ville Radieuse* Le Corbusier was still concerned with the machine age, with technology, with production, however this plan did not have the optimistic tone of *Vers une Architecture* and *Urbanisme* with regards to the machine age. *Ville Radieuse* was a response to the pressures of the machine age and the impact it was having on man’s body and spirit, part of the Syndicalist concern for the renewal of man, his spirit, and his body. Le Corbusier was not happy with what the machine age had become, particularly in its disconnect with man and his body, its departure from biology:

It is at this point that a means must be found to enable contemporary society to haul itself up out of the hell or the purgatory of the first machine age... modern man will be able to “live” at last, by which I mean to salvage his body... Body, family, studies, meditation, collective activities, all these are vast functions requiring buildings and sites: architecture and city planning.⁶¹

He did not want to abandon the machine age entirely, but instead redirect its course, claiming “we must measure afresh the consequences of being bodies; it is a task that all those who really desire to make the true destiny of the machine age a reality must face as a matter of personal experience.”⁶²

Le Corbusier was also dissatisfied with how the machine age had unfolded into a morass of free market capitalism and overproduction of “useless” goods. His lament was that products not concerned with happiness and wellbeing were being flooded on to the market and consumed without thought or

⁵⁵ This was the previous title to *Ville Radieuse*.

⁵⁶ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 91.

⁵⁷ Mary C McLeod states “the Moscow Soviet” sent Le Corbusier the questionnaire, and that it was distributed to various planning experts by “Sergei M. Gorny, the director of planning for Moscow’s expansion.” McLeod, “Urbanism and Utopia,” 225.

⁵⁸ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 90.

⁵⁹ McLeod, “Urbanism and Utopia,” 225.

⁶⁰ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 90 & 91.

⁶¹ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 65.

⁶² Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 93.

need, creating a market of free competition, which Le Corbusier refers to as a form of slavery, and on all this he blames the machine.⁶³ Free competition, or laissez-faire capitalism, was not free at all for Le Corbusier and his response to emancipate us from this slavery, seemingly counter-intuitive, was to create a program, “a program for *the production of useful consumer goods*.”⁶⁴ This would be an economy based on demand rather than supply. It is clear that he was still concerned with production, but a more rigorous form of production based on a program, not on supply, but on demand.

Furthermore in response to this concern for overproduction Le Corbusier wanted to free the worker by reducing working hours. He ponders if the world could possibly consume more by stating “Crisis! What is the solution? To produce less. To see that the machine liberates the individual worker with the work it performs instead of subjugating him to further slavery! Fewer working hours: 6 hours a day; perhaps only 5.”⁶⁵ This would, as Le Corbusier recognizes, lead to a complete reorganization of society inevitably through architecture and urban planning. He states, “the problem is to design a city...in which the average working day is only 5 hours. We have to organize a whole new way of life. And that is a problem we have to look into closely.”⁶⁶ To bring about this new way of life, he proposes the “replanning of private property” and to do this, “the necessary authority must be created.”⁶⁷ This authority is not necessarily a governing body, or even a governing figure. The authority, or the despot as he calls it, is *the plan*:

“What we need, Sir, is a despot!”

Do you too yearn for a king or a tribune? Weakness, abdication and illusion.

The despot a man? Never. *But a fact*, yes...

The human idol you are yearning after could not stem this tide. Only a *fact* can do it. A PLAN. A suitable, long-pondered plan firmly founded on the realities of the age, created with passion and imagination a work of human divination: man is a being capable of organization...

I shall tell you who the despot is you are waiting for.

The despot is not a man. The despot is the *Plan*...

Architecture and City planning! We must equip the machine age! We must use the results of modern technical triumphs to set man free.⁶⁸

Le Corbusier wished to set man free through architecture and city planning ironically using a despotic figure: the plan. The five-hour working day would lead to unprecedented free time for the average citizen, and of course, Le Corbusier wished to use this time productively for health, stating “since we

⁶³ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 68.

⁶⁴ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 69.

⁶⁵ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 112.

⁶⁶ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 112.

⁶⁷ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 112 & 113.

⁶⁸ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 153-55.

shall only work 5 or 7 hours a day, we shall have time on our hands: let us use that time to create everything we need for our physical and moral health.”⁶⁹ Le Corbusier wanted to fill the “machine age man’s” day, dictated by the sun, the 24 hour day:

What are the true functions of the machine-age man? What if I can manage to fill my modern man’s 24-hour day completely; what if, moreover, I can manage to make his life comfortable what if, better yet, I can contrive to make him a gift of personal liberty within the collective organization, restore that liberty to him, amplify it, extend the areas of its effectiveness, and give him the opportunity to indulge in the activities that this increased liberty will give rise to? Once more, as always, the city planner must place the figure of a man before him, consider that man and talk to him.⁷⁰

These activities, these functions to fill “the machine-age man’s” day are interlocked with the question of leisure time, the increased leisure time, and Le Corbusier is sure that the inhabitant is not to be stagnant, but to prioritise his physical health. He describes it as a need for a rebirth of the body: “what to do with LEISURE in the machine age; leisure could turn out to be the menace of modern times...The basic pleasures: satisfaction of psycho-physiological needs, collective participation and the freedom of the individual. The rebirth of the human body.”⁷¹ The tone of Le Corbusier’s language continues to be authoritative, viewing his urban plan as a dictator, planning out the lives and activities of its inhabitants: “I place my man in a new environment: he is strong, smiling, healthy. Illness suffers a crushing defeat.”⁷²

The plan responds to this need for the health of the body by being open, a theme that appears throughout his town planning since, and even before *Ville Contemporaine*. In fact Le Corbusier describes how the open space of *Ville Contemporaine* has been developed further and finessed in *Ville Radieuse*. In *Ville Contemporaine* he admits he was worried that the vast amounts of open space would create “dead spaces,” stating, “I was afraid that they would prove full only of boredom, and that the inhabitants of such a city would be seized by panic at the sight of so much emptiness.”⁷³ His answer after “eight years of worrying” was to “fill my modern man’s 24-hour day completely.”⁷⁴ The urban plan was also planning the schedule of the whole 24hr day of its inhabitants. This despotic plan would be inescapable and provide little freedom of Will for its inhabitants.

⁶⁹ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 118.

⁷⁰ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 106.

⁷¹ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 7.

⁷² Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 43.

⁷³ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 106.

⁷⁴ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 106.

Ville Radieuse was labelled by Le Corbusier as the pedestrian city. There would be 111% utilised floor area because of pilotis and roof tops. A theme proposed by Le Corbusier throughout all his plans was that the city is one immense park and sport is one of the key activities that functions as a tool to renew the human body, to fill the leisure time and fill the day of the “machine-age man.” In fact sport was influential in his conception of *Ville Radieuse*, claiming that the necessity of sports grounds outside the houses led him to “arrive at the idea of cities of the ‘Radiant City’ type:”

Having reached a clear awareness of these things, there came a day when I expressed my conclusions in the following formula: *sport should be a daily matter and IT SHOULD TAKE PLACE DIRECTLY OUTSIDE THE HOUSES...*A few years later, after many studies based on these very necessities, I arrived at the idea of cities of the “Radiant City” type. The sportsgrounds were directly outside the houses.⁷⁵

The Radiant City was a pedestrian city, and a pedestrian city was a sporting city:

*We have allotted the ENTIRE GROUND SURFACE of the city to the pedestrian. The earth itself will be occupied by lawns, trees, sports and playgrounds. Almost 100 per cent of the ground surface will be used by the inhabitants of the city. And since our apartment houses are all up in the air, raised on pilotis, it will be possible to walk across the city in any direction... Thus parks and sports grounds, the entertainment areas, etc, are all around the houses. And under the houses, there will be covered playgrounds. The houses will cover 11.4 per cent of the surface of the residential areas. That leaves 88.6 per cent open to the sky. In this way, one of our aims has been attained: SPORTING ACTIVITIES WILL TAKE PLACE DIRECTLY OUTSIDE THE HOUSES. No more courtyards, ever again. Instead, an open view from every window (though there wont be any windows, of course, only walls of glass).*⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 65.

⁷⁶ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 108.

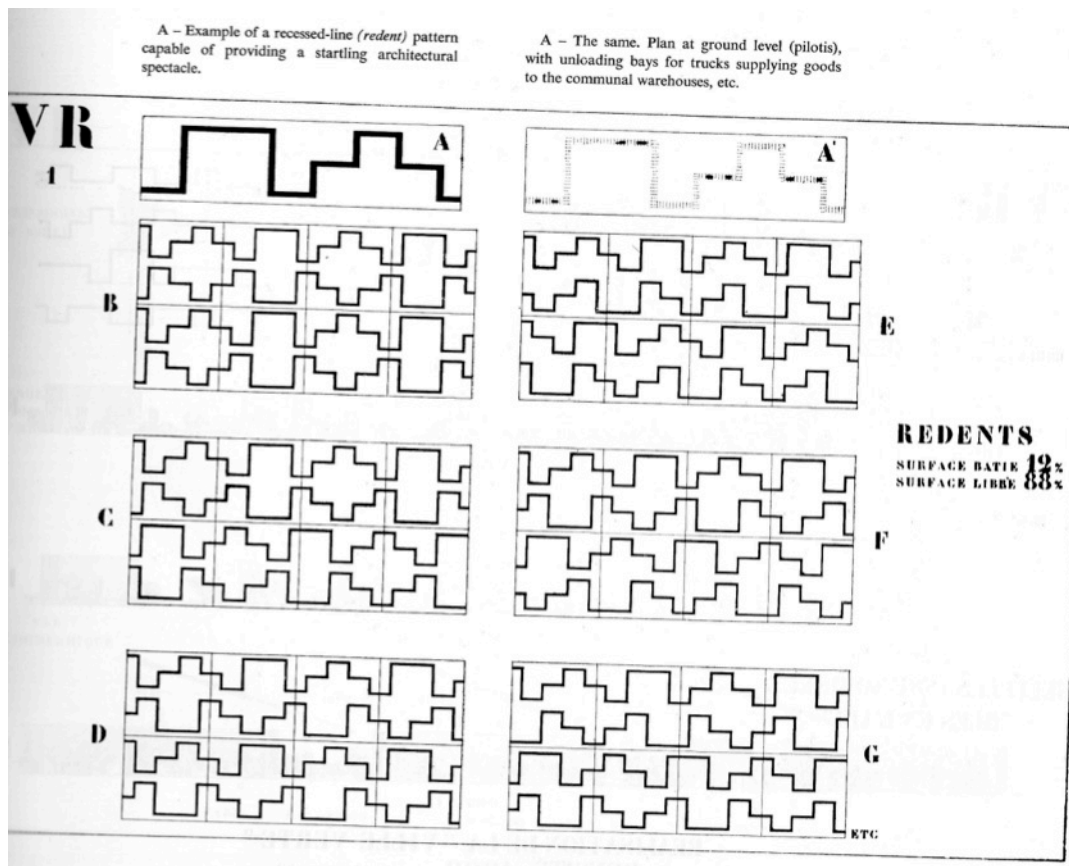


Figure 6. The city pattern of Ville Radieuse. - Housing with large set-backs. Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, trans. Pamela Knight, Eleanor Levieux, Derek Coltman, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1964), 157.

For Le Corbusier architecture and planning were the answers, the plan is the despot and authority. The architecture responds to the necessities he outlines to renew the body and its basic pleasures:

“satisfaction of psycho-physiological needs, collective participation and the freedom of the individual. The rebirth of the human body.”⁷⁷ The urban plan responds to these needs by creating vast amounts of open space. He emphasises the urban plan’s relationship with sports: “In every instance, city planning should respect sports (hygiene, recuperation of nervous energy, etc.) by leaving room for them to be practiced very near the house.”⁷⁸ In the residential zones this was achieved by the *buildings with setbacks* concept, a concept from 1920 that also appeared in the luxury housing quarters in *Ville Contemporaine*, which would “allow space for gardens, games and sports grounds.”⁷⁹

The Architecture responds by implementing the famous pilotis. All buildings in *Ville Radieuse* were to be raised on pilotis, with roof gardens continuous throughout the whole housing scheme, as he states, “moreover, the buildings that cover 11 per cent of the residential areas will all have roof gardens on top of them (solariums, in case of aerial warfare). These roof gardens will be used for

⁷⁷ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 7.

⁷⁸ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 12.

⁷⁹ Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, 177.

walks, for sports training, etc.”⁸⁰ The residential quarters in *Ville Radieuse* were filled with sporting amenities. Le Corbusier describes the sporting functions of the residential units:

the sports grounds will be at the foot of the apartment houses: soccer, basketball, tennis, playgrounds, etc... walks, shady avenues and lawns. Each residential unit of 400 by 400 meters will have a swimming pool from 100 to 150 meters in length. Roof gardens with beaches, pools, sun bathing, hydrotherapy, plants, flowers, tennis courts, games of all sorts, etc...⁸¹

He presents the purpose of so much sport in the city as a means to fill the leisure time of his modern man’s ideal five-hour day. But the purpose of sport to occupy the leisure time was to renew the health and physical body of the inhabitant, which forms the overarching theme of *Ville Radieuse*: “the rebirth of the human body.” Sport was also a tool to rejuvenate the worker so they could be a producer and not fatigue, another idea carried over from *Ville Contemporaine*:

Recuperation of physical and nervous energy: In a word, this means the upkeep of the human machine: cleaning, draining the toxic substances, recuperating nervous energy, maintenance or increase of physical energy. The task thus formulated means that new services must be available indoors: physical culture, etc. ... and outdoors: daily sports activities for everyone, children and grown ups.⁸²

The plan, in all three of his major urban plans, certainly was a despot, not simply allowing room for sport, but also dictating the citizen to participate in sport daily for the upkeep of the nation. The leisure time, as he puts it, was to be disciplined in how it was to be spent, a concept contrary to the very idea of leisure itself. Sport was so important for Le Corbusier in *Ville Contemporaine*, *Plan Voisin*, and *Ville Radieuse*, he described it as “a food as indispensable as bread itself.”⁸³

⁸⁰ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 111.

⁸¹ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 115.

⁸² Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 36.

⁸³ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, 65.

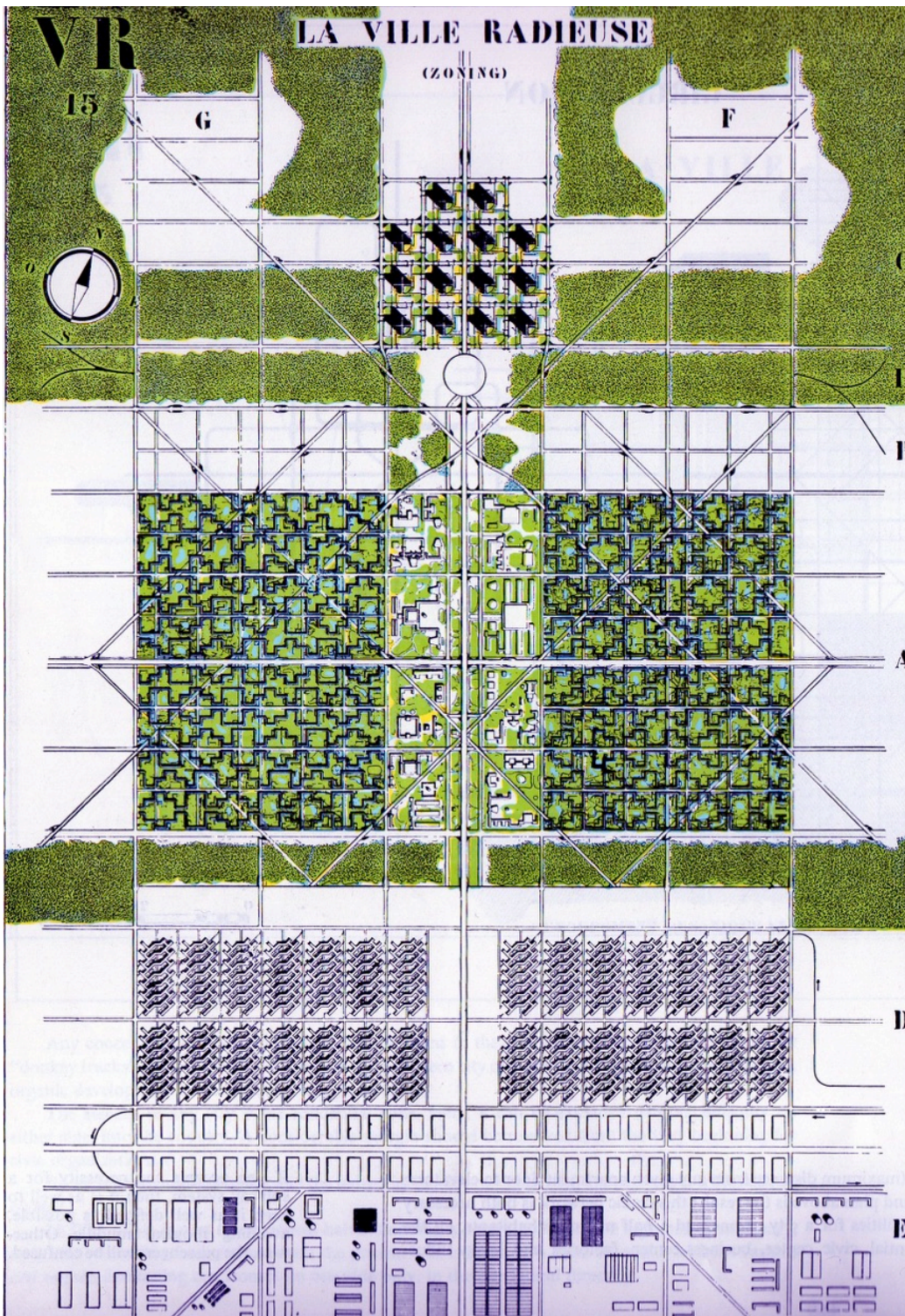


Figure 7. Ville Radieuse. The housing quarters are no longer separated by class. Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, trans. Pamela Knight, Eleanor Levieux, Derek Coltman, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1964), 170.

CHAPTER V: Un Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants 1936

By the mid 1930s sport in Le Corbusier's *œuvre* had shifted from his urban plans where he proposed sports grounds be placed throughout the city for everyday use. In 1936 Le Corbusier proposed a stadium in Paris to hold 100,000 spectators where sport was now contained within the architectural object as a spectacle. On the topic of spectator sport, in *Ville Radieuse* (1933), he had previously written, "where is the sport for the 20,000 spectators? Our aim: sport for everyone. That is the question."¹ And in *Ville Contemporaine* (1922), he had said "exhibition sport has nothing to do with real sport; it is more allied to the theatre, the circus etc. The stadium provides a spectacle where other people's marvellously developed biceps and calves can be seen. *Sport at the very door of one's house is needed.*"² Despite his previous aversions to stadia and the sporting spectacle, by 1936 he saw the opportunity to promote participation in sport by providing a stage for sport to be a spectacle.

The stadium's program and scale were ambitious and despite Le Corbusier's ongoing efforts over the following two years to convince the authorities to undergo such a project, it was never built. It is not clear whether he was commissioned by anyone to design the stadium or whether it was conceived on his own initiative. The latter is more likely as Le Corbusier spent the following two years lobbying to politicians to build his stadium, and at the time, between 1934 and 1936, five other grand stadiums for Paris were submitted to the authorities, all timed to coincide with the lead up to the International Exhibition in 1937, and the football world cup in 1938. They included a 116,000-seat stadium by Robert Mallet-Stevens and Georges-Henri Pingusson, a restoration of the Pershing Stadium by Albert Pouthier, and a 100,000-seat stadium at the Parc des Princes by the vélodrome director Henri Desgrange.³ The debate to build such a stadium for mass gatherings was so that France could "prove its national health and vitality as a great nation" which was the call from the fitness association *Union Nationale pour une France plus Grande* who in 1936 suggested France "desperately needed a 100,000 seat stadium."⁴ This group proposed to the Government that a lottery be used to fund the

¹ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, trans. Pamela Knight, Eleanor Levieux, Derek Coltman, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1964), 106. Originally published in France under the title *La Ville Radieuse*, 1933.

² Le Corbusier, *The City of To-morrow and its Planning*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover, 1987), 202. Originally published by Payson & Clarke Ltd, New York, 1929 from the 8th French edition of *Urbanisme*.

³ Robert W Lewis, *The Stadium Century: Sport, Spectatorship and Mass Society in Modern France*, (Oxford University Press: 2016), 37.

