'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960

Jens van de Maele & Johan Lagae

Published online: 05 Oct 2017.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 97

View related articles

View Crossmark data

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960

Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae   *Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Ghent University, Belgium (authors' e-mail addresses: jens.vandemaele@gmail.com; johan. lagae@ugent.be)*

While parliament buildings and governor's palaces have been studied as embodiments of governmental or colonial power, the architecture of the often more mundane state administrative office buildings has only received scant attention from architectural historians. In this article, we seek to demonstrate that political discourses concerning such buildings can nonetheless reveal important conceptions of colonial power. Rather than focussing on how such power was accommodated in and shaped by state-built architecture overseas, this article draws attention to the representational aspects of colonial governance in a *mother country* through an analysis of various projects proposed for the Belgian Ministry of Colonies (1908–1960). In the 1930s, when it was still housed in an eighteenth-century neoclassical building in Brussels, the Ministry of Colonies was included in a visionary but unsuccessful civil service reform, which was aimed at a modernisation of the Belgian state bureaucracy and its office buildings. After the Second World War, when colonialism became increasingly criticised in international fora, successive Belgian Ministers of Colonies pleaded for the construction of a new, grandiose ministerial complex, which was supposed to symbolise efficiency, modernity, and—above all —the permanence of the colonial undertaking. Even though important steps were taken to realise this complex, the project was outrun by the global decolonisation process, of which the independence of the Belgian Congo (1960) was an inevitable outcome.

Introduction

In an internal report written around July, 1953, a high-ranking civil servant at the Belgian Ministry of Colonies uttered his dissatisfaction with the office buildings occupied by his department. The Administrator-general, Marcel Van den Abeele, claimed that it was impossible to exert efficient managerial control over the ministry's several divisions, since the office spaces were scattered throughout the centre of Brussels. Many of these offices, Van den Abeele continued, were hardly appropriate for modern administrative activities anyway, given their state of

Figure 1. The Museum of the Belgian Congo in Tervuren near Brussels, constructed between 1904 and 1910: undated postcard from around 1910 (personal collection of Johan Lagae).

decay. According to the Administrator-general, the solution lay at hand: a modern office complex had to be constructed, in which the five hundred officials and employees of the ministerial administration could be housed under one roof. Additionally, Van den Abeele contended, such a complex could greatly benefit the representation of the colonial project in the capital's cityscape. As such, Belgium was to follow the example of an illustrious foreign power: 'In London, our British friends possess India House, Australia House, New-Zealand House, etc, which have been specially constructed and equipped for representing the Dominions towards the public.'[1]

This was certainly a rather curious statement for an important colonial administrator to make, see-mingly unaware (or wilfully ignorant) of the fact that all of the British possessions cited by him had achieved full independence during the preceding years. In the mid-1950s, however, no leading Belgian politician or official, including Van den Abeele, seriously contemplated the idea that the colony of the Belgian Congo and the neighbouring mandate territory of Ruanda-Urundi could be granted independence any time soon. Conse-quently, the proposed ministerial office complex was supposed to function as an architectural 'marker' of Belgium's colonial empire. Above all, it was to become a centre of government: the locus from where Belgium's African territories and its thir-teen million 'native' subjects would be *ruled.*

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

Architectural historiography has dealt extensively with the 'architecture of power' in colonial territories. Governmental complexes in cities such as New Delhi or Rabat have been described as instrumental in a continual process by which Western rulers sought to generate (or, rather, impose) legitimacy for their colonial projects.[2] In the Belgian Congo, however, a similar effort to embody colonial power in stone largely failed. The construction of a monumental residence building for the Governor General in the colonial capital Léopoldville (present-day Kinshasa) began only in the 1950s, causing the building to remain unfinished at the eve of Congo's independence in June, 1960.[3] Outside the Congo, the Belgian government did try to legitimise its colonial endeavour—a practice that has been described by the historian Matthew G. Stanard as 'selling the Congo'—by means of colonial sections at international exhibitions and world's fairs, whose architecture and interior displays presented an appealing image of the supposedly successful *mission civilisatrice* in Central Africa.[4]

From 1910 onwards, this representational effort was additionally furthered by the Museum of the Belgian Congo, a monumental complex near Brussels, which still remains the prime *lieu de mémoire* of Belgian colonialism (Fig. 1).[5] The precise impact of the colonial sections at world's fairs (which sought a 'visual annexation of the Congo') remains a subject of dispute amongst historians.[6] Yet, remarkably, much less scholarly attention has been devoted to the architecture of those institutions that played an active role in governing the Belgian colony, such as the Institute of Tropical Medicine

and the Colonial University. During the 1930s, both institutions were accommodated in monumental Art Deco buildings, which became highly mediatised through colonial postcards and magazines such as *L'Illustration Congolaise.*[7] This mediatisation was absent, however, for one category of buildings that was undoubtedly even more crucial for colonial government: the metropolitan offices of the Ministry of Colonies. In this article, we will analyse this latter 'architecture of colonial power', which has often been overlooked in the historiography of other colonial nations as well.[8]

To frame our discussion, a reference to the work of the Victorian journalist Walter Bagehot can be illuminating. In his well-regarded essay *The English Constitution* (1867), Bagehot likened the British system of government to a *machine*: a steam engine to be precise.[9] This metaphorical 'engine' ran smoothly, Bagehot maintained, because of the interplay of its so-called 'dignified parts', referring to the monarchy and the House of Lords, and its 'efficient parts', consisting of the House of Commons, ministerial cabinets and high-ranking civil servants. With its pomp and ceremony, the royal family in particular was a continual source of 'potential energy' for the 'engine'. In the eyes of the public (and in particular of the members of the lower classes), the monarchy functioned as the imaginable component of the state, Bagehot claimed: it provided an aesthetically refined piece of theatre to which the populace could relate, and which successfully assured allegiance to the otherwise abstract notions of state and nation. At the same time, the 'efficient' parts of the British governmental system assured

that the 'engine' turned the provided input of energy into efficient public services: the execution of laws, the maintenance of infrastructure, the provision of law and order, and so on. As such, ministerial administrations usually performed their work off radar—well beyond the inquisitive gaze of the general public, which had little interest in the activities of anonymous bureaucrats. In Western culture, moreover, the concept of the 'ministerial bureaucracy' often had a rather unfavourable popular reputation, from when the term *bureaucratie* was first coined in mid-eighteenth century France.[10]

These elements seem to have left their mark on the international historiography concerning governmental architecture. Most studies deal exclusively with building types that have a strong 'dignified' component, such as parliaments, law courts, town halls and royal or presidential palaces. Being a pronounced 'efficient' component of the state, ministerial bureaucracies and their material culture—including office buildings—have attracted much less attention from (architectural) historians, notwithstanding some notable exceptions.[11] By focussing on the Belgian Ministry of Colonies (which existed from 1908 until 1962), we argue that an inquiry into the planning and construction of governmental offices can be enriching for our understanding of architectural history. After all, in a 'bagehotian' dichotomy, ministerial offices often occupy a middle position— they represent the notion of efficiency as well as the notion of dignity. In fact, both aspects can be complementary, instead of exclusive.

Yet, the leading actors within the Belgian Ministry of Colonies only became outspoken advocates of

the idea of 'dignifying' architecture during the 1950s: not coincidentally when colonialism was increasingly branded in international fora as an unsustainable practice. In this decade, the ministry pressed hard for the construction of a headquarters building that was both efficient and dignified, as exemplified in the report quoted above. These high ambitions were crippled, however, by a marked absence of support from other ministries. Meanwhile, the perceived lack of a sufficiently representational and rationally equipped headquarters in Brussels did not seem to affect the everyday practice of colonial rule in any negative way: as late as the mid-1950s, Belgium could still pretend—without notable domestic or international opposition—to be the guardian of a 'model colony'. Yet, as soon as the end of the decade, this notion proved to be delusionary, and the rushed independence of the Belgian Congo in 1960 would finally render obsolete all hopes of 'representing' the colony in the mother country.

