

Manuscript version: Author's Accepted Manuscript

The version presented in WRAP is the author's accepted manuscript and may differ from the published version or Version of Record.

Persistent WRAP URL:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/160792>

How to cite:

Please refer to published version for the most recent bibliographic citation information.

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions.

Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

Please refer to the repository item page, publisher's statement section, for further information.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk.

Abstract

Urbanists have long condemned the reconstruction of France after the Great War as a failure. Articulated in the 1920s, this distorted view has largely gone unchallenged and continues to frame the historiography. This article revisits dominant assessments of the post-1918 urban reconstruction and positions the mobilisation of French urbanists in the wider transition from war to peace. Urban reconstruction underlined the uncertain nature of the aftermath of the conflict and proved both contested and uneven. While French urbanists imputed its failure to the local populations, this article argues that if failure there was, it should be laid at their feet. Urbanists proved unable to apprehend to the specificities of the post-war reconstruction and of the political economy in which they, as well as the devastated cities, had to operate. As those practitioners floundered, key tenets of urbanist thinking nonetheless prevailed.

When the Armistice of 1940 forced France to confront the challenge of reconstruction as well as her military defeat, one rare point of consensus appeared among policymakers, experts, and commentators. The reconstruction that followed the end of the First World War had been an unmitigated failure; one which should in no circumstance be allowed to be repeated. Jean Berthelot, the Minister in charge of reconstruction under the Vichy Regime spoke for many in 1941:

It is now commonplace to underline all the lacunae which marred the work of reconstruction undertaken after 1919. At that time, a victorious France, which had all necessary means at her disposal to rebuild on healthy foundations, did not know how

to impose the indispensable discipline and to put everyone and everything in its place.¹

To many, the post-1918 reconstruction had been a missed opportunity to modernise the country and its cities in particular.² As Martine Morel put it, 'men of the Art and politicians were united in their reprobation of this shameful period' and denounced it for its 'Monstrous errors'³ and 'architectural discordance'.⁴

Urbanists lambasted their predecessors for their reluctance to radically break with established conventions, for the financial mismanagement of the improperly termed 'first reconstruction', and for ceding the initiative, in too many instances, to operators without any appropriate professional qualifications. This wholesale condemnation, however, offered a distorted view of the post-WWI reconstruction for at least two reasons.

First, it underplayed the undeniable, if relative, success of the Republic in meeting a challenge of unprecedented magnitude. By November 1918, France had to contend with the deaths of over 1.3 million men, while over another million had been permanently incapacitated in combat. Soon, the state and the country's economy also faced extraordinary pension costs that hovered between 2 and 3 per cent of GDP throughout the interwar period. As a result of the German invasion, some of its most productive regions were subjected to foreign occupation or transformed into a ruined battlefield. 10 departments of the north and north-east of the country had endured such destruction that 91% of their settlements had suffered material damage. Of those, 620 communes had been entirely destroyed by military operations.⁵ Together, in 1913, the devastated regions had accounted for 20% of the national wheat production, for 43% of electricity generation, 55% of coal extraction, 80% of steel output, and 90% of French iron ore.⁶ Yet, in January 1924, less than six years after the Armistice, France's industrial production had almost doubled to finally exceed its

¹ J. Berthelot, 'Avant-propos', *L'Architecture française*, 13 (1941), 3

² D. Voldman, 'La France d'un modèle de reconstruction à l'autre, 1918-1945', in N. Bullock and L. Verpoest (eds.), *Living with history, 1914-1964: rebuilding Europe after the First and Second World Wars and the role of heritage preservation*. (Leuven, 2011), 60–71, 61

³ A. Persitz, 'Point de vue', *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 4 (1946) cited in M. Morel, 'Reconstruire, dirent-ils. Discours et doctrines de l'urbanisme', *Cahiers de l'Institut du Temps Présent* 5 (1987), 13–49, 34. 'Construire' *Techniques et Architecture*, 7-8 (1944), *Reconstruction*, 1 (1945).

⁴ *L'Architecture française*, 13 (1941), 11

⁵ L[a] C[ontemporaine], F Delta 874/9

⁶ P.-C. Hautcoeur, 'Was the Great War a watershed? The economics of World War I in France', in S. Broadberry and M. Harrison (eds.), *The Economics of World War I* (Cambridge, 2009), 169–205, 173, 199.

pre-war level.⁷ The rebuilding of cities was undeniably part and parcel of this successful economic restoration.

Second, scathing critiques of the post-1918 reconstruction offered a convenient foil for urbanists and architects anxious to impose their modernist agenda after 1940. It did also reflect the disappointment, and in some cases the resentment felt by urbanists and architects since the early 1920s. In series of article written in 1920 and 1921 for a new avant-garde publication, *L'Esprit Nouveau*, Le Corbusier, yet to impose himself as the central figure of modernist architecture, reflected upon the ongoing reconstruction of northern France.

This has not been a useful war [for cities]. The North has not rebuilt itself in the last two years. Only recently [...] have engineers grasped the problem. [...] But engineers were blackballed. Public opinion contradicted them. No one wanted their solutions. Usages were maintained. We have built as we used to, nothing changed. The North did not want to be the marvellous revelation of the post-war period.⁸

By the mid-1920s, all urbanists of note appear to share in this withering assessment.

Reconstruction, and urban reconstruction in particular they argued, was a failure. These experts squarely lay the blame on the local populations and their political representatives. Meanwhile, across the devastated regions, those *sinistrés* populations bemoaned the length and limitations of a rebuilding process which soon outlasted the world war itself. If ministers and officials in charge never hesitated to celebrate their achievements, few were able to mount a serious defence against the charges of incompetence, ignorance, and corruption frequently levelled by experts and laypersons alike.

The absence of any systematic study of urban reconstruction has allowed the partial and distorted judgment of urbanists to go largely unchallenged. The emphasis conventionally put on the financial and economic dimensions of the post-war recovery long obscured its urban dimensions as scholars adopted institutional and state-centred perspectives.⁹ While the French

⁷ A. Sauvy, *Histoire économique de la France entre les deux guerres (1918-1931)*, i. (Paris, 1965), 261–62.

⁸ Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris, 1958), 88.

⁹ A. Adamthwaite, *Grandeur and Misery: France's Bid for Power in Europe 1914-1940* (London, 1995). C.S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe. Stabilization in France, Germany, and Italy in the decade after World War I* (Princeton, 1975). B. Martin, *France and the après-guerre, 1918-1924: Illusions and disillusionment* (Baton Rouge, 1999). A. Orde,

countryside and its agriculture have been meticulously researched, the reconstruction of urban communities has mainly been studied from a local perspective, thanks to the efforts of local historians, archivists, and museums intent on preserving the memory of a key episode in the modern history of their regions.¹⁰ Historians also owe a great deal to other social scientists who, from the fields of geography, architecture, urban planning or heritage studies, have studied the urban reconstruction from their own perspective. Tellingly, the few historians who have published on the matter have done so in other disciplines' journals.¹¹ Those studies do offer a more nuanced appraisal and call upon scholars to study the post-1918 urban reconstruction in its own terms.¹²

This requires greater critical attention be paid to the experts and urbanists who did so much to frame the debate about reconstruction. This is what this article sets out to do. It will consider the mobilisation of French urbanists to position them in the wider transition from war to peace. Urban reconstruction got under way under the regime of political and economic uncertainty which defined the aftermath of war. It soon proved to be contested and uneven. Within a few years, French urbanists condemned the reconstruction as a failure; one they bitterly imputed to local populations and their elites. However, such as it was, this failure was largely theirs. Urbanists misapprehended the specificities of post-war reconstruction and of the political economy in which they, as well as the devastated cities, had to operate. Interestingly, where those practitioners floundered, key tenets of urbanist thinking nonetheless prevailed.

British policy and European reconstruction after the First World War (Cambridge, 2002). D. P. Silverman, *Reconstructing Europe after the Great War* (Cambridge, Mass, 1982).

¹⁰ H. Clout, *After the ruins: Restoring the countryside of northern France after the Great War* (Exeter, 1996). É. Bussière, P. Marcilloux, and D. Varaschin (eds), *La Grande reconstruction. Reconstruire le Pas-de-Calais après la Grande Guerre* (Arras, 2002). A. Duménil and P. Nivet (eds), *Les Reconstructions en Picardie (Amiens, 2003)*. Archives départementales de l'Aisne, Musée national de la coopération franco-américaine, and Musées de Noyon (eds.), *Reconstructions en Picardie après 1918* (Paris, 2000).

¹¹ E. Lebas, S. Magri, and C. Topalov, 'Reconstruction and popular housing after the First World War: A comparative study of France, Great Britain, Italy and the United States', *Planning Perspectives* 6.3 (1991), 249–67. B. Osborne, 'In the shadows of monuments: the British League for the Reconstruction of the Devastated Areas of France', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 7 (2001), 59–82.

¹² H. Clout, 'The great reconstruction of towns and cities in France 1918-1935', *Planning Perspectives*, 20 (2005), 1–34. Voldman, *La France, 1918-1945*

The invasion of Belgium and France in August 1914 brought industrial warfare to the urban heart of Western Europe and turned towns and cities into ruined battlegrounds. Their rebuilding immediately became a matter of concern. It is therefore imperative to place mobilisation and reconstruction in the same analytical framework.¹³ This first underlines the role that urban reconstruction played in the cultural mobilisation for war.

