



The invention of new territories. Spatial redistribution, agents of change and the question of power – an example from Bamberg/Germany

(Daniel Göler, Bamberg)

Abstract

The title of the book „*Inventer de nouveaux territoires*“ (Humeau/Long 2011) refers on the (re-)invention of new territories. The analysis of how territories define themselves in times of globalization and localization in a sometimes new and creative manner may come as one of the main legacies of French Geographer Jean Baptiste Humeau¹. Behind this question lies his deep interest in the transience of spaces, in perspectives of territorial restructuring or redistribution, in related functional changes of space and place in the face of a fundamental local or global change, or simply – a broad interest in questions of structural transformation and its socio-economic implications. Such processes are generally accompanied by territorial (re-)invention. Spatial reorganization is always associated with corresponding processes of negotiation between the actors involved. Their role and position is not least defined by power constellations, which in turn manifest themselves in everyday local geographies. The permanent variation of resulting spatial configurations will be analyzed in the following contribution with Bamberg as an example. It can be shown how bottom-up principles of urban planning subsequently shifted into a top-down perspective due to given power constellations.

1 Introduction

The constant variability of places and spaces is a basic geographic principle, which will be treated with special emphasis in this contribution. The social construction of space moves to the background, while the focus shifts to the materialistic and functional re-invention based on changed circumstances – a phenomenon that Schumpeter (1942) referred to as “creative

¹ This contribution is dedicated to Prof. Jean-Baptiste Humeau (1948-2017). He was founder and *spiritus rector* of the research network 2H2S, the “Consortium Européen de Recherche en Sciences Humaines et Sociales”. This international and interdisciplinary network brought together scholars from different countries such as France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Denmark, Romania and Serbia.

destruction” (see also: Knox/Marston 2010, 275). The triggers of such elementary transformations can be manifold. Acknowledged causes are – to just name single examples – changes in the natural environment like natural disasters and social catastrophes (Felgentreff/Glade 2008), alternated human behavior, habits or trends, as well as technological innovations. The economic structural change during the 19th and 20th century, in Kondratieff’s model based on so-called basic innovations, has caused severe, large-scale and long-term transformations in land use. However, it is not only important to focus on the consequences but also on the protagonists. These are usually closely connected with economy, society or spatial planning and act according to their interests. Frequently used examples are the old-industrialized regions in Europe, where the structural change was guided by elaborate planning, which aims on fighting negative consequences. Similar processes occur in the context of former harbors; a French example is Île de Nantes (Soumagne 2011).

As a result of the end of the Cold War, a specific form of functional and physiognomic reclassification of space took place in Germany after 1990, particularly in urban areas.² Through such conversion processes of former military spaces, in many cases whole new city quarters have evolved. In the early 1990s this occurred in Neu-Ulm (Wiley-Areal), later for example in Freiburg (Vauban-Quarter) or Tübingen (French Quarter); the latter are often named as exemplary conversion cases. In Bamberg the option for conversion developed rather late; only in 2014 the American army fully withdrew their last remaining troops.

The area’s dimension and the structural and functional differentiation in combination with an almost simultaneously upcoming global migration trend, the European refugee crisis, led to divergent development paths in Bamberg. In order to facilitate further understanding, crucial background information on the Bamberg conversion area will be provided consequently.

2 An anamnesis: Bamberg’s military history and the conversion area

All in all, the military conversion area in Bamberg contains 450 ha, which equals 8 percent of the spatial extension of the city as a whole (Stadt Bamberg 2019). This area can be divided roughly into three different sites: the Warner Barracks as core of the garrison, the ammunition

² Conversion of former military areas is not limited to urban contexts: Simply think of military training facilities (proving grounds) in rural, often even peripheral spaces (Münsingen; Himmelstoß 2019), in border zones (Ebern in Upper Franconia), in small or medium sized towns like Ellwangen (Erhard 2019) or military airfields like Frankfurt/Hahn or Memmingen that transformed into international airports.

depot (“Muna”) and a small airfield. The Warner Barracks themselves can be partitioned, once again, into three parts, renamed by the U.S. Army in Warner Barracks I, II and III.



Fig. 1: The three different sites of Warner Barracks and American housing areas in Bamberg. Part I and II (including pines area) is occupied today by the federal Police’s training facilities, Flynn housing area is a refugee camp and in part III the new “Lagarde-Campus” is considered for urban development.

(Source:

https://www.usarmygermany.com/Sont.htm?https&&www.usarmygermany.com/USAREUR_City_Bamberg.htm; last access on Sept. 4, 2019.

