

11. THE POLITICAL PRAILLE PROJECT (GENEVA)

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The collected articles in *Le Temps* concern three types of projects in the Praille area. The first development project, a shopping centre, was established based on a new model to create a leisure mall. A second project, originating from the national railroad company, wishes to develop housing in the Praille district, while the third project includes offices and housing in the entire Praille-Acacias-Vernets neighborhood, which should eventually become the new business district of the city. This third project attracts the attention thereafter.

The journalists of *Le Temps* favour the presentation of the project, with many figures, images, and references, creating a controversy for reader's letters and the reaction of the FAS (Swiss federation of architects, the Geneva section), thus avoiding to take position themselves on the project.

Partout, les villes tirent parti des friches urbaines, comme de leur meilleur potentiel, dans une optique de densification.

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The presentation of the project has been made by the relevant city and state counselors (Mark Muller and Robert Cramer), who come from different political sensibilities, thus avoiding the politisation of the project along party lines.

The justification of the project is first that the construction of 6.000 housings would allow to make some annual 300-400 million fiscal revenue, which are currently lost by the Canton of Geneva to its neighbour (the Canton of Vaud). The stake is financial, and about territorial competition, openly with Vaud but also with French bordering areas. Another justification of the project is to counterbalance the situation of paucity of housing. Then, the interest of the project seems to slide from the aspects of fiscal returns to urban symbolism and resides only on the "Place de l'Etoile", the public space where will be located Switzerland's highest tower (175 m). The neighborhood should be fashionable, full of life day and night, absolutely metropolitan.

In conclusion, the newspaper covers the subject from the urban shape and urban policy point of view only, without giving us the required alternate reasons of the financial sector and of the urbanists about the quality and the feasibility of the Praille's project.

[...] par son ampleur, le projet de Genève pourrait devenir exemplaire.

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