The names of Dinant, Rheims, Ypres or Arras, like those of other devastated towns and cities, punctuated the unfolding story of the war. The stupefying devastation visited upon them by industrial warfare came to encapsulate the nature and meaning of the war. It soon became indissociable from the 'barbaric' German way of war denounced by Allied propagandists.¹⁴ From the first weeks of the conflict, the devastated cities were central to the rhetoric of social mobilisation. To many across Allied and neutral nations the fate of the Belgian university town of Louvain burned by the German army in August 1914 illustrated what Alan Kramer defined as the radical 'dynamic of destruction' that characterised the conflict.¹⁵ So did Rheims, whose gothic cathedral was shelled a few weeks later. Its example helped French intellectuals and publicists explicitly construct the experience of urban victimhood as a symbol of national resistance. The discourse of urban victimhood transparently drew on the model of Christian martyrdom. As early as 1914, commentators and policymakers thus framed the reconstruction as the redemption of the patriotic sacrifice consented by these 'martyr towns'.¹⁶ It also reinforced a secular vision of reconstruction, understood as the fulfilment of the Republic's commitment to the devastated regions. The highest authorities of the regime, such as Viviani, President of the

¹³ J. Horne made this point in relation to industrial relations. J. Horne, *Labour at War. France and Britain 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1991).

¹⁴ S. Audoin-Rouzeau et al. (eds), *Guerres et cultures, 1914-1918* (Paris, 1994). J. Horne and A. Kramer, *German atrocities, 1914. A history of denial* (New Haven, 2001).

¹⁵ A. Kramer, *Dynamic of destruction: culture and mass killing in the First World War* (Oxford, 2007), 6–30.

¹⁶ G. Hanotaux, *Les Villes martyres. Les falaises de l'Aisne*. (Paris, 1915). M. Vachon, *Les villes martyres de France et de Belgique* (Paris, 1915). P. Jarry, *Le passé qui saigne : les villes martyres, hier et aujourd'hui* (Paris, 1916).

Council in 1914, had indeed made the 'solemn pledge' that the 'whole Nation' would proudly meet its 'duty of national solidarity' to rebuild the ruined cities before the payment of expected reparations.¹⁷ As the planning for - if not the actual - reconstruction started, it was clearly meant to be part and parcel of the national war effort.¹⁸ Urban ruins also featured prominently in the remobilisation effort mounted in 1916-17.¹⁹ They reminded the majority of the French population that the experience of war was highly differentiated. While the Republic had called upon every region to answer the call to arms and to acquit the 'blood tax', the fate of the devastated areas underlined the inordinate nature of the tribute the ruined cities had paid to the war.²⁰

The specific place ascribed to urban victimisation in the cultural mobilisation and remobilisation for war did not however elicit a specific policy response. For all their keen and genuine concerns for reconstruction, few within policymaking or even urbanist circles recognised the specific challenges raised by post-war urban reconstruction. While the right to the 'reparation of war damages' was recognised in the December 1914 finance bill, it would be almost 18 months before the state offered an institutional response to the challenge of reconstruction.²¹ It established a 'special service for the reconstitution of invaded regions' in April 1916. The work of reconstruction soon called for administrative coordination entrusted to an interministerial Comité de reconstitution des régions envahies chaired by Léon Bourgeois (1851-1925), a *Ministre d'Etat* and a figure of considerable

¹⁷ *J[ournal] Officiel de la République Française]. Débats [Parlementaires]. Chambre des Députés, 22 December 1914, p. 3125*

¹⁸ *A[rchives] D[épartementales du] P[as-de-]C[alais], PF 92/2, Le Lion d'Arras, 10 January, 1 March 1916.*

¹⁹ J. Horne, 'Remobilizing for "total war": France and Britain, 1917-1918', in J. Horne (ed.), *State, society, and mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge, 1997), 195–211. E. Danchin, *Le Temps des ruines: 1914-1921*, (Rennes, 2015). *Bulletin de la Ligue Souvenez-vous !*, 1 (1917). Musée Carnavalet, Paris, AFF3822. A. Barrère, *Souvenez-vous des crimes allemands! Gerbéviller 1914, 1917*. Imperial War Museum, Art. IWM PST 12811. LC Arch_002.

²⁰ J. Hermant, 'La reconstruction des villes détruites.', in F. Larnaude (ed.), *La Réparation des dommages de guerre* (Paris, 1917).

²¹ AN, Fonds Louis Marin, 317 AP / 119. JO, 28 December 1914, p. 9332

repute in policymaking and reformist circles.²² The committee's remit included the 'reconstitution of cities and villages' but this was just one policy area among six others.²³ The multiplication of administrative structures tasked with aspects of reconstruction reflected the unprecedented growth of the state apparatus elicited by the mobilisation for war.²⁴ It also revealed the scale and intricacy of the economic, technical, financial, and administrative problems raised by the reconstruction. The denomination of those structures also illustrated the tensions inherent in the wider discourse of reconstruction. The work of reconstruction was inseparable from the logic of compensation underpinning the 'reparation of war damages'. This rested on both national solidarity and the imposition of reparations, sanctioned by international law, as a result of the expected defeat of Germany. Reconstruction was indeed always conceived and discussed within the ethical and political parameters of the ongoing war effort.²⁵ Yet tensions would arise as a gap inevitably opened between the actuality of reconstruction and the lofty ideals of solidarity and justice evoked by the dominant language of patriotic sacrifice. The reconstruction of devastated cities was indeed subsumed in a wider agenda of social reforms intended to validate the unprecedented sacrifices the war was exacting. From 1916 onwards, the Confédération Générale du Travail, for instance, argued that the post-war period could not be defined by 'the sole reconstruction of the devastated regions'. Planning for the aftermath of war demanded a reflection on 'the total reorganisation made necessary by the dislocations brought about by the war'.²⁶ This ambition was not the preserve of leftist organisations. Indeed, as Huntly Carter noted in a 1918 review of French reconstruction literature, the question mobilised writers and intellectual across the political

²² JO, 6 May 1916; Bulletin des Lois, 1917, 210, 1884-1885. S. Audier, *Léon Bourgeois : fonder la solidarité, Le bien commun* (Paris, 2007).

²³ *Bulletin des Lois*, 1917, 199, 575.

²⁴ F. Bock, 'L'exubérance de l'Etat en France de 1914 à 1918', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'Histoire* 3 (1984), 41-51. P. Purseigle, 'The First World War and the transformations of the state', *International Affairs* 90 (2014), 249-64.

²⁵ P. Purseigle, *Mobilisation, sacrifice, et citoyenneté. Angleterre - France, 1900-1918* (Paris, 2013), chap. 5.

²⁶ B[ibliothèque] N[ationale de] F[rance] 4-LB57-16667, Compte rendu des discussions du meeting des représentants des régions dévastées organisé par la C.G.T., Paris, 21 March 1921.

spectrum.²⁷ A volume edited by historian Charles Seignobos revealed two key strands of wartime reflection on reconstruction. Entitled *La Réorganisation de la France*, the book stressed the need to rethink and reshape both the governance of the Republic and the national economy. Unsurprisingly, such publications placed great emphasis on the economic dimensions of reconstruction. Despite the well-established link between urbanisation and industrialisation, urban recovery never seemed of outstanding importance in these reflections. Seignobos' volume did however devote one chapter to the rebuilding of cities. Authored by Adolphe Derveaux, it read like a *pro domo* plea for the involvement of architects in the wider enterprise of national recovery. Derveaux framed the potential contribution of architects and planners in the conventional patriotic terms adopted by many intellectual and professional groups.²⁸ The mobilisation of urbanists did nonetheless take specific forms worthy of scrutiny.

The war had broken out at a critical junction in the history of French urbanism and threatened the ongoing professionalisation and institutionalisation of the field. The years leading up to the conflict had witnessed the creation of two key institutions under whose umbrella urbanists gathered: the Musée Social and the Association Générale des Hygiénistes et Techniciens Municipaux (AGHTM), respectively created in 1905 and 1907. The Musée Social facilitated the emergence of urbanism as an intellectual and professional field through the establishment of its Section d'Hygiène Urbaine et Rurale in 1908.²⁹ Many of its members would go on to create the Société Française des Architectes-

²⁷ H. Carter, 'Reconstruction literature in France', *The Sociological Review* 10 (1918), 55–9. I am most grateful to Prof. John Horne who brought this publication to my attention and kindly shared his notes and reflections on the topic with me.

²⁸ A. Derveaux, 'Le Beau, le vrai, l'utile et la la réorganisation de la France', in C. Seignobos (ed.), *La Réorganisation de la France : conférences faites à l'École des hautes études sociales (novembre 1915 à janvier 1916)* (Paris, 1917), 180–237.

²⁹ J. Horne, 'L'antichambre de la Chambre : le Musée Social et ses réseaux formateurs, 1894-1914', in C. Topalov (ed.), *Laboratoires du nouveau siècle : la nébuleuse réformatrice et ses réseaux en France, 1880-1914* (Paris, 1999), pp. 121–40. *Laboratoires du nouveau siècle* remains the key work on French reformist milieux in the late nineteenth century.

