

THE PARISIAN ELITE AND THEIR SOCIAL CLUBHOUSES: ARCHITECTURAL PATRIMONIALISTS AND INFLUENCERS OF URBAN PLANNING IN CONTEMPORARY PARIS.

RESUMEN

Los clubes urbanos y los círculos exclusivos representan los pilares arquitectónicos de la clase elitista. Durante más de 200 años, a pesar de las guerras mundiales y las olas feministas, los clubes exclusivos han permanecido como puntos fijos en los movimientos urbanos y sociales de la ciudad. Son cultivados y restaurados, convirtiéndose en un ejemplo del patrimonio arquitectónico de la élite y de su vida social tradicional. Este artículo está centrado en el impacto urbano de dos clubes parisinos elitistas, le Cercle de l'Union interalliée, para las familias elitistas, y el Travellers' Club de París, para los hombres elitistas; dos espacios de

flujos de la sociedad red. Ambas asociaciones del club son reconocidas como monumentos históricos y son vecinos de la residencia del presidente en París, l'Elysée. Describiré las características de la élite, su poder, sus grupos exclusivos, y sus tendencias espaciales para influenciar las dinámicas urbanas. Los dos estudios de caso se realizarán a través de un análisis de la teoría de la ciudad de Rossi, cuestionando el rol de estas asociaciones en la elaboración urbanística de la ciudad. Parecería que estas casas club mantienen vínculos íntimos con su entorno urbano, lo que demuestra que la socialización dentro de las paredes del club

no sólo es relacionable con el ocio, pero también más directamente relacionada con la política y la economía de la ciudad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: CASAS CLUB, SOCIALIZACIONES EXCLUSIVAS, LA ÉLITE DEL PODER, MONUMENTOS URBANOS, ESPACIOS DE LOS FLUJOS, HEGEMONÍA ARQUITECTÓNICA

ABSTRACT

Urban clubhouses and exclusive unions represent architectural pillars of the elite class. For more than two hundred years, through world wars and feminist waves, exclusive clubs have remained fixed points in the urban and social movements of the city. They are cultivated and restored, making an example of the elite's architectural heritage and their traditional social life. This article is focused on the urban impact of two Parisian elitist clubhouses, le Cercle de l'Union Interalliée, for elitist families, and the Travellers' Club of Paris, for elitist males; two spaces of flows of the network society. Both club associations are recognized as historical monuments

and are neighbors to the President's residency in Paris, l'Elysée. I will describe the characteristics of elite, their power, their closed groups, and their spatial trends in influencing urban dynamics. The two case studies will be done through an analysis of Rossi's theory of the city, questioning the role of these associations in the urban making of the city. It appears that clubhouses maintain intimate links to the urban environment, demonstrating that socialization inside the club's walls is not only relatable to leisure but also more directly related to the city's politics and economy.

KEYWORDS: CLUBHOUSES, EXCLUSIVE SOCIALIZATION, POWER ELITE, URBAN MONUMENTS, SPACES OF FLOWS, ARCHITECTURAL HEGEMONY

POWERFUL ELITE: THEIR CLUBHOUSES AND THEIR INTIMATE RELATIONS TO THE URBAN DYNAMICS OF PARIS

"(...) as a historical trend, dominant functions and processes in the information age are increasingly organized around networks. Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies, and the diffusion of networking logic substantially modifies the operation and outcomes in processes of production experience, power and culture." (Castells, 1996:469)

This article argues that there exist some fixed points, collective permanences in the urban and social movements of the city, that hold multiple power influences over the urbanization of the global city. Despite world wars and feminist waves these privileged clubs continue to act as monuments, space of places and spaces of flows for the ever-growing Network Society (Castells,

1996). For more than two hundred years, the case studies that will be presented here have remained constant in the urban fabric, pathological or vital permanences, making an example of the elite's architectural heritage and their traditional social life. Urban clubhouses and exclusive unions represent architectural pillars of the elite's class. *"By the power elite, we refer to those political, economic, and military circles which as an intricate set of overlapping cliques share decisions having at least national consequences. In so far as national events are decided, the power elite are those who decide them."* (Wright Mills, 1959:18)

This article aims to provide enlightenment on the role of elitist clubhouses as spatial (re)producers of power, domination and class inequalities within the city of Paris. We will examine the cases of the Cercle de l'Union Interalliée, for elitist families, and the Travellers' Club of Paris for elitist males. The increasingly widespread political and urban

influence of the privilege clubs, provides a new filter for analysis of the power of the elite with relation to the process of urbanization. Focusing on these two case studies of contemporary/patrimonial clubhouses, one may provide a comparative analysis that is explicit of the elite's spatialization and of the network's affairs with urban planning. The case studies will be approached through two axes of inquiry.

The first axis of inquiry analyses the identity of the clubs and their role as urban artifacts of the elite's network. Proposing the clubhouses as urban monuments, they represent the identity of the elite, preserving their own rituals in a political and cultural microenvironment of the city. The second axis of inquiry studies the actions and the influences on urban-planning that the club members exert. Thus, reviewing their relations with policy-makers and their actions towards becoming owners of cultural heritage monuments.

