



RESUSCITATING THE BLOSNE
REVIVING THE SOIL
STITCHING UP THE INFRASTRUCTURE

An archetype of the «archipelago city» - maintaining and intensifying contrasts?

The Blosne district and the Plateau d'Orson form two radically different yet complementary environments. They are inherently antinomic: urban/rural, dense/dilated, urbanized/open. The concept of the «archipelago city» exists precisely because of and thanks to these contrasts. We propose to preserve and intensify them as the starting point of our project.

Densifying the soon-to-be abandoned CHU infrastructure allows us to avoid building elsewhere, particularly on the other side of the ring road on the Orson plateau.

The project thus works as a manifesto of the «archipelago city». To perpetuate it, it proposes to create «capable spaces» needed for the activities of the Plateau d'Orson, the Blosne district and the wider metropolitan area on the site of the former university hospital: producers' shops, storage facilities, last-kilometer logistics warehouses, training centre, craft workshops, seasonal accommodation, car parks, power generation (solar ovens)...

Exploring, discovering and recognising places - intuitions to question?

At first glance, the Plateau d'Orson, with its fields and hedgerows, might appear to offer an ideal setting for cycling or a Sunday walk. On the other hand, the Blosne district may seem less attractive for pedestrians, with its heavy car traffic and widely urbanised space.

In fact, once on site, the Plateau d'Orson has few if any developed footpaths. Toward the bypass road, most of the paths have no exit. The Blosne district, on the other hand, offers, in addition to its many connected parks, a vast, safe, pedestrian green corridor along the ring road. The sports fields are directly connected to it.

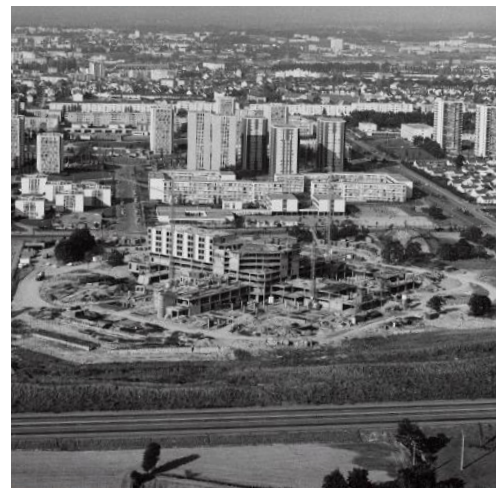
At this level, the project is intended as an orientation and reading tool. The aim is not to homogenise the two sides of the ring road, but to clarify the structures, environments, hydrographic and geographical territory so that people can appropriate them, find their way around and understand them. In the words of architect Inessa Hansch, the aim is to «give users back their power of orientation».

Meeting, living, working - from monofunctionalism to multifunctionalism?

The Fontenoy hospital, designed by architects Paul Phelouzat and Patrice Dutard between 1976 and 1980, is a vast infrastructure defined by a 7.20-metre square structural grid. With very few constraints, it offers great freedom of use.

In our opinion, these reversible qualities make it a durable and resilient structure that cannot be demolished because of the design constraint it could be. The project is based on the assumption that the structure of the cross and the additions that fit in the 7.20 metre grid will be preserved in their entirety.

Based on this assumption, the challenge was to make this infrastructure livable and attractive for the residents of Le Blosne and the surrounding area. Livable by branching out, increasing density yet opening up the structure to views and light. Desirable, by making this hermetic, technical and self-centred structure into an open, public monument, crossable and extrovert.





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Beyond the urban zoning inherited from the 20th century - planning with the unpredictable?

The project is not the result of actions that cannot be dissociated from one another, ultimately leading to a finished entity. On the contrary, it is conceived as a **succession of possible, autonomous events**. In other words, they are independent and can exist by themselves and for themselves without the need to rely on the future to function. **The project works according to a logic of double**