⁴ Robert W Lewis, "From the "Phoenix of Legends" to the "Ultimate Monument" of the Times: Stadia, Spectators, and Urban Development in Postwar Paris," *Journal of Urban History* 38, no.2 (2012): 321, and Lewis, *The Stadium Century*, 37.

project, but the idea was swiftly rejected.⁵ The Popular Front government, largely due to budgetary reasons, rejected all of the five proposals.⁶

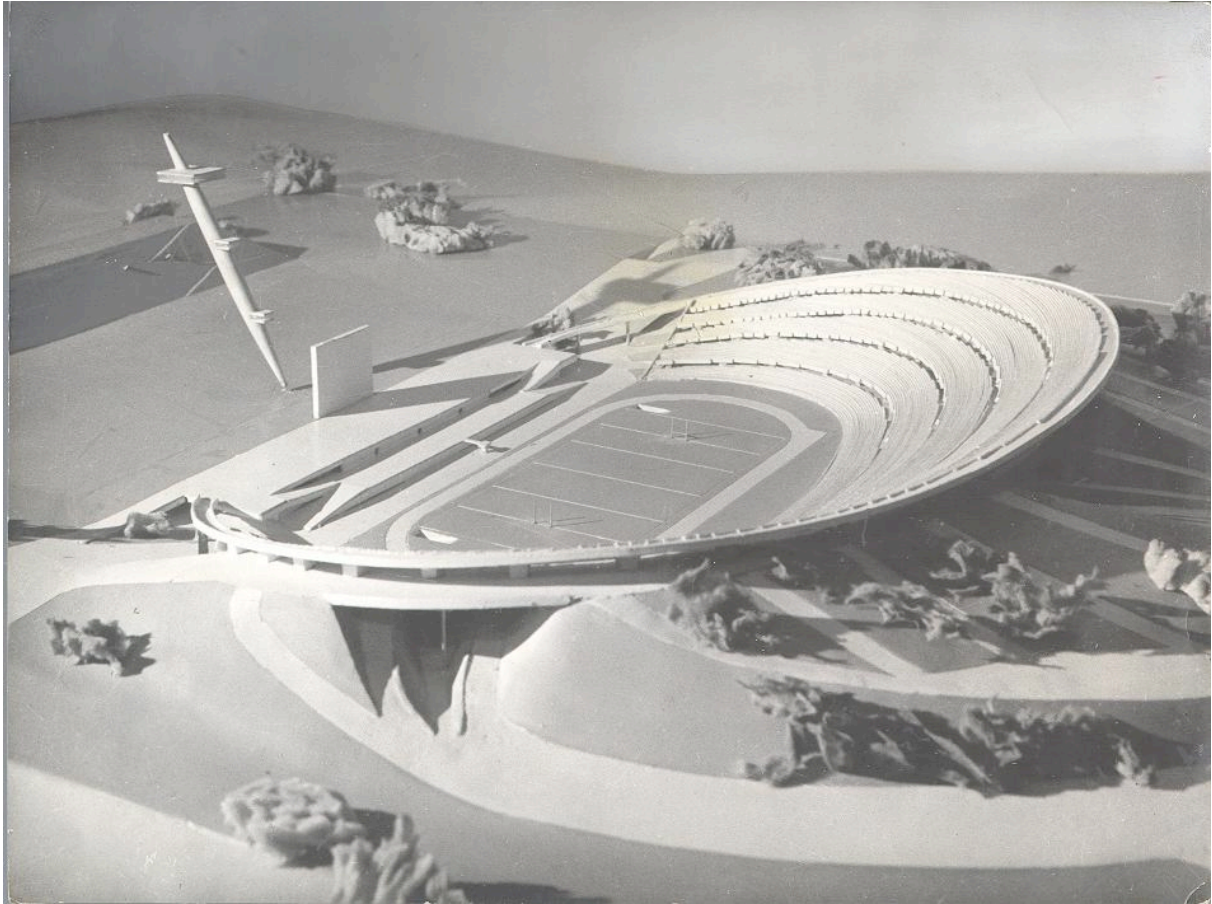


Figure 8. Le Corbusier, Perspective view of model of stadium. Photograph From the FLC Archive L2-14-32-001, 1936.

Le Corbusier's project consisted of an entire sports master plan, including various sports facilities surrounding a large monumental shell-like stadium. The surrounding facilities included tennis courts, a swimming pool, velodrome, restaurants, and gardens.⁷ In his *Œuvre Complète* Le Corbusier showed four locations around Paris for the master plan to be located: Bois de Vincennes in the East, Bois de Boulogne in the West, Gentilly-Cité University in the South, and in Gennevilliers to the North.

⁵ Lewis, *The Stadium Century*, 37.

⁶ Lewis, *The Stadium Century*, 38.

⁷ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 96.

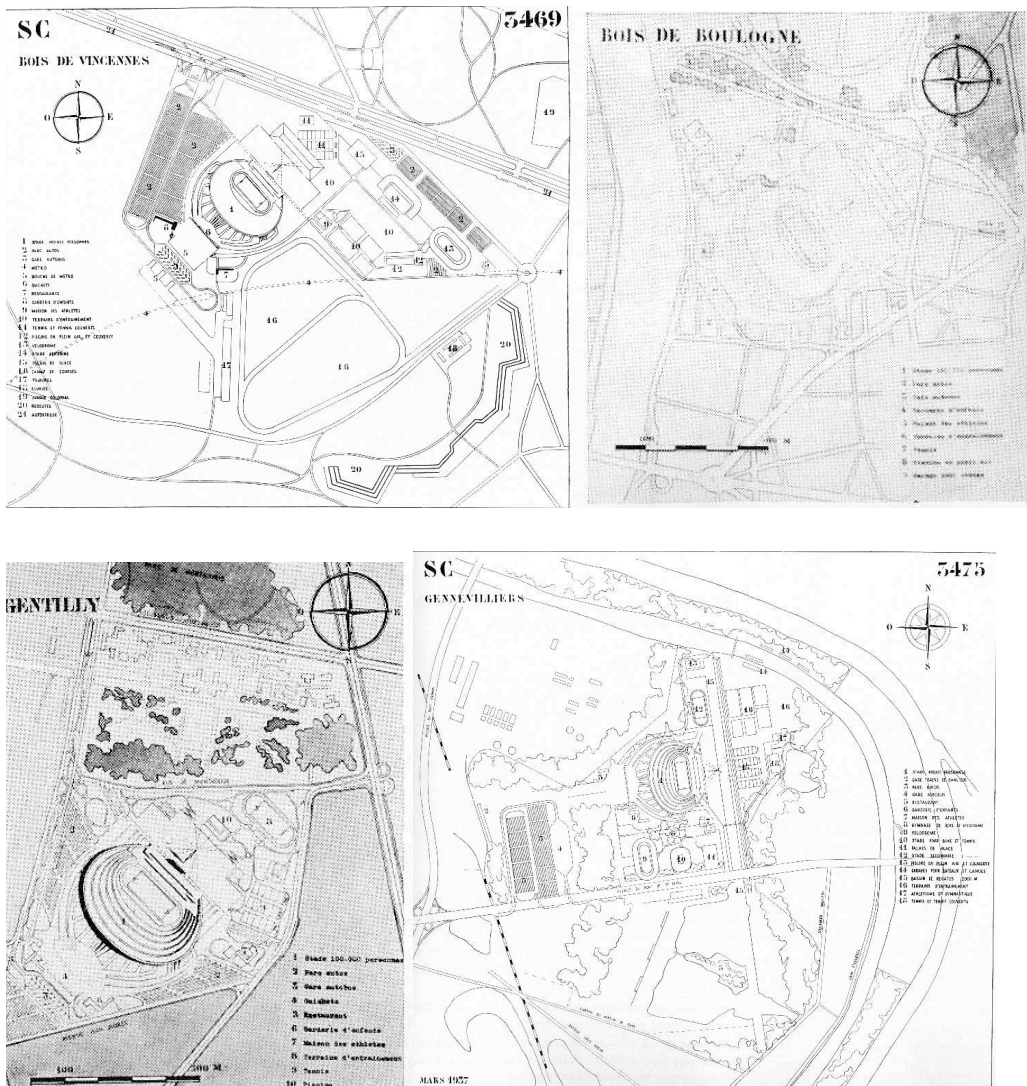


Figure 9. The four locations proposed for the stadium presented in four different master plans. Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 96-97.

The stadium itself was a huge amphitheatre structure set slightly into an embanked landscape, appearing like a shell softly resting against the sand. He described it as having “the appearance of a natural phenomenon. Inside, the purity of a shell.”⁸ At either end of the amphitheatre the stands would be at a height of seventeen metres, gradually sloping up to its highest point of sixty metres in the centre.⁹ All audience members were to be shaded from the sun at all times, therefore Le Corbusier proposed the stadium to include a vast tensile lightweight shade membrane to sit over the amphitheatre, supported by lengthy rods attached to one massive tilted column.

⁸ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, 93.

⁹ Le Corbusier, “Centre de Rejouissance Populaire,” (10 February 1938), FLC Archive, II-19-33-001.

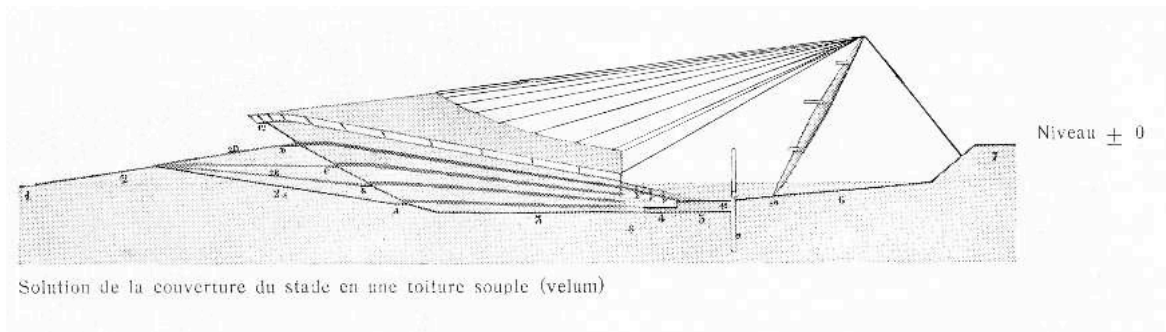


Figure 10. Section through the stadium showing the embankment and large tilted column supporting the tensile roof structure. Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 92.

The stadium, being a national centre for popular festivities, was to be a multi-functional arena not just dedicated to sport. In front of the large tilted column sat a screen for film, there was to be a stage for theatrical performances and an orchestra. The large open playing field could be used for mass displays of physical feats.¹⁰ Access into the stadium consisted of large open boulevards so large marches and parades could move freely into the arena via access ramps to the stage.¹¹ Audience participation was vital for Le Corbusier across all the various events to be held at the stadium from sports games to speeches. He wrote, “there are now many circumstances where a crowd of men must be able to communicate unanimously which can draw on emotion provided by art.”¹² The diagram below depicts brilliantly the nature of the crowd and the level of participation across all the proposed events. He further writes, “such a “Centre” must be national.” The caption reads “these sketches experiment clearly the significant innovation introduced by this entirely new type of “Centre for National Rejoicing” of a multiple use facility for very frequent use: athletics and sports, football and rugby, sports congress/convention, theatre, film and speakers, and major national holidays.”¹³ The last diagram shows the unanimous participation of the crowd and performers for events such as national holidays where the crowd and performers are merged into one unanimous unit.

¹⁰ Le Corbusier, “Centre de Rejouissance Populaire,” (10 February 1938), FLC Archive, II-19-33-001.

¹¹ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, 92.

¹² Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, 94.

¹³ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, 94.

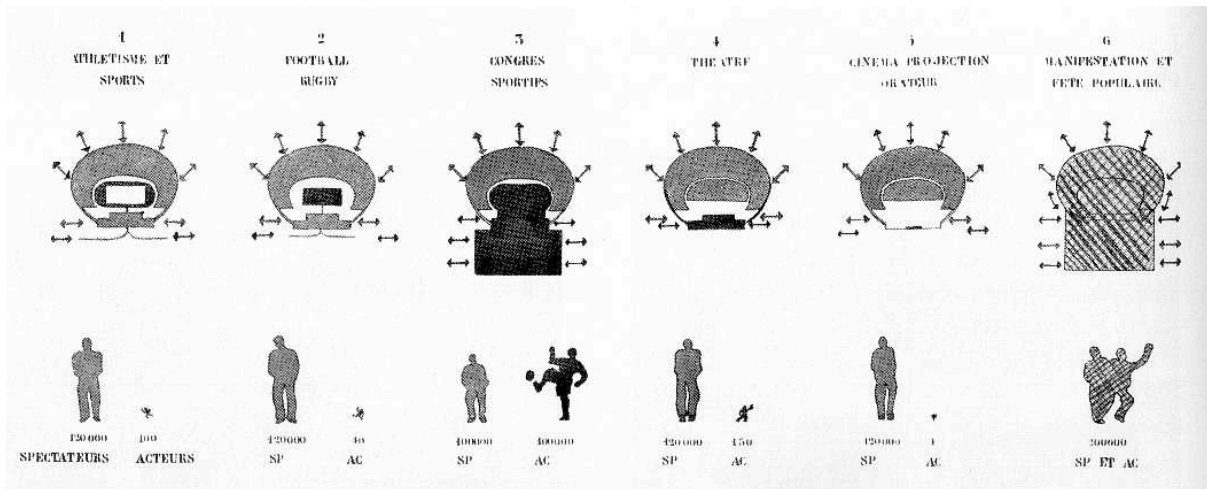


Figure 11. Diagrams showing the different uses of the stadium with the associated crowd participation. Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 94.

1937: The desire to build:

Once he had completed all concept plans and models of the stadium, Le Corbusier's quest for his project to be built began in January of 1937 with a letter to the Minister for Recreation under the Popular Front regime, Léo Lagrange.¹⁴ The Popular Front government appeared to be a suitable administration for realising Le Corbusier's stadium, as they were avid supporters of sport and physical fitness, especially Lagrange, but they were more concerned with participation over spectatorship. Lagrange in particular was the minister who rejected the several other proposals for grand stadiums in Paris during the same two years as Le Corbusier's.¹⁵ Unfortunately for Le Corbusier, Lagrange was against the perceived elitism of spectator sport, and was more concerned with providing sport for all at a local level, instead of a few elite athletes at the professional level. In fact Lagrange was quoted later in 1937 in one of his public speeches as saying his government "would not give a single cent for 50,000 people to watch 22 athletes."¹⁶

Le Corbusier's first letter to the Minister, dated 7 January 1937, briefly states the kinds of program the stadium would contain. It would be an Olympic stadium containing a tribune for orators, a giant cinema, stage for orchestras, a great scene of mass representation, and a large ground plane for general events.¹⁷ Le Corbusier suggests "this program has never been asked for before, and the problem seemed almost impossible."¹⁸ He proposed to keep all 100,000 spectators out of the sun so

¹⁴ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (7 January 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-02-001.

¹⁵ Robert W Lewis, "'A Civic Tool of Modern Times': Politics, Mass Society, and the Stadium in Twentieth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 34, no.1 (Winter 2011), 164, and Lewis, *The Stadium Century*, 37-38.

¹⁶ Lewis, "Phoenix of Legends," 321.

¹⁷ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (7 January 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-02-001.

¹⁸ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (7 January 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-02-001.

that all spectators would be in “exceptional conditions for all mass festivals, day or night.”¹⁹ He also proposed that the stadium’s location could easily lie within one of the urban quarters of Paris, or its outskirts, and requested to meet with the Minister to discuss the project. He suggested it be labelled as a “place for popular festivals” which was a program he noted “will certainly arise before the authorities.”²⁰

With no response ensuing from the Minister Lagrange, Le Corbusier persisted with another letter on the 30th January 1937, stating that all the plans and models were complete for the stadium, and that he hoped the project be taken seriously enough by the government to grant him a meeting with Lagrange. In this letter he added to the program popular theatre and mass demonstrations, alluding to the utility of the stadium as a political tool.²¹ On the 2nd February 1937 Lagrange responded to le Corbusier’s letters, granting him a meeting saying he would be happy to discuss the stadium.²² The two then met on February 8th 1937.²³

It was after this meeting with Lagrange that in March of 1937 Le Corbusier described the stadium to Lagrange in greater detail. At the same time he also wrote to the French Prime Minister, the President of the Council of the Popular Front government Léon Blum. In both letters Le Corbusier expressed his desire to include his stadium in the Universal Exposition 1937, which was to be held in Paris in November later that year.²⁴

After the meeting with Lagrange in March 1937 his next letter to the minister outlined three possible locations for the stadium. The first being Porte Maillot (Bois de Boulogne), which he noted was the popular opinion for a new stadium and said “we remain convinced that, as a result of judicious drilling in the miserable East of Paris, the city could take on an extraordinary splendour on this side.”²⁵ The second location was the Bois de Vincennes. Which he stated, “is an attractive hill, as beautiful as the Bois de Boulogne,” but he said, “that’s indifferent to us.”²⁶ But on the Bois de Vincennes, he asked the question, “has the public been informed whether work will be undertaken imminently to improve the Pershing Stadium?” and whether the upgrade of this stadium could coincide with the “usefulness and irrefutable beauty of a great health and leisure centre?”²⁷ Le Corbusier wished to utilize the plans already in place by the Government to upgrade the Pershing

¹⁹ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (7 January 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-02-001.

²⁰ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (7 January 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-02-001.

²¹ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (30 January 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-03-001.

²² Léo Lagrange to Le Corbusier (2 February 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-04-001.

²³ Madame Jeanneret-Perret to Le Corbusier (4 February 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-05-001, and Le Corbusier’s Secretary to Léo Lagrange (4 February 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-06-001.

²⁴ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (6 March 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-07-001-002, and Le Corbusier to le Président du Conseil (6 March 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-21-001-002.

²⁵ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (6 March 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-07-001-002.

²⁶ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (6 March 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-07-001-002.

²⁷ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (6 March 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-07-001-002.

stadium to include his own stadium. He said “that is the reason why we established the SC plan 3469 [pictured] in the field Vincennes,” so “100, 000 people could respond to a national program.”²⁸ The third location was on the banks of the Seine in the town of Boulogne sur Seine. But Lagrange told Le Corbusier this project was not about his Ministry. Nonetheless Le Corbusier pushed him to mention it to the *President du Conseil*:

We know very well (you have told us) that such a popular centre for festivities does not concern your ministry, but that's because of the amenities you envisaged with respect to the Stade Pershing however we submit the question. As you can see from the letter to the President of the Council, he is aware of the research we have done on this issue. We have asked you, from time to time, to communicate to the President what you think of such a conception, and we believe that the President, on your advice, will instruct one of his departments to study the matter.²⁹

²⁸ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (6 March 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-07-001-002.

²⁹ Le Corbusier to Léo Lagrange (6 March 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-07-001-002.

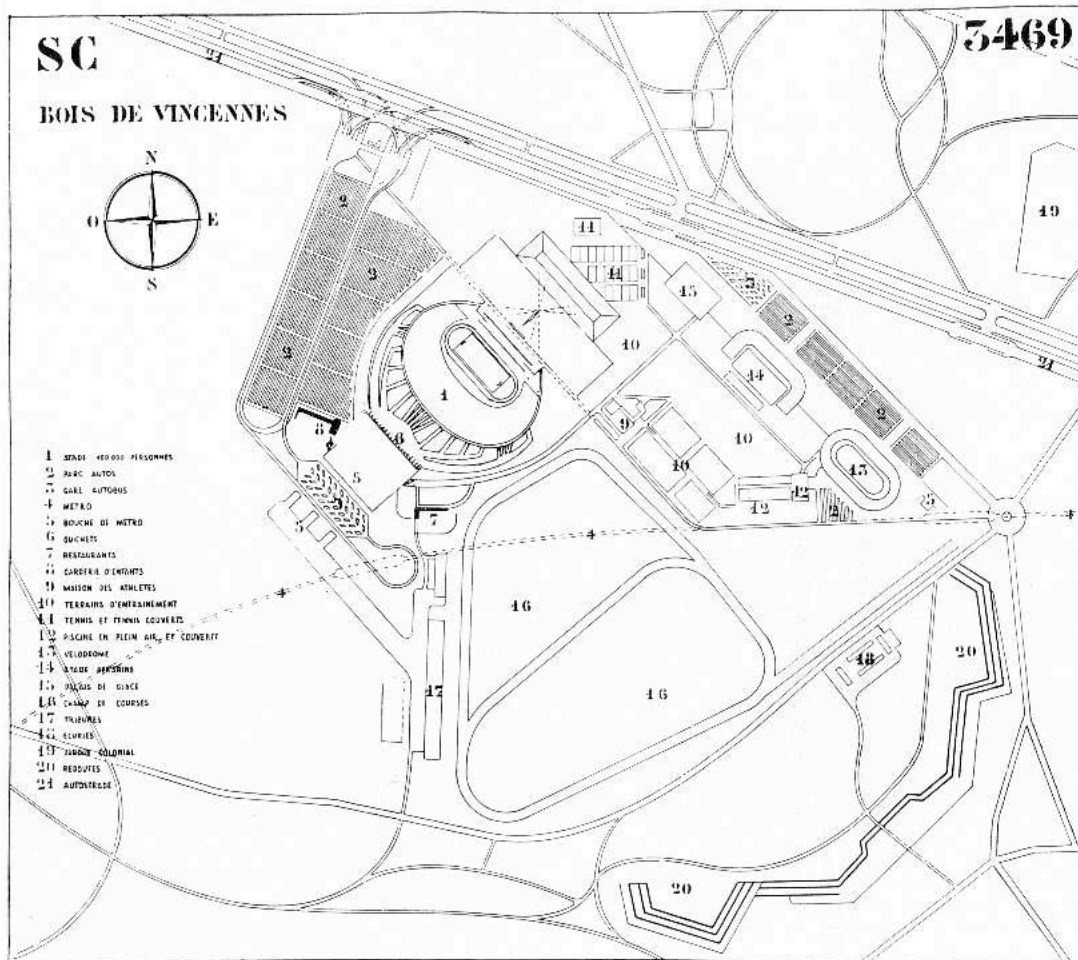


Figure 12. Site Plan for the Stadium Complex at Bois de Vincennes. Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 96-97.

