



Brussels, Capital of Europe



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In May and September 2001 the President of the Commission, Romano Prodi, and the Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt invited a group of intellectuals to discuss the needs and functions of a European capital and how Brussels could best express them. This report presents the main ideas and proposals resulting from those meetings. They are intended as a contribution to an ongoing debate.

The Group of Policy Advisers (GOPA), European Commission, organised both events, prepared the issues papers and the Final Report. Elena Saraceno acted as project coordinator.

The contents of this report do not necessarily represent the position of the Commission.

Following the Nice Summit the President of the Commission, Romano Prodi, and the Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, invited a group of intellectuals to two brainstorming sessions to discuss the expectations, needs and functions of Brussels as capital of Europe. This report summarises the main ideas and proposals resulting from those meetings. It aims to contribute to and inspire future decision-making.

The key idea resulting from the exercise was that the European capital should not follow the example of national capitals. There was wide consensus among the participants about this. The European capital -still in the making- should be a stable but "light" capital, linking the diversities that lie at the heart of the European project. This should be achieved through exchanges and cultural contacts rather than through a reduction of differences and the establishment of hierarchies. Networking could act as unifying principle. The European identity should be conceived as a plural one. The communication about the European capital needs to be more attractive and consistent with these guiding ideas, keeping them in mind when selecting ideal or physical representations.

Past experience of the European Institutions in Brussels was not considered an example of good practice. The quality of buildings, urban planning, relations between the European Institutions and Brussels' citizens, stakeholders' participation in different stages of the decision-making process, were all considered problematic areas. The articulation of existing diversities within the city was considered unsatisfactory. A higher degree of project coherence and a more extensive use of the partnership principle between different actors could improve past practices and influence positively the attractiveness of the European project in Brussels for the people living, working, investing or visiting it.

The proposals made in this report are an example of how these expectations and needs could begin to materialise. They stress the cultural and social

functions of the European capital -an aspect often underestimated in the past- and do not neglect the need to address urban planning issues. Four proposals have been selected for their demonstrative character:

- A *Centre for Advanced Studies* would respond to the need for attracting top scholars, to promote exchanges with other centres of excellence, and to profit from the concentration of human resources and interest groups attracted by the presence of the European Institutions in Brussels.
- An *Institute for multi-lingualism* would address the need for improving communication between people speaking different languages, finding user-friendly methods for their learning and their teaching, linking this to the pooling of translation and interpretation expertise, which has accumulated through practice in Brussels.
- The establishment of a more effective and transparent method for improving the quality of European buildings and deciding their location and impact, having in mind current problems and future needs. This should include the use of *international competitions*.
- The adoption of a *partnership approach*, experienced successfully between the Commission and Member States, for addressing specific issues of concern (for example schools, housing, transportation...) arising from the presence of European Institutions in Brussels and including relevant interest groups and stakeholders.

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INDEX

PART I: The discussion and the ideas generated

I.1	Background and aims	7
I.2	Introducing the debate	10
I.2.1	Umberto Eco's "soft" capital	10
I.2.2	Rem Koolhaas "hard" capital	12
I.3	Main ideas from the discussion: expectations, needs and functions	15
I.3.1	A capital for Europe	15
I.3.2	Brussels as capital	22
I.4	Conclusions: some guiding ideas	28

PART II: The Proposals 31

PART III: Communicating Europe 37

PART IV: The public and media perception of the project 130

Annexe 1: Short biographical notes about the participants 133

Annexe 2: Press coverage of the project 138

PART I:

The discussion and the ideas generated

I.1. Background and aims

At the Nice Summit of December 2000, it was decided that the role of Brussels as capital of Europe should be strengthened¹. Brussels will become, after 2002, the main seat for European Council meetings and this will give more institutional stability to the role of Brussels as capital of Europe. The strengthening of this role does not question in any way the presence of European Institutions in cities of other Member States.

The President of the Commission, Romano Prodi, and the Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, interpreted this task in a broad sense, turning it into an occasion to ask what a European capital should be, choosing not to limit their task to the provision of the physical facilities for hosting future summits.

The aims: to explore the needs and functions of a European capital and how Brussels could best express them

There are two key aspects to be considered. The first is related to what should be understood by a “European capital”. There is little knowledge on the subject, probably due to the originality and evolving nature of the European Union as an institution. There is a vast amount of literature on national capitals and their functions: but is this the model to follow? Brussels has interpreted in many ways its role as capital: sometimes competing with national capitals as one of them, sometimes trying more innovative paths and yet at other times avoiding any statement. Some new thinking could therefore provide some guiding ideas. Once these are better defined, symbols, messages and appropriate forms of communication might be easier to identify.

¹) Treaty of Nice, Annex III, Declaration on the venue for European Councils: “As from 2002, one European Council meeting per Presidency will be held in Brussels. When the Union comprises 18 members, all European Council meetings will be held in Brussels.”

The second aspect is related to *Brussels as the seat of the capital of Europe* and how it could best express - visually, physically, in everyday practice - those needs and functions that are perceived as typical of the European project. There is more experience on this aspect: the European Institutions, after all, have been in Brussels for over forty years now. However, not everything has been satisfactory on this front, whether we consider the communication of the European idea, the attractiveness of the *Quartier Européen*, or the relationships between the institutional stakeholders and citizens.

Both President Prodi and Prime Minister Verhofstadt were aware that the discussion of these issues was an unusual, risky and difficult task. The advantages on the other hand were quite clear and challenging: making explicit the type of capital expected, giving a coherent framework and sense of direction to planning decisions, considering what other dimensions besides buildings make a capital.

The method and the participants

A small group of high-level intellectuals, known for their original and innovative thinking, was invited to two brainstorming meetings². This approach was considered to be the most effective way to ensure a good level of independent expertise, to have an immediate interaction with policymakers and to obtain results in a relatively short period of time. The ideas generated in the discussion, organised in a report, could then be made available to other stakeholders for wider consideration and debate. Each meeting was preceded by an issues paper³ outlining the themes for discussion and was introduced by an invited speaker from the group, who gave his own reading of the subject matter.

Both meetings took place in Brussels. The first, on May 30th at *La Maison d'Erasmus*, dealt with the "European capital" aspect. The second, on September 19th, at *La Maison des Brasseurs*, concentrated on Brussels. The

Belgian presidency of the European Union, in the second semester of 2001, provided a particularly appropriate framework to conclude the exercise.

The participants in either one or both meetings were:

Name	Nationality	Activity/Area of expertise
Crozier, Michel	French	Professor, Sociology of organisations
Eco, Umberto	Italian	Writer, philosopher, Professor of semiotics
Geremek, Bronislaw	Polish	Social historian, deputy of Polish Parliament
Hayek, Nicolas	Swiss	Entrepreneur; founder and head of Swatch Group
Jaoui, Agnès	French	Actress and film director
Koolhaas, Rem	Dutch	Architect, Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), Professor; head of Harvard project on the city
Maragall, Pasqual	Spanish	Deputy of Parliament, former Mayor of the city of Barcelona
McDonald, Maryon	British	Anthropologist, Professor
Mortier, Gerard	Belgian	Director of the Salzburg music festival, former director of La Monnaie Opera House, Brussels
Schuiten, François	Belgian	Scenographer, strip designer, artist
van Istendael, Geert	Belgian	Journalist
Vidarte, Juan Ignacio	Spanish	Director of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao

President Prodi indicated that if the ideas resulting from the discussion were daring, so much the better. This gave the participants ample freedom of expression and improved the quality of the discussion.

A note on the wider context of this exercise may be to the point. The European Union has since its origins been in a process of slow, but continuous, institutional adaptation of its core functions and membership. This has prompted a need for making more explicit than in the past the "*finalités politiques*" of the Union and the desirable forms of governance. These issues were not on the agenda of this project. However, our task would have been easier if those finalités had been already established. In fact, the needs and functions of a European capital might mean different things according to the outcome of that debate. The historical experience reminds us that ideas develop while events occur. It was therefore agreed to proceed on the basis of each participant's understanding of a desirable outcome.

2) See annexe I for participants to both meetings.

3) For the first meeting: "Brussels capital of Europe, Issues paper", Brussels, May 2001. For the second meeting: "Brussels capital of Europe, Issues for the second meeting", Brussels, September 2001. Both were produced by the Group of Policy Advisers, European Commission, acting as coordinator of the project.

1.2. Introducing the debate

Umberto Eco introduced the debate on the European capital in the first meeting and Rem Koolhaas did the same for Brussels at the second meeting. Excerpts of their presentations are reproduced below. Their approach was quite different.

1.2.1 Umberto Eco's "soft" capital

What do we mean by the word capital? In the course of Europe's history there have been two ideas of a capital city. The first can be represented by the Louis XIV model. This is a city where not only the court and the government live, but in which every aspect of the social life is defined, decided, supported and exported to every minor centre of the kingdom. The ingredients of a capital are both of a material and of an intangible nature. They include enterprises, activities, markets, public administrations and also exchanges in sciences and arts, the production of religious beliefs, collective behaviour, fashions, etiquette and norms. The relationship between the capital and the dependent regional centres can be represented by a tree.

There were countries in which this relationship was profoundly different. Take for instance the case of Italy, a country that for centuries did not have a national government. The history of Italy is a story of cities, each with their own cultural, commercial and political tradition, even after the birth of the national state. The same happened with Germany. Consider also the case in which different historical cities coincide with linguistic differences as in Spain, in Switzerland and here in Belgium. In this case the model is no longer represented by a tree, but by a network.

In a network-like system, we have - in telematic terms - many servers, who are important because they connect several computers. But the server does not dictate the policy of any of the computers it connects. So, my first conclusion is that the European capital must be more like a server put in the centre of a network than like the root of a tree. The

metaphor of the server is not as whimsical as it may seem at first glance. A server is certainly made of hardware but it guarantees the circulation of software. A European capital should deal with soft, not hard, business. So allow me to smile when I hear that maybe we need to make a monument in order to give Brussels its character of capital of Europe: an Empire State building, a Coliseum, or something like that - that is hard stuff.

The "stable" character of Brussels as capital of Europe should not be understood to mean "heavy": stable should mean more and more "soft". In the perspective of a multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-ethnic Europe, Brussels should become the centre where diversities are not eliminated, but rather exalted and harmonised. Once again I insist that such a project has nothing to do with "hardware" problems but with "soft" ones.

Brussels should become a centre where all the most important issues about the acceptance of diversity are discussed. Themes like tolerance, fundamentalism, integration, globalisation could become themes for Brussels' forums. Another issue is the expansion of multi-lingualism. In 1992, I ended my public lecture at the Collège de France for a course on the perennial quest for a perfect language, by quoting an advertisement that I had seen on a wall here in Brussels. It said: "la plus speedy des pizzas". I would have liked to correct it as "The plus speedy de las pizzas". Multi-lingualism is a fundamental educational issue. I would see Brussels as the future centre for the discussion of all the problems concerning multi-lingualism. Incidentally, Brussels is a bilingual city and has a particular interest and experience in this field. Why not start a multilingual open university in Brussels?

Brussels should become a capital of European culture. Initiatives concerning the co-existence of different religions should be introduced as well as congresses on comparative literature. The organisation of a European book-fair (not on the model of the Frankfurt one, which works very well as far as commercial issues, exchange of rights and translations are concerned), as a playground where European publishers and readers would meet to discuss the European state of the art. The same should

be done for films and television. Thus, the capital of the European Union should become a “foyer culturel”, a centre for the confrontation of diversities. Brussels has a moral and cultural authority for issues that concern every European country.

I shall end with a reflection on the question posed by the issues paper: “is being European just one more layer (the external one) added to the onion of our personality, less deeply felt than the core? Or is it more like a garlic structure, each clove individually wrapped up and kept separate but tight together by the European skin?” I think that a continent hosting frog-eaters can take seriously a garlic ideology. I love France, which I consider as my second native country, as happens to many from the Piedmont Region. But when I am in France I feel irritated by many aspects of the French culture and habits. I am well inclined towards Germany, because I married a German woman but also, probably because of this, frequently I cannot stand Germans. And so on with many other European countries. But when I land in America and I find in New York many aspects of the “American way of life”, and when I meet after a lecture with colleagues of different countries, I feel really at home only with Europeans. Only at this point do I discover how European I really am. Only then, only once outside Europe, do I become a European patriot. Brussels should become the city where Europeans learn what it means to be a European citizen.

1.2.2 Rem Koolhaas’ “hard” capital

The presentation made by Rem Koolhaas⁴, at the second brainstorming meeting was based on specifically prepared graphic material. The key points of his introduction, accompanying a series of slides, are reported below. A selection of them is shown in Part III of the report.



4) A working group met several times between the two meetings and prepared the graphic material presented by Rem Koolhaas. The team was composed of architects Reinier de Graaf, Markus Scheafer, Sybille Waelty, Saskia Simon, Tammo Prinz, Roberto Otero, Ena Lloret, Fernando Donis, Johan de Wachter, Catarina Canas, from the Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) in Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

I will consider two particular forms of representation of the European Union’ identity: the first is through communication, both verbal and visual; the second through the physical substance and buildings of the European Institutions.

There are many examples that show the richness and diversity of Europe. However, the communication of that richness is wanting (like in the long lists of names in all the official languages). The representation of the European Union as one entity is often flat and without eloquence. It is possible to represent both the diversity and unity of Europe in a more attractive way (the stretched stars, the flag barcode).

Another way of communicating the European Institutions in Brussels is through its buildings. The European Union has asked for an enormous amount of buildings in the last 20 years. But this demand was expressed without influencing the choice of architecture or the meaning of those buildings. One would expect that the buildings in which the European Institutions are represented reflect the best ability and the highest quality. This is not the case. Brussels today is a European capital by default, a curious aesthetic landscape, sometimes generic and sometimes of such a scale that you can only talk about megalomania. In this condition it is unable to articulate any idea about Europe.



The result of this situation in Brussels is cruel: European Institutions inhabit a neighbourhood that they know very well is imperfect, and this fact has given the citizens of Brussels a traumatic experience in the heart of their city. This trauma has now turned into an alibi, because it allows them not to seriously confront the issue of modernisation or the new scale of the European project, thus remaining locked in a defensive position.

I will consider only two options for improving the present urban situation of the European Institutions in Brussels. The first consists in assuming the

past 20 years and finding a way for re-inhabiting the “Quartier Européen”, both through new buildings and a new conceptual framework. Then it could really begin to function as an explicit, politically meaningful, space. In doing so, it may perhaps also resolve the tensions between the European Institutions and the inhabitants of Brussels.

This option imagines an ideal circle and path around the location of the European Institutions and exploits all the existing margins of manoeuvre. This should create an area that does justice not only to bureaucratic needs but also to aesthetic quality, openness, political representation and improves the links with the rest of the city. Considering the age of the different existing buildings and the fact that you may consider them obsolete after 30 years, it becomes possible to improve the current situation gradually over the years.

The second and perhaps easier option is to make a new start outside the present area where the European Institutions are concentrated, in the site known as “Tour et Taxi”, along the canal. This could be conceived like in a more “idyllic” campus.