The oldest parts of the barracks date back to the late 19th century. These premises in the eastern part of the city represent today the “Lagarde-Kaserne”, the future Campus area (Stadt Bamberg 2017: 12ff.). After the American troops freed Bamberg in April 1945, officials decided to reuse the already existing military facilities for the stationing of the U.S. Army and renamed the complex in “Warner Barracks”. After 1945, the area was considerably enlarged with the construction of the eastern parts of the garrison (Warner I and II). Up to 12,000 soldiers were positioned in the late 1970s in Bamberg, a city with roughly 70,000 inhabitants.

However, with the end of the cold war the barracks began to lose their importance to the Americans. In February 2012, the U.S. Army announced the closure of their garrison in Bamberg. The process was finished with a ceremony on Sept. 12, 2014 (Stadt Bamberg 2017: 12ff.). This date marks the end of more than a century of military history in Bamberg and the beginning of a turbulent conversion process.

3 Conversion as chance

This outlook on the upcoming conversion processes after 2012 caused – considering the spatial extent quite understandably – great excitement amongst local politicians and city planners. Superlatives like “chance of the century”, “mammoth task”, “first priority” could be read frequently in official documents (Stadt Bamberg 2014, 2). The City of Bamberg used the opportunity of priorly decided administration reforms for implementing a new “Department for Strategic Development and Conversion Management”, which is in fact proof of the dimension as well as value of this challenge.

As a whole, the conversion process in Bamberg – following the predetermined historic differentiation – is split in three, in respect of physiognomy, structure and function fundamentally different subdivisions (fig. 2). The least problematic case is the around 90 ha measuring airfield, which has been used primarily for civil purposes in recent time and continues to be used in that way. The Muna areal (140 ha) close to the south-eastern edge of the city territory – as well as the 21 ha shooting range – was thought to be transformed into a business park. Though, still in the planning phase the project was stopped by a local referendum in 2018. No altered plans have occurred yet.