Urbanistes (SFAU) in 1913. Throughout the conflict, a considerable proportion of French reconstruction literature was produced by members of the Musée Social.³⁰ Their rational and scientific approach to urban planning was promoted as key to the recovery of the devastated regions.³¹ A technocratic vision of reconstruction emerged in this context that would persist in the aftermath of the conflict. In keeping with the visions of wartime mobilisation which prevailed across the state apparatus, urbanists modelled their potential intervention on that of the engineer, lauded as the exemplar of rational and disinterested technical competence.³²

The mobilisation of urbanists came to a head in 1916. That year first saw the publication of *Comment reconstruire nos cités détruites*.³³ Authored by three leading proponents of urbanism and members of the Musée Social, this book expounded the dominant vision of urban reconstruction. Formulated as a set of general and often abstract principles, it revealed a problematic feature of urbanist approaches to reconstruction: their lack of interest in the social conditions created by the experience of war and urban devastation. References to specific ruined cities are indeed few and far between in a 300-page volume entirely devoted to their recovery. This is all the more striking when the limited discussion of significant urban centers like Lille or Reims advocated no less than their 'total transformation' and called for the displacement of their industries and populations.³⁴ Three years later, the President of the Société Centrale des Architectes continued to plan the

³⁰ F. Larnaude (ed.), *La Réparation des dommages de guerre* (Paris, 1917). D.-A. Agache, *Nos Agglomérations rurales : comment les aménager* (Paris, 1918). L. Rosenthal, *Villes et villages français après la guerre aménagement, restauration, embellissement, extension* (Paris, 1918). J.-M. Auburtin and H. Blanchard, *La Cité de demain dans les régions dévastées* (Paris, 1917).

³¹ Horne, 'L'antichambre', 134.

³² C. Bruant, 'L'École d'art public du Collège libre des sciences sociales : une formation à l'urbanisme comme « sociologie appliquée »', *Le Télémaque* 33 (2008), 83–106, 86.

³³ D.-A. Agache et al., *Comment reconstruire nos cités détruites notions d'urbanisme s'appliquant aux villes, bourgs et villages* (Paris, 1916).

³⁴ Agache, et al., *Comment reconstruire*, 95.

reconstruction of cities without any regard for the specific experience of those places and peoples.³⁵

1916 also witnessed the launch of two exemplary and overlapping initiatives. The first one led to the creation of La Renaissance des Cités, an organisation whose explicit goal was to enable the rational planning and 'material, economic, and social' reconstruction of devastated towns and cities.³⁶ The Renaissance des Cités soon brought together the most prominent planners, policymakers, and social reformers. Many of those had already been working on the urban question under the aegis of the Musée Social. The Renaissance promised to engage with all stakeholders - state authorities, municipal leaders, professional practitioners, local populations - to ensure they respect 'the tenets of Urbanism, Regionalism, and Civic Art'.³⁷ Defining itself as an elite organisation ('la ligue d'une élite'), it set out to combat those 'old theories harmful to the ideals of social life, of sober beauty, of greatness, of prosperity that the reconquered lands will claim in the sacred interest of France'.³⁸ The group essentially aimed to play for urban reconstruction the role that the Musée Social had carved out for itself in the wider domain of social reform. An aggregator and distributor of ideas and practices, it also aimed to contribute to the policymaking process and to interpret legislation for all interested parties.³⁹

By the end of 1915, urbanists had already moved to consolidate and showcase their contribution to the debate over reconstruction. To this end, they announced the organisation of a special exhibition entitled *La Cité Reconstituée*.⁴⁰ This remarkable event took place on the terraces of the Tuileries Palace and the Jeu de Paume in Paris between

³⁵ L. Cordonnier, 'Reconstruction des villes. Projet en vue de l'organisation de la reconstruction dans les régions dévastées.', *L'Architecture* (1919), 245–54.

³⁶ LC 4 delta 1565. La Renaissance des Cités. Œuvre d'entraide sociale. Exposé. non dated, 1916

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ LC 4 delta 1565, Office coopératif d'information et de documentation de la 'Renaissance des Cités' pour la reconstitution architecturale, économique, et sociale après la guerre, 1917

³⁹ LC 4 delta 1565, *La Renaissance des Cités. Son œuvre sociale*, 1917

⁴⁰ CEDIAS [- Musée Social], 22-818 V8, Exposition de la cité reconstituée, rapport général, 16.

May and August 1916. Across 20,000 square meters, it sought to promote an expert-driven, urbanist-led reconstruction.⁴¹ Designed as an ‘exhibition of ideas’, its objective was to create ‘a movement of opinion, by popularising the knowledge of the beneficial effects of rational planning on the development of towns and villages’, critical to ensure ‘hygiene, well-being, ease of circulation’ in the rebuilt cities. The organisers’ emphasis on propaganda revealed their awareness of the potential ‘resistances’ they might encounter in the devastated regions. To head these off, they sought to encourage ‘association, cooperation, regrouping (*remembrement*)’. The event showcased technical solutions and temporary building solutions which would give experts the time and space to implement their urbanist blueprints.⁴² The exhibition underlined the ideological diversity of an urbanist movement within which few if any, saw any contradiction between the call for urban modernisation and their commitment to preserving ‘natural beauties’, ‘archaeological memories’, and to promoting ‘regional style’ of architectures.⁴³ The exhibition did indeed confirm the prominent place ascribed to both regionalism and its proponents in the French debate over reconstruction.⁴⁴ This nonetheless obscured the ambivalence of urbanists towards regionalism. They often commended regional styles of architectures that modern construction techniques showcased at the exhibition allowed to replicate.⁴⁵ The Renaissance des Cités would go on to organise a special session at the 1917 congress of the Regionalist Federation. The presence of Charles Dumont, Georges Risler, Louis Bonnier and Louis Rosenthal testified to their social proximity with regionalist luminaries. Jean Charles-Brun, for instance, had long been a regular presence at the Musée Social and sat on the board of the Renaissance des Cités. By and large however, urbanists did

⁴¹ LC 4 delta 1513

⁴² CEDIAS 22 818 V8, rapport général, August 1916, 11-12. BNF, *La Cité reconstruite*, May - August 1916.

⁴³ CEDIAS 22 818 V8, rapport général, August 1916, 12

⁴⁴ LC 4 delta 1565. F. Jean-Desthieux, *L'Évolution régionaliste: du félibrige au fédéralisme* (Paris, 1918). J. Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890-1914: Jean Charles-Brun and French political thought* (Oxford, 2003). O. Grenouilleau, *Nos petites patries: identités régionales et État central, en France, des origines à nos jours* (Paris, 2019), 163.

⁴⁵ *Le Foyer de demain*, June 1917. Agache, et al., *Comment reconstruire*, 61. Auburtin, Blanchard, *La Cité de demain*, 146.

rarely engage with the wider political agenda of the regionalist movement and with issues of governance in particular. To them, regionalism appeared of greater relevance to the reconstruction of rural communities.⁴⁶ Regionalist activists nevertheless celebrated the use of local architectural styles across French Flanders and in the reconstruction of Bailleul and Lille in particular as a way to foster 'a moral atmosphere conducive to regionalism.'⁴⁷ The links between urbanists and the regionalist movement illustrate the ideological pluralism that underpinned much of the French literature on reconstruction. The urban question had of course long been central to reflections of social reformers or commentators concerned with the impact of industrialisation. Urbanisation was often linked to the social ills associated with modernity. For hygienists of all hues, not merely for the conservatives in their midst, urban reconstruction offered the chance to address them.⁴⁸

Urbanists therefore mobilised for urban reconstruction in much the same way intellectuals and professional opinion had mobilised for the war itself.⁴⁹ They also did so in keeping with the specificities of social reformer milieux. As Christian Topalov argued, along with international congresses, 'the exhibition was a discourse on the method'. It placed 'the knowledge in the hands of great and small notables, social reform generalists or activists in one of its particular domains'. *La Cité Reconstituée* also confirmed that those reformers 'generally imagined very different pasts as well as futures'.⁵⁰ Like the Renaissance des cités, the exhibition offered a good picture of the state of urban planning in France during

⁴⁶ D.-A. Agache, *Nos agglomérations rurales : comment les aménager. Etude monographique, analytique, comparée d'un concours de plans de bourgs et villages* (Paris, 1918).

⁴⁷ *L'Action régionaliste*, 1 January 1924

⁴⁸ LC O 5850, A. Daudé-Bancel, 1 June 1917, 'La reconstruction des cités détruites', *La Grande Revue*, May-June 1917. C. Topalov, 'De la question sociale aux problèmes urbains : les réformateurs et le peuple des métropoles au tournant du XXe siècle', *Revue Internationale des sciences sociales* 125 (1990), 359–76. J.-P. Gaudin, 'La genèse de l'urbanisme de plan et la question de la modernisation politique', *Revue Française de Sciences Politiques* 39.3 (1989), 296–312.

⁴⁹ M. Hanna, *The mobilization of Intellect : French Scholars and Writers during the Great War* (Cambridge (Mass) - London, 1996). C. Prochasson and A. Rasmussen, *Au Nom de la Patrie. Les intellectuels et la Première Guerre mondiale (1910-1919)* (Paris, 1996).

⁵⁰ C. Topalov, 'Les "réformateurs" et leurs réseaux : enjeux d'un objet de recherche', in C. Topalov (ed.), *Laboratoires du nouveau siècle : la nébuleuse réformatrice et ses réseaux en France, 1880-1914* (Paris, 1999), 11–58, 41, 45.

the war. These initiatives allowed urbanists to promote and to project their ideas onto the post-war future. Yet there appears to have been little engagement with the particular issues raised in war by urban victimisation and, in its aftermath, by post-conflict reconstruction. Indeed, as a visitor to the devastated regions put it in late 1919, 'we were no better prepared for peace than we had been for war.'⁵¹

Post-Print

⁵¹ A. Bellesort, 'Un an après l'Armistice: aux régions dévastées', *Revue des Deux Mondes* 54 (1919), 438–57, 453.

