

*Jasmina Basic  
Alfie Stroud  
Anna Peralta Zaragoza  
Anna Sitarz*

# CITY DEEP, RIVER WIDE: SHIFTING AXES CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THE UPPER RUE NATIONALE

The topic of the 5<sup>th</sup> European Urban Summer School – ‘Heritage Conservation and Sustainable Development’ – gave us our prompt for getting to know Tours. It told us that the city has valuable assets but that it should be adapted to the contemporary and future needs of its users.

Indeed, there’s a lot going on in Tours. It has an evidently rich built heritage and, maybe even more valuable, the natural heritage of the river Loire. However, an over obsessive preservation of aspects of its heritage could risk Tours becoming a museum, which would not provide sustainable circumstances for a place for people live and work. This premise is why we came together in the city to talk about it.

Our approach to researching this urban area was to explore potentials of the characteristics we found in it, and to show the richness of the whole area. We acquired a strong feeling from our growing acquaintance with the place that everything it needs already exists, but just needs to be reinterpreted to improve the urban life of its users. Tours does not want to become a museum but rather a sustainable urban entity. To that end, there’s no need necessarily to build something new, or to change everything that already exists. The research we summarise in this paper would like to illustrate that sometimes it is enough to change our perception and try to see things in a different way. In this way, they become new and can provoke alternative responses for guiding the processes of change. At the same time, it is the method that preserves our heritage.

As we focused on the more specific area cited by the Summer School theme, the upper part of the rue Nationale, we discovered what we felt is actually the most exciting part of Tours, the place where the two



1.

Source : the authors

characters of the city – the natural and built heritage, the city and the river - meet. No wonder it has, so often in its history, attracted urban planners so much.

As the Summer School's analyses agreed, recent urban planning in Tours has concentrated mostly on the north-south axis of rue Nationale, which was designed to form a symmetrical, monumental and absolutist 'entrance' to the city, carrying the main road from Paris southwards. Public spaces have been made too, but without clear character and with confusing functionality.

The methods we present in this paper respect this formal history of the city's development, but, as in every city, there is so much more complexity to consider. The topography of the study area has variety on a 'small scale' and on a 'big scale', with different interweaving layers and colliding contrasts. Experiencing the city touches all our senses and change is the only constant. However, one permanent yet also constantly changing feature, the river Loire, is probably the most intense and unique adventure to be had in this city. We cannot talk about the urban development of the city of Tours without including the river in the story and perhaps even casting it in the main role.



2.

Source : the authors

## RESEARCH METHODS

The overall approach of this research was to observe, without valuing our impressions as positive or negative and without hurrying to propose solutions. Rather, every fact should be seen as part of the potential of the place. Because of this, the final result is not a proposition or project, but an inspiration for change and directions for further reflection.

## Interviews and site work

Recognising the significance of human experience for revealing hidden qualities of this

place, the importance of local community took a very significant role in this research right from the beginning. Valuable material was gathered through interviews with local people. Questions provoked citizens to speak about their personal emotions, opinions and intimate memories. As Aldo Rossi stated: *"The city is collective memory of its people"*. So, when asked about their first memories of the River Loire, interviewees recalled time spent with family, romantic walks with lovers, rare sightings of beavers and birds, the variety of colours both natural and artificial. There was one negative memory, but it was also very intense: Nathalie spoke about her father almost drowning in the river; she's afraid of the river now, but it doesn't stop her from going there.

On the other hand, stories about the rue Nationale were quite different. It does not bring up memories as much it provokes different opinions about its 'new look'. Some like it, some don't, some think it's 'unfinished'. This last opinion is worthy of our attention, as is the evidence that this is not a part of the city which locals identify themselves with, like they identify themselves with the river and its landscape, and to some degree with the cultural and recreational poles of two Old Towns.

In parallel, a great deal of photo and video material was gathered to explore the variety and the richness of the area and activities of its inhabitants. Films document walks near the river, crossings over the bridges and walks through some of the main streets. These clips capture sounds and brought them powerfully to our attention: sounds made by traffic, by nature (water, birds, flags in the wind...), by people, or their absence in quieter spots, all at different times of the day.



3.

