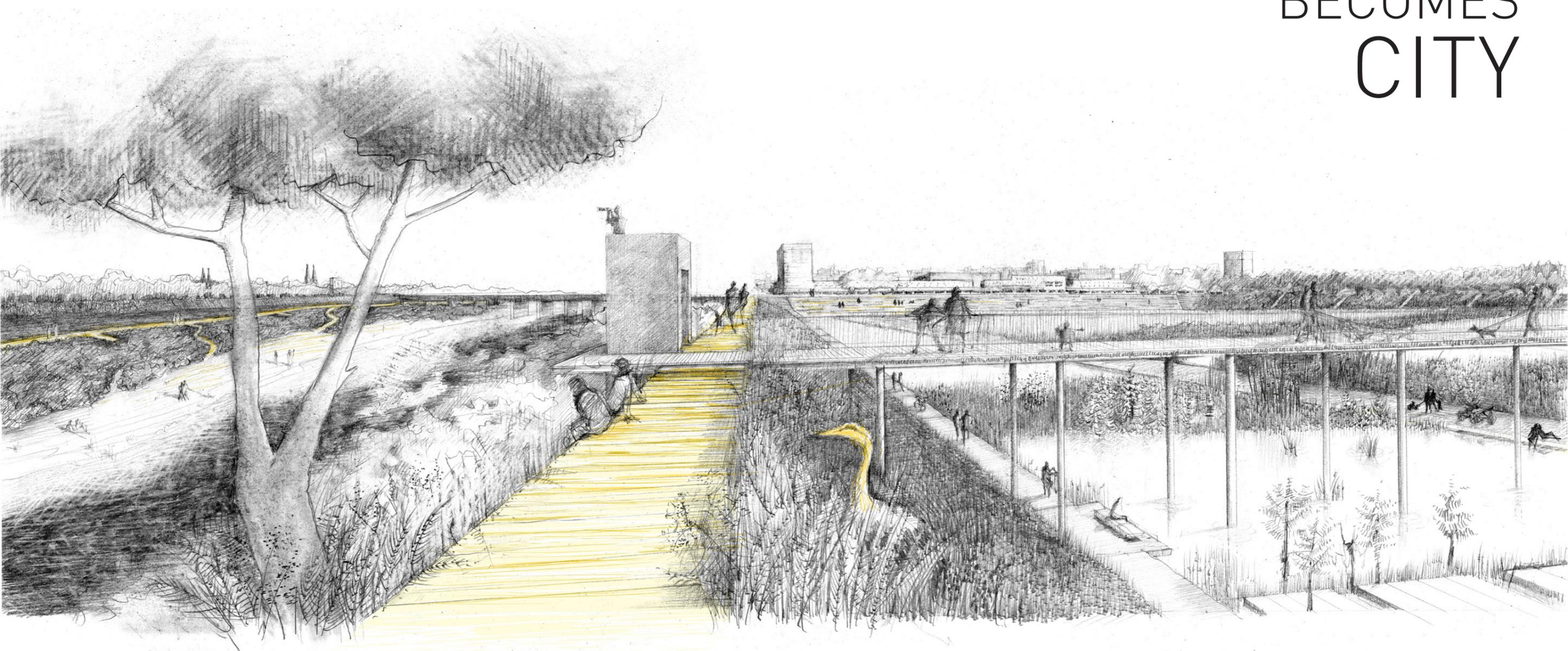


WO902

MOULINS (FR)

WHEN THE
ALLIER
BECOMES
CITY



WO902



A CITY WHICH IS PART OF ITS GEOGRAPHY

The Allier, a territorial figure

Located in an agricultural plain, the city of Moulins is implanted bestride two inspiring landscapes, separated by the Allier river : the Bourbonnais bocage and the Bourbonnaise Sologne. Historic capital, the city of Moulins, as numerous mid-sized french towns, lost since the 70's in dynamism. If it remains the administrative center of the Allier department, the nearby immediate vicinity of other similar mid-sized towns (Vichy, Montluçon) limited its influence. The low urbanization of the « Faubourg Madeleine » and the immediate proximity of these territorial and landscaping components provide the opportunity to revitalize the town thanks to its geography.

