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# The Chemins de la Culture, Bourg-en-Bresse For a hypermedia LANDSCAPE

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Figure 01. 3D Visualisation, Direction des Affaires Culturelles of Bourg-en-Bresse.

## 1\_Introduction to DIS-COURSE

Roland Barthes reminds us, while introducing the purpose of his book *Fragments A Lover's Discourse*, written in 1977, that dis-course — *making sense out of our confuse expression* —, is "originally the action of running here and there, they are coming and going, approaches, intrigues"<sup>1</sup>. When we've sought to deploy a hypermedia system upon the territory of Bourg-en-Bresse, the idea is then to create *short cuts & cross roads*, related of course to the wishes of the inhabitants to seize emblematic places of culture but to actualize public places, meeting points for being and feeling togetherness. The exchange of ideas means not a common dis-court but a collective approach of *discursivity* able to re-tribute the multiplicity of *infra-talks* caught beneath watchwords. The *Chemins de la Culture* were forged within such a desire. How to create a hypermedia LANDSCAPE between art and communication, closely linked to the development of a new cultural policy in a relatively small of France: Bourg-en-Bresse? Xavier Marcon, Director of Cultural Affairs, writes about this project that its purpose is "to define an organizational matrix that is both physical and symbolic". This one, "materialized above the territory, will ensure a continuous sectorial animation of public space by relying on the strong components which ensure the cultural diversity of the territory. It will allow the establishment of diversified paths from a cultural form to another, a cultural practice to a cultural expression, all with a constant concern for physical accessibility to symbolic, for the right to culture to be effectively invented and implemented, with, by and for the people. This device could therefore be seen as a life-size programming schedule established in the urban area itself. [...] This would also be the opportunity to work with the university itself to help its theorization one hand (the institution needs a theoretical ownership of its shares to inform its choice and take a step back from the *polis* itself) and / or students to work for the development of urban installation and stenography, co-related by technology on the territory: working at the crossroads of urban signage, the artwork, the cultural action in the making of its own process and an innovative institutional communication"<sup>2</sup>...

*Nature-scale*. For if we are dealing with an urban and cultural fabric, the *notion of landscape* is fundamental here. This device is anchored around a joint *linking* several levels of a *mental landscape* related to habitus, *History / histories*, ways of understanding the world... geopolitical and social changes, population flows. So how to effectively take into account through this cultural weaving the importance of a situation between a past deeply rooted but henceforth resolved and a future simultaneously associated with agriculture that still generates significant wealth? How to integrate and make room for new arrivals in the territory? Reconciling the historic center and burgeoning suburbs, dramatically posted beyond the device? And especially how to associate people to this new system in place? Finally, how to Bourg-en-Bresse, historically located at the crossroads of Burgundy, Savoy and France — which was formerly asserted through ambitious and monumental buildings like the Royal Monastery of Brou — a new cultural capital of the Rhône-Alpes Auvergne region? Indeed, if we all know for example the famous Bresse chicken which undoubtedly enjoys international fame, few of us will choose to do Bourg-en-Bresse a tourist stag... A multi-lane ring road cuts the city in two, turning into a place of passage without necessarily giving us the desire to stop; despite a rich cultural life that mixes current music, theater programming, science, art and heritage, all shared among several places scattered over the territory where it generates little or no social connections.

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1977, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Xavier Marcon, Director of Cultural Affairs, *Statement of purpose*, avril 2009.



**Figure 02.** 3D Visualisation, Direction des Affaires Culturelles and Map of Bourg-en-Bresse  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dX1iyb16A>

