

Tours was an important node on the route and the descent from *Avenue de la Tranchée*, on the northern shore of the *Loire* river, leading on to *Pont Wilson* with its splendid view of the centre of Tours, was reported as being “the most beautiful entrance to a town in France”. Over a century later, the situation had changed dramatically. The city centre was severely bombed during the Second World War, and with the widespread introduction of the automobile, the site suffered a fate that is shared with many European cities: the city centre, including *Rue Nationale* and *Place Anatole France*, was hugely transformed by the development of wider roads, parking spaces and the congestion and pollution that resulted from the increase in motorised traffic. During the past decade, the *Rue Nationale* experienced its latest makeover with the pedestrianisation of the street, the construction of a tramway along the axis, and the exclusion of all private vehicle use (Porhel, 2014). The transformation is clearly visible from the images in Figure 2.

The inner quarters form a certain paradox. They are the site of important cultural heritage: the western block is home to the *École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts* and the *Hôtel Gouïn* dating back to the 15th century, whereas in the eastern block the *Musée du Compagnonnage*, housed in a former abbey,

and the adjacent church of Saint Julien, can be found (Porhel, 2014). Ironically, the newer single storey commercial premises built along the *Rue Nationale* cut off physical and visual access to these landmarks, and have effectively enclosed the inner quarters, resulting in a feeling of exclusion and neglect.

Originally Tours had an east-west orientation, due to the location of the two focal points of the city, which were once two competing centres: the “City”, built on the Roman ‘*castrum*’ and including the castle of Tours and the *Cathédrale Saint Gatien* in the east, and the area centred around the *Basilique Saint Martin* and *Place Plumereau* in the west. During the 14th century, the two cities were connected, but the bombing during World War II severed those ties once again (Porhel, 2014). The *Rue Nationale* is located precisely in that void, and the road and its adjacent areas lack cohesion, connectedness, and perhaps most important of all, a human scale.

This is the ‘pain’ point we wished to address in our group assignment: ***how to bring life back to this historic site, the interface between the city and the river, thereby bridging the city’s cultural and natural heritage.*** *La Rentrée* is the concept we used to visualise our aim. The term could be found all around the city centre during the late summer period



2. The transformation of the Rue Nationale over the centuries, with on the left an image from the 18th century, in the middle a photo from the 1950s, and on the right the situation as it is today.

Source : <http://www.francebalade.com/tours/toursentretenord1.jpg> ; <http://nationale10.e-monsite.com/medias/images/tours-10.jpg> ; Suzanne Maas

that we spent in Tours, as it signifies the return to work and school after the holidays. In our proposal, we borrow it to represent the concept of bringing people back to the study site. For that to happen, we needed to set out a strategy focused on re-creating the entrance to the city, revitalising and reconnecting that part of the city centre so that is welcoming and inviting, and re-establishing the link between the city, the river, and its people.

METHODOLOGY

To address the main task above and to be able to formulate comprehensive and cohesive solutions, we approached the analysis of the study site from various angles, using different tools and strategies.

The initial step included comprehending the expert lectures we received and applying and combining this information with our first hand impressions of the study site. The presentations and the facts and views expressed in them enabled us to form a sound and informed opinion about the issues present at the study site. We decided to explore the study site and the present issues further by undertaking several site visits apart from those which were included in the programme of the summer school. The *Rue Nationale* is evidently one of the main arteries of the city, so it provided an obvious starting point for our research. Exploring and experiencing the main street, as well as its side streets and surrounding quarters, gave us first hand, real-time information of the current situation. We did not limit our observations to the boundaries of our study site, but also explored further on the *Rue Nationale*, crossed over the *Pont Wilson* and wandered around the two city centres to the west and east of the study site, to be able to position our proposals for the study site firmly within the context of the surrounding areas.

The various hands-on workshops that formed part of the summer school provided us with vital tools to translate our thoughts and ideas into tangible solutions.