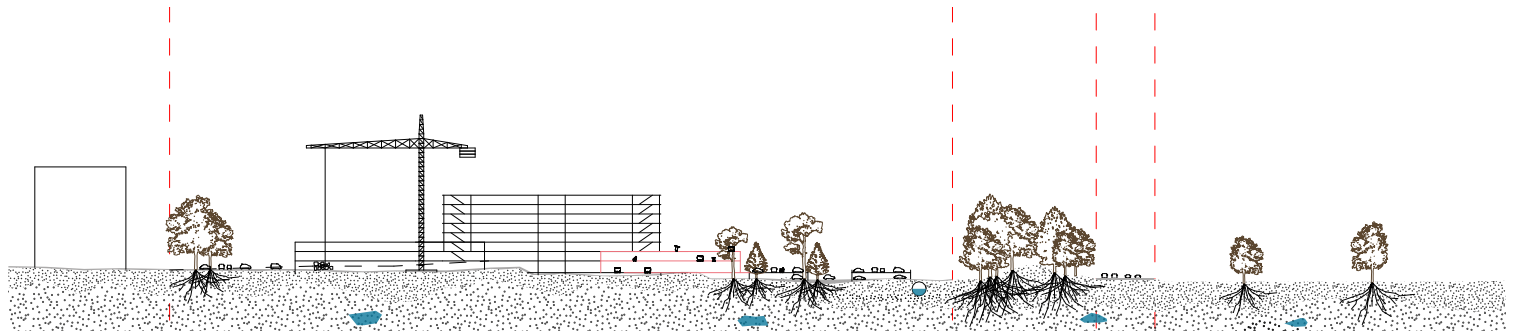
autonomy: , both time-based and event-based.

For example, the lower and upper ground floors of the CHU can be renovated in phase 1 and function autonomously, even if the renovation of the wings planned for phase 2 is not carried out for some reason.

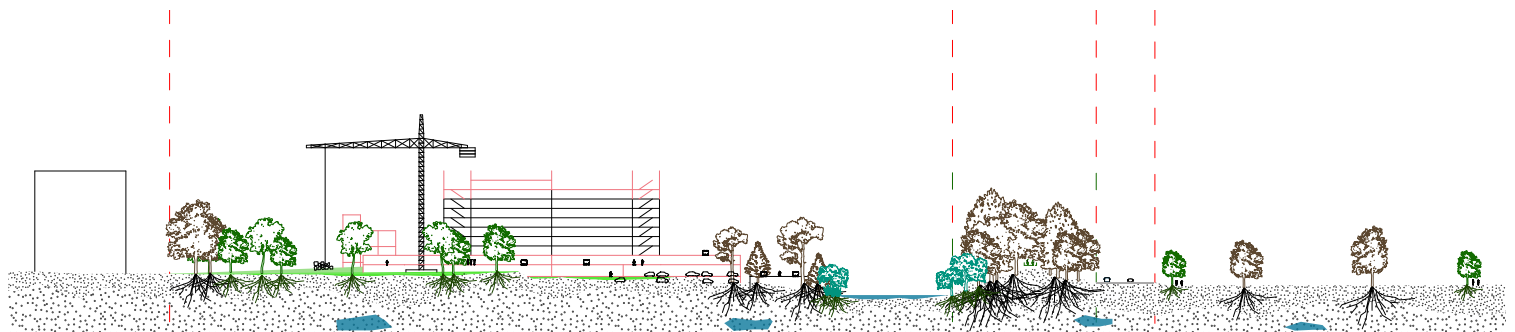
As the TVK studio points out, the aim of what they call «scenarisation» is «no longer to control the future by encapsulating it in a fixed plan, but to include unpredictability by working with time».

That is why our presentation reflects this observation,

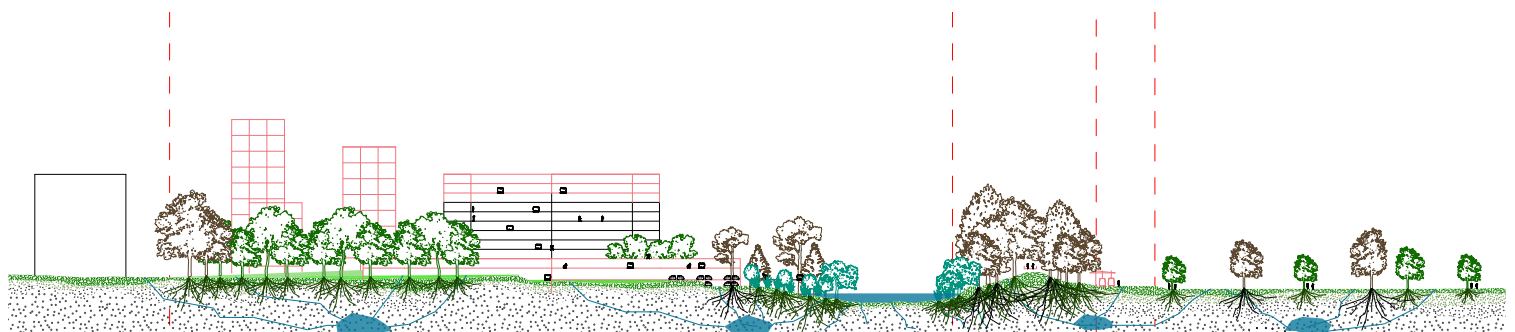
illustrating possibilities, successive scenarii, scenes of life at different times. Rather than an unalterable project representing the one and only possible future, **three timeframes are represented** through plans, axonometry and images.