The allier river winds its way in the middle of a wide valley which narrows in Moulins. The former road of Clermont-ferrand (D2009), which extends itself to the north with the road D13, draws, with the former road of Paris on the left banks, a big hourglass pattern with Moulins as inflection point. Following the older plans and the natural slope of the ground, the railroad and then road infrastructure (N7) gradually settled. The flood risk mostly preserved the Allier valley from urbanization. The succession of meanders and the numerous dead arms form a vast wet and rangy natural area surrounded with fields.

The territory as the city project

Reconsidering the relation of the city with its river is to make it part of its territory. Starting from the heart of the city of Moulins, the project connects the departmental park of the Valley of Allier, linking by this way the various natural spaces of the bed of the river and the cities which surround it. New pedestrian and cycle routes, on both sides of the stream, shape a vast network running through beaches, floodplains, undergrowth and fields, participating in the new urban system.

Established on the right bank of Allier, the city almost completely developed eastward, turning the back on the river. The creation of heavy infrastructures of expressways enclosing the city on the West by N7, and the loss of interest for the main historic ways progressively cut the links between the city and its territory and hinterland. The city level underwent little by little with regard to the Orvilliers Avenue, which was widened due to the creation of a hopper in the crossing of this way following Allier and of the Régemortes bridge. It turned the Orvilliers avenue into an expressway, and deeply altered the connection of Moulins towards the Allier river and the suburb of Madeleine.

If the city gradually turned away from its river, this one can nevertheless become her main asset. Because it was not channelled, it keeps its natural and tempestuous character, where the flora and fauna compose a landscape which the project suggests valuing.



Hourglass of the Allier

(RE)LEAD THE STREAM OF ALLIER IN THE CITY

When Allier is not any more a border : the city looks at herself through Allier

Where the dense fabric of the the city center streets ends, the panorama opens on the large territory. The Allier river becomes a contemplation space of the city. In that logic, we suggest fitting out, on both sides of the river, a system of platforms and points of view : the Allier river becomes a place where two pieces of the city look to each other, just like the miradors of Lisbon, or of Tarifa looking at Tangier. The old and the new look through the water and the large public place which gathers them.

Some emergences mark bridgeheads and echo the towers of the city center (the cathedral, the church of the Sacred- Heart of Jesus, or the building situated in the corner of the Ledru Rollin boulevard and the Orvilliers avenue).

Transversalities

The Régemortes Bridge, at present the only point of connection between Moulins and Montluçon, allowed the development of the Madeleine suburb. A second crossing planed by the city will afford the opportunity to begin the left bank development. A new boulevard, wich will lead to the Saint-Menoux Road, will be created in its continuation, allowing to doublee the public road network of Régemortes Bride and Libération avenue. It will establish the new limit of the Madeleine suburb and its urbanization. If the new bridge is going to improve the relation between the city and the river, other connections are envisaged, strengthening the link between both banks : we propose so, in the short term, the creation of a pedestrian footbridge «fastened» on the iron bridge in the South, going on by a soft connection up to the station along the rail. Secondly and keeping in mind the urban project evolution, a third work of engineering is proposed to connect the new « boat station» park to the sport playground.

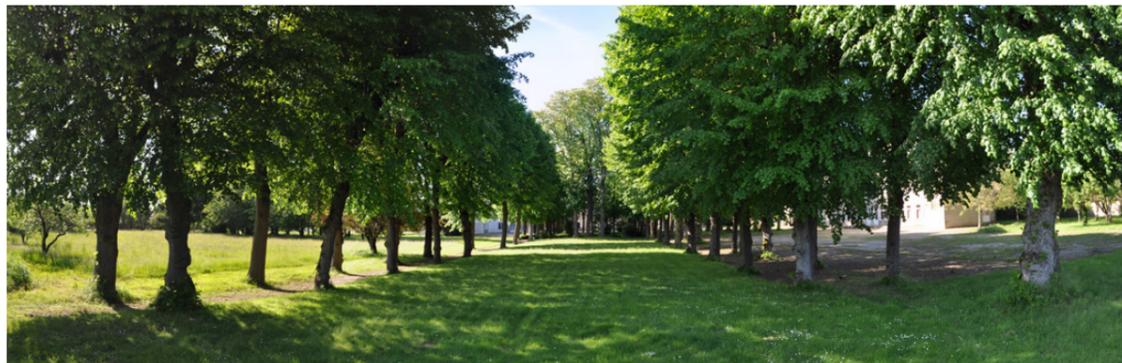
For a long time abandoned, the main points of interaction between the city center and the river are rethought to facilitate their access. The Cours of Bercy is reorganized to accompany the arrival of the new crossing. The abandoned stragegical plots will be re-addressed to highlight this axis. The Orvilliers avenue, strategical point for the river banks reconquest, will be redesigned in order to give it back its urban characteristic of place for walking and belvedere on the landscape : the hopper is eliminated, the width of the public road network is reduced.



