
TOURNAI: ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING THROUGH THE AGES OF A FORMER LEADING URBAN CENTRE, AND CURRENT PROVINCIAL HISTORIC CITY, OF THE LOW COUNTRIES

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Home to one of the first Netherlandish urban communities to secure municipal autonomy, Tournai boasts an illustrious past and wealth of historic buildings of comparable importance to Bruges. Despite prolonged post-mediaeval decline, the city remained a self-contained urban entity, with its own unique identity, well into the 20th century. This brief, summary text seeks to remind contemporary town planners and architects that cities of the pre-industrial ages benefitted both from place-specific forms of architecture and urban works that ranged in scale from the straightening and laying out of new streets, bridge building or planning river embankments to defence walls capable of embracing populous urban centres. Moreover, compared to the mediaeval, early-modern or industrial ages, the kind of stylistic guidelines currently dictating what goes up in the urban environment (as well as down; excluding listed buildings), may often seem ill-conceived. Largely preserved and further embellished during the 19th and first decades of the 20th century, the urban qualities and built aesthetics of Tournai were gradually undermined thereafter. By the 1980s and 1990s, much of the moderately wealthy city centre predating World War II was gradually falling into disrepair. Today, Tournai could be on the verge of far-reaching change. The potentially disastrous effects on the still extensively retained urban-architectural heritage remain unclear.

Keywords

urban-architectural history, urban planning (Fr.: l'urbanisme), parochialism, persistence, (post-) urbanity, conservation-preservation, "genius loci", societal initiative

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INTRODUCTION

Long since dwarfed by Ghent and Antwerp, Brussels, Liège and French-administered Lille, Tournai (Flem.: Doornik) belongs to a prominent group of cities in the former Southern Netherlands that, due in part to their wealth of historic architecture, still enjoy considerable prestige. If, however, compared with the urban-architectural heritage of Arras, Cambrai, Douai, Valenciennes, Mons or Namur, it is the mediaeval and early-modern vestiges of Tournai that more fully attest to the astounding abilities of builders from the more distant past.

The approach adopted in this paper involves briefly examining outstanding historic architecture and urban works from the city's wider past, before paying due attention to some exceptional construction and town planning from the 19th and the gradual decline setting in from the mid-20th centuries. It concludes by examining recent developments with respect to Tournai's situation in relation to the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai "Eurométropole", Wallonia and global forces.

Arising from the still relevant cultural clash between Francophone and Germanic-speaking Europe, an urban microcosm of such considerable importance as Tournai currently fails to receive the same level of exhaustive documentation of its historic buildings as towns and cities lying north of the so-called Flemish-Walloon linguistic divide¹. This astonishing disparity is mirrored in a broad absence of professional internet website sources devoted to built urban heritage for the so-called Walloon region. Of published materials the only comprehensive picture of Tournai's general architectural profile comes from the relevant (but long out-dated) volume of *Le patrimoine monumental de la Belgique* (1978) which may be supplemented with more recent, less exhaustive monographs², regularly upgraded Google Earth's satellite photographs, Gmaps.be.com and, in the final resort, individual perambulation. For the so-called Flemish region, in stark contrast, *De inventaris van het Bouwkundig Erfgoed* provides access to consistently exhaustive information on listed monuments, most buildings predating the 1950s and precise maps³. On the other hand, if the still strong lack of full engagement with the internet in Francophone, among other, countries that has resulted from the prevalence of English, it should be stressed that in Northern France and Wallonia demolition of urban architecture predating the 1950s is not, as yet, anywhere near so widely practised as in Belgian Flanders or even the Dutch *Nederland*. For reasons of maximum lucidity, quotes from almost exclusively French published and internet sources have not been translated.

PAST GLORIES AND DISASTERS IN A NUTSHELL: TOURNAI AS A LEADING URBAN CENTRE (1ST/2ND CENTURIES AD - 1830)

"Même s'il ne s'agit encore que d'une agglomération secondaire, la bourgade gallo-romaine de Tournai, sur l'Escaut, développe déjà des programmes urbanistiques et architecturaux ambitieux, dans le courant du IIe siècle de notre ère, à en juger les découvertes qui y ont été réalisées⁴."

With a recorded history of continuous human inhabitation since late-Roman Antiquity, Tournai, thus far, has been in existence for around 2000 years. The above reference to 'a secondary vicus' on the River Scheldt emphasises the tremendous endeavour involved in the initial stages of urban foundation. Assumed to post-date Roman suppression of the Belgae tribes, much the same *Turnacum* that was enlarged in the 3rd century (confirmed by rich archaeological findings in and around the Cathedral) served the 5th-century Franks as their first power base after crossing the Rhine. The rise of France as a state has tended to complicate the city's historic association with Belgium. Even if the diocese of Tournai was subordinated to the metropolitan authority of Rheims, the origins of this stolidly 'French' city issued from the Belgian tribe of the Remi⁵.

