



PUBLIC SPACE, A TERRITORIAL COMMON?

Laurie Beauvilain

PUBLIC SPACE, A TERRITORIAL COMMON?

Laurie Beauvilain

Research work in design under the supervision
of Ann Pham Ngoc Cuong, Laurence Pache
& Catherine Pradeau.

DSAA 2019-2021

Eco-design specializing in landscape and interior
design at Raymond Loewy school in La Souterraine.

May 2021

Cover : *Public space, a territorial common?*, 2021
Photography designed during a workshop with Charles Fréger.
© Laurie Beauvilain

Preface

August, 17th of 2020, 10:32 a.m, Villeurbanne

As I was laying a stencil on the roadway, with a spray in my hand, I turned round to see if all was normal and if I had the right to do this in the public space. If not, where could I do it? With the collective Pourquoi Pas!?, we needed to attract passers-by to the site. At that moment, I realized that I was not really comfortable with the fact I was about to mark the floor, the pavement, and that somebody might see me doing this. However, this space is the public space that is to say everyone's space. A temporary message made with a spray-painted stencil will fade with the next rain and represents no obstacle for the other users of the street. Finally, I did it: I put pink and blue arrows everywhere, toward the entrance of the site. After my first hesitation, I was rather proud to participate in the signage of the temporary occupation of the construction site.

With hindsight, if, as a designer, as an intern in a collective of architects, as a «professional», I don't feel able to occupy the public space, what about the inhabitants? How can they feel concerned and involved in the making of the city which is their territory? I'm not surprised city-dwellers are said to be individualistic when they do not know that they have a common space.

Summary

3	<u>Preface</u>
7	<u>Introduction</u>
9	<u>1. Is public space, an essential spatial resource?</u>
11	1.1 What are commons?
12	1.2 Could the public space be transformed into a common good?
18	1.3 To create a new relation between public sphere and commons.
25	<u>2. The activation of a territorial common good.</u>
27	2.1 Starting thinking about the common good: projections and proposals.
33	2.2 A pluralist role for the environmental designer.
37	2.3 A citizen and committed posture of the designer.
41	<u>Conclusion</u>
43	<u>Bibliography</u>
45	<u>Acknowledgments</u>

Introduction

The public space seems to be no longer considered as a common space. For some, this space is supposed to be managed by the town hall or public authorities, for others, it may even represent a financial windfall, but generally the notion of public space tends to disappear. As we become more and more urban, it seems essential to preserve such as places of sociability and sharing.

The Bon-Pasteur vacant lot located on the Pentes de la Croix-Rousse in Lyon represents a green lung in the middle of a densely-populated neighborhood. With a strong past and a lot of involvement for its preservation on citizens' part, this space, removed from public life, has represented a resource of vegetalization for 25 years. As the district's authorities wish to involve the inhabitants in the future of the public space, a consultation is conducted. Inhabitants are determined and committed to protecting this space from privatization. The future of this public space may be a turning point to have public spaces considered as a common good. While struggles, hacking, civic appropriation have already been tried, the institutional intervention raises many questions about the possibility of decision-making and governance of the place by its inhabitants.

Whereas surveying the population takes long, could the environmental designer become a facilitator for the creation of a territorial common good? With mediation and communication skills, is there not some room for an intermediary between the inhabitants and their territory, and between the inhabitants and decision makers?

Part 1

Is public space an essential spacial resource?

1.1 What are commons?

The concept of commons is linked with different aspects and principles which may be summed up as follows: a common good is composed of a resource – fundamental to survive on the planet – a group or a community who manages this resource and is linked with self-governance. This concept is explained with empiric experiences in the major book *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* written by Elinor Ostrom. Different principles help create a common.

*Elinor Ostrom's 8 Principles for Managing Commons*¹

1. *Commons need to have clearly defined boundaries.*
2. *Rules should fit local circumstances.*
3. *Participatory decision-making is vital.*
4. *Commons must be monitored.*
5. *Sanctions for those who abuse the commons should be graduated.*
6. *Conflict resolution should be easily accessible.*
7. *Commons need the right to organise.*
8. *Commons work best when nested within larger networks.*

Those principles highlight several problems to be adressed in order to help a community constitute a durable common. Therefore the environmental designer with an accurate approach about space, uses and users could have a facilitating role in the process.