II

The Armistice of November 1918 uncovered the landscape of destruction carved out by industrial warfare. Albert Londres bemoaned, in his despatches for *Le Petit Journal*, the environmental upheaval and ‘the desert’ to be found ‘wherever the raging armies went’.⁵² Others lamented that the devastated regions ‘offered nothing but a spectacle of desolation, chaos, and death;’ that ‘destroyed cities [...] like Reims or Arras or Albert [were] no more than a shapeless heap of rubbles.’⁵³ Similar descriptions featured prominently in the French and allied press as well as in the testimonies of humanitarian workers operating in those areas.⁵⁴

Such narratives underscored the magnitude of the material challenge of urban reconstruction. A report written in December 1918 estimated that, in Reims alone, it would take 500 business days to clear the rubble, at a rate of 5,000 cube meters a day.⁵⁵

Undeterred, refugees sought a prompt return home and the opportunity to embark on the rebuilding of their lives and their communities. Commentators extolled their commitment and held it out as an example of post-war patriotism.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, official discourse reiterated the Republic’s pledge to the devastated regions. The legislation providing for the reparation of war damages was promulgated on 17 April 1919. Commonly known as the *Charte des Sinistrés*, its first article stipulated that ‘the Republic proclaims the equality and solidarity of all French people before the costs of the war.’⁵⁷

Yet ‘before this sea of pitiful remains, one hesitate[d] to believe that any human effort, however great, be powerful enough to restore these ruins, to repair these disasters, to reanimate these regions.’ A key figure in urbanist circles, Léon Jaussely thus highlighted

⁵² A. Londres, *Le Petit Journal*, 10 September 1918.

⁵³ *Le Sinistré*, 6 September 1925. LC 4 delta 1565, *Revue Mensuelle du Touring Club de France*, July 1919.

⁵⁴ C. Haven-Smith and C.R. Hill, *Rising above the ruins in France* (New York, 1920), viii.

⁵⁵ L. Jaussely, ‘Chroniques de l’urbanisme’, *La Vie Urbaine* 1–2 (1919), 188

⁵⁶ Hanotaux, *Les Villes Martyres*, 27. L. Hubert, *La renaissance d’un département dévasté* (Paris, 1923), 354.

⁵⁷ JO, 18 April 1919, 4050

the 'anxiety', the 'painful uncertainty' which beset local populations and experts alike.⁵⁸

Post-war reconstruction was indeed defined by a regime of uncertainty which resulted from both the formidable material challenge it raised and from the political conditions under which it took place. For the 1918 Armistice had merely initiated a long and complex process of military and economic demobilisation, fraught with social tensions. The aftermath of war was also defined by the uneasy articulation of peace-making, demobilisation, and reconstruction. Across the devastated regions, urban populations found themselves dependent on the fulfilment of increasingly uncertain reparations and solidarities.

This dependence reinforced the specific nature of the transition from war to peace in the ruined area. While the Armistice was met across the country with the desire to discontinue wartime exertions, the precarious state of devastated cities required a sustained national effort. The challenge was to maintain and redirect the momentum of wartime mobilization towards their reconstitution, despite continuing economic disruptions and the formidable weight of mass grief and mourning. This tension between national demobilisation and the necessary remobilisation for the devastated regions undermined the confidence of their populations. Their representatives regularly felt compelled to reassert their claim to national solidarity and to remind the country that the ruins they were returning to were evidence of the specific sacrifice they had suffered.⁵⁹ The *sinistrés* perceived national solidarity as central to the social compact tying them to the nation at large. To them, the 'votive monuments to the martyr-towns' erected in Paris as part of the peace celebrations of the 14 July 1919 had only emphasised their special status and assured them of the 'brotherly warmth of French solidarity'.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ L. Jaussely, 'Les cités dévastées par la guerre', *La Vie Urbaine* 1–2 (1919), 109–110.

⁵⁹ E. Lavisé, 'A mes compatriotes', [*Le Journal des Régions Dévastées*], 18 May 1919. *JRD* 6 July 1919

⁶⁰ *La Croix*, 15 July 1919 ; Hubert, *La Renaissance*, 354.

Yet the frequent reassertion of the 'great duty' of national and international solidarity underlined a growing uncertainty. Would 'the rights of the Past and the demands of the Present in the reconstruction of our towns and villages' effectively be vindicated not least through the peace-making process?⁶¹ For the *sinistrés* populations expected their sacrifice to determine the outcome of the peace-making process. After all, as Étienne Clémentel, then Minister of Commerce, put it to Lord Reading in December 1918, 'France [had] been the battlefield of the Allies'.⁶² French policymakers regularly asserted what had become an article of faith across the devastated regions. Their sacrifice demanded Allied solidarity. In both public and private, British leaders acknowledged as much. As Lord Cecil wrote in September 1918, 'the needs of the Allied populations are a moral claim on all of us'.⁶³ Rapidly however, the *sinistrés* had to recognise that for all that lofty rhetoric the post-war settlement would not afford them any special status. The *sinistrés* press bemoaned the time and political energy spent on 'a thousand issues in faraway places' at the expense of reconstruction.⁶⁴ In 1920, representatives of the devastated regions condemned the treaty of Versailles as a repudiation of inter-allied solidarity.⁶⁵

The ambiguities of the conservative majority that emerged out of the parliamentary elections of November 1919 also undercut the confidence in the nation's capacity to fund the reconstruction. The Bloc National had largely predicated its policies on the payment of German reparations. The costs of reconstruction and of the war pensions thus appeared in the budget as recoverable expenses to be met by German payments.⁶⁶ Though under great fiscal pressure, the government refused to levy new or higher taxes for this would

⁶¹ P. Deschanel, 'Le Grand Devoir', *JRD*, 18 May 1919. LC O pièce 11.140, E. Gavelle, 'Les droits du passé et les exigences du présent dans la Reconstruction de nos villes et villages', Comité Flamand de France, 15 December 1919. H.A. Gibbons, 'The reconstruction of Northern France', *Fortnightly Review*, 106, 631 (1919), 66.

⁶² The National Archives (UK), CAB 1/27/28, 12 December 1918

⁶³ Orde, *British Policy*, 21.

⁶⁴ *JRD*, 18 May 1919

⁶⁵ ADPC 26 J6, *Le Pas-de-Calais Libéré*, 11 avril 1920

⁶⁶ J.-M. Guieu, *Gagner la paix: 1914-1929* (Paris, 2016), 215.

'effectively exonerate the Boche of its responsibilities and duty'.⁶⁷ As Alexandre Millerand, président du Conseil, admitted in May 1920, the treaties were 'heavier with promises than realities'. The devastated regions found themselves stuck between the hammer of international politics and the anvil of domestic fiscal retrenchment; abandoned by the Allies and neglected by the Republic.⁶⁸ In July 1926, textile industrialists from Sedan shared their 'alarm' at the impending economic 'catastrophe' they foresaw for the devastated regions. They called upon the state to maintain its financial commitment to the area and denounced, more generally, the treatment of its populations, left with 'no other true defenders but themselves'.⁶⁹ The *sinistrés* were painfully aware of the growing disconnection between their hitherto undisputed moral claim to reconstruction and the political and financial pressures bearing on domestic and international actors.

This was the background for the work of the urbanists. The need for reconstruction of north-eastern France presented them with a remarkable opportunity to design and implement their ambitious programmes of urban modernisation. Between 1915 and 1919, they devoted several thousands of pages to the reconstruction. They published books and pamphlets, gave lectures on this topic, organised international and national exhibitions and conferences. Their efforts culminated in the passing of the law prescribing the planning, extension, and improvements (*embellissement*) of towns in March 1919. Known as the Cornudet Law after its chief proponent in parliament, it was hailed as the first legislative recognition of urban planning.⁷⁰ First put forward in 1915, it built on more modest parliamentary initiatives taken since 1914. It was primarily concerned with the problems brought about by the growth of urban agglomerations: the circulation of people and goods;

⁶⁷ N. Delalande, *Les batailles de l'impôt. Consentement et résistances de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris, 2011).

⁶⁸ *JO, DP, CD*, 28 May 1920, 1700. *Journal des Débats*, 30 May 1920. LC 4 delta 0096, Association Franco-Belge des victimes des pillages allemands, Assemblée Générale, 18 July 1922. Hubert, *La Renaissance*, 357. *Le Sinistré*, 6 September and 6 December 1925.

⁶⁹ LC 4 delta 1565

⁷⁰ Honoré Cornudet des Chaumettes (1861-1938) was *Député* of the Seine-et-Oise from 1898 to 1924.

hygiene; urban aesthetic.⁷¹ It required that every town with 10,000 inhabitants or more as well as devastated *communes* establish a plan to manage its extension. The prescribed involvement of experts would ensure planning allow for rational modernisation.⁷² Yet rather than a response to the urban aftermath of war, the Cornudet Law must in fact be read as the legislative synthesis of the recommendations that urbanists strenuously made before - and clarified during - the conflict. It did indeed stem from discussions initiated in 1907 at the Musée Social.