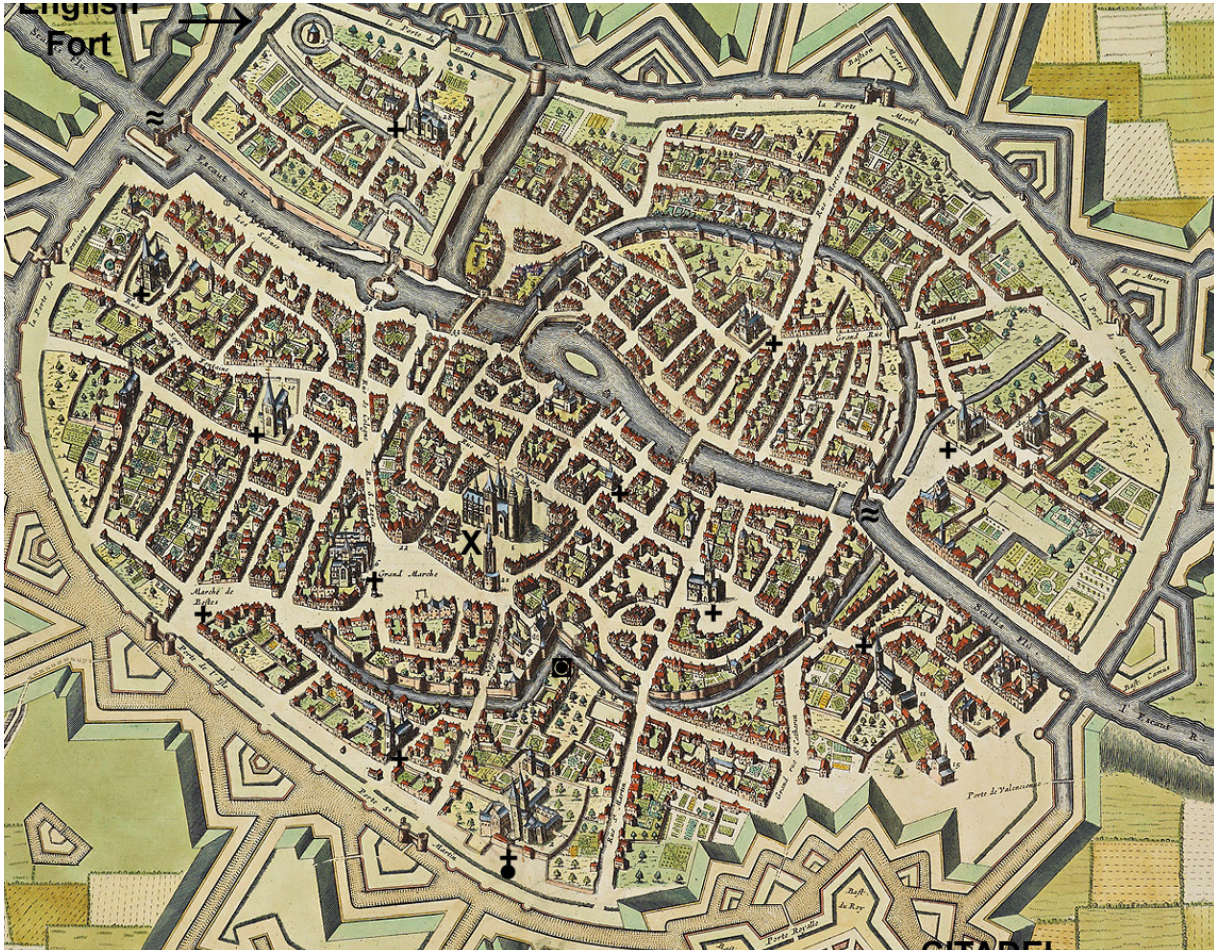


FIGURE 1 Schematised bird's eye view of Tournai from Johannes Bleau's Stedenboek. Surrounded by French bastions and earthworks, obsolete English Fort and technically advanced Citadel clearly marked (St. Catherine's parish semi-demolished). The river as yet not canalised; moated inner and outer city walls easily discernible; Cathedral and Beffroi (X) adjacent to triangular-plan Grand'Place; Halle aux Conseaux with Tour aux Six (■); St. Martin's Abbey (●+); parish churches (+); ponts des Troux & de l'Arche (≈)

For the purposes of this text, it is most practical to pinpoint the key aspects of Tournai's pre-modern history:

