Building (in) the void

Enquiry on the roles for architects faced with the multiplicity of imaginaries of an urban void

Leaving Traces/Living politics in the city || ENSAB, Rennes || 22 novembre 2018

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Summary

1. An approach to complexity

- (Mythified) unknown

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- Routine backgound

1. An approach to complexity

- (Mythified) unknown

- Routine backgound

- Urban complexity

"Urban disaster"

"Bavière syndrom"

"Wasteland"

"A myth in Liège"

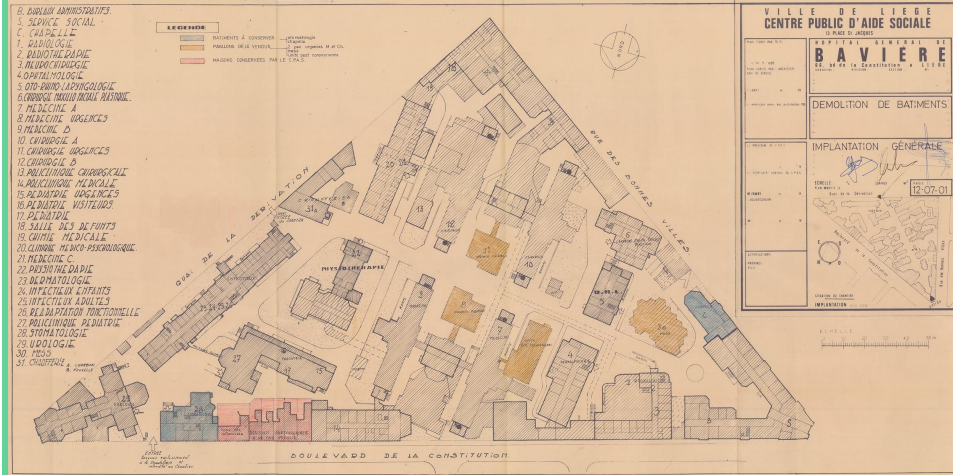# 1. An approach to complexity

- Before that:

    What is Bavière?

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  - Liège former hospital

  (17th cent. - 1987)

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- Before that:

    What is Bavière?

    - Liège former hospital
        (17th cent. - 1987)

    - A 4 Ha wasteland at the entrance
      of the city
      (demolition start: 1991)

    3 traces standing… traces of what?

1. An approach to complexity

- Before that:

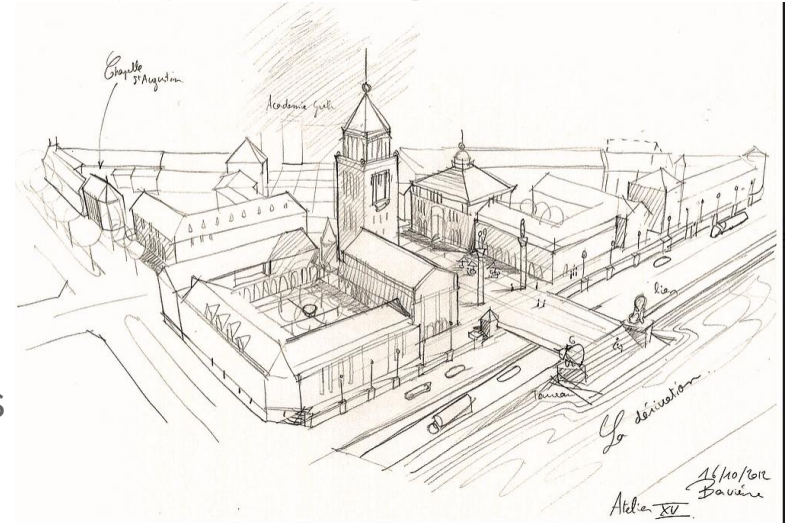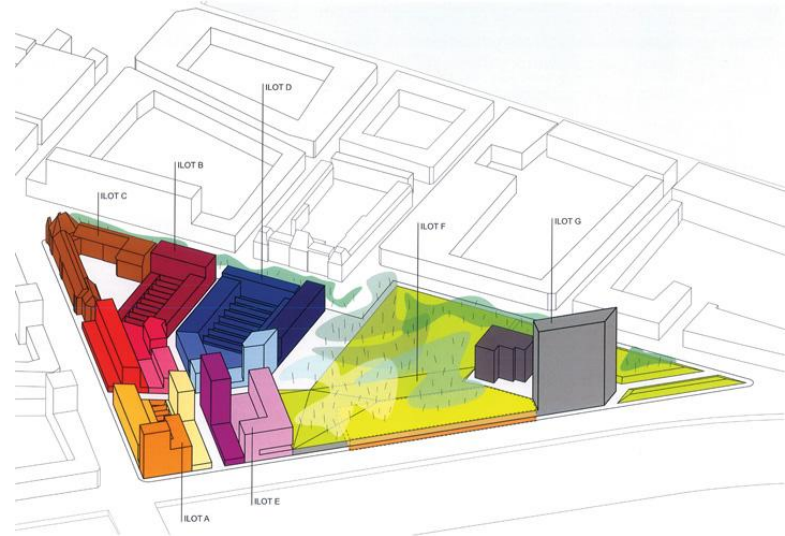   **What is Bavière?**

    - Liège former hospital

        (17th cent. - 1987)

    - A 4 Ha wasteland at the entrance
     of the city
    (demolition start: 1991)

    - A succession of urban planning projects

1. An approach to complexity

Why this research?

