

DEVISING THE MILIEU

Opportunities and strategies for the educational and cultural centre 'Les Heures Claires

Collectiveness, sharing, equality, temporary settings and adaptability, therefore density and re-interpretation of the existing archetypes.

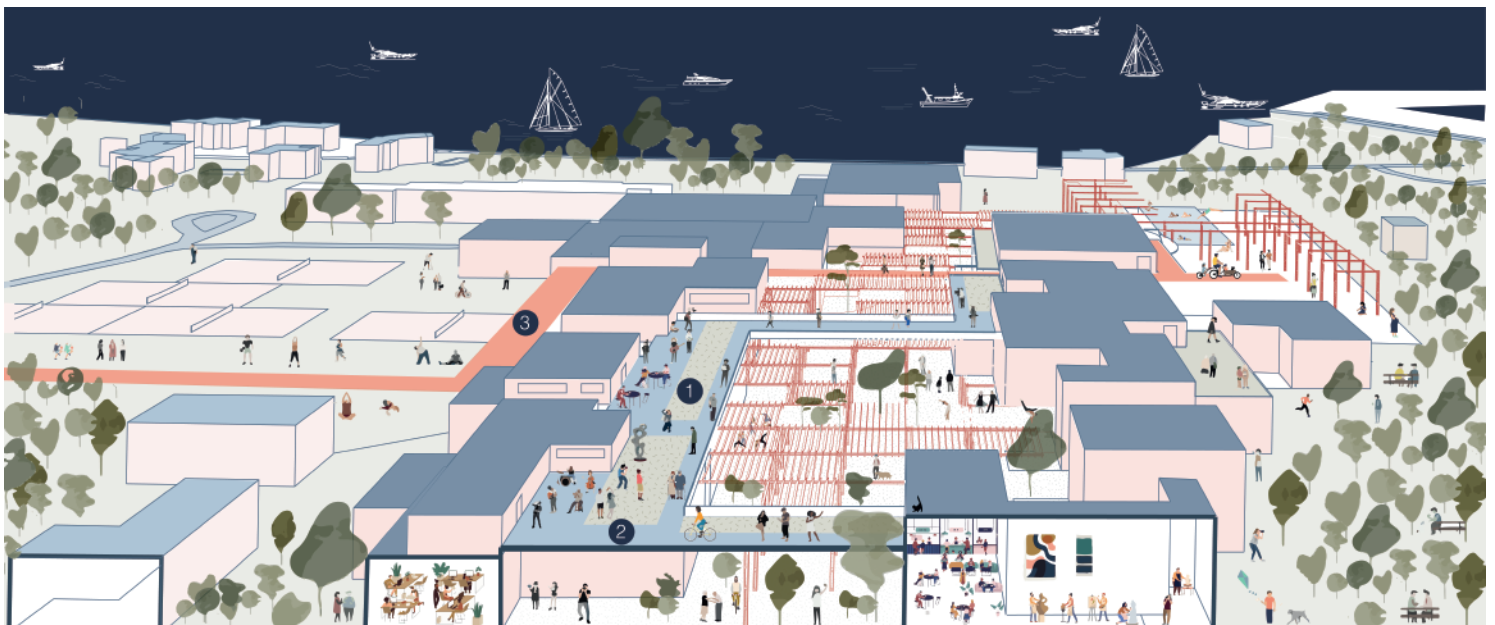
These are the main concepts from which we have been driven through the whole design process. The starting point has been a deep analysis of the principles and the architectural behaviour of the "Atelier de Montrouge", which expressed his main design features in the development of the "Les Heures Claires" cultural and educational centre. Here ATM expressed through his typologies a design made with the purpose of inclusivity, oriented to create a network of connections made up by different backgrounds and activities. Therefore it was highlighted from the beginning how the central promenade could represent a crucial point of the whole design. Hence, we thought that having a common third- place learning space for all the different activities could generate a milieu in which everyone can bring and share his own identity, his own background and his own culture, creating a multi-disciplinary environment based on the differences that characterize each user.