The presence of Allier in the city



Walks on the banks of the Allier : to the «Val d'Allier»



Landscaped enclosure of the Diocese



Meadow of the «Murière»

Existing landscapes



Urban development schema



Landscape structure of the project

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Bercy boulevard

Connection of the city center to the Bercy boulevard and to the Allier

Belvedere on the Allier

Meadow of the diocese

Sports path

Supermarket

Esplanade of the CNCs

Ehpad

Towpath

footbridge «fastened» on the Iron bridge

Path of the «Goutte Noire» brook

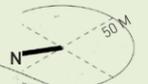
New boulevard

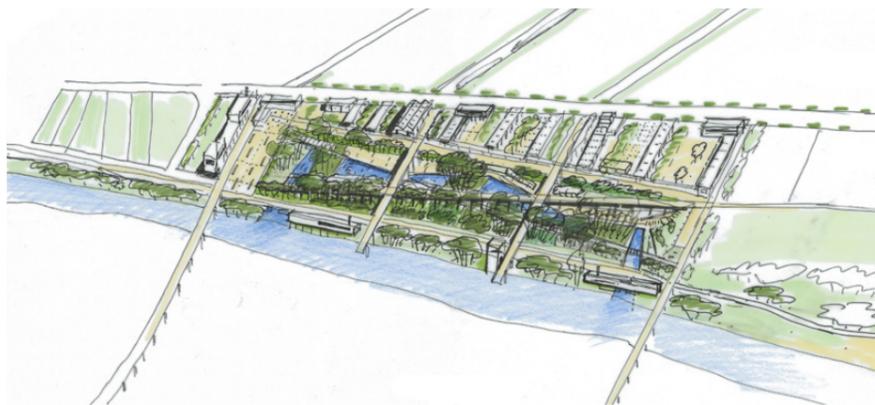
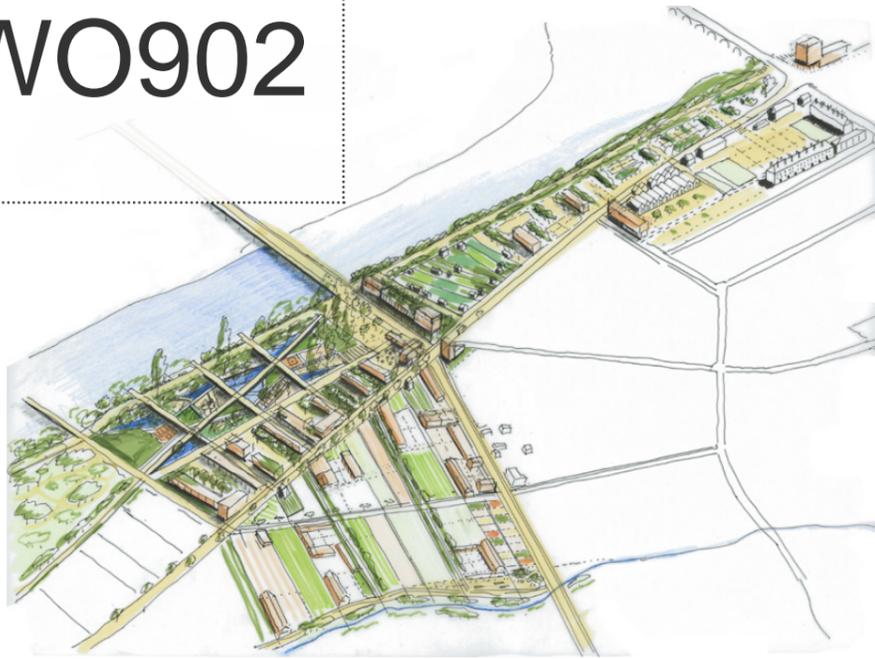
Meadow of the Murière