Stone-walled enclosures close to Gordale Scar. The result of a movement ending common goods in England. © Wikipédia Commons

¹ - OSTROM Elinor. *Governing the commons : The Evolutution of Institutions for Collective Action*. 1990.

1.2 Could the public space be transformed into a common good?

First of all, the resource which is at the heart of the question here is the public space. It is different from natural resources like water or the atmosphere but it is part of the territorial common good, like the landscape or hydraulic system. The public space can be considered like an endangered resource by several phenomena which are changing towns. Surveillance, gentrification, privatization are already changing our relation with the public space, everybody's space, a space of communication, where different ideas and points of view are exchanged. Those menaces provide some people with a feeling of security, control or attractiveness but it also implies exclusion and a limit to social diversity for a large number of citizens. What becomes of the space of ideas and debate? Actually, during the first lockdown, public spaces were inaccessible and city dwellers became aware of the importance of public spaces as everyday life spaces, as much as their homes. Also, this space is the only free space where some people can live. If it were private, where would they live?

The Bon-Pasteur vacant lot is not only a public space, it is also a reserve of biodiversity in a very urbanized neighborhood. That way, it constitutes a resource of life, biodiversity, tranquility and also an oasis of freshness. All these aspects have to be considered for the future of this space. The notion of Public space raises the question of property, and more exactly the binary relation between public property and private property. Nowadays, the vacant lot is enclosed but remains a public property. The status of this place has to be interrogated

to think a common good with a community of inhabitants and a self-governance. But what is the place of a common good in a metropolis? Are politicians able to think a new way of managing the public space? ♦



Inside the Bon Pasteur vacant lot in Lyon. © Laurie Beauvilain



In the early morning of April 1, 2016, the Nuit debout movement brought together hundreds of opponents of the law project, Place de la République. © MaxPPP/EPA/Ian Langson

Civil disobedience movement against advertisement.



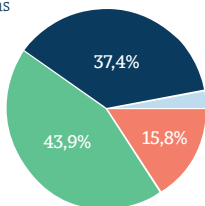
The movement Picnic The Streets, in Place de la Bourse in Bruxelles. Citizens appropriating urban space. © Belga Photo Nicolas Maeterlinck.

Public space: a resource?

Survey published online during the first lockdown. 140 answers.

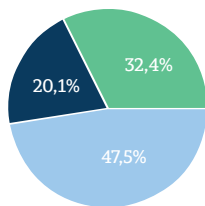
How old are you?

- - 20 ans
- 20 à 29 ans
- 30 à 60 ans
- + 60 ans



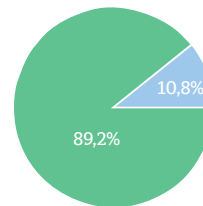
Where your lockdown place is situated?

- urban area
- peri-urban aera
- rural aera



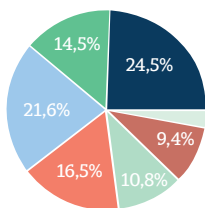
Do you have an outdoor space?

- yes
- no



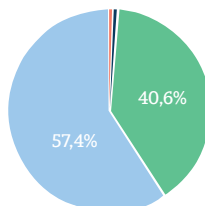
How many rooms are your lockdown place made up of? (excluding bathrooms)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7+



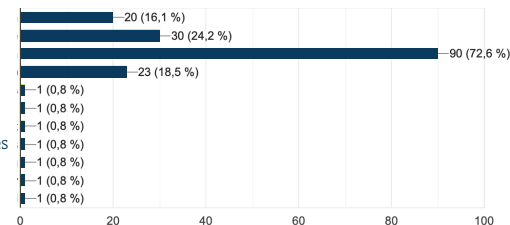
What was the primary selection criteria for your lockdown place?

- the size of the place
- being with your close family
- the light
- food self-sufficiency



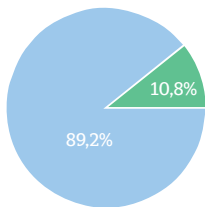
If yes, it is...

