

Landscape of Desire Lotville

a project by raumlaborberlin
avec la Maison des Arts Georges Pompidou, Cajarc

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raumlaborberlin



moving to paradise

raumlaborberlin has been invited to develop the “10ème Parcours d’art contemporain en vallée du Lot” north of Toulouse in July 2015. With this dossier we would like to present our project “Lotville” that will become the underlying narrative for the parcours. Lotville is raumlabor’s attempt to reintroduce urban visioning into the world of arts and architecture. Lotville is a contemporary perspective on Europe’s countryside in relation to urbanity. Lotville will be an exhibition and a set of interventions in the landscape and villages along the river Lot.

raumlaborberlin is a collective of architects and urbanists, which in the past 15 years has developed a big range of urban planning projects, installations and interventions for many European cities (and beyond). With Lotville we want to step into a new field - the relation between the contemporary landscape in Europe and the idea of urbanity.

In order to realise a work strongly rooted in the area raumlabor will move its headquarters, with up to 24 members, for 10 weeks into one of the most beautiful corners of Europe. La

Maison des Arts Georges Pompidou is offering LES MAISONS DAURA, RÉSIDENCES INTERNATIONALES D’ARTISTES in Saint-Cirq Lapopie. The village was elected the favorite village for french people 2012. Andre Breton spent his summer holidays here and went butterfly hunting with Max Ernst.

The valley around Saint-Cirq Lapopie attracts thousands of tourists every summer. In winter and at night there are very few people left. But the valley is also place, where certain people move to stay. These are the people we want to meet. Our theory is that the living conditions here are so perfect, that sooner or later runaways from all over the world will start to settle here. What then? What could be a true living future for a place that seems to become an open air museum for country life?

At the end of our 10 weeks residency we want to present an utopia. A visionary plan based on an intense research on the valley’s status quo, its needs and its potentials. We will look at people, villages, agriculture, history, economy, tourism, education, waste, water and possible

future scenarios. We will develop a plan for an utopian city as a refuge for those whose lifestyles do not correspond with the city and who still won’t become farmers. Beyond a vision for some lucky few, we want to challenge the all to convenient dichotomization of rural and urban and open a provocative debate about the real future (realities and needs) of life outside the big cities.

The following pages describe this idea more in detail.

We would be glad if you find this idea interesting enough to support the project.



top: Vallée du Lot
bottom: inside and outside Les Maisons Daura



top: hydroelectric power station on the Lot
left: pull trails on the river
above: hideouts along the Lot

[detailed description of the project >>](#)

Lotville - unchanting paradise

The differences between urban and country life are vanishing everywhere. People are moving to Detroit to start urban farming, honey production can be even found in the center of Manhattan, Berlin has now over 50 organisations for public gardening.

People are still risking their financial base and take loans to build a house in the sprawl of the big cities. This wish to be closer to nature often starts in the traffic jam every morning and ends up with disastrous bankruptcy.

On the other side we have a completely globalized rural life. You can find WiFi hotspots on every better village square, mobile networks in the most remote places in the forest, Lidl supermarkets that sell apples from Kenya in Germany's traditional fruit growing areas. Country life has lost its romantic side long ago: Europe's industrialised agriculture is in the hands of a few global players, supermarkets and EU norms dictate prices, shapes and colour of eggs, carrots and sausages.

The Lot valley is not the ancient landscape of farming anymore, that it pretends to be in the brochures. The board of tourism is well organized up to the pragmatic parking system for the end-

less chain of campers. Agriculture is completely industrialized. The corn that covers 70% of the valleys agricultural terrain is not growing to feed animals here or anywhere else, it is sold as high quality seed for the global market. Besides a few farmers that raise sheep and goats up on the ridge there are no more farm animals. The last tobacco fields that remained will vanish and give space for more corn in a few years.

Most Lot citizens are not farmers.

They work in tourism, service or in one of the large aeronautic companies near Figeac. Or they are retired. Or they built up their own specialized businesses.

The growing intellectual population of the Lot valley lives a partly urban life in a rural setting. It takes some time to get here from the big European cities, but once you are, there is little infrastructure you have to miss: internet, media, galleries, good restaurants and cafes, real estate management and - not at least - cultural programme, it's all here. The villages along and around the valley function as different quarters of one entity. Here the supermarket, there the bakery, here the school, there the bar with the concerts, here

the cinema, there the work. Lot citizens already use the valley and its surroundings as a conglomerate for their diverse needs and desires.



top: cornfields produce seed for the global market
left: traditional tobacco life
above: Saint-Cirq Lapopie



refuge resort (historical background)

The valley of the river Lot has a long history of people running off and hiding away from the rest of the world's agglomerations. In the middle age the valley with its steep cliffs on both sides was easy to control and protect from invaders with a few castles along the river. The valley is a shortcut through the Quercy mountains but the Lot with its winding curves and turbulences made it hard to access. Pulltrails along the sides are the witnesses of the hard work it meant to ship the river. Together with the fruitful soil it was therefore a perfect hideout for a very long time.

