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Cities' literary factory:

The mobilization of literature in urban planning in Europe

Abstract

Over the past twenty years or so, cities have been including literature and writers on architectural and urban projects, by more readily asking them to participate in the urban policy creation process. In response to requests, writers have collaborated with architects on planning projects involving tangible depictions of literature in the city. The present article proposes an analysis of this increasing literary presence within urban planning and landscapes: How is literature physically incorporated into the layout and management of today's cities? Results from qualitative surveys conducted across various French and European cities over the past several years help frame this investigation. A number of "literary" urban planning projects built in French cities during the mid-1990's will serve as a focal point for this endeavor. The projects analyzed herein were executed by members of the OuLiPo movement (a literary group dedicated to enhancing the potential of literature). Intended for both scholars and practitioners alike, this study explores how such new literary practices interact with the modern city, in revealing the professional realignments and changes in operating patterns occurring in both urban planning and urban design. It also critically assesses the models, values and paradoxes underlying today's cityscapes. The integration of literature into urban projects influences modern spaces in a way that contrasts: between striving towards democratization and social inclusion, between an initially subversive project and a shift favoring the mainstream, between a collaborative contextual approach and the dual effects of exclusion and relegation, all of which stem from stamping a "high-minded culture" on the city.

Keywords: *literary urban construction, democratization, inclusion, standardization, exclusion, relegation.*

Introduction

The role of artistic movements in city construction offers a topic of great interest to researchers and professionals working in the field of urban planning and development. From a research standpoint, considerable works have sought to establish how art and culture actually contribute to laying out and managing modern cities (Cole, 1987; Grésillon, 2008; Miles, 1997; Paddison and Miles, 2007; Terrin, 2012; Zukin, 1995). For a long time, the emphasis behind such efforts had been placed on the central role played by contemporary art in the dynamic urban revitalization process. The mobilization of other more marginal and

more discreet artistic or cultural forms, like literature, has given rise to an emerging body of research (Bonniot & Fournier, 2013; Molina, 2014b, 2016).

The quest to understanding how literature participates in the production, transformation and management of cities provides a more insightful lead given the special bond formed between contemporary literary practices and cities. Writers have adopted the city as a laboratory for new literary experiments (Molina, 2014a; Redondo, 2015). In response to requests formulated within European cities, spearheaded by French metropolitan areas, writers have collaborated with architects and/or visual artists on urban design projects that champion the concept of a tangible depiction of literature in the city. Accordingly, literature has seeped into the heart of an architectural or planning strategy aimed at promoting functional urban spaces. This article proposes an exploration of the interplay between these new literary practices and urban spaces: how in concrete terms is literature being incorporated into the layout and management of today's cities, and what do inter-professional practices involving writers and architects reveal about the way contemporary cities are taking shape? What effects, both expected and unexpected, what types of spaces and what social practices does this urban literary composition ultimately help produce and promote?

In drafting answers to these questions, this article will rely on various surveys conducted on the mobilization of writers and literature as part of the projects of a number of French and European cities, uncovered in thesis and post-doctoral research. Given the extent to which they portray this recent dynamic and movement overall, the literary projects created by this OuLiPo group, in partnership with urban planning professionals across a number of French cities, will receive special attention herein. Founded at the beginning of the 1960's, the OuLiPo workshop, dedicated to the potential of literature, consists of an international group of writers and mathematicians undertaking playful and experimental exercises that involve language, in the aim of impelling a new set of literary dynamics. Some of the research carried out in geography and literature has already indicated with great precision how OuLiPo members' contemporary literary practices maintain their unique and strong ties with places (Schilling 2003, 2006, 2011). With the Oulipians, space is not only occupied as a literary theme, i.e. a topic of representation, but also as an experimental field exploring new ways to produce literature (Molina 2014). Indeed, the city has been a favorite topic for poets and novelists, the place where Baudelaire and Rimbaud walked, the surrealists' beat (Stierle 2002). Yet with Georges Perec, the city became the laboratory of a new experience: *in situ* writing, whose context is capable of manufacturing an immediate relationship with the place (Molina 2014). During the 1960's, Georges Perec initiated a number of "projects executed in the field", as described by Derek Schilling in his analysis of the "Place" projects of this Oulipian author (2003, p. 144). As such, with Oulipian practices, literature has taken a "spatial turn". The physical staging of this literature factory seems to be part of a more general thread of contemporary artistic practices. Since the 1960's, the contemporary plastic arts have tended to be embedded in a "contextual art", being produced *in* and *with* their environment, as explored in the geography of art field. This contribution seeks to observe how Oulipians in particular have extended their practice of constraint-based writing all the way to the fields of architecture and urban planning.

These collaborative phenomena between literature and the city will be examined according to a three-stage process. The first stage will be devoted to theoretically framing the task at hand. It will build a perspective through the lens of geography and urban studies, establishing the underlying dynamics in contemporary urban development and presenting the methods deployed. In the two following segments, such literary mobilization will be placed into perspective through the use and introduction of other artistic and cultural forms within the city's factory. We will therefore be comparing the common and specific features of literature as an "ingredient" in the production of urban spaces with other forms, while highlighting research that has critically examined both the expected and real effects of art and culture in cities' production, rehabilitation and management. Stage 2 will then focus on determining the buoyancy of these urban literary surges and the ambitions held by their designers, as

revealed by our surveys. The process through which a writer substantively and symbolically participates in constructing urban spaces and then transitions to becoming an actor in the urban production process will be detailed. The third and final stage will analyze how literary design infused into urban planning projects opens a discussion on the paradoxes these developments raise in terms of appropriation, social dynamics and acceptance by city residents and users.