- a balcony
- a terrace
- a garden
- a shared garden
- farmlands
- a large garden
- a forest
- a plot of 2 hectares
- a parking
- a courtyard
- a field



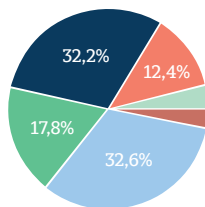
Do you share your lockdown place with other people?

- yes
- no

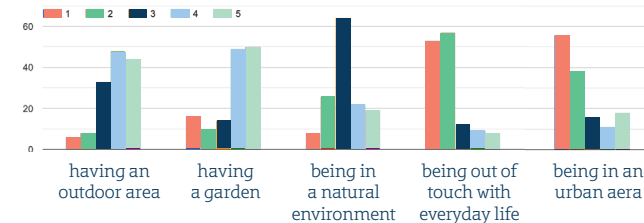


If yes, how many are you?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6+



What is the most important during this lockdown?



1.3 To create a new relation between public sphere and commons.

Who should the designer target to turn the public space into a common good? If the public space is a shared space, everybody's space, it remains nevertheless arranged, designed and managed by public authorities, at different levels: national, regional and local. For example, the management and maintenance of roads in Lyon is the responsibility of the Metropolis, while the maintenance of green spaces is the city's responsibility. If initiatives to build a common good are tolerated, what are the realities of transforming a public space into an urban common, self-governed by its inhabitants?

In order to integrate and interact with the inhabitants concerned by a project, the use of participation is now a central tool for public action. There is a kind of participatory requirement resulting from a crisis of political representation. But many examples of consultation show the difference between the intentions displayed and the reality: the outcome of the participation of the inhabitants and stakeholders is generally not satisfactory. The implementation of participatory democracy by institutions can sometimes be illusory, as it never really lets the inhabitants control the process.

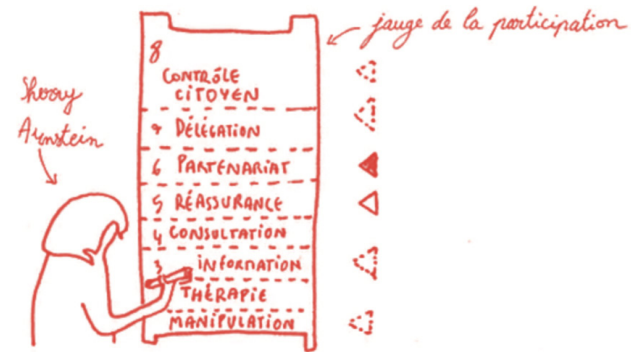
However, a tool allows to assess the level of participation of inhabitants in a project. The ladder of citizen participation was invented by the sociologist Sherry Arnstein in 1969. It measures the degree of citizen participation and assesses the degree of involvement. As part of the survey initiated by the town hall of the first district, to define the future of the vacant lot of Bon-Pasteur, this

assessment tool allows to measure the inhabitants' participation. The first stage is at level 5, with the possibility for the inhabitants to give their opinion. In the context of the creation of a common good, the level to be achieved is level 8. During the consultation, such a tool evaluates the implementation of participation of the local elected members but also follows the involvement, whether it is rising or not, of the inhabitants.

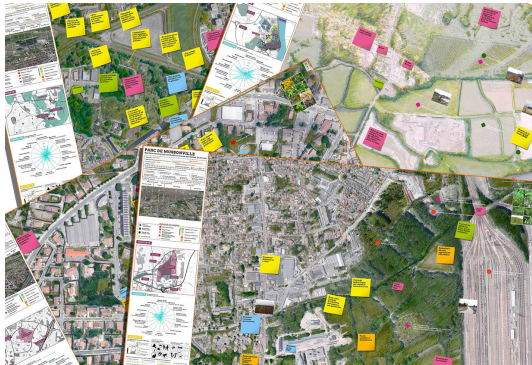
Participatory design is a strategy which allows to engage inhabitants or elected members in the project. It's a way of testing, confirming or eliminating some ideas but it may also highlight uses, conflicts or new ideas. In the context of the consultation started on the vacant lot, as a mediator, the designer is able to influence public policies, but he can also get the inhabitants to change their mind.

This reflection about the link between public sphere and commons is part of an ongoing process with a new generation of design agencies like La 27ème Région, a laboratory of public policies, or Vraiment Vraiment, defined as a general interest design agency. Those new design practices are linked with questions about the place of the designer and a specific attention to more desirable public policies by introducing design directly in the process of public institutions because they have the power of decisions more than a community of inhabitants.