«Boat Station» park

Agricultural park

Family gardens established along the shores of the brook





Studies of the landscape structure of the banks

Between the two bridges

Already partially urbanized the left bank will be transformed, by integrating the existing islands of houses into a landscaped system. Banks in front of the CNCS will take a more urban and more mineral shape. If in a first phase of urbanization the supermarket can keep its location, it constitutes a major stake in reconquest of banks. The influence of its parking lot must be considerably reduced while allowing daily passable access, and being able to lean on a mutualization of the parking lot of the CNCS for the days of influx. Secondly, it will be relocated on the plot of land at the corner between the Montilly road and the new boulevard running on from the new bridge of the Cours of Bercy. Situated at the perspective of the new crossing it will keep a privileged setting and good visibility along the major ways, while becoming integrated into a more compact and more urban shape.

A new park

Drawn on the current dike, the Montilly road will overhang two parks and will clear a view on each side of a panorama staging the major territory situated at the entrance of the city : to the East the bed of the Allier river and the «boat station» park, to the West the agricultural park and the countryside far as the eye can see.

After changes of purpose, the former «boat station», become ground of motocross, will be partially handed in water within an landscaped park. Integrated in the bed of the Allier river, this park has a longitudinal orientation accompanying the stream by means of a walk intended to connect along the water cities lining the Allier. This weft allows to sequence the city, from gardens of the CNCS to the park of the Valley of Allier at the city exit. By going away from the center the meshing loosens gradually and the vegetation finds its wild character.

Situated in the tangential point between the city and the Allier river, the park has the vocation to be the showcase and the door of the hinterland. Place of exchange and socialization, its flexible program has to welcome diverse functions bound to the ecotourism, involving research center, boating center, or places of observation and information about the ecosystem and the local heritage. The persistence of the shape of the old pond maintains a space several meters below the dikes, which will have a paludal character.

An agricultural park as landscaped interface

From the Montilly road up to the Goutte Noire brook, the meshing of the boat station park goes on through fields. Last agricultural area in the city of Moulins, the site presents a unique and protected landscape where the landscape bocages and the city juxtapose. Its privileged situation is convenient to the setting-up of a new cultural and economic program which preserves an agricultural character (teaching farm, riding school, fields and municipal greenhouses, agricultural cooperative, family gardens).



Mutability studies of the «faubourg Madeleine»



Banks of the Allier



The «boat station»