I am fairly explicit in suggesting that in my opinion the challenge of assuming the past is a much more interesting option, even though it is a complicated one. It would imply trying to find a better coherence for the Quartier Européen, with less ostentatious, well defined actions linking it to the surrounding neighbourhoods and making it work as a centre.

The issue of connection needs to be faced more explicitly. The big complaint is that the Quartier Européen stands out like a foreign, separate part of the city. I would like to mention the example of New York's World Trade Center as a building that was outrageously different from its context in terms of scale, that was not connected, but that nevertheless took its place in a very convincing way in a very old part of the city. I ask myself whether in Europe we are unable to simply assume the contrast

between the 19th century typology of the city and the scale of the new institutions, perpetuating a nostalgia for a kind of city that in the past 30 years we have not been able to build.”

1.3 Main ideas from the discussion: expectations, needs and functions

The debate that followed has been structured in a series of statements that summarise the various points made by the participants. Taken together, they form a sort of “guidebook” on what is expected of a European capital, the do's and don'ts, the problematic areas, the suggested approaches and some proposals which serve as an example of what is needed. These statements have been ordered following the two themes that acted as a unifying thread: what type of capital should Europe have, and how Brussels could best express and benefit from being such a capital. It is more an ideal framework than a complete and detailed list of actions to be taken. The names of participants appear in brackets to indicate specific contributions or points of agreement and disagreement.

1.3.1 A capital for Europe

- National capitals - a model not to follow

The European capital was expected by all participants to play a different role from that of national capitals in the past. It should not try to imitate or to follow this model. There was a large consensus among participants on this point.

The list of ‘things to avoid’ turned out to be clearer than the list of positive features. This is understandable since different models of national capitals are there to look at -some more attractive than others- while the European capital is a single, original and new subject, with uncertain and often contrasting characteristics, still unfinished.

It should not be perceived in hierarchical terms, as a centralising structure, necessarily big, tangible and monumental. A division of

functions among capitals (the Euro in Frankfurt, the Court of Justice in Luxembourg, the multiple locations of the Parliament...) was not considered contradictory with this type of European capital.

National capitals have tried to reduce internal diversities, rewriting (some said inventing) a unified history, creating symbols and values that strengthen the feeling of a unique national identity. A hierarchy between the national capital and other cities and regions of their territory was established. It was felt that this is not what a European capital should be about.

- The European capital: a subject in making

The capital of Europe should be conceived as a distinct entity, still in the making and requiring innovative thinking. The adjectives used to ideally describe its nature were “soft”, intangible, light, diverse, plural, networking, cultural.

- A stable but “light” capital

The stability of the European capital in Brussels has de facto already been achieved in everyday practice. This is not what is at stake. The passage to a “legitimate” status creates the need to spell out more explicitly the kind of capital Europe needs, how it should be symbolically and physically represented, communicated. Stability should not imply a concentration of decision making in Brussels, quite the contrary. This was emphasised particularly with reference to the enlargement process and the expected increase in EU population and national capitals (Prodi).

The implications of stability were interpreted differently. There was consensus that stable should not mean “heavy”. Some participants expressed concern over the disappearance of an “itinerant” capital (Geremek), since this was perceived as both linked to the feudal origins of Europe and a way to give expression to the multiplicity of cities and regions across Europe (Maragall). It was therefore desirable that some initiatives maintain an itinerant character.

- Diversity: the main asset of the European project

Diversity was felt as a positive and crucial asset of the European Union, its founding stone, all the more so after enlargement (Geremek). It is the distinctive feature that underlies the originality of the European project, especially in the eyes of non-Europeans. This convergence of opinion, coming from participants with different disciplinary and working backgrounds, appeared a remarkable, unexpected, clear prescription for future action. Diversity was also picked up as a key idea in the press coverage of the event (see Part IV).

A European capital should promote and respect the existing multiplicity of traditions, forms of social organisation, languages, culture, “the Europe of minorities”. Differences may be understood in territorial (cities and regions) or thematic (religions, ethnic groups...) ways. There is both a need to avoid fragmentation, as well as to allow freedom of choice in the exchanges among each area or group. This should help each part of the whole to evolve on the basis of its own peculiar profile and to modernise without developing defensiveness or intolerance. It implies that differences should not be reduced or harmonised for the sake of a common European identity.

- Networking: the unifying principle

There was a lower degree of consensus on what kept these diverse parts together. If the functions of a European capital are not those of national capitals, it is fair to ask why we need a European capital at all, and if so, what for. A first answer to this question was that Europe does not need a capital, it is the European Union that needs one. The political and administrative capital of the EU is already in Brussels, taking decisions and wielding power. States with a federal institutional structure like Germany or Switzerland have small capitals. Since the EU is likely to become similar to them, there is a strong need to counterbalance the resulting looseness by emphasising the “spiritual” function of the European capital –now sketchy and poorly known– strengthening “the very long dream of European unity” (Geremek).

Other participants endorsed the need for a unifying function of the European capital with different contents in mind. Some felt that stressing the common memory was only a step towards an institutional unification yet to come, of a federal nature, with a government, ministries, a defence, an army, a financial system, an education system and so on (Hayek). For others, the memory building exercise was seen as repeating the experience of rewriting national histories. This would turn out to be an artificial and “top down” exercise, done at the expense of regions and cities and ultimately leading to think in terms of a nation-Europe (Maragall, Vidarte). Furthermore, memory and traditions should not be seen as fixed and static since in reality they are constantly being re-elaborated through experience (Mortier).

A quite different perception of the function of a European capital was intended in the “soft” capital proposed by Eco. In this case the unifying principle was found in the “networking” function of the capital, assimilated to that of a server. This capital should facilitate exchanges and communication, the circulation of know-how between cities and regions (even when far apart), between different actors and groups, helping to reduce the physical distance and hierarchy between places and institutional levels. Brussels would have to develop this “articulating” function that no other national capital could ever have. The network function was understood as consisting mainly of cultural exchanges, students receiving university training in different countries, independent European film festivals, art exhibitions, theatre and music, the learning of several languages (rather than choosing a common one), religious dialogue and ethnic expression (Jaoui, Mortier, Vidarte, Eco). Such a function does not necessarily need the European Union as a reference and could be extended to a larger notion of Europe.

Taking this notion of a soft capital a step further, it was held that concepts such as “capital”, “identity”, “culture” in the singular, should be avoided when applied to Europe. They carry with them a baggage

always inextricably tied to the national states and positivism, therefore making it difficult to inject new meaning into these words and requiring continuous explanations about the difference (McDonald). It is not appropriate to describe the new and exciting construction of Europe with old conceptual categories, which might be embedded in our thinking but have been superseded in the practice of everyday life –in tourism, or the Schengen area- (Koolhaas).

Some participants perceived an opposition between the unifying and the networking functions, understood as mutually exclusive. However, the networking function could also turn out to be the unifying principle of European integration. It was remarked that often a homogeneity imposed from the top generates the need for independence and autonomy among those who do not want to be assimilated (Vidarte, Maragall). Respect for diversity and empowerment makes the fact of belonging to an open community like the European Union more attractive, precisely because this allows a non-exclusive form of allegiance. Networking provides an alternative unifying rationale from the one used by nation states in their unification. It could help to avoid the “tower of Babel” syndrome (Koolhaas).

- The European identity: a plural identity

The discussion about identity often overlapped with that on diversity. Asking about the overlapping identities of European citizens was dismissed as irrelevant. Identities are not something that you peel off like layers or tie together (like an onion or a garlic clove). If we move outside positivism, and look at the way in which human beings go about their daily lives, we see that identity is always relational and contextual. This means that you can be British one minute, Scottish another; and then European when you go to Japan or the US (MacDonald, Eco).

Identities and cultures exist only in the plural for each individual, and their relevance does not depend on an *a priori* hierarchy between

them, but rather on the specific context in which we find ourselves. For example, during the recent BSE crisis, there was a revaluation of the European identity by the British, in the face of an inability to cope with the problem at national level (McDonald). There might be also convenient trade-offs between national and European identities as the experience of changing the Deutsche Mark for the Euro showed in Germany (Maragall). These are interesting cases to look at because they show the ways in which a more favourable perception of Europe can take place in everyday life and at an institutional level.

Conflicts of identities have been a creation of nation-states, in response to their political needs (Maragall). In a sense, we should be happy that we haven't had similar artificial constructs in Europe and no European chauvinist indoctrination has taken place (Koolhaas). This has never been a real danger (Geremek, Jaoui). If the European capital does not follow the national model, then it would be wise and coherent not to worry too much about a European identity and leave that problem to the national states, who invented it in the first place.

The question of migration is linked to the perception of identity. Our societies are already multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious as a result of immigration. With the current process of ageing we can only expect migrations to increase in the future. In such a context, "why should then a Muslim citizen of Barcelona consider himself as belonging to a different nation from a Muslim citizen of Berlin?" (Eco). An "open" identity, not based on the establishment of "walls" between places and people should be considered as a distinctive feature of Europe (Vidarte). Speaking many languages, understanding the language of others, would be a good way for acknowledging our plural identity.

- Improving the communication on Europe

It is difficult to communicate in an attractive way both the complexities of the European project and the need for unifying elements. On

the one hand we have a mosaic Europe (the regions, the languages, the local traditions...) and on the other a plain blue Europe that flattens all differences. This becomes unwieldy and uncreative and should be replaced by something which is richer and more direct (Koolhaas).

The iconographic message about Europe needs to be reinforced and modernised, becoming less reticent. We live in an era of branding and in a certain sense it is admirable that there has been no branding of the European Union: this has helped to maintain a greater authenticity. On the other hand it is also sad because it leaves an important message misunderstood and ignored. Participants shared the need for new, less old-fashioned forms of representation (Maragall, Hayek, Vidarte).

The communication deficit is found both in the signs and symbols that have been chosen by the European Union, either in Brussels or in other Member States, and in the buildings, monuments and other physical representations of the European Institutions. The need for improving the communication is closely related to the question of symbols (see below).

- "Soft" and "hard": a false opposition

The "soft" cultural aspects emphasised by Eco were often perceived as alternative to the "hard" urban planning ones emphasised by Koolhaas. Brussels as capital could be interpreted in quite opposing ways according to the "mix of ingredients" perceived as essential: in one case it would mean more cultural networking functions, in another it would mean more buildings, monuments and physical objects. The controversial responses given by participants in the first meeting appeared in a new light after the discussion of the second meeting, centred on the role of Brussels.

In fact, most "soft" exchanges going on in Europe exist already, but are not seen as part of a coherent message. The cultural networking function will also need to have some physical substance: museums,

universities, concert halls, cinemas usually host art exhibitions, intellectual debate, music and movies. On the other hand, “hard” ingredients, assimilated with monuments and buildings, have been present in any kind of capital (Geremek, Maragall) and have an embedded significance in the architecture they choose. The almost exclusive emphasis given to the physical dimension of the European capital in Brussels probably explains the opposition perceived between “hard” and “soft” capitals (McDonald). The need for monuments was also perceived as an instrument of the past, while the “soft” aspects were thought to reflect the future (Vidarte).

A particular mix of soft and hard “ingredients” appeared to be necessary both for representing a particular idea about the European capital and for its realisation in Brussels. The European capital cannot avoid coming to terms with its physical representation (Koolhaas, Schuiten, Maragall, Vidarte). The problem is not so much one of ignoring the “hard” dimension, but rather one of giving meaning and significance to buildings and monuments, ensuring a higher degree of aesthetic quality and urban planning, finding the courage to redress what went wrong in the past and appears unsatisfactory to many.

This is the theme of the next section.

1.3.2 Brussels as capital

- Improving the past record

The ideas about the European capital, even though broad and general, were used as a first input for discussing how Brussels could best express them. There was a large consensus among participants that the relations between the European Institutions and Brussels in the past have not been an example of good practice and could be improved on many fronts. Communicating the European project, giving a significance to European buildings, urban development planning, addressing citizen's issues, were all perceived as problematic areas that need to be addressed more effectively and made coherent with the guiding ideas on the European capital in the future.

- The question of symbols

President Prodi introduced the question of symbols at the outset of this exercise. He had observed that the Belgian State found its symbols in the city (for example the arcades of *Place du Cinquantenaire*) but that there was nothing similar representing Europe in Brussels. Prime Minister Verhofstadt mentioned as possible choices a building, a monument, a song, a person... leaving the possibilities wide open and oriented towards the future “Europe-building”.

Constructing impressive buildings as symbols could be sending the wrong signal: as one of Parkinson's laws states, international institutions start their decline at the very moment they make their definitive building (Eco). Participants agreed that the symbol of a capital does not have to be big or impressive. Some states might have unassuming capitals, but this fact does not preclude a strong attachment from their citizens, or limit their symbolic value, especially in the perspective of a confederation of European states (Hayek). In the past, buildings became symbols over a very long period of time and independently of their looks (Moors).

However, if we think that having a symbol is important, not so much to reflect the existent, as to help create what does not yet exist, then the problem becomes more difficult and challenging. In his slide presentation Koolhaas gave examples of how symbols and communication about Europe could be made attractive, ironic and light.

Two types of answers emerged from the discussion to the question about symbols. The first pointed out the incoherence of choosing a “heavy” symbol like a monument or a building and then recommending emphasis on the cultural networking function. The second made clear that the search for a symbol had to be a part of a larger and coherent discourse on a project for the European Union. This is not done with a single and isolated action, tangible or intangible. It will be based on many different “ingredients”: a more explicit acceptance of

the originality of the EU (Koolhaas), the circulation of Euros in our pockets (Maragall), book fairs, art shows, film contests, museums (Eco, Vidarte, Jaoui, Geremek), a strong moral leadership (Hayek), re-connecting old and new neighbourhoods of Brussels, “eurocrats” and Belgian citizens (Schuiten), making Brussels the forum for a rational discussion on globalisation issues (van Istendael).

- Giving meaning to buildings, monuments and planning

In the first meeting Prime Minister Verhofstadt had surprised participants by remarking that Brussels was an open and flexible space that could be modelled according to the needs of the European capital. The European Institutions have occupied buildings and urban space in Brussels since the 1950s. As mentioned, there was consensus among participants that this experience was not an example of best practice or attractive results.

Koolhaas explained this situation as the result of the growing need for office space, the indifference for the quality and meaning of buildings and the temporary status of Brussels as capital. Other participants added different and harsher explanations, dealing with speculation (van Istendael), powerful interests and lack of participation by all stakeholders in decision-making (Schuiten). There was a shared view that, for the visitor to Brussels, the existing “Quartier Européen” was unpleasant and ugly: “nobody likes to go there, especially after office hours”. All agreed that any improvement - at least in the checks and balances of decision-making - would indeed be desirable and to the benefit of all.

The options explored the aesthetic quality of buildings and two alternative planning rationales. Buildings do not need to be big, closed or inaccessible as some examples showed. The option of “assuming past errors” by developing a new conceptual framework for the European neighbourhood was considered more challenging and was shared by some participants (Maragall, Vidarte), while “making a new start” and choosing a new site for European buildings was a preferable option for others.

