

The Opera of the Universe, and the Windmill of Art and Sciences

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Abstract

France has a good network of planetaria. Unfortunately, one of its main scientific region (i.e. Grenoble and the surrounding Alps) has no such facility. In this paper, we present a new initiative called "the Opera of the Universe" which will include a planetarium and be part of a bigger project : the windmill of Art and Sciences

1. Introduction

This project started a few years ago from the fact that one of the main scientific French area has no planetarium. Figure 1 shows the actual covering of such facilities.

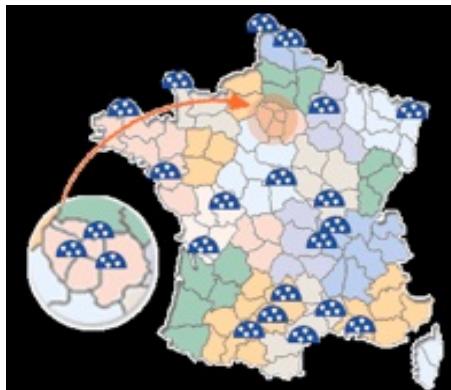


Figure 1: the French planetariums network.

The main scientific city in the French Alps is Grenoble. Starting from there, in order to attend a planetarium show, one has to go to Vaulx en Velin

(about 100 km west), Montpellier (250 km south) or Dijon (300 km North).

However, although the people at the origin of this initiative are astronomers, they belong to the Observatory of the Sciences of the Universe, which includes laboratories working on climate, glaciology, geology, hydrology. This is how we came with the concept of the "Opera of the Universe".

2. The Opera of the Universe

This facility will include:

- . A building where all the sciences of the universe (geology, seismic, astronomy / planetology, climatology, space weather...) will have the possibility to communicate to the public : rooms for experiences, museum ...
- . The scientists serve as experts. As soon as a discovery is made, they explain it to the professionals who will welcome the public so that the results of the research go directly back to the public who pays for it
- . The building will include a 14 m numeric planetarium (about 100 spectators).
- . The building will include a meeting room for meetings (200 people)
- . The Opera of the universe will serve as legal social centre for local astronomical or geological associations. The professionals will label the selected associations, which will therefore gain recognition. In the Opera, they will have a room, a copy machine...

3. The Windmill of Art and Sciences

We decided not to submit our project to the city of Grenoble itself, where the cultural offer is already large. Instead, we discussed with 2 suburb cities where the population is of low economic level. Mr Ferrari, the mayor of Pont de Claix - the 3d sized city

in the county - immediately adopted it. Christophe Ferrari is himself a climatologist and fully understands our goals. Recently elected, he had a more ambitious project now called the "Windmill of the Art and Sciences": to offer to artists and scientists an old windmill factory as a place to meet with the public. The meeting room will serve as a theatre. The total surface is 1775 square meters with possible extension in the actual barnyard of the factory. At term, the Opera of the Universe should be given 1200 square meters including the Planetarium.



Figure 2: The old factory "Les moulins de Villancourt"

4. Status progress

Concerning the Opera of the Universe, the progresses made so far are:

- . CNRS and the Grenoble University liked the concept. They do not pay, since scientists are « only » experts. They hold it as their official project
- . Strong support from the Planetarium french association (APLF)
- . Pont de Claix plans the opening in 2014
- . An old unused factory (thousands of square meters) will be used

. Scientists from 7 labs started to dream on the experiments to show to the public in a scientific committee soon called « the Fanfare of the Opera »
. Support has been given by official international groups: Europlanet, COST ES803 and Soteria.
. More than 10 meetings with the scientists, the artists and the city of Pont de Claix took place. A coherent project is emerging where science and arts are not as separate slices of onions, but are truly working altogether.

So far, the main problem encountered is the legal status of the Opera. Indeed, as scientists belonging to public institutions, we cannot endorse the administrative organization of the Opera. The leader is the city of Pont de Claix along with partners such as the county, the city network, the ministry.

One nice thing is that there are parallel projects are going on elsewhere in Europe. To our knowledge, Graz is one of them. Exchange of best practices will certainly improve our different planetaria.