We adopted the ‘Do-it-with-others’ methodology (Cimadomo, 2014) as a tool to interact with the principal stakeholders of the city: its people. We took to the streets armed with two simple questions: 1) “What do you like best about the city centre?”, and 2) “What do you miss in the city centre?”. Over the course of an afternoon we gathered answers from a wide range of people, including teenagers, students, expats, business owners, residents, as well as two very opinionated American tourists. By the end of our survey, the “What do you like?” question was answered by 31 respondents (15 females, 16 males, average age 42), and the “What do you miss?” question by 26 respondents (12 females, 14 males, average age 39). The input provided by the people we surveyed confirmed our findings, based on analysis of the main issues of the study site: the disconnectedness that people felt from the river, as well as from the heritage of the city, the lack of human scale throughout the *Rue Nationale* and surrounding areas, and ultimately, the feeling of dead space that is especially evident on the *Place Anatole France*, the square connecting the city with the river.

Based on the tools of integrative urban design (Mrđenović, 2014) and sustainable urban development (Đokić, 2014), we created a diagram to effectively deconstruct the main problem in terms of its Causes & Effects. We then converted the components of the diagram from negative into positive by translating the weaknesses into opportunities, resulting in a positively framed Ends & Means diagram. Using this methodology allowed us to clearly pinpoint and formulate our objective: to make the city and its spaces come alive again, and turn the ‘Means and Ends’ into tangible solutions to propose to the city’s decision-makers.

MAIN ISSUE

The study site, as it was defined for the purposes of this assignment, is faced with three major problems according to the conducted analysis:

- disconnectedness,
- lack of human scale
- dead spaces.

These three problems are interrelated and often their causes and consequences are also mixed.

When moving along the *Rue Nationale*, coming from the city and approaching the river *Loire*, the inner quarters at the end of the street present a sad and disoriented image, lined by rows of low commercial blocks in bad shape. The whole length of the *Rue Nationale* is lined with monumental buildings dating back to the beginning of the 20th century and the height of the streetscape is uniform with three to five floors of height (see Figure 3). When reaching our design site, however, there is a big contrast, when the monumental buildings are exchanged for one storey high commercial buildings that were constructed in the 1960s, but have not been well maintained. One seems to find oneself at the end of a city, when the site is in fact located in the very heart of Tours.

3. Still photography of the current situation.

Source : Suzanne Maas



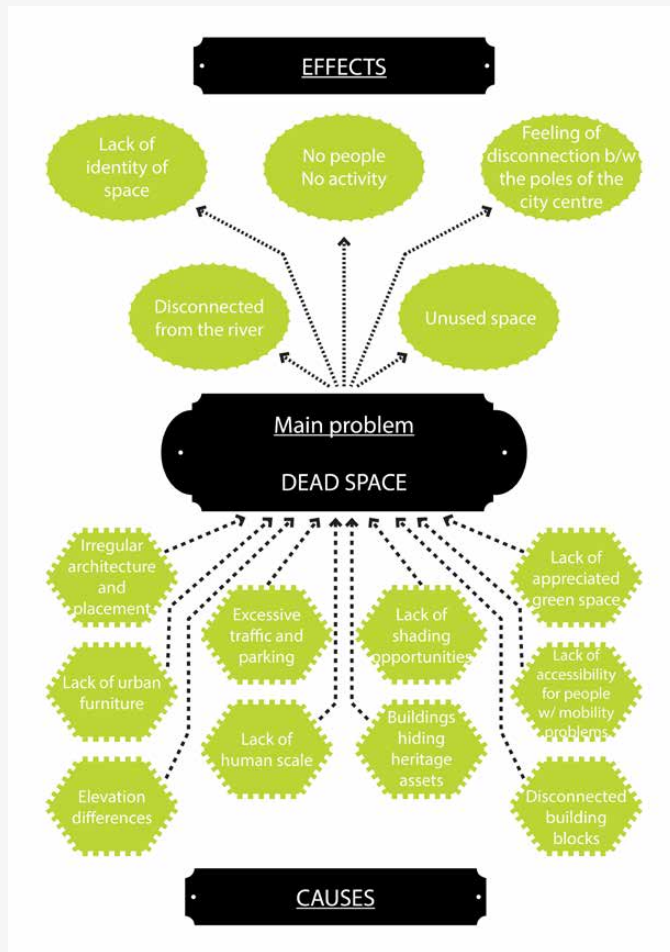
The city of Tours expressed their wish for an investor to develop a twin tower hotel complex with interior shopping malls to create an entrance to the city (Ballet, 2014). The city recognizes the design site as problematic. Nevertheless, they

