1 - CAGE AUX OURS (“BEAR’S CAGE”)

Located in the North of Brussels, this space is a part of a 2km long, 19th century axe composition, linking the local city hall to the main station. The circle original strong composition, conserving the passing axe and dispatching the roads is quite typical in the urban planning of that time. The place took the name of “La cage aux ours”, literally the bears cage, because of a comment done by the mayor of the time, disappointed by the existing project coming back from a trip to Berlin, compared the space with a bear cage that he saw in the Berlin zoo. This name stayed in the popular unconsciousness till today.

Nothing remains today of this design, it was removed by the construction of a train track in the middle of the plaza. The train infrastructure cuts the space in two nearly symmetrical entities, and the surrounding roads were elevated in order to allow the free-height passage. This disposition gives a crisps shape (up and down going circle) to what is more a roundabout than a plaza. The space has a strong geometry but lacks of identity and formal definition.

Situated in a popular neighborhood of Brussels and cut by an infrastructure, a feeling of insecurity dominated the space before. There was also a spatial segregation in between the two sides of the cutting (poor/rich, women/men...)

* PREVIOUS STATE

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* AIM OF INTERVENTION

Ten years ago a former intervention organized the plantation and the furniture on the two halves of the space, it tried to diminish the impact of the train as much as possible by hiding it under with thick vegetal massifs.

Recently a new pre-definition mission was held with a participatory process in order to implicate the neighborhood in different architectural and socio-economical projects, among others, the conclusion revealed the needs for a stronger unity and a better use of that space. As a part of this large revitalization program, a special public tender was floated on that matter in order to formalize this plaza into a communication node. The tender proposed the realization of a circle canopy (Strasbourg like) to find a new identity of the space and to accommodate the trams and bus shelter under it. An original designed was asked by the public authority in order to achieve a renewal of the space. We took quite passionately the subject proposed by the tender, we elaborated an original proposal of cable suspended canopy with an original geometry to fit to the already powerfull circular definition of the surrounding buildings and that the priority was in the centre of the space.