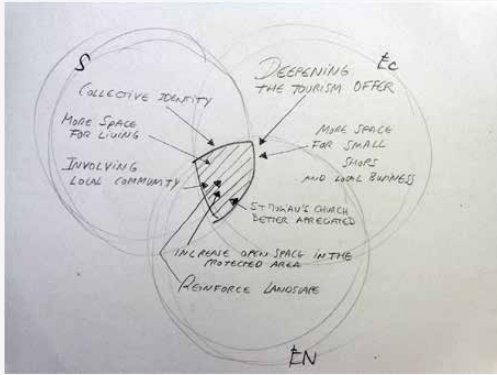
Source : the authors

Off site and working on paper, walls and keyboards, all the information collected was organised and reviewed in through different models of urban analysis: a 'problem' tree, the sustainable development model and other schemes.



4.

Source : the authors



5.

Source : the authors

## The Sustainable Development Model

The sustainable development model shows how to achieve the ideal type of sustainability. It includes economic, environmental and social aspects of sustainability. Bringing together urban qualities from these categories in ways which reinforce each other increases the chance of creating a sustainable place which

can protect or even enhance its local heritage. In terms of social sustainability what is very important is commonality: everyone should be included in the process of planning and constructing the city, especially local communities. Moreover, urbanism is not a project which produces a finished product; it is a deliberately unfinished process. Applied to the upper rue Nationale, social sustainability would seem to demand that there should be more space for residential functions in the city centre, and not only for shops and tourism, which seems already to be the trend. Without inhabitants investing personally and socially in the urban environment, the city could easily become a museum, a collection of artefacts, without common participative life in it.

Tourism is, of course, very important for economic sustainability as it provides money and work for local people, but the cultivation of traditional local businesses would deepen this. On the contrary, by developing only multinational brand shops, the upper rue Nationale could lose its identity.

Speaking about identity, what could better demonstrate it in Tours than the natural environment? Thanks to the care and protection galvanised by UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) status, there is not much which has been neglected in this matter, and the question instead is how to appreciate and value what already exists. The existing landscape should be reinforced and open space should be increased in the protected area. To further integrate this ecological value in the place, the river should, somehow, be felt in other parts of the city, too, not only on the river banks. And environmental sustainability should not only consider the natural landscape but also the built environment. So to mention one important monument in particular in this part of the city which could be more deeply included in

the sustainability of the place, the Basilica of Saint Martin deserves to be better integrated and appreciated. The Cathedral in the east suffers from some unsympathetic surrounding buildings, but its public-realm setting is much better than that around the remains of the Basilica. Local distinctiveness and depth of engagement with the great riches that already exist in Tours lie at the overlapping centre of the sustainable development model for the upper rue Nationale.

### The 'Issue' Tree

We had trouble defining a 'problem tree' to establish the causes and effects at work in this part of the city, because, in the first place, we never wanted to talk about the problems, and define facts as negative or problematic. Again, every fact should be seen as a potential. So we renamed this tool of analysis as an 'issue' tree. The observations are to be understood as aspects of a whole, actual situation, to be trained or modified but not simply redesigned and imposed. We found no simple chains of cause and effect to be resolved by removal at source. Indeed, many of the causes and effects reinforce each other in circularity, being complementary parts of a whole urban system. A spatial issue at the upper rue Nationale is that the city ends before the river, which influences people's movement and behaviour so that the river tends to be forgotten. This neglect of the river's potential means that the city, given the way it is built and used, ends before it reaches the river.

There are, nonetheless, some isolable threats to be mentioned among the issues. It was during this analysis that the 'museumification' of the place emerged as a central concern, more an effect than a cause. The key functional sources of this effect are municipality dominance and the persistence of 'one person'

projects in developing the city. Such projects are not participative. Furthermore, there's an obsession with symmetry in planning, derived not from the place itself but from the idea in 'Paris' of Tours' urban significance, and often indifferent to the present landscape.