only propose a very superficial development and do not integrate the heritage or sustainable perspectives into their plans. In the city's design, no special attention is given to activate the street or the inner quarters, neither is anything done to tackle the currently highly trafficked *Place Anatole France* just north of the *Rue Nationale*.

Despite the recent redevelopment scheme, which was implemented along with the installation of the tram line, *Avenue André Malraux* still acts as a barrier that separates the riverfront from the city. The public space design of the "interface" area maintains the imperial feeling of awe that it was supposed to provide as an entrance to the city. Nevertheless, this very geometric symmetry combined with the abundance of open, unused space, which is typical of the public space design of the era, renders the place disproportional and unfit for use. As a result, the space is deprived of a human scale, which is necessary for people to be able to relate to their surroundings. However suitable it might have been in the past for gatherings of vast crowds to celebrate the return of a monarch, it fails in its role as an inviting and cosy public space, mainly due to the emptiness and its dimensions. Adding to the complexity of the issue, the intensely used artery which was preserved as the main East-West road connection, inevitably interrupts the pedestrian movement and consequently frustrates any potential activity that could be facilitated in the wider area, including the magnificent riverfront and the two inner quarters that extend south of *Place Anatole France*.

The immediate result of this situation is a big "void" in the heart of what was supposed to be the liveliest space of the city centre, considering the quality and the quantity of the heritage assets it possesses. Concurrently, the riverfront emerges as a very popular public space, particularly celebrated by the younger part of the population, be they permanent

residents or visitors, a fact that magnifies the oxymoron of the two sides of this unique open public space being severely disconnected on account of motorized traffic.



4. Causes & Effects diagram.

Source : Diagram by group, visualisation by Nasos Alexis

Constructing the Causes & Effects diagram (Figure 4) during our analysis of the main pain point of the study site, allowed us to diagnose five essential weaknesses; the effects of the main problem:

1. The space lacks the qualities that would provide a unique identity.
2. Despite the proximity to the river, the part of the site which is south of Avenue *André Malraux* is very disconnected from it and the part which is north of the road lacks the qualities that would make it part of the riverfront.
3. The scale of the area, intensified by the distances between prominent structures or elements of the urban fabric, creates a feeling of vagueness. The physical connections are there, but there aren't enough direct mental connections and this produces a sense of disconnectedness between the poles of the city centre.
4. The immediate consequence of the above is that the space functions as a conveyor for movement between other parts of the city but does not accommodate vital activities nor, therefore, people, apart from those who are attracted by the shops and recreational businesses.
5. Eventually, an unused space, a void, is created in the centre of what ought to be a very attractive place and an unparalleled asset for the city.

In order to successfully tackle these weaknesses and turn them into opportunities, we needed to understand the causal factors. Our comprehensive analysis underlined a variety of important causes for the said weaknesses:

- The site is replete with instances of cultural heritage which, along with the waterfront, is the main asset it retains. As such, the fact that some very important heritage elements are obscured by modern structures, has been identified as the number one factor which reflects the attitude of the city towards its cultural capital.
- The vernacular architecture of numerous pre-reconstruction buildings which weave into the character and atmosphere of the

