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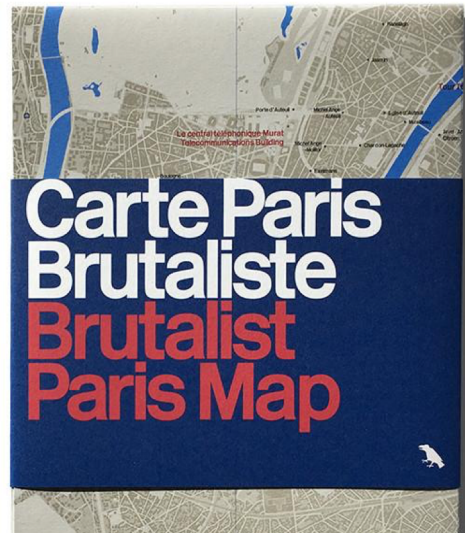
Carte Paris Brutaliste/ Brutalist Paris Map

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This map comprises a single folded sheet showing central Paris, with the locations of over 40 major modernist buildings, with an introduction by Robin Wilson and photographs by Nigel Green. It is one of a series of maps produced by Blue Crow Media since its foundation in 2009, covering architecture, design, food and drink in various major cities around the world. The publishers cite *The New York Times*' description of the maps as "part design manifesto, part urban architecture guide".



The map covers slightly more than the area limited by the *peripherique*, from Les Bleuets *logements* in the south east corner to the Cité Pablo Picasso in the north west, with excursions off the map southwards to Creteil and the Cimetière Intercommunal in Clamart and in the north east to the Aeroport Charles-de-Gaulle. There are clusters of brutalist buildings in Bobigny and La Défense. Otherwise, the buildings chosen are dispersed across Paris, more on the *rive gauche* than the *rive droite*. The map encourages walks in Paris which leave the conventional tourist trail, an invitation to take a new look at the city, or to find an unusual starting point for a *dérive*.

There is of course an irony in considering the brutalist architecture of Paris. The very name 'brutalism' owes its origins to the French term for rough concrete, *béton brut*, the use of which characterised much brutalist architecture. But brutalism came to be seen as a particularly British take on modernism, associated especially with the work of Alison and Peter Smithson and extensively employed in British public buildings from the 1950s to the 1970s. It was particularly associated with the buildings of the welfare state – schools, hospitals, local government offices, social housing – and had a strong position in local authority architects' departments, notably the LCC, where the Smithson's worked. According to the Smithson's, the new brutalism was about creating community through architecture and about a certain kind of realism which did not try to hide technique and was frank about the role of mass production. It should attempt to 'drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces' which were at work in post-war society.

Brutalist architecture was at best controversial from its inception, and, as Owen Hatherley has pointed out, condemnation of brutalist architecture and the politics of neo-liberalism, with their goal of reversing the structural changes brought about by social democracy, went hand in hand. In the eyes of critics of welfarism, the failures of brutalist housing projects in

particular, whether they were rooted in poor design or inadequate maintenance, became emblematic of the failing of the whole system. How better, then, for Tony Blair in 1997 to demonstrate his intention to break with Labour's past than by pledging to demolish the massive brutalist development at the Elephant and Castle in south London, the Heygate Estate?

But brutalism as an architectural style was not confined to public architecture. In the City of London, a whole new residential community for the wealthy, complete with a music academy, library, theatre and an international concert hall, was built at the barbican. Brutalism could also be chic, if the service charge was high enough to keep the lifts working. More recently, classic Brutalist buildings such as Goldfinger's Trellick Tower in West London, have been privatised and sold to an eager market among the urban wealthy.

So perhaps there are at least two narratives about brutalism to explore, the one about the reaction to post-war social reconstruction, the other about the commodification of a distinctive style. Or, as Rayner Banham put it in his seminal work on *The New Brutalism* in 1966, the ethical and the aesthetic. *Brutalist Paris Map* is largely about the latter. The buildings which it chooses are certainly diverse in their origins and use (housing, academic faculty, offices), and extend from the centre at least to the inner suburbs of Paris, covering the whole of the period from the 1950s-1970s.

Perhaps it is inevitable in a project of this kind that the result is to celebrate the *chic* in Brutalism. The selection becomes a 'best of', the buildings largely well-known, celebrated for their good design, and kept in good condition. Indeed, as in the case of London's Trellick Tower, a number have been repurposed for private housing or offices from their origins as the architecture of public space. It would be interesting to consider what the alternative might look like, a map for example of the broken and ill-maintained, the failures and the fake. Above all, the ordinariness of much brutalism, the architecture of the HLM in the outer suburbs or the mundane office blocks and schools which in Paris as in London are rapidly disappearing, to be replaced by the next generation of the transitory and functional.

In Paris, as in London, our current perspective of housing crisis and real estate bubbles challenges us to look at architecture in terms of commodification and profit, of the production of architecture and the attendant exploitation to create new types of value. We are led to ask whether good design – even if it originates in the utopianism of *les trente glorieuses* (the thirty years of economic boom after the war) – always ends up as the property of the wealthy and a vector of gentrification. We are also left thinking about resistance and the popular voice in urban planning. Brutalist architecture was associated with varieties of social planning which were rarely open to popular participation. It was an architecture of experts, at best benign and visionary but inevitably flawed. As we think about the role of cartography as a tool for expressing the voice of communities who are at the receiving end of current urban development, we should be mindful of the lessons to be learned from previous generations' experience of disruption and displacement.

Brutalism Paris Map doesn't engage with these issues of historical conflict. Indeed, it is a challenge for a single map to demonstrate historical process and far easier for it to present what looks like a state of arrival. Those who follow the path the map offers through this fascinating collection of major and, from an outsider's point of view at least, often overlooked

set of buildings, will need to equip themselves with some additional background, for example. The map will have done a great service, though, in encouraging its users to take the initial step into understanding this layer of Parisian urban history.