> Phase 1 (2027-2030): (re)discovering the living (What pre-existing? What potential?)



> Phase 2 (2031-2034): encountering of living environments (What balances? What Interactions?)



> Phase 3 (beyond): hypotheses for development (sustainability of environments and ongoing experiments)

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Resuscitating the Blosne

The Blosne river is little known to the people of Rennes, yet it gave its name to the southern ZUP and is one of the three valleys that cross Rennes along with the Vilaine and Ille rivers. Although it was radically altered and made invisible in the 20th century (by canalisation, diversion and culverting), it used to generate a variety of living environments that structured the landscape and its uses.

The project sets out strategies to restore the hydrological functions of the Blosne in order to "restore the soil's infiltration and storage capacity and get away from the obsession with draining water", as Emma Haziza, a doctor in hydrology, puts it. The actions are differing depending on whether they take place inside or outside the ring road: «in the city, this means removing sealing and planting as many surfaces as possible» and «in the countryside, restoring wetlands and flood-prone areas to their function as sponges, and restoring watercourses to their sinuous course».

The goal is twofold: it is ecological by nature, but it is also social; this renaturation also creates bonds, quality of life, shared and inclusive places. Light installations (footbridges, a former car park, footpaths) are set to make it possible to walk around and contemplate the site without damaging it. The aim is not to recreate the past, but to draw inspiration from historical environments and uses in order to strengthen the site's identity. Sociologist André Sauvage explains about the Le Blosne district: «In those days (the early 20th century), when pollution was unknown and water levels allowed it, teenagers practised swimming.»

Reviving the soil

Today, the CHU site is largely built-up. The challenge is to limit construction to areas that are already waterproofed and to radically remove concrete from unbuilt areas in order to clear the ground and start rehabilitating it.

Urban waste and rubble from the deconstruction of the CHU are reused to renew the soil; once fertile, they can store CO₂, create islands of coolness, facilitate the infiltration of rainwater, support biodiversity and produce nutritious food.

This revitalisation of soils also makes it possible to define the spaces shared by all living things. Gilles Gallinet, geologist and naturalist, points out that «the landscape is always the expression of a soil in a terrestrial environment». Over time, the regenerated soil creates different environments on and around the site of the former university hospital: open, wooded, wet, etc.

Historically, the site of the former university hospital was cultivated, and several farms were located there. The aim is also to renew this ancient, domestic link between the environment and food by increasing the network of allotment gardens on the Orson plateau and by planting edible plants along its paths (fruit trees, berries, herbs, etc.).

Stitching up the infrastructure

With the aim of ensuring resilience, saving materials and preserving the soil from new construction, the plan is to keep the existing structure and increase its density as much as possible, rather than demolish it. A new wooden structure (posts and beams) enhances the preserved infrastructure of the CHU by continuing its constructive logic, dealing with what is already there, with imperfections and irregularities. Like a living organism, it develops according to need, while strictly following the original structural grid.

This approach turns the CHU's single-function infrastructure into a capable, multi-functional structure that is independent of existing and future uses, guaranteeing its flexibility and upgradability. As architects Agwa explain, «architecture has to deal with wear and tear and appropriation. The role of the structure then becomes fundamental. As the only thing that lasts, the structure is what offers continuity in change». (Agwa, Bozar A+ reading, 11 October 2022)

The extended area is limited to a square perimeter. This preserves the land and ensures the urban cohesion of the whole. The four façades of the plinth levels generously address the four environments that face them: shops, a food market, a community cafeteria, a health centre and a training centre all directly address the public spaces.

The new buildings in phase 3 (towers and houses) are deliberately designed to follow the urban logic of the surrounding area, and the networked parks and pedestrian walkways are extended onto the site.