Grandeur through efficiency? Administrative and architectural reform plans during the inter-war period

Belgian colonialism started off as a personal endeavour by King Leopold II. The so-called 'Congo Free State' the King had managed to secure for himself at the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference, has rightfully been described a 'one-man project', since the Belgian government was not involved in its administration.[12] As a result of international outrage at the ruthless exploitation of the Congolese, Leopold was forced to cede rule over his colony to the Belgian government in November, 1908. The Free

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

State thus officially became the 'Belgian Congo': albeit without arousing much enthusiasm amongst politicians and members of the public.[13] Both in Brussels and in the Congo, the administrative structures that had been set up to manage the Free State remained largely unaltered. A significant innovation, however, was the creation of the so-called *Conseil Colonial*, an unelected council which met regularly in Brussels and which would become the *de facto* legislative body of the colony.[14] Another novelty was the replacement of the erstwhile *Secrétaire de l'État* (a senior official in the metropolis in charge of the administration) by a Minister of Colonies. Within the framework of Belgian politics, the ministerial portfolio of Colonies could be considered rather atypical, since the department exerted authority over *all* aspects of colonial government, combining the competences of 'many ministries in one'.[15] Still, it would always remain one of the smallest in terms of personnel: in 1953, for instance, the department employed no more than 500 civil servants whereas there were 1,600 in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and 19,600 in the Finance Department.[16]

In 1908, the newly created Ministry of Colonies took possession of the building stock previously occupied by the administrative services of the Congo Free State, consisting of a number of relatively small edifices—mainly former *hôtels particuliers*—in the vicinity of the Royal Palace. Following the First World War, however, the dispersion of the ministerial bureaucracy over various streets was increasingly perceived as cost-inefficient.[17] This inefficiency, as well as a continual increase in staff numbers, prompted the department in 1924 to buy the *Hôtel de Flandre,* a former leading hotel that was quickly transformed into an administrative headquarters (Fig. 2).[18] The sheer size of this late eighteenth-century edifice, which adjoined the Royal Palace, met the demands for increased efficiency, whilst the prestigious location and the stately neoclassical façade undoubtedly befitted an unspoken desire for dignity. Both geographically and symbolically, the administrative services of the new Belgian colony would thus remain strongly linked with the monarchy—as well as with many other political and financial institutions that were located in the immediate surroundings of the Royal Palace.[19] The acquisition of the *Hôtel de Flandre* did not, however, significantly reduce the total number of office buildings occupied by the ministry.

During the second half of the 1930s, this persisting dispersion was strongly criticised by Louis Camu, a former official of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, who had been appointed as 'Royal Commissioner for Administrative Reform' in late 1936. Camu's position had been newly created at the behest of the Prime Minister, Paul van Zeeland, who would lead two consecutive governments between 1935 and 1937.[20] Confronted with the lingering effects of the Great Depression (which had not been brought under control by preceding governments), Van Zeeland was determined to strengthen the state's grip on economic and social life. The technocratic ideal of having political problems analysed by supposedly 'neutral' experts—in an 'objective', almost scientific manner—was key to this ambition. For almost four years, right up to the beginning of the Second World War, Camu (who was educated as a political scientist) would

Figure 2. The *Hôtel de Flandre,* the main office building of the Ministry of Colonies from the mid-1920s until the abolition of the department in the early 1960s; photograph from around 1953 (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Brussels], Archives of the former Ministry of Colonies: inv. CP 603).

examine all aspects of the Belgian civil service with the aim of improving its performance and efficiency. In numerous official reports, he surveyed the functioning of all ministerial departments, pointing out abuses, irrationalities and dissipations of funds, whilst also suggesting measures for improvement.

The Royal Commissioner underpinned his reform plans with three major principles, which were heavily influenced by the then-fashionable managerial ideologies of Taylorism and Fayolism.[21] First, he sought to reform the procedures for the recruitment, promotion and permanent designation of civil servants, to make sure that every administrative position would be staffed by the 'right man'. Secondly, Camu aimed at a thorough reorganisation of the ministries' organisational structures, which were often burdened with redundant positions. Lastly, he emphasised the need for modern office buildings, since he considered the property holdings of Belgium's ministerial departments—including Colonies—to be seriously antiquated.[22] In two special reports on ministerial offices, issued in 1937

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

and 1940, Camu stated that the overwhelming majority of the approximately 160 buildings in the capital had to be abandoned.[23] Many of these, he explained, were badly maintained, with poor interior climates, whilst their architectural design was seldom based on recent insights concerning administrative processes. The buildings were often cramped and contained too many internal partition walls, which impeded the establishment of rectilinear 'workflows', surveillance by heads of department and the cooperation amongst employees. Camu also believed that the occupation by ministerial departments of many different locations hampered smooth communication between services, causing delays, high costs for the transport of paperwork and abuses by employees (who, while going from one office to another, allegedly indulged in *flânerie* far too easily). Yet, the Royal Commissioner was not solely interested in saving government funds: he also sought to raise public esteem for the civil service and the Belgian state in general. As such, he attempted to transform the concept of 'efficiency' into an agent of national 'grandeur' and dignity.

Camu believed that new, modern office architecture could actively contribute to appropriate 'grandeur'. A strained quest for monumentality and decorum—the core tenets of the 'modern classicist' style that set the tone in many European countries during the 1930s[24] — was nevertheless rejected. Instead, the Royal Commissioner favoured basic functionalist principles: the interiors of the future office complex were to reflect a factory-like rationality, whilst the façades had to be kept sober (and, most significantly, without colonnades). These

elements were, in turn, supposed to enhance administrative practices, and generate—in the eyes of the Belgian public—an aura of up-to-datedness and vigorous governmental power. Strikingly, Camu's 1940 Report cited the buildings of the French colonial administration in Morocco as the best example of office architecture *anywhere*. Here, Camu was probably alluding to the governmental office complex in Rabat, which had been constructed in the early 1920s during the *Résident Général* Hubert Lyautey's time in office. The Moroccan government offices, Camu stated, had been designed to perfection, having a 'star-shaped' footprint, with the offices of the *Résident Général* located in the centre. From this point, as many 'branches' emanated as there were '*directions-générales*', which were further subdivided into 'secondary branches, one for every direction and service'.[25] It is easy to see why the Royal Commissioner was so captivated by this colonial example. On the one hand, Lyautey had great renown in both French and Belgian administrative circles, since his authoritarian reign over Morocco was considered a model of governmental efficiency: a model that was, unsurprisingly, much more difficult to implement in a democratic context than in a colony.[26] On the other hand, the 'star-shaped' government complex evoked strong notions of hierarchy and surveillance, regarded as core tenets of Taylorism and Fayolism.

Located in a park and generously dimensioned, Rabat's administrative quarter could not simply be copied in Brussels, given the absence of sufficiently large building sites in the city centre. The alternative emerged in the form of two distinct office complexes, both located in the vicinity of the Parliament.
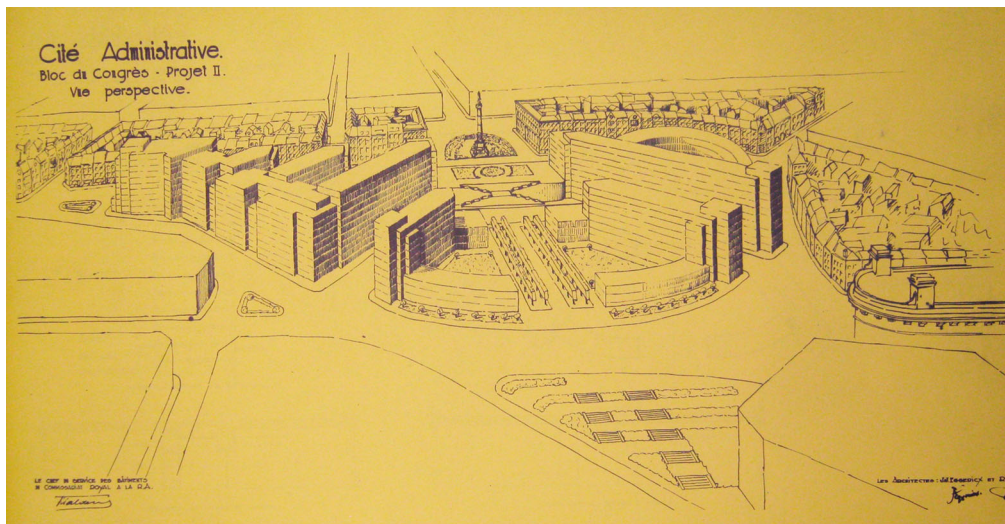
Figure 3. Project drawing by Jean-Jules Eggericx and Raphaël Verwilghen for one of the two sites of the unrealised *cité administrative* (1940), to be built between the Rue Royale and the present-day Boulevard Pacheco (© Archives d'Architecture Moderne [Brussels]: personal papers of J.-J. Eggericx, inv. 296).