Materialized as two nodes in the space of flows of the international elite, the Cercle Interallié and the Travellers may enlighten on urban dynamics of the Parisian dominant class and the repercussions of distinguishing the cultural heritage of the city. The research on these exclusive associations is grounded on self-publications of the clubs, articles/interviews from French journals, cultural heritage archives, lists of members, photographs on personal websites, etc.

POWER ELITE & THEIR CIRCLES, (RE) PRODUCTION OF POWER

The elite Parisian clubs that will be studied here were originally created as restricted Victorian gentlemen's clubs, from a century or two ago. In the 19th century gentlemen's clubs were privileged spaces, exclusive to the male aristocracy of their time. They existed in order to reaffirm the elite position of the members, they helped confirm or bestow the status on newcomers. As the British art historian Amy Milne-Smith suggested in her work titled '*London Clubland*', clubs represented a unique site or place that existed for the main purpose of representing the cream of British manhood.¹ Membership was a social cachet. It was supposed to reflect and embody the ideals constructed by the upper class. Belonging to a club also meant fitting in the company of the cream of society.² Even though the clubmen were in fact creating social and spatial boundaries, they believed to be merely reflecting the defined social status of masculinity and the bourgeoisie in Victorian times. "*Ideal club members were sociable, of good character and background, and their political, artistic, or other special interests matched those of the club. Of these qualifications, elite status was the most amorphous and unpredictable.*" (Milne-Smith, 2011:35)

1 Milne-Smith, A. (2011). *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late-Victorian Britain*. New York, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 7.

2 Ibid., 38.

The Spanish socio-economist, Manuel Castells, offers some insight on the growing influence of social relations in the contemporary global society of the *Information Age* that inhabits the *Informational City*. He defines this latter as a parallel to the industrial city, a city which has the spatial and social form that corresponds to a number of social and techno-economic processes. Offering the hypothesis that the informational city is a spatial expression for, what he describes as, a new form and of social organization, composed of the interaction between technology, and cultural and social information³. In addition, if the city is analyzed as a process rather than as a place, Castells argues that the city ends up playing a critical role in the production of the global economy.

Accordingly, the global economy would depend on the critical role of these global *Informational Cities* acting as space of flows. Castells defines the latter as a new form of spatiality that materializes the support of simultaneous social practices communicated at a distance. This space of flows is not placeless. It acts as a channel that produces, transmits, and processes flows of information that are carried by communicative electronic networks⁴. Subsequently, this network appears to play the role of linking specific places, with clearly determined social, cultural, physical, and functional characteristics⁵. In other words, one could say that the network of club members that carries specific information and social practices is materialized in a physical space of flows, the clubhouse.

The earliest clubs were established in London, Britain, with the objective of materializing a

3 Castells, M. (Presenter). (1989, September). *The Informational City: A Framework for Social Change*. Lecture presented at the University of Toronto, 1.

4 Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society: The information age: Economy, society, and culture* (2nd ed., Vol. 1). Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell. (Original work published 1996), preface, part IV, para. 2.

5 Ibid., Ch. The Space of Flows, sec. The Social Theory of Space and the Theory of Space of Flows, para. 7.

defined social status and social practice, those of the dominant masculine elite. In her work titled "*Pursuit of Pleasure*", the architect and historian, Jane Rendell suggests that the actors involved in the making of clubhouses were male acquaintances with shared interests.⁶ The activities they performed as an organized association were oriented towards social entertainment and social consumption of foods and drinks. They met periodically in public spaces: coffee houses or taverns with the purpose of gambling and drink while also discussing subjects that were associated with the educated gentlemen.⁷ Some of these topics were politics, economics, art, or literature.

Eventually, the clubmen left the private rooms in taverns and coffee houses in order to install themselves in clubhouses. These first physical representations were initially just informal conversions of family homes. Later on, when the first purpose-design buildings appeared, the actors maintained this tradition by modeling their clubs after domestic dwellings. Even the first club that is argued to have broken this Victorian-house-style tradition, Charles Barry's *Travellers' Club* of 1819, still refers to the Italian domestic typology as model.⁸ This is also the case for the two Parisian case studies that will be studied here. The Cercle de l'Union Interalliée and the Travellers' Club in Paris settled their privileged clubs inside the walls of historical '*hôtels de maître*'.

Penetrating inside a clubhouse is an experience that can be compared to visiting a land that is populated by a single ethnic group, a land where everyone resembles one another. The club members are similar to a tribe that aims to mimic each other's garments and to assimilate each other's social performance.⁹ Several authors have

6 Rendell, J. (2010). *The clubs of St James's public patriarchy*. In *Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London* (pp. 63-85). London: Bloomsbury.

7 Ibid., 66.

8 Ibid., 68.

9 (Pingon-Charlot, Charlot, 2007:50)

proposed explanations for this deliberate pursuit and/or unconscious formation of homogenous societies and spatialities.