- 1 Belgian post-Antique history began with the Carolingian Empire's partitioning (843-80) between ultimately the Western and Eastern Frankish Kingdoms;
- 2 a watermark in Tournai's early-mediaeval history is marked by inclusion of its city on the Scheldt's left-bank (alongside almost the entire County of Flanders) in what became the French Kingdom and assigning of the right-bank, with the parish of St-Brice, to the Holy Roman Empire;
- 3 while the Flemish (initially under the Counts but subsequently led by the cities) broadly rejected French sovereignty, the *Tournaisiens* sought king Philippe Auguste's active support to free themselves of the Church's feudalistic dominion, as sealed by the urban charters of 1188 and 1211;
- 4 although a French vassal periodically besieged by the Flemish Counts, Tournai remained the diocesan seat for Flanders;
- 5 The city's mediaeval wealth⁶ rested on a potentially disastrous combination of constituting France's fourth city (after Paris, Rouen and Orléans) and remaining a vital Flemish economic centre (clothe industry largely based on imported English wool, tapestry production and provision of various hues of Tournai stone);
- 6 coinciding with the demise of the Middle Ages, the brief English occupation (1513-19) and incorporation into the Habsburg-dominated Seventeen Provinces (1521-72) spelled certain loss of the city's pre-eminence as an independent urban variable⁷.

Among the architectural gems attesting to the 'glory' of mediaeval Tournai, the world-famous Romanesque and Gothic Cathedral of Notre Dame shares place of honour with the *Beffroi*⁸, situated at the head of the (main) market square, or *Grand'Place*. As also happened in most towns and cities throughout Belgium and today's North of France, the secular (in this instance) tower symbolises civic liberty⁹. Arguably a greater architectural testimony to the victory of *Stadtluft* over feudalism, two great systems of ramparts were raised to protect the expanding *République communale*. If the bishop's *civitas Turnacensium* had merely protected the Cathedral and immediate vicinity, the first civically initiated *enceinte* (55ha) encompassed the *Grand'Place* and former *fauxbourgs* of St-Quentin and St-Piat, before being extended to take in the right-bank parish of St-Brice (1188-1202). Comprising 18 gates and 42 towers, the second *enceinte* (c.190ha) was a gigantic undertaking carried out within a mere 25 years (*rive gauche*: 1277-1282/1295; *rive droite*: 1289-1302). It incorporated an additional eight parishes, of which the city churches of Ste-Marguerite, St-Jacques, Ste-Marie-Madeleine, St-Nicolas and St-Jean still stand¹⁰.

Enduring three centuries of outside interference in their socio-economic and cultural life, the *Tournaisiens* continued to identify with their city rather than any of the ensuing succession of European powers. Having largely converted to Calvinism, due to which Tournai was known as *la Genève du Nord*¹¹, its citizens faced religious persecution from the Spanish. Following Farnese's two-month siege of 1581, thousands emigrated to France or the self-proclaimed Dutch Republic, leaving behind a depopulated city. Economic recovery within the Southern Netherlands (1581-1667) proved sluggish.

English occupation had entailed turning St. Nicolas's parish into a fort, of which only Henry VIII's Tower still stands¹¹. Return of the French in 1667, after another destructive siege, was overshadowed by Louis XIV's Citadel. Requiring 30,000 men working in shifts of 10,000 from 4am to 7pm¹², it was not conceived simply to protect the city from external threat but (like the gargantuan fortress outside Lille) to subdue potential urban insurrection. Conversely, the "42 *glorieuses*" (*années*) exerted by far the greatest pre-19th-century impact on the mediaeval built environment:

"Tournai doi son visage actuel à l'action de Louis XIV et de ses architectes"¹³;

"No other French town offers so many fine houses with similar façades from the reign of Louis XIV"¹⁴.

The Scheldt was canalised and its tree-lined embankments fronted by townhouses in the 17th-century French classicist style named for *le roi soleil*. If Tournai was eclipsed by the rising importance of Lille (Flem.: *Rijsel*; Dutch: *Rijssel*), the *Parlement* (i.e. justice courts to Flanders and Hainaut) was set up on the Scheldt; in a palatial edifice of imposing scale and architecture, as affirmed by the three-dimensional scaled model (*plan-relief*) of 1701¹⁵.