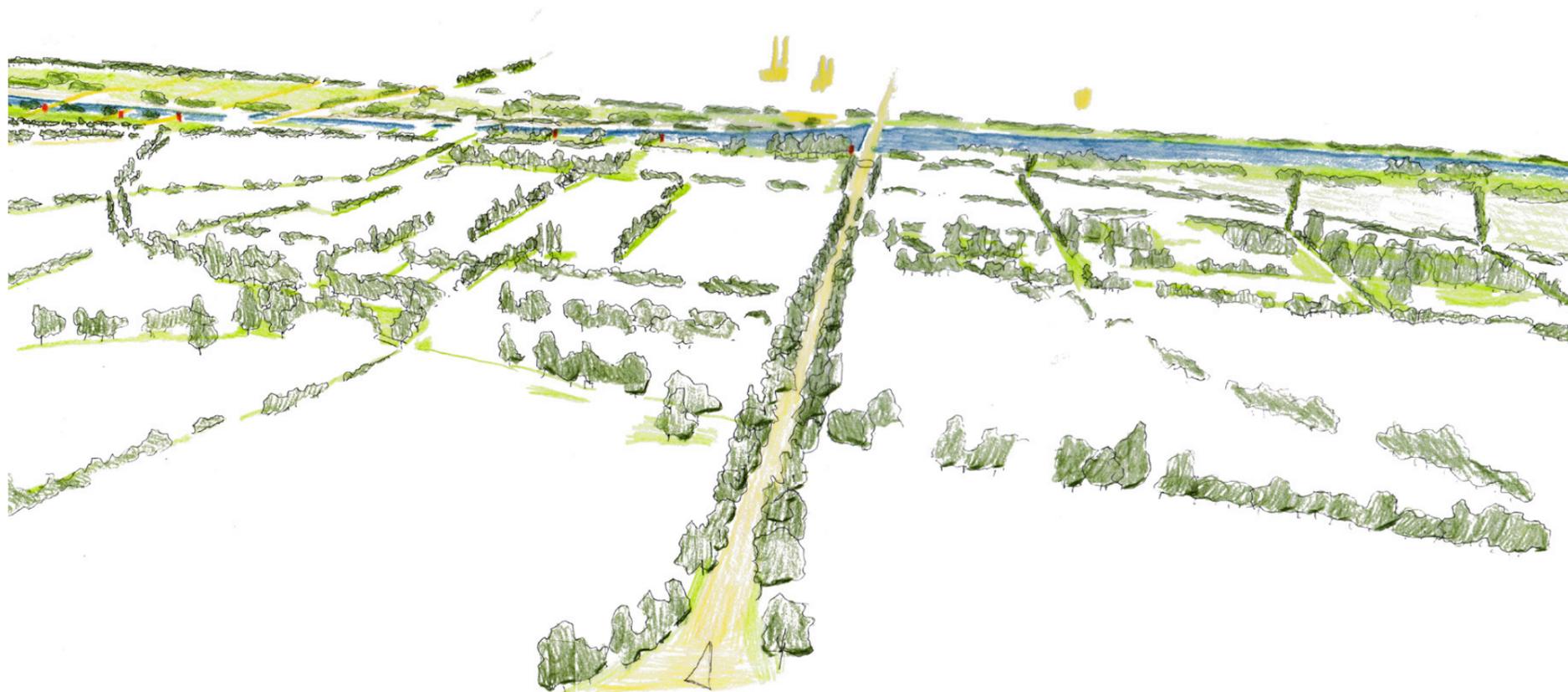
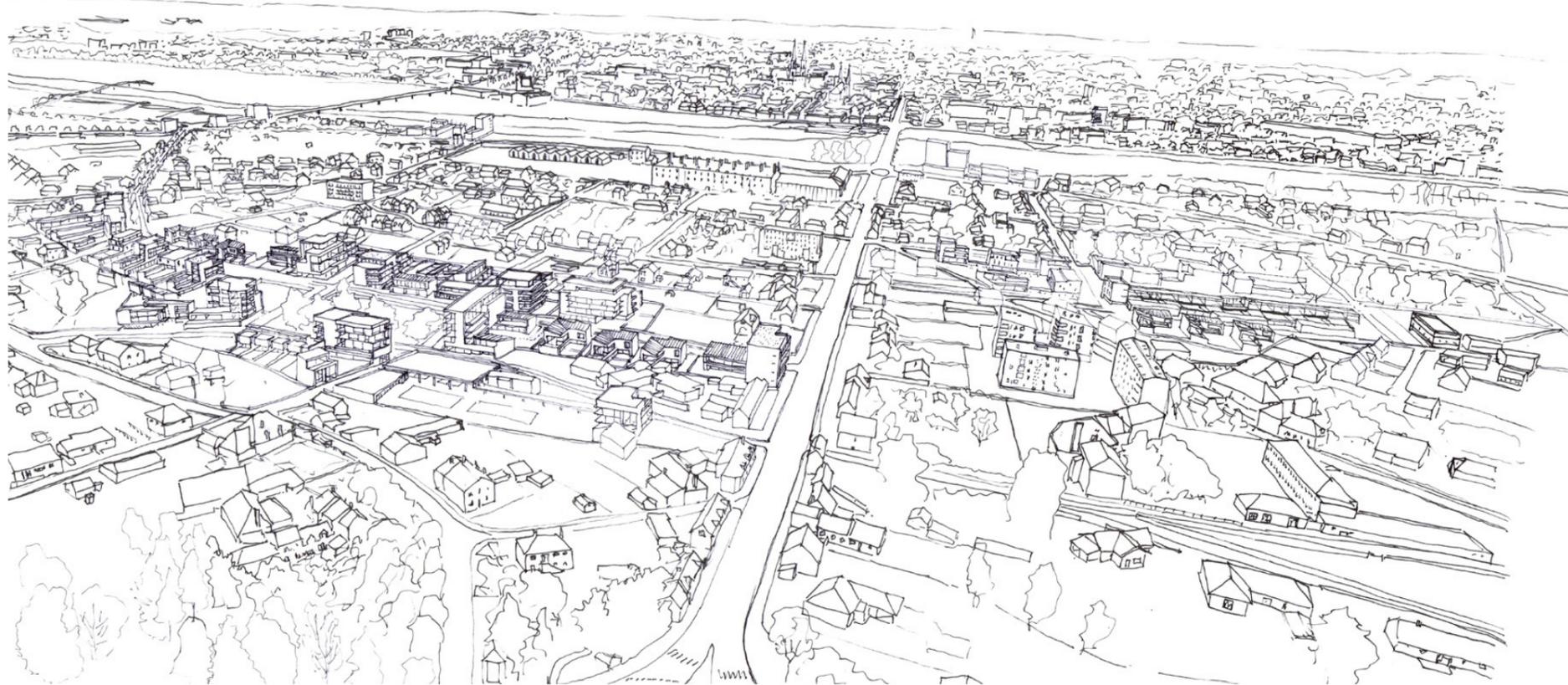