Some were pessimistic about finding remedies to the existing situation: “one should avoid illusions about the possibilities of creating a beautiful, attractive and lively Quartier Européen” (van Istendael); “it will always be a question of muddling through” (Crozier). Others were less pessimistic: “the task is very difficult but we have to try to reconstruct some roots and find some coherence in the present chaos” (Schuiten).

These negative and sceptical reactions suggest the need to reassess the existing “rules of the game” for taking future planning decisions, and finding innovative ways for dealing with the inherited situation.

In the context of what has been said so far, it is clear that buildings and urban planning for the European Institutions cannot be considered just a supply of office space, isolated from other forms of symbolic representation and communication. Their attractiveness and significance could improve through overall coherence, diversifying away from the present concentration on bureaucratic functions towards the cultural network ones and establishing more participative decision making procedures. The example of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, told by Vidarte, made this point forcefully: the city was made internationally attractive with the high aesthetic quality of the museum building and its cultural function.

Connecting the European Institutions and the citizens of Brussels

Other issues involving problematic relationships between European Institutions and Brussels’ citizens were: access to European schools, transportation and green areas, levels of income, lifestyles, housing rentals and taxes. This list was not discussed with the same emphasis or detail as the building and planning theme, but should be included in the discussion of Brussels capital. A method or procedure for dealing with these issues does not exist. They could be considered a specific component of the cultural-networking function that needs to be developed.

- Similarities between Belgium and the European Union, a source of inspiration likely to be addressed in different ways

The following quote, which recently appeared in the press, might be useful in summarising a frequent observation on the similarities of the European and the Belgian situation.

“ Brussels is a place where highly sophisticated, multilingual men and women from the most diverse backgrounds – a French technocrat, a former governor of Hong Kong, a one-time student opponent of Franco - try to reconcile national interests and national ways of thinking with the pursuit of larger, common interests. It is also the capital of a country that has almost fallen apart in the conflict between its French-speaking and Flemish (i.e., Dutch) speaking parts, Wallonia and Flanders. ... Launching the “great debate” on the future of the European Union, President Prodi said that Belgium might be considered as a model for Europe. Indeed”⁵.

Something quite similar could be said about the city of Brussels. It is composed of nineteen towns and two official languages. Each town within the city has its own town hall, its own authorities, its own police force and its own hospitals. This mosaic is unique in relation to the “functional city” in which business, administration, leisure and residential quarters are located in different and specialised areas. It is possible that the imposition of the modern functional city on this multiplicity of communes has been responsible for creating conflicting relationships between Brussels and European citizens. The words trauma (Schuitem), bomb (van Istendael), flatness and megalomania (Koolhaas), used to describe the way in which European Institutions have affected the city, do not speak favourably of the role that these similarities have played in facilitating the search for solutions to problematic areas.

On the other hand the analogy between Belgium/Brussels and the European Union is striking: both have accumulated experience with the immediate juxtaposition of different cultures, identities, social and economic organisations. This mirror effect is based on the common problem of diversity and how to deal with it. During the discussion this symmetry came back quite often. However, nobody suggested

how this observation could be turned into a source of inspiration for addressing the challenge of diversity. This might be due to the different scales and approaches required at European and Belgian levels, likely to remain quite specific to each situation.

- Identifying the stakeholders in the decision-making process

The identification of the stakeholders relevant for dealing with European and Belgian-Brussels affairs has been restricted to public officials (and these are numerous precisely due to the different levels of government) on both sides. Local citizens and local organisations have been recently included in a consultation process but this procedure does not seem to work adequately (van Istendael, Schuitem).

The issue was raised about who should be the ideal interest groups to be included and heard in a future debate about Brussels as capital of Europe (Vidarte). Comparing the list of guiding ideas resulting from the discussion (cultural network function, communication, building quality and urban planning options) with the stakeholders participating in the present decision making, it is evident that some issues are not adequately dealt with simply because nobody is there to argue in their favour. Bringing back the example of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, it was mentioned that the search for proposal ideas and themes for improving the attractiveness and international recognition of the city could never have been achieved by involving only local government officials and citizens (Vidarte). Maragall told a quite similar story about the physical restructuring of Barcelona during the Olympic Games.

For Brussels capital these were important references, indicating the need to establish a method for dealing adequately with the conception and realisation of complex and ambitious projects, for which there is little accumulated experience. Stakeholders might need to change in relation to the type of issues addressed and the different phases of planning and implementation.

I.4. Conclusions: some guiding ideas

This report has summarised the results of two brainstorming meetings on Brussels capital of Europe, hosted by the President of the Commission, Romano Prodi, and the Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, with a group of invited intellectuals from various disciplines and countries. Participants were invited to speak and debate freely on the basis of two issues papers and introductory statements from Umberto Eco (on what is a European capital) and Rem Koolhaas (on communicating this concept in Brussels).

The aim was to explore the needs and functions of a European capital and how Brussels could best express them. The resulting set of ideas, as indicated above, forms a sort of "guidebook" containing basic concepts, principles, references, do's and don'ts, problem areas and desirable approaches, actions that could communicate and symbolise the desired message. Together they make a simple and coherent framework that could help and inspire future decision-making. Since these ideas were generated in closed meetings they would benefit from a wider debate with relevant stakeholders.

The most important expectation that emerged was that *the European capital should not follow the example of national capitals*. There was wide consensus among the participants for this idea, which became a sort of basic principle, a prescription for future action that organised and influenced all the other ideas expressed by the group. It is a political message reflecting the need to maintain different functions between the two, to counterbalance the "heavy" nature of the one with the "light" nature of the other, for not engaging in a "competition" replicating the nation-building processes.

The European capital is expected to be an original and innovative product, easier to define by what it should not be. This is also due to the fact that it is a product in the making, still unclear in its final outcome. It is difficult to find symbols and effective ways of communication when the product is still being designed. In this context, the decision to strengthen the role of Brussels by increasing the institutional stability of the European Institutions

is a positive one but makes more urgent an explicit indication of its needs and functions, as well as addressing unsolved problems.

The following are the needs and functions of a European capital in Brussels identified by participants.

- The European capital should be a "light" capital. The increased stability of the European Institutions in Brussels should not imply a concentration of decision-making functions in Brussels.
- Diversity is the main asset and richness of the European project. Brussels should be the place where the linkage and connection between different forms of knowledge, cultures, languages, minorities and religions is organised and encouraged.
- Networking is the unifying principle of European diversity and Brussels should act as one of the "servers" that articulate such diversity on a horizontal rather than hierarchical basis.
- The European identity is a plural identity. An artificially constructed common identity would be counterproductive and impoverish the existing richness. Brussels and Belgium are good examples of tolerance and coexistence between multiple identities.
- The communication on Europe needs to be improved by finding more attractive and eloquent ways of representing -visually and physically- the European project both in Brussels and in Europe.
- The opposition between soft (cultural) and hard (physical) components of a European capital is a false one. Both aspects are present and should be coherent in any manifestation. The cultural function needs to be strengthened substantially in its own right, while the physical urban planning needs a better integration into the city's social fabric.
- The past experience of the European Institutions in Brussels is not an example of good practice. The following were indicated as problematic areas.

- communication about Europe and its symbols,
- the meaning and quality of buildings, the urban planning,
- the relations between the European Institutions and Brussels' citizens,
- the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process.

There is a need to include these concerns in current practice, for a more efficient system of checks and balances, for a better identification of the stakeholders and for dealing in innovative ways with problematic situations inherited from the past.

There was no time in the meetings to discuss concrete proposals in detail. Many concrete project ideas were suggested, indicating the key concept and the need to which they provide a response. Some of these ideas have been selected and highlighted for further elaboration in Part II of this report. They cannot be fairly attributed to the deliberations of the two meetings since they were not sufficiently discussed. They are however coherent with the spirit and ideas suggested by the participants.

PART II: The Proposals

The rationale followed for choosing concrete proposals was to give some good examples of how one or more of the needs and functions indicated by the participants could be addressed. They should contribute, both in a practical and in an ideal way, to strengthening the innovative notion of the European capital resulting from the two brainstorming meetings. The following proposals should benefit the city of Brussels by adding value to its cultural networking role and capitalising on the unique accumulation of experience and resources that the presence of the European Institutions concentrates in the city.

The strengthening of the “soft” functions should help to provide a higher quality of significance to the European project. It is expected to be a learning-by-doing process and to develop over time. Since there is no such thing as a purely “soft” or a purely “physical” dimension, the two aspects should not be considered as independent strands of action. This implies that the presence of the European Institutions in Brussels needs to be addressed both in its “hard” physical aspects as well as in terms of significance and quality, linkage with the city's social and urban fabric. Helping to establish forms of exchange between people and institutions could be considered one aspect among the many different networking functions that Brussels as capital of Europe should strengthen.

The following suggestions will need further elaboration and discussion. They are indicative of the needs and functions to be addressed. Each proposal is described broadly in its key project-idea, its possible contribution to Brussels and to the European project.

I. A Centre for Advanced Studies

A European Centre for Advanced Studies would respond to the need for top quality intellectual exchange, attracting scholars and facilitating

exchanges with them and with European and international policymakers. It would respond to the cultural networking function, adding value to Brussels and to the European Union.

Its “competitive advantage” for being in Brussels would be the presence of human and institutional resources which happen to be concentrated in Brussels as a result of the presence and everyday activity of the European Union as well as other international organisations. It could develop strong links with these while remaining independent from them.

Setting up such a centre need not be a major expense. By its very nature it would be interdisciplinary and rely on exchanges with major Belgian universities. It would be expected to network rather than compete with them, using their particular areas and disciplines of excellence. It should also establish exchanges with institutes of the same character, both within and outside the EU. There is a need, evidenced in the Sixth Research Framework Programme, to target existing Centres of Excellence, top scholars and selected post graduate researchers for particular projects.

The activities of the Centre would respond to new emerging issues that cut across scientific disciplines and represent challenges for European policy-making. An essential component of the Centre’s mission should be to reflect and develop ways of better communicating with the public at large on such issues. While there are already established centres with well-defined areas of disciplinary excellence, like international law or economics, there are relatively few that are able to address transdisciplinary problems with the right mix of human resources required. Possible examples of this problem solving approach could be the future of health in ageing societies, culture and economic development, sustainable development, governance and policy reform methods.

This type of Centre would be based on a network of existing structures, addressing interdisciplinary issues that may change according to needs. An alternative could consist of a Centre based on a clear cut domain, chosen explicitly as a major area in which excellence is desirable in Brussels, attracting and concentrating the top scholars required.

Addressing major contemporary concerns with a transdisciplinary approach would increase the attraction of the Centre, benefit both the European Union and Belgium, exploit the know-how already accumulated in Brussels and contribute in a unique way to international research. Furthermore it would address formally and substantially both the need for cultural networking and articulating diversity, in this case disciplinary, thus becoming an excellent example of the guiding ideas resulting from the Brussels capital of Europe project.

2. An Institute for multi-lingualism

Brussels is the city with the highest concentration of people speaking different languages, the highest quality and expertise in translation and interpretation services and a population that has learned to respect, learn and diffuse bilingualism as a common practice. The proposal is to make out of this comparative advantage an opportunity for development that would benefit both Belgium and the European Institutions.

This institute would be expected to pool together the knowledge concerning multi-lingualism, including speaking, reading, translating and interpreting second and third languages, teaching them and communicating such plurality in more attractive and user-friendly ways. There are some experiences in this field in Belgium that could be used as “servers” in developing a network with existing structures.

3. International urban and architectural competitions for a higher quality of life in the “Quartier Européen”

This proposal addresses the need for improving the quality of the European Institutions’ buildings and the attractiveness of the *Quartier Européen*. Ideally this would require the establishment of a number of checks and balances in the decision-making process and a more effective way of addressing both the qualitative and technical aspects of future locations as well as what is to be done with the problems inherited from past practices.

A wider partnership arrangement between relevant stakeholders would be desirable, varying in its composition according to the issue addressed and the phase of the planning process. This should help to find acceptable, negotiated solutions to conflicting views, soften competing practices between administrations, increase the responsibility of each actor in accepting innovation.

A minimum requirement for future decision-making in this field is to ensure the systematic recourse to international competitions for the allocation of new projects. The European Union has excellent experience in making sure that Member States have transparent procedures for drawing up calls for tender at European level and in practices which allow for fair competition.

Buildings in the European Quarter should not be limited to office buildings. The realisation of a Museum related to the European project could be explored, enhancing the liveliness and richness of European culture in the widest sense. This would attract visitors different from those working in the area, improve the quality and variety of life for local residents and convey a message about the European Union in Brussels not linked to a bureaucratic function.

4. A method for addressing areas of concern arising from the presence of European Institutions in Brussels

These concerns refer to problem areas of a heterogeneous nature, related to everyday life and activities in the city. Those mentioned included schools, transportation, green areas, housing, and taxation. They are related to inequality of access or inefficiency in the provision of services. They have been expressed both by Brussels' citizens on the one hand and officials working for the European Institutions on the other.

Establishing a method for addressing these problems would significantly improve the coexistence and relationships between "eurocrats" (which will increase with enlargement) and the local population. An informal and

voluntary approach would seem appropriate, with relevant authorities participating in the discussion. A first task would be to give a better definition of each problem and the possible options for their solution. The second task would be to establish discussion groups with the concerned parties for making concrete proposals that would then be subject to the formal consideration of the competent authorities.