Public space can be considered as a common good. Inhabitants-citizens might take more decisions for their public space, like the Bon Pasteur vacant lot, but this approach raises some questions of self-management. How the designer contribute to the creation of a common good ? What are the specific skills of the environmental designer?



The ladder of citizen participation of Sherry Arnstein illustrated by Association ICI ©Association ICI.



La carte du Bien Commun, Coloco. To create a common knowledge of the territory. Study realized in 2014 in Bègles. © Nicolas Brousse



An example of success of the implementation of a common good in Belgium : citizens mark the common path after the work of the farmer.



Inhabitants-citizens of the first district of Lyon are concerned by the spatial and territorial resources of the neighborhood.
© Laurie Beauvilain

Part 2

The activation of a territorial common good.

2.1 Starting thinking about the common good: projections and proposals.

Questioning limits

The question of the boundary is an entry in the project that allows us to begin the reflection, and raise, without the inhabitants realizing it, numbers of questions that are essential to deal with before establishing a common good. It is also the first principle to design a common good according to Elinor Ostrom. Boundaries take part in the consideration of a space as a public space, it interrogates its entrance, its surroundings, with a more or less marked fence. The intervention of the environmental designer allows to raise these questions from a concrete and practical angle. With his or her competences, the environmental designer will treat the colors, the materials, the proportions but also the lighting of this limit, all kinds of elements that a group of inhabitants will not first focus on, while these spatial markers will influence the rules of the common good and its success.

This way, the identification of the Bon Pasteur vacant lot as a common good lies within its limits, that distinguish it from the rest of the public space. This is exemplified in Christiania, a self-managed neighborhood in Copenhagen. Limits are also a way questioning the status of this vacant lot: is it a public park, managed by the town hall and a supervisor, a shared garden with an association, or an open space without supervision, without fence? Who has the key? This question is essential to consider a sustainable management of a resource. If the limits are essential for the establishment of a common good, the reflection engaged in this way makes it

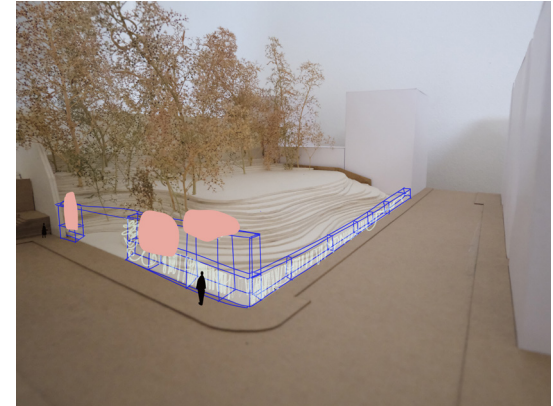
The meaning of this project is not to set up a common good immediately but to question its potential, so that the inhabitants become aware of the essential quality of this vacant lot and see the future as a common good or not.

possible to initiate quickly and simultaneously the uses and the rules to be introduced.

Uses and rules

Managing together and determining some uses and rules may be seductive for some but may frighten others who do not wish to lose "their" trees. The designer should not draw a project that makes the right compromise, taking into account the divergent opinions of each. The notion of care, as an orientation of the project, includes decisions that respect both the users and the place itself. Moreover, as the vacant lot is described in this text, it is essential to question the sustainability of this resource, for the current inhabitants but also for the future ones. The project and the proposals of the environmental designer are not insignificant, if they allow the inhabitants to get involved, to express contrasted opinions or to contribute actively. It is also a way of influencing the imaginary and the future decisions. With a gesture, forms and fiction, through scenarios referring to the reality of the territory, with a bit of dream and utopia, with rules and uses, the designer questions new modes of citizen organization while contributing to the preservation of a resource.

If the designer knows how to communicate a project to his sponsor by using different means such as plans, sectional views, photo-realistic views, models, etc, he must also be able, with a social approach, to turn towards the inhabitants from all walks of life and to adapt his communication and his proposals, which are meant to be discussed and debated with them. Getting the inhabitants to actively participate is therefore part and parcel of the environmental designer's approach. ♦



Researches about limits and uses extracted from the diploma project.
© Laurie Beauvilain






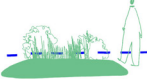
Entrance of the neighborhood Christiania in Copenhagen.
© JJF Arquitectos

Boundaries of the neighborhood. © Mari Hald

ICI, BIENTÔT...

