

BETWEEN EMOTIONAL VALUES AND FUNCTIONAL VALUES, WHAT FUTURE FOR FRENCH PARISH CHURCHES?

The Lyon - Saint-Étienne urban region questioned by the Quebec's "Plan Churches"

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Introduction

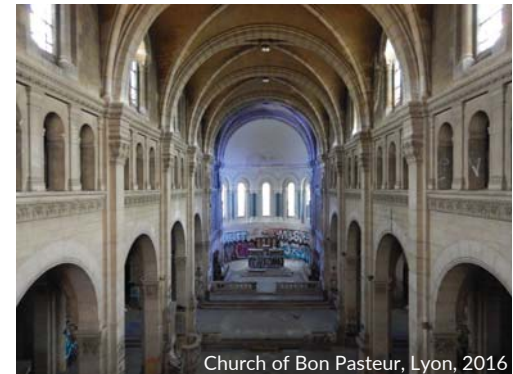
Since the beginning of the 21st century, the future of religious heritage has provoked serious consideration in the fields of law, history, architecture and heritage. The origin of this problem is explained both by the decline in traditional worship practices, essentially Catholic in France, from the 1960s onwards, and by the Church's lack of human and financial resources, which has resulted in the appearance of a veritable "religious desert".

This process, related to society's secularisation, is expected to increase because of the likelihood of these two factors intensifying. If convents, monasteries, seminaries and other Catholic religious buildings have already been affected by this phenomenon, parish churches are now in turn losing their original use.

Quebec has also experienced this same situation, but its historical and legal contexts have accelerated the transformation of churches, which in turn resulted in the

establishment of a "Churches Plan" that tries to preserve church buildings by converting them.

In this thesis, that pioneering programme is used in the Lyons - Saint-Etienne urban area, as a lens through which to read the French situation and as a tool for generating methods adapted to its specific context.



Church of Bon Pasteur, Lyon, 2016

Method and means

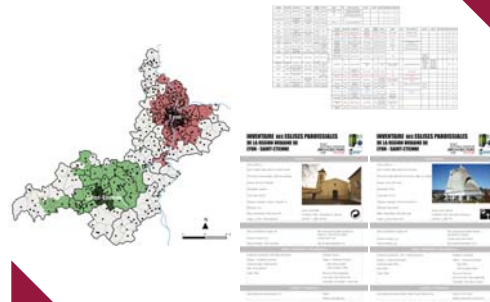
The research is organised in two stages:

◆ OBSERVATIONAL STAGE

The observational stage defines the territory and creates an inventory of the corpus of research: all parish churches and their initial use and subsequent mutation (worship, worship sharing, closed, converted, demolished).

The interventional one is an action-research interventional study. For three cases, a participatory approach has been set up with the municipality, inhabitants and associations, in order to propose conversion scenarios adapted to local needs. In parallel an architectural survey is made by consulting the municipal and parish archives, by creating heritage records in collaboration with the MAP-Aria laboratory so as to constitute tools for a conversion project (plans and 3D models).

- Mapping SIG: all churches, parishes & municipalities
- Inventory: database and inventory sheets



◆ INTERVENTIONAL STAGE

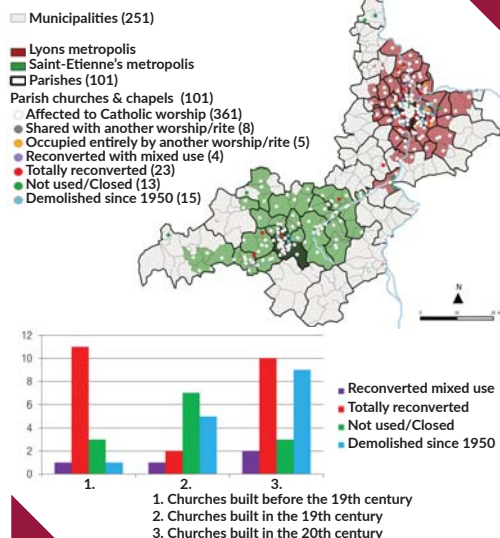
- Application of the "Plan Churches" on 3 case studies:
 - . to evaluate the capacity of the church / the site
 - . to evaluate the local needs
 - . to evaluate the compatibility of the church / the site with the new use
 - . to establish a vision: architectural project



Results and conclusion

First, an inventory of 429 parish churches is provided within the Lyon - Saint-Etienne urban region with a surface area of 2 920 km² = 1 % of the national corpus.

On that total, 63 are inventoried as mutated:



The analysis of the different mutations highlights that the time of construction is decisive for the future of a church. So we defined and characterized three major typologies so as to propose appropriate intervention:

- ◆ "historical churches"
- ◆ "19th century churches"
- ◆ "20th century churches"

The 3 selected cases illustrate each typology:

Church of the Assumption of the Virgin, Montarcher
("historical church", rural area, Loire)



Church of Saint-Nicolas, Givors
("19th-century church", urban area, Rhône)



Church of Our Lady of Hope, Villeurbanne
("20th-century church", urban area, Rhône)



Using the cases of church conversions in our corpus, we analyse the degree of compatibility between their previous worship use and their new uses. It appears that

- ◆ local needs take precedence for a better acceptability of the conversion project.

Then we formulate hypotheses relating architectural interventions for adaptive reuse to restoration theories. Based on existing theories, we call them:

- ◆ theory of reversion through stylistic restoration
- ◆ theory of reversion through critical restoration

With these theories we propose an updating of the religious heritage using both recognized restoration practices and contemporary architectural creation.

This work shows that the demolition of parish churches, widely perceived as a common good, threatens the transmission of local identities. It therefore seems essential to start a global reflection on the evolution of this heritage, one which takes into account territorial issues, citizens' demands and the architectural diversity of these buildings. We show that the architect, through both his sensitivity to the place and his technical, can play a central role in implementing of these reflection.