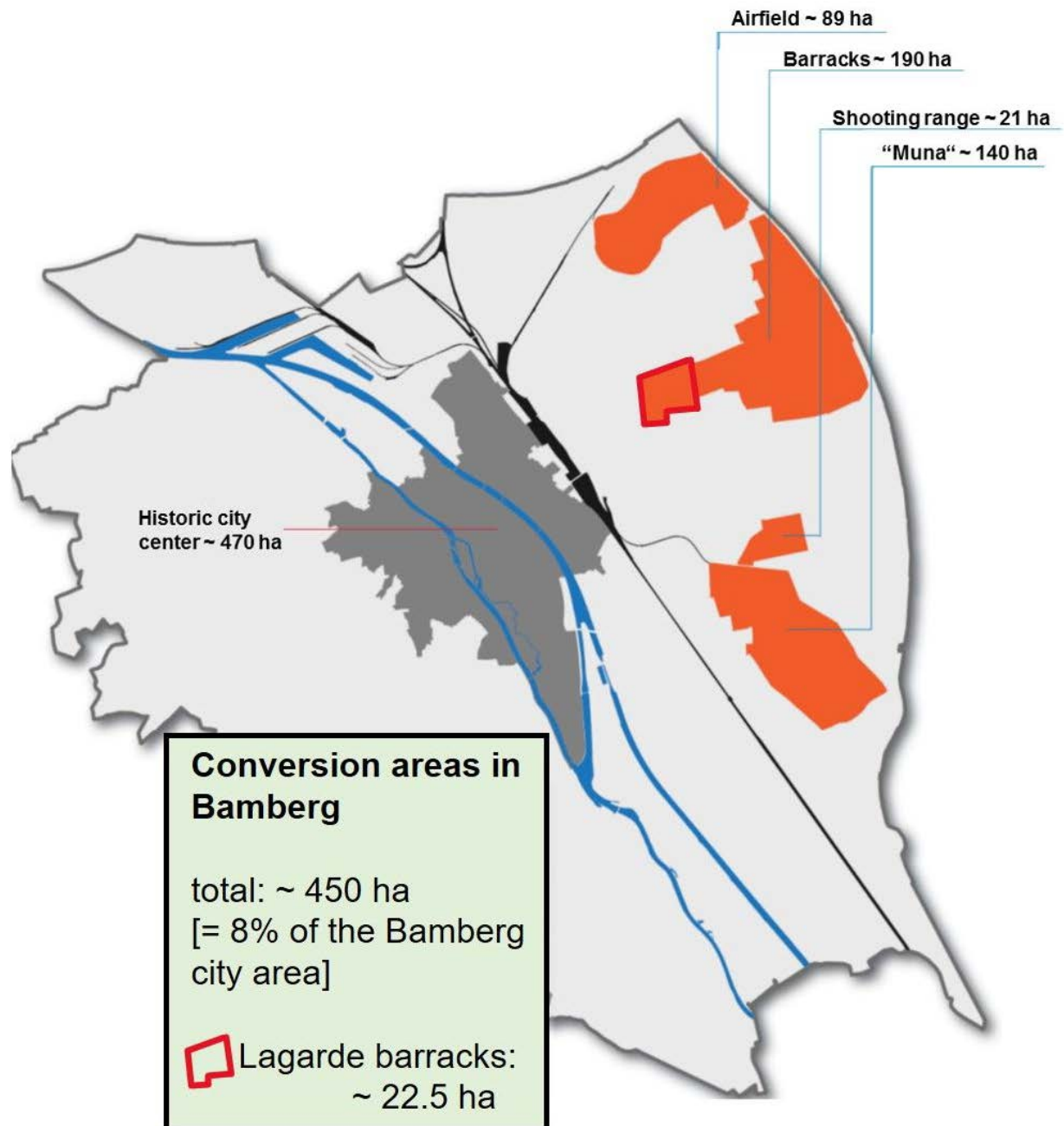


Fig. 2: Overview of the conversion areas in Bamberg. Source: Stadt Bamberg 2014, 8 (adapted)

Consequently, only the 190 ha former Warner-Barracks remain for approaches of a high-quality city development. A special focus in this context lies on sustainable and future-oriented district development that tackles housing shortage as well as provides perspectives for emission free economies. For this purpose, the only in 2010 created overall city development program was adjusted by including the conversion areas. In order to ensure the participation of the citizens, in 2013/14 a set of public events like round tables and others took place with the goal of maximized transparency in the decision-making concerning the conversion process. In 2014/15 an architectural contest with significant expenses for the city was initiated. Manifold informational material, leaflets and brochures issued by the City of

Bamberg serve as testimony of the extraordinary efforts. But in 2015 they turned just into paper waste.

4 Conversion as problem

Abandoned military facilities in Germany become state property (of the Federal Republic of Germany). Thereafter, an internal real estate service provider, the BImA (Federal Department for Real Estate), is entrusted with the management and, wherever possible, with the sale. The City of Bamberg always stressed its „communal planning sovereignty“, which is a leading rule in urban planning in Germany, regarding the conversion areas and aimed for a swift purchase. Yet, this land acquisition could never be realized to full extent. The difficulty was not caused by the contracting parties – even though the purchase would have been a heavy burden for the City of Bamberg since the BImA is obliged to sell the properties at the current market price. Considering the dimension of the area as well as its premium location this would have resulted in enormous expenses.

In the end, this whole planning was scotched by global dynamics. On the one hand side, though intensive immigration to Germany the necessity for quickly available refugee accommodation arose. On the other side, the federal police planned to expand their police forces and special units as reaction to general safety concerns. Both measures require ideally existing, quickly available properties in federal possession – a combination that was to be found in Bamberg through temporal coincidence with ideal conditions. Therefore, the negotiations with the City of Bamberg were paused and the conversion area was used for different purposes: The Flynn-Housing Area was turned into a refugee camp in 2015 and the northern part of the Warner Barracks became a training center for the federal police. Consequently, the only remaining part left for urban conversion was the historic Lagarde Barracks (see below).

The obstructed or only fragmentarily implemented conversion process in Bamberg can be used as example for a dynamic that Robertson (1995) called “Glocalization”. In this outlined case, changes in the global order (here rather short-termed) became visible in a severe spatial functional shift on the local scale, which was caused as an effect of changes in the distribution of power and its scale. Initially, the planning process on a local scale and under communal control continued to follow the bottom-up-principle with the typical participatory approach of citizen’s participation. The current situation, nevertheless, is determined by top-down-constellations with direct control of the federal government on the local scale. This situation is

likely to continue since the downsizing of the training camp of the federal police and the closing of the refugee center, both scheduled for 2024 or 2025 respectively, targeted by politicians will solely depend on global developments, too (Göler 2020).

