Guy Mercier, Francis Roy, Étienne Berthold, Yaïves Ferland

Understanding current cities through the individual actions of land developers:
A new biographical methodology

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QUESTION

- How future urban development vision is transformed into reality?
  - What is the role of local authorities in realising that vision?
  - What is the contribution of private land developers for implementing that vision and for seizing trends?
INTRODUCTION TO URBAN DEVELOPMENT

• City-planning instrument, which defines the public spatial vision and general trends of a community’s future.
  – Urban development is not just about making a plan!
• A theoretical and idealized image of the city in the making:
  – Instrumented with very precise technical standards and rules.
  – Zoning for dividing the local territory into geographical zones and assigning them to specific and exclusive functions.
INTRODUCTION TO LAND DEVELOPERS

- From an industrial who develop land to lodge his working force (employees) ...
  - Garden-City
  - Utopia
  - Maintenance of the working force
- ... to professional land developers
  - Specialization
  - Ad hoc teams
URBAN DEVELOPMENT VISION

• Public Stand-Point = Master Plan and Zoning
  – Guidelines and Orientations

• Private Stand-Point = Land Market Anticipation
  – Future Needs
  – Competition and rivalry
  – Specific alliances
  – Capital mobilization

Mercier, Roy, Berthold and Ferland (2017)
SCIENTIFIC CHALLENGE

• Understanding urban development though individual land developers
  – Their visions
    • Figure out the urban trends before anyone else
  – Their actions
    • Define the needs / Seize the opportunities
  – Their projects
    • Set up development operations / Build / Sell
CASE OF QUEBEC CITY

• Context of Post-World War II Urban Development
  – Conservation of a Patrimonial (Heritage) City
  – Modernisation of a Capital City
• Modern Public Administration
  – Jobs for Young Professionals
  – New residential requirements
  – Commercial structure: Mall, …
• Connected City
THE MAKING-OF A LAND DEVELOPER

• Marcel Adams
  – Biography based on its land development operations
  – Methodology: analysis of his land and real estate transactions and operations
  – Main sources: Land Registry, Cadastre

  – Understanding the global (entire) work (and not only each land development operation

Mercier, Roy, Berthold and Ferland (2017)
A land developer’s success relies on networking.
- Can’t be an independent self-made-man.

Network:
- Municipal authorities
- Major Land Owners (like Religious Communities)
- Commercial Anchors (Banks, Supermarkets, Cinemas, Retailers, …)
- Creditors
HOUSING FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

- 1960 = Creation of a Modern Public Administration
  - New Jobs for Young Professionals
    - Housing
    - Commerce
    - Mobility
NEW OPPORTUNITY

1948
NEW OPPORTUNITY

1963-1965
COMMERCIAL FUNCTION

• Private Arrangements
  – Contractual Obligations for certain types of development

• A Supermarket
  (to serve a newly-constructed residential area)

For 1 $
A MALL IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

1963-1965

Mercier, Roy, Berthold and Ferland (2017)
A MALL IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

1983
A MALL IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

1988
A NEW URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORE

2013

Mercier, Roy, Berthold and Ferland (2017)
A NEW URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORE

- Agricultural Land Reserve (or Bank)
  - Acquisition over a 10 year-period
- Opportunity = Highway Construction
  - Exit leading directly to the parking lot
- Construction of a Mall out of nowhere
  - Vision of development
- Nowadays = Major Development Core of the Quebec City Metropolitan Area

Source: Quebec City Archives
CONCLUSION

• Structuration of a New Methodology
  – Research, documentation and analysis of legal documents related to land transactions
    • Land
    • Private companies
  – Land Register, Cadastre
  – Biography based on land transactions and operations