Repeatedly, issues seem to settle – in complicated interrelationships – around the central concern of 'museumification'. An unexplained observation we were prompted to add to the issue tree was the matter of: where is the movement of users in this system? Is it much more complex than the easily-established two-dimensional routes? The lack of obviously complex uses of the space seemed to be related, again, to the main spatial element of the place, beyond the street grid: the river Loire. The river has not been included in the urban planning of the city, the city 'ends' before the river; it is a non-place. It could even be said to have been forgotten somehow. As will be demonstrated at greater length in the analysis below, without the river, the character of the landscape is not legible, and the essential characteristics of change and movement it brings to the city around it are weakened. Reinforcing this, but also as a result of this, Tours has come to prize monumentality and 'museumification' above the subtle and complex real character of its situation.

With the issues connected and understood more deeply, we finally organized our conclusions into three different groups: topography, layers and contrasts. Pursuing our observations through these categories of urban experience – as described in the analysis which follows – we arrived at change as the critical quality of the place from which a solution should begin. It cuts to the difference between 'museumification' and interactivity and it brings us deeper into the subject, changing perceptions and provoking some alternative responses.

## ANALYSIS

The experience of the pedestrian on the ground around the riverside at the upper rue Nationale seems at first to be mainly flat and characterised by the street grid. The geography of this study area is simple enough: the plateau ends to its north at the edge of the river flowing westwards, which is traversed by the main route at right angles. The grid is not complicated by steep inclines or interrupted by irregular street forms. Walking the Medieval streets on the east-west axis, such as rue Colbert, the river is glimpsed to the left or right, and one historic pole or the other comes gradually into view. Apart from the river, the wide, smooth pedestrianised channel of the rue Nationale is the dominant feature.

## Topography

However, the topography of the study area is not as routine as at first it seems. Paths traced back and forth, especially in the east-west axis, reveal subtleties which recall the city's past and add interest and character to the present day city. Riverside Tours is a long, wide landscape which follows the river's flow from the high ground chosen for the Roman settlement in the east, across the modern planned city, to medieval St Martin and beyond. Walking that route, the traveller descends to rue Voltaire, climbs again to the platform of the rue Nationale, meets another gentle valley at rue de Constantine, before ascending again into the Old Town. Moreover, tarmac, cobbles, gravel, steps, pavements, paved courts and grass verges add variety to the ground, while undulations alter the topographical journey depending on how close the route comes to the riverside. As in any urban



6.

Source : the authors

place, the significance of these topographical changes is obscure, buried in the geology, or long erased by the archaeology of Tours.

Standing at the top of rue Nationale, the apparent flatness of the riverside Tours dissolves still further. The height of the whole Loire valley landscape gradually reveals itself, especially in the view north across Pont Wilson. Looking along the north-south axis, suddenly the subtle topographies perceptible in the town have a profound context. Not all of the natural landscape can be sensed underfoot, as the city has erased some of its topography, but still some sense remains of the ground on which the city was imposed. Centuries of urban development on top of this have generally added more strata of depth. The two dimensions of the axial urban form as seen in the plan, or understood through a simple route across the town, have begun, through experience on the ground, to grow into three dimensions. The city is not a grid of buildings and streets laid-out on paper, but an urban and natural landscape composed of many overlapping layers.

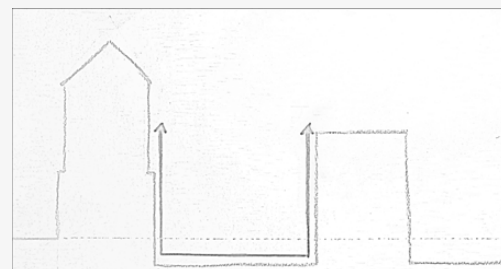
## Layers

Considered in this way, urban spaces gain depth and integration. Conventional urban planning may be inclined to flatten and distinguish the city's surfaces, allocating the ground to urban designers, and buildings to architects. However, set in its layered landscape, the city is not merely buildings connected and separated by streets, and so its proper topography is not horizontal planes bounded by vertical walls, but is integrated and U-shaped. Topography is not just beneath your feet, but in the walls of the town too: ground-level life - people, shops, signs, windows, trams - are part of it and animate it; at an upper-level, it becomes less populated, instead shaped by the monumental townscape of facades, roofs and treetops happening above your head. When exploring the city, moving



7.