1. Co-production of literature and cities

1.1 The literary substance of European cities, as witnessed in contemporary trends

In the area of European city composition and management over the past twenty years, literature tends to be included as a project component. Since the 1990's, projects focusing on the literary treatment of buildings or urban open spaces have in fact been on the rise in various European cities, like Paris, Madrid, Prague, Amsterdam, Dublin and Naples. The most tangible results involve public venues and buildings open at least partially to public use (libraries, public places) and mobility corridors (metro, tramway stations, etc.), i.e. spaces where intense social practices and interactions play out (Molina, 2014b, 2016; Redondo, 2015). France offers an emblematic case regarding this permeation of literature into architectural and urban projects, as well as a perception into how various cities are managed (e.g. Paris, Saint-Denis, Strasbourg, Rennes, Nantes, Aix-en-Provence). In Paris for example, the writer Jean-Christophe Bailly collaborated with architect Antoine Grumbach in developing the François Mitterrand station on Line 14 of the city's subway system. The opportunity provided through public policy embracing modern culture and art by adopting an artistic creation subsidy system (1% cultural allocation on all public procurement projects) (Moulin, 1992) helps explain this expansion of literary references within the built urban landscape.

The use of literature in urban development is not necessarily confined to public buildings and moreover is not solely justified by legal obligations or financing opportunities. This trend can actually be traced to many other projects, like major private-sector facilities or private housing complexes showcasing the extent of cultural, social and political challenges. A number of imprints of literary and poetic citations are on display across an array of European cities. Quotes from the poet Rainer Maria Rilke have been used by architect Jean Nouvel on the facades of an office building and department store (Zlatý Anděl) located at a high-profile intersection in central Prague (Czech Republic). A text from Victor Hugo on freedom of the press has been imprinted onto the facade of the *Le Monde* newspaper's Paris head office, designed by architect Christian de Portzamparc. This literary imprint technique was also used in the development projects of large luxury hotels in some of Europe's largest cities, like Madrid's Hotel Las Letras.

Within contemporary European cities, various phenomena also underscore the desire to promote a literary heritage. Such determination is displayed not only in statues of writers, poets or literary celebrities in urban open spaces (Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Geneva, the famous character who walks through walls in Paris' Montmartre district, Jules Vernes in Nantes (France), James Joyce in Dublin, Fernando Pessoa in Lisbon), but also by museums and writers' houses (e.g. the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam, Jules Verne Museums in Nantes and Amiens in France) (Bonniot-Mirloup & Blasquiet, 2016; Molina, 2014b). Some recent public space projects can be cited as examples, including a homage to Spain's Golden Century of literary heritage in Madrid's "*Barrio de las Letras*" (Literary District), renowned by tourists. As another example, on June 16th ever year for Bloomsday, a series of events (public readings, literary circuits, etc.) is held in Dublin, James Joyce's birthplace and one of his favorite literary settings, attracting throngs of residents and tourists and

significantly contributing to the city's cultural life and economy. An entire array of actors participates in the staging, maintenance and operations of urban literary heritage promotional campaigns (city managers and public works departments on the front lines, along with cultural heritage and tourism agencies, tourist offices, and cultural actors chiefly artists, led by sculptors, designers and private entities like hotels and tour operators).

Figure 1: Zlatý Anděl in Prague: A play on the poetic reference

Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/19903763@N00/3314117524/in/photolist-gHKML3-6dQ5qu-62wFdx-6dKULT-gHLuEV-dkfHev-gHKEWk-63RHFj

