Léon Krier 
Architect and Urban Planner

Léon Krier now resides in the south of France.

Biographical Information * Selected Publications * Buildings and Projects

Léon Krier is recognized today as one of the world's outstanding architects and urbanists. He received the inaugural Richard Driehaus Prize for Classical Architecture in 2003.

"His view of the city as a document of intelligence, memory, and pleasure is the antithesis of the concept of the disposable, adaptable, plug-in city of Archigram, Metabolism, and other advocates, and he has been critical of Post-Modernism and stylistic pluralism, condemning both as unserious, unintellectual Kitsch. He has seen de-zoning of activities in cities to be essential and is fundamentally opposed to the views of Le Corbusier, CIAM, and the Athens Charter that seem to be firmly embedded virtually everywhere, despite efforts by Jane Jacobs and many others to excise them." -- James Stevens Curl.

"One day I went to a lecture by Leon Krier, the man who designed the English model town of Poundbury for the Prince of Wales. Krier gave a powerful talk about traditional urbanism, and after a couple of weeks of real agony and crisis I realized I couldn't go on designing these fashionable tall buildings, which were fascinating visually, but didn't produce any healthy urban effect. They wouldn't affect society in a positive way. The prospect of instead creating traditional communities where our plans could actually make someone's daily life better really excited me. Krier introduced me to the idea of looking at people first, and to the power of physical design to change the social life of a community. And so, in a year or so my wife and I left the firm and went off to do something very different." -- Andres Duany.

"The main tenets of the classical school of architecture and urbanism, now termed 'New Urbanism' in the USA, began to be laid down by the Luxembourg architect Léon Krier during the 1970s. The Krier approach was distinguished by its clarity, and matched by an extremely effective polemical strategy, in which many things which had been 'outlawed' from urban design thinking since World War II were made to seem once again to be simple good sense." -- Brian Hanson & Samir Younès.

"Léon Krier may be best known to Americans as the architect behind the Prince of Wales's new town of Poundbury in Dorset, England, and as the intellectual godfather of the New Urbanism movement in America, a campaign to rescue the landscape, townscape and civic life of our nation from the failed experiment of a drive-in utopia. He brings an exhilarating clarity to issues of place-making and architecture that have been otherwise subject to a remorseless obscurantism by a colorful cast of self-promoting avant-gardist charlatans ranging from Le Corbusier in the 1920s to Peter Eisenman in our time. Among the other putative leading figures in international architecture, Krier's work is the most comprehensive and intelligent." -- James Howard Kunstler.

"We owe an allegiance to Léon Krier for his genius as the foremost, veridical apologist of architecture and urbanism this century. He showed us how the city's 'reconstruction' is not only integral to personal freedoms needed in our everyday lives, but also to the legislative form and policy comprising the ethical vision, or constitution, of a Nation. Because of Léon Krier, we now also see Modernist ideology beneath its clothes. What once marked Modernism as a profound egalitarian sociopolitical agenda, has now become an excuse for failing to denounce cultural demythification and the invisible hand of industrial technique. Krier has encouraged the next generation of architects to be exactly that, architects. He has convinced us to regain our authority; to think; to plan sensibly; to create meaningfully; to build beautifully; to lobby politically; and to educate carefully. Léon has transcended himself to speak the truth at a time when it seemed only a fragmented Babylonian confusion was our fate." -- Duncan McRoberts.

"Léon Krier is one of the most important influences on the principles espoused by the charter for the New Urbanism. For those who don't know, Krier is a European architect who has spent a lifetime writing, drawing, lecturing, and teaching. He has designed a number of noteworthy plans for European cities, including for Poundbury, whose developer is the Prince of Wales -- who might be called a New Urbanist. I would highly recommend Krier's books, including 'Architecture, Choice or Fate.'" -- Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk.
"Léon Krier was among those who first realized that indiscriminate toleration posing as the guarantor of democratic freedom had thrown architecture and the city into disarray, undermining the very discipline of architecture itself. ... Both through his projects and writings alike, [he] has sought to explain the rational foundations of architecture and the city. ... No architect has explored architecture's claim to universality better than Léon Krier, and it is this which makes him the most controversial figure of contemporary architectural culture." -- Demetri Porphyrios.

"Léon Krier, of Luxembourg and London, is arguably the most curious, potent and significant force in architecture today. Krier's frontal attack on the architecture of the postindustrial, consumer empires is both an intellectual and a spiritual housecleaning; not a demolition or a redecorating job but the most profound kind of reaffirmation of traditional values. Among his architectural peers Krier stands almost alone in his intuitive understanding of the ecological insights of the last thirty years, and in this he is ironically more 'modern', more avant garde, than they. These ideas come together in his urban proposals - combining a clarity and practicality of vision unparalleled in recent history. There is every indication now that his influence, his arguments and strategies as well as his 'style', are firmly embedded in the architectural sensibility of the coming generation." -- Jaquelin Robertson.

"There was a deeply totalitarian mindset in modern architecture in those decades directly after the Second World War. That is why people of my age tend to be wary of architectural theory, especially of ideologies professed by architects to explain or enhance their own work. Krier, on the other hand, and considering the climate of the time, did an even more revolutionary thing. He said, without equivocation and in the teeth of Modernism's most sacred dogma, 'We must rebuild the classical and vernacular traditions of architecture'. Moreover, he insisted that those traditions were embodied in the traditional European city, which we had to rebuild as well. Krier literally thought the unthinkable, said the unsayable. And his remarkably powerful take on the European city produced a much more convincing and three-dimensional urbanism than the flat pochés suggested to other architects by the Nolli plan (of which we have heard so much), which could not be brought up satisfactorily into three dimensions using the prevailing Corbusian architectural vocabulary. Some of the architects involved eventually came to realize that traditional urbanism required solider, more typical, probably more traditional, architectural forms. Krier had known it from the beginning. And out of his example and tutelage, as Duany and Plater-Zyberk are the first to acknowledge, came, in large part, the New Urbanism of today." -- Vincent Scully.

"Few would deny that the architectural climate has recently changed remarkably so that it is no longer axiomatic that a new building or shop front in an historic street will be in a 'frankly modern' style. Yet for over half a century an architectural McCarthyism banned from practice anyone who dared to design in the classical style. As recently as the 1970s it seemed that this iconoclastic nightmare would never end. No one has been more influential in bringing this intolerance to a halt than Leon Krier. The influence of Leon Krier, which has been widely felt in Europe and the United States of America, has been disseminated through his drawings, his ideas and his unbuilt schemes for rebuilding cities. Born in 1946 in Luxembourg, Krier reacted against the postwar destruction of the historic towns of Europe by modern planning. His aim has thus been no less than the Reconstruction of the City. His aim is to recreate the patterns of urban order which delight us in the historic towns and cities of Europe. " -- David Watkin.

The Krier website is maintained by Nikos A. Salingaros.