Source : the authors



8.

Source : the authors



9.

Source : the authors

between these levels can bring about powerfully different experiences, by creating new perspectives or sheltering distinct atmospheres. The urban potential of this vertical movement is felt very clearly in some parts of the study area, most of all down on the riverbank, where a dramatic change of level transforms the experience of the place. The steps all along the embankment wall are the architectural symbol of this fascinating interchange of urban layers.

Experiencing this expanding landscape recalls the vastness and horizontality of the protected UNESCO valley landscape. It is huge and composed of layers which are integral to an understanding of the way the totality of the landscape works and has developed. This is a similarity it has with the town itself. Indeed, the UNESCO WHS acknowledges the two nested sets of layers which mediate between the historic Loire settlements and their river setting. Terminology distinguishes the landscape of natural layers from the landscape of urban layers, but at the core, they overlap. Standing on the north bank looking towards the town, the *Tourangeau* sees first the Loire itself, bounded by the architectural *quais*, then above them the buildings of the town. Expanding the scope of his view from the same position, he sees again the river, first of all, in the *lit mineur*, but this time it is bounded by the leafy *rives* still in the *lit majeur*, with human uses climbing up the *côteaux* towards the *plateau* beyond it., which is predominantly rural and agricultural.

10.

Source : the authors



Ville

Quai

Loire

## Contrasts

Perceived in layers, the organisation of this landscape and the way it has developed become clearer. Considering layers of landscape at this scale invites comparison and contrast. While the layers of the natural landscape blend subtly one into the other, human interventions have brought distinctions to the riverside landscape. So the edge of the wild river was defined by the construction of a fine, designed embankment, and facades built according to Classical traditions carefully distinguish private buildings from the street. Moreover, the contrasts and comparisons drawn between these layers find a range of symmetries or asymmetries. The two banks of the river match one another more or less in parallel and in the Post-War grid of the reconstructed town, squares and streets run off the spine of the rue Nationale. On either side of the quais, the flat, regular elevations of the riverfront buildings contrast with the organic forms of the trees and islands of the river.



11.

Source : the authors

These relationships are not only physical. The fascinating tension produced by the layers of character in the study area can be perceived also in the subtly different behaviours of residents and of tourists, and in the natural blend of river sounds overlain by sharp human traffic sounds. The soothing flow of the river is drowned-out when the wind catches loudly

in the fluttering flags on Pont Wilson, picking up and falling away constantly, which is in turn drowned out by the gradually rising sound made by the hooves of a pony drawing a tourist carriage across the bridge cobbles, or by the sudden interruption of the honk of a car horn. These layers, contrasts and comparisons, as they are sensed and experienced, create the character of the place, and the place where the built and rebuilt Classical spine of Tours meets its medieval streets, and in turn meets the Loire and its wide river landscape. It has a character which is especially deep and rich.

That fact that all the noisy elements are, in different ways and different directions, moving through the landscape, is no coincidence. Movement or passage through the landscape is also the cause of contrasting physical layers, as where the fast flow of the constantly travelling river creates its own loose and wild riverbanks, which human construction has attempted to contain within stonework which makes a barrier of unmoving permanence. Equally, the characterful contrasts and combinations of the place are most clearly perceived by a person moving through the layers of the landscape, crossing Pont Wilson, crossing the rue Nationale, or climbing from the river up to Place Anatole France. Journeys and travel are, interestingly, especially pertinent themes in the heritage of Tours, thanks to its role in *compagnonnage* and its ancient hospitality to the pilgrims of St Martin and those bound for Santiago di Compostela. The passage of water, the passage of time and the passage of people in the place is constantly creating its character, and also creating the conditions in which this complex character is understood and appreciated.

## Changes

Clearly, the essence of the place is change – constructive or transitory, unceasing or

unpredictable, human or natural – but always change. At this point, our experience of the place has become four-dimensional: the passage of time is experienced not just as it might be in a street with buildings of various ages, or at the site of an archaeological excavation, but is experienced also through a heightened awareness in the presence of movement, passage, and change.