In 1937, Camu engaged two architects, Jean-Jules Eggericx and Raphaël Verwilghen, to compose detailed plans for these complexes, which he dubbed '*la cité administrative*': a name that referred to the general French word for 'quarter', but also carried overtones of the then-fashionable British concept of 'the City'. Eggericx and Verwilghen can be best described as pragmatic modernists. As members of the Belgian CIAM group and *protégés* of Henry van de Velde, they were evident supporters of a 'rational' approach to architecture and urban planning. Throughout the inter-war period, they operated a successful joint architectural office, which managed to build a significant number of superior blocks of flats in the capital. [27] Both architects had also participated in the design of the

Belgian pavilion for the 1937 Paris world's fair. Contemporary observers had praised this pavilion for its 'balance, sensitivity and discreet grace', which represented Belgium as 'the land of measured proportions'. [28] These qualities were, undoubtedly, in tune with Camu's own expectations concerning the future *cité administrative*.

Virtually all ministerial departments were to be concentrated in a series of large blocks on the two sites of the *cité administrative* (Fig. 3). Each ministry would receive identical office spaces, whilst the number of square metres per service (and, consequently, per employee) would be determined 'objectively' by Camu's input. By prescribing all aspects of the office spaces top-down, the Royal Commissioner sought to override the parti-

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

cularism that reigned in many ministries. In the
past, such particularism had often led to impracti-
cal architectural arrangements, or to the acqui-
sition of overtly expensive buildings, office
equipment and furniture. In the *cité administrative,*
the Ministry of Colonies would thus be subjected
to a forced alignment like any other department.
Camu favoured the grouping of Colonies (which
was allotted 5300 m^2 of generic office space) in
one building with a number of rather technocratic
ministries, such as Public Works, Agriculture and
Economic Affairs. This grouping, the Royal
Commissioner believed, would foster acts of
mutual cooperation between administrations. In
this sense, it is clear that he attempted to neutral-
ise the image of Colonies as the 'outsider'
amongst Belgian ministries.

Logically, this implied that the department would
also be deprived of the possibility to (re)present itself
autonomously in the cityscape. However, Camu did
recognise that the Ministry of Colonies had specific
needs when it came to public relations. Therefore,
he envisaged the relocation of the *Office Colonial*
—a semi-autonomous body that was responsible
for colonial propaganda—to the future Brussels
Central railway station, which was under construc-
tion at the time. This prime location can be con-
sidered a strategic choice, since the *Office Colonial*
was also committed to the stimulation of 'colonial
vocations' amongst the public. The creation of
easily accessible services, moreover, was consistent
with the Royal Commissioner's aim to make
Belgian governmental administrations more custo-
mer-friendly. As such, investing in colonial propa-
ganda emerged as the government's main strategy

for 'selling the Congo' to the public—rather than
anchoring a distinct image of the colonial bureauc-
racy in architecture.[29]

Despite having been worked out in considerable
detail by the beginning of 1940, a violent turn in
the international political climate would confine
Camu's architectural schemes to the vast realm of
'paper architecture'. The German invasion of
Belgium in May, 1940, led to a premature abortion
of the project, without any part having been built.
As will be explained further on, not until the mid-
1950s would a Belgian government again take up
the idea of concentrating all ministries in a *cité
administrative*.

Exemplary office architecture for a 'model coloniser', 1945–1955

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War,
the charter of the newly founded United Nations
(1945) called for a phased process towards 'self-deter-
mination' in all colonised territories, but the Belgian
government certainly did not consider the decolonisa-
tion of Congo and Ruanda-Urundi to be a viable
option. Indeed, up until the late 1950s, most
Belgian politicians were convinced that it would
take an indeterminate number of decades before
their colonies could evolve to the status of a sovereign
state.[30] Following this rather naïve line of thinking,
they effectively attempted to insulate their colonial
policies from foreign influence.[31] In order to fend
off international criticisms, Belgium did initiate a
series of reforms, with the aim of transforming
Congo into a so-called 'model colony'. The corner-
stone of these reforms was the 'Ten-Year Plan for
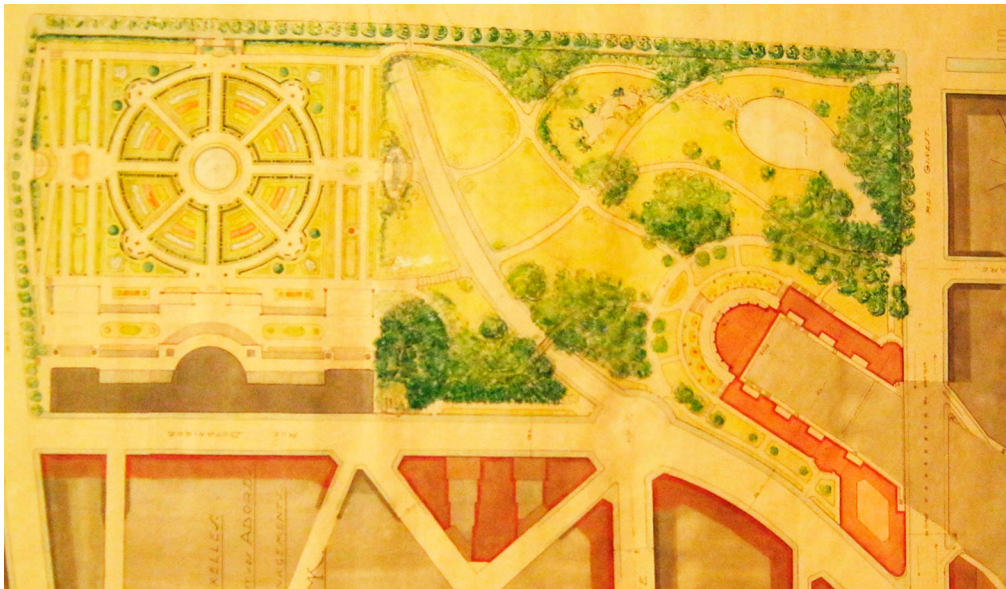the Economic and Social Development of Belgian

Figure 4. By the mid-1930s, the architect Mario Knauer had already conceived a plan for the construction of a building complex at the entrance of the railway tunnel in the Botanical Garden, which can be seen on the right below (© Archives d'Architecture Moderne [Brussels]: personal papers of J.-J. Eggericx, drawer 68 bis).

Congo' (1949), an ambitious programme for the 'material' and 'moral' advancement of the colony and its inhabitants, which mainly focussed on large infrastructural works as a vector of progress and modernity.[32] In Brussels, these new objectives resulted in a surge of bureaucratic growth. Confronted with a chronic and worsening lack of space in the various ministerial premises, the Minister of Colonies, Robert Godding, began to consider the construction of a completely new, large office complex. This choice was consistent with general governmental policy in the immediate post-war years to reject the concentration of all ministerial departments in a *cité administrative*.

In 1946, the Ministry of Transport suggested that Colonies could build a 'partially glazed' office complex on top of the entrance of a new railway tunnel, next to the Botanical Garden of Brussels. A Transport official claimed that this central location —from where one would enjoy an enchanting view of both greenery and passing trains—could even turn the complex into 'an attraction for the public' (Fig. 4).[33] If this proposal had been realised, the ministerial administration could indeed have boasted an office building that manifestly sought to evade the usual, negative connotations of 'bureaucracy', but there is no evidence that Godding had any interest in commissioning 'specta-

1188

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

cular' architecture. He soon turned his attention to the Avenue Louise, a stately, tree-lined and mostly residential thoroughfare in the south of the capital.[34] During a 1948 parliamentary session, the proposed relocation of the Ministry of Colonies to this location was heavily criticised by Albert De Vleeschauwer, one of Godding's predecessors, who considered the eccentric site—relatively distant from Parliament and most of the other ministries—as inappropriate.

De Vleeschauwer expressed his fear that the ministry would 'walk away' from the traditional centre of political power, thereby isolating itself both physically and symbolically.[35] This might well have been Godding's tacit intention, however: while he actively tried to ward off international interference, he also seemed intent on taking evasive action from the broader field of Belgian politics. Unsurprisingly, De Vleeschauwer's criticisms were to no avail. Over the course of the following years, the ministerial administration would effectively acquire a series of properties in an area situated between the Avenue Louise, the Rue du Magistrat and the Rue du Châtelain. All existing constructions in this location were destined to make way for a new office complex, large enough to accommodate an expanding corps of civil servants.