In his Letter to the Prime Minister, Leon Blum, le Corbusier did not specifically mention the stadium, rather he spoke of his role in the reorganization of Paris through master plans associated with CIAM, which he said have “continued for more than fifteen years on the case studies of Paris.”³⁰ But he did send Blum a master plan which he described as a “comprehensive plan encompassing isolated elements, all connected to each other and laying down successive stages.”³¹ The stadium was included as part of this master plan (item 7 in image below).

³⁰ Le Corbusier to le Président du Conseil (6 March 1937), FLC Archive, 11-19-21-001-002.

³¹ Le Corbusier to le Président du Conseil (6 March 1937), FLC Archive, 11-19-21-001-002.

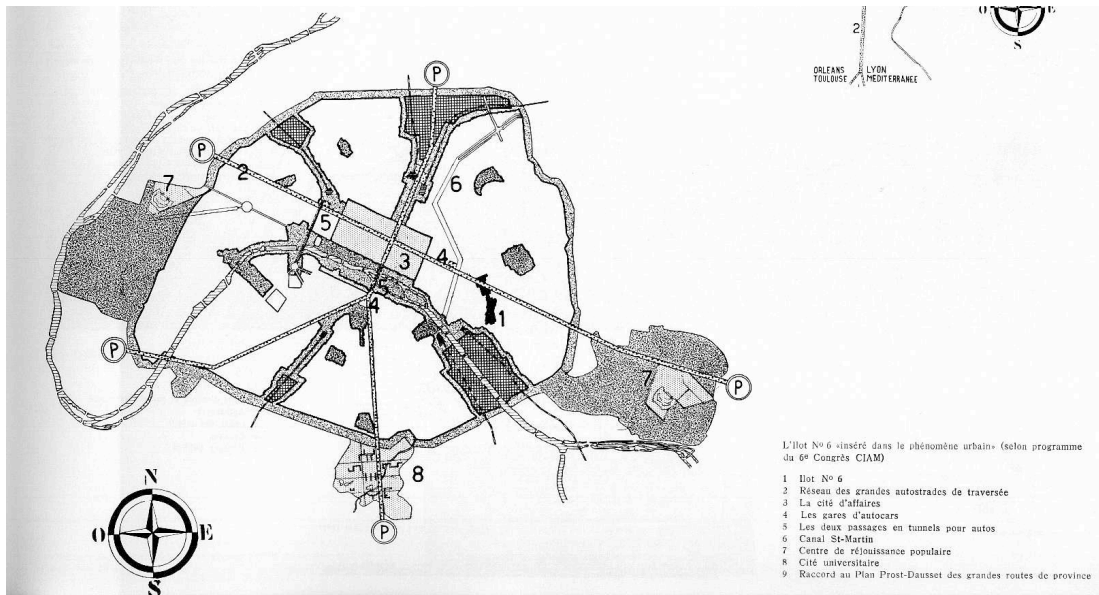


Figure 13. The master plan of Paris sent to the Prime Minister showing the stadium as item 7. Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 49.

After these letters, communication with Lagrange on the matter of building the stadium appeared to cease, no doubt due to the fact that he said the project did not concern his ministry, and as Robert Lewis has noted, Lagrange rejected all of the six grand stadiums proposed between 1934 and 1936 due to his ideological opposition to sport as a spectacle, and to the Government's budgetary restrictions.³² By December 1937 Le Corbusier's interest in his stadium appeared to re-emerge with a letter to Dutch Architect G.T.J Kuiper requesting a price breakdown of the Rotterdam Stadium, which seated 80,000, including earthworks, foundations, concrete, and land.³³ Kuiper responded, giving Le Corbusier a breakdown of the costs in Swiss Francs. This request shows the seriousness in which Le Corbusier intended to build the stadium, giving him an understanding of costs involved with constructing such a large-scale arena.

1938: The quest to build continues:

In the beginning of 1938 Le Corbusier, after being rejected by Lagrange, turned his attention to other people of authority, making them aware of his plans for the stadium, promoting it as an entirely new type of building, the likes of which no other country had produced. In February he wrote to a J. Lenoir,³⁴ but nothing came of it, and in March he wrote to Georges Huisman (the Director General of the Beaux-Arts), and to Georges Barthélemy,³⁵ who was the Mayor of Puteaux and the Deputy Mayor of the Seine. Barthélemy was an obvious choice for Le Corbusier to court, as he shared some of the

³² Lewis, *The Stadium Century*, 38.

³³ Le Corbusier to G.T.J. Kuiper (18 December 1937), FLC Archive, I1-19-25-001.

³⁴ Le Corbusier to J. Lenoir (8 February 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-26-001.

³⁵ Le Corbusier to Georges Huisman, Director General of the Beaux-Arts (31 March 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-27-001, and Le Corbusier to Georges Barthélemy (31 March 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-28-001.

same sentiments as Lagrange in his advocacy for sport, but unlike Lagrange, Barthélemy wanted France to build a grand stadium. In Le Corbusier's letter to the mayor he refers to an article written by Barthélemy entitled "When Will We Be Like Berlin With Our Sports Parks?" (Quand Aurons-nous Comme Berlin Notre Parc des Sports). In this article Barthélemy calls for Paris to build not just small facilities for sport but grand stadiums where the spectacle of sport is on display:

Do not forget that the sports facilities in the Paris region are still at a number of fifty-one per 120,000 inhabitants, with a population of over 6 million people. This is a ridiculously small proportion compared with that of all other major capitals... Large spectacular stadiums, large sports facilities, are also essential in the larger urban centres. They meet another goal. While small land is used for daily practice of different sports, it is necessary for large national or international events, facilities whose grandeur and beauty leave nothing to be desired. Otherwise the prestige of sport is affected, and the masses turn away from the spectacle of the stadium.³⁶

Barthélemy lamented that whilst other nations' capitals possessed large arenas with the capacity for mass spectacles, such as London's Wembley and Glasgow's two 100,000 seat capacity stadiums, Paris did not. He noted numerous other cities such as Prague, Rome, Stockholm, Turin, and in particular Berlin. He used Berlin's *Reichssportfeld*, a huge sporting district consisting of a 100,000-seat stadium as its central monument, used for the Berlin Olympics in 1936, as an example of what he wished Paris to construct. Numerous sports complexes were spread around the *Reichssportfeld* stadium such as a swimming pool, racetrack, outdoor theatre, and a large open plane to host mass sporting demonstrations where 250,000 people could participate. Barthélemy stated, "in short, the Reichssportfeld is a world, which hides an intense clean life in its hilly and wooded surrounds," and that "this is a similar Sports Park as we seek to create in the Paris region."³⁷ He concluded the article by noting that plans were underway by the Minister of Recreation to upgrade the Pershing and its surrounds with basketball and tennis courts, however he did not consider this, and other future works planned by the government, to conform to his ideas of what a national stadium for France should be, stating, "after Pershing, there will be La Courneuve, Sceaux, La Belle-Epine ... unless the public

³⁶ Georges Barthélemy, "Quand aurons-nous comme Berlin notre parc des sports?" Paris Midi (28 March 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-54-001-002.

³⁷ Barthélemy, "Quand aurons-nous comme Berlin notre parc des sports?" FLC Archive, I1-19-54-001-002.

authorities, finally acquainted with the ideas defended energetically by the sportsmen and by ourselves, undertake the construction of the *Stade de France*.³⁸

Le Corbusier wrote to Barthélemy saying he read the article “with great interest.”³⁹ Le Corbusier highlighted that his stadium would be a “centre of an entirely new kind,” and wished to meet with Barthélemy to discuss the issue of constructing a new centre for Paris analogous to that in Barthélemy’s article. Unfortunately for Le Corbusier, Barthélemy responded by saying he is too busy to meet.⁴⁰ This must have been frustrating for Le Corbusier considering Le Corbusier’s studies for the large stadium aligned perfectly with the narrative presented by Barthélemy in his article calling for a national stadium for France.

Along with the letter to Barthélemy Le Corbusier attached a letter sent to the Georges Huisman, Director General of the Beaux-Arts, giving a more detailed description of his stadium. He stated “since 1936 and 1937, we have developed the "Centre de Réjouissances populaires pour 100,000 personnes", which has been shown with a great deal of detail at the 1937 Exhibition at the Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux.”⁴¹

³⁸ Barthélemy, “Quand aurons-nous comme Berlin notre parc des sports?” FLC Archive, I1-19-54-001-002.

³⁹ Le Corbusier to Georges Barthélemy (31 March 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-28-001.

⁴⁰ Georges Barthélemy to Le Corbusier (6 April 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-29-001.

⁴¹ Le Corbusier to Georges Huisman, Director General of the Beaux-Arts (31 March 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-27-001.



Figure 14. The Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux, 1937. The stadium is located on the wall in the top-left of the image. Photo by Albin Salaün, accessed from Fondation Le Corbusier, “Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux, Paris,” accessed April 18, 2018, <http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=5070&sysLanguage=en-en&itemPos=48&itemCount=79&sysParentName=Contact&sysParentId=64>.

He informed the Director General that the Centre for Popular Celebrations “is completely new and exists nowhere,” and was intended to contain “various dramatic and sporting purposes, theatre, gymnastics, and politics” and was also purposed to host “mass parades of any kind.”⁴² Despite claiming the centre would be completely new, Le Corbusier noted that “it seems to match the trends emerging gradually in all countries,” but “France could be the first to achieve this overall centre of popular rejoicing.”⁴³ He alerted the Director-General to Barthélemy’s article, pushing the question of whether France would follow Berlin’s lead. This was followed by the purpose of the letter, as with all of them: to get the stadium built, as he asked that the Director General to bring the project to the attention of the Chairman of the Board, and asked whether land was still available around Paris, “especially in the field of the Bois de Vincennes, where the impending work [the Government’s

⁴² Le Corbusier to Georges Huisman, Director General of the Beaux-Arts (31 March 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-27-001-002.

⁴³ Le Corbusier to Georges Huisman, Director General of the Beaux-Arts (31 March 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-27-001.

extension to the Pershing Stadium] should be combined with this proposal.”⁴⁴ He finished the letter with a call for France “to do better than Berlin, rather than copy or be average.”

Despite all the efforts of Le Corbusier, writing to various men of authority in the hope his project would gain support and be constructed, nothing eventuated and the project was never built. With regards to Le Corbusier’s project and the five other grand stadiums proposed for France between 1934 and 1936, Robert Lewis states “the push for a massive stadium, ineffective in 1922, again failed to convince politicians to abandon their traditional reluctance to subsidize sporting spaces intended for large-scale spectatorship.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Le Corbusier to Georges Huisman, Director General of the Beaux-Arts (31 March 1938), FLC Archive, I1-19-27-001.

⁴⁵ Lewis, “Phoenix of Legends,” 321.

CHAPTER VI: Sport and Stadiums in Le Corbusier's Late Work: Firminy and Stade de Baghdad

Not having had any luck convincing anyone to build his 100,000-seat stadium for Paris in 1936, it would be almost twenty years before Le Corbusier would be asked to design another stadium. During this twenty-year period Le Corbusier's major work tended not to focus on sport as much as it did during the twenties and thirties.¹ For example if one considers the trajectory of his urban plans, following on from *Ville Radieuse* (1931) and *Plan de Paris* (1936), in the 1940s he produced the *Industrial Linear City* (1942-45), which shifted his focus slightly toward organizing the city via means of production. Unlike his previous urban plans of *Ville Contemporaine* (1925) and *Ville Radieuse* (1931) where he emphasised the necessity for sports grounds at the doorstep of the home, in the *Industrial Linear City* he separated the two, providing a defined zone for "services set apart from the home" which included all forms of cultural functions such as schools, libraries, cinemas, sports grounds, and youth clubs.² This was also the case in a housing project, *Le Maisons 'Murondins'* (1940) where he said, "the sports field will be 5 or 10 minutes away" from the housing.³

¹ See chapter IV of this thesis.

² Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier Œuvre Complète 1938-1946*, ed. Willy Boesiger (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1950), 73.

³ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier Œuvre Complète 1938-1946*, 96.

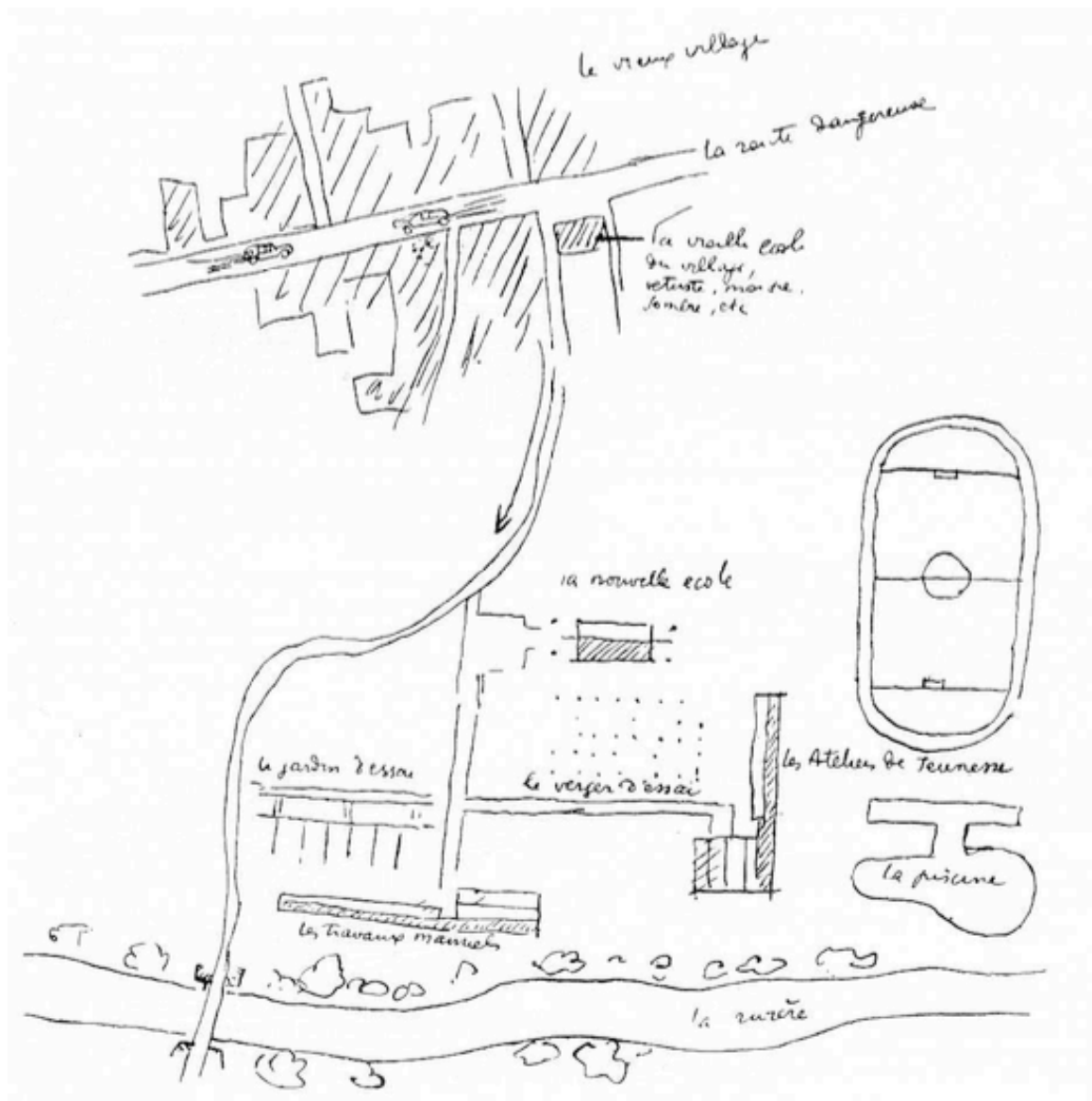


Figure 15. Le Corbusier, *Le Maisons Murondins*. Le Corbusier, *Œuvre Complète 1938-1946*, 96.

It was the *Unité d'Habitations* which continued the lineage of Le Corbusier's main ideas of sport and everyday life from the 1920s and 30s into the 40s with the first *Unité d'Habitations* built in Marseille (1945), then Berlin (1956), Briey (1959-63), and Firminy (1965). On the *Unité d'Habitations* he wrote "things said in 1920 (in *L'Esprit Nouveau*) about the motor car have become the considered practice in 1960. Forty years of exhaustive and indefatigable study, inside and out. Everything is expressed, displayed, analysed, grouped and formulated in its effects upon the home: Air, sound, light, the 'green' town, recreation at one's doorstep."⁴ The *Unité d'Habitations* embody much of what Le Corbusier considered in the twenties and thirties. For instance in *Ville Radieuse* he stressed that the housing blocks be raised on pilotis to free the ground plane to be utilised for sport and recreation. He

⁴ Le Corbusier, *My Work*, trans. James Palmes, (London: Architectural Press, 1960), 161-163. Originally published in French as *L'Atelier de la Recherche Patiente*, 1960.

said the same for the *Unité d'Habitations*: “100% of the ground space of the town is freed, making an uninterrupted park at the disposition of the inhabitants.”⁵ Another direct homage to the housing concepts from *Ville Radieuse* was the roof garden. In *Ville Radieuse* not only did Le Corbusier wish to utilise the ground plane for sports, he also dedicated the roof to sport and leisure. The same was true for the *Unité d'Habitations*, as he wrote, “the roof-garden (a model superimposed on the actual countryside) comprises: 1. The nursery school and day nursery related to the nursery on the 17th floor. 2. Open and covered gymnasia for physical culture. 3. The solarium and café-terrace. 4. The communal water tanks. 5. The two ventilation extracts. 6. The 300m running tracks.”⁶ So it was clear that sport at the doorstep for everyday participation was still a priority for Le Corbusier, just not at the vast scale it was in *Ville Contemporaine* and *Ville Radieuse*.



Figure 16. Rooftop gymnasium, pool, and play areas at *Unité d'Habitations* Marseille. Jean-Louis Cohen and Tim Benton, *Le Corbusier Le Grand*, (London: Phaidon, 2008), 426.

Then in the 1950s three stadiums were commissioned for Le Corbusier to design. These projects were located in Firminy, Chandigarh, and Baghdad. The Chandigarh stadium was never realised, nor did it appear to have any prominence in Le Corbusier’s numerous publications on the Chandigarh master plan. It appeared briefly in the urban plan of Chandigarh in his *Œuvre Complète* volumes five and

⁵ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier Œuvre Complète 1938-1946*, 176.

⁶ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier Œuvre Complète 1938-1946*, 185.

seven.⁷ In a letter to his assistant Iannis Xenakis, Le Corbusier stated, “it’s time to charge ahead! I have three urgent things to take care of at the same time...It’s a question of: 1) the Chandigarh stadium (miserable budget), 2) the Firminy stadium (normal budget), 3) the Baghdad stadium (good budget).”⁸ Perhaps it was the “miserable budget” that led to this particular stadium never being developed. However an important observation on the formal qualities of the Chandigarh design was its significant similarity to *le Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants* (1936), giving the impression that *le Centre National* was for Le Corbusier his prototypical stadium.