“One [major key] is the psychology of the several elites in their respective milieu. In so far as the power elite is composed of men of similar origin and education, in so far as their careers and their styles of life are similar, there are psychological and social bases for their unity, resting upon the fact that they are of similar social type and leading to the fact of their easy intermingling.” (Wright Mills, 1956:20)

The American sociologist, Charles Wright Mills, shared an interest in the self-cultivation of the elite and their almost inaccessible group associations. In 1956, he published his peculiar research on the American power structure in a work titled *The Power Elite*. This social science and social criticism examined the power elite circles exerted in political, economic, and military positions. Wright Mills defined elite circles as being “an intricate set of overlapping cliques” that make shared impactful decisions that have national consequences.¹⁰ In other words, the elite would enclose those persons in power who have direct power of decision in the construction and the outcome of national events. Thus, the power elite would have direct power over the construction and the outcome of urban planning and architectural projects.

Wright Mills believed that the elite groups were not consciously looking for homogeneity and exclusivity. He proposed to move away from perceiving the elite as being “consciously joined in conspiracy” and to rather imagine them as a coordinated unity that coincidentally shares psychological similarities and social intermingling.¹¹ The American sociologist understood the elite as a social class, who defined by a series of smaller face-to-face

¹⁰ Wright Mills, C. (1956). *The Power Elite* (2000 ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 18.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

*milieux*¹². These face-to-face spaces, similar to Castells’ space of flows, were represented by places of education (private secondary schools and universities) and places of adult formal association (gentlemen’s clubs and metropolitan clubs). He describes these spaces of higher circles as being places of production of candidates for the elite. Accordingly, the elite would use these spaces of association as ways of auto-supplying members that could later refill the command posts and the positions of authority. These places of production of new elite members would ensure the maintenance of the elite’s direct decision power over national projects.

“They belong to clubs and organizations to which only others like themselves are admitted, and they take quite seriously their appearances in these associations. They have relatives and friends in common, but more than that, they have in common experiences of a carefully selected and family-controlled sort. They have attended the same or similar private and exclusive schools. (...) And now they frequent the clubs of these schools [Harvard, Yale, Princeton], as well as leading clubs in their own city, and as often as not, also a club or two in other metropolitan centers.” (Wright Mills, 1956:57-58)

To this day, the metropolitan clubs continue to provide the same traditional, regulated lifestyle with the added interest of protecting the architectural patrimony that embodies their society and their elitist values. This may be due to the rules, regulations and missions that clubmen have come to accept and reproduce within the walls of their on exclusive *milieu*.

PROFILE OF CASE STUDIES: 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY CLUBHOUSES

“There exist private elite clubs in almost all countries of the world. They maintain affiliations with each other that allow the members of the

¹² *Ibid.*, 15-16.

Jockey Club in Rue Rabelais, next to the Elysée, to be received at the Knickerbockers Club, on the corner of 62nd Street and Fifth Avenue in New York. And thus, they can meet their peers in any big city they visit, the agreements between these circles are multiple: more than a hundred affiliated clubs for the Cercle de l’Union Interalliée.” (Pinçon-Charlot, et al., 2007:26)

The two club associations that will be studied here can be simultaneously defined as Wright Mills’ face-to-face *milieux* of reproduction of the Parisian politicians and as Castells’ spaces of flows for the global network of the power elite in the city of Paris. Both associations are elite high circles older than two hundred years. They both hold geographically and politically positions of power, that render the exclusive socialization inside clubhouse walls directly related to the city’s urban process.

The first case study will be the Cercle de l’Union Interalliée, established in 1917 at the hotel Henri de Rothschild. The 18th century hotel was designed by the architect Pierre Grandhomme in 1714. The club was formed at very same moment that the United States of America made their official entrance into World War I. The objective of the founders—Count de Beaumont, Paul Dupuy, Count J. de Bryas, Arthur Meyer, and M.J. de Sillac—was to provide a safe place for lodging to the officers from allied armies. They wanted to provide a welcoming place that provided the officers with moral and material resources.¹³ In 1920 the association installed a real estate company, in order to acquire the building, along with the grandiose gardens of 6500 m², for the equivalent of one million euros, in current currency¹⁴. The real estate committee was presided by one of its founders, Comte de Beaumont and vice-presided by Eugène Raval, the president of the Banque Nationale de Crédit

¹³ The Cercle de l’Union Interalliée’s personal website, <http://www.union-interalliee.fr>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

at the time, currently named Banque Nationale de Paris, BNP.¹⁵ Thus, the clubmen aren't only inheritors of family fortunes but they also carried out professions of power that allowed them to maintain their social dominance. They became politicians, bank owners, high-ranked militaries, diplomats, directors of international companies, etc.¹⁶ (Figure 1)



Figure 1

"The founders of the Union Interalliée (Earl of Beaumont, Paul Dupuy, Earl J. de Bryas, Arthur Meyer, MJ Sillac) intended to establish a welcoming place offering moral and material resources to officers and individuals of the nations of the Agreement, in order to develop the interallied way of life that had just been born." (Cercle de l'Union Interalliée, 2014).