PART III:

Communicating Europe

Europe



EUROPA-PARLAMENTET
EUROPÄISCHES PARLAMENT
ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟ ΚΟΙΝΟΒΟΥΛΙΟ
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
PARLAMENTO EUROPEO
PARLEMENT EUROPEEN
PARLAMENTO EUROPEO
EUROPEES PARLEMENT
PARLAMENTO EUROPEU
EUROOPAN PARLAMENTTI
EUROPAPARLAMENTET



Eurocampus



ROMAN EMPIRE
First century AD



FRANKISH EMPIRE
AD 800-77



PLANTAGENET
1170



BURGUNDY
1519



HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE
1519



VENICE
Fifteenth century AD



HABSBURG
Fifteenth century AD

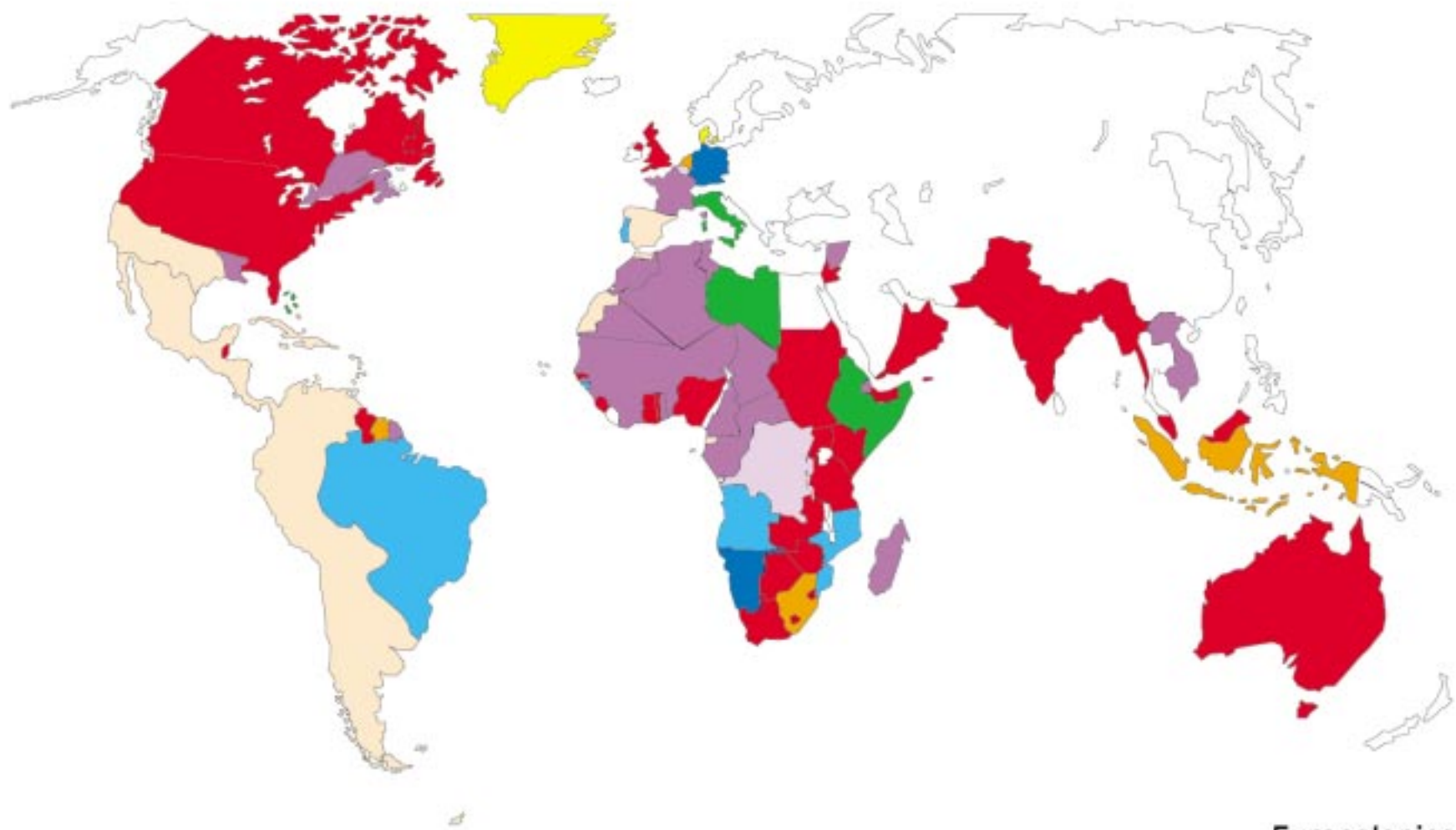


HANSA
1400



BENELUX
1948

Early Europes



Eurocolonies



Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Belgium
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
England
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
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Latvia
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Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Turkey
Ukraine
Macedonia



Maximum Europe

EUROVISION



Albania
Algeria
Austria
Belarus
Belgium
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Egypt
Estonia
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United Kingdom

UEFA



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Russia
San Marino
Scotland
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Turkey
Ukraine
Wales

EU+Enlargement



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NATO



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United Kingdom
United States

SCHENGEN



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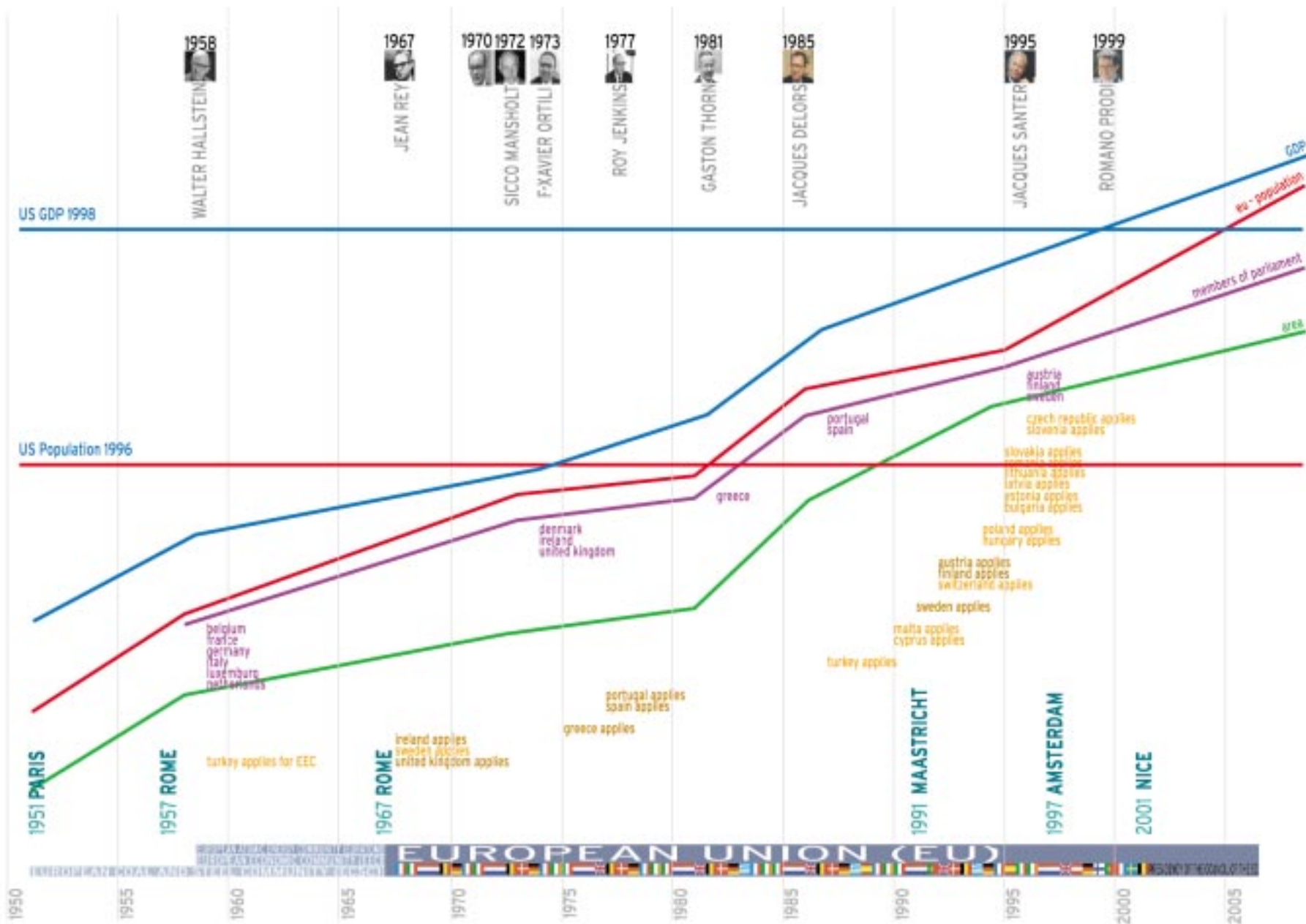
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EURO



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Spain

Multiple Europes



European Union



Blueurope



Mosaic Europe



e urope



Cool Europe



Iconic Europe







AMERICA UNDER ATTACK

**CHIRAC PLEDGES SUPPORT
IN FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM**

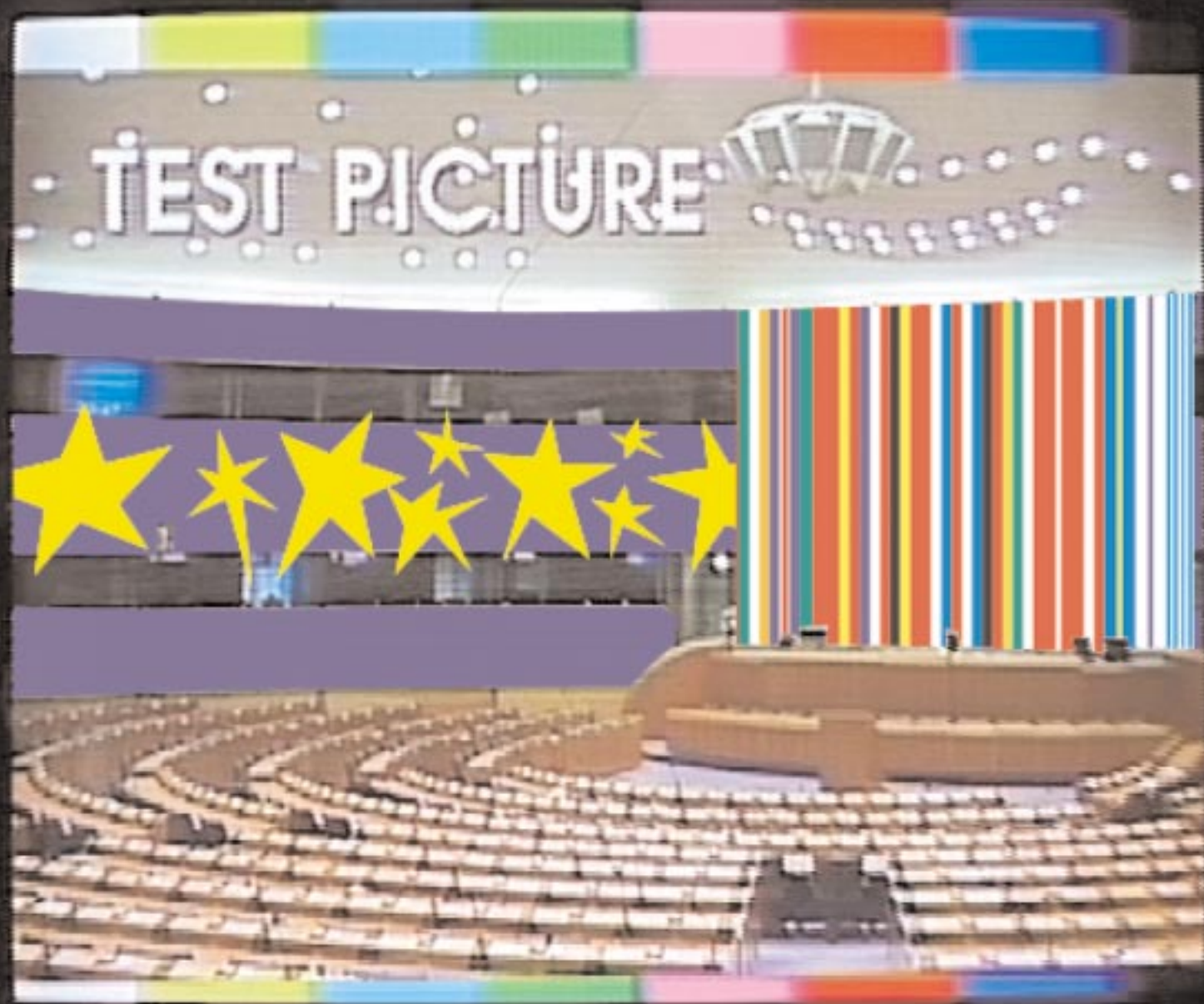






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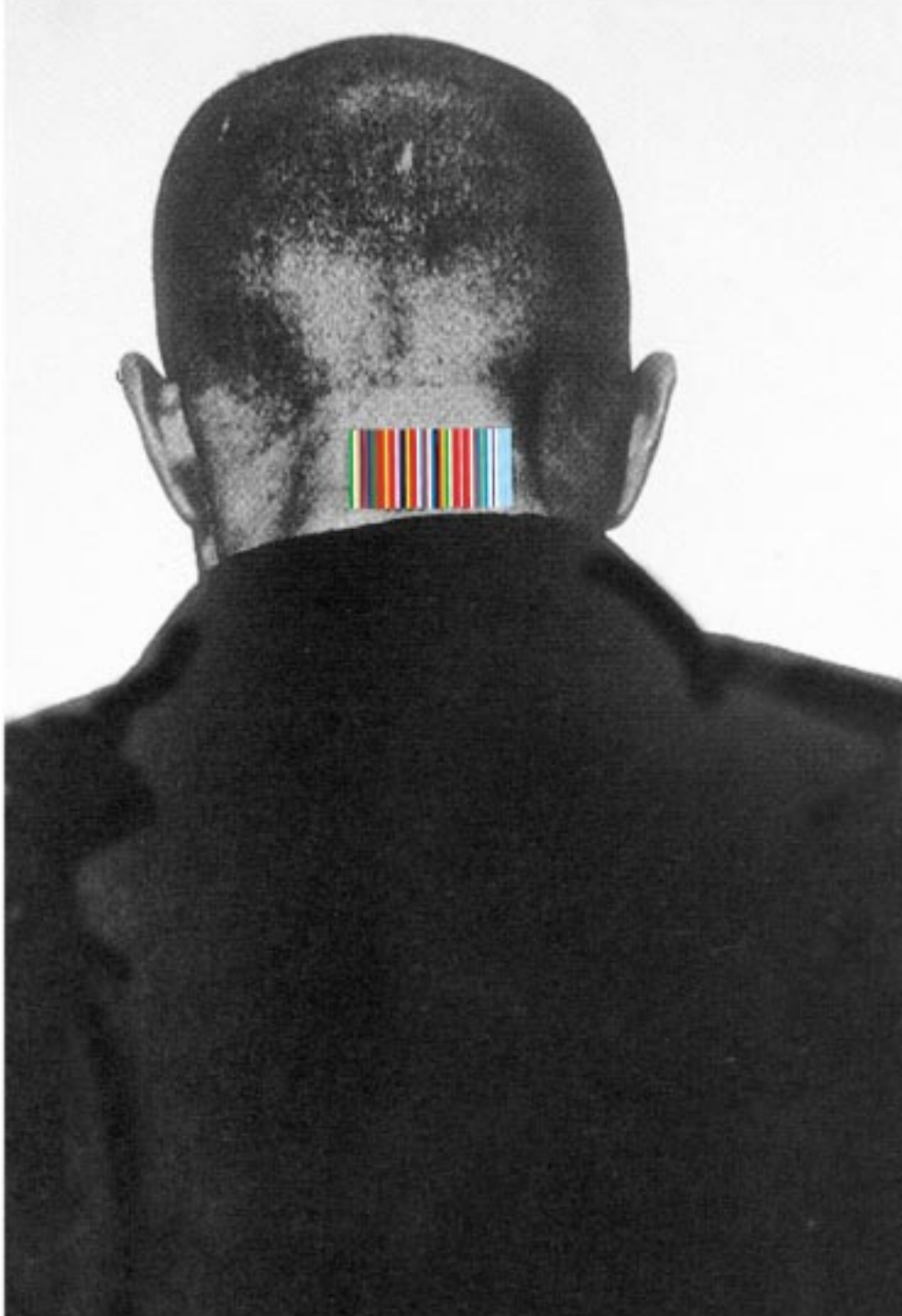