The age of industrialisation changed also the Lot in the Lot valley. In the 1860s a railway was built to transport coal from mines near Capdenac to Cahors. Now agricultural goods could be transported easily to the nearby markets. Strawberries and tobacco, chevre and sheep left and money and people came. The fast growing leisuretime society of the ending 19th Century discovered the valley. The now easy-to-access beautiful countryside became a temporary hideaway from the loud and dirty cities. George Pompidou and Andre Breton are just the most prominent of the vacational dropouts to be found here.

In the 60s and 70s a new generation of drifters stranded in the region. After two world wars, that have cost many young lives everywhere in Europe, the villages of the Lot valley were getting desolate. On top of that, the young population that was left saw no future in the region and searched their luck in the big cities. So when young urban dropouts were looking for places to settle, they were warmly welcomed here, no matter what strange behaviour they brought along. Hippie communes flourished in many of the villages and traces of their existence like cooperative organisations can still be found everywhere around.

Quercyrail before and now
 big: one of the Bridges by Gustave Eiffel followed by a 800m tunnel
 right: most of the buildings along the traintracks are privatised now just the station in cajarc (top) is a youth-club and parking for campercars
 bottom: the last trains in the 1980's

running away (presence)

Since then the stream of dropouts has not stopped. The amazing landscape, the sunny weather, combined with tolerant people and the option to build a somewhat financial base on the tourist industry has attracted people from all over Europe. Dutch open camping grounds, Parisians raise chevre, Germans make art, British spend their pension (which for a long time was worth a fortune here until unfortunately that changed dramatically). Since the internet arrived, it is no problem to run a mailorder company, a call center or a large engineers office from here. With Airbus in Toulouse two big aeronautic companies settled nearby in Figeac - we are in the center of Europe.

Looking into the present situation of Europe and it's surrounding countries, it seems just a matter of time until a stripe of land with these advantages will be invaded by a new wave of dropouts. And we are not only looking at people that are sick of the air pollution in cities and other stress factors of urban life, imagine Spanish unemployed teenagers, poor people from the eastern eu-members, refugees from the conflicts all over the world find out that there is a place in Europe where you can actually live a decent life.



Lotville wants to prepare people, villages and nature in the Lot valley for this moment. It wants to turn the upcoming challenge into a up until now unseen set of advantages.

Erwan came to the Lot from Paris to become a shepherd. It didn't work out but he found a beautiful spot, bought the land, became a builder and build a 100% Bio house for him and his family. In the meantime he went back to the IT-Business in the quercy region.

bye bye utopia

We live in a time where present problems are being solved and strategies to prevent the worst are developed. We try our best to morally escape the dilemmas that pollution, wars, the automobile industry, IKEA, H&M or Frontex present to us. There seems to be no time to think about a far better world than the one we are in. Urban visioning seems to be far away from our daily life. The times when people invented utopias are history. New towns today are more dystopias than anything else - either they are unpersonal real estate investments like European suburbs, gated communities, the cities in the Emirates or they are in other ways driven by the manic wish for economic growth like the industrial cities in the Pearl River Delta. Economic pressure and poverty generate numerous unplanned new towns, favelas, shanty towns, slums and a rising number of refugee camps.

hello vision

Thinking a few more steps forward from now is a culture that has been forgotten in the past decades. In our work though we noticed how