Even though the world war armies have long since departed from the French soil, the Cercle de l'Union Interalliée continues to gather foreign and French aristocrats to this day. Nowadays, the clubhouse continues to energize and to cater to the social life of elite Parisian families. The fully renovated 18th century hotel offers diverse

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Le Maréchal Foch. (1922). Union interalliée. The club's archives: list of members and events coordination in the period of 1918-1922. Retrieved from: <http://tinyurl.com/q2ns7e6>.

spaces for entertainment: interior swimming pool, fitness center, gardens, casual and formal dining restaurants, library with 15000 works, bridge and chess salons, and rooms for the night. The restricted access and control over these spaces gives the 3100+ members a freedom to operate, to relax, or to even invite work colleagues and clients. (Figure 2)



Figure 2

"My husband, reveals Mme de Quesnay, is a member of the [Cercle de l'Union] Interalliée. He is a member because he needs to [use the space] in the context of his work, it allows him to receive whoever he wants. He is also a member of the Jockey Club, where he has never set foot, precisely because he cannot do in the Jockey [Club] what he does in the [Cercle de l'Union] Interalliée." (Pinçon-Charlot, et al., 2007:221)

The second case study will be the Travellers' Club in Paris, established as a gentlemen-only club also aiming to promote harmonious international relationships between Western countries. The club association was originally founded in London, in 1819, with the aim to "form a point of reunion for gentlemen who had travelled abroad."¹⁷ The clubhouse, located on Pall Mall near several other 19th century clubs, was designed by the renowned British architect, Charles Barry, who is also the author of Westminster Parliament. The project for the clubhouse is believed to be the first one in Victorian London to be procured and designed through architectural competition.¹⁸ The Travellers' Club was limited to those gentlemen who had travelled 'out of the British Isles to a distance of at least five hundred miles from London in a direct line'. Membership was subsequently extended to foreign visitors and diplomats expatriated to London.¹⁹ (Figure 3)



Figure 3

¹⁷ Rendell, J. (2010). 'The clubs of St James's public patriarchy.' In *Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London*. London: Bloomsbury, 75.

¹⁸ Ibid., 68.

¹⁹ Travellers' club personal website, <http://www.thetravellersclub.org.uk>, and Milne-Smith, A. (2011). *London Clubland: A Cultural History of Gender and Class in Late-Victorian Britain*. New York, USA: Palgrave Macmillan, 45.

This unique rule, stating that all candidates had to travel to enter the club, restricted access to the club even more than the usual social elite and aristocrat. The art historian Amy Milne-Smith claimed that the Travellers' Club was in fact the most exclusive club in London from the 1870s to the end of the century. She attributes this significant characteristic to the election rules that made the club even less accessible than the norm of the other metropolitan clubs of the time. Milne-Smith goes on to add that, "Despite, or perhaps because of these stringent rules, the Travellers' maintained a fourteen-year waiting list during the 1880s, cementing its position as the most popular and exclusive London club." (Milne-Smith, 2011:48)²⁰

Two decades later, the growing homosocial milieu for celebrated travellers started expanding affiliations of the same club across the British border. In 1904, the elite masculine club's ideology was imported to Paris, aiming to recreate a similar experience to the Londoner club in urban space of the French capital. Thus, the same original missions were incorporated and numerous travellers from within and beyond the national French perimeter became club members. Once again, the club assimilated the function of Castells' space of flows. It provided the international network of Travellers' clubmen with a materialized space, which encouraged the flows of their powerful private information and of their social practices. Similar to the Cercle de l'Union Interalliée, the club became a welcoming space that provided lodging and dining facilities for British, American, and French officers alike.²¹ During the Second World War, the club was used to celebrate and encourage the British soldiers that took part in Special Air Service.²² (Figure 4)

²⁰ Also citing, Fitzroy, A. (1927). *History of the Traveller's Club*. London: George Allen & Unwin, 150

²¹ Barnard, C. Inman. (1914). *Paris war days: diary of an American*. Boston: Little, Brown, and company, 140-41.

²² Tim Sellors, a British cyclist living in Leeds recounts anecdotes from his grandfather's experience in the Second World War, retrieved from



Figure 4

The Parisian Travellers' Club was settled in one of the last *hotels particuliers* still standing in the Avenue des Champs Élysées, the Hotel de Païva.²³ From 1856 to 1866, the French architect Pierre Manguin designed this now cultural heritage monument for the Marquise de Païva. La Païva, a luxurious Eastern European courtesan, was known for seducing several famous European lords and aristocrats that attended her salon events or even took her hand in marriage.²⁴ She had travelled to Paris as a widow with no coins left in her pockets and surprisingly managed to attract the heart of a Portuguese Marquis, Païva Araugo, who financed the construction and design of the lavish home. The hotel, furnished with remarkable sculptures and interior decorations by Paul Baudry, was a hotspot for wealthy gentlemen of the time.²⁵ In 1904, after the death of the owners and a few failed businesses, the hotel was turned into the home of the Travellers' homosocial events, accompanied by the presence of the attractive Marquise, imprinted in the interior architecture. (Figure 5)



Figure 5

personal website, <http://tinyurl.com/m2wwy2f>.