But this in-between space deserved more than a simple "declaration of intents" to be actually "performed" from the citizenship, so we followed our path exploring the means and the architectural devices able to reach the design goal. In this sense we noticed how it was completely wrong to consider as a limit for the intervention the borders of the buildings volumes. It was shown as a necessity to include in the design not only the central promenade but as well all the facilities still included in the area of the cultural centre and in a bigger scale the connections within the city and his infrastructural network. This has been possible creating and implementing a new possible link on the North-South axis where Chem. de la Combe aux Fées goes along the border of the sport facilities area never having a declared connection to the hearth of the cultural centre.

Then it was important to open a passage through it , connecting the forest and the harbour area with the northern border. Though we designed a new connection, loose from the existing +0 level infrastructural net and then we adapted it to the existing building morphology. Therefore, we explored the successful strategy well calibrating the purpose of the densification with the new qualities of the proposed milieu.

Thus, the necessity to match the two main different strategies and scales of the design approach.

In the first place, in a human and user-scale, the densification of the central promenade with the creation of a milieu. An environment in which the third space learning and the sharing connections could happen. A space in which different characters from different worlds can "bring-out" their own talents and their interests, merging them together and giving birth to a new multi-disciplinary environment; an excellent space for the user, and a super attractive "place de la ville" where everything is always happening. In a more urban-wise scale we had to approve a strategy which was essential to shape and create strong and tangible connections. New directions crossing new spots of interest and giving contribution to the right acknowledgement of the new urban interfaces. In this new network of connections, it was essential to calibrate the will to create equity through architectural devices as much inclusive as possible. In this sense it was clear the dichotomy of the project in his two different scales. The buildings scale, with the creation of the central milieu: the space for sharing ideas and knowledge, personal contribution and cross- disciplinary insights. The urban scale, an extensive intervention able to create new connections and urban devices open to the citizenship: the space for sharing activities and gathering beyond classes boundaries and limitations.



This produced the creation of a new meta-level of the design, metaphorically but even physically.

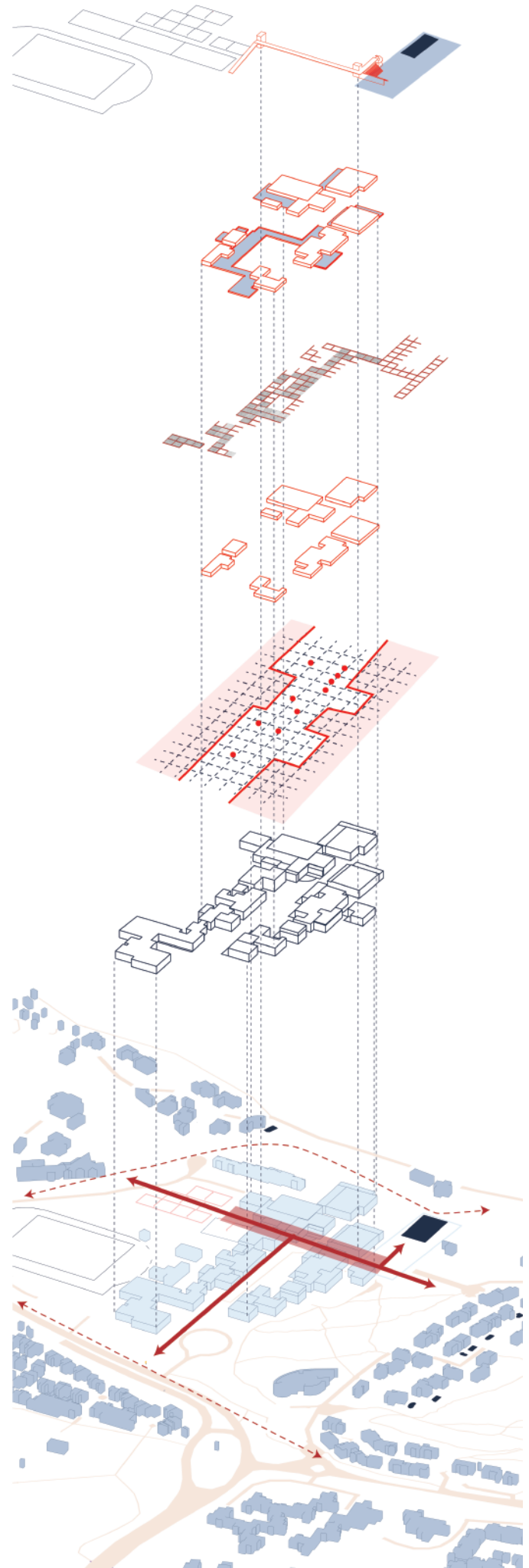
A new level in the cultural centre as well as in the outer connection through the city and the nature. A necessary ingredient to activate the metabolic city that was turned off inside the ECC and throughout the ville. Hence a new layer has been created, starting from a first analysis about the morphology of the buildings and the relatively flat surroundings.