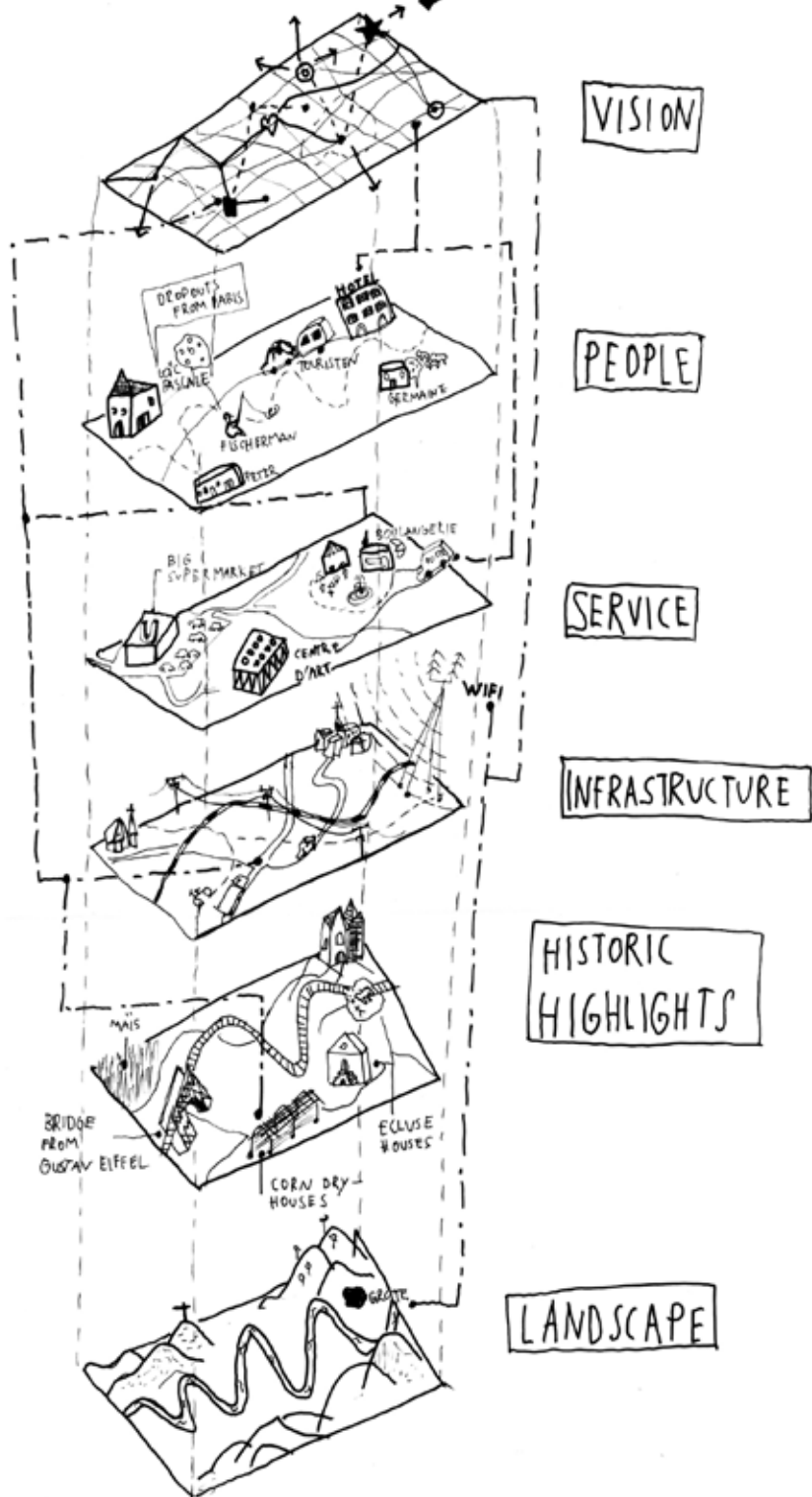
important the thoughts and drawings, the models and happenings, movies and lectures on utopian ideas and urban visions are. The power of an image from the past that points beyond our present times has always been a strong inspiration to our work. Truffaut's Alphaville, Lang's Metropolis, Wright's Broadacre City, Archigram's Plug in and Walking City, Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse, Soleris Arcosanti, Ebenezer Howard's Garden City, Costa's+Niemeier's Brasilia, Kurokawa's Helix City etc. The list is long. These proposals how our life could be organized completely different hence how life could be completely different are necessary for our present life. These ideas give us an orientation and inspiration for our decisions today. With Lotville we want to reactivate the power of the visionary.

two sides of a contemporary Vision that attracts the world above: the Jumeira Beach Hotel left of the Burj al Arab Hotel in Dubai - the world's most luxurious Hotel. below: the slums on the left side of the Burj al Arab Hotel in Dubai - the world's most luxurious Hotel.



