

**CANDIDATURE 10th European Urban and Regional Planning Awards  
ALEXANDRE CHEMETOFF & ASSOCIÉS**

**LE PLATEAU DE HAYE NANCY, LAXOU, MAXÉVILLE**

Plateau de Haye is a name that designates the territory comprising the three municipalities of Laxou, Maxéville and Nancy. It is an urban area with 14,000 residents, covering 400 hectares and located at the edges of the Haye Forest on the limestone plateau that overlooks the Meurthe Valley.

On Plateau de Haye, at the top of Nancy in the Haut-du-Lièvre sector, stands two of the largest housing blocks in France, the *Tilleul argenté* and *Cèdre bleu*, built between 1958 and 1962 by Bernard Zehruss. Only 200 years separate the architectural designs of Emmanuel Héré and those of Zehruss, and only 120 metres of altitude and a distance of 200 kilometres separate Place Stanislas and Haut-du-Lièvre.

On one side, we are in a UNESCO World Heritage site, while, on the other, we find ourselves in a district receiving state funds for urban renewal.

In 2004, after 50 years of being strongly shaped by urban development, this area embarked on a far-reaching transformation, where the city reinvents itself and creates new forms of city life, interdependent and caring.

In November 2011, Plateau de Haye received the ÉcoQuartiers Grand Prize for excellence in creating an eco-district.

For us, an eco-district is not a new town or a neighbourhood whose distinctiveness sets it apart from its surroundings; rather, it is an approach that improves and promotes what exists by associating it with what is new. An eco-district is where existing residents find a better living environment and newcomers are a sure sign of positive and concrete progress.

Our goal here is not to present a finished product. We want to emphasize the fact that the transformation of a city is a sensitive topic that involves not only implementing processes, but also achieving a shared space, the heartbeat of a city.

For this reason, private investors must construct new kinds of housing and workplaces, and the canal must be filled with water, streets readied to welcome new developments, gardens cultivated and forest paths on the hillside reopened; we must be empowered to complete the transformation and make the Plateau a sustainable eco-district.

The project is founded on four core principles: Ecological balance, Economic viability, Social progress and Participatory democracy.

**ECOLOGICAL BALANCE**

**The land as cultural heritage**

This land has been successively influenced by agriculture (Sainte-Catherine and Saint-Jacques farms), extraction of oolitic limestone for refining Lorraine iron ore, and massive construction of social housing, starting in the 1960s, accompanied by major public facilities (schools, social and educational services, sport venues and places of worship). With the end of mining operations, quarries were backfilled and underwent pre-greening in 1985, which has flourished since, creating a diverse, rich land that must be enhanced and managed.

The project consists in bringing to the fore all the varieties of landscapes, different architecture, cultural diversity and economic advantages.

**Sustainable management of natural resources**

Everything we found on the site was reused and recycled. In this way, 755,000 cubic metres of earth was reused on the Plateau to construct pavements or foundations for new street blocks. The same principles were applied to canal earthworks (1.6 km), which contributes to the beautification of the district.

### **Maintaining the balance of nature**

Haye Forest provides the territory's identity. The Plateau is at the heart of a network of parks and walking paths that connect the orchard paths of Maxéville, the hillsides, existing parks, new parks and Haye Forest. This wealth of habitats creates new continuums, brings value to neighbouring areas and becomes generally more desirable.

To achieve this balance, the existing parks are enhanced and new parks created:

- The Forest Botanical Gardens and Parc des Sport, at the centre of the Solvay site, benefit from the pre-greening to create a natural 15-hectare core of the district.
- The linear park located at Champ-le Boeuf includes a 2.7-hectare wooded area with noise protection walls against the motorway.
  - The forest park located on the hillside of Meurthe use existing resources to create paths and clearings.
- Sainte Catherine Park links the Aulnes district with the Forest Botanical Gardens, from grove to grove.
  - The park of the hillside of Solvay, where there is a large terraced orchard on the former quarry face.
- Gentilly Park where there are woods and prairies, paths, high forests, trails, sport fields and other facilities.
  - Saône Park at the centre of Champ-le-Boeuf, hidden away, wild and romantic, opening onto adjacent districts.

### **Energy production and management**

The topic of energy plays a major role in the transformation of Plateau de Haye. Whether it involves energy used to change the district, energy consumed to perform the works or energy produced to provide services and supplies for construction and facilities, energy is precious and must be managed economically and with respect for resources.

The Office of Public Housing of Nancy (OPH) has chosen dual energy: gas/wood-fire replacing gas/coal. This new collective heating system provides 3,000 housing units with hot water and heating. Its objective is to lower CO2 emissions by 4,000 metric tons a year and reduce tenant energy bills.

After three years of work, in October 2009, the restoration project for OPH and Meurthe & Moselle Habitat (MMH) lands was completed. It involved more than 3,500 housing units. The works made it possible to improve electricity and thermal and acoustic performance of the housing. For example, 10,000 windows were replaced.

## **ECONOMIC VIABILITY**

### **Through wise investments**

Our first assessments clearly indicated that the success of the project would depend on a more global transformation of the Plateau. It was quickly agreed that the proposed budget for developing 70 hectares would be used to work on 60 more. Consequently, for greater urban coherence and to meet the needs of as many people as possible, a measured approach was taken.

This positioning, which consists in doing more with the means at our disposal, constitutes a true challenge. The average cost of developing public spaces is now €50 per square metre, excluding taxes. This choice makes it necessary to adopt a simpler aesthetic, emphasise the ways of using and sharing the spaces and thinking outside the box: "less money, more brains."