Firminy:

The Firminy stadium was part of a master plan commissioned in 1954 by the mayor of the town, Eugène Claudius-Petit.⁹ The master plan consisted of a housing development (a *Unité d’Habitation*), a church, a youth and cultural centre, and a sports stadium. It was a master plan which Deborah Gans suggested “mimics the Greek agora.”¹⁰ Once Claudius-Petit was no longer mayor, the project halted and the church was not completed until 2006, however the stadium, youth centre, and *Unité* were all built.¹¹ On the master plan for Firminy, Mayor Claudius-Petit said it was “to lay the foundations for a renaissance of the human being, the family, society; to effect an authentic revolution in the gestures of everyday life, which directly affects women, mothers, and which largely determines the behaviour of children.”¹² It was a reminder of Le Corbusier’s earlier urban planning principles. One could imagine the Firminy-Vert scheme multiplied on a larger scale to resemble characteristics of *Ville Radieuse*. But it could also be considered a scaled-down version of the *le Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants*, as the Firminy stadium included not only a field and track, but a stage, open air theatre, and electronic games,¹³ a concept which would also be introduced in the Baghdad stadium. The whole master plan was a synthesis of functions both sporting and cultural:

From the outset the Cultural and Youth Centre was connected to the Stadium for 10,000 people to be constructed at the same time...the two things were entirely connected. But as things turned out, the Stadium depended on one Ministry and the Cultural and Youth Centre depended on another Ministry. As a consequence,

⁷ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier Œuvre Complète 1946-1952*, ed. Willy Boesiger (Zurich: Les Editions d’Architecture Zurich, 1955) and Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et son atelier rue de Sèvres 35 Œuvre Complète 1957-1965*, ed. Willy Boesiger (Zurich: Les Editions d’Architecture Zurich, 1965), 70.

⁸ Iannis Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, trans. Sharon Kanach, (New York: Pendragon Press, 2009), 84.

⁹ Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, 75.

¹⁰ Deborah Gans, *The Le Corbusier Guide*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 85.

¹¹ Jean-Louis Cohen and Tim Benton, ed., *Le Corbusier Le Grand*, (London: Phaidon, 2008), 685.

¹² Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier The Last Works Volume 8 des Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Willy Boesiger (Zurich: Les Editions d’Architecture Artemis, 1986), 11.

¹³ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et son atelier rue de Sèvres 35 Œuvre Complète 1957-1965*, 130.

the order was given to move the Cultural and Youth Centre to the other extremity of the projected site.¹⁴

The youth centre today sits perched on an elevated ground level, overlooking the stadium where “one comes unexpectedly upon the pleasure of a scene in an open air theatre, with the public of the stadium. At the right are the amphitheatre, dramatic stage, speaker’s platform etc.”¹⁵ Le Corbusier once again saw the stadium as a cultural tool, not just as a place for spectating sport, but as a type of building utilised for cultural purposes. There was a stage for speakers and space allocated for trucks to unload sets. These were not just ideas or suggestions of how the users could utilise the stadium, he planned to provide solutions in the built form and planning in order for these functions to be carried out. Sadly the infrastructure for the electronic games and open air theatre were never built, as Gans states, “had this public precinct been completed as planned, an open-air theater and stage for electronic spectacles, and an enclosed theater called a *boite á miracles* (box of miracles) would have approximated the Greek amphitheater and odeion.”¹⁶ Around the same time, Le Corbusier was attempting to implement these ideas on a larger more significant scale for an Olympic sporting complex in Baghdad.

Baghdad:

In 1955 Le Corbusier was appointed by the government of Iraq to design an Olympic stadium and sports complex in Baghdad. This stadium mysteriously never appeared in his *Œuvre Complète* series, and until recently has had little scholarly attention. Mina Marefat has written on the project, focusing mostly on the built component (the Gymnasium). It appeared in Deborah Gans’s *The Le Corbusier Guide* and also appeared briefly in *Le Corbusier Le Grand*. In Le Corbusier’s 1960 book *My Work*, the project had a one-page appearance with an image of the master plan and only a very brief caption. Despite this, of the three stadiums commissioned in the 1950s, it presents a most fascinating, albeit cloudy, history, and it embodies Le Corbusier’s ideas about sport being for the everyday individual, but also as a grand spectacle as it carried with it the ideas developed in his *Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants* from 1936. In Le Corbusier’s book *My Work* he stated, in regards to the stadium for 100,000, that “the Government of Iraq were the first to show a practical interest, when, twenty years later, they commissioned their Sports Centre for Baghdad.”¹⁷ Deborah Gans in her book *The Le Corbusier Guide* also makes the connection between the two

¹⁴ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et son atelier rue de Sèvres 35 Œuvre Complète 1957-1965*, 130.

¹⁵ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et son atelier rue de Sèvres 35 Œuvre Complète 1957-1965*, 131.

¹⁶ Gans, *The Le Corbusier Guide*, 85.

¹⁷ Le Corbusier, *My Work*, 132.

stadiums, stating, “Le Corbusier considered the program the spiritual kin to his own unbuilt project for a National Centre of Collective Festivals for 100,000.”¹⁸

The form of the stadium was similar to *le Centre National* with a thin shell-like surface forming the grandstand with a lightweight tensile roof structure for shading. In this instance the tensile roof structure was referred to as a hyperbolic paraboloid, a term that appeared in numerous of Le Corbusier’s projects during the same period, most notably the Philips Pavilion of which the entire envelope was a series of undulating hyperbolic paraboloids developed by his assistant Iannis Xenakis. The term was also used to describe the roof of the youth centre in the Firminy master plan, which bears a striking resemblance to the Gymnasium in the Baghdad Sports Centre. The master plan of the Baghdad sports centre was organic in its layout, a complete departure from the Cartesian grid of his pre-war urban plans. Overall the plan consisted of a stadium, a swimming pool, a gymnasium, an open-air amphitheatre, and tennis courts. Aside from the Olympic pools, there was a large public wave pool, organic and free flowing in a snake-like shape, bulging out to form ‘lakes’ for swimming.

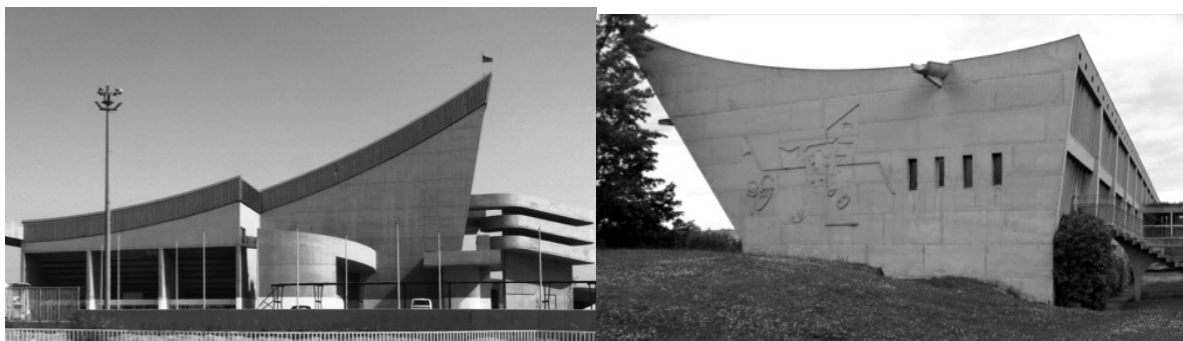


Figure 17. Left: Gymnasium, Baghdad. Right: Youth Centre Firminy. Fondation Le Corbusier/ADAGP/Caecilia Pieri, “The Le Corbusier Gymnasium in Baghdad: discovery of construction archives (1974-1980),” accessed April 18, 2018, <https://ifpo.hypotheses.org/3560>.

¹⁸ Gans, *The Le Corbusier Guide*, 254.

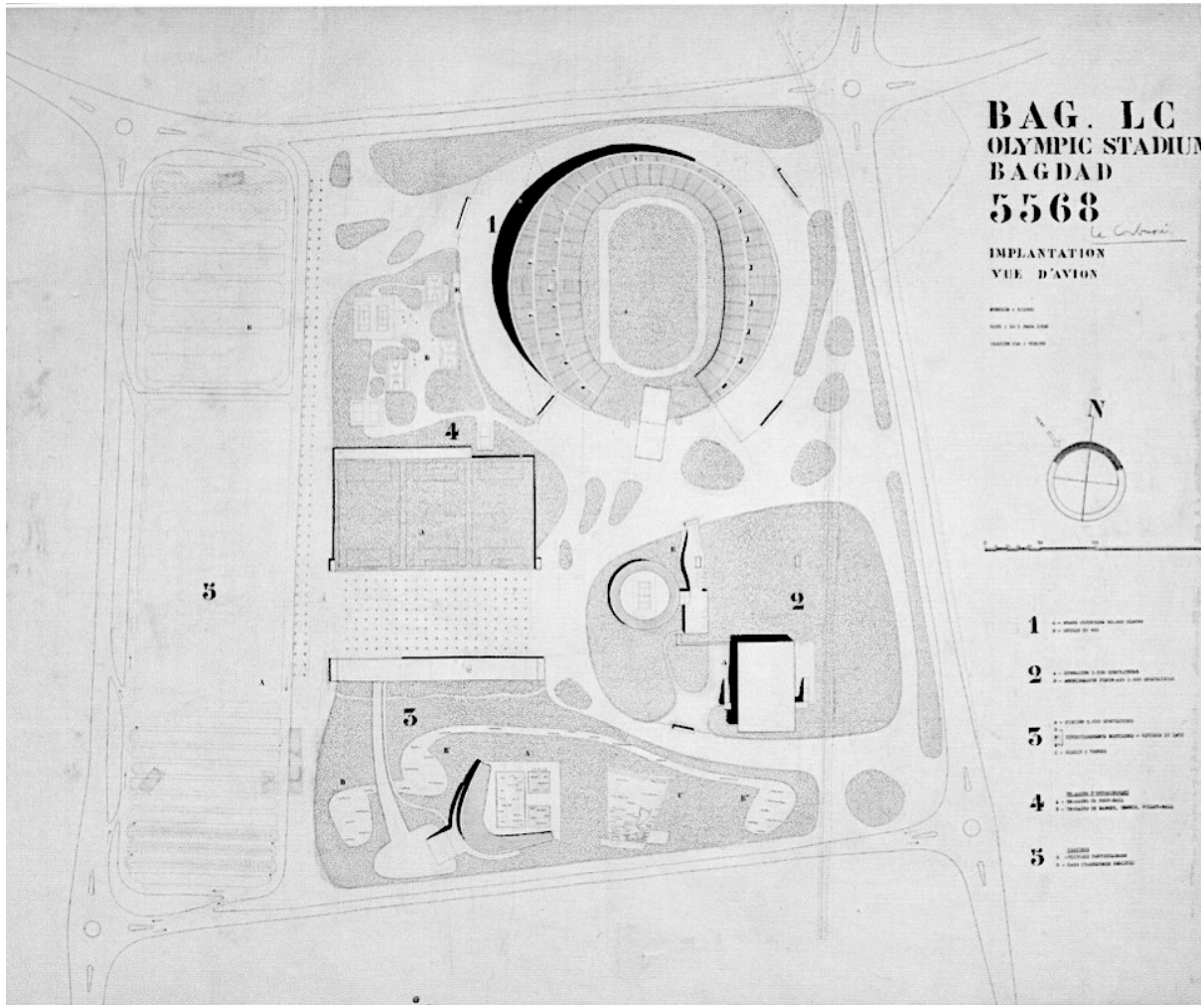


Figure 18. Baghdad Sports Centre Master Plan. Image from Fondation Le Corbusier (FLC) BAG 420.

Just like the *Centre National*, Le Corbusier would tragically never see this stadium built. What followed from the initial appointment in 1955 would prove to be a tumultuous journey for Le Corbusier. In the end the stadium was never built, but a gymnasium, which was part of the whole sports complex proposal, was finally constructed in 1980, fifteen years after Le Corbusier's death.

1955-56: The initial briefing:

The 1950s was a period of economic growth and cultural modernisation for Iraq, and in particular the capital, Baghdad. In the ten year period from 1947 to 1957 Baghdad's population grew from 80,000 to 1.3 million.¹⁹ In response to this rapid growth the Iraqi government established the Iraq Development Board who were responsible for approximately 70% of the government revenue, which was allocated to development.²⁰ Its main goal was the modernisation of Iraq, and in the middle of the

¹⁹ Magnus Bernhardsson, "Faith in the Future: Nostalgic Nationalism and 1950s Baghdad," *History Compass* 9, no.10 (October 2011): 809.

²⁰ Bernhardsson, "Faith in the Future," 808.

decade the Development Board focused its energy on urban development.²¹ To implement their urban plan and goal of modernisation they contacted five renowned modernist architects for various projects. They were Walter Gropius, Gio Ponti, Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto, and of course, Le Corbusier.²² On the 22nd June, 1955, the Ministry of Development in Iraq sent a letter to Le Corbusier inviting him to be appointed as architect for the construction of an Olympic stadium in Baghdad.²³ On the 5th July Le Corbusier responded to the Ministry, requesting documents to assist him in his design studies such as a map of Baghdad highlighting prospective sites, the capacity and requirements of the stadium, and the climate of the region. The conditions of the agreement were drawn up by Le Corbusier's trustee A.P. Ducret and sent to the Director General of Legal Affairs and Contracts in Baghdad on the 15th July, 1955 with Le Corbusier accepting the offer, stating his "readiness to draw up plans for an Olympic Stadium in Baghdad."²⁴ Some of the conditions were that Iraqi architects may be included to assist with the project on the provision that Le Corbusier approved the choice of architects, and all plans and drawings were to be signed by Le Corbusier. After the initial review of the program a site visit was to ensue which would then be followed by a complete draft set of drawings developed in Paris to be submitted to the relevant authorities in Iraq, and drawings were then to be sent to the consultants in order for construction to begin at which time Le Corbusier was to make one or two site visits. Fees were to be set out by Le Corbusier after the program and conditions of implementation were set. The fee was to be calculated on a percentage basis and was to be made in Francs and was to be paid to a French account. Half of the fee was to be paid two weeks after the signing of the contract with a quarter to be paid during the presentation of the draft and the final quarter to be paid at the time of submission of the final plans.²⁵

After sending the aforementioned letter, approximately one year passed with no response from Iraq. Meanwhile on February 11th, 1956, Le Corbusier was approached by Iraqi engineering firm Al-Khazen Engineers, who offered their services to assist with the stadium in Baghdad.²⁶ Le Corbusier responded on March 13th highlighting his willingness to work with the firm on the project, but made it clear that he had still not heard any news from the Ministry of Development about the project. Finally on the 2nd July, 1956, almost a year since the last letter sent to the Ministry of Development in Iraq, Le Corbusier's office prompted the Iraqis with a letter stating, "we are anxious to know if these letters ever reached you." Then on July 28th, 1956, the Ministry of Development responded with the first

²¹ Bernhardsson, "Faith in the Future," 809.

²² Mina Marefat, "Mise au Point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium," *DOCOMOMO journal* issue 41 (September 2009): 30, and see also Bernhardsson, "Faith in the Future," 812.

²³ Minister of Development Iraq to Le Corbusier (22 June 1955), FLC Archive, P4 (3) 33.

²⁴ Le Corbusier to Director General of Legal Affairs and Contracts Iraq (15 July 1955), FLC Archive, P4 (3) 36.

²⁵ Le Corbusier to Director General of Legal Affairs and Contracts Iraq (15 July 1955), FLC Archive, P4 (3) 36.

²⁶ Al-Khazen Consulting Engineers to Le Corbusier (11 February 1956), FLC Archive, P4 (2) 11.

brief for the project.²⁷ This letter was a response to Le Corbusier's requests from 1955 with the Minister of Development Nadim Pachachi stating, "referring back to your letter dated the 5th July 1955...it would appear that we omitted to give you the brief details of the project and I very much regret this as I appreciate that you would wish to have the outline proposals of the scheme..."²⁸ The brief was developed by the Ministry of Education, Physical Education Department and was rather vague. It consisted of a stadium, a swimming pool, and a gymnasium. The stadium was to seat 50,000 spectators and field an international sized football field and running track. Only a portion of the stands required covered seating, and as for the additional facilities, the requirements were vague with the letter stating, "the usual facilities for athletes changing rooms and attendant staff to be provided."²⁹ The swimming pool was to be fifty metres in length and twenty metres wide, as well as including a separate diving pool with high dive board. The seating was to be stepped in style with a capacity of 5,000. Again, any additional requirements were vague, which were that "the usual filtration and sterilization plant to be provided together with changing rooms, lockers and services for bathers and swimmers."³⁰

The gymnasium was to be an enclosed space with a wooden floor forty metres long and twenty metres wide. Again, stepped seating was the requirement and the capacity was to be 3,000, and was also to include baths, lavatories, and changing rooms. In general the whole sports centre was to be used at night and required "good artificial lighting standards."³¹ The brief also included the necessity for adequate parking within the site area, however a site had not yet been established, with the Minister suggesting that a site had not yet been specified, but was in the process of being acquired which he says "has been discussed with the Town Planning Consultants who are preparing the master city plan for Baghdad."³² The initial budget in this brief was stated at 1,500,000 Iraqi Denarii.

²⁷ Nadim Pachachi to Le Corbusier (28 July 1956), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 4.

²⁸ Nadim Pachachi to Le Corbusier (28 July 1956), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 4.

²⁹ Nadim Pachachi to Le Corbusier (28 July 1956), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 4.

³⁰ Nadim Pachachi to Le Corbusier (28 July 1956), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 4.

³¹ Nadim Pachachi to Le Corbusier (28 July 1956), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 4.

³² Nadim Pachachi to Le Corbusier (28 July 1956), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 4.

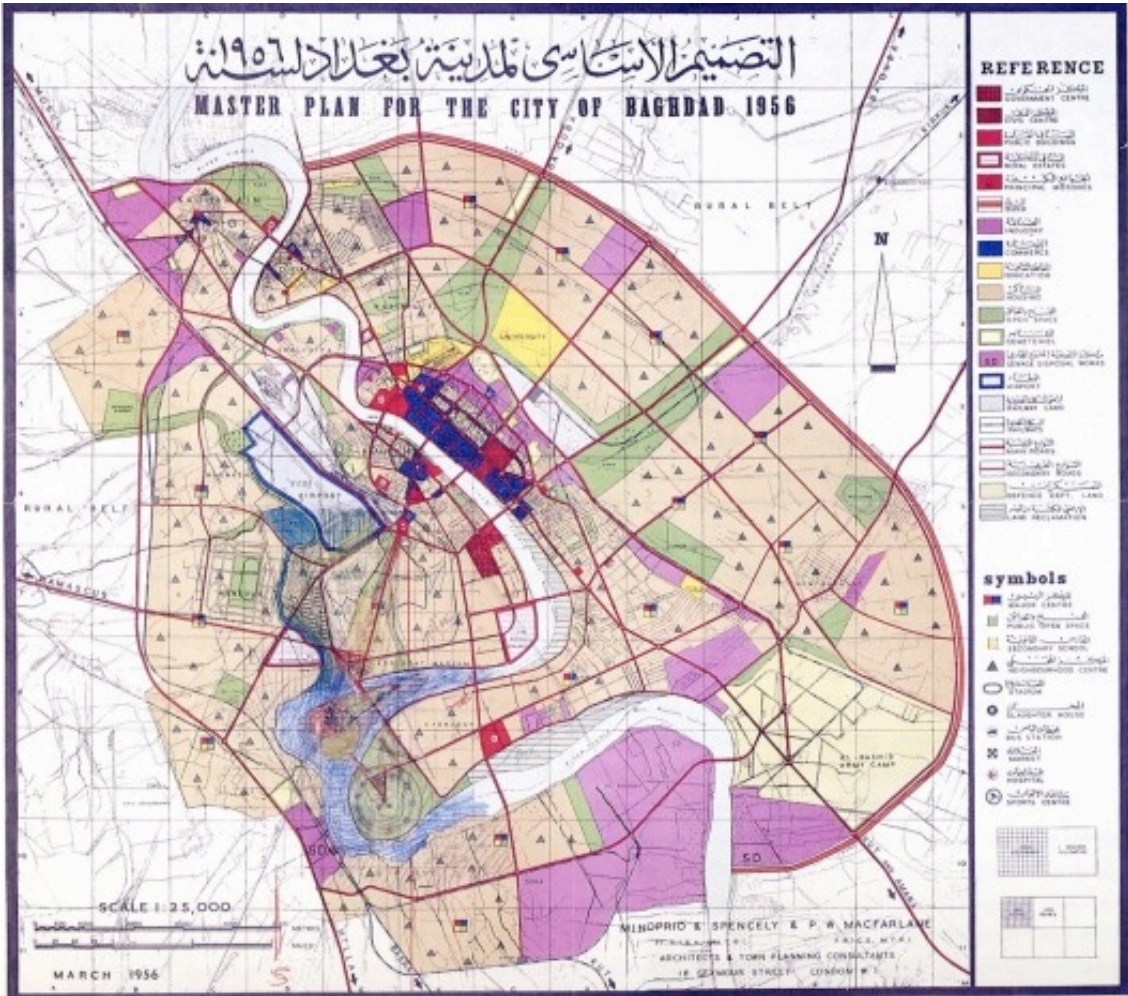


Figure 19. Master Plan for Baghdad, 1956. Plan produced by Minoprio, Spenceely, and P.W. Macfarlane, Architects and Town Planning Consultants.