²³ Boucher, F. (1921). *American footprints in Paris: a guide book of historical data pertaining to Americans in the French capital from the earliest days to the present times*. New York: George H. Doran company, 35.

²⁴ Nevill, R. (1913). *The man of pleasure*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes company, 241-247.

²⁵ Ibid.

“Claus Von Bulow tells me he keeps a change of clothes and a toothbrush at the Travellers' Club in Paris so that he doesn't have to carry a bag when he travels by Eurostar. Last time he was in the club he was shocked when a member's mobile started to ring. 'It was playing Deutschland Uber Alles, which I would have thought was tactless in a cosmopolitan club.’” (Evening Standard, 2007)²⁶ Today, the Parisian Travellers' Club is composed of more than 740 members that pay a yearly membership of 1600€.²⁷ Less than half of the members, about 40%, are originally from Great Britain, thus maintaining the British-French relationship that marks the history of the club. Even if the club asserts to have opened its doors to welcome female members, in the past decade, it has been argued that the great majority of the clubbers continue to be *'gentlemen'*.²⁸ Some of the prominent French members are Charles Beigbeder and Gérard Augustin-Normand, the founding member of Richelieu Finance.²⁹ Once again, as Wright-Mills previously suggested, the members of the club appear to be in direct relation to the dominant groups in power. The Traveller members embody positions of political power, occupying the roles of chairpersons and directors of national banks, vigorously leading the French economy.

FIRST AXIS: CLUBS AS MONUMENTS? WHOSE RITUALS?

Hereafter, we will study the relationship between the power elite clubbers with their permanent architectural objects within the city. Framed in the

²⁶ “Claus Von Bulow tells me he keeps a change of clothes and a toothbrush at the Travellers' Club in Paris... [derived headline]”. (2007, Feb 22). *Evening Standard*, pp. 15. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/nj4d2ev>

²⁷ Singer, A. (2012). *Les heureux maîtres de La Païva* [The Happy Owners of La Païva]. *Le Point*. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/lfe3dkk>

²⁸ Rouge, E., De Santis, et al. (2011). *Clubs, les bonnes adresses parisiennes* [Clubs, the good Parisian addresses]. *Le Figaro*. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/6cghno5>

²⁹ Singer, A. (2012). *Le Point*

context of Aldo Rossi's urban theories, the first axis of inquiry proposes to analyze the Parisian club-houses as architectural monuments, representing their respective networks within the urban dynamics. The second axis of inquiry questions the role of the urban policies of cultural heritage in Paris with relationship to the network of clubmen in the Cercle Interallié and the Travellers.

The Italian theorist and architect, Aldo Rossi, made the city his object of study in his 1966 work titled 'The Architecture of the City'. The post-modernist proposes to hypothesize the city as a vast, complex man-made object that grows over time; a collective sum of different experiences and different impressions.³⁰ Secondly, he defines the crucial aspects or buildings that compose city as urban artifacts, which are characterized by their unique history and individual form, that are independent of their function.³¹ According to Rossi, both the city and the urban artifacts are a human creation par excellence and are, thus, by nature, collective.³²

“I have sought to establish an analytical method [in italics in the text] susceptible to quantitative evaluation and capable of collecting the material to be studied under unified criteria. This method, presented as a theory of urban artifacts, stems from the identification of the city itself as an artifact and from its division into individual buildings and dwelling areas. (...) Destruction and demolition, expropriation and rapid changes in use and as a result of speculation and obsolescence, are the most recognizable signs of urban dynamics. (...) Monuments, signs of collective will as expressed through the principles of architecture, offer themselves as primary elements, fixed points in the urban dynamic.” (Rossi, 1984[1966]:21-22) In the post-modern manifesto, the Rossi contends

³⁰ Rossi, A. (1984). *The architecture of the city* (D. Ghirardo & J. Ockman, Trans., P. Eisenman, Ed.). Cambridge: MIT Press. (Original work published 1966), 29.

³¹ Ibid., p. 29, 34.

³² Ibid., p. 22, 35.

that the study of the city cannot be reduced to a historical study. This is due to the fact that the city persists through its transformations and its enduring elements, the *permanences*.³³ These gripping points in the urban fabric differ from the city itself in the sense that they are not determined by their human creation. Rossi argues that there are two main permanences, communal housing—different from individual houses—, and monuments.³⁴ The latter is simultaneously classified as a primary element of the city, an element that can both impede and accelerate the process of urbanization. Following Rossi's line of thought, the Cercle de l'Union Interalliée and the Travellers' Club in Paris are urban artifacts that are characterized by their unique history and individual form. Accordingly, these elite clubhouses can be envisaged as primary elements, and more specifically, as monuments of the contemporary city of Paris. The Italian architect-theorist defined urban monuments as signs in the city that represent the collective volition through the medium of architecture.³⁵ These monuments are fixed points in the urban dynamic that function as rituals, being both collective by nature and essential in preserving and transmitting the collective ideas.