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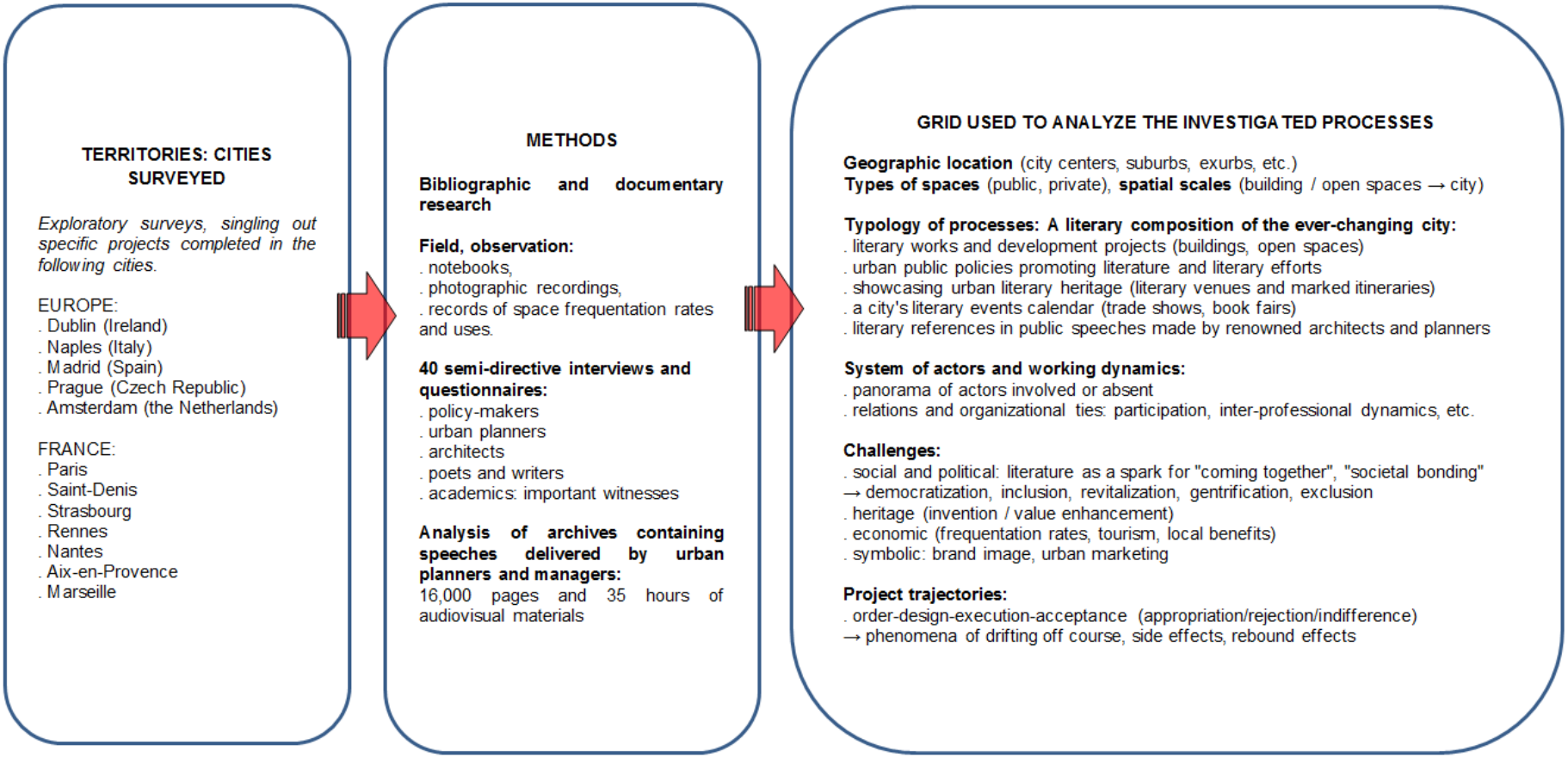
1.2 A playground for literary geography and urban studies

The literary construction of contemporary cities was first explored via the "geography of literature" (Brosseau, 2015; Molina, 2014a, 2014b, 2016; Peraldo, 2016), which has taken root since the beginning of the 2000's among geographers interested in literature. Focusing on a specific topic, this approach has molded a current of thought that more broadly falls under the banner "geography of art", which addresses the co-production relationship existing between art and space (Guinard, 2014; Volvey, 2008, 2010). The "geography of literature" distinguishes itself from "literary geography", which proposes a textual approach, i.e. an internal analysis of literary work. "Literary geography" actually sheds light on how space is represented in textual passages. Various works have analyzed the city's depiction in literature (notably Lehan 1998, Macnamara, 2014). Paris, for example, appears as a "capital

city of signs", crystallizing into many imaginary and literary works (Stierle, 2002, Kennedy, 2009). Los Angeles has also been viewed as one of the world's major cities and included in numerous pieces of literary fiction (Fine 2004). The "geography of literature", on the other hand, offers another point of view and shifts attention to questioning the relationship literature enjoys with society and space by investigating the phenomena of production, appropriation, use, even exploitation, of its associated works and spaces (those inhabited by the writer, writing venues, conduits through which literary works can reach the public, etc.). Researchers have questioned the relationship writers build with the cities they've frequented or where they've left their literary mark, e.g. Charles Bukowski and the lowlands (Brosseau 2008). The influence exerted by literature on the depictions individuals and social groups construct of a city and the circulation phenomena between the literary and social imaginary have also been examined. Some works have actually created a matrix influencing the way individuals perceive, represent and discover during their travels to or daily practices of cities (Molina 2007) or the place occupied as an object of artistic representation (Reff, 1998). The specific issue surrounding literary tourism (more prevalent in cities) seems to have also undergone considerable review (Brown, 2012; de Saint Phalle, 2004; Robinson and Andersen, n.d.; Watson, 2006, 2009). Paris offers a unique case study, as popular tourism has been nurtured through the literary myth of a city replete with a panoply of attractions, as evoked in the contemporary novel "The Da Vinci Code", or by authors like Hemingway and Colette (Wells, 2016). More broadly, the role played by literature in territorial development has been recently explored for a range of geographies (Bonniot-Mirloup & Blasquiet, 2016; Fournier, 2016; Molina, 2010, 2014a, 2016). The research presented in this article has contributed to enhancing the "geography of literature" approach by concentrating first and foremost on contemporary cities and the role literature plays in their composition and management.