Urbanists relentlessly advocated for Cornudet's prescriptions throughout the war. His report was regularly reprinted or quoted at length in publications or lectures pertaining to post-war reconstruction. The report like the eventual 1919 law asserted great technocratic confidence in an expert-led reconstruction. Urbanists called for the country not simply to build back better but, where necessary, to reshape the urban space through the relocation of key public amenities or sites of production.⁷³ As early as 1915, they argued the devastation was an unprecedented opportunity 'to take advantage of the catastrophe to build anew'; to 'make the most out of the removal of all obstacles to ensure the prosperity of the city through its modern and productive organisation'.⁷⁴ The Cornudet Law, however, proved to be a deceptive success and urban reconstruction soon revealed the limits of the urbanist movement.

In a context marked by fiscal retrenchment, national authorities had made the strategic and pragmatic choice to prioritise the restoration of industrial production and its logistical apparatus. Consequently, urban reconstruction was never afforded the pre-eminence that

⁷¹ D.-A. Agache et al., *Comment reconstruire nos cités détruites. Notions d'urbanisme s'appliquant aux villes, bourgs et villages* (Paris, 1916), 189–96.

⁷² To place the Cornudet Law in its wider context, see J.-P. Gaudin, *L'avenir en plan: technique et politique dans la prévision urbaine, 1900-1930* (Paris, 1985).

⁷³ J.-M. Auburtin and H. Blanchard, *La cité de demain dans les régions dévastées* (Paris, 1917), 10.

⁷⁴ Dervaux, Le Beau, Le Vrai, l'Utile et la la réorganisation de la France', 194. Jaussely, *Chroniques*, 197. P. Bourdeix, 'Urbanisme et régionalisme', *La Technique Sanitaire et Municipale* (1924), 57–9

urbanists and *sinistrés* expected. It was, as a result, an uneven process which did not fit the story of linear, uninterrupted progress that national authorities were keen to promote throughout the 1920s (Figure 1).

Fig. 1: 'Cinq ans d'efforts dans les pays dévastés', La Contemporaine 4 delta 1565

Official statistics do indeed reveal a different picture. By 1921, 79 per cent of factories and workshops had been rebuilt in the devastated areas which had overall regained 70 per cent of their population. Only 37.6 per cent of the housing stock was however available to these returnees. By 1922, industrial reconstruction and the return of population were proceeding at the same pace. The rebuilding of homes still lagged far behind, so 85 per cent of the pre-war population could only rely on 48 per cent of the pre-war housing stock. Though this figure also included farm buildings, it remains a good indicator of the uneven and halting process of urban reconstruction. By 1924, the reconstruction of housing still remained 10 per cent behind that of factories and workshops.⁷⁵

The early 1920s witnessed a flurry of official reports on the progress of reconstruction. Focussed as they were on the recovery of infrastructure, industry, and agriculture, many economic commentators were keen, by the mid-1920s, to declare the end of reconstruction. At the close of the decade, national authorities saw fit to do so explicitly, as André Tardieu did in November 1929 when he assumed the Premiership.⁷⁶ Yet the 1940 national budget still accounted for reconstruction-related expenses. Many communities were still completing their reconstruction when they had to face another war and its own trail of destruction. Reports published during the 1920s provide invaluable information on the material dimensions of reconstruction. Most often authored by officials or local

⁷⁵ LC 4 delta 1565; F delta 874/9, État de l'avancement de l'œuvre de reconstitution pour 1922.

⁷⁶ *Le Figaro*, 8 November 1929.

notabilities, they purport to bring out the voices of *sinistrés* as well.⁷⁷ Urban populations, however, rarely endorsed those positive assessments. Indeed, the slow pace of reconstruction soon gave rise to recriminations. Local populations quickly expressed their anger at what they perceived to be the inadequacies, incompetence, and corruption of local and national authorities.

In April 1919 for instance, the Special Commissioner of the railway station at Reims described mounting discontent in the city and evoked the risks of 'serious conflicts'.⁷⁸ A year later, the Prefect of the Marne reported with satisfaction the continuing support of the city's 'bourgeoisie'. In a context marked by the rise of Bolshevism however, the presence of 9,000 foreign workers employed in reconstruction work heightened his fear of subversion. The potential for violence loomed large in his mind.⁷⁹ In April 1921 the local trade unions continued to denounce the mismanagement of the reconstruction in increasingly bitter terms.⁸⁰ The *sinistrés* now clearly questioned the nation's commitment to the recovery of the devastated areas. As Raymond Dorgelès put it in *Le Réveil des Morts*, the fascinating and problematic novel he wrote about reconstruction in the Aisne in 1919-1920, 'for a moment, this impoverished France was allowed to believe that happy France was forgetting it'.⁸¹ Years after the Armistice, the *sinistrés* remain anxious to remind their fellow countrymen of the martyr they had suffered.⁸²

In 1925, the *Comité d'Action des Régions Dévastées*, a rather forceful group led by left-of-centre politicians from the North and East launched a publication, *Le Sinistré*, to advocate for the regions. To this group, public commitments to national solidarity had clearly faded

⁷⁷ A. Naudin, *Trois ans de reconstitution. Rapport présenté au Conseil Général* (Lille, 1922). A. Naudin, *Trois ans de reconstitution. Rapport présenté au Conseil Général* (Lille, 1922). A. Morain, *La reconstitution de la région libérée au 1er avril 1922. Exposé présenté au Conseil Général*. (Amiens, 1922). Hubert, *La renaissance*. ADPC 10 R 1/78

⁷⁸ AN F7/13001, Commissaire spécial de la Gare de Reims au Directeur de la sûreté générale, 4 April 1919 ; Rapport de Louis Thibon, Préfet, au Ministre de l'Intérieur, 27 June 1919.

⁷⁹ AN F7/13001, Rapport du Préfet au Ministre de l'Intérieur, 15 April 1920.

⁸⁰ AN F7/13001, Commissaire de Police de Reims au Directeur de la Sûreté Générale, 27 April 1921.

⁸¹ R. Dorgelès, *Le réveil des morts* (Paris, 1923), 63.

⁸² Hubert, *La Renaissance*, 358.

by 1920-1921 and reconstruction actually slowed down by 1922. It lay blame for this at the feet of both the government and civil society. It denounced the gradual abandonment of the ruined areas as a betrayal of the sacrifice they had made to protect the nation in its hour of need.⁸³ Six years after the passing of the *Charte des Sinistrés*, it argued, the Republic had failed to honour its commitment. Despite the progress of industrial reconstruction, too many urban denizens of the North and East were still living in material conditions unbefitting the citizens of a victorious nation. They blamed that state of affairs on the national authorities and never appeared to find any ally among the urbanist community.

Disillusionment soon affected the urbanists themselves. By 1922, the *Renaissance des Cités*, which had positioned itself as the leading interlocutor for devastated cities, had downgraded its expectations and significantly curtailed its operations. In a striking albeit reluctant acknowledgement of failure, they had decided to refocus their effort on the creation of just one model-village, Pinon, in the hope it would then showcase urbanist principles in action. Gone were the group's ambitions of a wholesale redefinition of the urban fabric of northern France. They admitted 'the liberated regions no longer absorbed the major part of [their] action⁸⁴', and they lost little time in ascribing responsibility for this state of affairs: 'Last year, we foresaw that unceasing administrative difficulties, the mentality (*état d'esprit*) of the *sinistrés*, would make our programme unrealisable.'⁸⁵ Less than five years after the institutional triumph that was the passing of the Cornudet law, urbanists found themselves unable to exert as much influence on urban reconstruction as they had done on the legislative process. Soon, their focus on the wider housing crisis could hardly mask their regrouping in - and around the issues raised by - Paris and its

⁸³ F. Doucedame, 'Pourquoi ce journal?', *Le Sinistré*, 6 December 1925

⁸⁴ LC 4 delta 1565, *La Renaissance des Cités*, Assemblée Générale, 15 December 1923

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

agglomeration.⁸⁶ Urbanists did indeed promptly frame their reconstruction efforts as a losing battle waged against the conservatism of the local populations. Historians subsequently adopted their point of view and stressed the *sinistrés*' nostalgia and longing for the *status quo ante bellum*.⁸⁷ While they insisted - understandably enough - on a rapid reconstruction, there is precious little evidence that *sinistrés* actively opposed the modernisation and improvements of their cities.⁸⁸ What local and institutional archives underline though is how little attention urbanists paid to the actual experience of returnees and inhabitants of the devastated cities. In the voluminous literature devoted to urban reconstitution, urbanists did indeed prove remarkably oblivious to the specific challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. The work of Léon Rosenthal does illustrate this collective intellectual failure. An eloquent and assertive proponent of urban planning, Rosenthal acknowledged the suffering and hardship of the victims of the invasion and of veterans.⁸⁹ Yet nowhere in his work did he indicate if and how urban planning should respond to their specific needs. Rosenthal was no exception in this regard and leading urbanists concurred in this telling oversight.⁹⁰ Jacques Hermant even explicitly rejected the idea that devastated cities be treated any differently than any other; to him, post-war reconstruction simply did not raise any specific challenge.⁹¹

This neglect of the sociological conditions of urban reconstruction is both striking and paradoxical. D.-A. Agache, for instance, had long called for sociological observation to be

⁸⁶ H. Sellier and A. Bruggeman, *Le problème du logement. Son influence sur les conditions de l'habitation et l'aménagement des villes* (Paris - New Haven, 1927). R. Payre, 'Un savoir « scientifique, utilitaire et vulgarisateur » : la ville de La vie urbaine, objet de science et objet de réforme (1919-1939)', *Genèses* 60.3 (2005), pp. 5–30, 23. Lebas, Magri, Topalov, Reconstruction and popular housing.