QUI A LA CLÉ ?

Et si la friche ouvrait dans un futur proche, qui serait en charge de la gestion de ce nouvel espace public ?

-  La mairie, avec un gardien ?
-  Une association ?
-  Un voisin de la friche, responsable désigné ?
-  Pas de clôture ?
- une idée ? _____

Flyer designed for a meeting with inhabitants questioning the management of the Bon Pasteur vacant lot. © Laurie Beauvilain

2.2 A pluralist role for the environmental designer.

Mediation and communication: an important part of the process.

In this type of project, the environmental designer, as a mediator, goes a little beyond his field of competence, in dealing not only with space but also with product and graphic design. Is this not the role of a designer with hybrid skills to use all his know-how so as to coordinate a coherent social and ethical project? The vacant lot, as well as the concept of the common good, has a political and social entity. The neutral position of the designer, without any political bias, allows for a relationship of trust with the inhabitants. The establishment of virtual communication networks is essential to give substance to these emerging relationships. As Elinor Ostrom points out from her studies, a common good can be built in 1, 10, 50 years or never reach a finalized state. Such temporality requires a strong and long-term commitment on the part of the group. Should the designer be part of this group for a defined period or should he ensure a follow-up, which can last a lifetime?

Working in the public space: devices, experiments and meetings.

By establishing itself directly in the site to interact with the inhabitants, the designer creates a clear and direct link between the questions asked, the proposed visuals, and the site. It is easier for a majority of people to project themselves by having a direct relationship. It allows fluid exchanges with the designer, who will find a lot of



The mobile stand used during a meeting with inhabitants next to the Bon Pasteur vacant lot. © Laurie Beauvilain

information that he could not have alone. How many people can participate simultaneously? If the size of the group is decisive for the good management of the common good, the participation of the inhabitants in these moments of consultation is also important. Although the share of participants is reduced compared to the number of people in the neighborhood, the fact remains that if the designer is interested and shows honesty and transparency, people make the effort to come and take time to respond.

The environmental designer creates a micro-space in public space, with physical means such as signage, a mark on the ground or a device showing visual elements. It may be more or less formalized, temporary or over a longer period of time but it brings out the beginning of a group or the consideration of a common good. It is in this sense that the capacity of space to influence the inhabitants can be used to engage a collective action. The skills of the designer beyond his initial field of action make him a hybrid designer who adapts to the place and the public he is addressing. The designer's communication skills make him an intermediary between the place and the inhabitants-citizens, in a perspective of general interest while activating the establishment of a common good. ♦

ICI, LA FRICHE

Réflexions sur la considération d'un espace public comme bien commun.
Lettre d'information - Mars 2021

nouvelles — à la une • nouvelles — à la une • nouvelles — à la une

↓

Retour sur notre rencontre enneigée à la friche

Malgré la neige et les températures polaires, nous nous sommes quand même rencontrés le samedi 13 Février lors de mon petit stand. Nous avons échangé sur l'entrée de cet espace aujourd'hui clos. Et si la friche ouvrait bientôt, comment y entrerais nous ?

A partir de différentes propositions d'entrées : plus classiques comme un parc public ou plus originales, les habitants et riverains que j'ai rencontrés ont pu me donner leur avis, leurs inquiétudes ou de nouvelles propositions. Très vite, les questions de la gestion et des usages se sont posées. Avec ma question «Qui a la clé ?», nous avons pu échanger sur les différentes possibilités de gestion, j'ai pu me rendre compte de l'implication des habitants et de l'attachement à ce lieu.

Ces échanges ont été riches et ouverts et m'ont permis de comprendre les envies, les souvenirs et les enjeux du futur de cette friche. Je poursuis mes recherches et mes propositions à partir de ces nouveaux éléments de réflexion et je vous dis à très vite pour de nouveaux temps d'échanges.

rencontres-nous • séance de rattrapage • rencontres-nous

Participez en ligne !?