5 The territorial invention: Lagarde-Campus

In the current situation, the former “mammoth task“, has turned into a rather small task focused on the remaining 22.5 ha of the Lagarde-Barracks. In 2017, the City of Bamberg was able to buy this property and thereby restore the communal planning sovereignty. This was the starting point of “conversion on a small scale”. Anyhow, to call this a less-than-ideal solution would be ill-informed. A closer look reveals that through a connection between old and new infrastructure, a combination of economy and housing, involvement of creativity and innovation indeed the development of a whole new quarter, within the meaning of *territorial invention*, is aimed at. Currently, the physiognomically integrated but still functionally isolated former military areal with its somehow alienated character is transformed into a modern, connected city quarter with multipurpose use for cultural and creative industry, information technology and healthcare sector, services and accommodation (Stadt Bamberg 2017, 50f.). In respect of the property possession and therefore control, mixture is the goal as well. The renovation or redesign of housing facilities is in the hands of private developers while the city itself promotes social housing and especially the idea of a quarter dedicated to culture and creativity.

Hereafter, apart from the commercial activities in the housing sector two additional activities are looked at more closely. The Quarter for Cultural Activities (“Kulturquartier”) and the Digital Entrepreneurial Center (“Digitales Gründerzentrum”) embrace the concept of *inventer de nouveau territoires* to a special extent.

(a) Lagarde Quarter for Culture

The Lagarde Quarter for Culture Activities is intended to serve easily accessible offers and activities of the local alternative art scene, which had initiated an annual event in 2015, the “Kontaktfestival”. That event turned into a very successful temporary use for the area. Current planning concepts include a central public space around the former horse riding arena as vivid space for cultural and social activities of all kinds. Through a high-quality spatial design this space is meant to turn into a social meeting point and the core of the quarter (Stadt Bamberg 2017, 54). This initiative follows consequently the concept of an „integrated area

development“, which explicitly should stimulate processes of social innovation (Moulaert 2000; Moulaert/Mehmood 2011). The planner’s expectation for their “invention” is clearly defined: “A quarter for culture promotes a strong creative and sociocultural environment that builds up the quarter’s attractiveness” (Stadt Bamberg 2018, 8). All aspects of daily life should be connected with cultural factors and develop a sort of magnetism for residents, citizen, economies and tourism.

(b) Digital Entrepreneurial Center

In fall 2019, the “Digital Entrepreneurial Center Lagarde1” counts towards the first realized projects. It serves as business-incubator for entrepreneurs and start-ups with digital business models.³ The project is highly supported by the Bavarian state, ironically as part of a compensation agreement from 2015, when the refugee facilities (see above) were established against the interests of the City of Bamberg, being promised financial compensation through the state in return. A special focus lies, once again, on the whole project’s creative character. It offers not only working space for business cooperation but also a “Creative Cube”, recreational areas, cafeteria, co-working-spaces and additional seminar and conference rooms. With these activities the center hopes to attract innovative start-ups and provide an ideal environment for exploring the range of possibilities of digital technology for new products, services and business ideas.

6 Conclusion: The power of institutions and the local dimension

The outlined example proves that the essential questions regarding “*inventer de nouveaux territoires*“ (the invention of new territories; Humeau/Long 2011) arise in most cases in the context of a controversial and conflict-loaded discourse triangle between spatial redistribution and the influence of agents of change as well as the given power constellation.

In the case of Bamberg, the shift from the bottom-up to top-down principle changed a extraordinarily challenging large-scale project provisionally into a district-based development

³ Press release City of Bamberg 13.4.2018; [https://www.stadt.bamberg.de/B%C3%BCrgerservice/%C3%84mter-A-Z/Amt-f%C3%BCr-Strategische-Entwicklung-und-Konversionsmanagement_/Amt-f%C3%BCr-Strategische-Entwicklung-und-Konversionsmanagement/Baubeginn-f%C3%BCr-Digitales-Gr%C3%BCnderzentrum.php?object=tx,2730.5&ModID=7&FID=1829.13124.1&NavID=1829.730&La=1 , last access 10.9.2019]

with medium reach. From the current standpoint this sequence of events surely had its benefits regarding the quality of the city development (yet the shortage on the local housing market will continue to exist). The gradual reduction of the conversion plans lastly led to a concentration of capacities and resources. Another effect is – consciously or subconsciously – the pressure to finding creative solutions which resulted in a multipurpose use of the area. Agents on the local scale reacted in this specific case to externally caused changes they could not influence with creativity and the *re-invention of new territories*. The famous key question of the “right to city” (Lefebvre 1968) is here applied figuratively through temporal, planned and unplanned concurrence of per se independent events, which also took place on completely different scales. In this whole process, coincidence was directive, if not even crucial.

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