CONURBATION

On the northern limits of Paris, between the Saint-Denis canal, and the railway lines that leave the capital for Northern and Eastern Europe, is the Plaine-Saint-Denis, a vast enclave of diverse activities, an inter-communal area covering 780 hectares. For eight years now, three local authorities (Saint-Denis, Aubervilliers and Saint-Ouen), as well as the Saint-Denis County Council, have been working together on its economic, social and urban revitalisation. Today an overall development plan exists, which privileges the landscape and public space as places of contact and poles of attraction, and, where coherence and urban organisation will come together. The project integrates the old transport routes, neighbourhoods, parcels of land and industrial installations, and favours the mixing of the functions of small businesses, housing and amenities. It is in this context that the restructuration project for the "Cristino Garcia Landy" block, is set.

SITE

At the Plaine-Saint-Denis's territorial "centre of gravity", the site is some 700 m from the future "Grand Stade" [Great Stadium] and borders the canal. Placed within the framework of a larger requalification operation known as the "Grand Projet Urbain" [Great Planning Project], the site is part of a priority development, due to the presence of insanitary housing and to the shifting of an RER [Parisian suburban express rail network station]. The inter-communal "Cristino Garcia, Landy" district, therefore, constitutes an urban ensemble of approximately 32 hectares, with a resident population of 3,000 as well as a working population of 1,300.

A multi-faceted challenge, the neighbourhood has assumed a symbolic character by virtue of the succession of foreign populations that have followed one another there, without really ever leaving it. The neighbourhood's present situation can be summed up as a paupersisation and diminution of the population by 50% between 1954 and 1990, a continuous deterioration of buildings, of speculative activities (furnished rooms), dilapidation of industrial premises, changes of function which have generated dysfunctions, with the creation of new jobs, a system of narrow unlocked roads where the pedestrian is penalised, a ground pollution risk district, insufficient and unequally distributed public amenities, and a weak retail structure. The zone to be considered encompasses the whole neighbourhood, and in particular its link to Aubervilliers by the "rue du Landy" road.

Within this neighbourhood, the plots of land proposed to the competition are currently occupied by housing that is, either very dilapidated and often vacant, or refurbished and to be conserved, and by declining artisanal or industrial activities. Ownership of the plots is shared between the town of Aubervilliers, the developer (ISEM), private owners able to prove their legal title, and others having "built upon the land of others" and, therefore, not possessing legal title.

OBJECTIVES

The town of Aubervilliers is proposing strong planning principles in order to develop the existing fabric, reorganise small business activities and move towards social diversification, while improving the lot of those already living in the area. Instead of a tabula rasa, the town wishes to take into account the richness and the contradictions of the existing urban organisation, putting into place an overall strategy for the neighbourhood, with the possibility of specific interventions as a function of operational opportunities.

PROGRAMME

Prior to the operation, thought is to be given to the types of dwelling, to the different lifestyles, as well as the distribution of activities. The programme foresees different sorts of housing (low rent housing, market rent housing, and subsidised home purchase, small business premises, shops, car parks and a general treatment of the public space, within the block and along the canal.

THEME

An interstitial site, including traces of parcels of land and constructions, which need to be evaluated, is given as a rich, mixed urban structure which is to be conserved and enhanced.