⁸⁷ Our argument contrasts here with Marc Bédarida's. M. Bédarida, '1918 : Une modernisation urbaine frileuse', in Direction des Archives de France (ed.), *Reconstructions et modernisation. La France après les ruines, 1918-1945* (Paris, 1991), 263–6, 266.

⁸⁸ A conservative publication like *Le Lion d'Arras* demonstrates that there was no blanket opposition to modernisation. ADPC PF 92/2

⁸⁹ L. Rosenthal, *Villes et villages français après la Grande guerre*. eds. V. Chambarlhac, T. Hohl, and B. Tillier (Paris, 2014), 269, 319-32.

⁹⁰ Agache, et al., *Comment reconstruire*. Auburtin, Blanchard, *La Cité de demain*.

⁹¹ Hermant, *La Reconstruction*, 214.

placed at the heart of the new urbanist discipline. A central figure at the Musée Social from 1909 and a co-founder of the Association des Architectes-Urbanistes in 1911, he had defined urbanism as an exercise in applied sociology. This sociological perspective framed the lectures he gave, from January 1915, on 'the resurrection of cities'.⁹² It was also meant to underpin the *Cité Reconstituée* exhibition which explicitly celebrated and called for the type of civic survey elaborated by Patrick Geddes, the Scottish urbanist and the event's star turn.⁹³

Adopted by the *Renaissance des Cités*, such a perspective promised a holistic and ambitious view of reconstruction underpinned by 'municipal sociology'.⁹⁴ From February to May 1919, the organization thus ran an 'Interallied Social Ideas Competition' to raise urbanism above technical considerations and to refocus it on the 'great social issues' raised by modern urban life. Those ranged from education to democracy through public health and industrial relations. Despite its lofty intellectual ambitions, the *Renaissance des Cités* completely overlooked the possibility that the experience of the war might actually bear on the reconstitution of urban communities. It ignored their past ordeals under fire and in exile as well as the process of military and social demobilisation now in full swing.⁹⁵ Likewise, none of the articles that specialist journal *La Vie Urbaine* devoted to the reconstruction throughout 1919 paid any attention to the conditions in which local people, including the most vulnerable, returned to the devastated areas.⁹⁶ **At that time in Reims, 4,000 children started a new schoolyear in classrooms without any heating or indeed any**

⁹² Bruant, L'École d'art public. *L'Humanité*, 30 January 1915

⁹³ P. Geddes, 'Two Steps in Civics: "Cities and Town Planning Exhibition" and the "International Congress of Cities"', Ghent International Exhibition, 1913', *The Town Planning Review* 4.2 (1913), 78–94. 82). *La Cité Reconstituée*, 2 July 1916. On Geddes, A. Lees, *Cities perceived: urban society in European and American thought, 1820-1940* (Manchester, 1985), 238–39 and H.E. Meller, *Patrick Geddes: social evolutionist and city planner* (London, 1993).

⁹⁴ LC 4 delta 1565, Office coopératif d'information et de documentation de la 'Renaissance des Cités' pour la reconstitution architecturale, économique, et sociale après la guerre, 1917

⁹⁵ LC, 4 delta 1565, *La Renaissance des Cités*. Concours d'idées sociales. Feb-May 1919. *L'Architecture*, 3 (1919), 64-65. *La Revue des Dommages de Guerre*, 1 June 1919; Bourdeix, Urbanisme et régionalisme, 57

⁹⁶ Jaussely, Les Cités Dévastées, 111.

window or door.⁹⁷ In 1922, an official report indicated that 256 schools remained unsalubrious across the Somme department. Two years later, the national congress of the Ligue des droits de l'Homme was still calling for the urgent rebuilding of schools across the devastated regions.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, urbanists essentially ignored the issue altogether. When they occasionally considered the plight of returnees, urbanists betrayed a technocratic vision which was bound to hamper any meaningful cooperation with the *sinistrés*. Notwithstanding rhetorical marks of empathy, some experts even rejected the *sinistrés*' uppermost desire – 'legitimate, pressing, and respectable though it may be' – to return home as soon as the military situation would allow it.⁹⁹ Unsurprisingly, most refugees refused to prolong their exile to allow experts to work unimpeded. In fact, demobilised soldiers often returned home ahead of their families to settle back in their 'dwelling with makeshift means, even if it [was] half-destroyed'.¹⁰⁰ To them and to local authorities as well as charities, the 'rebirth of homes' was inseparable from the rebuilding of cities.¹⁰¹ By contrast, urbanists never considered how to integrate the reconstitution of family homes into their planning of the post-war city. This revealed a double intellectual failure, of both observation and conception. It hindered the capacity of urbanists to genuinely engage with local populations, whose central concerns they appeared to ignore. Indeed French urbanists rarely considered reconstruction as anything but a technical issue, albeit one of unprecedented scale. Their inability to impose their views on the local populations can hardly be ascribed to the latter's conservatism or rejection of urban planning or modernization. In fact, absorbed in a vision

⁹⁷ A[rchives] M[unicipales de] R[eims], 6/S/5, 1919/225, 21 October 1919

⁹⁸ Morain, *La reconstitution*, 68. BNF, Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, Congrès national de 1924 : compte-rendu sténographique (27-29 décembre 1924), 363

⁹⁹ R. Figeac, 'La Détresse Des Régions Libérées', *L'Economiste Parlementaire*, 1919, 2.

¹⁰⁰ ANF F7/13001, Préfet de la Marne au Ministre de l'Intérieur, 21 January 1919.

¹⁰¹ AMR, Délibérations du Conseil Municipal, 11 November 1918. *JRD*, 5 October 1919. LC VAL/385/047-050, Œuvre de l'Armoire Lorraine pour la reconstruction des foyers détruits par l'ennemi, 23 July 1917. ANF, BB32/1/73/4.

of urban planning they mainly defined as a technical exercise in modernisation, urbanists never took the measure of the socio-political challenges of the war's aftermath.

III

The urbanists' unbending technocratic faith in their emerging discipline also blinded them to the political dynamics underpinning post-war reconstruction. This was again rather paradoxical considering the close relationships they cultivated with policymakers and elected officials. Many were indeed aware of the resistance that a potentially lengthy planning process could generate. Cornudet's report thus acknowledged it might be taken as an unbearable imposition on afflicted communities desperate for a prompt return home. The issue was however swiftly brushed aside. Cornudet's unshakeable confidence in experts as well as the existence of a rich literature on urban planning convinced him this would not be an issue.¹⁰² To the *sinistrés* however, those attitudes shared by urbanists and policymakers alike revealed a deeper and wider flaw. The apparent neglect of practical demands reinforced their call for a different kind of governance which would allow for greater flexibility and adaptation to local circumstances: 'What can those ministries and services do for us if they consider us like any other part of France, identical to the others which can be dealt with through the same methods and the same forms?'¹⁰³

The *sinistrés*' press relentlessly focussed on what it perceived to be bureaucratic impediments to reconstruction. This complaint revealed a more profound dissatisfaction with a technocratic process leaving little room for the participation of the local populations. This frustration was expressed in a most symbolic fashion in September 1919 with a meeting of the Estates General of the Devastated regions. Sponsored by *Le Matin*, a conservative daily, those Estates General and their 1,000 delegates - deputies, senators, departmental and municipal councillors, leaders of *sinistrés* organisations - did however

¹⁰² Agache et al., *Comment reconstruire*, 205–6.

¹⁰³ *JRD* 18 May 1919.

eschew radical let alone revolutionary rhetoric. Although anxious not to jeopardise their relationship with Clemenceau's government, delegates pulled few punches in their denunciation of the state bureaucracy. The Estates General had indeed been designed to serve as a national platform for the devastated regions to voice their concerns. To underline their gravity, those had previously been consigned into *Cahiers de doléances* produced by local committees.¹⁰⁴ Both the *cahiers* and orators brought before the Estates General lamented excessive centralisation and called for the local management of the reconstruction process. Those demands were all the more striking for being formulated by regional notabilities, who were used to wielding significant influence on the policymaking process. It would not take long for former delegates to express their disappointment as they railed against the centralised and technocratic approach to reconstruction.¹⁰⁵ In 1923, Emile Bladel, a Nancy notable, pointedly asked 'whatever happened to the beautiful dream of the Devastated Regions' Estates General of 1919' which had been no more than 'smoke, hollow agitation'.¹⁰⁶ To many, reconstruction revealed how little regard the state and the nation paid to the opinions of the victims of the war in general and to veterans in particular. This was the point forcefully made by René Cassin in his review of *Le Reveil des Morts*.¹⁰⁷

Urbanists, on the other hand, never seriously entertained the idea that the local populations might have a role to play in the reconstruction of their cities. Urbanist circles, across the ideological spectrum they spanned, shared in the notion that urban communities were objects of intervention rather than participants. Achille Daudé-Bancel, for instance, grounded his urbanism in an economic and environmental critique of

¹⁰⁴ AN F7 2/2103, *Le Matin*, 1 and 3 September 1919.

¹⁰⁵ Bellesort, *Un an après*, 444.

¹⁰⁶ E. Bladel, 'Et les Etats-Généraux ?', *L'Immeuble et la construction de l'Est*, 12 March 1923.