Afin de poursuivre l'échange avec les habitant.e.s que je n'ai pas pu rencontrer, le contenu présenté lors de la rencontre a été intégré à un questionnaire en ligne. Vous pourrez découvrir mes premières intentions et propositions auxquelles vous pourrez réagir et donner votre avis.

Alors, prêt.e.s ?

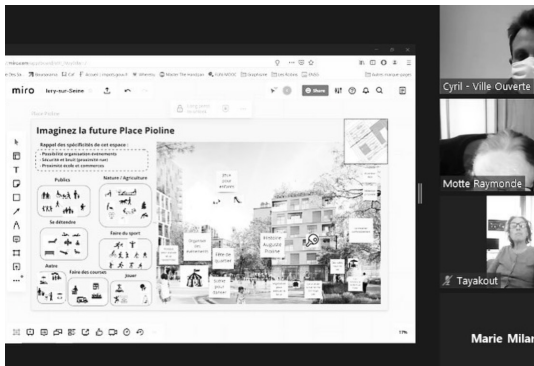
Extract of the newsletter sented to inhabitants of Lyon interested by the project. © Laurie Beauvilain

2.3 A citizen and committed posture of the designer.

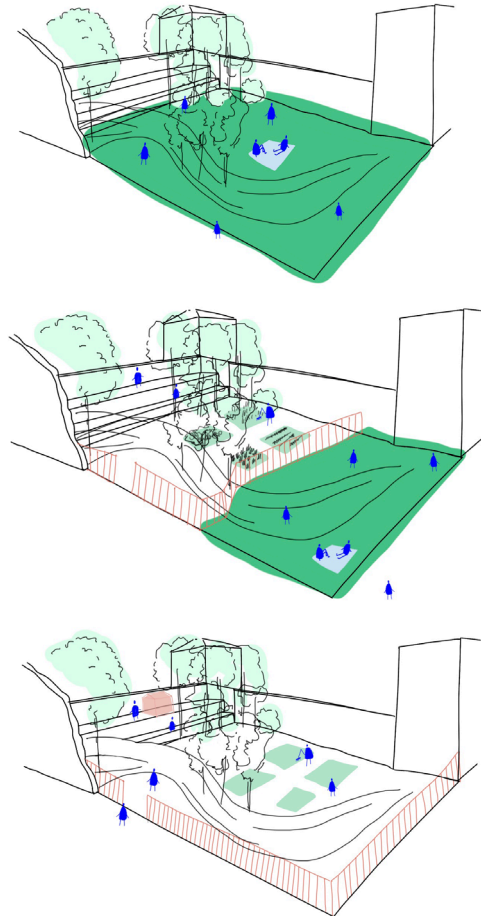
How to guarantee the general interest face to face with the divergent interests of the stakeholders?

If professionals mobilized in urban projects such as architect collectives, designers or landscapers are committed to making the city ever more democratic and civic, political and financial complexities can reduce the designer's action. Commissioned by private actors or authorities, designers are divided between the conditions of a project and the desire to better integrate the inhabitants in the process so as to meet as closely as possible their real needs and uses. An example is the management services related to uses. Although this mission is essential, it can result in a strong disappointment when the finalized project does not include the proposals that have emerged. The use of alternative methods of consultation may generate rich and strong moments between the designer and the inhabitants whereas the final project may fail to meet the inhabitants' expectations.

Who does the designer dedicate his project to? In the context of the activation of a common good, he has a political posture that makes him a designer-citizen. As such he places himself at the crossroads between the inhabitants-citizens and the decision-makers with whom he interacts. The designer-citizen might be politically used by his various interlocutors, that is what he must be vigilant, keep in mind his intentions and use his hybrid skills to carry out the implementation of a common good, by assuming his singular posture. ♦



The consultation of inhabitants have to be adapted during the pandemic to guarantee a high level of participation. Digital devices replace meets in the street. © Ville Ouverte



The designer have to project different proposals even if its in opposition with elected members vision. Researches about management extracted from the diploma project. © Laurie Beauvilain

Conclusion

Could the environmental designer get the public space to be considered as and turned into a common good? Certainly.