The analysis of these projects draws into question the modes by which contemporary cities are transformed; this analysis addresses the issues underlying urban studies, thus placing such studies as a second theoretical pillar of our research. The collaborative forms identified between writers and city builders introduce new inter-professional working dynamics, which realign the system of urban development actors, thus expanding the analysis to include the sociology of urban professions (Biau and Tapie, 2009; Chadoin, 2007; Chadoin and Claude, 2010; Claude, 2006; Tapie, 2000). Moreover, these projects provide an avenue for literature serves as a resource when rezoning urban spaces, like other artistic forms capable of being identified in different urban contexts (Cole, 1987; Hall, 2001; Ley, 2003; Lloyd, 2002; McCarthy, 2006; Miles, 1997, 2005; Paddison, 1993). Such literary development projects lead to questioning the inclusion and exclusion processes that shape contemporary cities (Molina, 2016), as explored previously within the realm of other art forms (Sharp, Pollock, and Paddison, 2005; Smith, 1996; Zukin, 1995). By moving the lens onto the street, in assuming a spatial dimension and building bonds both in and with the city, literature seeks to democratize, through an engagement with all, in striving for an urban "coming together" and "making society work" (Jaillet, 1997). The spaces create that are capable of infusing literature however epitomize "high-minded culture" (Bourdieu, 2002), which implicitly excludes social groups without any literary affinity and does not convey a shared frame of reference like other cultural and artistic spaces (Baniotopoulou, 2001; Cameron and Coaffee, 2005; Deutsche, 1998; Ley, 2003; Mathews, 2008). Given the inherent paradox when these projects are viewed with respect to their initial ambition, to what extent then do they actually contribute to replicating socio-spatial inequalities and gentrifying the spaces? To better explore this literary composition of contemporary cities and suggest ways of tackling the field of "geography of literature" and problems associated with urban studies, we conducted a number of qualitative surveys over the years of thesis and post-doctoral research, from 2005 to 2016, as summarized in the following diagram.

Figure 2: Qualitative surveys on urban literary composition



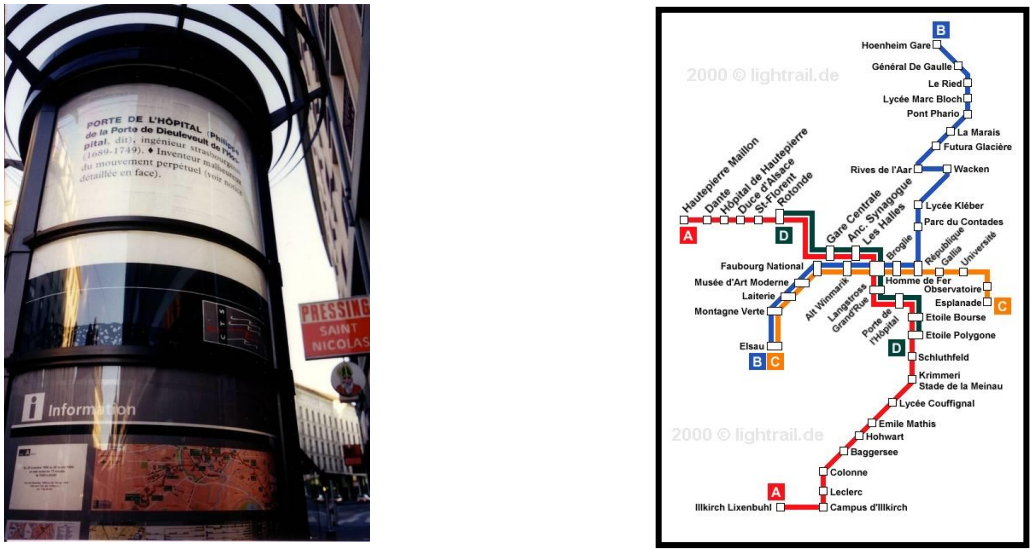
Source: Molina, 2017

1.3 Emblematic cases: The OuLiPo-inspired literary projects in French cities

By the sheer number and diversity of architectural and public space projects, as well as the diversity of the cities hosting such works, Oulipians offer cases of great interest for the presentation of our survey results on literary substance. As of the 1990's, Oulipians became involved in the literary treatment of urban spaces by responding to various calls. Through their participation in architectural and planning projects and developments, these writers shifted their literary content and staged their works in the cities themselves. This effort led to manually inscribing literature, in its material form, within the city's physical space (Molina, 2014a). Literature has migrated outside of its traditional spaces (books, libraries, bookstores, etc.) and into the city and its component spaces. For Oulipians, a spatial literary layout actually relies on challenging a systemic response that combines literary composition constraints with the type of spatial building constraints (be they material, technical, relational, economic or symbolic) with which urban professionals and developers are most familiar. Literary projects mobilize literature much like an ingredient and the writer much like an urban developer, in order to physically construct an urban space and symbolically craft a socially-valued identity of place (Molina, 2014a).

Figure 3: Tramway in the French city of Strasbourg:
An innovative project integrating literature (1994)

Source: Molina, October 2008



Source: Oulipo's documents, provided by Hervé Le Tellier

(color should be used for this figure in print)

The treatment applied to Strasbourg tramway stations in 1994 marked the beginning of this adventure. In its project submitted to the Strasbourg Metropolitan Council and the Regional Culture and Communications Directorate (DRAC), OuLiPo produced a series of 96 texts playing with the network's place names written onto the Wilmotte columns of the various transit stations. Two years hence, in 1996, saw a second landmark project, namely the University of Paris 8 Library in Saint-Denis. At the request of architect Pierre Riboulet, Oulipians proposed a mural poem for inscription onto the facade of the building footbridge; this poem borrowed citations relative to the universe of books and the topic of reading. Inaugurated in 2010, the work entitled "*Clous de l'Esplanade*" offered another example of a production conceived by OuLiPo members at the behest of architect Nicolas Michelin, this time within the scope of redesigning the Charles de Gaulle Esplanade in Rennes. It is composed of nails inserted into the ground, featuring the words that a user of this space, asked to come up with an original citation, might mentally concoct while strolling.