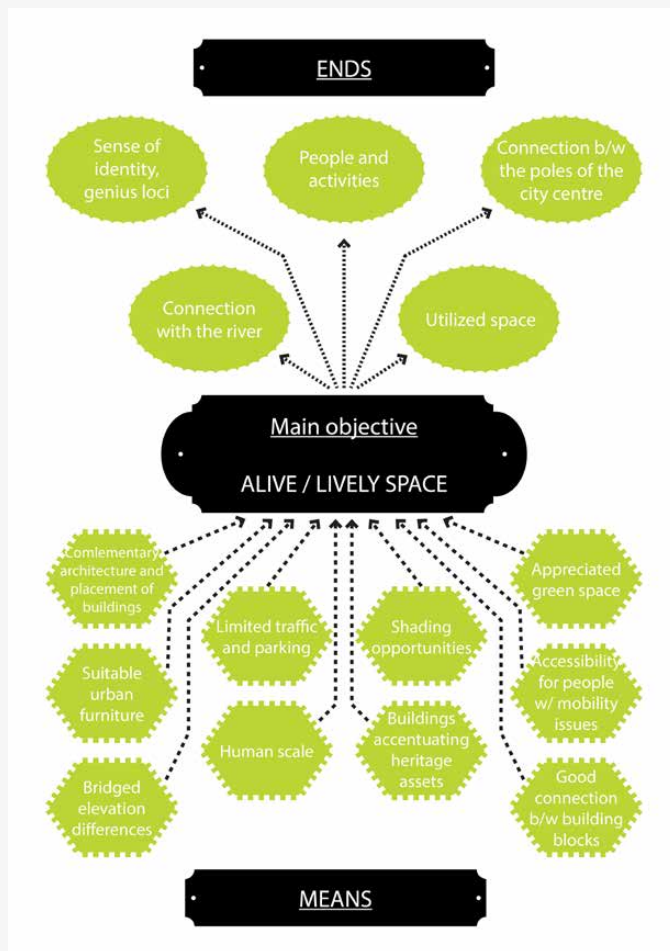
area is very often disturbed by less attractive examples of post-war modernism. The importance of post-war architecture is of course irrefutable as it responded to urgent needs after the Second World War, but the quality of urban space it created has been questioned several times and the project site is such a case.

- It has been mentioned before that the dimensions of the site are such that they create a sense of awe. This was probably perceived as a quality during royal times, but it is far from a merit for modern public space. The space is empty and the exaggerated scale which once imposed a sense of awe to the public now only results in the user feeling insignificant and isolated.
- A more tangible cause is the exaggerated use of the car in the area, aggravated by the choice to maintain *Avenue André Malraux* as the principal East-West road of the city centre.
- Design decisions are related to the next set of causes: The area is characterized by a lack of essential accessibility provisions for people with physical impairments. Very few access ramps and an almost complete absence of a guide way for the blind create a space which seems to totally disregard this part of the city's population.
- The elevation differences that existed from the original configuration of the space and create a very interesting urban landscape are inefficiently bridged and therefore often hard to access. Poor accessibility is often also deteriorated by rainwater accumulation issues that are not addressed effectively.
- More on the same topic, the site today suffers from the scarcity of appreciated green space. The presence of scattered green patches and planters alone fails to produce the desired result due to the lack of programming and an integrated green strategy.
- To exacerbate the problem, the recent redevelopment scheme, built around the tram line, deliberately refrained from installing green features supporting the argument of homogeneity and historical accuracy. Not only does this decision deteriorate the quality of the urban environment in the area, rendering it monotonous, but also deprives it of any shading opportunities and often eliminates the possibility of a sustainable rainwater drainage system that could be integrated into the plans.
- The site fails to emerge as a “user friendly” area in one more aspect, that of the urban equipment. It is a striking surprise that along the whole length of almost 1.25 kilometre of the pedestrianized stretch, the only available sitting facilities are the benches at the tram stops and the seats at the recreation businesses!
- Finally but very essentially, the space that was created to accommodate the tram line and the rest of the parallel movement, after the justified removal of the vehicular traffic, creates a breach between the building blocks which induces the aforementioned feeling of disconnection even between adjacent blocks.

MAIN OBJECTIVE

In order to respond to the aforementioned challenges, we need to outline the main objective of the proposal and in the next phase the measures with which it is going to be achieved. The greater goal is obviously to create a lively place filled with people and activity or, as it is often portrayed, to **“turn a space into a place”**.