If, first, a public space is not necessarily regarded as a common good by city-dwellers, the fact is that it remains however essential for their individual and collective well-being. The notion of common good involves freeing ourselves from the idea of ownership. The designer has to use his skills in an intelligent and benevolent way so as to create new ways of life. He has to experiment and to invite the inhabitants-citizens to participate in the improvement of the living environment of all. If the ultimate goal is collective happiness in the public space, urban vacant lots are certainly ideal experimentation sites. The implementation of a territorial common good requires a long period. Initiating the process is a preliminary stage, which allows the designer to sow the seeds needed by the inhabitants-citizens.

If the status of a student designer allows to create a relationship of trust with the people, the professional status of the designer commissioned by authorities changes the prospects for success, by integrating financial and political issues that could change the relationship with inhabitants and the way of thinking the implementation of a common good.

Bibliography

The following bibliography was elaborated to sustain a piece of research carried out in French.

Books

ARIES Paul

Gratuité vs capitalisme. Larousse, 2018.
ISBN 978-2-0359-5065-9

BESSE Jean-Marc

Habiter. Un monde à mon image. Flammarion, Paris, 2013.
ISBN 978-2-0812-8197-4

LABBE Mickael

Reprendre place, contre l'architecture du mépris. Payot, 2019.
ISBN 978-2-228-92454-2

LUSSAULT Michel

L'homme spatial. La construction sociale de l'espace humain. Seuil, Paris, 2007.
ISBN 978-2-0209-3795-5

MAGNAGHI Alberto

La biorégion urbaine, petit traité sur le territoire bien commun. Eterotopia, France, 2014.
ISBN 979-10-93250-00-7

OSTROM Elinor

La gouvernance des biens communs, pour une nouvelle approche des ressources naturelles. De Boeck Supérieur, 2010.
ISBN 978-2-8041-6141-5

PAQUOT Thierry

L'espace public. La Découverte, 2015.
ISBN 978-2-7071-8580-8

VANUXEM Sarah

La propriété de la terre. Wildproject, 2018.
ISBN 978-2-9184-9069-2

Written press

FESTA Daniela

Les communs urbains. L'invention du commun. Revue des Sciences humaines, 2016, hors-série Traduire et introduire.

MEZOUE D Aniss, KAUFFMANN Vincent, NASDROVSKY Boris.

Vers un retour de la lenteur et des communs ? Espaces et sociétés, avril 2018, n°175. Disponible sur : cairn.info

TRILLING Julia

La privatisation de l'espace public en Californie. Les Annales de la recherche urbaine, n°57-58, 1992. Espaces publics en villes.

Digital publication

JOURDAIN Edouard

La part anarchiste des communs. Revue Ballast [en ligne]. 17 janvier 2020. Disponible sur : www.revue-ballast.fr

Report

LABOREY Claire, EVREUX Marc

Mainmise sur les villes. Arte, France, 2013, 89 min.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank first, Catherine Pradeau for her help and her precious advice along this abstract. Many thanks also to Ann Pham Ngoc Cuong and Laurence Pache who supervised the whole project.

I humbly extend my thanks to all concerned persons who co-operated with me in this regard, especially the inhabitants and elected members I met in the first district of Lyon. Huge thanks to Léonard, for all his support through this year and for pushing me forward and for appeasing me when I was stressed out. And of course, many thanks to my parents and sister, whose support and faith have boosted me up.

Graphic design

Laurie Beauvilain

Fonts

Regime and Manifest Grotesk

Paper

Munken polar rough 100g

Printer

School Raymond Loewy

Abstract printed in 4 copies for the High Diploma in Applied Arts specializing in eco-design and sustainable development.

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders of material produced in this abstract. Any rights not acknowledged here will be acknowledged in subsequent editions if notice is given to the research student.

This abstract starts with the tension between the consideration of the public space in the city-dwellers everyday life and its implementation as a common good. From this comes a hypothesis : is the public space an essential resource? If this intuition was right, the designer might have a role to play to help citizens-inhabitants on the self-management of a territorial common good.

What are the methods and the competences of an environmental designer? How could the designer act to a sustainable management of a territorial resource by the inhabitants?

This abstract is a condensed version of my essay *L'espace public, un commun territorial?*. It has helped me identify which methods and tools of mediation could be applied and used in the precise case of the territory I have chosen : the Bon Pasteur vacant lot in Lyon.