This contextual labyrinth will have to be redesigned and enriched by Franck Soudan during a CIFRE<sup>3</sup> thesis. Under the direction of Jacques Ibanez-Bueno, co-directed with Marc Veyrat, hybridizations between art, communication, and digital urbanity will gradually create a mesh of interconnections. Associated voluntarily from the very genesis of this ambitious project by the Department of Cultural Affairs, our entire research group G-SICA (LLSETI 1 Lab: Image, Communication & Digital Art) and some students of Master 1 & 2 were involved in this first phase reflection about the *Chemins de la Culture*. *Building a theoretical reflection* from an anthropological study of the life on the territory, study the uses to understand how they work and generate flows (socials, economics, politics), first to convince a majority of elected officials and residents of Bourg-en-Bresse of its critical importance; and only then, *imagine innovative devices* to make them work in network (this will be largely the work of Franck Soudan). Finally, *investigate and report* on the actual impact on the territory some time after installation. This work will therefore take place in several phases. From 2008 to 2010, that's sort of the genesis of the work, the study of the territory oscillates between wanderings and doubts. We travel several times at Bourg-en-Bresse. It's also when the first negotiations with the mayor and the direction of Cultural Affairs happen. Then will open a filmed investigation phase conducted by students of Master 1 & 2 (Ghislaine Chabert / Jacques Ibanez-Bueno / Marc Veyrat) in early 2010 to prepare a presentation to the municipal council. After validation by the latter, the project finally *comes in a calendar*.

<http://www.cheminsdelaculture.fr/>

<sup>3</sup> Contrat Industriel de Formation et de Recherche: "*Industrial Agreement for Training and Research*"

## 2\_EMERGENCE-i

“Unitarian urbanism is not ideally separated from the current field of cities. It is formed from the experience of this land, and from existing constructions. We have much to exploit existing sets, by the affirmation of a playful urban space such as only the drift makes him recognizable, only to build completely new ones.” (Internationale Situationniste n°3).

Formerly *the garden* used to be defined as a buffer zone between the still virgin nature and the castle or the walled city. Sometimes even *built, thought* inside the walls, *the structural interface* offered different views for building entrances and exits, as well as *wanderings*. The castle is believed to have disappeared. Materially, the city lost its ramparts. And with geolocation systems we normally possess the keys of the maze. The garden, *in the cultural sense* of the notion, no longer defined *paths*. There is no starting point, nor arrivals. For, with the mobile phone, for example, there is no more physical buffer between our *i-materialized points of view* (*in anticipation* turned into tangible and digital data by algorithms) and all our possible moves, our necessary drifts. *The prospective experience* of a body that would be @-SET in game is subtly SEEN, moved (replaced?) through a projective experience obtained by simulation. The citizen does no longer discover HIS city. Quickly overwhelmed by flows of data and connected networks meshes indicating him the points of information — urging him to be interested in a specific P-POP: *PowerPoint Of Perspective*, a point where power *tells what is supposed to be of any kind of interests* — which it could possibly go, then be kindly escorted (literally @-DUCED) at home. In contrast to the almost systematic grid, this utopian unitary urbanism previously suggested by the Situationists will not be able to emerge without recreating new gaming devices. And in this context of @-START FICTION, *if the garden* offered an imaginary landscape, the map will become the real structural node of the project *Chemins de la Culture*. It is indeed from the very concept of this interactive map that the *pathing* is born and will be walked for both an ambitious development of Cultural Heritage and communal fabric offered to residents.

But what do they think? The easiest way, of course, would have been to set up a survey and distribute it to the inhabitants of Bourg-en-Bresse. But shortly before, Jean-François Debat (PS : *Socialist Party*) has been elected as the new mayor: the new municipal team chose a symbolic place — the Hotel Marron of Meillonas — to be associated with contemporary art and host the headquarters of Cultural Affairs. These important changes in public life then lead us directly to meet the locals. The invented device, mixing visual anthropology and hypermedia art, was inspired by a previous experience originally created during the Internal Biennial of Design of Saint-Étienne (2008) by Catherine Beaugrand, and around the urban gaming SUGOROKU<sup>5</sup>. It will allow us not only to understand the territory but to initiate a real *systemic approach of discursing*. Master students through the city, film and ask the residents about the places where they are (where the camera framed them), how they go through, how they foresee them, their eventual desires to understand and know the city, their knowledge of cultural structures or major events, the importance in this discovery, of the use of digital technology... Thus, gradually, *a cartography of streams* — both physical and digital — render the *paths* borrowed by people, across town or to go from place to place. On the MA-i is drawn, commented, listed before the actual facts of the culture. Before imagining what could be installed to build this *hypermediatic eSPACE* of *coalescent*