Through these accomplishments, the dual practices of literary creation and architectural and public space projects can be assessed, leading to the conclusion that literature and space are being co-constructed. A co-construction relationship is nurtured between literary composition (with literary work being created via a system of socio-spatial constraints) and spatial composition (enhancing the physical quality of a space through reliance on a joint writer-literature mobilization). These achievements thus entail a double process, namely *the "spatialization"* of literature and *the "literarization"* of the urban space. Literature and poetry are produced both in and with the urban space, thus witnessing their mutual "*spatialization*" (Volvey, 2008) and offering one of the most significant testimonials of "spatial twists" sparked by contemporary literature in France.

2. Literature as an ingredient in contemporary urban production

With these literary arrangements of urban spaces, Oulipians have been tackling the constraints specific to the urban production field. In broader terms, they have provided insight into the underpinnings of urban literary composition: how does the contemporary city take shape in the presence of literature, based on which principles, processes, working protocols, which organization undergirds these projects? What do these practices say about the dynamics of urban literary creation and, more generally, about current urban space production? Which parallels can then be established with other forms of artistic mobilization and cultural uses in the production, transformation and valorization of spaces in the contemporary cities analyzed as part of previous research?

2.1 The writer as an actor on the urban production scene

Integrating writers into the world of urban professionals lies within a movement to multiply the project development trades and, in more general terms, expand the inter-professional cooperative dynamics permeating into the fields of architecture and urban planning (Biau and Tapie, 2009; Chadoin, 2007; Claude, 2006; Tapie, 2000; Tapie *et al.*, 2005), which have since branched out to encompass artistic skills. The literary composition of urban spaces has built new collaborative chains between project-driven trades and the professions. The writer provides backup and support to the project architect, tasked with seeing development through to fruition, in accordance with specifications drawn up by the project sponsor. The example of the Charles de Gaulle Esplanade in Rennes helps grasp the conditions inherent in design, execution and distribution of professional roles. The architect commissions OuLiPo team members to produce text-based artwork under the aegis of the 1% artistic expenditure, as drawn from the space renovation budget. The constraints placed on their work are stipulated in a dialogue held with the project sponsor (i.e. City of Rennes) and the project

architect (Nicolas Michelin's firm). A "special commission", composed of six Oulipians, works hand in hand in order to devise a project for subsequent presentation to Rennes' elected officials to secure validation before the architect commences.

On occasion, a literary project also requires the technical support of other professions (engineers, graphic designers, typographers, visual artists), in addition to relying on a specialized professional network that OuLiPo has assembled through past experiences. These urban literary creations are crafted as part of an inter-professional dialogue engaging many actors seeking compromises among constraints, be they literary, technical, budgetary, urban, temporal, etc. The writer's arrival on the scene introduces a new degree of complexity into the urban production system. For one thing, a new profession's involvement always raises the issues of coordination and competition with actors formerly holding a status in this territory (Vivant, 2012). This penetration of writers represents competition for the artists who had occupied the market of the 1% cultural allocation and public procurement contracts, i.e. who had been at the helm of the urban factory. Moreover, the distribution of roles between the writer and his/her partners (architects, graphic designers, etc.) appears, at least for now, to be somewhat unstable. The writer often winds up being projected into the role of urban composer, in facing professions and constraints that differ sharply from more familiar surroundings. The writer therefore learns to accept this role "on the fly", through trial and error and experimenting with new working procedures. The relations between writers and architects are therefore not always clear-cut, as the project architect is forced at times to act as mediator or intermediary between the project sponsor and the writer, while being thrust into the role of partner and writer's advocate. New conditions applicable to exercising the literary trade and building our cities are being drawn up.

This integration of the writer however also yields overlapping challenges for project partners. The city's fabrication makes up a whole new market, an opportune opening for a trade characterized by a strong disconnect between its social prestige and actual economic conditions on the ground (Lahire, 2006). By occupying the domain of space builders, the writer refreshes his/her activities and develops skills similar to those possessed by the project architect (namely dialogue and negotiation with a sponsor, mediation with residents, inter-professional duties, acknowledgment of the urban context, resolution of architectural and urban planning issues), all of which overlap with the constraints typically imposed on literature. For the project sponsor and architect, in addition to coping with the legislative constraints imposed by construction and renovation regulations, as established by the mandated 1% cultural allocation or public procurement financing option, recourse to a writer entails major symbolic stakes. This recourse also highlights a sensitive side of the project, a contextual and heritage-based approach, a relational or even participatory approach, towards local residents, as well as entertainment in keeping with the trendy model of a festive, recreational city (Chaudoir, 2007; Gravari-Barbas, 2006; Judd, 1999; Stevens, 2007).

2.2 An integration strategy with an urban background

Oulipians are mobilized to pursue urban development work in response to orders issued by project managers and architects, who themselves respond to the expectations and constraints listed in the specifications set forth by a project sponsor. Writers are thus relying on an intricate system of constraints to come up with their proposal; such constraints pertain to a site, an urban context and the potential social practices adopted. The "*Clous de l'Esplanade* Charles de Gaulle" effort in Rennes is exemplary for its contextual adaptation; the writer contributed to a redevelopment program carried out in a public space with a cultural purpose (auditorium, multiplex cinema, major cultural facility hosting a library, museum and science exhibition hall). This adaptation was evidenced in particular by compliance with three types of constraints defined by the project sponsor, project architect and the writers themselves. Some of these constraints were in fact imposed in the municipal specifications submitted to the project architect (given that the public space had been intended to host large gatherings and public events, the project sponsor preferred for it to

remain uncluttered, without even a tree or street furniture). Other prescriptions were communicated to Oulipians by the architect (i.e. inclusion of the city's milestone dates, use of a marked course, insertion of nails onto a network of branches, spacing between the nails, their length). Other constraints were assigned by OuLiPo in order to better meet the challenges presented by both the venue and its social practices, namely: some flexibility in collating the texts placed on the nails (the planned texts had to be legible on all nine distinct itineraries); legibility considerations (a text engraved in two different directions on the nail to facilitate reading by passersby); "reversibility" (a palindrome text, allowing for reading in either direction); and "pertinence". The text references topics tied to open spaces bearing an inscription: a meeting, celebration, love, the weather, rain, history, walking. These constraints, all tied to the context, are thus utilized by Oulipians as resources for building a dynamic surrounding this artistic effort.