The most significant testimony to Tournai's built history is its remarkably diverse domestic architecture, as revealed in the great wealth of pre-industrial townhouses and subtly complex definitions of period and building type in accordance with the frontages' arrangement and decorative details. They vary from stone Romanesque, (featuring the *fenêtre tournaisienne* applied in much of North-Western Europe), Scaldian stone or Flemish stone-and-brick Gothic, through Gothic-and-Renaissance, or more emphatically defined Flemish and Louis XIII Renaissance, to variations of the localised Tournai 'traditional style' or *maison rustique* so distinct from the Classicist-orientated Louis XIV (Baroque), XV (Rococo) and XVI (neo-Classical)¹⁶. The wealth in Belgium and Nord-Pas-de-Calais départements of urban homes designed in the Empire, Historicist and Eclectic styles through to Art-Nouveau and Art-Deco reflects how the tradition continued through the 1800s into the inter-war years¹⁷.



FIGURE 2 Tournai townhouses. Left to right (upper:): Romanesque - Louis XV & Bruges neo-Gothic - 14th-century Gothic; (lower:): Louis XIV - stone-and-brick Renaissance - neo-Classical (part-adapted)

BETWEEN HISTORY & MODERNITY: ENDURING VITALITY OF A SELF-CONTAINED CITY & URBAN COMMUNITY (1713-1940)

“Prendre, autant que possible, la ville à son origine; suivre ses modifications à travers les ages; faire l’histoire et la description de toutes ses parties; en un mot, peindre le vieux Tournai et le Tournai de nos jours, tel a été le thème que nous nous sommes imposé” 18.

First occupied by the anti-French Alliance, Tournai was returned to the now Austrian-ruled Southern Netherlands (1713-94), passing subsequently to post-revolutionary France (1794-1815) and the Dutch Kingdom (1815-30). True to its urban traditions, Belgian Flanders actively contributed to the earliest stages of coordinated industrial enterprise from the mid-1700s. In Tournai the disused *Parlement* building was adapted into François Péterinck’s porcelaine factory (1800), while in 1811 the wider known Piat, Lefebvre et Cie carpet factory on the rue Clarisse, occupying the pre-Revolutionary Ste-Claire nunnery, received a purpose-built neo-Classical frontage designed by Bruno Renard (1781-1861),¹⁹ a local architect who had studied under Charles Percier. The reoccurring influence of Paris imposed further rationalisation on the city’s built fabric by adopting a localised variation on the style *empire*, lasting from the 1810s to 1850s. Demolition of the mediaeval complex of municipal edifices induced Renard, in collaboration with Benjamin Joseph Dewarlez (1768-1819), to plan the *Place du Parc* (currently named for Queen Astrid), fronted with well-proportioned neo-Classical townhouses (largely non-extant) and two public buildings: the *Salle des Concerts* (1822→) and *Hôtel Gorin* (c.1825)²⁰. This monumentally conceived square connected the *Grand’Place* to adjacent parkland and new *Hôtel-de-Ville*, adapted from extension in the style Louis XV (1763-7) of Saint Martin’s Abbey (dissolved after 1794). Renard is probably best known for his design of *Le Grand Hornu* (1816-35), comprising a factory, its owner’s residence and workers’ colony²¹.