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<sup>4</sup> In *L'Internationale Situationniste n°3*, Under the direction of Guy Debord, Paris, December 1959, p.13. See in this full 12 issues of the journal : <http://www.larevuedesressources.org/internationale-situationniste-integrale-des-12-numeros-de-la-revue-parus-entre-1958-et-2548.html>

<sup>5</sup> Marc Veyrat, *SUGOROKU, des petits chemins de toutes les couleurs*, in *HYPERURBAIN 4 / Mobilité et Parcours Hybrides*, under the direction of Patrizia Laudati, Dominique Laousse et Khaldoun Zeik, Éditions Europia, Paris, 2014, p.59-78.

*paths* of cultures. Unfortunately this mapping requires new contingencies, choices and political decisions.



**Figure 03.** *Chemins de la Culture* links

The whole project difficulty then returns to find co-incidences between a mandatory order, anchored before our arrivals, and impetuous experiences of the territory, which does not contain the same issues and do dis-course on the same paths. Political will, first, can be enumerated according to the following requirements:

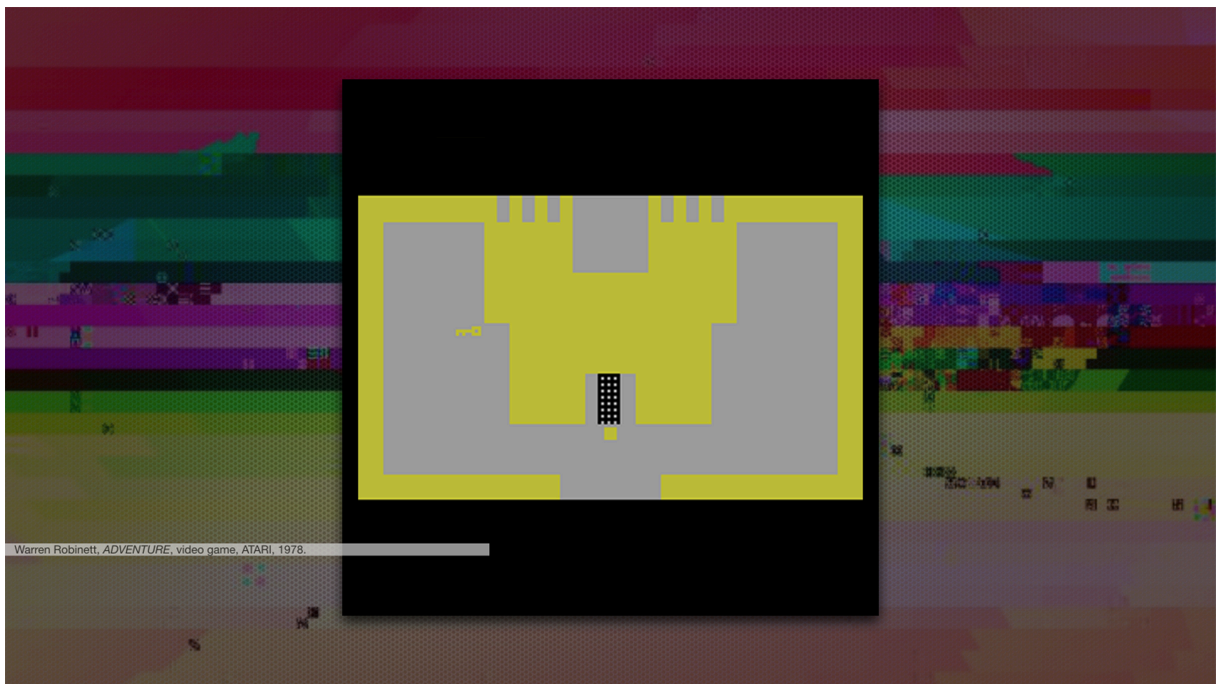
- a/** *Communication and mediation* are needed: we must no longer be able to say that nothing cultural happens in Bourg-en-Bresse;
- b/** *De-segmentarisation* and networking: we must find a way to detach the public accustomed at the visit of a single location;
- c/** *Physibility*<sup>6</sup> and *visual presence*: the response to the command should be visible, access to the device must use the actual spots of physical space.