Whilst the Avenue Louise had been a playground for property developers ever since it had been created in the mid-nineteenth century, its transformation from a residential neighbourhood into the present-day mixed-use area with retail shops, flats, embassies and offices only began after the Second World War.[36] During the late 1940s the Avenue Louise was fast becoming the 'place to be' for the

rich and powerful, and there is little doubt that the Ministry of Colonies was looking for a symbolic association with this *beau monde* scene, rather than an association with the traditional centre of political power. Somewhere over the course of 1952 or 1953, the department charged the relatively inexperienced architectural duo Paul Ramon and René Aerts with the design of a new administrative headquarters. In 1951, Ramon and Aerts had already won a design contest for the *Résidence du Gouverneur-Général* in Léopoldville. On that occasion, however, their radically functionalist project had been discarded by the colonial government, because it was too 'modernist'.[37] The commission was thereafter given to Marcel Lambrichs, whose symmetrical and neoclassical design was considered more 'appropriate' for the official residence of the Governor General (figs 5, 6).[38]

Thus it seems that Ramon and Aerts were 'compensated' by being granted the commission for the ministerial office in the Avenue Louise. In the autumn of 1953, the duo presented the general *parti* of their project in a carefully crafted booklet, which was probably intended to convince both the Ministry of Colonies and the municipal services of their design's merits (Fig. 7).[39] The project was dominated by a 72-metre-high office tower, placed towards the rear of the building plot and surrounded by lower volumes, in which the library and the medical centre were to be accommodated (Fig. 8). This disposition allowed for a 'generous distribution of light and air', whilst the architectural conception itself would guarantee 'a monumental character and a grandeur springing not from artificial decorations, but from proportions and rhythms coming
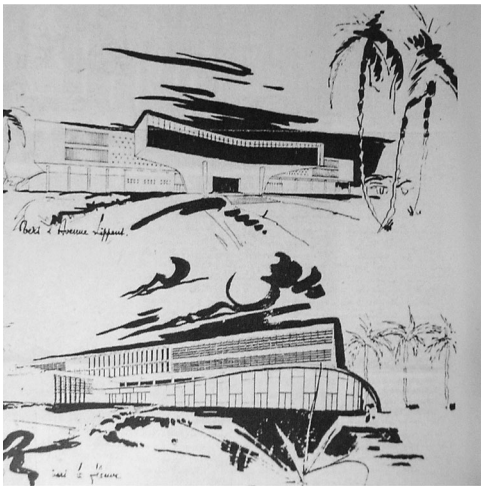
Figure 5. Unrealised competition project by Paul Ramon and René Aerts for the Governor General's *Résidence* in Léopoldville, 1951: perspectives of the front and rear façades (personal papers of Paul Ramon, from the personal collection of Johan Lagae).
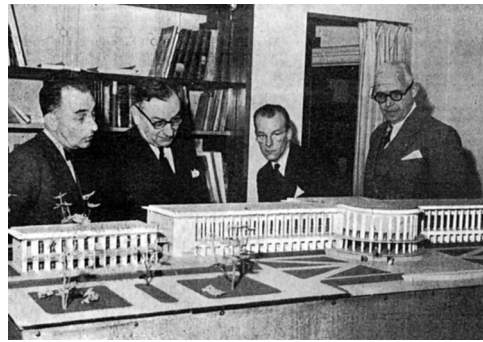
Figure 6. Presentation of a model for the realised *Résidence* in Léopoldville of the Governor General, circa 1955: from left to right, the Governor General, Léon Pétillon, the Minister of Colonies, Auguste Buisseret, the architect, Marcel Lambrichs and the engineer, L. Chapeaux (*La Maison,* 1955, no 4, p. 110).

together in a perfect compositional unity'. Following this vision, the new ministerial headquarters would become both 'a true architectural testimony' and a significant 'element in the urban landscape'.[40] Aerts and Ramon mainly described their design as an autonomous composition, without any reference to the colonial context of the building. The only piece of 'decorum' in their project that could potentially have symbolised the colonial endeavour was a garden sculpture. Apart from this, the office tower essentially aimed to evoke administrative efficiency. In many ways, it was a design the pre-war Royal Commissioner Louis Camu would have appreciated.

This somewhat uncompromising project was met with little enthusiasm in ministerial and municipal circles, however. The Mayor and Aldermen refused to give their *imprimatur* to a near twenty-storey tower, considering it as inappropriate for the

Avenue Louise, whilst officials within the ministry seemed to have raised doubts about the general suitability of the design. In the second half of 1954, the Minister of Colonies, Auguste Buisseret, therefore decided to add Emile Goffay to the architectural team. Like Ramon and Aerts, Goffay had participated in the ill-fated 1951 contest for the Léopoldville *Résidence* building. Most importantly, he was also the architect of a number of luxurious blocks of flats that had been erected since the late 1940s in the Avenue Louise—on this basis he probably had a better understanding of the unwritten aesthetic codes that influenced not only this upper class *milieu*, but also the circles of colonial officials. Goffay immediately proposed to suppress the office tower and to replace it with a series of lower volumes on an enlarged building plot. Early in 1955, this suggestion was received favourably by the ministry, whereupon Goffay immediately set to work, since the complex was intended for completion by 1958: the year of both the Brussels world's fair and the fiftieth anniversary of the Belgian Congo. Although Ramon and Aerts were