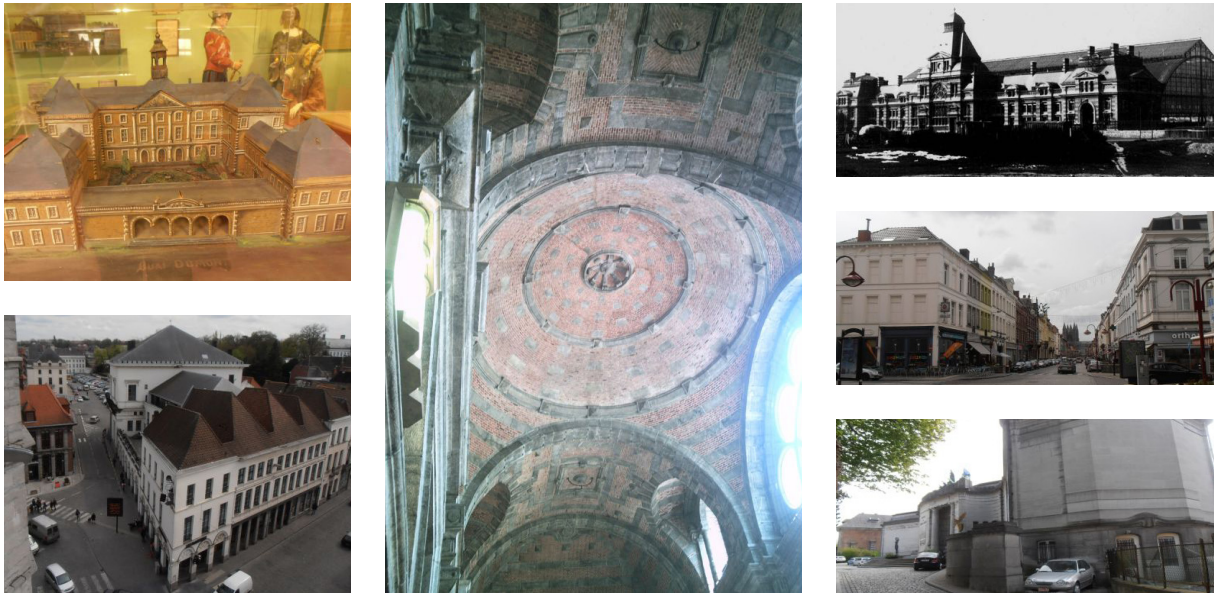


FIGURE 3 Left: late-17th-century Parlement, Renard's Salle des concerts with Place du Parc; middle: main hall plafond of H. Beyaert's railway station (1870s); right: station, exterior view (c.1880), Rue Royale viewed from Place Combez, Victor Horta's Musée des Beaux Arts (1903 onwards)

The greatest single piece of urban planning in Tournai combined demolition of the outer city walls (1867→) with construction of the third railway station (1874-9), by the Fleming, Hendrik Beyaert (1823-1894)²². An important railway junction, linking the city with Mouscron, Liège, Brussels and Lille, as well as Ronse (disused), took shape from 1842. Three avenues (rues de l'Athenée, Childeric, Royale), radiating from newly demarcated Place Combez were integrated with a system of magnificent boulevards laid out along the dismantled ramparts. Even if such far-reaching steps, facilitating assimilation of the outer suburbs and surrounding villages, anticipated rapid growth into a populous agglomeration to rival Liège and Lille, they came too late for the city to attract industrial location away from the Borinage, Charleroi or more proximate cross-border textile towns of Tourcoing and Roubaix. Factories in this nonetheless fastidiously commercial city were largely concentrated around the first two railway terminuses²³, or went up behind pre-existing buildings.

Taking into account how Belgian independence initiated an era of recovery and sustained stability encouraging social improvement, it may be contended that during the 19th and early-20th centuries Tournai still functioned as a largely self-contained urban entity. Possessing its own commercial life, manufacturing businesses, museums, publishing houses, theatre, as well as local customs and urban mythology drawing on a prolific past, the city experienced an effective prolongation of its mediaeval autonomy. Richly supplemented by infrastructural innovation of municipally initiated underground sewers and running water, the supply of gas and electricity, raising of hospitals and other public services, this more parochial rekindling of Tournai's mediaeval *âge d'or* was seriously undermined by the cataclysmic German invasion of August 1914. The hypothesis that Tournai's modern history was one of encroaching provincialism is thus open to criticism for overgeneralising immensely complex processes. Considering the destructive changes on the horizon, the so-called *Belle Epoque* may be regarded as signifying an inventive and even dynamic reaffirmation of the city's pre-modern heyday so markedly at variance with the above-mentioned industrial agglomerations' development.

THE AIR RAIDS OF MAY 1940, POST-WAR 'RECONSTRUCTION'

“Aujourd’hui la tempête de fer et feu a passé sur ce qui n’était déjà plus qu’un souvenir. Il n’y a même plus de murs noirs par la fume; tout a été nivelé à ras du sol. Et etiam periere ruinae: les ruines elle-mêmes ont péri”²⁴.

As had already been inflicted on Guernica, Wieluń, Warsaw, Rotterdam, Middelburg, Maubeuge and soon struck a myriad other built-up areas, Tournai was subjected to merciless aerial bombardment. Between 16th and 23rd May 1940, great swathes of the centre were reduced to shattered remnants or heaps of rubble²⁵. Of the most valuable historic architecture, the Cloth Hall and three most ancient churches of St-Quentin, St-Piat and St-Brice were reduced to gaping, partially obliterated shells. The Cathedral’s Romanesque nave also sustained bomb damage. Over a thousand buildings (ex-intra-muros) were either badly damaged or almost totally razed. In the desperate conditions of another German occupation within barely two decades, due to insufficient measures taken to preserve their invaluable remains buildings worthy of meticulous restoration were lost forever. All but the sturdiest of burnt-out walls were ripped down, leaving nothing but the cellars.

Detailed reconstruction à l’identique applied after the ‘Great War’ at Ypres and Dinant was limited to the most prestigious devastated edifices. Elsewhere, a modernistic approach was introduced from the early-1950s into the 1960s of a style – but not always proportions – specifically intended to ‘harmonise with’ the surviving historic architectural profile. Paul Bonduelle (1877-1955), an architect of national repute and *Tournaisien* by birth, was appointed *commissaire spéciale* to oversee the rebuilding, which – disregarding the implications of mass car ownership – made provision for the widening of pre-existing streets (Têtes d’Or, d’Argent, rues Puis d’Eau, du Pont, du Cygne, sections of Rue St-Martin), or laying out of new thoroughfares (rue Wallonie) to improve traffic flow across the city’s inner core²⁶. The retreating British forces had blown up the Scheldt bridges, including the middle span of the mediaeval *pont des Trous* (1281-1329)²⁷ and four characteristic *levy bridges* (*ponts levants*) in the centre, raised by two pairs of mechanised pulleys resting on Doric columns²⁸.