### **An inventive economy**

It was necessary to consider the land a resource to use with care, meaning "make do" and "do together" rather than "work against." Implementing urban planning centred on reuse. It is a way of viewing the city and searching to understand its details by scrutinising its faults while appreciating its strong qualities.

Conservation is not an obstacle to creativity. It stimulates and requires in-depth consideration of a situation not under our control, in which we must be practical. It is a way of acknowledging heritage and being responsible with regard to the environment and public investments. Dealing with reality is also an economical manner to design the development of public spaces and buildings. It shines new light on what is taken for granted, thereby allowing us to see unappreciated value.

### **The project's public service**

The broad range of mandates given to Alexandre Chemetoff's Bureau des Paysages made it possible to have "active service," in which service and action are associated to make it clear that something concrete is happening and the project is moving forward every day. Urban planning must be concrete and result in actions over time that bring changes that can be assessed and appreciated on-site. You must be able to verify that what is done is said and what is said is done.

From the master plan to the execution of works on public spaces, from assistance to the contracting authority in maintaining construction consistency to helping with rehabilitation, the mandates make it possible to ensure coherent action in the space and over time.

## **SOCIAL PROGRESS**

### **Meeting the essential needs of people**

Housing is a basic need that must be met, but the larger issue of housing conditions, the environment suitable for city life, cannot be addressed by housing alone. To live well in your housing means living well in your city and neighbourhood. To achieve this, new buildings are mostly organised close to the Forest Botanical Gardens, and all forms of housing are explored: large houses, houses on roofs, stacked townhouses, villas, garden homes and others.

The relationship of each project in its context was determined using various views, extensions, gardens (including productive), winter gardens, planted terraces, greenhouses and so on.

Housing that makes it possible to maintain a personal dimension within a collective scale was imagined by organising independent automated sanitation systems, from roof drains to the gutter, taking into account the actual state of underground facilities and adopting a waste management policy based on on-site reuse and recycling with, for example, local composting sites.

Diversity was sought in each new operation, and a specific theme for each construction project was determined in order to communicate a usage and comfort value beforehand for architectural representation. In addition, residents have opportunities to access gardening and the production of fruits and vegetables. Local gardens appear here and there for individual use, sharing, co-ops and learning.

### **Fighting against all forms of exclusion**

Against social exclusion, by implementing employment criteria in job markets. The worksites have already made it possible for hundreds of districts to offer temporary work and, in some cases, permanent employment.

Against urban exclusion, by a better social mix, opening the site to private enterprise, spreading social housing throughout the urban area, welcoming new residents and beneficiaries of social housing into new buildings and using existing assistance and support services known for their efficiency on the local level.

Better functional mix, by extending the urban area to the quarry site close to the clinic facilities, one of the largest in eastern France, and the expanding Saint-Jacques Business Park, to boost the dynamism of the Plateau.

Better commercial offerings, with the opening of new businesses and the Sunday market on Avenue Pinchard, the renovation of the Ombelles boutiques and improved access to and revitalisation of the Cascade Shopping Centre.

Improved transport system, with the creation of comfortable and easily accessible stations, a bus station on Avenue Pinchard and extension of the existing lines to the new Solvay district.

Accommodating the new penitentiary in the city, whose location is determined by the layout of public spaces. The image may be challenging, but it represents a group of buildings integrated into a neighbourhood where, every day, 690 people live, scores of families visit and 280 others work. A place accessible by public transport, foot or bike, and near motorways.

### **Knowledge sharing**

In Nancy, knowledge of the forest brought by the renowned *Ecole des eaux et des Forêts* is part of the art of transforming the city.

With the contribution of the *Ecole nationale supérieure du paysage*, the transformation of the emerging forest was undertaken by maintaining the plants inherited from pre-greening in order to create a forest botanical garden, a place for research and knowledge sharing open to all.

This productive, living countryside is becoming a learning tool oriented towards horticulture, gardening and urban ecology.

## **PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY**

### **Participation of all residents, from design to realisation**

Since 2003, with the project serving as media, Plateau de Haye, has been at the centre of many activities on the site, as well as at more emblematic locations in the urban area.

Using the master plan, with added photos and drawings, the various gatherings, such as informational activities, Plateau in the Square, policy discussions and visits, as well as shared celebrations and entertainment, have made it possible to exchange ideas and share the project, integral parts of its realisation and achievement.

### **Listening to input**

Allowing others to see is a way of helping others to understand the project. From the outset, samples of significant parts of the project were created to serve as "prototypes" to help construct and share the project. Each new part implemented leads to a test piece. A piece of street, a new post office as an early example of the future shopping centre, a garage, a rehabilitated apartment, a garden at the foot of a building and so on.

These tests on a small scale bring together public spaces and buildings and help set the level of requirements, while keeping within budget. They are visited from the time of creation to their finish. They include comments from organised visits with elected officials, users and the technicians charged with maintenance.

They are projects that, once completed, testify to the shared experience. They show what we want to do and how to do it. Better than a drawing, better than a linear perspective, they are dynamic testimonials of the project.

**We thought hard about how to construct the upper city on Plateau de Haye, not only by putting in place a "piece of city" that protects the environment, but also by practicing urban planning whose objective is to meet the needs of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. We considered everything that already exists as a heritage asset that must be promoted and improved, something where we could add new constructions and facilities. This solidarity between the existing and the new is important to the residents who live and work on the Plateau.**

**On Plateau de Haye, our urban development project aims at constructing a double solidarity: horizontal for the most disadvantaged and vertical for all generations.**