This list corresponds not only to the statement of a need but it refers to a request. Indeed: imagine that we are pizza sellers, a request we can respond to could match the order of a 4 Cheese. But the need we would satisfy to our customer is hunger itself. The small study by G-SICA already advanced a little better the problems of the city, we have no hungry there. It's not that we miss it, it is that the relationship between the territory and its inhabitants is paradoxically devalued even if the city, including the work of the DAC<sup>7</sup> and energy infused by cultural operators, present incredible richness. Five questions emerge and weave a medium for co-incidence points between political will and what the surveys of residents have allowed us to reveal:

<sup>6</sup> *readability / visibility* involving the physical space.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Cultural Affairs.

- what will it be used for: to upgrade and develop the cultural framing of the city;
- to whom will this be useful: cultural partner operators and citizens;
- on what is it active: on the ®-PRESENTATION of the territory;
- how it works: by a renewal of arrangements for access to culture, based on the use of a digital device primarily available on the Internet. This one should allow to centralise all cultural action quality (like AOCs) based on a group of common and shared descriptors (a menu). Associated with a search engine, the device must finally allow to find an event, but above all make one want to play with that representation.
- for what purpose: to make the actual value of the land relevant to a more biased perception, as for the remarkable effort by the DAC finds its echo among the citizens of Bourg-en-Bresse / region Rhône-Alpes / in France / in the world?



*Figure 04. GARDEN®*

### 3\_GARDEN-®

To see how we could use these field studies without remaining prisoners of their *effects* and *transfigure* them — that is to say: questioning the documents from an artistic posture —, another art project started in 2010 (U-rss <http://u-rss.eu>) will be served as a testing ground. For the *SELF eSPACE* to arise, the given individual *plugged* on the social fabric of Bourg-en-Bresse, is also nowadays — on the day of the information and a “*hyperreal*” self ( Baudrillard) — involved with a set of interfaces / folding. Furthermore networks, magnified by the appearance of the mobile phone — this tool / screen that allows us to communicate throughout the in real time but also helps us plan our use of the local territory — project us within discontinuous *U-topics*, *U><Us* more or less fictional shaped in appearing slices which then interfere with, on, against geolocation tools or softwares aimed to increase the visibility of those in control. Like a *GARDEN-®*: monumental and networked, *the urban nature which will be suggested by the project* is certainly part of a tracing / mapping device. But for anyone willing to participate to what we

might call an “archi-sculpture<sup>8</sup>”, it should remain a ground for playing with their own symbolic representation, through the cultural events of the city. With “The Buried Bicycle” conducted by Claes Oldenburg & Coosje Van Bruggen in the Parc de la Villette in 1990, the challenges are many. First the viewer / walker is necessarily in a physical experience of a *situated place*. Sure *mentally*, he is caught in a mapping process: the disposal of each of the elements is not accidental. The ®-ACTS to architecture, provokes it and build a path that will help us confront it, *within* the artwork. So not only each fragment of the bicycle ®-composes both a distance from the place (*topos*) obtained by the point view at the time of its discovery, but also suggests a network of telluric forces, grounded, almost hidden by being buried, *subtracted to sight*. Since this element is inseparable from a terrain (the Park) and a set (the bicycle), the idea is to provoke through the *Paths of Culture* a critical distance. The citizen act that will be set up, in an *in/visible way* through the network mapping, must question the *threshold of the visible*. The *archi-sculpture* reverses a sequenced eSPACE, both *discontinuous and disruptive*. “No risk no fun”<sup>9</sup>.