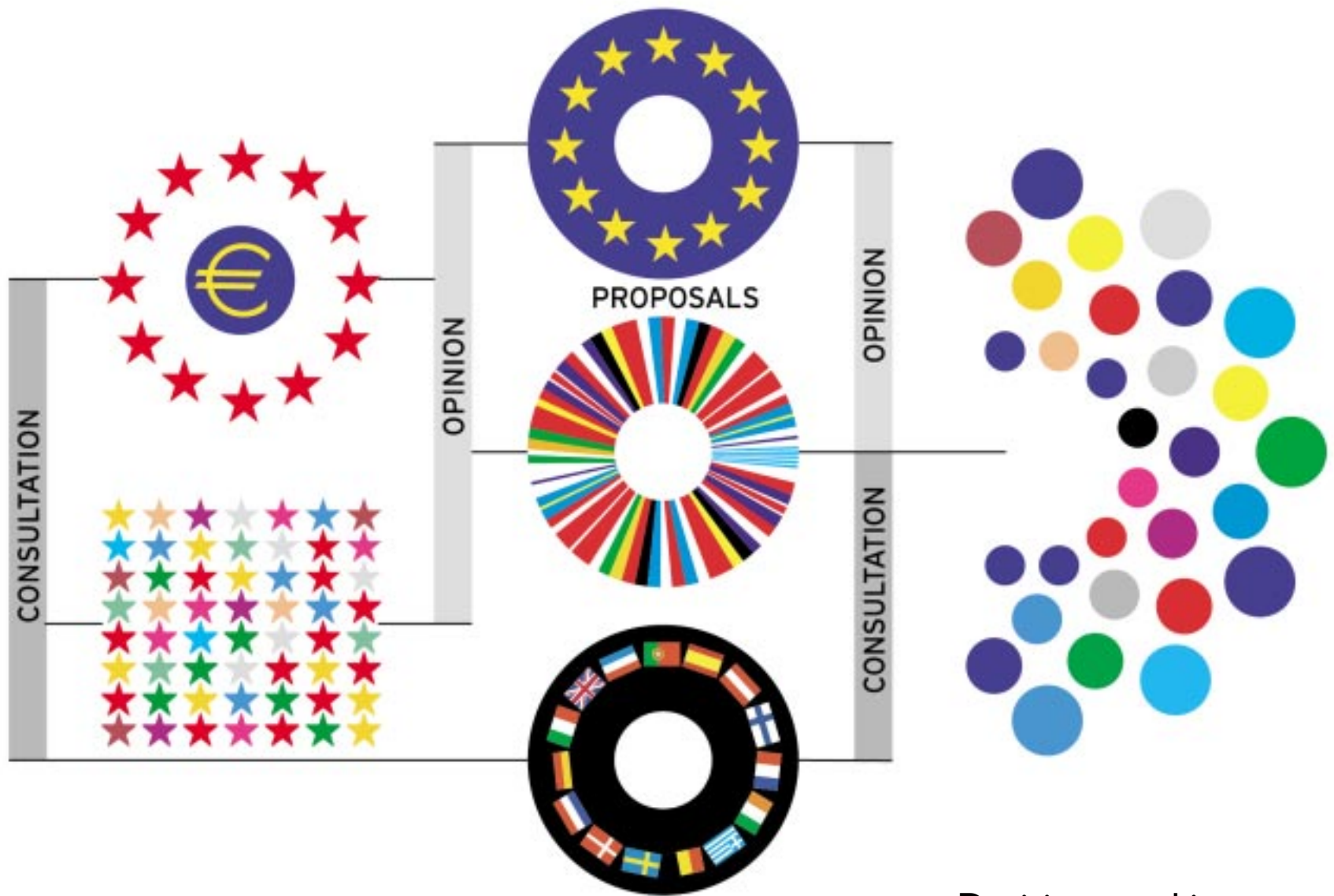


AMERICA UNDER ATTACK

WIM DUISENBERG
ECB PRESIDENT







Decision - making process

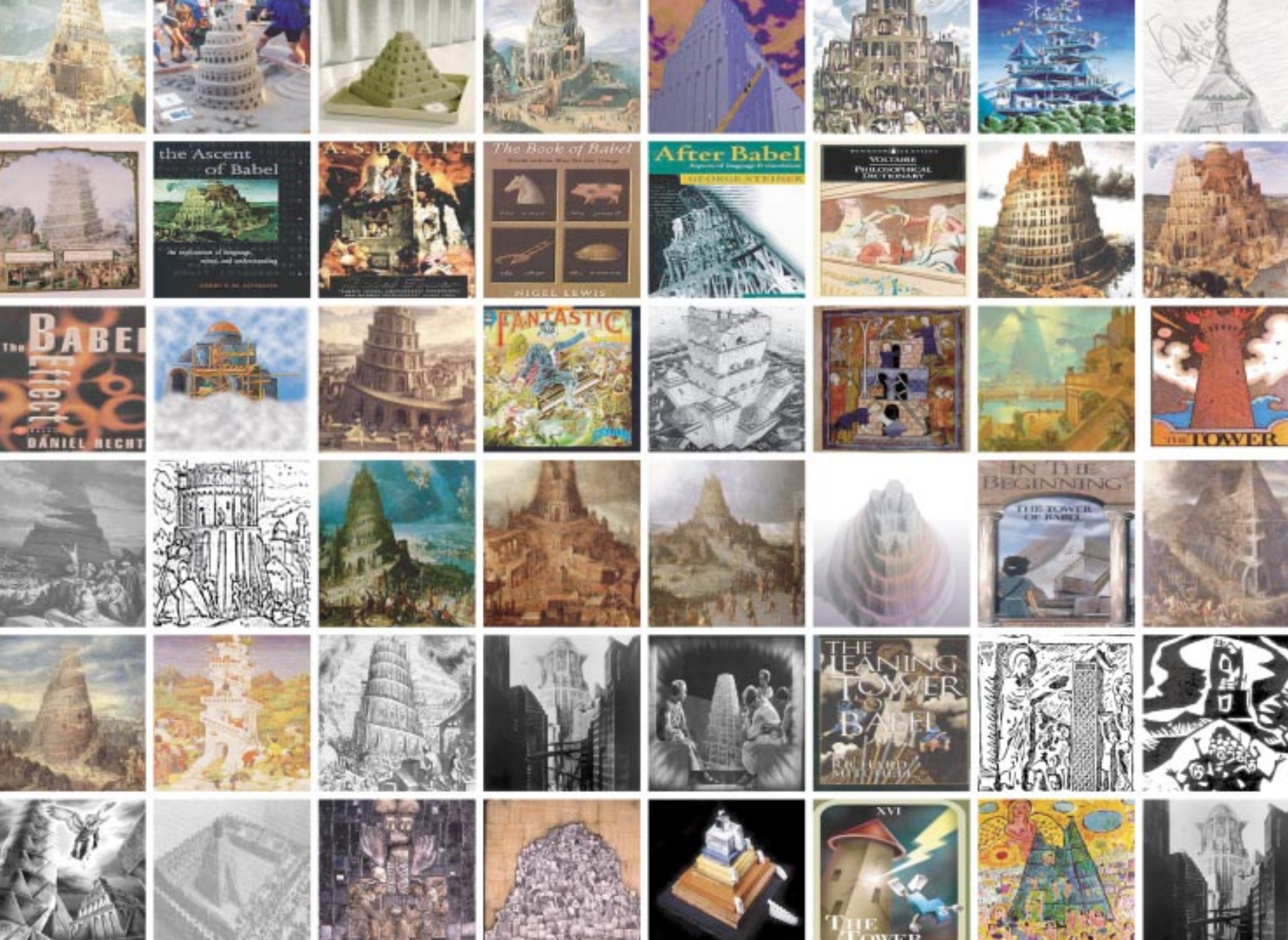
Brussels

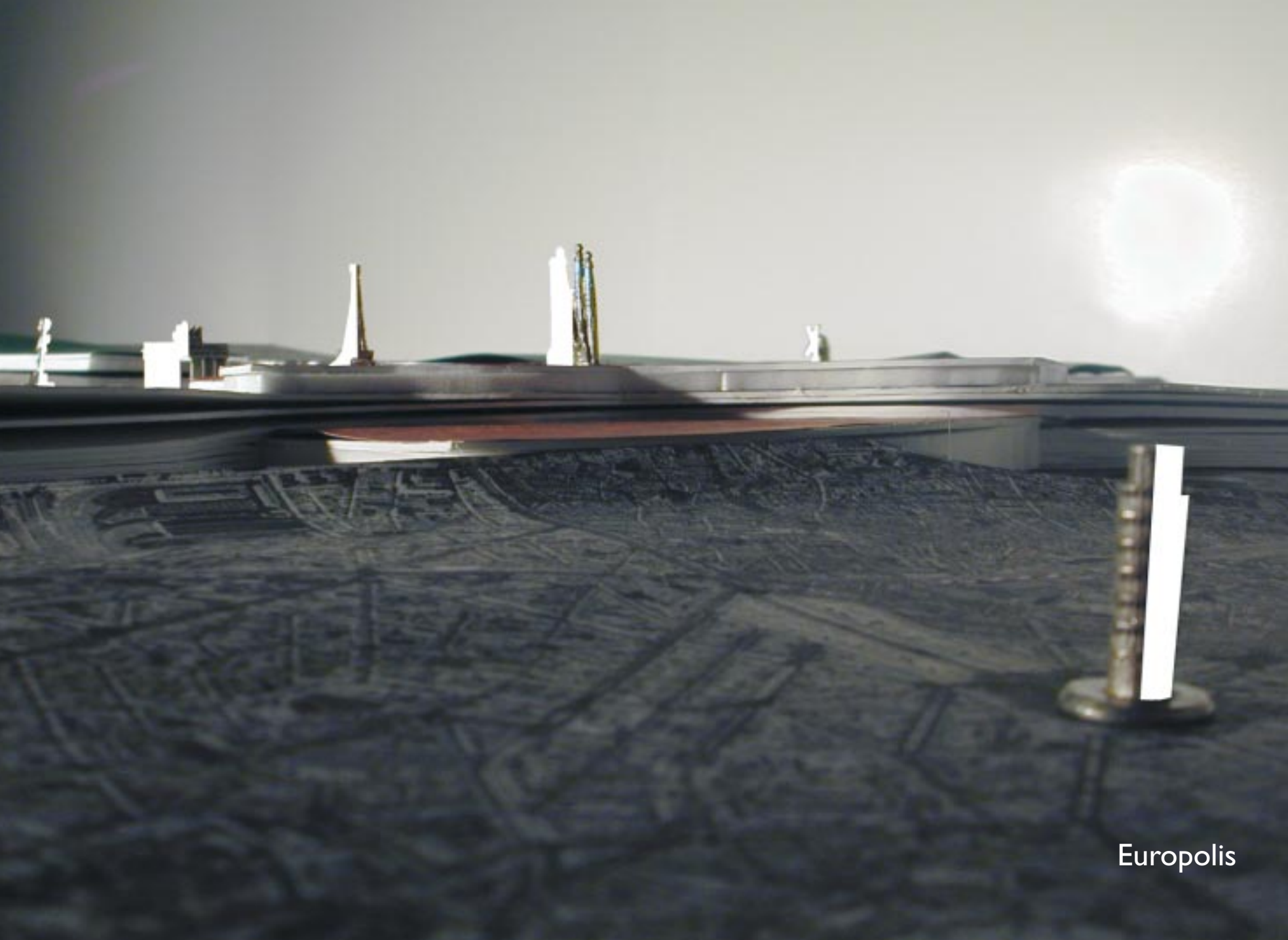
brussels capital region



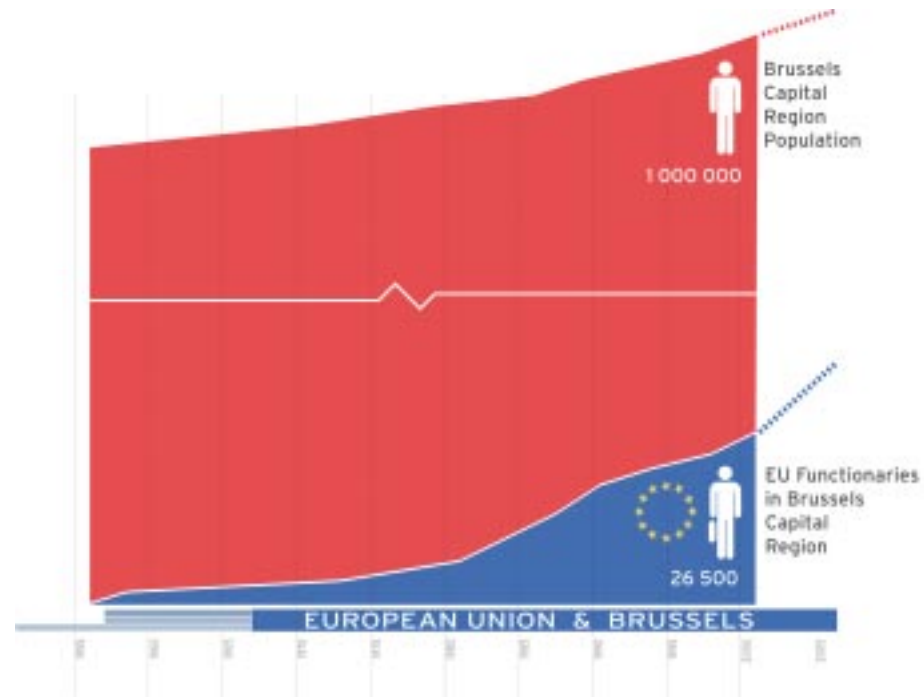
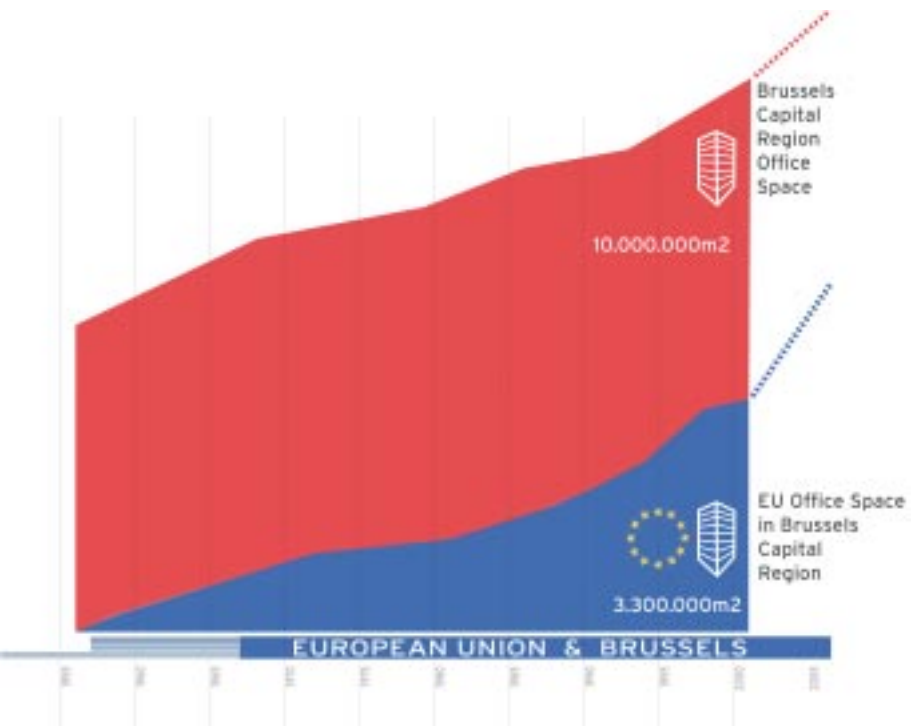
Brussels/Bruxelles/Brussel Pop. 970,346

9% of Belgium's population; 80% Walloon, 20% Flemish; 30% Foreigners, 52% of which are from the EU, of which 23% from France, 21% from Italy, 16% from Spain, 18% from Greece, 6% from UK, 5% from Germany, 4% from Portugal.