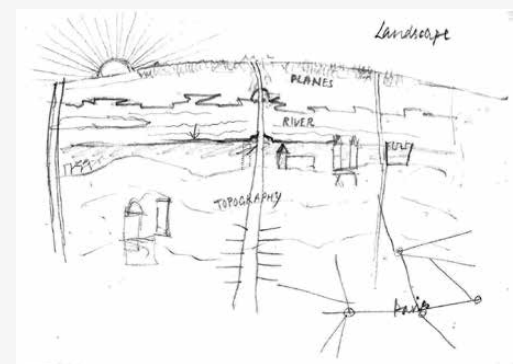
It seems inescapable that the Loire itself is the most changing thing – the river is always changing. It is on an eternal journey through the Touraine, east to west, in which it is changing constantly, casting different lights and sounds, and changing its surroundings too. How instantly and enthusiastically these subtle, shifting qualities are appreciated is obvious in the way Tourangeaux and visitors alike talk about the Loire. Expressing it is much harder, and the difficulty of capturing the changing qualities of the Loire's light was the inspiration for Olivier Debré's work, in which abstraction seems absolutely necessary.

Any street or square changes through time, changes use and form, and necessarily changes its population. But it is the special combination of the spinal role played by the rue Nationale and the vast context of the Loire where they meet at Place Anatole France, which makes the changeable quality of the area's character so essential, and makes the area in turn a pivotal space for the city.

## SOLUTION

### Urban pathology

Our experience and the reflections of inhabitants suggest that the presence of the river in the life of the city is, in fact, limited. Also, views towards the river from the upper rue Nationale are limited, and someone approaching Place Anatole France must read the presence of the river from the gap



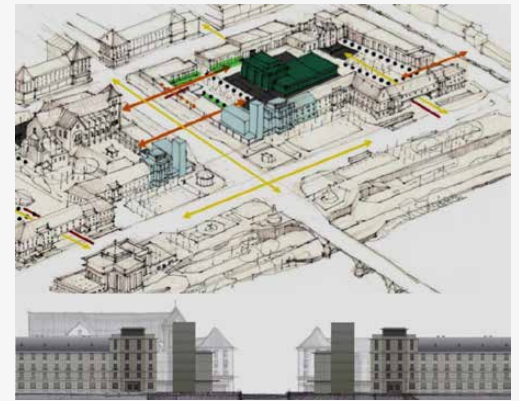
12.  
Source : the authors

in the urban fabric rather than from many positive signifiers. Place Anatole France itself is a weakly-defined space, twice split by busy roads, and much of the environment around it and its key monuments – the Church of St Julien, and the Beaux-Arts – suffer from poor settings and concealment. As explored through the sustainable development model described above, the existing layers of complexity around the upper rue Nationale contain all the ingredients for social, economic and environmental viability, but they are compromised by the present form of the place. To enhance their sustainability, they need to be brought closer together in a more deeply integrated urban space. Understanding now its potential for character and its place in the structure and function of the city, how can the upper rue Nationale be improved in a way that deepens the urban experience?

The effervescent Loire made us realise the essence of this place – its identity and memory – which all seems to be expressed by the constant changing sensual qualities and landscape layers created by the river. Yet the unfixed character instilled by the river contrasts with the unease the city feels about its unfinished gateway at Place Anatole France. In fact, the subtle sense of place given by the river could better animate the frozen, ‘museumified’, monumental tours, obsessed with symmetries and reconstruction. The wildly popular annual *guinguette* on the riverbank manifests the power of the river’s character to transform the urban experience, but it is concealed from the street beyond the embankment wall. When it is in view, the spirit of the place is unforgettable, and the symmetrical river frontage of Tours is transformed from a postcard backdrop to the routines of city life into a vivid drama. The position of the *guinguette* at river level is no mistake, allowing it to face the water from among the wild landscape of the rives. This situation does not

so much insulate the city from the noise of the party, as shelter the party from the fixity and formality of the city.