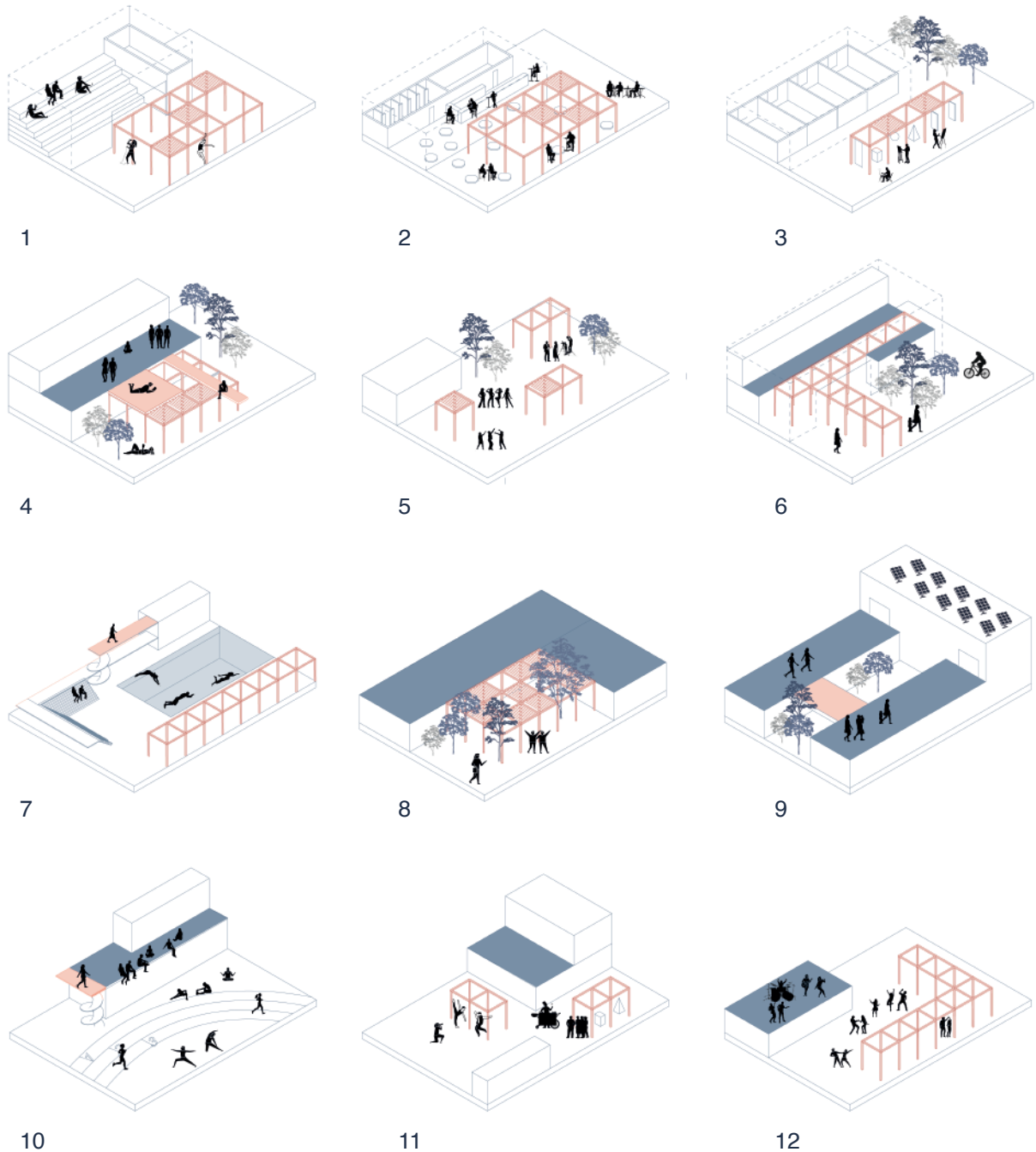
A new suspended level in which new connections and new uses can bond together to create a new ecology directly connected with the new milieu but still usable to produce easier and more direct connections.