"There is a continuous process of influence, exchange, and often opposition among urban artifacts, and the city and ideal proposals make this process concrete. I maintain that the history of architecture and built urban artifacts is always the history of the architecture of the ruling classes." (Rossi, 1984[1966]:23)

Subsequently, Rossi raises an interesting argument, cited above, proposing that the history of architecture and the built urban artifacts will always be a representation of the architectural history and identity of the ruling classes, the elite in power. Thus, one could say the Parisian clubs act as monuments that preserve and transmit the ideas

³³ Ibid., p. 22, 57.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 6, 61.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 22, 24.

of the elite by the medium of architecture and urban activity. As urban monuments, they represent the collective will of their unique society. (Figure 6)



Figure 6

The Cercle Interallié and the Travellers' clubs act as architectural forms that represent, collect, and preserve the rituals of their society. One may inquire what the elite's motivation may be behind preserving their own architecture and urban monuments, materialized forms of their collective lifestyle. In 1979, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu studied the origins and the reproduction of esthetic culture and taste with relation to social classes. In his work *Distinction*, he proposed that the cultivation of certain tastes, lifestyles and the consumption of some particular goods are a means by which a social group can become homogeneous and, thus, distinguish itself from others.³⁶

³⁶ Bourdieu, P. (1979). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984 ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 77.

"Every material inheritance is, strictly speaking, also a cultural inheritance. Family heirlooms not only bear material to the age and continuity of the lineage and so consecrate its social identity, which is inseparable from permanence over time; they also contribute in a practical way to its spiritual reproduction, that is, to transmitting the values, virtues and competences which are the basis of legitimate membership in bourgeois dynasties." (Bourdieu, 1984:76)

Bourdieu established that cultural taste and promoted aesthetics are products of the ruling classes. These products would serve the purpose of creating a distinguished identity that is superior to the 'other'. Hence, a self-controlled and self-cultivated group would create a sense of belonging to a more polished, more polite, and more superiorly policed world. As Bourdieu suggested, its own perfection justifies its own existence and its own self-value. The private club can also be identified as a self-controlled and self-cultivated association. In this sense, one could propose that club members construct their urban monuments with one common motivation. They are in search for a world that is also more controlled and more polished according to their own standards.

SECOND AXIS: CLUBHOUSES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON URBAN PROCESS

Firstly, we argued that the Parisian elite and their club residence could be defined as propelling elements of the city, as urban monuments of the city. Going a step further, following Rossi's theories, it was proposed that the clubhouses help in distinguishing the elite and materializing the significance of their own identity. Furthermore, as Bourdieu suggested, the elite would use their own architectural aesthetics as a way of policing and controlling the world according to their standards. Next, we will question the clubhouse's and the clubmen's relation to a polished and self-

cultivated urban environment.

“For this to work, interconnections with the state are of prime importance... This proximity facilitates the proliferation of associations, commissions, and committees where, among themselves, informed choices can be made and the best strategies are elaborated, similarly to the G8, they gather together the chairmen of the department of “Défense du Patrimoine” [Protection of National Heritage] and the senior officials of the “Ministère de la Culture” [Ministry of Culture]. The networks of the upper bourgeoisie can produce, promote and materialize their own projects and wishes all the more easily, as they present these as being in accordance with the common good.” (Pinçon-Charlot, et al., 2007:159)

The second axis of inquiry analyses how the elite assure the preservation of their urban monuments, the architectural inheritance of their own rituals. It is proposed here that the elite associations act as accelerators and retardants of the process of urbanization of the city. They abuse their positions of power to reinvigorate the urban city and the past architecture, while at the same time controlling the list of primary elements that are classified as cultural heritage and worthy of preservation. Furthermore, some club renovations are even financially sustained by government grants, nationally cultivating the urban environment of the elite.

The Cercle de l'Union Interalliée is settled at the number 33 on Faubourg Saint-Honoré Street in an 18th century *hôtel particulier*. The adjacent neighbors are the Embassy of Great Britain and a French luxurious shoe store. A few houses down, at 65 Faubourg Saint-Honoré Street is situated the Elysée, the French President's official home, and across the street we can find a four star hotel. The club's own home, also named Hotel Henri de Rothschild after its first owner, is hidden from the public Parisian street. The club is concealed behind an interior patio, which serves

as parking space, and another building, the hotel de Guébriant, which faces the street. This double-filter of inside-outside makes the accessibility to the building even more exclusive. (Figure 7)

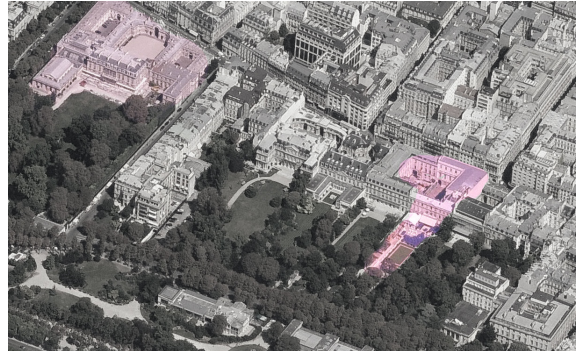


Figure 7

The Travellers' Club inhabits the last *hôtel particulier* still standing in the internationally famous Champs Elysées Avenue. It is situated near the beginning of the street, at the number 25. The adjoining next-door buildings are a flagship store for an American clothing brand and the renowned cinema Gaumont. The façade of the Hotel de Paiva is withdrawn by ten meters into the inside of the block, which makes the building almost invisible when one is simply passing along the busy commercial avenue. The exclusive Travellers' club uses architectural mimicry to maintain exclusive accessibility. (Figure 8)