Europolis



European Union and Brussels



BERLAIMONT BUILDING

INFOPOINT EUROPEAN UNION

PRESSCENTER

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

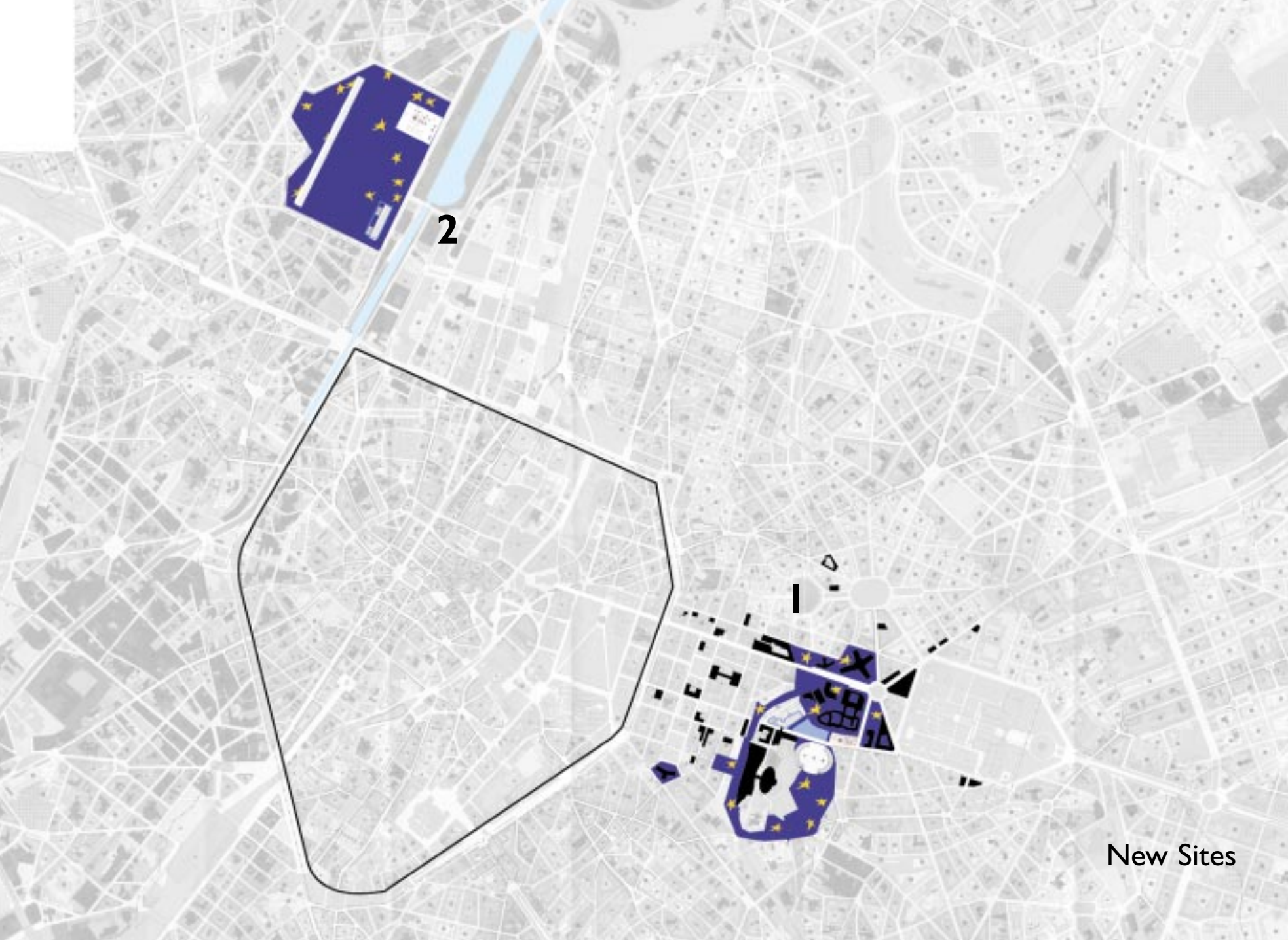
Quartier Européen





ANARCHITECTS
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SDACT 41 JAKERS





2

1

New Sites



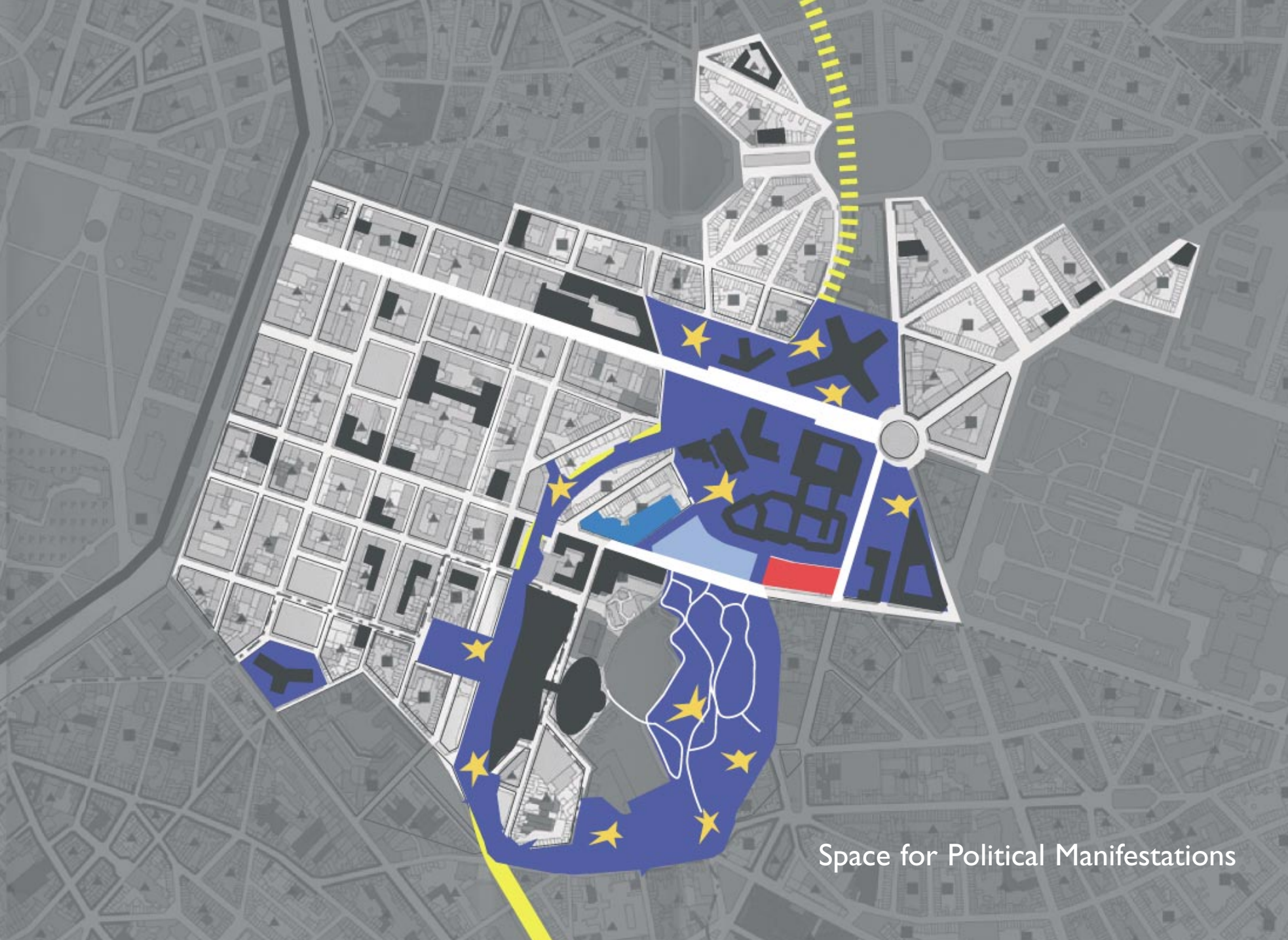
TRIPS, SAPs, G.M. Crops, Third World
Debt, International Aid, Industry, Biotech
nology, Millennium Dome, Homelessness,
Student Fees, Public Transport, People
before profits, Social Business, Pollution,
Global Warming, Healthcare, Pension Funds,
Education, World Trade Organisation,
National Security, War, Farming, Famine,
Poverty, Privatisation, Corruption, Unemployment,
Racial Rights, and rights, Genocide, Films,
Trade Unionisation, Community, New World
Order, Environmental Destruction, Fair
Trade, Freedom of Information, Poverty Gap,
Employment regulation, Consumer
expectancy, Designer Bob, BSE, Life
choice, Monopoly, Immigration, Economic Imperialism,
Oil Industry, Tobacco Industry, Gun
Lobby, Animal Testing, Balance of Paym
ents, May Day 2000, Prison Service,
Countrycide, Price Fixing, Child Labour,
Civil War, Women's Rights, Oppression.

LONG LIVE

SOCIALISM



TKB



Space for Political Manifestations





WTC 9-11



Icelandic Parliament

SUMMIT BUILDING: PROGRAM

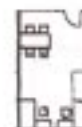
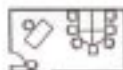
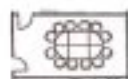
Heads of State



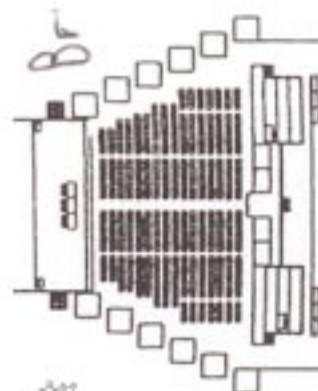
Coreper
Coreper II



Specialist working groups



Press

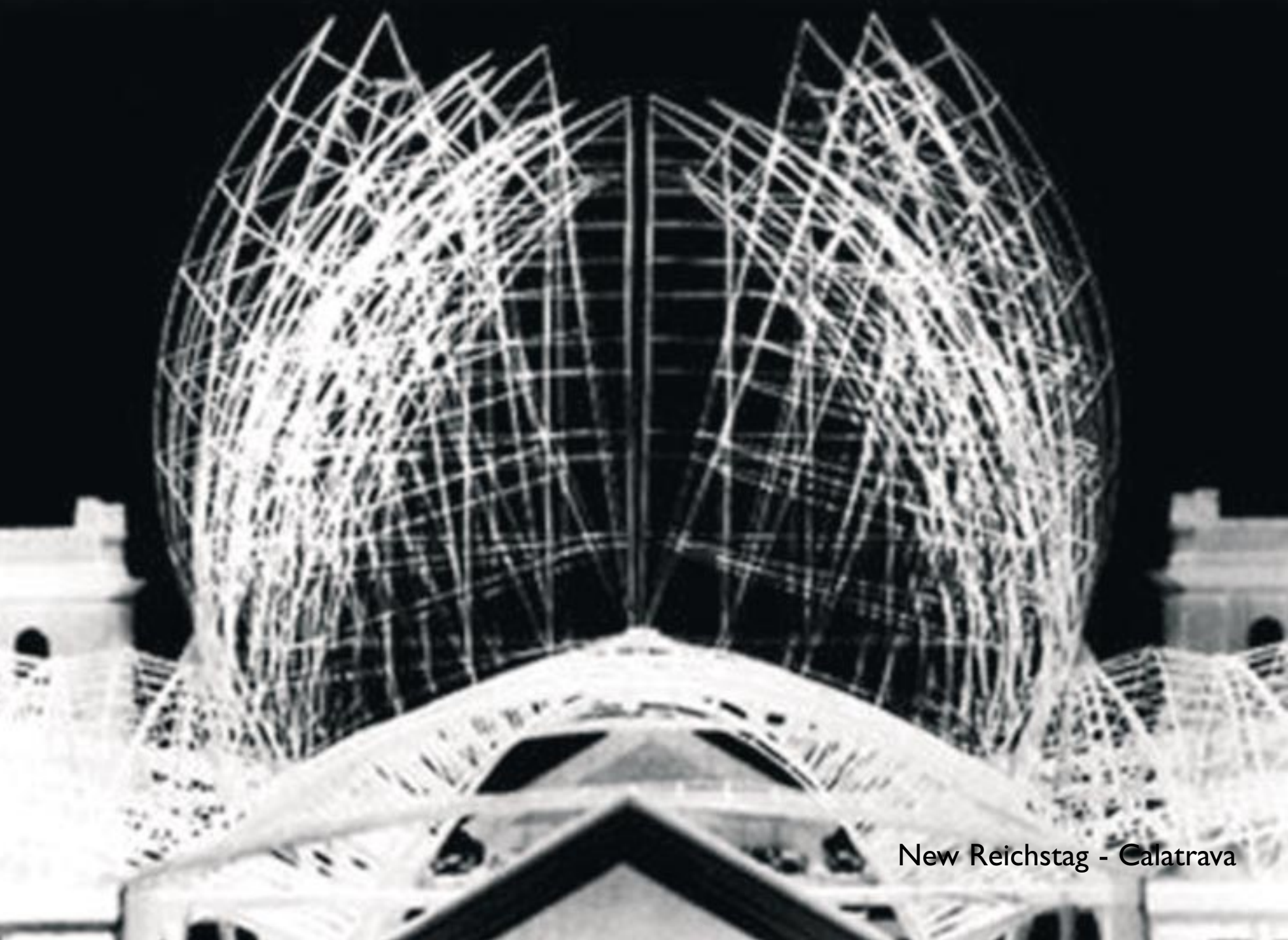


Restaurants



Translators



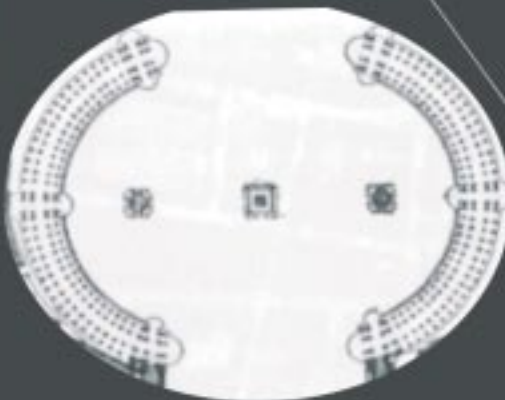
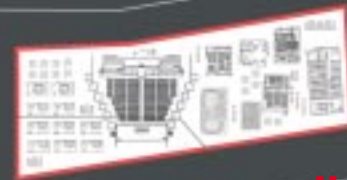