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

Figure 7. Cover of the
booklet by Ramon and
Aerts, 1953 (City
Archives of Brussels:
Construction permit
request no 63042). The
cover featured a
somewhat cryptic
motto, which was
attributed to Dominique
de Menil, a French-
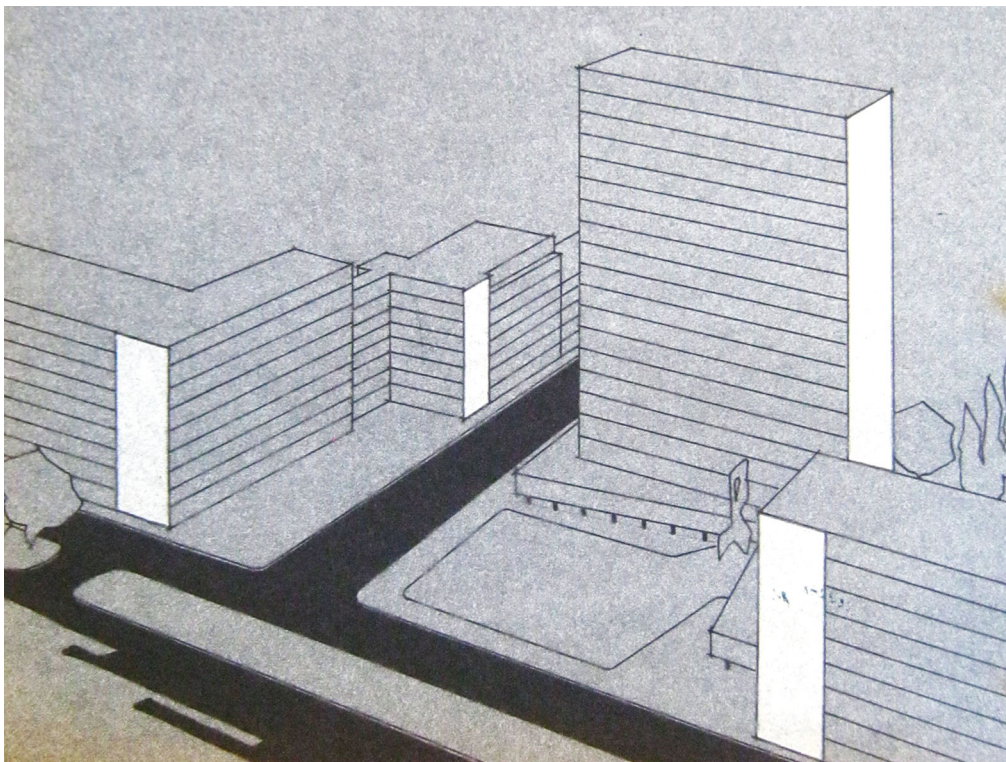American art collector
and high-society figure.
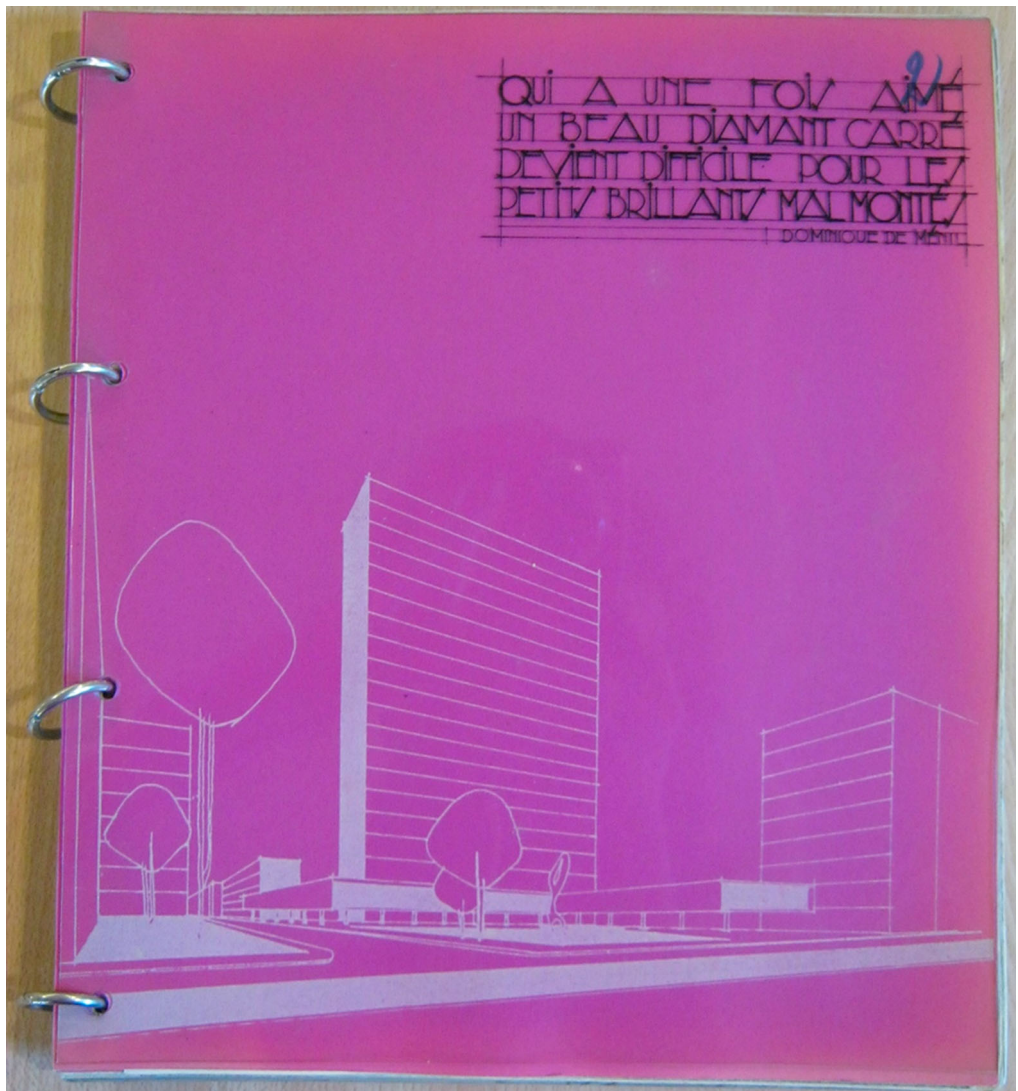
Figure 8. Presentation
drawing of the
unrealised headquarters
project by Ramon and
Aerts, 1953 (City
Archives of Brussels:
Construction permit
request no 63042).

supposed to collaborate with Goffay, the duo soon
dropped out for unknown reasons.[41]

Goffay delivered his final plan for the new ministry
building in May, 1955. His project was typified by
three large wings, which could be constructed in
phases, within the varying limits of the ministry's
financial resources (Fig. 9). The entrance of the
main wing, which was located along the Avenue
Louise, was to be adorned with a classicising sculp-

tural group on high pedestals (Fig. 10), whilst the
rhythmic framework of the windows above the
doorway added a slight touch of 'tropical modern-
ism'. At the right side of the entrance, Goffay pro-
jected a large conference room and a library, to be
recognisable from the outside by a colonnade.
Directly to the left of the entrance, he planned a thir-
teen-storey volume for the offices for civil servants,
as well as for 'the Ministerial apartment', which

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

Figure 9,
10. Presentation
drawings of the
unrealised headquarters
project by Emile Goffay,
1955 (© Archives
d'Architecture Moderne
[Brussels]: personal
papers of Émile Goffay).
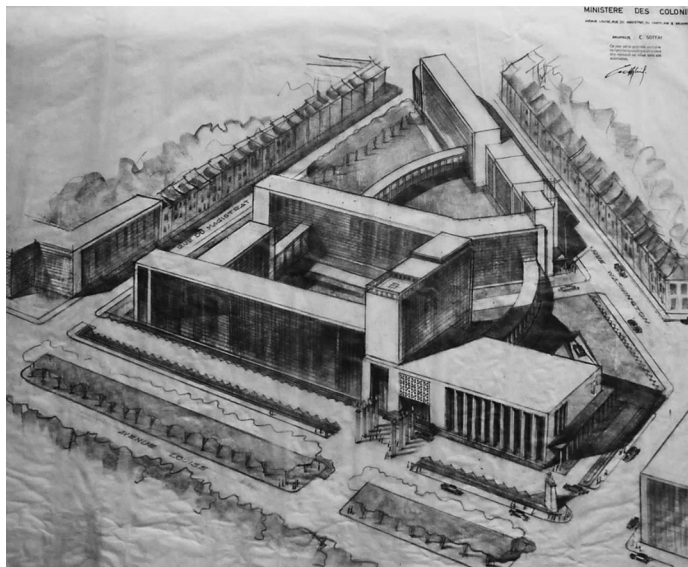
could be reached through 'a separate entrance with
private staircases and lifts'. Further to the left, an
eight-storey volume would house more offices, as
well as—in Goffay's own words—'spacious' and
'dignified' working areas for the minister's personal
staff. Whilst the colonnade of the library volume
referred to some of the formalisms that had charac-
terised the 'monumental classicist' style of the inter-
war period and his own 1951 competition project
for the *Résidence* of the Governor General, the
office volumes were typified by stark curtain wall
façades, which evoked a kind of corporate office
modernism that was slowly obtaining a footing in
Europe during the 1950s. The two requirements
for a ministerial headquarters—dignity and effi-

ciency—were thus explicitly rendered visible in the
façades and the volumetrics of the complex.

If the offices of the minister and his personal staff
were generously conceived, the same can be said
about the complex as a whole. Taking into account
the three planned wings, Goffay provided no less
than 28,700 m^2 of offices, although the brief had
only mentioned 18,000 m^2 of net floor space
(including meeting rooms, archives, a canteen, etce-
tera). Still, even the ministry's own calculations
appeared to be rather generous: in 1940, for
instance, Louis Camu had determined that the Min-
istry of Colonies needed only 5300 m^2 of office
space in the planned *cité administrative*: a figure
that already included a 20% margin for foreseeable

growth. It thus seems that both Goffay and the Ministry favoured the construction of a future proof complex that could accommodate continuing administrative expansion. These ideas were, of course, consistent with the political conviction that Congo would remain a Belgian colony for many decades to come. Goffay supplemented this conviction with a remarkably self-confident representational programme, which made few allusions to the Congolese context and evoked powerful notions of grandeur instead. Unlike the design by Ramon and Aerts, Goffay's complex was not merely a 'machine' for administrative efficiency. The scale of his design bore testimony to a belief in the obviousness, even agelessness, of Belgian colonialism. Such views were underpinned, it should be noted, by highly mediatised events such as the 1955 visit of King Baudouin to the Belgian Congo, which was commonly described as 'triumphant'.[42] In Congo, moreover, no organised African nationalism had taken root yet, since the first movements demanding a right to self-determination were only established in 1956.[43] In the mid-1950s, Belgium was still able to pretend to be a 'model' coloniser without evoking many objections.