Panorama from the Montilly road



Family gardens

Landscape strata : from the Allier to the brook of the «goutte noire»



Vegetation structure and landscaped enclosures

Connecting the city and its river is to restore the geographical space within the urban fabric itself. The whole suburb of Madeleine is thought as an extension of the Allier Park. A weft of planted ways and walks connect the river to the new public places in heart of lots.

The Allier as a landscape for the faubourg

The faubourg of the madeleine is characterized by two urban forms :

At first, by a fabric of suburbs, made up of individual houses built along the main ways, and of lots little linked with the rest of the city. This low density set creates a landscape of garden opened on streets, where from the lines of roofs jut out above. The center of the plots, where ends of lots and fields are mixed, remains for the great majority not built.

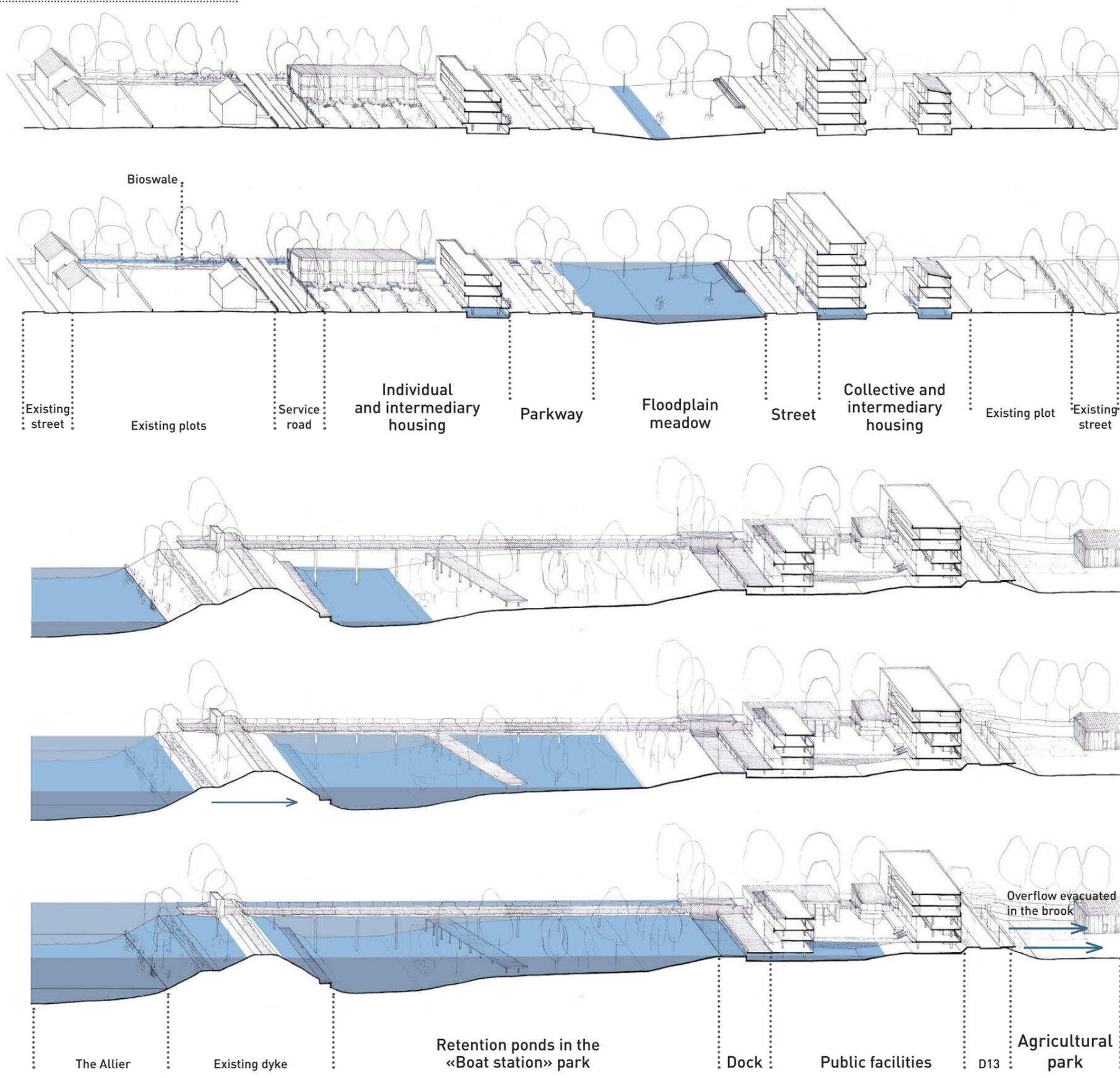
Then, by large enclosures inherited from institutional properties (military barracks and diocese). Contradicting the urban shape of suburb, they represent today landscaped opened public places allowing a new urbanity and new collective practices.