PROGRESSIVE ATTRITION OF THE URBAN CORE - 1960S-1990S

“Une nouvelle génération d’architectes avait fait son apparition et elle vouait un culte, tout particulier, au Dieu béton. Hôtels de maîtres et petites maisons au charme désuet ont été ainsi systématiquement sacrifiés, sans regret, pour faire place à des résidences dont on peut relever la pauvreté architecturale”²⁹.

A long drawn-out decline of large parts of the city’s building stock was intensified by profound changes to the social structure, associated with adoption of ‘modern’, internationalised ‘lifestyles’ and all that entails, began to take on dramatic proportions from the 1960s. The situation became dire in the 1980s, by which time new technology had transformed rural life in the *Tournaisis*, local manufacturing activities were in rapid decline and once numerous, typically family-run shops, hotels, cafes, bars and restaurants³⁰ succumbing to the impact of individualised motor transportation and accompanying preference for entertainment in bigger cities, *hipermarchés*, fast-food franchises, theme parks, shopping malls, etc.

A venerable city of Tournai’s priceless historic importance required far-sighted governmental policy. However, this period coincided with the devolution of centralised administration in favour of a federal state system. From a regional perspective, an unjust blow, predating national independence, had been dealt the city by its administrative subordination to (Belgian) Hainaut. With regard to the urban fabric’s advancing ruination, as actually occurred in the 1980s-2000s to Liège. With the municipal authorities more or less willing connivance, the Walloon political establishment resorted to severely unimaginative utilitarian redevelopment of the urban core, employing outside contractors and, as public funds ran dry, private developers³¹. In a city ten times smaller, while ruinous redevelopment (as cited above) struck particular streets³² or squares³³, the greatest loss was to

pre-20th-century housing, decayed or otherwise, replaced by typically tawdry-looking constructions that, bearing names highlighting their architectural banality like: “résidence Cathédrale”, “Le Versaille” (sic), “Crédit Professionnel du Hainaut”, severely contrasts with the pre-late-modernist urban fabric. In view of the municipality’s ineptitude at protecting historic architecture, a turning point was marked by the Pasquier Grenier Foundation’s purchase of desperately run-down historic monuments in danger of being condemned³⁴. These included the 17th-century Sept-Fontaines barracks, while the churches of St-Jacques and Ste-Marguerite were saved by restoration projects³⁵. Many other edifices, such as the church of Ste-Marie-Magdalene, still await substantial rebuilding. Elsewhere, work on disused buildings has failed to guarantee satisfactory results, as with . Renard’s former abattoirs on the rue de l’Arsenal of which one pavilion survived, the remaining two being sacrificed to enlarge the utilitarian clinique Notre-Dame.

CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE PROSPECTS

“Après Lille, Rouen, le défi consiste à offrir au Tournais **une nouvelle address, une nouvelle vitrine** tournée vers le bien-être, la gastronomie, la reconstru, la détente, l’hébergement de standing; **une nouvelle capacité d’accueil:** seminars, salons privés, espaces conferences; **une nouvelle destination**”³⁶.

- emboldened phrases as applied in the press report)

The broader changes of the later half of the 20th century proved as unkind to Tournai as the central and inner urban areas of many cities in the world. Although living and housing standards may have improved, the same could not always be said of the actual quality of urban life. If the century ended with efforts increasingly independent of official institutions to ensure a *sauegarde* of the city’s phenomenal architectural inheritance, under more fortuitous conditions, it might have proved possible to extend conservation to the whole of the city centre and its formerly mediaeval *fauxbourgs*³⁷.

Consideration of post-16th-century change to Tournai’s organically evolving urban architecture demonstrates the direct relationship between building ‘the new’ and destroying ‘the old’/‘outdated’. The forces of so-called historic inevitability may be claimed to have dictated long-term replacement of wooden buildings by stone-and-brick construction. The more immediate impact involved the loss of c.300 houses and St. Catherine’s to the Citadel’s esplanade, a further three parish churches, St. Martin’s Abbey and numerous monasteries ripped down after 1794, removal in the 1820s of the mediaeval political centre (fig. 5) and subsequent demolitions to accommodate straightened or new streets, production plants, public edifices, etc. It is only from the mid-1900s that the destruction finally begins to exceed creative building, as witnessed by wartime obliteration; expropriation from 1963 of c.150 properties along the *Quai du luchet d’Antoing* widened to accommodate increased river traffic on the Scheldt³⁸; large-scale substitution of ‘obsolete’ townhouses; widespread decline of churches, public buildings, etc. Considering the durability of solidly constructed and comparatively well-maintained architecture, the reckoning for 75 years of all too frequently mindless erasure is a bleak one³⁹.