To explore the socio-political roles of conceived spaces

(Lefebvre 1968, Harvey 2012, Ellin 2006, …)

⇒ Bavière, "ideal" field of research (while difficult to approach)

How?

Establishing a general understanding of its existence and evolutions:

Press review + **historical research** (ACPAS Lg)

Establishing a specific understanding of existing imaginaries through History and those who live/lived it and how those relate to traces (both physical and projected):

Historical researches + **interviews** (12, by means of map drawing and/or comemnted walks) + **observations**

Qualitative methodology: Lynch 1998, Grosjean-Thibaud 2001, Kaufmann 2016…

1. An approach to complexity

How?

By diversifying the types of informers:

-4 have known the hospital as **adults** (to visit someone, work or study)

-5 have known the hospital as **children** (To get cares, to visit)

-3 are **almost ignoran**t of Bavière (Liégeois and non-liégeois)

-5 are/have been **neighbours of Bavière**, 2 **don't live in Liège**

-5 are **planners** (architects/urbanists), 4 are linked to the **medical field**

-2 are active into activist **plate-forms**

-5 are professionnally **linked to the current projet** (Province, City administration, developers)

       (+ all expressions of opinions and discussions figured into the archives)

1. An approach to complexity

How?

By diversifying the types of informers:

⇒ A multiplicity of imaginaries, of habits and representations confirming and contradicting themselves over the same objects, the same traces

(physical, pictures, memories, …)

‼ **Non exhaustive** + **anchored in subjectivity**

2. Six threads and a rope

The complexity of the void, an overwhelming investment of the place

EDDIE MERX À CUBA DÉLIQUESCENCE DE L'ETAT ET MONTÉE DES EXTRÊMES POUMON D'ACIER LES BAS-NYLONS DES INFIRMIÈRES ISOTOPES LA DÉFENSE DES DROITS DES ANIMAUX LIÈGE 2015 BOFILL À LA PLACE SAINT LAMBERT TRACÉS HAUSSMANNIENS LES RATÉS DE LA DÉMOCRATISATION CULTURELLE L'EFFONDREMENT DE L'URSS TECHNIQUES D'IMAGERIE DE LA GLANDE HYPOPHYSAIRE L'URBANISME MODERNISTE CAPITALISME LIBÉRAL ET CAPITALISME MODÉRÉ HOMO FESTIVUS CIRUGEDA ET L'ARCHITECTURE DE RÉSISTANCE LES RISQUES DE LA RÉHABILITATION LOGEMENT SOCIAL LES BÉBÉS ET L'ARGIROLE OCCUPY L'OPÉRA ROYAL FRANK GEHRY LE FAÇADISME LA CRISE FINANCIÈRE LE BON VIEUX TEMPS CHIENS ERRANTS GRAFFITIS HORLOGE POINTEUSE LE PETIT CHÂTEAU CARABINS ET MANDARINS DJU'DLA UNIVERSITÉ EXPÉRIMENTATIONS URBAINES ROMANICHELS COURSES EN BRANCARDS DÉPOTOIRS LA MARQUISE GENTRIFICATION VIE MORT ET MALADIE HÔTEL RIGO EMPREINTE GÉNÉTIQUE NOSTALGIE PUBLIFIN OGEO FUND DEMOCRATIE PARTICIPATIVE 3EME LIEU FEDER MR LOYAL CONCOURS TRUQUÉS SPÉCULATION DOS-FANCHON MONOFONCTIONNALITÉ TRANSPLANTATIONS HEPATIQUES ...