LANDSCAPE OF DESIRE

LOTVILLE





1 - appropriation

raumlabor will start to develop Lotville with a small team that undertakes a research work on people, who decided to move here to have a better life. Not only the motivations are interesting for us, but also how they arrived here and how reality has changed their expectations. In a first fieldwork in summer 2013 we realized, that there are various reasons to be here, but an amazing agreement that life is good in the valley. This research will become part of our exhibition in la Maison des Arts Georges Pompidou in Cajarc. Another small group will prepare the infrastructure for the growing team which in peak times will be around 20 people. This group will install a garden to feed everyone, a workshop to build some large installations and additional cabins to accommodate the rest of the group. raumlabor will move to Saint-Cirq Lapopie and set up their own urban-rural life here. It also means to come with kids, so that one of the first steps will be to qualify the almost inexistent infrastructure for kids in Saint-Cirq Lapopie. The work to install accommodation and a place to live for the members of the group and their kids acts therefore as a first proposal of how the Lot valley could welcome more and different people without harming the valleys attractive atmosphere.

2- the utopian planning cake

Once we are accommodated we will start to design a vision for a future of urban life in the Lot valley based on the research work that has been done before and on our own first experiences. To do so we will look into all the corners of the valley, every village, every scenic spot, every remote farm. As a result we will create a map of everything we have found out. The map will have different layers like a cake. And the top layers will be the vision - everything we could imagine here, everything that could emerge, be created, integrate the existing but bring a new spark of contemporary, futuristic, visionary. We will build a model of this vision to exhibit with the utopian planning cake and the research in La Maison des Arts Georges Pompidou in Cajarc

3-3d visualisation

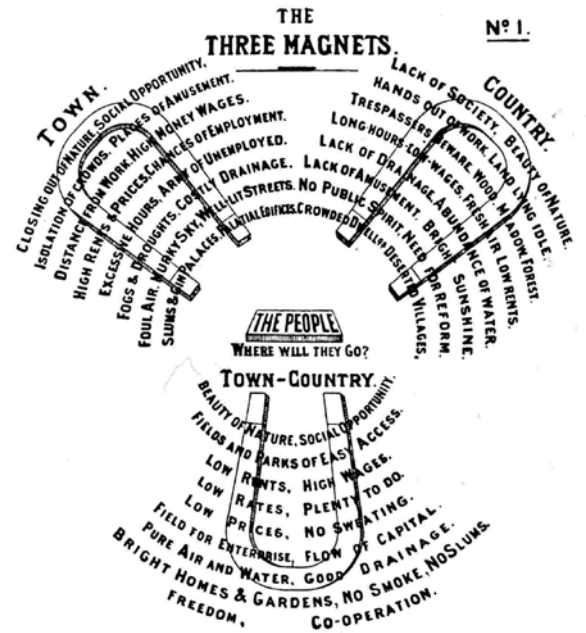
Our 3-dimensional visualisation will be implemented in real space. We will choose several spots around the valley to install first particles of Lotville. This could be first elements of a city square, like a service station for people, who want to move to Lotville, a sound cloud on the riverbeach fed by the musicians that settled around here, a future lab for kids after school, Lotvilles transport hub for high speed bicycle busses, a smokers club for people that just smoke tobacco from the valley, a market for internet gardening, a multi media school for senior citizens or an architecture laboratory for cross gender housing projects. All these projects will be initiated in cooperation with people from the valley.

permanent residences in Saint-Cirq Lapopie

Benjamin Foerster-Baldenius, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt
 Dr. Olga Maria Hungar, Dr.-Ing. Architekt
 Sabine Zahn, Choreographer
 Claire Motthias, Architecte DE
 Marius Busch, MA Architekt, BA Geographer
 Paula Strunden, BA Architekt
 Fabien Bidaut, Architecte DE
 Todosch Schlopsnies, Sculpturer
 Federica Teti, Dott. Architetto
 Valentin Fastabend, Moviemaker

parttime residences

Anna Katharina Laggner, Radio Journalist
 Harry Sachs, Artist
 Gonzague Lacombe, Graphiste
 Samuel Boche, carpenter, Sculpturer/Carpenter
 Florian Stirnemann, Dipl. Designer
 Maria Garcia Perez, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt
 Andrew Plucinsky, Carpenter
 Samuel Cavalho, MA Architekt
 Andrea Hofmann, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt
 Axel Timm, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt
 Jan Liesegang, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt, BDA
 Frauke Gerstenberg, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt
 Markus Bader, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt
 Christoph Mayer, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt
 Francesco Apuzzo, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt
 Matteo Carli, Dott. Architetto
 Andreas Kraut, Dipl.-Ing. Architekt



above: Ebenzer Howard - Garden City (1898)
 bottom left top: LeCorbusier (1929)
 below: Frank Lloyd Wright - Broadacre City (1932)
 mid top: Chambless - Road Town (1910)
 below: Hans Hollein - Flugzeugträgerstadt (1967)
 right top: Yona Friedman - Raumstadt (1958)
 below: Archigram - Walking City (1964)