In the actual conditions of the floorplan, we identified the buildings as separate islands. Even though in the architectural poetry of Atelier de Montrouge everything was connected and hybrid in his function, nowadays the site works as an archipelago of many different islands without any metabolic relation. The concept design process has seen through the activation of this in-between vertical level the possibility to enrich and connect the existing buildings. Though we analysed the buildings identifying two different roof heights. Then we chose the lower roof level as the roots of our design. Choosing this level and not the higher one has meant for us to produce a new dialogue between the existing buildings, which can be now activated through terraces and outdoor space connecting to other buildings. This new layer of connections can even produce a re-organization of their interior distribution, giving the possibility to new functions and a new subdivision of the actual unities in more active and fragmented spaces, still linked from the outer circulation. On the other hand, choosing the in-between level permitted us to not get too far from the milieu design intervention, integrating here the structural and the architectural devices able to extend the indoor spaces of the active buildings, and even provide suspended paths for the crossing passage of this new level through the central street. The deep re-interpretation of the actual buildings involved the creation of the central milieu conceived as an extension of the actual activities.

In this sense we had to provide an architectural device which could structural-wise substantiate the upper circulation, and in the meanwhile activate the inner square extending the buildings and giving a new shared space.

A connectivity fabric that represents an offset area of the existing volumes, but then qualify itself with a proper architectural identity. The historical photos and the theory behind the architecture of Atelier de Montrouge team has been an important reference for the development of this moment of the project. Standards such as sustainability, temporary settings and adaptability, had to match with structural needs and energy production requirements.





Following these theoretical steps, we designed a modular wooden structure which can integrate all the needed aspect that we conceived. In this sense the modular nature of the element can perfectly respond to the flexibility of the planning and the adaptability to the function of the building with which is posed in dialogue. His structural stability can provide, with the appropriate sizing, the support for the upper element of the suspended path. His modular composition permitted us to integrate on the roof of this element a pivoting shading system with photovoltaic cells to grant the energy production of the intervention. With this strategy a really big area covered with an energy-productive system could really make the difference in the energetic metabolic balance of the whole design. The pivoting framing indeed could easily be adapted to the climate conditions providing a filtered sunlight and a proper extension for the inner space within the mild Provençal seasons, or otherwise give the possibility of being closed creating rainproof covered areas in the rainy days. The design pushed himself to study how this structure deals and dialogues with the existing activities and the different typologies of the volumes.

(Further explanations are given in the panel n.2)

1. EXTERNAL STAGE FOR EXISTING AUDITORIUMS
2. EXTENSION AND COVERED AREA FOR THE RESTAURANT AND CAFÉ
3. EXPOSITION HUB FOR STUDENTS AND ARTISTS
4. NEW LEVEL EXTENSION – TERRACES AND BRIDGES
5. INNOVATIVE PERFORMANCE SPACE
6. HYBRID INDOOR OUTDOOR SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR RE-DESIGN
7. SPORTS FACILITY INTEGRATION, THE POOL AREA
8. INTEGRATION WITH THE EXISTING TREES PATTERN
9. ACTIVATION OF THE UPPER LEVELS AND INSULATION STRATEGY
10. A VISUAL CONNECTION TO THE SPORT FACILITIES
11. RENTABLE SPACES FOR EXPOSITION AND ACTIVITIES
12. TERRACES AND STRUCTURE: GLOBAL INTERACTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The structure is perceived as an organic ensemble in his floorplan settings together with the existing buildings and with the multiple modules bond together. It loses in the eyes of the user, the conception of a singular element, becoming not only a group of objects, but a path, a covered pavilion, an extension of a performance space, and finally the support of the new suspended bridging connections. It activates functions extending and creating environments, transforming the inner circulation in a proper place to live and to stay: the milieü.

It acts as a performative object able create and extend the existing, dividing and altering the space enhancing new connections and programs.

Even though the energy production is not visually dominant in the design of the modular structure, it plays a very important role in the conception of the metabolic rhythm of the overall design. It the continuous evolving attitude of the environments it keeps working as a continuous power plant. Many different things can happen under and beside every module of the structure, but the energy production is always happening in the photovoltaic cells of the brise soleil. A parallel metabolic flow taking place in the same architectural device..