Since the creation of a new crossing at the site of Pont Wilson for the road south from Paris in the eighteenth century, the urban planning history trend has been to define Place Anatole France as the ‘entrance’ to Tours. With the new municipal proposals for two 5-star, ‘highrise’ hotels, symmetrically placed at the top of the rue Nationale axis, simulating a gatehouse at the entrance of the city, this will be even more emphasized. The change planned at

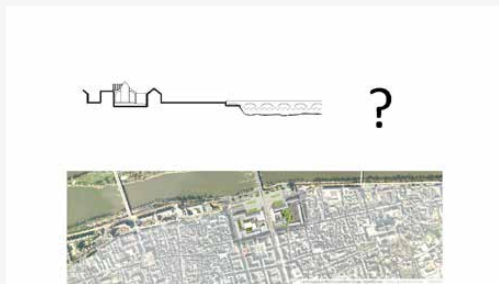


13.

Source : the authors

Place Anatole France aims to make it a fixed gate-monument, a museum exhibit of a lost Tours, trying to freeze this ‘essential axis’ as an image of something which has already passed – though in the process obscuring the real historic monument of St Julien. Such a vision leaves the Loire out of the picture, and its intended finality could mean that the river is forgotten forever. And not only the river; this way, the whole of the north side of the city is ignored. The prevalence of this perspective is demonstrated in the fact that a lot of city maps – especially tourist maps – end at the river, running along the top

edge of the sheet, without showing the northern part of the city. Here is a problem of perception, observable in the way the city describes and depicts itself, and manifested too in the 'unfinished' form and limited use of the upper rue Nationale.



14.  
Source : the authors

### Changing perception

Our analytical journey from topography, through layers and the contrasts they create, to an awareness of complete changeability, demands that we re-examine current perspectives on Tours to ensure that all this depth and complexity is really perceived when development is designed for the city.

The first step in changing perception is to broaden the perspective in order to see the whole: the city in its river landscape. And a river has two banks, necessarily; they appear as layers in the plan, which in relief are made



15.  
Source : the authors

up of the strata of the vast river landscape. What happens on the other side of the river? Place Anatole France is at the entrance to the city as it used to be; the city today spreads to the other side of the river, too. These two parts of the city don't seem to form one entity. The city's shape feels fractured at the upper rue Nationale because an edge has been imposed, and maintained by planning, in an urban space which otherwise feels central and important. When the picture 'zooms out' and the wider area is seen, it becomes obvious that the river Loire has the main role in the city's form, and the north-south axis of rue Nationale becomes much less significant.

This brings us to a second step in changing perception, which is shifting the axis. No one dimension should dominate, so let's rotate the map and see what it brings us: suddenly, the river becomes the urban axis. The unique and vast river landscape of the Loire regains its status relative to the conceit of the urban planning grid, and becomes the organising axis of this part of the city. The full depth of layers in the urban and wider natural landscape are reintegrated as an additional dimension in our plan of the city.

By shifting the axis of our urban structure to follow the river Loire, it becomes clear that the existing squares on the both sides of the river, including the bridge, really form an integrated central public space of the city. Everything needed already exists, but just needs to be reinterpreted. The third step in changing perception, then rearranges the spatial syntax of the upper rue Nationale. Place Anatole France is no longer a limit of the city, but is a central point. Once redefined, it will reflect this changed significance onto the urban development around it. In so doing, it could provoke a range of new possibilities and processes, and will also be able to project into the city the character of the river and landscape. The river landscape already underpins



16.  
Source : the authors

the location, form and function of Place Anatole France, but only weakly so; their redefined relationship should be stronger and capable of prompting organic changes in the urban space. So from this changed perception, a range of deliberate or organic, minor or major, physical or behavioural interventions might arise. Our deepening, moving, changing analysis of the city is the basis of the solution we propose.

### A theatre of change

The urban implications of the changed perspective carry immediately across the river. The view towards Tours from the north side of the river has featured in depictions of the city for centuries, celebrating its monumental townscape and its two symmetrical Old Town poles, all set behind the horizontal landscape of the river. This view is historically important, and as we have seen, with a broad perspective, it can reveal the deep layers of the whole landscape. However, this arrangement places the north bank in a passive position in the city. This picture-postcard Tours consigns at least half of the whole river landscape to the blank side of the card, always presenting the monumental face of the city from behind the river on the south side. Indeed, the city's new development priority is to further formalise this view, to balance and complete place Anatole France as one large waterside heritage shop front, perfect for attracting more retail and tourism. Instead the city should perceive the north side both as integral to the whole, being a complementary part of the vast and subtle natural setting of the place, and as accommodating the living audience for the riches of the complex built heritage concentrated on the south side.