Figure 20. Le Corbusier, 1957. Initial location plan indicating site. FLC 418.

1957: a detailed design is developed:

(Note: Mina Marefat in her 2009 article *Mise au Point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium* has already given an account of the events that took place in 1957 and 1958).

In October 1957 Le Corbusier appointed Iannis Xenakis to the project as *chef du projet*.³³ In November 1957 Le Corbusier made his first site visit to Baghdad,³⁴ where he produced notes and sketches that would form the preliminary concepts for the sports centre. Le Corbusier envisioned a multi-functional program for the sports centre, where culture and sport would converge. He noted that the gymnasium was to house opera and orchestral concerts, the stadium to incorporate the *Jeux Electroniques*, a concept developed for the 1958 Philips Pavilion, described as a synthesis of colour, image, music, speech and rhythm. In a letter to the general art director of Philips in 1956, Le Corbusier wrote,

My role here is that of the creator of an electronic poem shaped by my capacities (open to discussion, of course) as a man in contact with the aspirations of our civilization. This electronic poem is a complete scenario similar to that of a film. Thus it contains text, timing, and breakdown. It is an exhibition using visuals, sound, and colours. No methods are excluded. I have forty years experience, via books, projects, and exhibitions, in learning how to make contact with the public. In that respect you may rest easy.³⁵

In the Philips Pavilion this spectacle of imagery was called the *Poème Electronique* and “reflected, in seven stages, Le Corbusier’s vision of the history of humankind...”³⁶ “The interactive aspect of the *Poème Electronique* lies in the audience’s voluntary participation in this mechanism of perceptive deception. Hundreds of thousands of people lined up to get into the pavilion.”³⁷ In Le Corbusier’s *Œuvre Complète* volume 6 he wrote, “the electronic poem...at the Philips Pavilion marks the first appearance of a new art form: “The Electronic Games”, a synthesis unlimited in its possibilities for colour, imagery, music, words and rhythm.”³⁸ This idea is directly descended from his 1936 *Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants*, where a huge screen was to be used to project imagery and cinema to create a mass spectacle of participation from each audience member. The *Poème Electronique* in the Philips Pavilion was a condensed version, and for Baghdad he saw

³³ Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, 79.

³⁴ Fondation Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier Sketchbooks: 4 1957-1964*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981).

³⁵ Cohen and Benton, *Le Corbusier Le Grand*, 626.

³⁶ Sven Sterken “New Media and the Obsolescence of Architecture: Exhibition Pavilions by Le Corbusier, Xenakis, Stockhausen, and E.A.T.,” *Interiors* 3, no.1-2 (2012): 129, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2752/204191212X13232577462691>.

³⁷ Sterken, “New Media and the Obsolescence of Architecture,” 130.

³⁸ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier et son atelier rue de Sèvres 35 Œuvre Complète 1952-1957*, ed. Willy Boesiger (Zurich: Les Editions d’Architecture Zurich, 1957), 200.

this as an opportunity to realize the *Electronic Games* on a mass scale in a way he could not in 1936. *Le Centre National* was again a direct influence. In Le Corbusier's book *My Work* he wrote about *le Centre National* saying it was "a design which is the logical complement to Olympic meetings and football matches, with provision also for open air theatre and cinema, public speeches, gymnastic exhibitions and, nowadays, electronic displays (as a result of the "Electronic Poem" of the Philips Pavilion)." ³⁹ This, written in 1960 was a retrospective take on the 1936 stadium, alluding to the fact that had the technology been available at the time, the stadium from 1936 would have also included the electronic games.

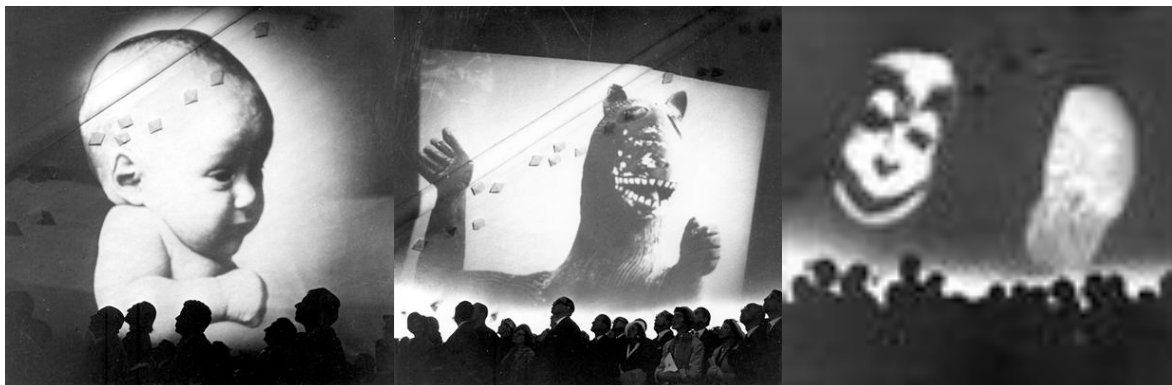


Figure 21. Stills from the Electronic Poem, Philips Pavilion, Le Corbusier, 1958. Accessed from Fondation Le Corbusier, "Pavillon Philips, exposition internationale de 1958, Brussels, Belgium," accessed April 18, 2018, <http://www.fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=5096&sysLanguage=en-en&itemPos=51&itemCount=79&sysParentName=&sysParentId=64>.

These ideas of the electronic games and using the stadium and gymnasium for cultural functions other than sport, such as music, theatre, and political speeches, are all reminiscent of the 1930s stadium where the spectacle was fundamental, however for the Baghdad Sports Centre, Le Corbusier also wished to include the public, providing them with facilities to participate in physical recreation. Public access into the park was to be free, with ticket booths located outside of each venue only. As well as the Olympic and diving pools, Le Corbusier proposed the idea of a public wave pool, with water to overflow into the pool from the River Tigris. He recorded in his sketchbook a brief dialogue with the Minister for Social Affairs who asked Le Corbusier "to plan for the Stadium, areas for young people." ⁴⁰ Le Corbusier continued to write, "swimming pool for young people requested by the minister." He then posed the question, "swimming pool with waves? Etc. The minister responds yes." ⁴¹

Access for players and athletes was to remain separate from the public, but there was also to be separate access for the King (who at the time was King Faisal II), as well as a podium/forum in the stadium where the King could congratulate players and orate to the crowds. These ideas were to be

³⁹ Le Corbusier, *My Work*, 132.

⁴⁰ Cohen and Benton, *Le Corbusier Le Grand*, 704.

⁴¹ Cohen and Benton, *Le Corbusier Le Grand*, 704.

defining elements of the project's identity, but they are also ideas developed from Le Corbusier's earlier work in that of *le Centre National*. In 1957 Le Corbusier brought the engineering firm of George Marc Présenté on to the project.⁴² Présenté's firm would remain on board throughout the entire project right up to delivering its eventual construction.

1958: the initial proposal is submitted to Iraq:

On May 31st, 1958, Le Corbusier submitted a preliminary proposal, beginning with a declaration, writing:

Declaration: This is not a preliminary draft. This is the project itself. The drawings submitted here constitute this first dossier, are the fruit of the analytical studies of each of the constituent elements of the Olympic Stadium.⁴³

It was similar to the initial brief, but with the additional ideas and concepts developed in his sketchbook from his site visit from November 1957. His written statement of the master plan consisted of five main components: the stadium, the gymnasium, swimming, circulation, and gardening.

The stadium seated 50,000 spectators, and on the field were an Olympic size pitch for football, and a racetrack for athletics. Change rooms were located under the stands of the stadium and the stands did not step down all the way to the ground level. There was a vertical separation of 2.26m between the bottom row of seating and the field. The king had separate access (via car) on the west-east transverse axis of the stadium along with the vertical circulation (lifts and stairs). There were four entry points for the spectators, each with a ticket booth. The form of stadium did not form a completely enclosed ring, but was disrupted at one end by another separate building. This building was for the *Jeux Electroniques*. This lighting display would, he wrote, emit "sound, colour, images, and rhythm" to the spectators. "This building of "electronic games" includes a mobile element that allows to project the scene at will above the football field and to remove it."⁴⁴

The grandstand was covered with a tensile structure, a hyperbolic paraboloid "veil", to shade against the sun. This was reminiscent of *le Centre National's* shading structure. This would later be abandoned as Le Corbusier stated in a letter to Xenakis, "HP [hyperbolic paraboloid] shells should be avoided."⁴⁵ Le Corbusier stated "the stadium is not designed as a circular amphitheatre at constant height but, on the contrary, taking into account the sun, it takes advantage of the shade available in the

⁴² Marefat, "Mise au Point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium," 32. See also Iraqi Development Board to Présenté Engineers (1957), FLC Archive, P4-6-18-001. This letter contains the Iraqi Development Board accepting Présenté Engineers and outlining their terms and conditions.

⁴³ Le Corbusier, "The Olympic Stadium Baghdad" (31 May 1958), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 163.

⁴⁴ Le Corbusier, "The Olympic Stadium Baghdad" (31 May 1958), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 163.

⁴⁵ Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, 85.

West to gather the spectators. In this way, the stadium takes on a form of indisputable elegance with a silhouette on the sky that is agreeable, elegant view of the sun from near or far.”⁴⁶

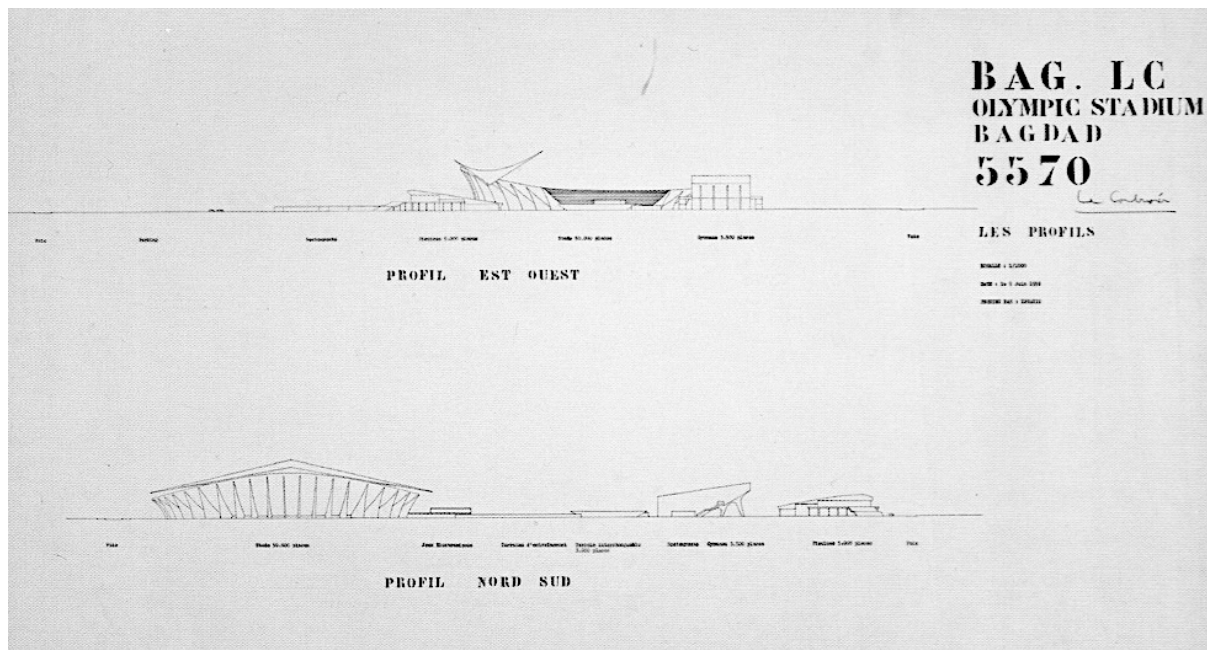


Figure 22. Elevations of the Baghdad Sports Complex. The top elevation shows the hyperbolic paraboloid shade structure to the stadium. Jean-Louis Cohen and Tim Benton, *Le Corbusier Le Grand*, (London: Phaidon, 2008), 705.

The Gymnasium was to be constructed with reinforced concrete stands for 3,500 spectators. It was an enclosed and covered building as it was required to be air-conditioned. The whole north wall was to be operable via the use of a large tilting door, tilting horizontally with a counterweight at the top, the style used in hangars. The side walls were to be solid, and the ceiling translucent plastic material “to give a relaxing lying place and also providing shelter from the sun and rain.”⁴⁷ Change rooms were located under the lower stand.

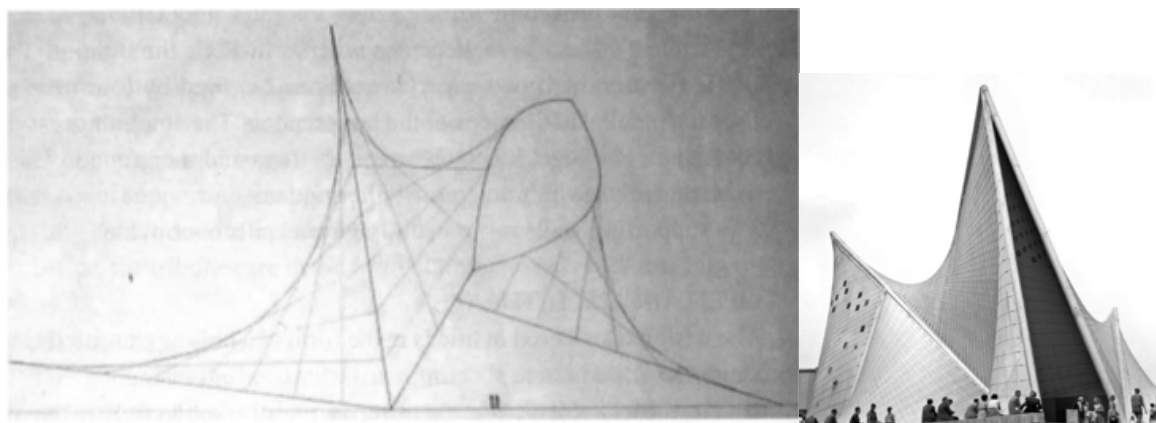


Figure 23. Early sketch of hyperbolic paraboloid for the Baghdad project (probably the gymnasium) by Xenakis which Le Corbusier rejected. It is remarkably similar to the Philips Pavilion (Right). 1958. Iannis Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, trans. Sharon Kanach, (New York: Pendragon Press, 2009), 92.

⁴⁶ Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, 87.

⁴⁷ Le Corbusier, “The Olympic Stadium Baghdad” (31 May 1958), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 163.

The outdoor amphitheatre's functions were interchangeable between basketball, tennis, and volleyball, and it was to seat 3,000 spectators. Le Corbusier described it as an "elegant solution: it is the construction of a perfectly circular and regular reinforced concrete saucer."⁴⁸ Spectators could access the stands via an external staircase and a platform, which underneath contained the service spaces. Another interesting addition to the amphitheatre was the idea that this platform could also be used as an outdoor meeting point during intermissions. The amphitheatre was to be surrounded by a garden with a low trellising wall enclosing it.

There were a total of four swimming pools, three for competition and one for public use. All the pools were outdoor. Under the gaze of a 5,000 seat amphitheatre there was an Olympic size pool fifty metres in length, and alongside it was a diving pool and an exercise pool, both nineteen by nineteen metres. The pools were level with the surrounding lawns and gardens, and access to the amphitheatre was via a vast, sweeping staircase, connected at the ground level to a fenced esplanade with a ticket booth at the entrance. The most fascinating element of the pool area is the fourth pool, which was conceived of as an artificial river seven metres wide and 1.4m deep. Along the river it would balloon out to form small lakes with beaches. This pool was open to the public and was intended for recreational use, as Le Corbusier stated, "these lakes allow swimming without discipline,"⁴⁹ also noting "swimming is such an agreeable sport that it would be a shame to limit its practice in Baghdad to Olympic training."⁵⁰

The Iraqis accepted the proposal and were eager to begin construction as soon as possible but on the very next day, July 14th 1958, King Faisal II of the Hashemite Monarchy was assassinated and the new Republic of Iraq was formed under the leadership of Abd al-Karim Qasem.⁵¹ Even though the government under the Hashemite Monarchy had shown growth and initiative through the Development Board, it was mainly the urban elites who benefitted. Whilst the government were dedicating large sums of money on modern buildings designed by world famous architects, the majority of Iraqi citizens did not have sufficient access to health care and education, therefore "a deep chasm was developing between the rulers and the ruled."⁵² The government under the Hashemite Monarchy was also intolerant of dissent. They banned rival political parties from meeting, closed newspapers, and imprisoned those who criticized them harshly. Magnus Bernhardsson in his piece *Nostalgic Nationalism and 1950s Baghdad* writes "each time the government took steps to limit or mute political opposition, their political opponent would re-tool and re-think ways to work against the

⁴⁸ Le Corbusier, "The Olympic Stadium Baghdad" (31 May 1958), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 163.

⁴⁹ Le Corbusier, "The Olympic Stadium Baghdad" (31 May 1958), FLC Archive, P4 (1) 163.

⁵⁰ Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, 88.

⁵¹ Marefat, "Mise au Point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium," 30, and Bernhardsson, "Faith in the Future," 813.