FIGURE 4 The 12th-century Fort Rouge tower adapted after 2000 into a 'luxury home' (stainless steel fencing and gateway out of keeping with the ancient architecture). Beyond: a townhouse on the Rue Perdue (many others eradicated from the 1980s), dwarfed by late- and post-modernist apartment blocks

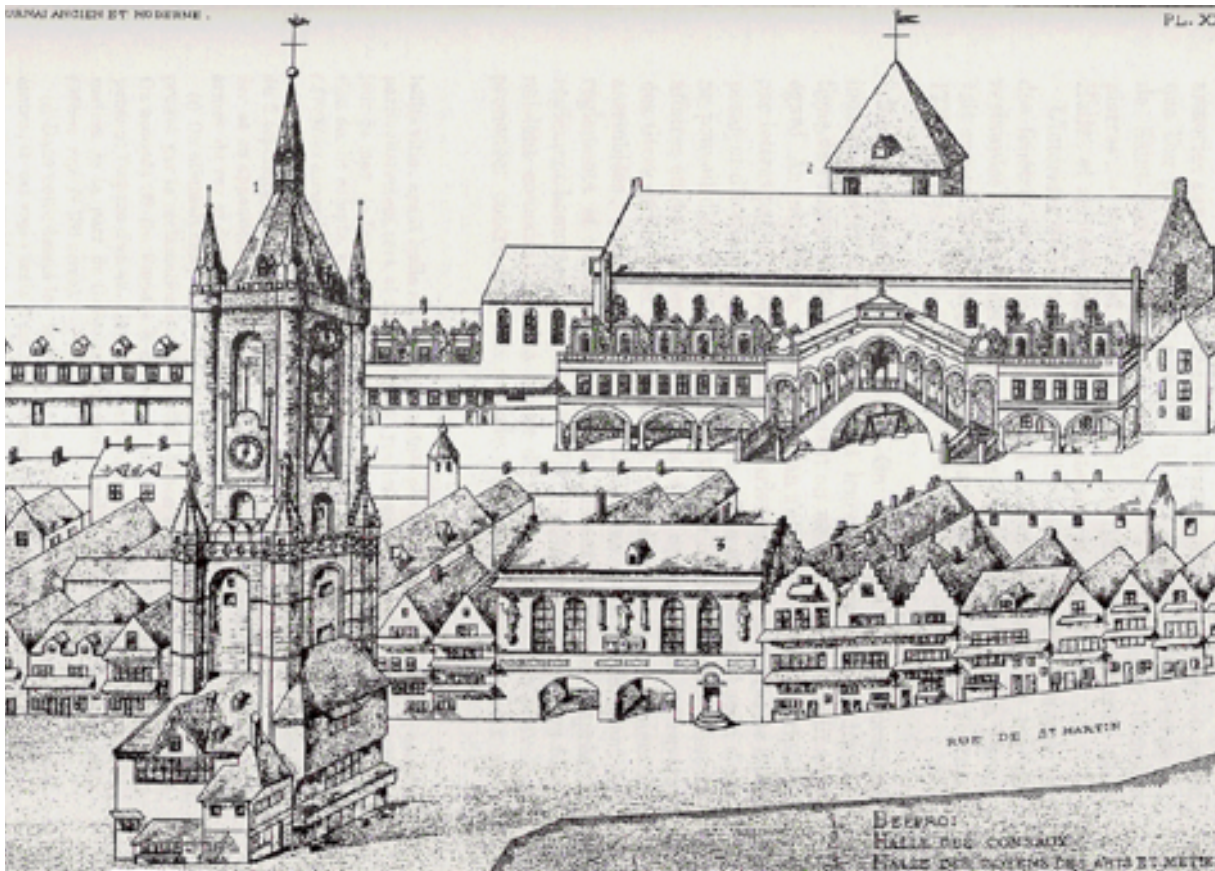


FIGURE 5 Lost urbanity of municipal buildings (Halle aux Conseaux, Tour de Six and Halle des Doyens), cleared of adjacent houses (foreground: Beffroi), in a mid-19th-century update of the 17th-century print