Thus the square on the north side of the river, Place Choiseul, which is already an amphitheatre in shape, can be interpreted as the 'theatre' observing the 'old', UNESCO

preserved part of the city; whereas the square on the southern part, Place Anatole France, could be a living stage, not merely a museum exhibit. It should be renamed 'Plateau Anatole



18.

Source : the authors

France'. The city in its river landscape is a four-dimensional performance space for urban life in all its aspects. And just as in the modern theatre, the city should not be afraid to break the 'fourth wall', between the stage and the auditorium. One of the two planned hotels could be moved to the other side, on Place Choiseul, to strengthen the link between these two open public spaces. Strengthening this functional link across the river would encourage more activity on the bridge. Pont Wilson is currently the most exciting part of this urban scene – the historic structure which brings you



19.

Source : the authors

suddenly into the middle of nature, experiencing the existing contrasts and changes with



17.

Source : the authors

all your senses (the sound of the river, urban transport, traffic, wind, the birds, the smell of the plants and the water, the lights changing throughout the day and night, the layers of the city and the river, the view....). The bridge also enshrines change as the essence of the place. Every time you cross it, every time this uniquely natural but urban performance takes place, the experience is new.

To make it more concrete – to carry this essentially sensual experience into the formal city – the place needs to be more thoroughly inhabited. To this end, experimental physical interventions might make the new space for living, in which the city's changed perception could drive more organic reuse and redevelopment.

The new 'plateau' (meaning, as well as flat open space, 'stage' in French) at Place Anatole France would be perfect for open-air concerts, open-air cinema, theatre performances, urban sports, skate parks and similar open-air activities. For this purpose the traffic should be removed from the square and it be made mostly pedestrian. Connection with the level of the river could become stronger by incorporation of an elevator, and this elevator could also go up beyond the level of the square to offer a great view - metaphorically representing a balcony in the theatre. The same analogy might apply to the second-floor exterior walkways along the social housing blocks facing Place Anatole France, and facing back into the squares around the Beaux-Arts and St Julien, if they could be made publicly accessible and incorporated into the public realm. The towering avenue of trees to the west of Place Anatole France could provide a treetop gallery. Along the bridge there should be benches and other urban equipment to attract people to stay there, enjoy and discover the remarkable experience that the river provides.

The possibilities are countless, and to repeat, these proposed solutions represent only inspiration for the change and direction for discovering an expanding range of potentials.

## CONCLUSION

*"Architecture has to follow the diversity of society, and has to reflect that a simple square or cube can't contain that diversity."*

The route south from Paris through Tours no longer runs down the rue Nationale. This is good news for the amenity of the city centre, but leaves confusion in the area we came to study. Place Anatole France, together with Pont Wilson and Place Choiseul, the new proposed central public space, seen as it is now, mainly represents only the city's entrance for the residents of its northern suburbs. They simply pass by when they go to visit the historical city centre, heading for Place Plum and other attractive spots for business or leisure. The citizens of the southern part of the city probably hardly ever go there. There are few activities to attract inhabitants, except maybe in the summertime, along the river bank, catering to some particular lifestyles. The river occupies this gap in the city fabric.

As analysed extensively above, this public space has great potential, with possibilities inherent in its character almost as vast as the UNESCO WHS river landscape of the Loire. What is missing is life, complexity, theatre. But of course, these qualities can't be made by urbanists, by planning the city. They have to be spontaneous, and all that can be planned is the process that stimulates the local community to start using it and changing it. The spaces of the upper rue Nationale and Place Anatole France are already designed and built, yet still gives the impression that they are unfinished. It is because nobody knows what the place really stands for. Is it to show the power of local

government and to remain innocently appealing enough for commercial investment, or is it to be touched by and to inspire its people with the wild and uncontrolled life of the river?

This paper wants to provoke and inspire the inclusion of this public space as a living part of the complex organism of the city around it. Everything is already there, but what will we do with it?