The ironies of decolonisation, 1955–1960
By the time Goffay submitted his final plans the government had once more changed its mind on the ministerial office buildings. In the first half of 1955,

1194

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

the Prime Minister, Achilles Van Acker, had unex-pectedly revived Louis Camu's pre-war plans for the construction of a *cité administrative* in the centre of Brussels. It was decided that a new *cité* would be designed from scratch, although the *leit-motiv* from the 1930s was little changed: the complex had to accommodate the majority of Belgian ministerial administrations in order to raise the efficiency levels of the public service and gain benefits from economies of scale. In September, 1955, the Council of Ministers agreed that the *cité administrative* would be constructed on a single site in the so-called *Bas fonds* area, a slightly impo-verished neighbourhood that was to be 'cleared' of its 'slums'. The Council also appointed a team of five architects, including Marcel Lambrichs (designer of the Governor General's *Résidence* in Léopoldville, which was under construction at the time) and Georges Ricquier (who had made a name for himself as a designer of flats and offices in the Belgian Congo).[44] From the outset, Van Acker seems to have insisted on an integration of the Ministry of Colonies into the *cité administrative* as a 'normal' department among many others. Unsurprisingly, this decision was badly received by the Minister of Colonies, since it rendered pointless the many efforts of preceding years—most impor-tantly, the expropriation of buildings along the Avenue Louise and the commissioning of designs for a new ministerial headquarters. Moreover, the prospect of losing autonomy over architectural matters was met with particular scepticism by the officials of Colonies.

In November, 1955, the Minister of Colonies, Auguste Buisseret, presented a memorandum to the Council of Ministers in which he described the enforced relocation to the future *cité administrative* as 'a grave error'.[45] Although he acknowledged that his department was, formally, of equal standing to any other ministry, he immediately added that it 'represented something more than other depart-ments: a coordinated *oeuvre* of civilisation, and the idea of managing an empire'. This finding had evident architectural consequences: a headquarters building for the Ministry of Colonies could not simply look like any other ministerial office building. Buisseret reminded colleagues that the planned complex in the Avenue Louise was destined to sym-bolise higher values:

> […] Both to our compatriots and foreigners, the building must reflect the ideals which inspire the Belgians in Congo. The city of Léopoldville symbo-lises the Belgian colonial *oeuvre* in Africa, but the Congo must also have a presence on Belgian soil [*il est nécessaire aussi que, sur le sol belge, la prés-ence du Congo soit une réalité*]. King Leopold II understood this well when he ordered the con-struction [in 1901] of the Museum of the Belgian Congo [near Brussels]. Certainly, the architectural programme [of the proposed minis-terial office complex in the Avenue Louise] is con-ceived in a grandiose manner. But it should be understood that mediocrity and prestige are incompatible. King Leopold II had grandiose views. We must continue to affirm the prestige of the Colony.

By referring to the eminence of the long-dead king, Buisseret reiterated two *topoi* that had always been deployed in Belgian colonial propaganda. On the one hand, Leopold was portrayed as an almost

saint-like benefactor who had 'given' Belgium its colony.[46] On the other hand, the King was supposedly an architectural 'visionary', whose personal financial investments in major public works—including those for the Museum of the Belgian Congo—had reshaped the capital into a modern metropolis.[47] The fact that Buisseret found himself obliged to repeat these *topoi* amongst colleagues, can be seen as an indication of their highly constructed nature: even after almost four decades of colonialism and the relentless wave of colonial propaganda, most of the Belgian politicians still had to be *reminded* of the importance of their 'mission' in Africa, and of the representational 'duties' this involved. As such, Buisseret tried to forge a notion of continuity between Leopold's era (when the ideal of architectural representation had been taken for granted) and his own period.

Although Buisseret's praise for the enterprising King must have sounded somewhat clichéd even in the 1950s, the minister did use one original argument in his memorandum. The construction of a distinct ministerial office building, he claimed, was also necessitated by the foreseeable development of the *Communauté belgo-congolaise.* This 'community' was a rather vague concept, introduced earlier in the decade by officials such as the Governor General, Léon Pétillon, and the former Minister of Colonies, Pierre Wigny, who had argued that the Belgian Congo would gradually have to be granted more autonomy. In their view, it would still be a matter of many decades before independence could be achieved; yet, in the meantime, Belgium and its colony were supposed to form a kind of political union: which was, of course, to be dominated

by the mother country.[48] This idea provided an easy, and highly naïve, response to growing (international) criticisms of colonisation. Buisseret clearly anticipated that the African counterpart of the future 'community' would no longer be governed by a classical ministry, but rather by a new government service with a *sui generis* statute: part ministry, part embassy. As such, the planned ministerial headquarters building in Brussels could, in the long run, be transformed into the headquarters of the *Communauté belgo-congolaise.* An integration of the Ministry of Colonies into a *cité administrative*—as one among many ministries—clearly contradicted these aims. Finally, Buisseret's memorandum stressed the importance of having the ministerial office complex finished by the 1958 World's Fair, an occasion on which its inauguration could be played out as a promotional affair: '[…] The whole world, assembled in Brussels, will be a witness of the *mission civilisatrice* of Belgian colonialism.'

Although the creation of a prestigious, dignified office building was fast becoming a key component of Buisseret's ambitions, his memorandum fell on deaf ears among ministerial colleagues. By the end of 1955, the integration of the Ministry of Colonies into the *cité administrative* could no longer be prevented and Goffay's elaborate plans were remorselessly transferred to the archives. It does seem, however, that the architects of the *cité administrative* were asked to give Colonies some kind of special treatment. Drawings and scale models show how the ministries of Colonies and Foreign Affairs were each provided with a separate building volume, whilst all the other departments were to be accommodated in a forty-storey high-rise building

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

Figure 11. Scale model of the realised *cité administrative* complex in Brussels, undated (KADOC [Leuven]: Cabinet papers of Public Works Minister Jos De Saeger, box 54). The building volume on the right below was appropriated to the Ministry of Colonies.
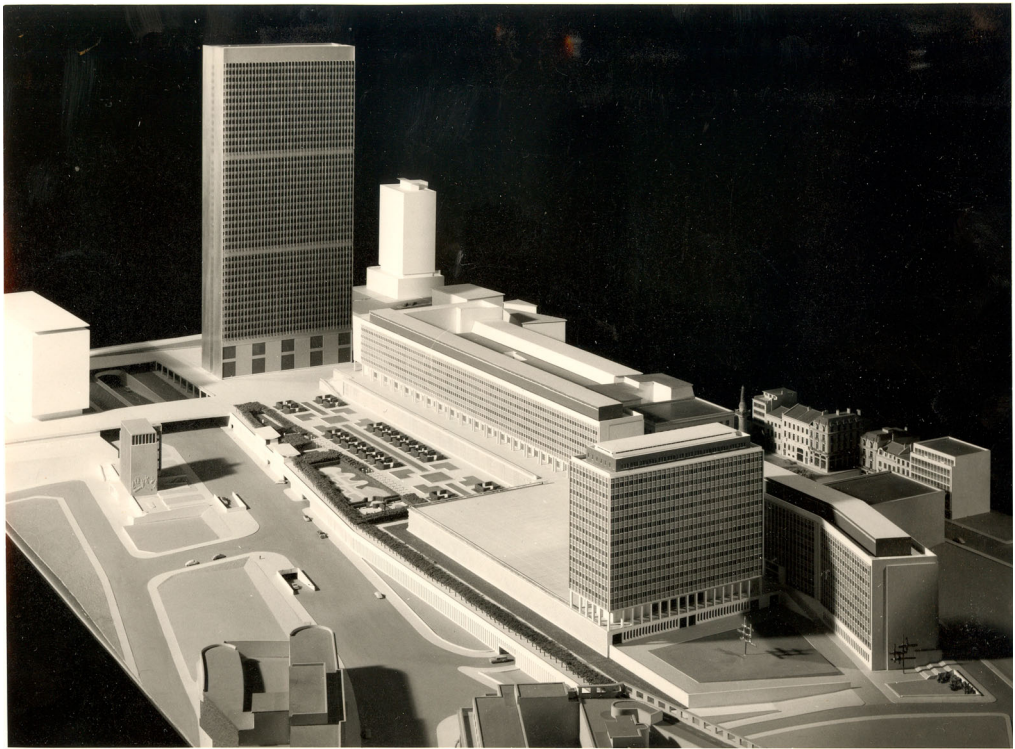
and an adjacent eight-storey block (Fig. 11).[49] This disposition did generate a certain sense of 'autonomy', but the department was initially allotted barely 6000 m² of office space, about 20,000 m² less than Emile Goffay had projected in his plans for the aborted Avenue Louise complex.

