



Pierre Farla (full name: Petrus Lodewijk Yan Farla) is an architect who has, since the 1960s, been a prominent figure in the field of architecture in Wallonia. For over half a century he has been actively involved in urban renovation, during which time he has seen to fruition many contemporary architectural projects focusing on the renovation and refurbishing of old buildings, especially in the city of Mons. In 1984, he obtained professional notoriety and received much-deserved official recognition of the importance of his work by a royal decree. In ideological terms Pierre Farla is very much a disciple of the La Cambre School, and in 2014 he decided to donate his professional archives to the ULB (the Free University of Brussels).

Pierre Farla was born in Brussels on 4 June 1936, the scion of a multilingual family of independent traders. He studied interior design for two years at the Saint-Luc school in Mons. When he discovered that his vocation lay more in architecture, he went to Tournai where he studied under Pierre Vago. In 1960, he enrolled in the ENSAAD-La Cambre School, where he was profoundly influenced by the teacher who would become his mentor, Victor Bourgeois. After he qualified as an architect in 1962, he decided to follow an additional course at the La Cambre Higher Institute of Town Planning in Brussels under André Wogensky. He qualified as a town planner in 1964.

After a brief internship with the architect Jacques Dolphyn, from 1964 to 1966 he worked as a research coordinator for IDEA (the Regional Economic Development Agency). While working as the coordinator of territorial development surveys, he completed the plans for a city of 30,000 inhabitants to be built between Frameries and Pâturages in the Borinage district. In 1968, this project was given first place of honour in the Bonduelle prize.

From 1965, Pierre Farla completed several major town planning and architectural projects in partnership with the architects Odon Dupire and André Godart. From 1971 to 1976, he set up with these partners a *de facto* association, the "DFG Group". Among many projects, with the help of the geographer Pierre Gillain the association completed a study of the traffic of the city of Mons and developed the idea of creating a system of traffic rings and a pedestrian precinct, and these plans were subsequently adopted and implemented. The group then branched out into other areas of research and designed the Tondreau Stadium in Mons (1965) and the Benedictine Monastery in Quévy-le-Grand. For the University of Mons, they completed a major redevelopment project focusing on the rue du Parc and the place du Parc in the context of which they designed a students' residence with a total of 72 flats.

1970: International design competition focusing on the development of a tourist and accommodation centre in Como, Italy. Joint first prize. Pierre Farla's assistant was the architecture student Roger Verraes.

1984: The city of Mons received the Europa Nostra award for the renovation of a building that was originally erected in 1530. DFG entrusted the work and architectural supervision of the project to Odon Dupire.

Alongside his projects with DFG and even before the group was formed, Pierre Farla was involved in a number of project contests.

In 1964, together with the architects Albert Alligorides and Jean Dethier (who went on to supervise the design of the Beaubourg Centre in Paris), Pierre Farla was awarded second prize in the national architectural competition for the construction of the Jewish national monument. In 1968, jointly with the architect Albert Alligorides, he was awarded first prize in the international architectural and town planning competition for the design of the town centre of Watermael-Boitfort. This was the first project that developed the idea of vertical gardens.

Following the dissolution of the DFG Group, Pierre Farla set up the "Atelier d'architecture et d'urbanisme Pierre Farla" (AAU Pierre Farla).

From 1976, the main projects developed by this association were the urban renovation of the district of Messine in Mons (1980-86) on behalf of the Ministry of the Walloon Region, a project that included the construction of 220 housing units, the renovation of the Royal Theatre of Mons (1994-97), the construction of the Ambroise Paré Hospital and two faculties for the University of Mons-Hainaut, the "Pentagon".

1981 - At the first world architecture congress in Sofia, presentation of drawings for the development of place Nervienne in Mons. This project received an award.

1983 - Honourable mention in the Bonduelle competition for the redevelopment of the district adjacent to Brussels central station.

In the 1990s, Pierre Farla was given responsibility for drawing up plans and overseeing the construction of several major public works projects, including the Central Services of the Ministry of the Walloon Region in Namur and the European School in Brussels for the Building Department.

In 1977, Pierre Farla opened an office in Algiers and became a member of the Algerian Architects' Union. In this capacity, he undertook numerous contractual projects in Tamanrasset in the south of Algeria, including a cultural and sports centre and the urban renovation of the Tahaggart district in the context of which 800 housing units were built. Close to the city of Algiers, with the assistance of Professor Rachid Boyat, a surgeon specialising in the treatment of patients requiring surgery for severe burns and hand operations, Pierre Farla drew up plans for an extension of the Bou-Ismaïl pediatric clinic, a hospital specialising in hand surgery, plastic surgery and the treatment of severe burns in Beni Messous. In Annaba, he completed the drawings for the administrative headquarters of the Prosider company and 2,000 seafront residential units in the city of Oran. Of these many contract proposals, the only projects that came to fruition were the industrial buildings close to Tamanrasset, including a carpentry unit and a multipurpose mechanical unit, comprising a total of 4 large industrial workshops.

Pierre Farla drew up plans for a number of other African projects (in particular, in Rwanda and Burundi) for the NGO Nord-Sud. Of these projects, only the St Fidèle institute, a boarding school for girls in Gisenyi, was completed.

In addition to his architectural work, Pierre Farla has been very actively involved in community organisations and in education. Since the very outset of his career, he has campaigned tirelessly for the urban renewal of the city of Mons. In 1968, he founded the non-profit association ASBL "Young Economic Chamber of Mons" and shortly thereafter was appointed vice-chairman and director of the National Council of the Young Economic Chamber of Belgium and representative of the Young Economic Chamber of Mons responsible for coordination with the Board of Management of the Economic Community for the Promotion of the City of Mons (CEPM). In 1970, he became a member of the Central Society of Belgian Architecture (SCAB) and subsequently served as chairman of this association from 2001 to 2003. Pierre Farla was also a member of the Chamber of the Council of Belgian Town Planners (CUCB). In 1973, strongly motivated by his conviction of the importance of international exchanges, with Constantin Brodzki he founded the "International Architects Association". In addition, he demonstrated his deep concern for the quality of the training offered to young people and gave lessons in architecture at the ISAE-La Cambre school. From 1982 to 1984, he worked as an assistant in the architecture workshop of the architect Jean-Pierre Blondel.

The Pierre Farla Archive, a valuable collection of 59 categorised and inventoried boxes, includes several types of documents (drawings, photographs, texts and hard drives) and 98 rolls of blueprints. These documents concern a number of projects completed between 1964 and 2014. The Archive not only provides a comprehensive and user-friendly overview of the work of Pierre Farla and of late 20th-century Belgian architecture, but it is also a major source for the study of projects completed in association with other architects whose archives are kept by the ULB (the Free University of Brussels).

Irène Lund - Architecture archive coordinator