The arrival of writers addressing venue-specific issues familiar to both architects and urban planning professions thus implies opening a dialogue with the existing scene, i.e. the urban context, its heritage and history. The proposed projects are to be built *in*, *for* and *with* a unique urban space and socio-spatial context. The body of Oulipian works attests to how literature, to the same extent as contemporary art, has exited its traditional spaces, relocating its "worlds" (Becker, 2010), taking to the streets, penetrating the domain of architecture and urban planning, and "immersing itself in the realm of the tangible" (Ardenne, 2002, p. 19), all the while moving in sync with the problems experienced in specific locales. Such works stem from a clash of literature with roadblocks and with the system of architectural and urban planning constraints.

2.3 A relational and participatory approach

By taking to the streets and complying with urban composition constraints, Oulipian literature aligns with a more participatory approach. It seeks to integrate the lives of residents, their representations, their collective memories and their spatial practices. The issue of mobility, more specifically movement, occupies a predominant place in Oulipian projects. The majority of their works invite residents and open space users onto amusing itineraries laid out through the city. The "*Clous de l'Esplanade*" achievement, for example, relied on the principle of users-partners of the endeavor prepared to embark on a treasure hunt across the city, a rally to reward a literary text along paths traversed and meanderings. Projects have thus been designed by means of integrating the principle of a reaction and an appropriation by the user according to a rationale that dismantles the notion of a recipient, a passive reader, in favor of imagining a full-fledged actor in this endeavor (Stevens, 2007). Once again, this Oulipian approach proves to be more highly symptomatic of a characteristic trend occurring in the arts since the 1960's, as championed by artists who, in abandoning the role of creator, have initiated their "descent into the arena of the commonplace" and now view artistic production from the lens of "otherism" (Ardenne, 2002, p. 182). This transition is being accompanied by a co-construction with other actors and a democratization of art and culture.

Other literary projects planned for open spaces with OuLiPo participation have placed greater emphasis on local residents' input. The work performed on the Excideuil benches, as proposed by Jacques Jouet, is undoubtedly the Oulipian achievement that has taken such a participatory approach the furthest. Residents were led by the writer throughout the project development process: early on, with observations of practices by residents in the targeted district; then meetings to record their memories, personal accounts and anecdotes to subsequently produce poems recalling this local memory and city history. This step was followed by a public reading session to obtain residents' reactions to the poems before their inscription into the public domain. In this way, residents are being requested to serve as partners to the production of literary work as well as judges of the writer's output. The participatory approach thus overlaps with a heritage dilemma. This effort is intended to be anchored into a rationale of continuity, with the spotlight aimed at the collective memory of a place. The invention of a literary heritage within the scope of urban design projects thus

seeks to add value to these spaces by conferring upon them a new literary quality tied to local collective memory. This creation of a literary identity carries the political challenge of building territories richly symbolic in positive cultural and social values.

3. Paradoxical effects of urban literary production

An examination of the literary project design steps has helped clarify the extent to which these steps address the relational, professional, contextual and political challenges inherent in problems pertaining to building a contemporary city. Incorporating Oulipians into the development project strategy is straight out of an action model for producing and rezoning spaces based on their artistic and cultural attributes, known to be highly popular in the contemporary context, while seeking to promote a social link (Paddison, 1993; Zukin, 1995). However, considerable research has already examined and highlighted the limits of this action model for other artistic and cultural ventures. Therefore, in overlapping results with our research conclusions, the intentions and ambitions expressed by actors shaping the urban environment need to be weighed against the tangible effects engendered by completing these works in the first place. This step will require taking a cold hard look at how such literary spatialization has affected the city and its component spaces.

3.1 From an initially subversive ambition all the way to normalization

The movement to spatialize literature and art, embodied in the *in situ* efforts undertaken by its proponents, was initially intended to take to the streets, to leave behind traditional venues and institutional spaces (museum, library, bookstore, etc.) (Ardenne, 2002; Volvey, 2008). This movement took root in an approach purported as alternative, experimental, militant and transgressive, concerned over publicizing and democratizing the craft, framing it and opening it up for discussion in the public square. By occupying the ordinary, the banal, the routine, the Oulipian Jacques Jouet attempted to conduct a series of literary experiments with a cause, as exemplified by occupying "forgotten" spaces and reconnecting with their inhabitants (Molina, 2014a). He sought to infuse his poems-portraits conducted *in situ* with direct interactions involving patients at a psychiatric hospital and factory workers. His poetic project had become tinged with a social message. His mission was to resurrect the image of places of last resort, offering them new potentials, perceptions, depictions and practices.