¹⁰⁷ *Le Poilu de France*, 16 June 1923. On Cassin, see A. Prost and J.M. Winter, *René Cassin and Human Rights: from the Great War to the Universal Declaration*, Human rights in history (Cambridge, UK, 2013).

capitalism and was a respected figure in the cooperative movement. Yet he argued that the design of reconstructed cities ought to be exclusively entrusted to 'clear-sighted citizens'.¹⁰⁸ Here, this socialist differed little from the *Renaissance des Cités*, whose founding documents revealed a focus on experts and professionals. Along with other notabilities they expected to stand in for the devastated communities.¹⁰⁹ The organization did indeed set great store upon the support of an 'intellectual elite', of 'enlightened personalities', and 'knowledgeable groups'. They envisaged their 'authority' and 'knowledge' as the two keystones supporting their enterprise. The *Renaissance des Cités* assumed the 'general interest' could be simply defined 'according to a formula dear to our urbanists, the organised whole of well-understood particular interests'. Such rhetoric poorly obscured the fact that the *sinistrés* were, in effect, to be kept out and excluded from the planning of the 'Great Task' of reconstruction.¹¹⁰ To be sure, their leadership structure included representatives of the devastated regions or of *sinistrés* organisations.¹¹¹ Yet there is little if any evidence of actual engagement with the local populations. Rosenthal, for one, feared the reconstruction be exploited by foreign speculators and unscrupulous businesses. He also denied local charities and philanthropic organisations the capacity to uphold the principles of urban planning. As he put it, 'one must show [the *sinistrés*] what is actually suitable to them.'¹¹² The writing on reconstruction often betrayed attitudes which could have hardly endeared experts to the *sinistrés*. In an article devoted to Péronne (Somme), Camille Vallon described the work of reconstruction as 'domestic colonisation'.¹¹³ A couple of years earlier, Dervaux had explicitly argued that post-war

¹⁰⁸ LC O 5850, A. Daudé-Bancel, 'La reconstruction des cités détruites', *La Grande Revue*, May-June 1917, 1.

¹⁰⁹ H.P. Cart de Lafontaine, 'The work of "La Renaissance Des Cites"', *The Town Planning Review* 9.1 (1921), 1-4.

¹¹⁰ LC 4 delta 1565, *La Renaissance des Cités*, Exposé, non dated (1916)

¹¹¹ LC 4 delta 1565, non dated, 1917.

¹¹² Rosenthal, *Villes et villages*, 286.

¹¹³ C. Vallon, 'Les cités dévastées par la guerre', *La Vie Urbaine* 1-2 (1919), 94-95.

urban reconstruction ought to follow colonial practices evidenced in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco.¹¹⁴

Indeed, for all their theoretical commitment to urbanism as a branch of sociology, urbanists remained wedded to a technocratic approach to post-war reconstruction. While urban communities were to benefit from their intervention, those populations appeared to be little more than another variable to factor into the wider equation that urbanists, alone, expected to solve. That they failed to recognise the agency of the local populations was not simply poor sociology; it also revealed a surprising degree of naivety. Imbued with the conviction that the transformation of cities' morphology would solve all problems associated with the urban question, urbanists assumed that their prescriptions would naturally impose themselves upon all stakeholders. Impervious to the needs and desires of the *sinistrés*, urbanists also proved remarkably ignorant of the wider political economy of urban recovery. This explains, in no small part, their subsequent disillusionment with urban reconstruction.

Urban reconstruction was an uneven process, which depended on the structure of the local economies as well as on the successful mobilisation of specific local, national, and transnational resources. The individual trajectories of Reims and Lens illustrate the weight of such structural and contingent inequalities. They also reveal both the impact and the limitations of the urbanist movement in the aftermath of the Great War.

Lens lay at the centre of France's coal mining heartland and was a bastion of socialist and working-class politics. At the heart of the Champagne region, Reims was known for its sparkling wine and as a significant commercial and industrial centre.¹¹⁵ Both cities

¹¹⁴ Dervaux, Le Beau, 199.

¹¹⁵ With 115178 inhabitants, the population of Reims was over three times that of Lens (31341). ADPC M3654 and M3655. [A]rchives [D]épartementales de la [M]arne 122 M 345.

exemplified the scale and nature of urban victimisation in the First World War. 'At Lens, fire and bombardment made a clean sweep' and 'no city in the devastated zone [was] so fitly to be characterized as the abomination of desolation'.¹¹⁶ The destruction of Reims and of its Cathedral fast became an enduring symbol of the 'barbaric' German way of war.¹¹⁷ Each city did however recover at a very different pace. Temporary shelters were being dismantled in Reims from 1923 and had disappeared by 1928. By contrast, there were still almost one thousand temporary housing units in Lens in 1930, although Lens was only a third of Reims's size in 1914.¹¹⁸ By 1924, builders struggled to find work in Reims and the city could organise a parade to celebrate the return of the 100,000th inhabitant in 1926. In Lens, key sites of urban life, like the main Catholic church or the trade unions' headquarters were not rebuilt until later.

There are at least three reasons for this which, when combined, outline the political economy of urban reconstruction. The process was indeed defined by each city's respective and unequal access to capital. Champagne producers first managed to tap into funding and support for industrial reconstruction. Money was therefore poured into the city itself, where these corporations had their headquarters and where business leaders lived. By contrast, Lens's capital-intensive mines lay on the outskirts of the city and their reconstruction certainly posed greater difficulties. Of strategic importance for the country as a whole, the reconstitution of the mines took precedence over the needs of the city. Coal extraction did not resume before 1921 and only returned to full capacity in 1923. In Reims, the local elite explicitly and systematically set out to exploit the 'symbolic capital' of the city, its singular status among 'martyr-towns'. In its first meeting after the 1918

¹¹⁶ W. MacDonald, *Reconstruction in France* (New York City, 1922), 25

¹¹⁷ See the remarkable book by A. Dowdall, *Communities under Fire: Urban Life at the Western Front, 1914-1918* (New York, 2020). O. Rigaud and M. Bédarida, *Reims. Reconstruction, 1920-1930* (Reims, 1988). O. Rigaud, *Reims à l'époque de l'Art Déco* (Reims, 2006). G. Haÿ, *La Renaissance de Lens, 1918-1932* (Lens, 2007).

¹¹⁸ Haÿ, *La renaissance*, 181

liberation, the municipal council called on the city's friends in France and abroad, and specifically in Great Britain and the USA, to fund the reconstruction if not of the whole city, at least of a 'museum, library, laboratory, high school, or hospital'.¹¹⁹ During and after the war, Reims had received a number of high-profile visitors, including President Wilson in January 1919 and it went on to receive the help of Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and Pasadena.¹²⁰ The city's symbolic capital made a material difference to its reconstruction. The old hospital was thus rebuilt as the American hospital, thanks to an initial donation of \$200,000. Each bed was sponsored by the family of a dead Sammy who had fought in France. Ground was broken in 1922 and it was formally unveiled in 1925. By contrast, the reconstruction of the hospital at Lens was not completed before 1932. It was exclusively funded through taxation and borrowing by the municipality. Lens had of course been recognised by French authorities as one of the 'martyr towns' and was awarded the *Croix de guerre* and the *Légion d'Honneur* in August 1919. But it never commanded the type of international resonance that Reims or Leuven did. There is indeed little, if any, evidence of a transnational contribution to the reconstruction of Lens.¹²¹

Such unequal access to economic and symbolic capital also accounted for the differentiated attention that transnational urban planning milieux paid to devastated cities. While Reims soon proved to be of particular interest to French and international experts, urbanist networks appear to have ignored Lens. The reconstruction of Reims was indeed often discussed at the Musée Social. The first plans were elaborated in 1915 and two projects were presented at the 1916 exhibition *La Cité Reconstituée*.¹²² In 1920, the city council called upon the *Renaissance des Cités* and commissioned an American urban

¹¹⁹ AMR, 6S5, Délibération du Conseil Municipal, 9 November 1918.

¹²⁰ D. Quéreux-Sbaï, O. Rigaud, and R. Salmon, *Les Rémois en 1918, de l'évacuation au retour*. (Reims, 1998), 42

¹²¹ ADPC BHC 652/1, La reconstitution des régions libérées du Pas-de-Calais, Situation au 1^{er} janvier 1927, Préfecture du Pas-de-Calais, 358.

¹²² Jaussely, *Les cités dévastées*, 118.

planner, George B. Ford (1879-1930), to lead its work there. A graduate of Harvard, MIT and the Beaux-Arts in Paris, Ford had been working as an architect in New York City until 1917 when he returned to France to serve as Head of Reconstruction for the American Red Cross. A key vector in the transatlantic circulation of urbanist ideas, Ford was a fixture of French urbanist circles.¹²³ His plan for Reims was approved in July 1920.¹²⁴ Revised in response to financial constraints and the views of local stakeholders and notabilities, the plan was eventually approved in 1922 and provided for the city we know today.¹²⁵ Then, as now, the city was often held out as an exemplar of a successful reconstruction, defined by its Art Déco architecture and its peripheral neighbourhoods rebuilt as garden-cities.¹²⁶ The *Renaissance des Cités* did not however wait long to criticize the reconstruction of Reims. As early as 1923, the organisation complained that ‘the rebuilt streets [were] ugly and the former harmony of this city of art [was] irremediably compromised.’ Reims was now excoriated as a ‘a deplorable example to show to pilgrims from the world over’.¹²⁷ The depth of disappointment over the reconstitution of Reims appears commensurate to the intellectual investment in its reconstruction. Yet the criticism levelled at Reims focussed less on the plan itself than on the management of the process. In its report on the rebuilding of Pinon, expected to become a ‘model village’, the *Renaissance des Cités* also regretted the failure to impose a complete modernisation programme, the administrative difficulties encountered even at such a small scale, and above all the ‘état d’esprit des *sinistrés*’.¹²⁸ This recurring complaint testified to the urbanists’ failure to understand the political dynamics of urban reconstruction. Imbued with an unwavering technocratic faith, urbanists expected to be entrusted with the control of urban reconstruction. They failed to

¹²³ D.T. Rodgers, *Atlantic crossings: social politics in a progressive age* (Cambridge, Mass London, 2001).