Figure 8

Both club associations, the Travellers' and the Cercle Interallié, share a common environment of political power and cultural consumerism. As previously described, the clubs' facilities are treasured not only for leisure purposes but also for business possibilities. They serve as meeting places for politicians, chairpersons, executives, and CEO's. They are next-block or next-door neighbors to the President's official residency in Paris, the Elysée, the British Embassy, the American Embassy, and other exclusive clubs³⁷ like their own. As previously mentioned, the clubhouses truly function as polarized hotspots for the dominant society, spaces of flows for the global network society in power. They also maintain the close relationship with positions of power by being themselves involved or by directly socializing with those who do, as Wright Mills had also suggested.

“This street [Faubourg Saint-Honoré] of the 8th district is one of the most exclusive Paris. There are luxury stores, including Hermes who is headquartered here, fashion designers, boutiques who make shirts to customer's measurements, the Embassy of Great Britain, the residences of ambassadors of the United States and Japan, and the main entrance of the Elysée Palace.” (Pinçon-Charlot, et al., 2007:49)

The urban environment around the clubs is also marked by the cultural entities that contribute to their self-cultivated, polished world. They are neighbors to the world's renowned museum, the Louvre, notable gourmet restaurants, and several contemporary galleries that contribute to the policing of taste and of cultural esthetics. In addition, the boarding and immediate streets are filled with expensive flagship stores for luxury items of clothing and accessories. The clubhouses

³⁷ The Automobile Club de France is settled at Place de la Concorde and the Nouveau Cercle de l'Union, an extremely exclusive gentlemen's club, is currently residing at the front building of the Cercle de l'Union Interalliée.

and club members can enjoy the privileges of the elite's luxurious lifestyle: dining at fine restaurants, experiencing the latest art exhibitions and shopping for the hottest *sac-à-main*.

One could say that the elite habitants and clubbers have created a controlled microenvironment of their own. They maintain intimate links to the urban environment, demonstrating that socialization inside the club's walls is not only relatable to leisure but also more directly related to the city's politics and economy. In order to maintain this microenvironment exclusive and controlled, the clubs make use of their powerful positions in urban policy making.

In 1928, the French government and the elitist inhabitants honored the architectural object owned by the Cercle de l'Union Interalliée by turning the hotel into a cultural heritage monument that the club inhabits to this day. From 1999 to 2004, the facilities of the club were renovated, refurbished, and redecorated by the international architecture firm lead by Juan Pablo Molyneux. Most of the work was concentrated on the dining room, the great room oriented towards the garden that hosts the most important events of the club—weddings, graduation celebrations, exclusive holiday events and daily gourmet dining.³⁸

The Chilean-born architect started his studies at the Universidad Católica of Santiago and carrying them to the Ecole des Beaux Arts and the Ecole du Louvre in Paris.³⁹ Molyneux represents the identity and the architectural interests that the clubs aims to promote, an international background with an interest in classical architecture and cultural heritage. Sharing the same interests as the clubbers, the architect appears as a perfect fit for the renovation of the Cercle's residence.

"The dining room is tired," the club's president, Pierre-Christian Taittinger, diplomatically told

38 Clarke, G. (2007, February). Before & after: magnificent revival. *Architectural Digest*, (100). Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/n2nsbns>
39 Juan Pablo Molyneux's personal website for the Molyneux Studio, www.molyneuxstudio.com.

Juan Pablo Molyneux, who was called in to bring it back to life. But one glance told Molyneux that the room was not just fatigued. It was in a coma, and it needed more than a pick-me-up to bring it back to life. 'Everything about it,' says Molyneux, 'was, like,...wrong!'" (Clarke, 2007)⁴⁰

The international designer and interior architect is part of the stakeholders of several boards that aim to protect and rejuvenate the French heritage monuments in France but also in the USA. Some of these are titled: The American Friends of Versailles, The World Monuments Fund, and French Heritage Society. Thus, it is not surprising that in 2004 Molyneux has been awarded the 'Decoration of the Chevalier des Arts et Lettres', by the French Minister of Culture for 'having helped to spread French culture through his design work and his support of artisans'.⁴¹ Once again, the Cercle Interallié surrounds itself amongst international persons of power that hold positions that influence and control the government's attention towards cultural heritage in the city.