⁵² Bernhardsson, "Faith in the Future," 813.

government and eventually found a way to overthrow the Monarchy in July of 1958.”⁵³ Despite the Iraqi government’s somewhat authoritarian rule, Le Corbusier did not hesitate to work with them. This is not a condemnation of the great architect, however it does cast doubt upon the broadly accepted notion that Le Corbusier’s late phase of work took on a liberal democratic tone, typified by the *Open Hand* in Chandigarh, of which William Curtis writes “was the emblem for the new, democratic, liberal and liberated India...Le Corbusier’s symbol of international peace, transcending politics, caste, religion, and race.”⁵⁴ After the coup, on the new government Le Corbusier wrote in a letter to Xenakis, “local labor is pitiful. Large enterprises have fled because of the revolution. It is not possible to designate any set construction company since the Government alone decides.”⁵⁵ The coup d’état was the first of many obstacles this project would face in its path to be constructed. In spite of the political changes (there were more to come) the project continued. This is best summed, when years later (1973) the Gymnasium was commencing construction documentation, when amazingly one of the Iraqi officials, a Monsieur Ansari, involved with the project since its beginning was still involved with it and was described as being fully aware of its ups and downs: “Mr. Ansari was already in place at the origin of the stadium project; he is fully aware of the ups and downs of the contract.”⁵⁶ Jose Oubrierie who worked on the project in Le Corbusier’s office noted that “Présenté fought a long battle with the Iraqi’s to finally get to build the Gymnasium.”⁵⁷

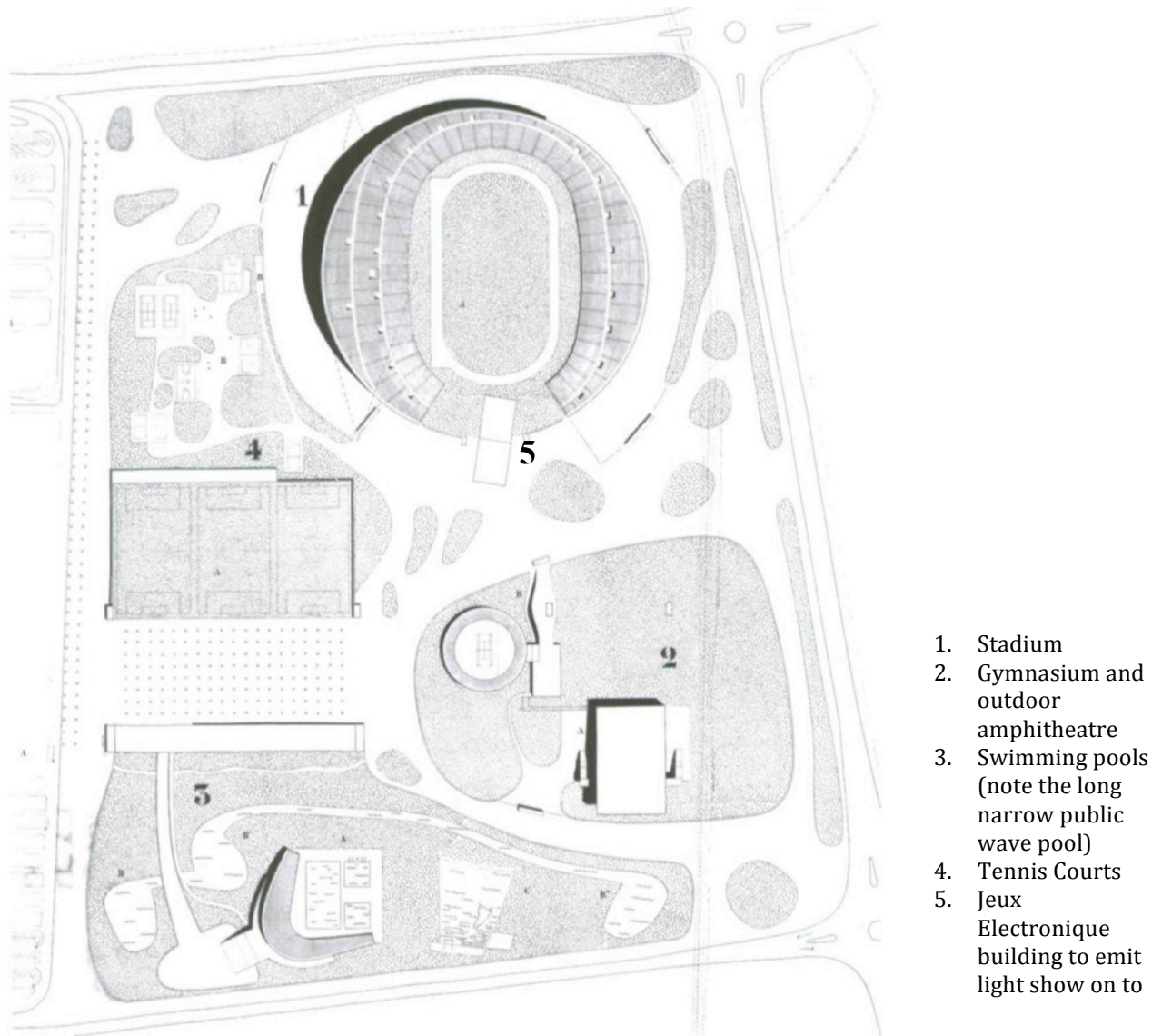
⁵³ Bernhardsson, “Faith in the Future,” 814.

⁵⁴ William Curtis, *Ideas and Forms*, (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1986), 194.

⁵⁵ Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, 85.

⁵⁶ Roulhier to Wogenscky (25 April 1973), FLC Archive, P4-11-149-002.

⁵⁷ Jose Oubrierie, Email exchange, November 5, 2014.



1. Stadium
2. Gymnasium and outdoor amphitheatre
3. Swimming pools (note the long narrow public wave pool)
4. Tennis Courts
5. Jeux Electronique building to emit light show on to

Figure 24. Le Corbusier, Master plan submitted as part of the 1958 proposal. Image from Fondation Le Corbusier (FLC) BAG 420.

1959-1963: Further delays to construction:

In 1959 the project continued with construction still on the client's agenda, however there were budgetary issues and a change in site location, causing a delay to any prospects of a construction date.⁵⁸ The original budget had increased from 1,500,000 Iraqi Dinars to 2,427,400 Dinars. By this time, Le Corbusier's talented assistant Iannis Xenakis, who was heavily involved in the project, (named *chef du projet* by Le Corbusier and is argued by some to have significantly authored the project)⁵⁹ had left the studio on 35 rue de Sèvres due to the relationship between the two becoming increasingly tense.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ For mention of site change see Roulier, "Historique du Contrat d'Etudes de la Cite Sportive de Baghdad en Iraq" (3 February 1964), FLC Archive, P4-7-91-001.

⁵⁹ Sharon Kanach in her book *Music and Architecture by Iannis Xenakis* argues that the question of authorship was somewhat blurry, claiming Xenakis was the author of the original presentation sent to Iraq, and that there were "Xenakian self-influences on certain aspects of this new project." 79-81. But

During 1960 and 1961 the project slowed down with some studies taking place by the Engineers of Présenté's office, but communications were rare with the new Government's now titled Revolution Ministry of Works and Housing: "our studies continued at low speed stream 1961 contacts with the Ministry (now the Revolution Ministry of Works and Housing) is becoming more and more rare." But in 1962 Tender and Construction documents were being prepared as the Government of Iraq requested a detailed document including the reasons for certain changes made by Le Corbusier to his original program: "It appeared then that the Ministry wanted a very complete file down to the smallest details, as well as the justifications of certain modifications made by Le Corbusier to his original program."⁶¹ Part of this investigation revealed that there had been some significant design changes. A document from December 1962 revealed the results from discussions between the Engineer and the client after site visits in Iraq. Platounoff notes :

During the visit made in Baghdad by Mr. J.P. Ahays, Chief Engineer of the Bureau d'Etudes Presente Consulting Engineers working in collaboration with Le Corbusier...several meeting have taken place in the 4th Technical Division in order to study and comment the documents submitted by the Consultant's Representatives....

It has been noted that certain modifications to the initial design has been made by the Consultants like ;

- a) The canopy over the west part of the Stadium has been omitted.
- b) The bridge connecting the parking areas to the stadium has been cancelled, and the consultants are proposing in their final proposed design a new traffic circulation system by using a larger back road.
- c) The conception of the Gymnasium is also a little different from the first proposed one. In the final design the large door connecting with the outside field has been cancelled as well as the sliding translucent roof.
- d) The conception of the restaurant has also been modified by shifting a part of it under the tiers of the main stadium and by creating in the vicinity of the Swimming Pool areas a smaller restaurant based on self service principles.⁶²

Mina Marefat takes an opposing position in her article "Mise au Point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium," stating "The documents leave little doubt that Le Corbusier was the author of the Baghdad City of Sport and that is was important to him in many ways." 37. Nonetheless Xenakis was undoubtedly second in charge next to Le Corbusier and his leaving the office would have been a detriment to the project.

⁶⁰ Xenakis, *Music and Architecture*, 7.

⁶¹ Roulier, "Historique du Contrat d'Etudes de la Cite Sportive de Baghdad en Iraq" (3 February 1964), FLC Archive, P4-7-91-001.

⁶² Platounoff, "Baghdad Stadium," Memorandum (16 December 1968), FLC Archive, P4-6-158-002.

The translucent roof over the Gymnasium and the large hangar-like door to open one whole side of the Gymnasium were abandoned due to thermal inefficiencies in the hot Iraqi climate.⁶³ But while this document was painstakingly being developed in the office of Présenté Engineers, in February of 1963 a new coup in Iraq created further doubt to the project's future when colonel Abdul Salam Arif overthrew General Kaseem.⁶⁴ This coup was due to the nationalist Kaseem's attempts to implement a decree that would see the Anglo-American owned Iraq Petroleum Company stripped of 99.5% of its concession, allowing him to establish a state owned oil company to control all of Iraq's oil industry. What led him to attempt this was the Iraq Petroleum Company's refusal to give in to his initial demands of a 20% state ownership and 55% share of their profits.⁶⁵ This led to his overthrow and execution by the Ba'athist party.

⁶³ Rémi Baudouï, "To Build a Stadium: Le Corbusier's Project for Baghdad, 1955-1973," *Azara* 33 (2008): 278.

⁶⁴ Roulier, "Historique du Contrat d'Etudes de la Cite Sportive de Baghdad en Iraq" (3 February 1964), FLC Archive, P4-7-91-001.

⁶⁵ Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 62.

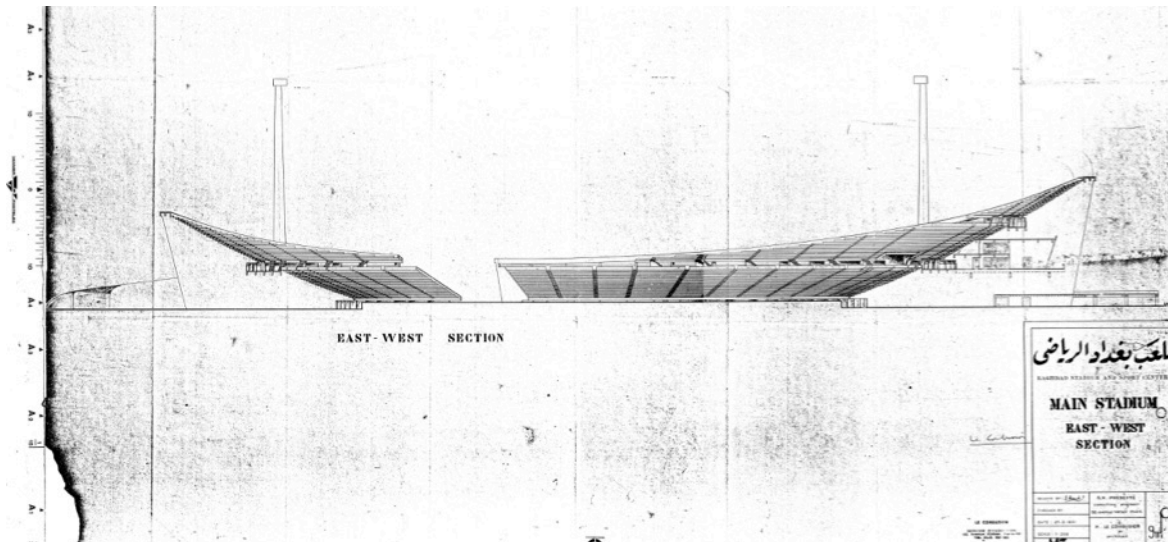


Figure 27. Le Corbusier, 1961, Section through Stadium. Image from FLC P4-13-14-001-002

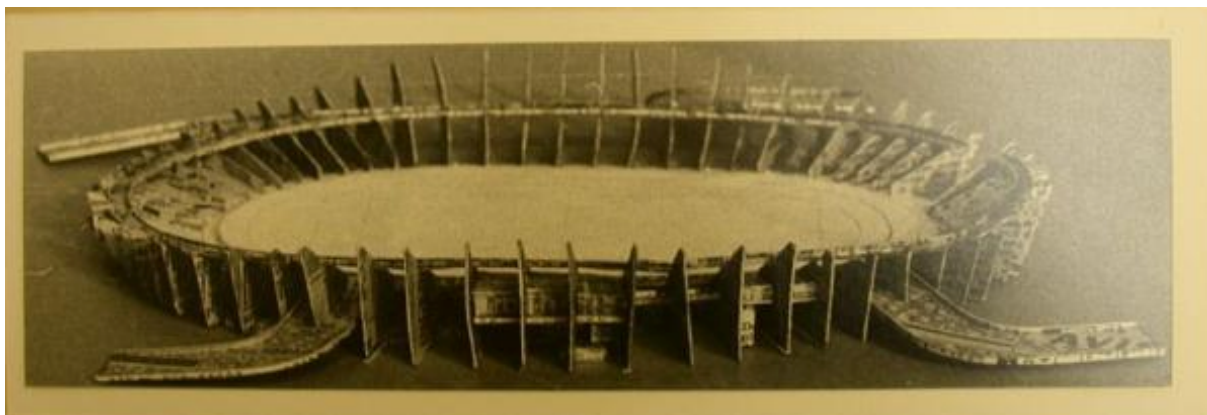


Figure 28. Le Corbusier, 1961 Paper Mache Model of Stadium. Image from CCA, Reference no. DR1993:0127:038:021, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/search/details/collection/object/394763>.

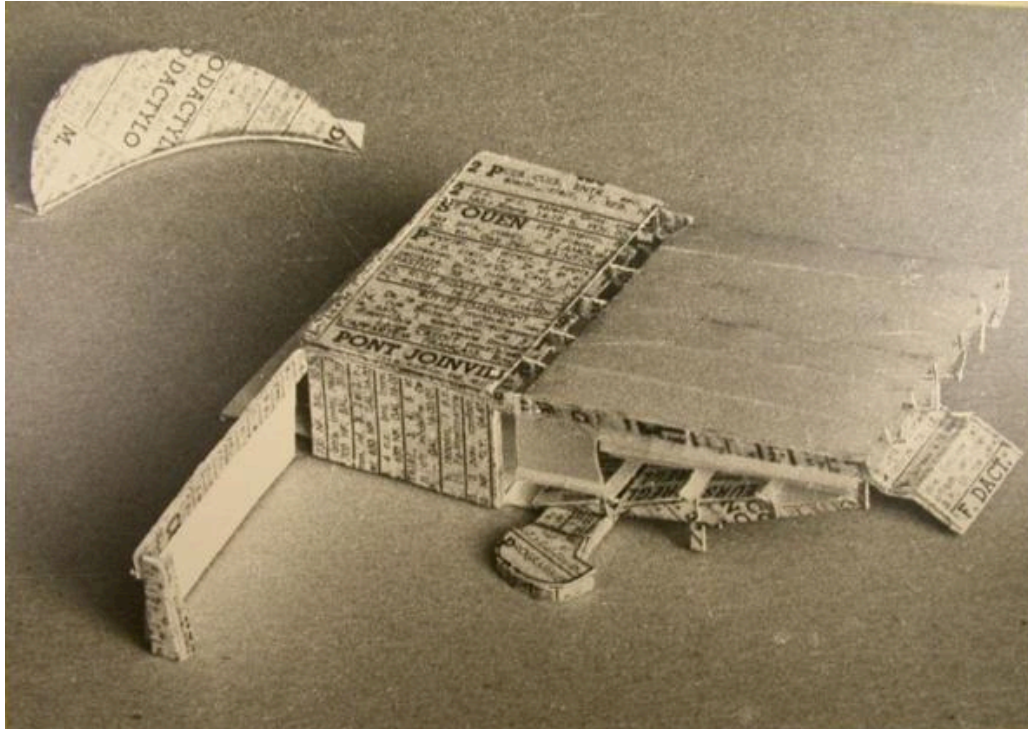


Figure 29. Le Corbusier, 1961 Paper Mache Model of Gymnasium. Image from CCA, Reference no. DR1993:0127:038:026, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/search/details/collection/object/394768>.

1964-1965:

In 1964, a document produced by Roulier from Présenté Engineers, revealed that the Iraqis were in fact still keen to construct the project, as he wrote, “the letter attached to document No. 8 clearly indicates the Government's intention to proceed with the studies and to proceed to execution as soon as possible.”⁶⁶ Then the very next year at this tragically optimistic point of the project, Le Corbusier passed away in August of 1965. What proceeded was an arduous journey to see any of the project built. Eventually, fifteen years after Le Corbusier’s death, only the Gymnasium was built. The stadium and all other components of the master plan were never constructed even though some scholarship suggests a “bastardized” version of the stadium was built, this was not the case. Mina Marefat states,

The stadium actually constructed in Baghdad was not built to Le Corbusier’s design. And certainly, by the time of its completion in 1980, it represented only a fraction of Le Corbusier’s overall plan, with important features omitted or left for an indefinite future. Owing to this, Corbu’s death, and the fact that a good part of architectural design of the stadium complex occurred outside his rue de Sèvres office, there may well have been a desire to relinquish ownership of what could have been perceived as a bastardized project.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Roulier, “Historique du Contrat d’Etudes de la Cite Sportive de Baghdad en Iraq” (3 February 1964), FLC Archive, P4-7-91-001.

⁶⁷ Marefat, “Mise au Point for Le Corbusier’s Baghdad Stadium,” 31.

As well as Marefat, Rémi Baudouï and Arnaud Dercelles in their piece “The Corbusian Sportive Body” state that “only the gymnasium and the stadium were built.”⁶⁸ However Deborah Gans in *The Le Corbusier Guide* notes that the gymnasium was eventually built “across from the Baghdad Stadium designed by F.K.D. Amaral on the east side of the Tigris River.”⁶⁹ Gans is correct, the Gymnasium was built next to the Gulbenkian Stadium designed by Portuguese Architect Francesco Keil do Amaral, under the funding of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. This stadium has been mistaken as a redesigned, “bastardized” version of Le Corbusier’s. Le Corbusier’s archive certainly does not suggest a redesign of the stadium ever took place either, even though the Fondation Le Corbusier show photographs of the stadium on their website.

In 1980 Le Corbusier’s Gymnasium and Outdoor Amphitheatre were eventually built and opened under the title of the *Saddam Hussein Gymnasium*.⁷⁰ Its location was directly opposite the now named Al-Shaab stadium, or as then described in a site report by Présenté’s office in 1974 as being “located next to the existing Gulbenkian Stadium” (note: this stadium was built in 1966).⁷¹ Therefore predominantly the confusion ensued due to the proximity of the Gymnasium’s (and Amphitheatre’s) eventual site location in relation to the Gulbenkian Stadium by Amaral, creating an eventual false link or connection between the two then unrelated projects.⁷² Therefore the project’s life from Le Corbusier’s passing to its partial construction and the reasons for it need to be accounted for to prove that the built stadium was not a redesign of Le Corbusier’s.

1965 and Beyond:

Very shortly after Le Corbusier died, the Iraqi officials were in contact with the Fondation Le Corbusier, who were only then establishing themselves, busily proving to authorities their authenticity as heirs to Le Corbusier’s work and unfinished projects, as outlined in the architect’s will.⁷³ The first architect to be approached, and asked to take over the project in Baghdad was José Luis Sert. The status of the project was described to him, by then Fondation President Maurice Besset, as soon to be built (if financial and political uncertainties were resolved by the Iraqi Government), as most of the plans and implementation documentation and studies were already completed, and that Sert’s role

⁶⁸ Rémi Baudouï and Arnaud Dercelles, “The Corbusian Sportive Body,” in *Le Corbusier: The Measures of Man*, ed. Olivier Cinqualbre and Frédéric Migayrou (Zurich: Scheidegger & Spiess, 2015), 83.

⁶⁹ Gans *The Le Corbusier Guide*, 254.

⁷⁰ Marefat, “Mise au Point for Le Corbusier’s Baghdad Stadium,” 32.

⁷¹ Présenté Roulier Engineering, “Preliminary Report on Site Layout: Baghdad Gymnasium and Outdoor Amphitheatre” (5 March 1974), FLC Archive, P4-11-161-006.

⁷² On the Fondation Le Corbusier’s website, photographs of this stadium are shown on the project’s page. “Stade, Bagdad, Iraq, 1956,” Fondation Le Corbusier, accessed April 22, 2018, <http://fondationlecorbusier.fr/corbuweb/morpheus.aspx?sysId=13&IrisObjectId=5179&sysLanguage=en-en&itemPos=55&itemCount=79&sysParentName=&sysParentId=64>.

⁷³ Will of Le Corbusier (16 June 1965), FLC Archive, P4-11-2-001-002.

would be largely a supervisory one.⁷⁴ Sert politely declined to take on the project, but presented to the Fondation recommendations in the way of Jerzy Soltan, Dolf Schnebli, and P.A. Emery. The latter of the three then agreed to take on the project (this all took place only a couple of months after Le Corbusier died).⁷⁵ They make it clear that they are acting as they consider Le Corbusier would want them to. At this point, doubt as to the project's completion appeared from both parties (FLC and Iraq), as Besset wrote to Emery, "due to political and financial difficulties, the project has not yet been completed, nor have the fees fully paid," and the requests of the Iraqis to the FLC, was to inform them of a successor should the project be implemented.⁷⁶ It is still unclear why Le Corbusier's scheme was abandoned. In 1966, all the construction drawings, completed under Le Corbusier were sent to Iraq. These drawings date from 1959 right through the 1964, with the other architects in Le Corbusier's office who worked on the project mentioned. These were Tavès, Jullian, Jose Oubrerie, and Rebutato.⁷⁷

Lack of communication between France and Iraq ensued over the next few years, when finally in February, 1969, a letter from Iraq to the FLC explained that fees had stopped being paid to the FLC as apparently they had not appointed a successor to implement the project, which at the time, was required by law in Iraq for the project to continue, even though P.A. Emery had apparently been appointed as successor. The letter stated, "in the case of Le Corbusier's fees, these were blocked as a result of the non-designation of Le Corbusier's heirs and the architect responsible for the construction of the Stadium."⁷⁸ Then in that same month, in a meeting at Présenté's office regarding the recovery of fees owed to the FLC from Iraq, it was revealed that the Iraqis requested the FLC confirm they had in fact made the selection of Emery to take responsibility of construction of the stadium, but with the caveat that construction would only take place if the Iraqi Government decided to build it. They wrote, "he also asked that the Foundation should confirm the choice of Mr. Emery as the architect to assume responsibility for the stadium's implementation should the Iraqi government decide to build it."⁷⁹ Over the following years, the Iraqis always preface the execution of the project by stating, "should the Iraqi Government decide to build it." Therefore any notion that the Gulbenkian stadium was an altered version of Le Corbusier's stadium is inaccurate as the Gulbenkian Stadium was built in 1966, and from the years 1969 through to 1972 the Iraqi government were still considering building Le Corbusier's stadium, proving that the two stadiums were in fact unrelated. Given the Gulbenkian

⁷⁴ Maurice Besset to José Luis Sert (14 October 1965), FLC Archive, P4-8-273-001-002.