However, integrating the writer into an urban composition, within the scope of the 1% artistic allocation or public procurement policies, has revealed the transition to another stage, namely one of institutionalizing this approach, resulting in a kind of normalization. So it seems that literature, in trailing by a few years, cannot escape the same slide that for contemporary art began in the 1970's, heading towards a systematic reliance on art in urban policy, hailed as the new standard to enhance the aesthetic appeal of open spaces along with their safety and gentrification, while excluding less affluent population segments (Ardenne, 2002; Cole, 1987; Miles, 1997; Zukin, 1995). This process leads to "corrupting the initial ambitions" of approaches that started out as radical, subversive and marginal when adopted by dedicated artists (Ardenne, 2002).

Figure 4: More widespread literary achievements by the OuLiPo team in French cities

PROJECT NAME		PLACE	YEAR OF COMPLETION AND DURATION	SPONSOR	NATURE OF INTERVENTION	PARTNERS
COLLECTIVE OULIPO PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS						
Strasbourg Tramway		Wilmotte columns placed in the Strasbourg Tramway stations	1994 (permanent)	Commissioned by the Strasbourg Metropolitan Council, Alsace Regional Cultural Affairs Directorate (DRAC)	96 texts laid out on the station's columns playing with the place names and identities	Pierre Laurent (typographer)
"*Seul astre exact un livre*"		Footbridge wall, University of Paris 8 library, Saint-Denis	1996 (permanent)	Commissioned by Pierre Riboulet	Mural poem, clever play on words from citations relative to the text	David Tremlett (graphic designer)
Carrefour Pleyel		Carrefour Pleyel metro station, Paris	2001, for the station's 100th anniversary (temporary: 12 months)	Commissioned by the RATP (Paris Transit Authority) and the BBCF[2] architectural group	Literary arrangement of the space: mural poems playing on the identity of the place: the musical universe[1]	Pierre Laurent (typographer)
Weightlessness, Festival of Lights		Place des Terreaux, Lyon	2006 (temporary)	Commissioned by the Lyon Metropolitan Council and the BBCF architectural group	Staging in the public space: installation of balloons and projection of texts	BBCF
"*Les Clous de l'Esplanade*"		Charles de Gaulle Esplanade, Rennes	Underway (permanent)	Commissioned by Nicolas Michelin, architect-planner / ANMA agency, Paris, as part of the esplanade renovation project	Layout of 215 nails propping up a text on the themes of the gathering place, the city and the festival. Set up like a game of pursuit, a literary itinerary through public spaces	Nicolas Michelin
THE INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF OULIPO MEMBERS						
Jacques Roubaud	Pili, Pyramides metro station	Pyramides metro station on the network's line 14	2000, the metro's 100th anniversary (permanent)	RATP (Paris Transit Authority)	A piece of work based on an artistic and modern interpretation of ancient light indicators	Philippe Favier (visual artist)
	"Poem for a footbridge"	A pedestrian walkway in Bischeim	2000 (permanent)	Commissioned as part of the Strasbourg tramway line B project	2 poems inscribed on the outer parts of the bridge arches	Shia Armajani
Jacques Jouet	The benches of Excideuil	Public benches placed in the historical center of Excideuil	2001 (permanent)	Commissioned by "new sponsors": Foundation of France, Excideuil Cultural Affairs Office, assisted by the Excit'oeil Association.	19 poems engraved on the town's public benches relating to the history or a memory of Excideuil residents, collected by the poet	Residents of the district around the Church

Source: Molina G., 2010, summary produced based on working documents and position papers backing OuLiPo projects, furnished by Hervé Le Tellier.

3.2 A democratization project that paradoxically turns into an elitist achievement

Within these projects and their justifications, the ambition to democratize literature stands out as a major argument; observations still suggest that the territorial distribution of literary amenities aligns with a somewhat elitist geography. These productions are directed, for the most part, at the central spaces of France's capital and major provincial cities (Strasbourg, Paris, Lyon, Rennes) as well as the most renowned and prestigious locales: large public plazas, dedicated transit spaces (tramway or metro stations), cultural venues.

Another question to be raised concerns the tangible effects of literature as a public art and its potential for reshaping public spaces, which leads to evaluating the acceptance and appropriation of these literary urban works. The works tangibly reflect a presence of the text and literature in the city, successfully drawing literature out from its traditional spaces. But is "being potentially visible to all" synonymous with "intended for all"? Which users and residents actually understand the transformed literary citations and puns on the University of Paris 8 Library's literary wall in Saint-Denis, or the playfulness directed at the place names engraved in Strasbourg's tramway stations? Which users are able to glean meaning and which spatial practices in public spaces serve as a springboard for literary urban planning? Would this be a regular user, a mom, for example, crossing the esplanade on a daily basis trying to strike a balance between the constraints of professional and family life, or what about the tourist just passing through, i.e. a more "exceptional" user not subjected to the same constraints as those of residents and instead taking a more recreational approach to interacting with the city?