The question now is what the ongoing era of (so-called) globalisation may have in store for the city. Since the onset of the New Millennium, as an extension of prolonged restoration work on the Cathedral (€21 million), the most ancient quarter of Tournai has been undergoing would-be EU-funded “revalorisation” that, having overridden the local authorities, declares in grotesque French newspeak: *Le Fonds européen de développement régional et la Wallonie investissent dans votre avenir*⁴⁰. Signs are evident of property developers’ interests enjoying the support of the regional government officials directly involved, desperate to ‘boost’ a flagging local economy by encouraging investment in the main thing they see going for Tournai: its tourist attraction. Attention has focussed on the disused 18th-century *Maison des Prêtres* which, with its main elevation overlooking the Place de l’Évêché (dominated by the Cathedral’s Romanesque west front and main entrance), is to become the city’s first 4-star hotel; complete with boutiques, top-class restaurant and obligatory roof-top terrace affording ‘die-for’ views over Notre Dame and the *rive-droite*. Underlining how, much as in the early stages of international modernism, architects propagating its contemporary variation(s) work for very wealthy clients⁴¹, the 44-page *dossier de presse* alludes to the general direction of forces currently under way, with the inevitable objective of attracting big money. Tournai’s geopolitical location as a provincial Belgian city is being overridden by its geographic (as well historic) proximity to Lille, whose cross-border importance as urban heart of a metropolitan region now spreads beyond French-administered Flanders into the western reaches of Belgian Hainaut, the Belgian-Flemish *Leiestreek* (Courtrai) and *Westhoek* (Ypres). If the press report’s plans and glossy photomontages already depict a new development facing the Place Paul-Emile Janson, links to websites publicised through *Skyscrapercity* have revealed alternative concepts that go to the extremes of a 110m glass-fronted tower (a full 27m higher than four of the so-called *cinq clochers* symbolising Tournai since the 12th century)⁴². Mere exercise or latent blueprint for the near future? That is the question.



FIGURE 6 Maison des Anciens Prêtres (“Hotel 4 étoiles”), views of the Cathedral from places de l’Évêché and Paul-Emile Janson, model of Cathedral precinct with one of various designs for the new hotel

*“Prêcher l’esprit d’équipe, réclamer la simplicité et la logique dans les formes, la bonne et saine construction, exiger l’utilisation de matériaux régionaux qui vieillissent en beauté, à l’exclusion des produits industriels qui ne résistent pas à l’action des éléments...”*⁴³.

So quickly forgotten, even these guiding principles of the reconstruction, formulated in the classicist tradition of the Brussels and Paris Académies still fail to pay full tribute to the city’s own capacity for architectural construction and urban composition – too often forgotten, because each urban centre of the past most typically was a rule unto itself. Apart from paintings, models⁴⁴ and pre-1940 photographs, this *savoir-faire* is self-evident in the multitude of genial visual effects surviving or preserved for posterity in the *plan-relief* of 1701. As in other pre-industrial cities, this ability in designing townhouses or genuinely arresting public buildings to take maximum advantage of the pre-existing *tableau urbain*, with its subtly alternating topography and winding streets, reveals a combination of true appreciation, initiative and requirement to originate high-quality work that, semi-maintained or rediscovered during the 1800s, was all too readily squandered from the mid-1900s onwards⁴⁵.

Nothing, as yet, has come of the satirically nicknamed *tour Michelin* in reference to its deviser, the Paris-based architect of AMNA⁴⁶. An altogether less invasive project, possibly retaining the 1950s ex-State Archives building, may still prove the most practical, not to mention least controversial, outcome. But this hardly alleviates an ongoing threat to the magnificent *pont des Trous* posed by 1350 ton vessels plying the Scheldt⁴⁷. All in all, the current state of affairs, involving the potentially failed region of a federal state whose chief city serves the

European Union⁴⁸ as its main political and administrative seat, cannot inspire optimism. Where municipal authorities spending residents' taxes on their 'behalf' have lost the initiative, hope could lie in 'citizens' power' injecting life back into political science through public meetings and free exchange of information, galvanised by socially engaged groups or individuals who are becoming progressively adept at protecting what is, after all, their city⁴⁹.

Disclosure statement

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Image Sources

Figure 1: Joan Blaeu, Stedenboek (p.100) pre-1673, Universiteit Utrecht (in the public domain)

Figure 2: Phot. Peter Martyn

Figure 3: Phot. Peter Martyn

Figure 4: Phot. Peter Martyn. Tournai Railway Station, c. 1880s, unknown photographer; refer: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:M66435_std.jpg

Figure 5: Hotel des Doyens des arts et métiers and adjacent municipal buildings, from A.F.J. Bozière, *Tournai Ancien, Tournai Moderne* (pub. 1864), p. 310 (in the public domain)

Figure 6: Phot. Peter Martyn

Endnotes

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