⁷⁵ José Luis Sert to Maurice Besset (29 October 1965), FLC Archive P4-8-275-001, and Maurice Besset to José Luis Sert, (10 November 1965), FLC Archive, P4-8-276-001.

⁷⁶ Maurice Besset to P.A. Emery (10 November 1965), FLC Archive, P4-8-277-001.

⁷⁷ Maurice Besset to R. Andréini (30 June 1966), FLC Archive P4-8-284-001-002.

⁷⁸ F. Gardien, meeting minutes concerning the honoraries for le Stade Baghdad (19 February 1969), FLC Archive, P4-8-293-001-002.

⁷⁹ R. Andréini, "Honoraires Le Corbusier – Stade de Bagdad," (20 February 1969), FLC Archive, P4-8-297-001-002.

Stadium was already built in 1966, seemingly as a replacement for Le Corbusier's stadium (although this is unclear), it is surprising that the Iraqis would be writing to the FLC in 1969, showing that they had not yet committed to building his stadium. If another stadium had already been built, surely the Iraqis would let the Fondation and Emory know there was no chance of the commission proceeding. These questions regarding the intentions of the Iraqis remain unanswered. In February 1972, six years after the Gulbenkian stadium was constructed, the Iraqi Government finally made it clear to the FLC (and Présenté) that they only wished to construct the Gymnasium, and not the stadium.⁸⁰ It would appear, that had the Iraqis built the Gulbenkian stadium in 1966 as an altered version of Le Corbusier's stadium, they would not have concerned themselves with corresponding back-and-forth with the FLC, all the while making their intentions clear that the construction of the stadium was still a possibility. It also remains uncertain as to why they maintained the illusion that Le Corbusier's project was still a possibility. They would not have waited until 1972 to let them know they only wanted to build the Gymnasium. Besides this, if a project of a deceased architect was to continue, Iraqi law required a legal successor to be appointed by the appropriate bodies (in this case the FLC and French government).⁸¹ In May of 1973 the FLC officially accepted to take on the task of constructing the Gymnasium (and outdoor amphitheatre), as all fees had been settled between them and Iraq.⁸² Philippe Roulier, engineer from Présenté's firm took most control over the construction, with permission from the FLC (he had been on the project for most of its lifetime).⁸³ Over the next few years construction took place, and the Gymnasium opened in 1980,⁸⁴ just opposite, divided by a road and fence, from the Gulbenkian Stadium, creating in the end, a sports centre master plan, imperfect and fragmentary in its nature, tragically compromised in relation to Le Corbusier's original intentions.

⁸⁰ M. Ansari to G.M. Présenté (6 February 1972), FLC Archive, P4-11-140-003.

⁸¹ The Iraqi law in this area is made clear in A.R. Al-Saidi to P. Roulier (7 November 1973), FLC Archive, P4-9-13-001 and R.K. Chadirji to P. Roulier (March 31 1969), FLC Archive, P4-9-9-002.

⁸² A. Wogenscky to P. Roulier (18 May 1973), FLC Archive, P4-11-149-001.

⁸³ A. Wogenscky letter giving authority to P. Roulier to take over the Baghdad project (26 March 1973), FLC Archive, P4-11-29-001.

⁸⁴ Marefat, "Mise au Point for Le Corbusier's Baghdad Stadium," 32.

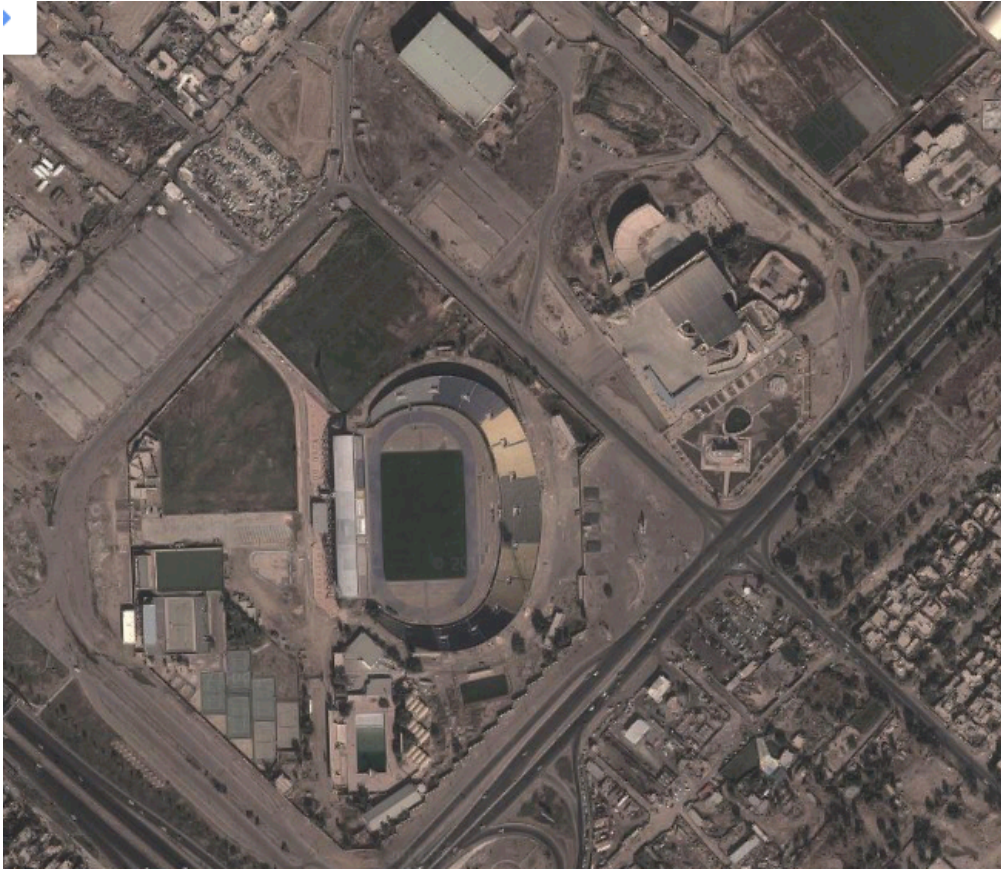


Figure 30. Aerial view of how the site currently exists, taken from Google Maps. The Gymnasium and Amphitheatre by Le Corbusier are located in the top-right of the image. Across the road from the Gymnasium is the Gulbenkian Stadium.

CHAPTER VII: Discussion on the Sports Ground and Stadia

Participation vs. Spectacle:

Le Corbusier claimed his *Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants* (1936) was entirely new, referring to the fact that it was not just a grandstand for watching sport, but an arena for mass demonstrations of physical spectacles, theatre, film, and even political rallies. He rightly notes that at the time, this type of project, where sport was a spectacle used as a demonstration of national health and well being, was trending across Europe, particularly in Berlin. So his project was a response to the apparent need for France to have a stadium to contain this spirit of spectacle in an arena, in architecture. But it was not merely a response to France's neighbours, it was part of an ongoing narrative in France surrounding sport and the well-being of its people, a narrative that coincides with Le Corbusier's transition from his sports grounds at the foot of the house, to the sports ground as a large arena. This trend of promoting everyday participation in sport was integral to Le Corbusier's urbanism in the 1920s.¹ At the time he wrote "exhibition sport has nothing to do with real sport; it is more allied to the theatre, the circus etc. The stadium provides a spectacle where other people's marvellously developed biceps and calves can be seen. Sport at the very door of one's house is needed... The sports ground must be at the door of the house." In his urban plans of the twenties and early thirties, sport was indistinguishable from the urban plan as Marc Perelman describes *Ville Radieuse* as an urban continuum of sports fields and factories.² Sport was everywhere, even inside the home as well as surrounding it. The urban plan was completely open to the point where Le Corbusier became worried that in *Ville Contemporaine* "the inhabitants of such a city would be seized by panic at the site of so much emptiness."³ The stadium treated sport and its relationship with Architecture and planning in complete contrast to how Le Corbusier had done so in his urbanism throughout the 1920s.

After World War I France had introduced legislation proposing to increase physical health and wellbeing by constructing more sports facilities, with the emphasis on revitalizing the youth.⁴ This propagation of the sporting agenda soon manifested itself into the need to build more stadiums as Robert Lewis notes, "as the French state and various political parties began to devote more attention to physical fitness policy and sport in the aftermath of World War I, the stadium occupied a prominent

¹ See chapter IV of this thesis.

² Marc Perelman. *Le Corbusier: une froide vision du monde*, (Paris: Michalon Éditeur, 2015), 231.

³ Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City*, trans. Pamela Knight, Eleanor Levieux, Derek Coltman, (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1964), 106. Originally published in France under the title *La Ville Radieuse*, 1933.

⁴ Robert W Lewis, "A Civic Tool of Modern Times": Politics, Mass Society, and the Stadium in Twentieth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 34, no.1 (Winter 2011), 159.

place in public discourse.”⁵ But the use of stadia soon became a political tool more concerned with the spectacle of sport and the *appearance* of being a physically fit nation rather than *actually* being a fit nation. Lewis states that various political groups realized they could capitalize “on the powerful connection between stadium space and bodily health to promote stadium-based spectacles as a visible manifestation of political vitality and mass support.”⁶ One example used by Lewis was the *Fête de la Jeunesse* in Lyon beginning in 1926, which involved an array of physical and gymnastic demonstrations. But he notes that the spectacle soon become just that, and not a representation of the real health and vitality of Lyon. It was entirely political and symbolic. Lewis states that “after several years, however, the *Fête de la Jeunesse* drew increasingly harsh criticism from the Lyonnais press, which perceived the event as a Potemkin village designed to glorify Herriot's administration and mask real inadequacies in Lyon's physical-fitness policies.”⁷ This also highlights the political nature of Le Corbusier’s stadium, which, had it been built, would have been a much grander version of the *Fête de la Jeunesse* representing France’s policies on health at a national scale. This example also places Le Corbusier’s stadium within a longer, historical narrative, somewhat negating his claim that his stadium was an entirely new phenomenon. In fact the arena used as a political tool stretches back even further than simply post-war France, as Lewis states, “French stadium demonstrations also tapped a longer tradition of collective political activity, dating back to the French Revolution.”⁸ Le Corbusier’s project and the idea that Architecture can act as a facilitator of the mass spectacle is not without precedent. In fact there is a long history where the concoction of culture, politics, and sport are as Le Corbusier put it, “*mise dans l’unité, par l’architecture*”⁹ – in the unit that is Architecture. Deborah Gans claimed that Le Corbusier’s *Centre National* “descended from the vast public dreams of the French revolutionary architect Etienne-Louis Boullée.”¹⁰

The Stadium and the Crowd:

In the late 18th Century (c.1782) Etienne-Louis Boullée, one of the great architects of public monuments, proposed a *Coliseum* analogous to Le Corbusier’s *Centre National*. Boullée’s *Coliseum* was to seat 300,000 spectators and like Le Corbusier’s project, was dedicated to public festivals of a national kind, as Boullée wrote, it “would enable the inhabitants of Paris to enjoy public festivities... Yes, national celebrations. All that plays on our senses is reflected in our souls. It is on

⁵ Lewis, “A Civic Tool of Modern Times,” 156.

⁶ Lewis, “A Civic Tool of Modern Times,” 157.

⁷ Lewis, “A Civic Tool of Modern Times,” 160.

⁸ Lewis, “A Civic Tool of Modern Times,” 182.

⁹ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d’Architecture Zurich, 1947), 90.

¹⁰ Deborah Gans, *The Le Corbusier Guide* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 254.

this principle that all national celebrations should be based.”¹¹ Boullée emphasised that the Coliseum could be instrumental in maintaining order amongst France’s citizens: “and if they [national celebrations] were all thus, they would doubtless provide an effective means of inciting and preserving morality,”¹² and in this, he is decidedly political, stating “the plan for a circus, which I am including, is intended to serve both moral and political ends.”¹³

The two Architects and their projects are analogous in how they both function as a tool for the facilitation of mass public celebrations, and also in how they both treat the crowd. The mass that both architects are referring to is concerned with France on a national scale, responding to national celebrations. The relationship between the crowd and the nation is one of identity according to Elias Canetti, in his book *Crowds and Power*, he notes,

We can take for granted that no member of a nation ever sees himself as alone. As soon as he is named, or names himself, something more comprehensive moves into his consciousness, a larger unit to which he feels himself to be related... The larger unit to which he feels himself related is always a crowd or a crowd symbol... Every member of a nation always sees himself, or his picture of himself, in a fixed relationship to the particular symbol which has become the most important for his nation.¹⁴

Canetti defines the distinction between two types of crowd, the open and the closed. He states “the natural crowd is the open crowd; there are no limits whatever to its growth; it does not recognize houses, doors or locks.”¹⁵ What is important to note here is the open crowd’s complete disregard for architecture, ignoring “houses, doors or locks.” Canetti also describes the open crowd as if it is an organic, living entity absorbing people to survive. This type of crowd is one of spontaneity and disruption, perfect for protest and upheaval, the complete opposite of what Architecture symbolized, the opposite of order and stability. Whereas the open crowd disregards architecture, its counterpart, the closed crowd, required architecture to function. The closed crowd has a distinct border and “renounces growth.” The following extract from *Crowds and Power* describing the closed crowd is a perfect depiction of the stadium and how it functions in relation to the crowd:

The first thing to be noticed about it is that it [the closed crowd] has a boundary. It establishes itself by accepting its limitation. It creates a space for

¹¹ Etienne-Louis Boullée, (c1790), “Architecture, Essay on Art,” in Boullée’s *Treatise on Architecture*, ed. Helen Rosenau, trans. Sheila de Vallée, (London: Alec Tiranti, 1953), 101.

¹² Boullée, “Architecture, Essay on Art,” 101.

¹³ Boullée, “Architecture, Essay on Art,” 101.

¹⁴ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart, (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), 170-71. Originally published in German as *Masse und Macht* by Claassen Verlag, Hamburg, 1960.

¹⁵ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 16.

itself which it will fill. This space can be compared to a vessel into which liquid is being poured and whose capacity is known. The entrances to this space are limited in number, and only these entrances can be used; the boundary is respected whether it consists of stone, of solid wall, or of some special act of acceptance, or entrance fee...

The boundary prevents disorderly increase, but it also makes it more difficult for the crowd to disperse and so postpones its dissolution.¹⁶

The politics of the closed crowd is one that imposes order and discipline upon its members, if not overtly, it is simply done by the act of placing the crowd within a restrained border. Lewis picks up on this notion in his discussion around the stadium in France as a political tool stating “the stadium form of politics, however, also entailed efforts to discipline the crowd, a discipline imposed internally through an emphasis on self-control and mediatized descriptions of orderly crowds, and externally via the structure of the stadium space itself, which lent itself to overt police surveillance.”¹⁷

For Le Corbusier’s stadia, containing sport and its symbol of the revitalization of France’s (and later Iraq’s) physical wellbeing within a defined arena projects a departure from the vast openness of the sporting cities of *Ville Contemporaine* and *Ville Radieuse* where sports grounds occupied most of the open space around the residential quarters. The role of sport in those urban plans was less about symbol and more aligned with active participation. Now with stadia included in his *œuvre*, the participant’s role was to be part of a spectacle within a closed crowd. A common understanding of how Le Corbusier treated the individual in society was that of a dichotomy between the individual and the collective, in the lineage of Fourier’s socialism, typified in Peter Serenyi’s reading of Le Corbusier’s public housing as fusing “monasticism and Fourierism.”¹⁸ In this instance, the subject/object relationship is made up from a series of tensions between the individual subject and the objective world of the collective. However in Le Corbusier’s stadium, this reading does not really apply.

In the mass/crowd conceived of by Boullée and Le Corbusier, there is no subject, only the object. The tensions which emerge in Serenyi’s historical reading: “private and public, individuality and collectivity, personal and impersonal, unity and diversity,”¹⁹ do not occur for Le Corbusier’s crowd in *le Centre National*. The individual is now part of one large unit. The same is true for Boullée’s project, where he draws attention not to the individual phenomenological experience of being present

¹⁶ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 17.

¹⁷ Lewis “A Civic Tool,” 157.

¹⁸ Peter Serenyi, “Le Corbusier, Fourier, and the Monastery of Ema.” *The Art Bulletin* 49, no.4, (December 1967): 283.

¹⁹ Serenyi, “Le Corbusier, Fourier, and the Monastery of Ema,” 277.

in the arena, but to the image or object of the 300,000 spectators, as he said, “imagine three hundred thousand people gathered in an amphitheatre where none could escape the eyes of the crowd... The spectators would be the elements of this surprising spectacle and they alone would be responsible for its beauty...”²⁰ The subject gazing at itself becomes an object. The same is true for Le Corbusier, where throughout his descriptions of his stadium, the individual is not once emphasized or described via its subjective relationship with the project. When it is alluded to that the mass or crowd is in fact made up from many individuals (*une foule d’hommes*), it is only emphasized that their unanimity is all that matters, as Le Corbusier wrote, “*Il est aujourd’hui maintes circonstances où une foule d’hommes doit prouvoir communier dans l’unanimité...*”²¹ The mass/crowd precisely *is* the object, there are no distinctions. Therefore in Le Corbusier’s public stadium, this national public is not a crowd where the individual-communal relationship is emphasised. In the national mass, there is no individual/subject *or* communal: there is only *the mass*, stripped of its subjectivity.

Robert Fishman in his essay “From the Radiant City to Vichy: Le Corbusier’s Plans and Politics, 1928-1942” presents a slightly different understanding of how Le Corbusier envisaged the relationship between the spectator and the spectacle in his stadium. Fishman writes,

What is the relationship between the leader on the platform and the masses on the field? How can a regime of authority create a feeling of participation? Le Corbusier could never say. He knew only that both must be present in his ideal city. They were two elements in a synthesis he could never define. In his many drawings and plans for the National Centre, the great stadium is always empty.²²

However this is not actually the case. The project *is* depicted with people in it, drawn anonymously in the form of dots to reinforce the singular image of the mass as an object. This is due, in part, that within the crowd, “no distinctions count.”²³ Fishman overlooks the nature of the crowd. Where he asks, “what is the relationship between the leader on the platform and the masses on the field?” it is that, in Canetti’s words:

Every spectator has a thousand in front of him, a thousand heads, as long as he is there, all others are there too; whatever excites him, excites them; and he sees it...the differing details which make individuals of them are blurred; they all look alike and they behave in a similar manner and he notices in them only

²⁰ Boullée, “Architecture, Essay on Art,” 101.

²¹ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, 94.

²² Robert Fishman, “From the Radiant City to Vichy: Le Corbusier’s Plans and Politics, 1928-1942,” in *The Open Hand: Essays on Le Corbusier*, ed. Russell Walden (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977), 269.

