

OBJECTIVES AND STAKES

Pont-Château is a city of 10,000 inhabitants in the metropolitan area of Nantes-St Nazaire. Situated in the hinterland of the estuary of the Loire, the town was developed, since its foundation, from the meanders of the river Brivet and the geography of the “Sillon de Bretagne”, a ridge line, establishing an upper town and a lower town. Take advantage of the removal of the level crossing of the city hall square, the project of public spaces aims to create a real tie with the banks and to reveal a hidden identity.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PROJECT: THE REMOVAL OF THE LEVEL CROSSING

The “route de Nantes” is the main access road to the city center of Pont-Château. Since the East, this way goes down regularly on a hillside and crosses the railroad (line Nantes-Rennes) at the entrance of the City hall square. This level crossing - PN378 – constitutes a matter of public safety due to its dangerousness. The consequence of its removal was the closure of the city main entrance.

Pont-Château is thus obliged to create a gateway to the city, to restructure its urban planning, to modify the districts of the city center, to transform traffic lanes to maintain the attractiveness of the city centre.

A request for a pure urban functionality (the removal of the level crossing) leads finally to an in-depth requalification of all the city centre of Pont-Château:

- Urban renewal of the city centre by the released spaces.
- Creation of a new entrance to the city from the South between the viaduct (the south urban boulevard) and the station.
- Rediscovery of the river of the city centre, the Brivet, which was hidden under the concrete slab of a parking lot.
- Creation of walkways between the city centre (upper and lower) and the quays of Brivet.
- Proposal of major spaces of conviviality (square of the City hall, square of the Station, square of the Centre).

AN APPROACH COLLABORATIVE

THE METHOD, BETWEEN PROCESS OF ELABORATION OF THE PROJECT AND PROCESS OF DIALOGUE

The method of the project is a participative process in every stage. From the work of diagnosis, we proposed a seminary of thematic workshops, grouping a team of project management, elected representatives, technicians, partners, inhabitants, etc.... By the implementation of thematic workshops, the objectives were to allow:

- to be aware of the territory, the actors and the current related projects on the city, by confronting subjects which are also the working themes of the project.
- to enrich the reflection already committed by urban project of city centre, according to the evolution of the objectives or the different visions on the urban questions.
- to widen the reflection ("zoom-out") in a wider territory than the city centre to estimate and take into account the stakes of connections, and to establish the criteria of environmental evaluation which then used as guideline throughout the project.
- to bring outside skills, to allow each to express himself (report of the current situation and the identification of needs) and to share experiences.

The proposed themes of workshops :

- COMFORT OF USE AND DAILY PRACTICAL OF THE CITY CENTRE
- THE URBAN MOBILITY: MOVEMENTS AND CAR PARKS
- THE BIODIVERSITY AND THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

THE PROJECT OF PUBLIC PLACES

Improvement of the living environment.

Transformation of the forms and the brownfield sites of the city center.

Transformation of the city centre as a place to discover the geography of the territory and the presence of water in the city centre.

The reorganization of the city centre of Pont-Château operates a transformation of the nature of its urban spaces, its qualities and its uses.

After decades of submission to the car traffic and its needs in asphalted surfaces, public spaces lose its first sense, its relationship with the geographical site, and especially, the Brivet. It is a question of rediscovering the assets of the relief, the crossings of a stream (the bridges of Pont-Château), and the variations of levels.

Even if the project is connected to the removal of a level crossing and to the realization of a bypassing by a new viaduct crossing the valley of Brivet, the founding act of the urban mutations is indeed the removal of the vast parking lot made of concrete which recovered the river, in front of the City hall.

Then, it was only necessary to improve the quality of pedestrians space, the holds and the renovated quays, the landing stages and the footbridges created to promote movements as closed as possible to the river, the flooring and the revegetation of streets, staircases and accesses of public buildings to reveal what had disappeared. At this improvement of the existing urban space, new infrastructure was added harmoniously like the footbridge and the retaining stone wall.