Now, in U-rss, all our attempts to involve our partners in the construction and dissemination of interactive maps about / on their network, have so far resulted in near misses... In 2011, with the *social portrait* of Mediterranean Museums Network, the idea of a map appears to us very quickly, as evident, only to replace the existing one where the choice of Google Earth is unjustified because of its requirement for a plugin installation. Moreover, as a whole, the site of the time very poorly reflects the *will of reticularity* as entitled by the association. Nevertheless, the architecture of informations present the advantage of being *literally translated* to the interface. Undressed, naked, transparent, we can see through each presentation page of a museum, the explicit number of its links to associated museum. But there is no mention of the quality of the link. Thus the idea of choosing the only crossable information — *physical distance itself* — for a map engenders a program as a flesh for a data skeleton; the *software modulation* is then being used to construct a new visual perspective for an already present set of data, so it uses a reticular sense within another affirmation for networking. Following a first version, we stress the appropriateness of visual interactive map, on its ability to express the territorial power of information and to support ®-emotional connection with the territory. But, facing this tactic of making the network *legible* on the territory, the reaction of curators was largely skeptical. For *getting the text in the image*, making associativity promoted by institutions perceptible; or confront the significance of territorial segments of the reality to the reality of matter, this is an effective way to use tracks for *retro-projecting* live actions. The map is always the challenge of *dis-course*. It is the place of secrecy, the updated program — through *its legend*, its biased commitments — ®-placing under the eye of the reader every possible of a given territory. The map decrypts figures while simultaneously encoding shapes.

So, ®-arranging a mapping process is to *individuate* technics on temporary premises, establishing informative surfaces, initiating an art of *dis-coursing* propelled by a vision machine (Virilio). The mapping of Bourg-en-Bresse will not escape to that rule. For this item to be the computing mainframe of the territory and its media planning, it must involves a *network as a program* (both in layout and data design) to connect ethno-aesthetic attributes of a possible controversy. Machine-territory, the map shows and intensifies the emotional affections, relationships to *alteration*. It

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<sup>8</sup> Philippe Sabourdin, *La bicyclette ensevelie / Claes Oldenburg & Coosje Van Bruggen*, Éditions Canopé, Futuroscope, 2014, p.45... When *wandering of artists* overlays the *project wandering*: “On 7 May 1986 Coosje Van Bruggen enters by curiosity in the Gallimard bookstore on the Boulevard Raspail in Paris. There, his attention is attracted by a book. This is the first novel by Samuel Beckett actually written in French. On the cover is a character on a bicycle. This is Molloy. The sculpture will be born from this image that reactivates an old project which both artists had a photographic blueprint in 1978. [...] *The buried Bicycle* will 'embody' the circular wandering this disabled person who, under a threat of imbalance, does one with his bike.” p.37.

<sup>9</sup> Antoine Schmitt, <http://www.cuberevue.com/no-risk-no-fun/1443>



truly is — for the one who creates it like one who reads it — the actual place of politics: the GARDEN-®. The challenge of this first phase of work to Bourg-en-Bresse, will be ®-THINK THE ROADS: mnemonic paths of an i-readable territory, put under a social body, a unitarian urban planning somehow illuminated by a sufficiently *open* mapping device — in the idea of a self-organized U-topic — to generate discontinuous i-LEGO, elastic and exponential bricks of crossroads. *To get a body* (self/US public) is to navigate a *fragmented self*, a thousand times reflected on the screens; this resumes to express a *computed sequence* of individuation all put under a reflective device (reported for the risk of the MAP). These fragments (i-LEGOs) are pointed residues of the virtual projection for the upcoming phenomenological events to come through the mapped matter. The tracks one leaves behind his walks (which will not necessarily be reported and consigned to the system) articulated a network that makes *the marks of our presence and the margins of our ontological thickness*: footprints of an act carried through its own *synergy of purpose* and the computed modulation of a syntactic system, deported and captioned.

GARDEN-® Bourg-en-Bresse therefore impose the inclusion of an i-REAL (informative networks) on a *playground*, through the hybridization of a territory to a map. With always some risk. For revealing links, displaying and locating where and how our different points of views interfere can lead to political struggles. If readability means gradients of power; access to the legend of the map gives the key of the territory. Because the castle is no longer a physical place, it is now locked behind the virtual walls, translucent but sufficiently tight to allow only those who are actively *deciphering the code*. To enter the castle, you must not only know your path through the informational labyrinth, it is now necessary to turn the place inside out and cultivate your own MAZE of data.

Marc Veyrat / Franck Soudan, 2015