2. Six threads and a rope

⇒ **An explicitation model:**

Place as a **rope**

-Taut through History

2. Six threads and a rope

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-Formed of ever (un)weaving representation threads

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Place as a **rope**

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-Concretised through physical or projected acts

2. Six threads and a rope

⇒ **An explicitation model:**
Place as a **rope**

-Taut through History

-Formed of ever (un)weaving representation threads

-Concretised through physical or projected acts

-Of which the threads and knots are based on the interactions between representations and the traces left before.
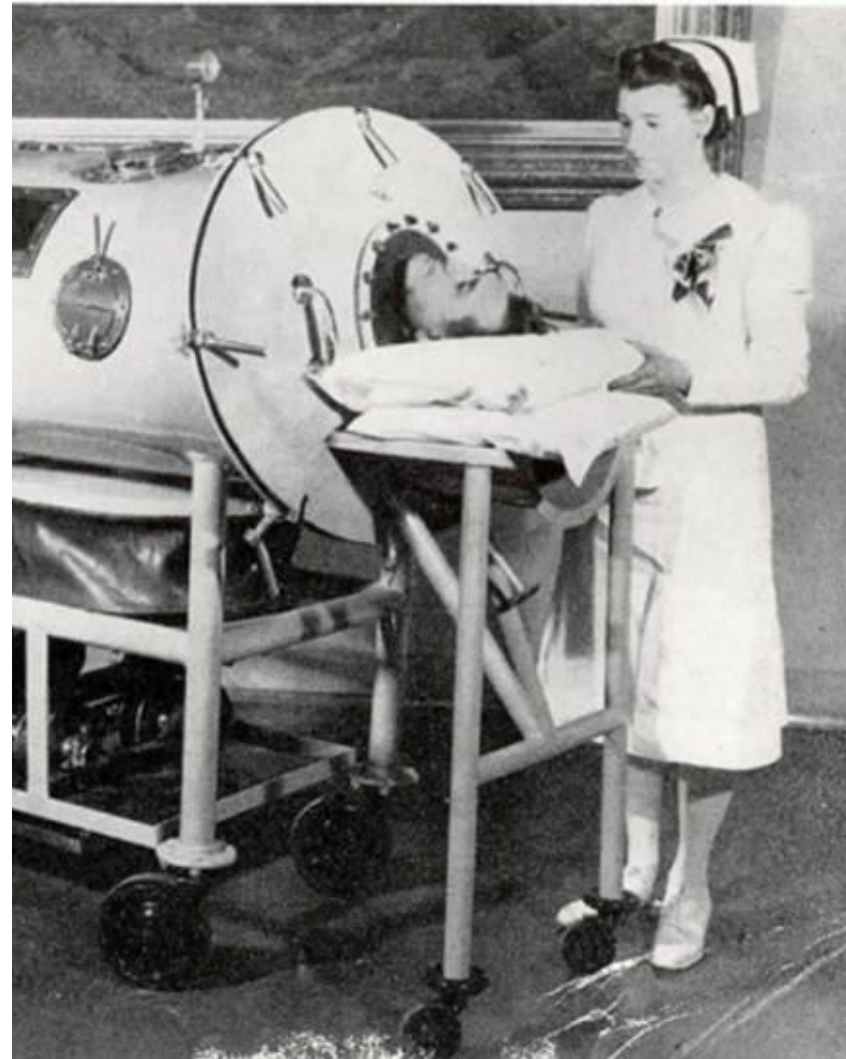
2. Six threads and a rope

Bavière is (at least):

-A place that cures/cares

Meaning: - An outdated, deadly hospital ("Descendre à Bavière")

                - A cutting edge hospital (innovations arch., med.)

                - A urban hospital (closeness to uni. and to the people)

2. Six threads and a rope

Bavière is (at least):

-A place that cures/cares

-A place of Culture, cultures, and learning

Meaning: - A place of learning (university, library)
             - A place of Culture/cultures (Opera/street art)
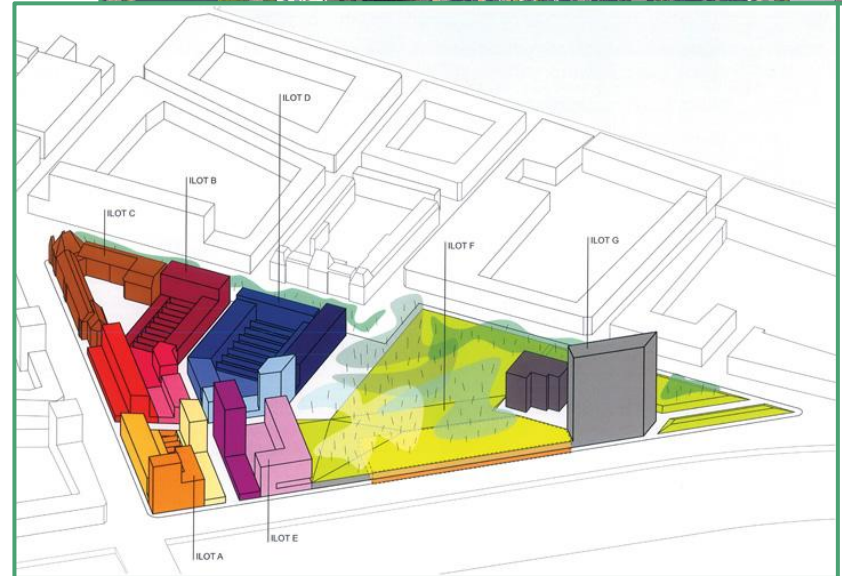   - A place of local identities ("une ville dans la ville")