New Reichstag - Calatrava

press

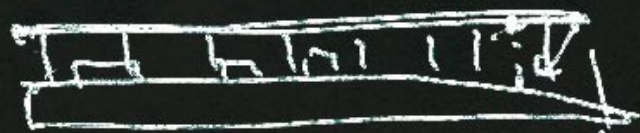
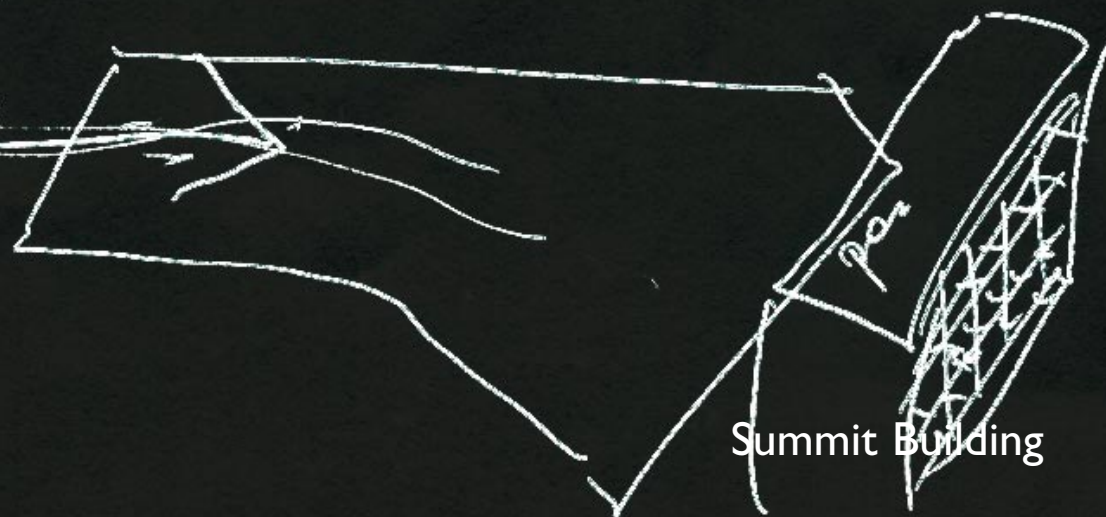
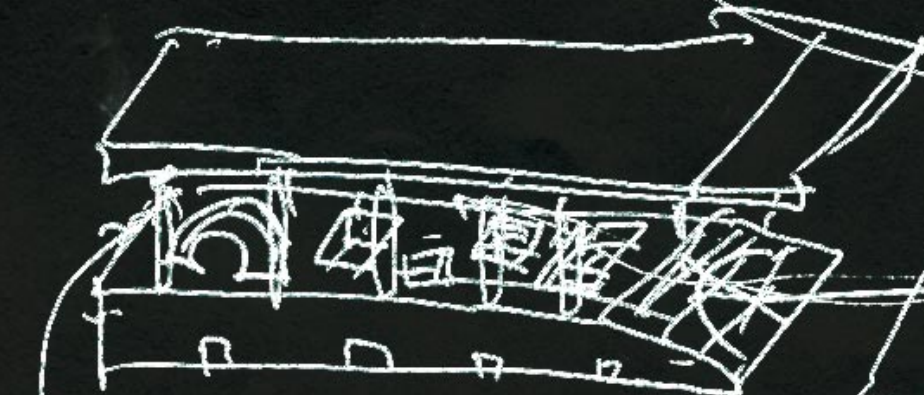
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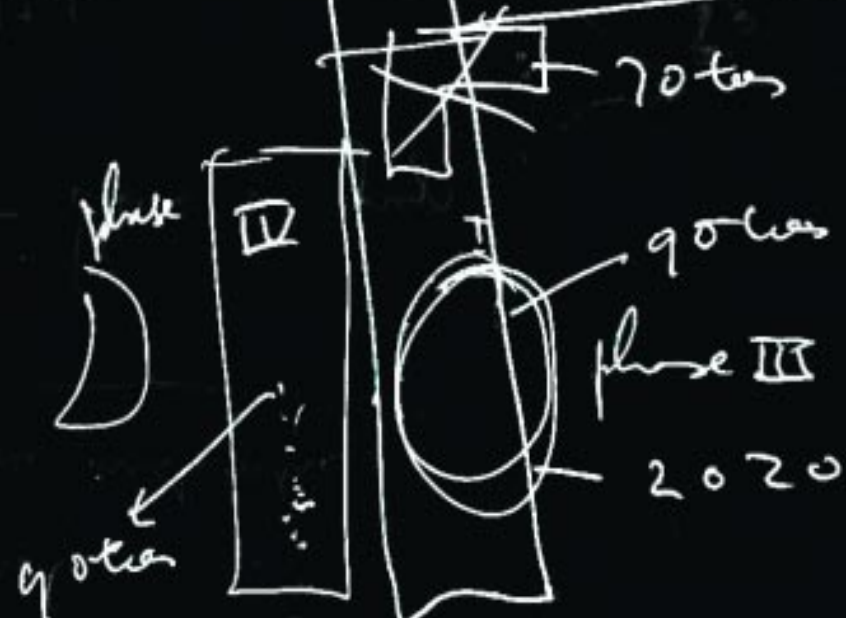
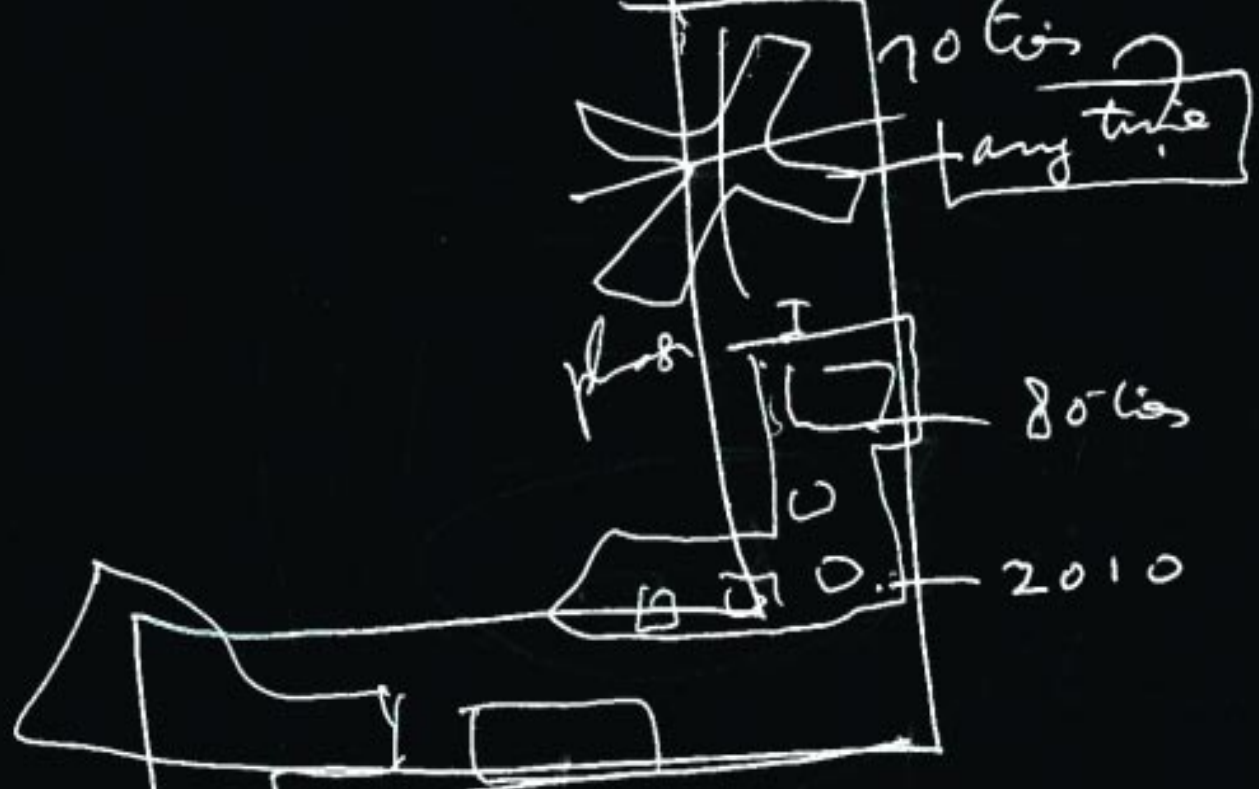
council

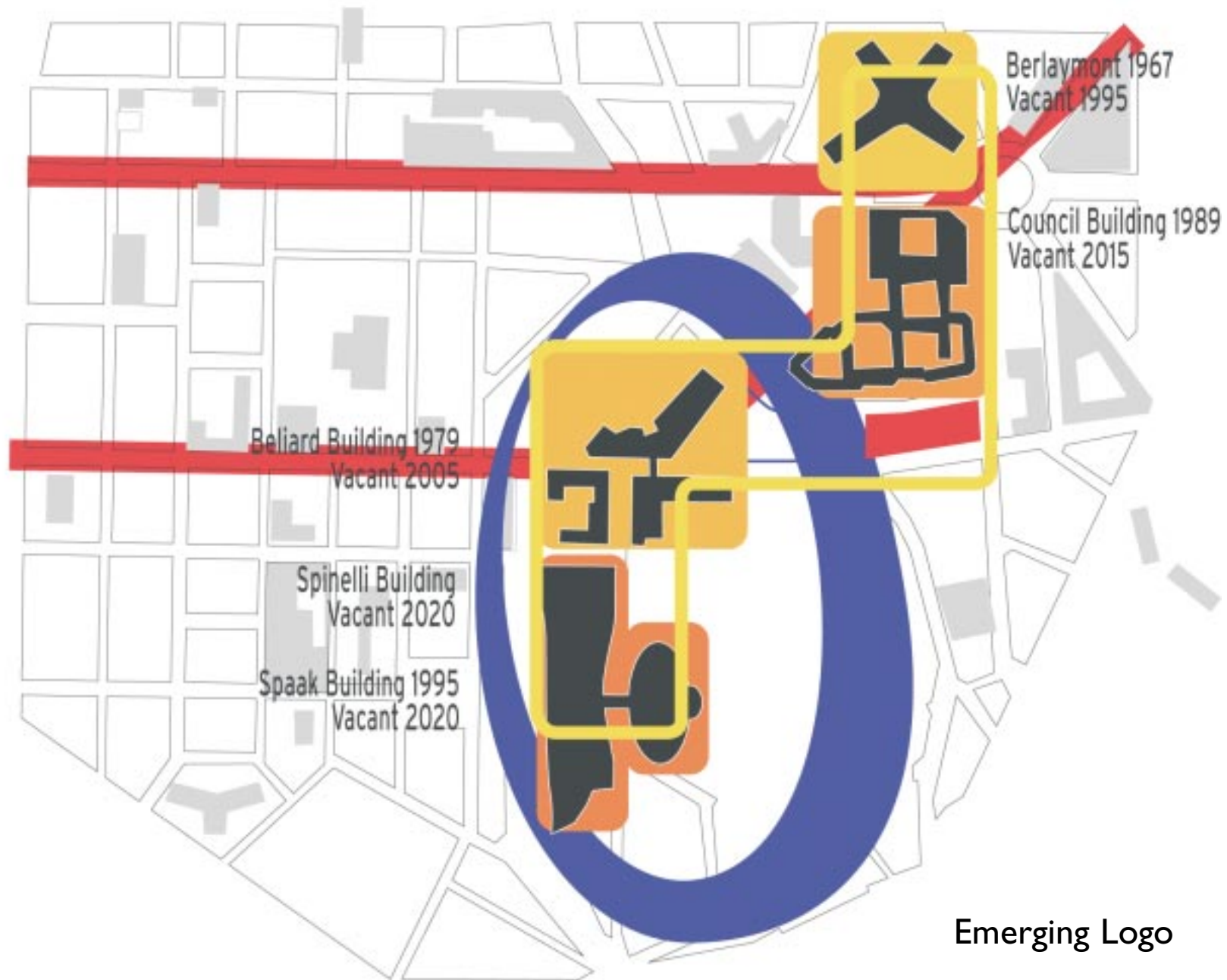


EURO ZONE

roof could
↓ rise
to open







BRUSSELS - QUARTIER EUROPEEN

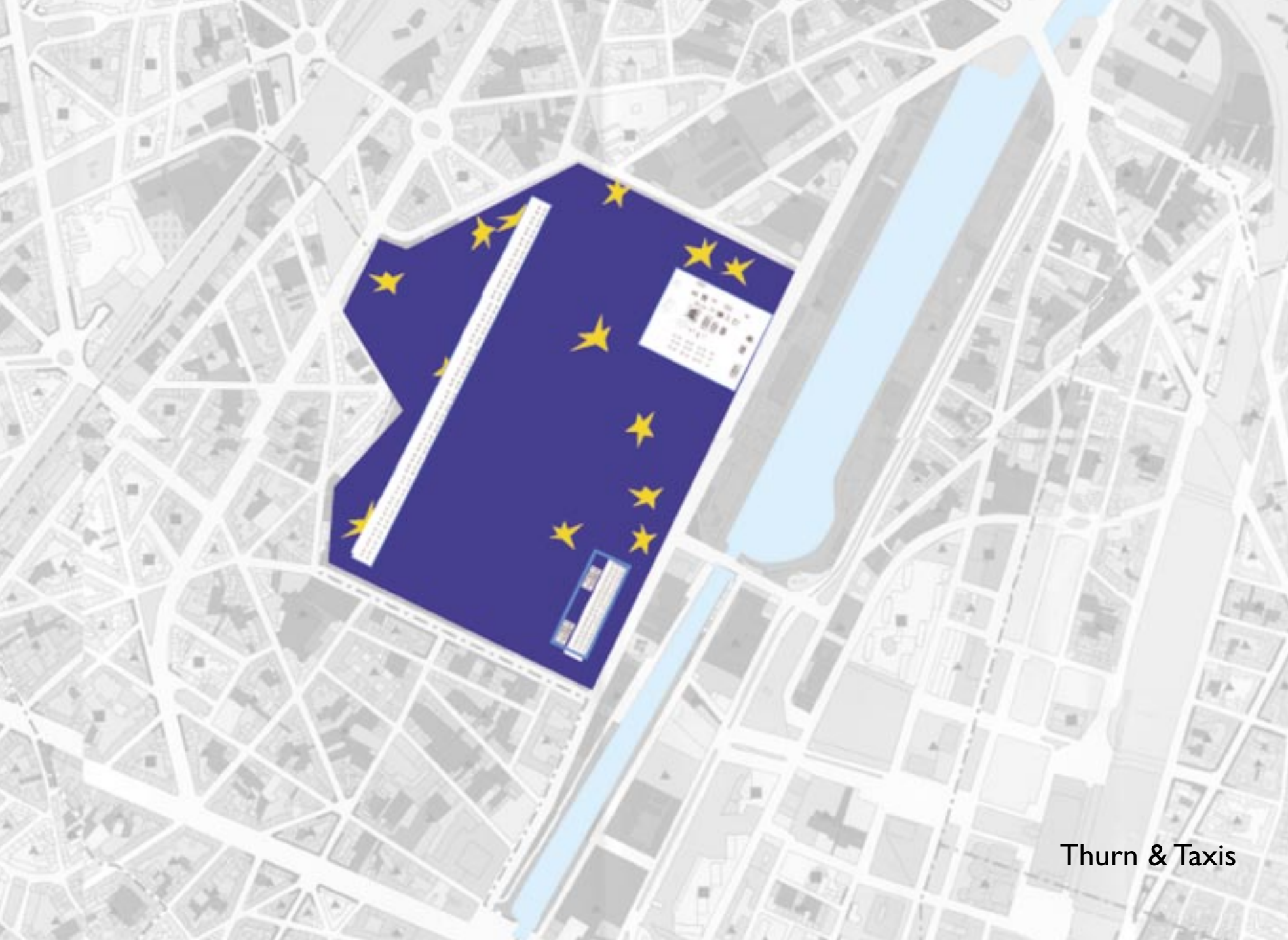


WASHINGTON - THE MALL



Logo in comparison





Thurn & Taxis



PART IV:

The public and media perception of the project: a comment

During the evolution of the project, the public and the media intervened and contributed to the ongoing debate about Brussels capital of Europe, expressing opinions about its perceived objectives and desirable outcome. The ideas given, even the critical ones, may be considered as a useful source of information for issues that were missed in the discussion or addressed from different perspectives, an indirect check on the quality of the results, a reflection of the different perceptions of Brussels as capital of Europe. It also stresses in a different way the need for improving the communication on Europe.

The material available for analysis is heterogeneous⁶. It consists of letters or messages with suggestions about possible symbols of Europe or aspects considered to be important, coverage by the press of both events, and a specific writing competition launched by the weekly "The European Voice". A short review of the contents shows two main areas of concern:

- a) the European capital and its symbols;
- b) Brussels and the European Institutions

The European capital and its symbols

This aspect drew relatively little attention from the press, but more in terms of individual suggestions proposing designs for symbols and monuments. One of the most relevant contribution was initiated by the European Voice on "what the ingredients of the capital of Europe should be, and how Brussels could best express these aspirations. What needs could a capital for Europe fulfil? How should it relate to other European capitals, represent common values and celebrate Europe's diversity?" 47 entries were received, the overall standard was considered very high and an American lecturer won the first

prize. His essay and those of four runners-up were published in the 13-19th September issue and distributed to participants invited to the second meeting.

The winning essay shares the conclusion indicated in this report that the model for a European capital should not be that of national states. One has the impression from the tone of the essay that the author imagines, or takes for granted, that the conclusions to be expected from the two brainstorming meetings would go in the opposite direction. *"Europe needs a capital like a tree needs a chainsaw. Trying to force Brussels to be seen as and act like a traditional capital for Europe would be absurd and dangerous to the European project. ... Given the EU's complex nature, Brussels is its perfect non-traditional 'un-capital'. ... Culturally, Brussels is a thriving and vibrant multi-lingual and multi-ethnic society with significant migrant communities and spiced with cultural antagonisms. ... All of this is a reflection of the diversity of European society"*⁷.

The other essays emphasise that Brussels, with all its contradictions, adequately describes *"the current halfway state of European integration"*⁸. *It needs to improve its attractiveness by facilitating access and visitors, cultural events, a representative building*⁹. *By making a project that could symbolise an open and multi-cultural vision of Europe. ... A showpiece for Europe and a meeting place for those who constitute it*¹⁰ but are excluded. *A modern European capital must reflect the principles that have come to represent modern political good practice: transparency, openness and added value. ... a capital with a small 'c'*¹¹.

Some of the elements indicated by the award winning authors are in fact coherent with the main ideas resulting from the two brainstorming discussions. The only significant difference is that they lead to different conclusions: while in the writing competition an alternative to the national capital is unimaginable and therefore Europe should not have a capital at all, for the participants in the discussion it was possible to indicate some elements of a new and original type of capital.

7) Robert Geyer, "Europe needs a capital city with a difference" in the European Voice, 13-19 September 2001, p.19

8) Albrecht Rothacher, "Meeting European integration half way" op. cit. page 20.

9) Adeline Hinderer, "Brussels: a complement to national capitals" op. cit. page 20.

10) Johanne Poirer, "Creating a space for citizens to flourish" op. cit. page 21.

11) Paul Stephenson, "A city that makes a recipe for success" op. cit. page 21.

6) A list of the articles and report is given in annexe 2.

This theme attracted most of the attention of the Belgian press and the correspondence received. One of the issues raised regarded the method chosen for treating the issue. Many felt that “a group of intellectuals” from different countries could not discuss a subject that was perceived exclusively as a “Belgian affair”. Related to this, it was thought that the Belgian presence in this project had to be larger and more representative of established interest groups in the local urban debate. A second observation was that the proposals and ideas resulting from the exercise had not been adequately consulted with the local population and this was the usual un-transparent decision-making that characterised previous experience. A third theme appearing quite frequently referred to the “group of intellectuals” discussing on one side about abstract ideas while the substantial decisions about buildings and sites had already been taken elsewhere.

These observations reflect a perception of Brussels capital as a domain where the European dimension is absent, as if the fact that the capital in question is the European one shouldn't make any difference in the choice of architecture and communication. This in a way confirms the point made during the discussion, of Brussels being a capital by default. The issue at stake is not so much the quality of the buildings and their significance, but almost exclusively the needs of local residents, understood as those in the neighbourhoods surrounding the European Quarter. The tone of the articles is polemic. They contain the self-fulfilling prophecy that no connection between the citizens and the European Institutions is possible.

In a certain sense the press reaction to the discussion indirectly confirms the need for a partnership approach, indicated by participants and picked up in the proposals.

ANNEXE I:

Participants, short biographical notes

Name, age : CROZIER, Michel 79
Nationality : French
Activity : Sociologist, organisation expert
Position : Founder and former director of the Centre for Organisation sociology, in Paris
Short biographical notes : Professor at the University of Paris X, Nanterre and at the University of Harvard. Major research produced on the behaviour of large organisations (enterprises, public administration). He became widely known with his book “The Bureaucratic Phenomenon” (1963). His last book “The crisis of intelligence” (1995) reflects on the capacity of elites to reform themselves.

Name, age : ECO, Umberto 68
Nationality : Italian
Activity : Semiologist, communication expert, writer
Position : Professor at University of Bologna and President of the Scuola Superiore di Studi Umanistici of the University of Bologna – Italy.
Short biographical notes : Professor of semiotics, the study of communication through signs and symbols. Philosopher; historian, literary critic, aesthetician. He is an avid book collector. The subjects of his scholarly investigations range from St. Thomas Aquinas, to James Joyce, to Superman. Author of “The Name of the Rose” which was translated into several languages.

Name, age : GEREMEK, Bronislaw 68
Nationality : Polish
Activity : Social historian, politician

Position : Professor at the Institute of History, Polish Academy of Science. Deputy of the Lower Chamber of the Polish Parliament.

Short biographical notes : He studied in Poland and France, where he taught at la Sorbonne until 1965. A teacher at the Polish Academy of Science until 1980, he left Poland for political reasons in 1985. In 1989 he is called back as a full professor. His main work deals with French medieval history and the history of medieval Poland. Since 1989 he has had different political and parliamentary engagements; in 1997 he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Name, age : HAYEK, Nicolas 72

Nationality : Lebanese Swiss

Activity : Business entrepreneur

Position : President of the SMH (Société Micro-électronique et d'Horlogerie), the Swatch Group.

Short biographical notes : He has studied chemistry and metalworking in Zurich, worked as a consultant in the restructuring of the Swiss watch industry in the '80s. Creator of the SWATCH. Today he manages 220 firms, only 14 of them related to the watch industry.

Name, age : JAOUI, Agnès 37

Nationality : French

Activity : Actress, scriptwriter, scenographer

Position : Actress and film director.

Short biographical notes : She has worked with Jean Pierre Bacri, writing together "Un air de famille", creating the scenography for Alain Resnais in "Smoking /no Smoking" and "On connaît la chanson" for which they were awarded the César prize. She directed in 2000 "Les goût des autres" a sentimental comedy with a sophisticated humour about the behaviour of businessmen and actors.

Name, age : KOOLHAAS, Rem 57

Nationality : Dutch

Activity : Architect, urban planner, professor

Position : Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), head of Harvard City Project.

Short biographical notes : He won the Pritzker Prize for architecture in 2000. In Europe he has produced the master plan and Grand Palais for Lille, the Bordeaux house (for a man in a wheelchair). He has worked in Japan and the United States (Seattle Public Library). He has published books (Delirious Manhattan, Mutations), in which he studied the post-nationalist city and its character.

Name, age : McDONALD, Maryon

Nationality : British

Activity : Anthropologist

Position : Professor, Cambridge University.

Short biographical notes : She has conducted a major study of the European Commission, "The invention of Europe. An anthropological examination of the European Commission and the European Parliament, 1995", considered innovative in its approach and results.

Name, age : MARAGALL, Pasqual 60

Nationality : Spanish

Activity : Lawyer, politician, former Mayor of Barcelona

Position : Deputy of Parliament.

Short biographical notes : He became Mayor of Barcelona in 1982 and was re-elected until 1995. As President of the Barcelona Olympic Committee, he undertook a huge development programme of renewal for the city. He has been Vice-President and President of the Committee of Regions. He conducts a programme on the Europe of Regions and the Cities at University of Rome.

Name, age : MORTIER, Gerard 58
Nationality : Belgian
Activity : Art manager and opera house manager
Position : Director of Salzburg Festival.
Short biographical notes : From 1968-1972 director of the Flanders Festival, from 1973 managed opera houses in Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Hamburg, and Paris. In 1981 he was appointed manager of the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels contributing significantly to its revival. Since 1992 he has been director of the Salzburg Festival.

Name, age : SCHUITEN, François 45
Nationality : Belgian
Activity : Scenographer, designer, comicstrip creator
Position : Author and artist
Short biographical notes : From a family of architects, he worked in the creation of comicstrips from an early age. The city is an important subject in his books (Les Cités Obscures, one of them is "Brüssel") which have been translated into most languages and obtained several prizes. He has been a scenographer for films, contributed to the decoration of the "Porte de Hal" metro station and has produced drawings and sculptures.

Name, age : VAN ISTENDAEL, Geert 47
Nationality : Belgian
Activity : Reporter and poet.
Position : Independent writer.
Short biographical notes : An expert of Belgian and German history and politics. He has sketched effectively the historical, cultural and environmental portraits of Belgium and Brussels, in well documented books ("The Belgian Labyrinth or The Beauty of Deformity", 1989; "Poor Brussels", 1992; "New Outbursts", 1999). He was reporter and news reader for the Flemish television.

Name, age : VIDARTE, Juan Ignacio 45
Nationality : Spanish
Activity : Economist and business manager
Position : Director of Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao.
Short biographical notes : He left his post as Director of fiscal and financial policies in the Basque Administration in 1992 to become Director of the entity in charge of the construction and development of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. In 1996 he was appointed Director General of the Museum. The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has become one of the most successful and attractive cultural institutions in modern art and has had a positive impact on the Basque economy.

Romano PRODI	President of the European Commission
Alessandro OVI	Special Advisor to the President
Stefano MANSERVISI	Head of the President's Cabinet
Sandro GOZI	Member of the President's Cabinet
Ricardo F. LEVI	Director of the « Group of Policy Advisors »
André SAPIR	Member of the «Group of Policy Advisors»
Elena SARACENO	Member of the « Group of Policy Advisors »
	Coordinator of the Project

Guy VERHOFSTADT	Belgian Prime Minister
Peter MOORS	Deputy Head of the Prime Minister's Cabinet – Diplomatic Adviser

ANNEX 2 :

Press coverage of the project

La Dernière Heure	03/4/2001	Interview exclusive de Romano Prodi « Bruxelles est la capitale de l'Europe ! »
De Staandaard	25/5/2001	Europese culturele brainstorm over Brussel
Le Soir	25/5/2001	La capitale de l'Europe rêvée par Eco, Mortier ou Jaoui
Le Soir	25/5/2001	Quelle identité pour la capitale d'une Europe non achevée ?
Commission Online	29/5/2001	President Prodi and Prime Minister Verhofstadt launch debate on « Brussels, a capital for Europe »
Communiqué Presse Pays Basque espagnol	29/5/2001	El Director General del Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, Juan Ignacio Vidarte, invitado a participar en un debate sobre « Bruselas : capital de Europa »
De Staandaard	31/5/2001	Romano Prodi's « Erasmusgroep »
De Staandaard	31/5/2001	Europese hoofdstad op zijn Italiaans
La Libre Belgique	31/5/2001	Etre la capitale de l'Europe, c'est quoi ?
La Libre Belgique	31/5/2001	Prodi : Bruxelles doit être prête à jouer un rôle plus important.

De Staandaard	31/5/2001	Umberto Eco reflecteert over Brussel als knooppunt van diversiteit.
European Voice	7/6/2001	Search for symbol of Brussels spells hypocrisy with capital H.
Focus	7/6/2001	EU-Hauptstadt Brüssel
Le Soir	13/6/2001	Un quartier encore plus européen.
De Financieel Economische Tijd	13/6/2001	Verhofstadt ziet nieuw EU-gebouw in Europese wijk.
The Sun	29/6/2001	Prodi call for Euro capital.
The Economist	4/8/2001	A bureaucracy by any other name.
Le Soir	7/8/2001	La colonisation de Bruxelles par l'Union européenne.
European Voice	13-19/9/01	Meeting European integration half way.
European Voice	13-19/9/01	Brussels : a complement to national capitals.
European Voice	13-19/9/01	Creating a space for citizens to flourish.
European Voice	13-19/9/01	A city makes a recipe for success.
European Voice	13-19/9/01	Europe needs a capital city with a difference.
La Libre Belgique	19/9/2001	Euro-idées pour Bruxelles.

Communiqué presse Pays Basque espagnol	19/9/2001	El Director General del Museo Guggenheim Bilbao, Juan Ignacio Vidarte, participa en la segunda jornada en torno a « Bruselas: capital de Europa ».
Le Soir	25/9/2001	Tourner la page des architectes fous.