Whilst this surface calculation was doubled when a new government assumed office in 1958, the ministry was undeniably left with the short end of the stick in terms of literal 'grandeur'.[50] Interestingly, the office building for Colonies was supposed to be provided with a special assembly room for the *Conseil Colonial* on the ground floor. The architects affirmed that they would take adequate measures to prevent passers-by from having 'indiscrete views' into this nerve-centre of Belgian colonialism.[51] The proposed architecture for the utterly undemocratic (and literally opaque) *Conseil Colonial* can thus be

considered as the symbolic antithesis of a 'transparent' parliamentary assembly, as it had come to fruition in post-war West Germany.[52] In other words, the *Conseil Colonial* room, where Belgians were supposed to make all crucial decisions on Congo's destiny for many years to come, was deliberately conceived to *evade* representation.

For the Ministry of Colonies, the completion of the *cité administrative*—which took more than a decade—came too late. Following violent riots in Léopoldville in early January, 1959, the Belgian government was abruptly forced into understanding that history had to take its course, and that the full independence of all colonies was becoming an inevitable reality. When the Belgian Congo achieved independence on 30th June, 1960 (followed by Ruanda-Urundi in 1962), the construction of the *cité administrative* had barely begun. Upon completion in the late 1960s, the building volume originally intended for Colonies was occupied by the Ministry of Health, whilst the neoclassical headquarters in the Place Royale was, in time, used by a couple of subsections of the Foreign Affairs Department.[53]

Conclusion

The troublesome process of designing a Ministry of Colonies headquarters building is useful for giving complexity to our understanding of the relationship between power and architecture in a colonial context. By placing the Belgian Ministry of Colonies at the centre of analysis, we have shown that this particular 'architecture of power' sits in between the 'dignified' and the 'efficient' parts of the state (to use Walter Bagehot's 1867 conceptual dichotomy). For most of its existence, the Ministry of Colonies seems to have been relatively little concerned with the creation of representative, 'dignified' architecture in Brussels. Only after the Second World War, when colonialism became contested worldwide and the Belgian colonial project was redefined to keep foreign critics at bay, did the Ministry of Colonies *explicitly* seek to represent itself through an architecture that was both efficient and dignified. These attempts, we claim, can be seen as a compensation mechanism for a perceived lack of legitimacy: by literally setting the colonial project in stone, the ministry's officials attempted to ensure its longevity.

The fact that none of the proposed ministerial complexes saw the light of day during the period of colonialism can be seen as one of the ironies of the Belgian colonial project, whilst it is also revealing for the somewhat peripheral position of this project in the broader field of Belgian politics. Similarly to the way many Belgian politicians and the public never displayed a strong sense of 'empire-mindedness',[54] the representational potential of office architecture for the Colonies Department was usually downplayed by the main actors in the political-administrative system. Yet this did not prevent the Belgian Congo from being propagated throughout the 1950s as a 'model colony'. Indeed, despite the absence of modern and 'dignified' office accommodation in Brussels, the Ministry of Colonies would always manage to govern its African territories in a relatively efficient manner.

In broader terms, our article can be interpreted as a plea for an intensified scholarly attention to the architecture of 'bureaucratic' institutions (such as ministries). By this means we hope to open up a new line of research, which, in the case of the

1198

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

Belgian Congo, would ultimately require an in-depth analysis of the large production of buildings and typologies constructed to house the various levels of the colonial administration on African soil.

Acknowledgement

Notes and references

1. Archives of the University of Leuven, Personal papers of E. van Dievoet: File 320/H, *Réponses à la circulaire du 10 juillet* (1953). Throughout this article, all quotations from French have been translated by the authors.

2. Some classic studies include: T.R. Metcalf, *An Imperial Vision. Indian Architecture and Britain's Raj* (London, Faber and Faber, 1989); G. Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991); N. Alsayyad, ed., *Forms of Dominance. On the Architecture and Urbanism of the Colonial Enterprise* (Avebury, Aldershot, 1992).

3. In the Belgian Congo, the Governor-General was the highest official in rank. For a detailed discussion of the *Résidence* building project, see: J. Lagae, 'Léopold-ville—Bruxelles, villes miroirs? L'architecture et l'urbanisme d'une capitale coloniale', in, J.-L. Vellut, ed., *Villes d'Afrique. Explorations en histoire urbaine* (Tervuren, Paris, MRAC and L'Harmattan, 2007), pp. 67–99.

4. M.G. Stanard, *Selling the Congo. A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

5. M. Couttenier, *Si les murs pouvaient parler. Le Musée de Tervuren 1910–2010* (Tervuren, MRAC, 2010).

6. The historian Luc Vints coined the notion 'visual annexation' in his seminal study *Kongo, made in Belgum. Beeld van een kolonie in film en propaganda* (Leuven, Kritak, 1984). For a discussion of this dispute, see: M. G. Stanard, *Selling the Congo*, *op. cit.*; V. Viane, D. Van Reybrouck, B. Ceuppens, eds, *Congo in België. Koloniale cultuur in de metropool* (Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2009), Introduction.

7. J. Lagae, E. De Palmenaer, J. Sabakinu Kivilu, 'Antwerp. 6. Colonial Port', in, J. Vrelust, ed., *Antwerp World Port. On Trading and Shipping* (Antwerp, BAI and MAS, 2012), pp. 101–125. Both buildings were located in Antwerp, Belgium's main port city.

8. A few studies of office buildings for metropolitan colonial administrations exist, including: G.A. Bremner, 'Nation and Empire in the Government Architecture of Mid-Victorian London. The Foreign and India Office Reconsidered', *The Historical Journal,* 48 (2005), pp. 703–742; F. Fiúza, 'Os edifícios institucionais do Ministério do Ultramar na Metrópole', in *Palcos da Arquitectura (vol. 2)* (Lisbon, Academia de Escolas de Arquitectura e Urbanismo de Língua Portuguesa, 2014), pp. 227–233; N. Randeraad, 'In Search of a National Building Style. Administrative Architecture in the Netherlands in the Second Half of the 19th Century', *Yearbook of European Administrative History* (1994), pp. 243–260.

9. W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (London, Chapman & Hall, 1867). Our interpretation of Bagehot's concepts is additionally shaped by: J. Agar, *The Government Machine. A Revolutionary History of the Computer* (Cambridge, Mass., London, The MIT Press, 2003).

10. On the negative reputation of 'bureaucracy', see, for example: D. Gardey, *La dactylographe et l'expeditionnaire. Histoire des employés de bureau, 1890–1930*

(Paris, Belin, 2001), pp. 30–31. On the origin of the term itself, see: B. Kafka, *The Demon of Writing. Powers and Failures of Paperwork* (New York, Zone Books, 2012), pp. 77–108.

11. For example, M.H. Port, *Imperial London. Civil Government Building in London, 1850–1915* (New Haven, London, Yale University Press, 1995); J. Wright, *Crown Assets. The Architecture of the Department of Public Works, 1867–1967* (Toronto, Buffalo, London, University of Toronto Press, 1997); H. Wilderotter, *Alltag der Macht. Berlin Wilhelmstrasse* (Berlin, Jovis, 1998); C. Welzbacher, *Die Staatsarchitektur der Weimarer Republik* (Berlin, Lukas, 2006); A. Sharr, S. Thornton, *Demolishing Whitehall. Leslie Martin, Harold Wilson and the Architecture of White Heat* (Farnham, Burlington, Ashgate, 2013).

12. J. Stengers, *Congo. Mythes et réalités* (Brussels, Racine, 2008), pp. 100–101.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

14. V. Viaene, 'Reprise—remise. De Congolese identiteitscrisis van België rond 1908', in, V. Viaene, D. Van Reybrouck, B. Ceuppens, eds, *Congo in België*, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–62; 52.

15. J. Vanderlinden, 'Le gouvernement du Congo belge (1908–1960). Un aigle doublement bicéphale?', *Yearbook of European Administrative History* (2006), pp. 21–61; 24.

16. E. Van Leuven, *De evolutie van de personeelseffectieven in overheidsdienst* (Heule, UGA, sd), p. 17.

17. *Minutes of the Council of Ministers*, 26th April, 1924, p. 260 [online source: http://extranet.arch.be:8180/Conseil1/?lg=fr].