2. Six threads and a rope

Bavière is (at least):

-A place that cures/cares

-A place of Culture, cultures, and learning

-A public place

Meaning: - A public space (litteraly then used by some)
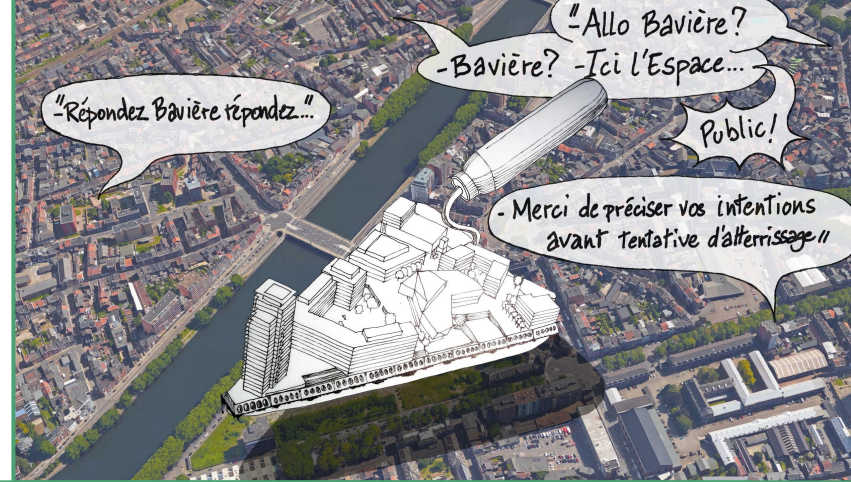   - A public subject (publications, public debates, ...)

2. Six threads and a rope

Bavière is (at least):

-A place that cures/cares

-A place of Culture, cultures, and learning

-A public place

-A place of profit and economy

Meaning: - A mean to financial gain
                - A financial risk

"A financial risk"

"To make it yield a profit"

"An investor's big-game hunting"

"A difficult economical equation"

"Returns on investments"

"Real estate speculation"

2. Six threads and a rope

Bavière is (at least):

-A place that cures/cares

-A place of Culture, cultures, and learning

-A public place

-A place of profit and economy

-A place of freedom and transgressions

Meaning: - A place of alternatives
                 - A place of dangers
                 - An abandoned place

2. Six threads and a rope

Bavière is (at least):

-A place that cures/cares

-A place of Culture, cultures, and learning

-A public place

-A place of profit and economy

-A place of freedom and transgressions

-A place of memories and heritage

Meaning: - A place remembered
            - An heritage

ERNESTVS ARCHIEPISCOPVS COLONIENSIS,
PR. ELECTOR.

DOMINVS SALVTEM
TRIBVIT.

ERNESTVS. D.G. SERENIS. ET REVERENDISS. ARC;
HIEP. COLONIENS, EPISC. LEODIENS. S.R.IMP.
PER ITALIAM ARCHICA. AC. PRINC. ELECTOR.
COM. PALAT. RHENI. VTR. BAVAR DVX.

3. Tying the rope

Bavière is (at least):

-A place that cures/cares
-A place of Culture, cultures, and learning
-A public place
-A place of profit and economy
-A place of freedom and transgressions
-A place of memories and heritage

Those representations weave themselves, are buried and resurface through History to form Bavière

3. Tying the rope

If   Bavière is a rope
        Its representations the threads of this rope

⇒ Space is the **interface** between those threadss

Which   is tought, projected, built
           Is retought, transformed, demolished
           is interpretated et reinterpretated daily

3. Tying the rope

⇒ Planners (architects/urbanists/landscap designers/...)

Identify representations

(**comprehensive** architect)

Offer new knots

(**creative** architect)

Negociate their concretisations

(**Negotiating** architect)

⇒ (Partial) conscience of the complexity of the place

3. Tying the rope

BUT **planners**:

Identify **partially** the representations

(Lack of time and ressources)

Are not **decision-makers**

(Lack of power and legitimity)

Architecture = a universe of constraints

(economical, political, technical, situationnal, ...)

3. Tying the rope

ALTHOUGH

Planners possess **margins of freedom**

That they use or not.
Due to partners, external references ...

⇒ **capacity to implement/orient representational configurations**

4. **Ccl**: comprehension as tool?

Bavière is a **complex place**

Void = **"full"** of many representations
Planners have multiplied trials and failures
BUT use those representations and create some

⇒ **How can we create tools allowing planners to take into account this complexity and diversity while allowing them to fulfill the client request?**

Bibliographie

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