²³ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 15.

the things which he himself is full of. Their visible excitement increases his own.²⁴

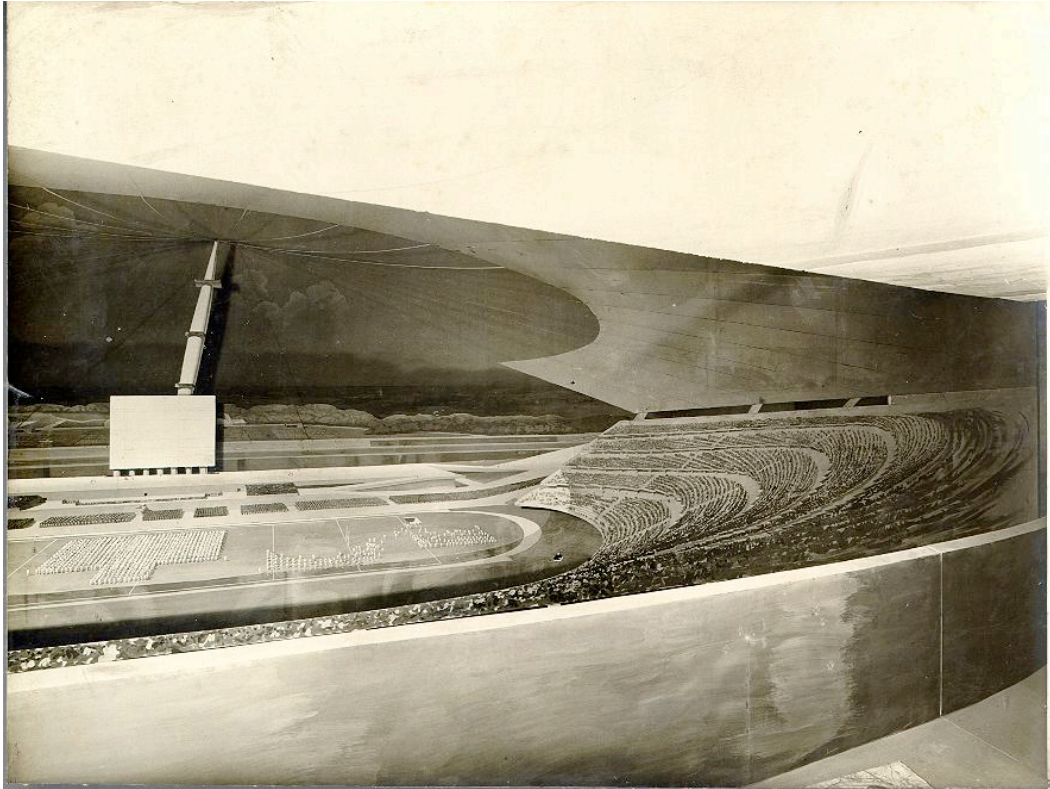


Figure 31. Le Corbusier, Rendering of the stadium as it would look in full use. The crowd and the participants on the field are depicted as dots. Image from the FLC archive. L2-14-36-001, 1936.

This image of the full participation of the spectator in the stadium is fully understood by Le Corbusier as he stated “there are now many circumstances where a crowd of men must be able to communicate unanimously that can draw on the emotion given by art.”²⁵ The full emersion of the crowd in the spectacle was also a significant attribute of Boullée’s stadium, as he wrote, “the spectators would be the elements of this surprising spectacle and they alone would be responsible for its beauty...”²⁶ “It is as if the two hundred and fifty thousand spectators were driving two hundred and fifty thousand chariots...”²⁷ The merging of spectator and spectacle was understood as being inherent in the nature of political spectacles within the stadium, especially in France, as Lewis points out that in one particular instance where a communist party rally took place in a stadium in France, “this sort of behaviour effaced any distinction between "spectating" and "participating"; it bound everyone in the stadium together in the struggle against fascism.”²⁸ It is not the absence of the human being that defines the objecthood of the mass: quite the opposite, it is the presence of humans *en masse* which

²⁴ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 28.

²⁵ Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, 94.

²⁶ Boullée, “Architecture, Essay on Art,” 101.

²⁷ Boullée, “Architecture, Essay on Art,” 103.

²⁸ Lewis, “A Civic Tool,” 167.

give it its ontology. Le Corbusier's neutral depiction of people painted as dots on the page only reinforced this reading and strengthened his understanding of the arena and the function of the mass. Even in his diagrams the crowd is represented as a single unit, in the form of a human body. This is the connection that Fishman fails to allude to, that the crowd, and the leader on the platform, are all part of the same unit.

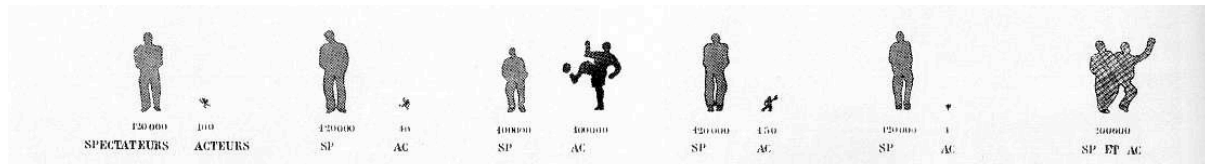


Figure 32. Diagrams showing the different levels of crowd participation. Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier & P. Jeanneret Œuvre Complète 1934-1938*, ed. Max Bill (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture Zurich, 1947), 94.

The Stadium as a Regime of Power:

Fishman is accurate on one point, that is, the “regime of authority” in which *le Centre National* was conceived. In this case the particular political group was Syndicalism. As Fishman states “Le Corbusier put forward his most revealing vision of political life in a syndicalist society: the National Centre of Collective festivals for 100,000 people.”²⁹ Le Corbusier envisioned his stadium to rival that of Berlin’s and France’s other neighbours as he wanted France “to do better than Berlin, rather than copy or be average.”³⁰ At the same time as Le Corbusier was prompting France to do better than Berlin, Hitler was promoting the “importance of creating stadia for political spectacle and for forging a “new breed” of men prepared to sacrifice itself for the violent regeneration of society.”³¹ Hitler wanted to build a 400,000-seat horseshoe shaped stadium for war games, rallies, and sport.³² Note the closed crowd’s ability to impose the will of the dominant order upon its participants, how Hitler wished to utilize stadia to forge a new breed of men, willing to sacrifice themselves for society.

Here we see Le Corbusier’s stadia again situated within a broader historical and philosophical lineage of the public arena: the mass games and regimes of control and order. In Boullée’s chapter on his Coliseum, he included an extract from a *Memorandum on Circuses* by Abbé Brotier, where the archetypal stadium or arena for public spectacles was discussed: the ancient Roman circus. The Roman circus is the ultimate precedent for Le Corbusier’s *Centre National*, where culture, politics, and the public all converge into the arena and are embodied in the crowd. What is ultimately drawn from the circus is that of its symbolic value. Brotier described it as the “prop of imperial Domination

²⁹ Fishman, “From the Radiant City to Vichy,” 269.

³⁰ Le Corbusier to Georges Huisman, Director General of the Beaux-Arts (31 March 1938), FLC Archive, II-19-27-001.

³¹ Lewis, “A Civic Tool,” 166.

³² Lewis, “A Civic Tool,” 166.

and the People's delight."³³ The games that took place within the arena were often re-enactments of real battles, a symbolic violence, and at the same time, the arena and games themselves were a prop or symbol of the ruling hegemony. For Julius Caesar, it was the prop of imperial domination, for Boullée, a prop of national well-being and celebration, for Hitler a tool for violent regeneration, and for Le Corbusier, a prop for a "regime of authority," of a National Syndicalist politics, in the context of *le Centre National*. For Baghdad the same could be said.

This idea of the symbol, the notion that what occurs inside the arena, as well as the arena itself, is a representation of national values, and is present in all three projects. As to what occurs inside the arena, Canetti suggests that "these performances...supplant needs for something harsher and more violent,"³⁴ they sublimate a possibly inherent need or want for violence within the citizen, therefore preventing them from carrying out such acts outside the arena and upsetting the ruling order of things. Brotier described one of Caesar's games:

The last day of the games given by Caesar was worthy of a warrior people and of the hero who had just celebrated four victories. Caesar had had the turning posts taken out of the Circus to make room for two camps so that Rome could see all the scenes of war. On this martial day, the assembly admired twenty Elephants defeated by Five hundred foot soldiers, and another twenty elephants, their towers on their backs, each carrying sixty soldiers, assaulted and besieged by five hundred foot soldiers and five hundred cavalry.³⁵

Here there is a convergence of real and symbolic violence. Caesar's games are an example of how the spectacle of violence, or the symbol of violence, is in itself a means to prevent real violence outside of the arena. In any authoritarian environment, such displays of spectacular violence are used as a means of discipline and control of the citizens. It is not simply to prevent other violence but also to prevent ordinary freedoms or rights through terror and intimidation, analogous to the frenzied crowd during the "Two Minutes Hate" in George Orwell's *1984*.³⁶ This is why it is important for Boullée and Le Corbusier that the crowd be contained, so it [the crowd] can experience violence only through a symbolic participation in order not to commit real violence and disrupt the hegemonic order. As Slavoj Žižek suggests, "the outbreak of 'real' violence is conditioned by a symbolic deadlock. 'Real'

³³ Boullée, "Architecture, Essay on Art," 102.

³⁴ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 21.

³⁵ Abbé Brotier quoted in Boullée, "Architecture, Essay on Art," 102.

³⁶ George Orwell, *1984*, (Chancellor Press: London, 1984), 23-28. In the Two Minutes Hate the crowd forms a collective rage, creating a violent scene against a common enemy, but Orwell notes it is not a real violence but an abstract one. Immediately after the frenzy the crowd is exposed to the party slogans and rejoicing immediately follows. This is a good example of the crowd having order imposed upon it as a singular unit stripped of individuality.

violence is a kind of acting out that emerges when the symbolic fiction that guarantees the life of a community is in danger.”³⁷

Caesar used the contained mass and the games to show the irrelevance of the old republic and remind the citizens of the new power of the empire. Throwing games was a means to rise through the political ranks. Boullée’s contention was to maintain the order of the revolution against the *ancien regime* of the monarchy; and Le Corbusier was part of a wide sentiment across all of early 20th Century continental European politics to rid the world of individual bourgeois capitalism, and establish a new politics, whether it was Bolshevism, or Communism, or Fascism, or Syndicalism. The public space of the arena has always demoted the notion of individual free subjectivity and promoted the will of the nation/masses as a single unit.

The mass spectacle was not unique to one side of the political spectrum. The mass theatre of Bolshevik USSR, and the mass spectacles and theatre of fascist Italy both shared a common enemy. Jeffrey Schnapp accurately notes that it was not necessarily a case of fascism *or* bolshevism, but that of fascism *and* bolshevism versus individual bourgeois society, “to institute a theatre of the future...of and for the masses that would end...the crisis of the Bourgeois theatre. Against the bourgeois stage’s emphasis on individual psychology...”³⁸ Le Corbusier was not immune from this political and cultural milieu of Continental Europe. His early work was more-or-less a technocratic take against individual bourgeois economics. His sports grounds were for the individuals and the collective as a larger group of productive citizens. But then in the 1930s with *le Centre National* he became caught up in the same battle between the future and the past – the future being that of a Nation made up from a mass, embodied in his mass theatre of *le Centre National*; and the past being that of the individual’s purpose or role within a productive city. *Le Centre National* rages against this old politics. In this sense, Le Corbusier’s work around sport and the arena provides us with a symbol of his broader cultural and political progression of his work, situated within a long political lineage of the public and the arena, not excluding his contemporaries.

Caesar used the arena firstly to advance his own political ambitions, and secondly to establish and display his power to his people. Boullée saw this as a precedent in which his own Coliseum could preserve the morality of the Nation’s citizens, “governed no longer by a monarchy...but by a republican state.”³⁹ And here Boullée’s notion of the free citizen is that of the anonymous citizen, free from the monarchy, however completely under the order or regime of the republic. Pier Vittorio

³⁷ Slavoj Žižek, “Invisible ideology: Political violence between fiction and fantasy,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1, no.1 (1996): 22.

³⁸ Jeffrey Schnapp, “18 BL: Fascist Mass Spectacle,” *Representations*, no.43 (Summer 1993): 92.

³⁹ Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 142.

Aureli understands this in his description of Boullée's monuments and his emphasis on free movement and circulation through the city and its monuments, and the free citizen as that of the anonymous citizen: it is not the individual who is free, but the new order/hegemony as a totality that is free from the *ancien regime*: the mass is apparently free, but not necessarily the individual. The stadium embodies this paradox. Whilst in general, the crowd, whether open or closed (disruptive or submissive) is made up of anonymity, the closed crowd is an anonymous mass in unison, with no possibility for an individual to break free or act on their own accord due to the boundary of the stadium. The disruptive open crowd allows for individual expression, the closed does not, reinforcing the stadium's role to impose order and the national agenda upon its participant spectators.

CHAPTER VIII: Conclusion

The primary purpose of this thesis was to present a history of sport and stadia in Le Corbusier's *œuvre* by examining urban and architectural projects where sport was a dominant theme. Sport is a surprisingly common theme in Le Corbusier's urban theories and architectural projects, yet has not been subjected to any rigorous analysis in Corbusean scholarship, which is why the topic is an important one. However beyond simply presenting a history, it was essential to appreciate the significance of sport as a theme in Le Corbusier's work, and how it influenced, and was influenced by other elements surrounding his work such as the political and theoretical frameworks surrounding the architect and his urban theories, not to mention the formal qualities portrayed in the architectural projects. This thesis therefore presents a largely untold and detailed history of Le Corbusier and sport.

Overall the thesis is presented chronologically in three distinct phases: firstly 1920-1930, secondly 1936-38, and thirdly post-WWII-1980. The first phase reveals how sport began to appear in Le Corbusier's work, and it details three main urban projects, *Ville Contemporaine* (1922), *Plan Voisin* (1925), and *Ville Radieuse* (1930). In this decade, in all three of these projects, sport was a concept explored by Le Corbusier at an urban scale. He was not interested in stadiums or what he described as "exhibition sport." He wanted sport to be an activity that every citizen partook of on a daily basis. To achieve this, sports grounds were to be a ubiquitous part of the city landscape in and around the housing districts. "Sport at the foot of the houses" was his decree. But it was not only at the ground level, as the rooftop spaces of the apartment blocks were also dedicated to physical activity. Sport was ubiquitous in all three of the urban plans.

This begs the question as to why so much of the open space in Le Corbusier's cities was dedicated to sport? The answer to this question differs per project, and reflects the theoretical and political frameworks in which each project was conceived. Firstly in *Ville Contemporaine* Le Corbusier wanted to create a model for the hygienic city. He wanted to cure the ills that the cramped conditions of Paris created. He saw open space and physical activity as remedies for an ailing France. But *Ville Contemporaine* was also a technocratic, industrial vision for a city based on scientific management models such as Taylorism. Therefore the hygienic city was also a model for a productive city. Sport was an instrument in this function to create a more productive citizen. The placing of sports grounds at the foot of the houses made it an activity impossible to escape, and more accessible to participate in after a day of work, the purpose of which was to rejuvenate the worker, under the guise of leisure, to create more efficient producers. This was not only about the rejuvenation of the individual; it was about rejuvenating the nation. He attributed France's state of "demoralization" to its cramped and unhygienic cities. Part of his solution was to create open space in the city to accommodate sports

grounds so the city would be a hygienic city. This was all in order to achieve what he referred to as the “spirit of mass production.”

Plan Voisin further ties his urban projects to an industrial framework as it was commissioned by a “captain of industry,” the head of the Voisin Motor company. This project also connected sport to a specific political movement. Like *Ville Contemporaine*, hygiene and productivity, which sport was a tool to achieve both, were also main themes of *Plan Voisin*. Subsequently one of the first French Fascist groups, *Faisceau des Combattants et Producteurs*, showed interest in Le Corbusier through their admiration of his *Plan Voisin*. His neighbour, the *Faisceau* member, Dr Pierre Winter introduced Le Corbusier to this group, and it was he too who introduced Le Corbusier to the benefits of sport. Winter’s interest in *Plan Voisin* was the hygienic element, but the group’s leader, George Valois, was interested in the industrial aspect of the city and the idea of the “industrial producer.”

By 1930, members of this fascist group, after it had disbanded, led Le Corbusier to the political ideology of Syndicalism. One of the main obsessions of the Syndicalists was the revitalisation of the body and the rebirth of man. *Ville Radieuse* was conceived during this period and unequivocally reflects the Syndicalist notions of the body. In this urban plan Le Corbusier was not as optimistic about the machine age, as he refers to its failures. He was more concerned with the biological needs of man. The way in which sport manifests in *Ville Radieuse* was still very similar to the previous two urban plans (at the foot of the house and on the rooftops), however the political framework in which it was proposed differs. In this plan Le Corbusier wanted to reduce the working day to only 5 hours, therefore creating more time for leisure. It was about the rebirth of the human body for physical and moral health, and not only for productivity: his influences had changed.

The second phase of sport introduced Le Corbusier to the stadium when he designed a 100,000 seat stadium for Paris called *le Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants*. This project too was considered to be a Syndicalist vision. Inspired by Syndicalist politics, but also by the general politics of the time in Europe, Le Corbusier proposed a stadium where a multiplicity of activities could occur and where the audience would feel just as much part of the performance as the performers themselves. Unlike the participation in everyday sports at the foot of the house in his urban plans, he was now concerned with creating an environment where participating in the spectacle of sport was as important as participating in sport itself. It was not only sport to be performed in the arena, rather, sport was but one function intertwined with theatre, music, film, speeches, and political rallies. Overall it was a centre of culture. The main focus was now not on individuals’ participation in sport, but on a crowd of people being absorbed in the spectacle of sport. The crowd became a singular unit: unanimity was key. Sport was symbolic, played out alongside theatre.

The third phase encompassed Le Corbusier's late work (Post WWII). It was not until the 1950s that Le Corbusier would be asked to design another stadium, but in the meantime, the 1940s saw the first of his *Unite d'Habitations* constructed, and these housing projects included sport concepts first presented by Le Corbusier in the 1920s and 1930s in *Ville Contemporaine* and *Ville Radieuse*. Sport was at the foot of the house, the pilotis freed the ground plane, and roof gardens were utilised for sport and recreation. They were the embodiment of his earlier conceptions in his original urban plans for the housing districts. However beyond these housing schemes, sport as a theme did not have as much priority in his urban plans in the 1940s as it did in the 1920s and 1930s. Then in the 1950s he was tasked with designing three stadiums: one in Chandigarh, one in Firminy, and one in Baghdad. The stadium planned for Chandigarh was not an important project for Le Corbusier and was not developed in detail beyond its inclusion in his master plan for the city. Firminy was the only stadium fully constructed out of the three, but it was not a large stadium. Baghdad although never built fully, was the largest project and consisted of a complete sports master plan of an Olympic scale including a stadium, gymnasium, amphitheatre, tennis courts, and swimming pools. This project embodied ideas about sport from both the first and the second phases outlined above, but is not particularly well known or documented, hence why I chose to present a detailed history of this stadium over the other two. It best embodies the late phase of sport in Le Corbusier's *œuvre*. Ideas carried over from the first phase (1920-1930) were that the whole sports complex was free to enter, only costing money to enter each facility individually. It was one large urban sports park with individuals free to walk through any time. He wanted the public to participate in sporting activities, not only the athletes, therefore he included a public wave pool. The Baghdad Stadium was also a direct descendant of *le Centre National de Réjouissances Populaires de 100,000 Participants*. It too was a stage for not only sport, but also for music, theatre, political speeches, and film, just like the previous stadium. To present film in the stadium the concept of the *Jeux Electroniques* was proposed. This concept of the electronic games was developed in Le Corbusier's Philip's Pavilion (1958). So too was the hyperbolic paraboloid form, which was also to be a feature of the roof canopy of the Baghdad stadium, analogous to the tensile roof structure proposed in *le Centre National de Réjouissances*.

Sport for Le Corbusier began in the 1920s as a means for everyday activity within an urban environment. He then developed ideas of sport as a spectacle in his first stadium in 1936, where complex concepts of the crowd and its participation with the spectacle were developed. Then finally he combined both of these ideas in a sporting master plan in Baghdad. All throughout this history sport is not an isolated theme in his work, but is influenced by numerous external factors such as the political context in which the projects were conceived. This thesis has created new knowledge around the history of sport and stadia in Le Corbusier's *œuvre*. It has revealed that his sporting work can be correlated with the political affiliations he had at the time of the work's conception, providing the political context and philosophical framework for sport in his urban and architectural work. It also

shows a continuity of thought from Le Corbusier's early work right through to his late work on the particular subject of sport and its role in the urban environment, which is contrary to the common notion that his late phase of work was vastly different to the work early in his career. This is not to say there is no defining 'late phase' of his work, but that it should not always be viewed through an isolated lens. This project opens potential future research into the current contentious topic of Le Corbusier and politics. I have provided a link between the two topics of sport and politics, but it could be further elucidated in more depth, just exactly what the political implications of sport were for Le Corbusier. To follow, this could position Le Corbusier as influential in creating a modern precedence for the way in which current-day stadia is politicised. Today that context is largely capitalism and economy, but the way in which the stadium is instrumental and symbolic of modern politics by positioning sport alongside mass cultural events in the same arena is reflective of Le Corbusier's understanding of the function of the stadium in an urban context. It shows Le Corbusier understood the political, cultural, and even economic benefits stadia could provide when not simply used as just a sports ground, but as a stage for all spectacles, sporting and cultural, which is the standard function for any large stadium today.

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