"About fifty members of the Nouveau Cercle de l'Union met at Place de la Concorde May 15, 2006 for a conference given in situ by Etienne Poncelet, chief architect and general inspector of historical monuments, to whom we owe the restoration of the golden capstone atop the obelisk [at the Concorde Square], and the reflection of the two fountains by Hittorff [as well as the restoration of the Travellers' Club in Paris, the Hotel de Paiva]." (Pinçon-Charlot, et al., 2007:15)

In 1980, the Travellers' clubhouse, Hotel de Paiva, was classified as a cultural heritage monument. Since 2006, the 19th century home has been undergoing a restoration in order to polish and rediscover the original lavish and sumptuous interior. The renovation was firstly concentrated on the façade and the grand staircase but soon

40 Clarke, G. (2007, February). Before & after: magnificent revival. *Architectural Digest*, (100). Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/n2nsbns>
41 French Heritage Society's website, a New York City association, <http://tinyurl.com/pve2e7d>.

followed the entrance hall, courtyard, and dining room. Olivier du Plessis, club secretary, described the renovation with enchanted enthusiasm: "Everything has been completely restored. Work has been non-stop, but the whole place has its spark back."⁴² The restoration was carried out by the above-mentioned, Etienne Poncelet.

The French architect-politician has been chief architect of Paris's historical monuments since 1979. He was practiced as an architect in Lille, his hometown, Paris and some American cities as well. Poncelet was also in charge of restoring the top of Egyptian obelisk at Place de la Concorde, one of the oldest monuments of the city. Thus, the same politician-architect, who holds the power to classify buildings as national monuments, is the architect in charge of reinvigorating this self-recognized monument. Furthermore, Christian Prévost-Marcilhacy, the French architect and inspector in charge of Historical Monuments in France has been leading the renovation project as architect-restorer.

"For the past five years, the Hotel de Paiva has undergone a major restoration process controlled by the Monuments Historiques [Historical Monuments], led by the Travellers' [Club], and by Christian Prévost-Marcilhacy, the president of the association for the Protection of Places. The façade and the grand staircase were the first to be spectacularly rejuvenated, then, in 2010-2011, the entrance hall and the courtyard. "For the latter, € 350,000 were needed, funded by private funds and by the State amounting to 45%. The dining room will have to wait until 2012-2013." (Collet, citing du Plessis, 2011)

The club administration took advantage of the privileged situation by requesting government grants that partially covered the expenses.⁴³ A financial action that seems unnecessary when taking into account the prestigious economic

42 Allen, P. (2010). French 'Love palace' built by famous prostitute restored. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from <http://tinyurl.com/yc9pgsx>
43 Ibid.

profile of the members in the club. Once again, the club demonstrates its political and international influences, self-cultivating its identity, self-evaluating its own architecture as cultural heritage, and re-creating a space of flows of the global network.

CONCLUSION: DISCUSSION

The philosopher and political activist, Antonio Gramsci, can offer some insight on the phenomenon of clubhouses and their repercussions. His subject of study was the magnitude of the dominating power and its social constructions to maintain such power. Gramsci's theory on Hegemony criticizes the bourgeoisie, or a group in power, for propagating its values and norms through the creation and reproduction of a shared culture. In other words, a mutual culture, within a society, would be a biased representation of this society by projecting solely the opinions of the dominant group. These opinions are inculcated to the point that the oppressed individuals accept those morals as their own.

"With Bourgeois hegemony having reached its limit and with the position of the progressive classes having been reversed, the class relations created by the industrial development induce the bourgeoisie not to struggle all out against the old world but to allow that part of the façade to subsist which would serve to conceal its dominion." (Gramsci, 1929:150-51)

Gramsci's argument is that a social group establishes itself as the dominant group, it must maintain and exert its power with much assertion. Hence, when the bourgeoisie becomes dominant, it maintains its power by controlling culture, the standard of culture, and validating its own lifestyle. This is the very case of the clubhouses and the exclusive Parisian associations that were presented here.

The Cercle de l'Union Interalliée and the Travelers' Club are examples of the spaces of power that elite cultivate and preserve, in order to maintain their dominant position within the city. The two club associations maintain complex functions within the face-to-face *milieux* of reproduction of the Parisian politicians. Their members meet in the clubhouses to formally socialize, while reproducing the bourgeois identity and politically self-validating their own forms of architecture. Their closed circles and associations help legitimize the monuments of their network of elite. For more than two hundred years, they have provided spaces of flows for the global network of the power elite in the city.

This article studied the relationship between the Cercle Interallié and the Travellers' clubhouses with their inhabitants, elitist political clubbers, and the urban dynamics of the city. Suggesting that the clubhouses are permanent architectural objects of the city, the case studies were analyzed through two axes of inquiry. The first axis was outlined by Rossi's theories of the city; proposing an analysis of the clubhouses as architectural monuments, which represent the identity and rituals of international elite networks. The second axis of inquiry considered the role of the clubmen's influences on the urban dynamics, and the cultural heritage standards in the Parisian city. In conclusion, it would seem that the clubs profit from their dominant position to preserve their exclusive and controlled microenvironment. They recognize their own buildings as valuable monuments of the French identity, they renovate them to sustain their distinguished identity and they create these restorations through their intimate relations with the political powers. Living in beautiful neighborhoods, owning extravagant palaces, and being a member of clubhouses has an advantage over urban process that maintains the inaccessibility of the spaces dominant class.

"In short, this power is exercised rather than pos-

essed; it is not the 'privilege', acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions—an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated. Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who 'do not have it'; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip has on them." (Foucault, 1995[1975]:26-27)

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