Our intervention is set up in a process of densification of the urban fabric and the creation of public space. Basing ourselves on the potential represented by the hearts of the lots, we propose a reinterpretation of the enclosures of the diocese and the CNCS open spaces and their progressive systematization. The reconquest of the hearts of the lots gives way to meadows all around of which are implanted the new typologies.

The interweaving of low buildings (individual and intermediate) and small collectives appearing over the suburban fabric and offering distant views on the main territory, allows to integrate the new morphology into the existing suburban fabric.

The hazards of the Allier river

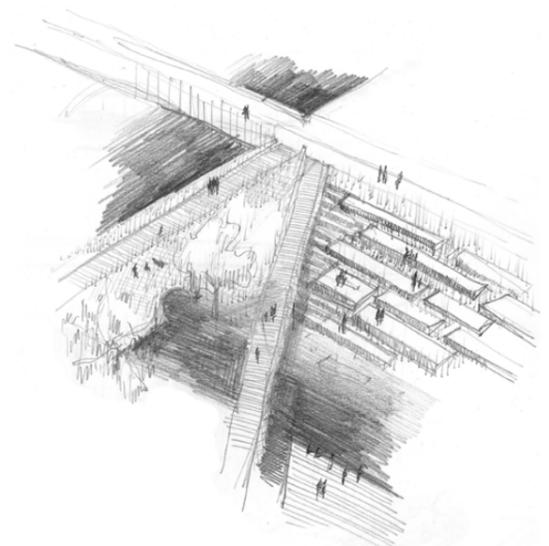
Included in a new meshing of ways this new urban shape extends the park of Allier to the heart of the suburb of the madeleine to create a garden city. Integral part of the floods management system, the landscape of the suburb evolves according to the bad weather. Meadows, slightly under the level of new ways are transformed into ponds of retention, before freeing their waters in the direction of the river by a meshing of bioswales along landscaped axes. The extra height of ground floors over half-buried parking lots, integrates the same system of restraint of water and transformation of the landscape.



The park as hydraulic system

The whole «boat station» and agricultural parks constitute a flood management system, allowing a progressive and checked submersion, in order to balance the level of the Allier river.

At first the water goes up the «Boat station» park various levels, transforming it into pond. Then the ground floors of the equipments constructed on piles are flooded, and the full excess is evacuated through bioswales in the fields of the agricultural park, towards the Goutte noire brook which pours downstream in Allier river.



Boat station Park : Studies and references