To explore in greater detail this question of how such literary works are being accepted, an extensive survey would need to be conducted among users of the spaces. Several indications garnered from Oulipian cases cross-correlated with other case studies serve to frame the response. Every artistic form has both its public and "non-public" perception and inevitably induces inclusion and exclusion processes. Some works of art however implicitly return some level of the imaginary, i.e. cultures or sub-cultures more or less widely shared by various groups composing urban society. Recent research has probed the contemporary context (from the 1980's to modern times) on how famous French architects-planners of the star-system who help produce and transform European and world class cities make frequent use of various literary references (Molina, 2010). This study has clearly demonstrated that such explicit references to libraries, imaginaries and cultures are shared to some extent by distinct social groups. The references take place on a scale extending from the more popular to the more elitist, and in some instances remain confidential. This scale yields a variability in both the inclusion and exclusion processes. As for Oulipian cases, the correspondence sent by Strasbourg residents to their City Hall denouncing mistakes contained in the texts placed on the Wilmotte columns as "scandalous" indicates the presence of misunderstandings and a widening gulf with OuLiPo members' work, as some users neither grasp nor appreciate the Oulipian puns played on place names. To what extent is Oulipian literature, through the complex games it proposes on literary constraints and stylistic figures, revelatory of a certain elitism, of a "high-minded culture" (Bourdieu, 2002) mostly inaccessible to non-aficionados? Oulipian literary works are thus not spared the criticism levied as regards contemporary art and its disconnect with city residents' practices and local uses, expectations and concerns. The "literarization" of the urban layout may be interpreted as one of the incarnations of an imposed cultural bias and the power of the city's creative and upper classes, like a gentrification symptom sweeping city centers. More broadly, this phenomenon affects the various urban spaces by virtue of imposing a particular culture, not necessarily familiar to all and detrimental to other cultural forms.

3.3 Urban literary production: Symptom of the "recreational" city?

Literature is now apparently looked to as one ingredient in building a creative and recreational contemporary city, to be included in a potential recipe for an "aesthetic urban

composition", with spaces designed as theatrical venues, stage sets, proper *decorum* (Ambrosino, 2012, p. 181; Gravari-Barbas, 2006). Along these lines, the "*Clous de l'Esplanade*" project in Rennes has been cited as one of the latest incarnations of a public art policy being promoted at the municipal level, thus contributing to the array of artistic endeavors engraved into public spaces alongside textual works, helping raise the city's profile. The exploitation of literature in urban production is actually based on the principle of cultural economics, as theorized by, among others, Allan Scott (2000), Richard Florida (2004) and Charles Landry (2008). This principle relies on believing in the role of culture as a resource in urban revitalization programs (Cole, 1987; Hall, 2001; Ley, 2003; Lloyd, 2002; McCarthy, 2006; Miles, 1997, 2005; Paddison, 1993). This belief is grounded in the capacity to forge a city's image and serve as a lever for marketing, tourism promotion and economic growth while: enhancing the appeal of an urban territory, constituting an asset in the arena of urban competition, and marketing cities against one another (Hannigan, 1998; Judd, 1999; McCarthy, 2006; Stevens, 2007). Nonetheless, the works on culture and the arts, in particular on contemporary art, have underscored limitations in the ability of aesthetic tools to effectively aid dissemination and produce meaning shared by all users and residents of both Northern cities (Deutsche, 1998; Hannigan, 1998; Ley, 2003; Lloyd, 2002; Sharp *et al.*, 2005) and Southern cities (Guinard, 2014), in addition to transforming into a catalyst of social bonds. This observation seems to be easily transposable to contemporary Oulipian literary projects in France.

Conclusion

Through an urban planning application, literature is fomenting a radical migration away from its traditional spaces by globetrotting, withdrawing from a book format, and investing in the city and its production processes. The city has thus become the supporting medium for texts, a space where text is written and assumes material form, but also a place of reading and sharing, of mediation between author and reader in the aim of democratizing literature. The literature spatialization analysis has also served to identify the dynamics of contemporary space production. By participating in these literary urban planning projects, Oulipian writers have been inducted into urban space design activities. They are now tasked with integrating new fields of activity, corresponding to those pursued by urban production actors, thereby creating new collaborative chains and inter-professional competition.

Some "drift" phenomena have also been noted (Raynaud, 2001), with side effects and disconnects between the ambitions of a given project, its execution and its appropriation all being analyzed herein. Questioning the trajectory of literary urban works, from the designer's intention to their final state, actually leads to probing the future of ambition, the paradoxes between "intentional" (what a producer projects for his own work) and "attention-grabbing" (how people receive the work, perceive the project and wind up appropriating it) (Genette, 1994, pp. 10, 223). Moreover, a project strategy aimed at being alternative, relational, contextual, collaborative and democratic must cope with side effects inherent in its execution. Depending on their level of acceptance, appropriation or rejection, residents and users targeted by the effort will establish other meanings than those expected by the designers. Examining the viability of urban literary works would therefore ultimately lead to analyzing the processes of standardization, trivialization and exclusion dynamics in a contemporary city's cultural and artistic production. A dichotomy appears between a project democratizing literature and its execution, thus running the risk of further excluding certain population categories. By taking to the public square, by revealing material form in the heart of urban development projects, literature imposes itself in the city on all users and residents in their respective living spaces. The Oulipian cases are emblematic of new forms of integrating literature into contemporary European cities' factory and management. We have placed these forms into perspective along with other urban planning and renewal efforts that mobilize other artistic and cultural forms. Consequently, if one aspect of literature specificity

is to open a wide range of interpretative possibilities compared to other artistic forms (Eco, 1965), this mobilization appears to induce comparable effects of normalization, gentrification and imposition of a city's penchant for creative classes.

Our study has questioned literary composition through the lens of analyzing contemporary European cities, as well as the way an urban production and management model is built by mobilizing the literary forces emerging in the city. It remains necessary however to observe whether this model is trending towards dissemination and exportation beyond Europe's borders in cities belonging to other cultural areas and then to draw comparisons between Northern and Southern cities, thus making it possible to examine this model's adaptation process.

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