¹²⁴ G.B. Ford, ‘Rebuilding France for posterity. How the Renaissance des Cités is helping the people in devastated areas to plan a new life’, *La France* (1921), 202–23.

¹²⁵ For a fascinating discussion of Ford’s career and ideas, see L.D. Slavitt, ‘Pioneering practice and the disrupted metropolis: George B. Ford and the emergence of city planning in the early twentieth century’, PhD Dissertation, University College London (2020).

¹²⁶ Rigaud, *Reims à l’époque de l’Art Déco*

¹²⁷ LC 4 delta 1565, La Renaissance des Cités, AGM, 15 December 1923

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

appreciate that urban elites had to respond to their constituents' desires and to address the *sinistrés*' demands. In Reims and elsewhere, urbanists resented the notion that their principles should be accommodated to local conditions. They also bristled at the Third Republic's well-established commitment to individualism and to private property rights. Though it had been reaffirmed by the *Charte des Sinistrés* of April 1919, urbanists failed to reckon with the impact it would have on their work.

Their broader incapacity to appreciate the political dynamics of reconstruction also prevented urbanists from acknowledging the extent to which the tenets of urbanism actually underpinned the rebuilding of many French municipalities. Lens does indeed provide a stunning example of the dissemination and embrace of urbanist principles. In spite of the difficulties the city faced, it seized on reconstruction as an opportunity to remodel its urban infrastructure and morphology. A rapid comparison of the plans of Lens before and after the reconstruction highlights the expansion of the city and the emphasis placed on the rational reconfiguration of its circulation plan.

Fig. 2: Plan of Lens before the war

Fig. 3: Plan of Lens after the war

Led by the Socialist municipality, the material reconstruction of the city was meant to provide the platform for an ambitious social policy aimed at the education and emancipation of the working classes.¹²⁹ The reconstruction of Lens nonetheless pursued most of the objectives formulated by the urbanist movement. The rebuilding of infrastructures, from sewers to medical facilities, as well as the reshaping of streets was

¹²⁹ A[rchives] M[unicipales de] L[ens], 1 Per 1, L'œuvre d'une municipalité socialiste. Compte rendu des travaux du Conseil Municipal, 1919-1929, 26.

designed to improve living conditions in accordance with dominant hygienist principles. Most significantly, the municipality used the enormous quantities of rubble and refuse produced by the destruction to fill in the swamp located to the east of the city. It thus provided for its physical expansion and the creation of a public park and other amenities.¹³⁰ The ambition and modernity of the city's reconstruction found another spectacular expression with the 1927 inauguration of the train station, relocated and rebuilt in Arts Déco style by one of Le Corbusier's disciplines, Urbain Cassan.¹³¹ That Lens did not appear to have aroused any sustained interest among postwar urbanist milieux is thus all the more surprising, given that the substance of its reconstruction programme was clearly in keeping with their ideals. This however was not true of its implementation in two important respects. First, Lens' Socialist council - however committed it was to collective ownership - chose to accommodate the property rights of local landlords and landowners. Where urbanists had called for systematic expropriation, its reconstruction plan was implemented in a transactional fashion. The municipality oversaw 200 sale deals and 550 transfers of ownership in an ambitious programme of land consolidation. To the council, such a process of bargaining was both cost-efficient and true to their credo of democratic governance.¹³² Second, it chose to retain control over the planning process while urbanist organisations claimed a monopoly of best practices and expertise they clearly did not possess. This claim reflected, in no small part, the continuing and unsuccessful efforts of architects to define urbanism as their exclusive domain. For many cities, like Lens, opted instead to rely on their in-house personnel, on municipal engineers and road surveyors, to design and manage their reconstruction. To *La Renaissance des Cités* and its supporters across the intelligentsia, these local technicians were beholden to private interests when the general

¹³⁰ *Le Télégramme*, 17 juin 1919

¹³¹ A. Bocquillon, P. Bréemersch, and B. Ghienne, *Lens. La gare, le dépôt, la cité des cheminots*. (Lens, 1996).

¹³² AML, 1 Per 1, 26.

interest ought to prevail. They could not be entrusted with a role which required, besides technocratic detachment, a particular aesthetic sensibility. Paradoxically, this was of great concern to those few urbanists who were truly committed to regionalism. Léandre Vaillat for instance criticised the dominance of rational approaches to urban planning which had confined the pittoresque to architecture. Yet he argued a city's plan and the layout of its streets should also seek to preserve its character. Alarmed by the choices made in this regard by municipal engineers, Vaillat denounced their 'fanatical cult of the straight line [which] sacrifice[d] the supple combinations of nature and art'. To this regionalist, the solution was for reconstruction to be guided by a centralised and 'disinterested' organisation such the *Renaissance des Cités*.¹³³ The leading voices of the urbanist movement effectively chose to belittle or even ignore the successes of urban reconstruction rather than to acknowledge it could happen without their input or in accordance with their own vision of urban planning. That attitude betrayed their disregard for the contingent and structural inequality which shaped post-war urban recovery. It also revealed their failure to comprehend that reconstruction could not happen in opposition to the very communities it was supposed to serve.

French urbanists lost little time in proclaiming urban reconstruction a failure where the scale and complexity of the challenge called for a patient and careful examination of the war's urban aftermath. Interwar experts thus defined an interpretive framework which scholars uncritically accepted. Fifty years after Jean Royer had denounced, in 1941, the

¹³³ ADPC 26 J 6, *Le Pas-de-Calais Libéré*, 11 April 1920

post-1918 reconstruction as 'an exceptional opportunity and a missed opportunity', those very same terms were used to denounce the 'first reconstruction'.¹³⁴ Historians who, like Danièle Voldman, subsequently called for a more nuanced assessment have rarely been answered.¹³⁵ To do so, this article has scrutinised the post-war reconstruction of French cities in its own terms and paid particular attention to the experts who had done so much to frame its assessment. French and transnational urbanist milieux often argued their difficulty stemmed from the belated development and limited public acceptance of town planning in France. This was the line of argument accredited by George B. Ford for a piece published in *The Builder* in November 1919. Yet the conversations he related in that publication with the President of the French Surveyor's Institute pointed to a more fundamental issue. Those architects who 'called themselves town-planners' he claimed [...] did not understand the economics or social aspects of town-planning'.¹³⁶

This article demonstrated that such criticism could have also been levelled at those urbanists who loudly proclaimed their commitment to Geddesian 'civics' and 'municipal sociology'. Those prolific wartime and post-war commentators did indeed neglect to consider the nature of wartime urban victimisation. They showed little interest in the social conditions created anew by the conflict. This hindered their capacity to engage with the local populations. Unable to apprehend the socio-political dynamic at work in the devastated cities, urbanists were unable to exercise the kind of control over reconstruction they had claimed and craved for the duration of the war.

Anxious to bring about the modernisation of towns and cities, they appeared remarkably oblivious of the specific challenges raised by post-war reconstruction. Urbanists virtually ignored the problems that the economic reintegration of demobilised combatants in

¹³⁴ R.-A. Couedelo, 'Aménagement et urbanisme. L'insertion des pouvoirs publics, 1919-1950', in Direction des archives de France (ed.), *Reconstructions et modernisation. La France après les ruines, 1918... 1945...* (Paris, 1991), 211–20, 212

¹³⁵ Voldman, *La France d'un modèle de reconstruction à l'autre, 1918-1945*, 66-68

¹³⁶ *The Builder*, 7 November 1919

devastated cities might pose for instance. **Meanwhile across Europe, artists such as George Grosz placed disabled veterans at the centre of the post-war urban landscape.**¹³⁷

Likewise, those practitioners of municipal politics never considered how foreign occupation and its legacy might hinder the reconstitution of urban politics. Despite their hygienist concern, they also paid little regard to the personal development of children whose schooling would be further disrupted for months and in some cases years. Those concerns were however foremost on the minds of *sinistrés* and their municipalities. Across the devastated areas, like in Lens or Reims, urban populations and their elites sought and often succeeded to reconcile the tenets of urbanism with local demands. By contrast, French urbanists betrayed many of the limitations commonly associated with their functionalist successors and their 'experience-starved beliefs'.¹³⁸ Focussed as they were on the design of the ideal *ville*, urbanists had lost sight of the urban lives and of the *cité* that *sinistrés* sought to rebuild in the uncertain aftermath of the Great War.

¹³⁷ See for instance in Germany, G. Grosz, *Kriegsinvaliden und Arbeiter*, *Im Schatten* series, 1921, <https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection_ge/objbytag/objbytag_tag-vo62784_sov_sort-5_page-4.html>

¹³⁸ R. Sennett, *Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City* (New York, 2018), 63-77.