18. J. Vanhove, *Histoire du Ministère des Colonies* (Brussels, Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1968), pp. 16–20; J. Braeken, L. Mondelaers, *Bouwen door de eeuwen heen in Brussel. Stad Brussel: binnenstad (1B)* (Liège, Mardaga, 1993), pp. 238–239.

19. J. Stengers, *Congo, op. cit.*, pp. 195–196.

20. For a more in-depth contextualisation of Camu's administrative reform plans, see B. Rochet, 'L'impact de la seconde guerre mondiale sur les pratiques administratives', *Pyramides,* no. 10 (2005), pp. 167–188; A. Molitor, *Servir l'Etat. Trois expériences* (Brussels, Louvain-la-Neuve, CRISP, sd).

21. A fresh historical approach to Taylorism and its 'French counterpart' Fayolism has recently been provided by: Y. Cohen, *Le siècle des chefs. Une histoire transnationale du commandement et de l'autorité (1890–1940)* (Paris, Editions Amsterdam, 2013). Fayolism was characterised by a strong focus on *administrative* efficiency, whereas Taylorism was mainly a managerial ideology for *industrial* environments.

22. For an alternative case study of Camu's architectural views, see: J. van de Maele, 'An "Architecture of Bureaucracy". Technocratic Planning of Government Architecture in Belgium in the 1930s', in, K. Lloyd Thomas, T. Amhoff, N. Beech, eds, *Industries of Architecture* (London, New York, Routledge, 2016), pp. 271–282.

23. L. Camu, *Rapport sur les bâtiments des administrations centrales de l'État. Deuxième rapport sur la réforme administrative* (Brussels, Imprimerie du Moniteur belge, 1937); L. Camu, M. Malderez, *Mémoire sur les bâtiments administratifs* (unpublished governmental report, 1940). The latter report (which Camu co-wrote with one of his assistants) has been retrieved in the Archives d'Architecture Moderne (Brussels): Personal papers of J.-J. Eggericx, inv. 296.

24. J.-L. Cohen, ed., *Les années 30. L'architecture et les arts de l'espace entre industrie et nostalgie* (Paris, Caisse nationale des monuments historiques et des sites, 1997).

25. *Mémoire sur les bâtiments administratifs,* p. 17. On the governmental offices in Morocco, see: M. Culot, A. Lambrichs, *Albert Laprade. Architecte, jardinier, urbaniste, dessinateur, serviteur du patrimoine* (Paris,

1200

'The Congo must have a presence on Belgian soil.' The concept of
representation in governmental discourses on the architecture of the
Ministry of Colonies in Brussels, 1908–1960
Jens van de Maele, Johan Lagae

Norma, 2007), pp. 118–123; G. Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 117–118.

26. One example of this idolatry vis-à-vis Lyautey: H. Mahieu, 'De la réforme administrative', *Revue de l'administration et du droit administratif de la Belgique,* 1935 (no 12), pp. 517–525; 520–521. This article, written by the '*chef de division de l'administration de la ville de Bruxelles*', was probably the source of Camu's knowledge concerning Lyautey's governmental office complex, although Mahieu mentioned a 'fan-shaped complex' instead of 'star-shaped'.

27. On Eggericx and Verwilghen, see: M. Culot, ed., *J.-J. Eggericx. Gentleman architecte, créateur de cités-jardins* (Brussels, AAM and CFC, 2012).

28. G. Bekaert, 'Right in the Middle. The Belgian Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair', in, M. De Kooning, ed., *Belgium at the Fair. Exile on Main Street* (Ghent, WZW Editions, 2010), pp. 9–31; 21.

29. Architecture did play an important propagandistic role in the context of world's fairs. On the colonial sections at such fairs, see: J. Lagae, 'Displaying Authenticity and Progress. Architectural Representation of the Belgian Congo at international Exhibitions in the 1930's', *Third Text*, no. 50 (2000), pp. 21–32.

30. J. Stengers, *Congo, op. cit.*, pp. 243–245; I. Ndaywel è Nziem, *Histoire du Zaïre. De l'héritage ancien à l'âge contemporain* (Louvain-la-Neuve, Duculot, 1997), pp. 510–513.

31. G. Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, 1885–1980* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 47; J. Stengers, *Congo, op. cit.*, pp. 197, 253–254, 259–260.

32. On this plan, see: G. Vanthemsche, *Genèse et portée du 'Plan décennal' du Congo belge (1949–1959)* (Brussels, Académie Royale de Belgique, 1994).

33. National Archives of Belgium (Brussels), Archives of the *Office National pour l'Achèvement de la Jonction Nord-Midi*: Box A37, Letter 27th May, 1946.

34. J. Vanhove, *Histoire du ministère des colonies, op. cit.*, pp. 100–101. On this relocation, see also: Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Brussels), Archives of the former Ministry of Colonies: *Mémoire: construction d'un complexe administratif,* 24th March, 1956.

35. *Parliamentary Proceedings (Belgian Chamber of Representatives)*, 19th March, 1948, p. 6.

36. For a history of this street, see: I. Douillet, C. Schaack, *L'avenue Louise et les rues adjacentes. Considérations historiques, urbanistiques et architecturales* (Brussels, Ministère de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, sd).

37. Both the Governor General and the Minister of Colonies of the time had an outspoken preference for pomp and grandeur, and favoured those competition entries which proposed momumentalising architectural solutions.

38. J. Lagae, 'Léopoldville—Bruxelles, villes miroirs?', *op. cit.*; J. Lagae, 'Colonial Encounters and Conflicting Memories', *op. cit.*

39. Archives of the City of Brussels: Construction permit request no 63042.

40. Quotations derived from the booklet referred to in the previous note.

41. Archives d'Architecture Moderne (Brussels): Personal papers of Emile Goffay, Project for the Ministry of Colonies.

42. G. Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, op. cit.*, p. 87.

43. For an African perspective on this time frame, see: J.-M. Mutamba Makombo Kitatshima, *Du Congo belge au Congo indépendant 1940–1960. Emergence des 'évolués' et genèse du nationalisme* (Kinshasa, Publications de l'Institut de Formation et d'Etudes Politiques, 1998).

44. For a short history of the post-war *cité administrative*, see: G.J. Bral, *La cité administrative de l'État* (Brussels, Ministère de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, 2007). Our interpretation of the genesis of the complex is

further supported by the minutes drafted by the architects during the design process. For these minutes, see: Architecture Archives of the Province of Antwerp (Antwerp): Personal papers of Léon Stynen, Project *Rijksadministratief Centrum,* Box 456.

45. National Archives of Belgium (Brussels): Archives of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister (2005 deposit), Box 334, Memorandum of 17th November, 1955. Technically, this memorandum was written by an official of the Ministry of Colonies, but it was fully endorsed by the Minister of Colonies, Auguste Buisseret.

46. On this topos, see: G. Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, op. cit.*, pp. 19, 26–27.

47. On Leopold's activities as builder, see P. Lombaerde, *Léopold II. Roi-bâtisseur* (Ghent, Pandora, 1995).

48. On the *Communauté,* see G. Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, op. cit.*, pp. 84–87; A. Stenmans, F. Reyntjens, *La pensée politique du gouverneur général Pétillon* (Brussels, Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1993); L. Pétillon, *Récit. Congo 1929–1958* (Brussels, La Renaissance du Livre, 1985), pp. 273–280.

49. Architecture Archives of the Province of Antwerp (Antwerp): Personal papers of Léon Stynen, Box 456; KADOC (Leuven): Cabinet papers of Public Works Minister Jos De Saeger, Box 54.

50. Architecture Archives of the Province of Antwerp (Antwerp): Personal papers of Léon Stynen, Box 453, Letter 3rd May, 1957.

51. Architecture Archives of the Province of Antwerp (Antwerp): Personal papers of Léon Stynen, Box 452, Minutes 23rd May, 1958.

52. D. Ascher Barnstone, *The Transparent State. Architecture and Politics in Postwar Germany* (London, New York, Routledge, 2005).

53. J. Braeken, L. Mondelaers, *Bouwen door de eeuwen heen in Brussel, op. cit.*, p. 239.

54. J. Stengers, *Congo, op. cit.*, p. 126; V. Viaene, 'Reprise—remise', *op. cit.*, pp. 46, 55–56; J. Lagae, 'Colonial Encounters and Conflicting Memories', *op. cit*.