As it is described above in the methodology section, we tried to invert the shortcomings and switch them into potential for development or the “yeast” that we will use to activate a solid strategy for the regeneration of the site (Figure 5).



5. Means & Ends diagram.

Source : Diagram by group, visualisation by Nasos Alexis

The “Ends” are the features that we want to attribute to the place. As opposed to the “Effects” that define the current conditions, we determine the five target elements that we envision the proposed situation to feature:

1. The fabric of the old part of Tours is embroidered with a unique assemblage of heritage items. By accentuating heritage, we succeed in raising the individual identity of the place. We capitalize on the inherent assets

(heritage, riverfront, street culture) instead of trying to force or create new merits that are based on market values.

2. The removal of the barrier that is *Avenue André Malraux* allows for the continuation of the public space, both physically as well as mentally. No longer is *Avenue André Malraux* considered to be the end of the public space that extends from the *Rue Nationale*. The river banks are connected by the bridge which is now part of the public space network and not just a linear connection and therefore are raised from being “ends” of a journey to becoming prominent nodes.
3. Urban design and landscaping will be used to add space components where emptiness is today. By interpolating programming (soft actions), or physical design (hard actions) we succeed in creating more connecting points in space, which results in a more coherent, integrated tissue.
4. The addition of the aforementioned features will offer the possibility of a short or longer pause to the visitors and users of the site along with the opportunity to facilitate numerous activities, permanent as well as temporary and bring more life to the area.
5. As a result, the diagnosed void in the space will be filled with design, people and activities, the essential elements of a place.

Our strategy deploys a set of measures in order to bring about the changes that we envision and create a new form and functions of the area, as a direct response to the causes of the problems that were identified above.

- One of the first priorities that we have defined as part of our proposal scheme is to open up the inner quarters towards the main artery of movement, *Rue Nationale*, by removing the poor quality single storey buildings that line the upper part of the *Rue Nationale*. Further gestures that

improve the visual and physical connections will be made through urban design and landscaping.

- The “necessary morphologically adapted to specific climatic and geographical conditions” built environment is one of the most vital components of urban heritage and a conveyor of sustainability (Verdelli, 2014: 6). Therefore, the importance of architecture in the creation of a positive context that will embellish and promote culture is irrefutable. We propose the establishment of rules concerning the morphology and the use of future structures in the site, in a way that complements the points of cultural interest rather than detract from them.
- In the early stages of the analysis we identified the problem of the inharmonious scale. By opening up the two facades of the building blocks it seems that we are exaggerating the problem of the vastness of the space. Instead, we propose the creation of horizontal and vertical elements that frame views, direct movements and introduce interactions that promote everyday life’s rituals, to give the place a human scale and enhance quality of life and living.
- Our traffic reconfiguration proposals on *Place Anatole France* aim to restore the connectedness and not just the connectivity. In the process of enabling pedestrian movement, we are careful not to sever entirely the necessary vehicular connections across the site, but to restrict them in terms of intensity and speed. Of the four alternative scenarios that we tested, we promote the “shared space” configuration as the most flexible and the one that achieves the best results with the minimum side effects. (Figure 6)
- In order to create an urban environment which is justly available, inclusive and welcoming for everyone in the city, we take specific actions, not least of which is the installation of facilities for the physically impaired. We consider equal rights to be the cornerstone of any project of public interest and therefore it is on the top of our priorities to ensure easy access to those who enjoy full physical ability as much as to those with any kind of difficulty.
- In the mind-set of our team, preservation of urban heritage means, apart from the structures and land uses, specific “idiosyncrasies” of the space, deriving from historical reasons. One of these is the dramatic landscape with the elevation differences between the inner parts of the blocks and the level of *Rue Nationale*. At present, this situation creates some difficulties in approaching the inner blocks from the street level, but we see this attribute more as an opportunity than as an impediment. With carefully selected design proposals we transform the drop into a smooth transition between the movement and the pause, complementing it with interesting views that offer intriguing perspectives and viewing angles. Elevation differences also allow for a natural flow of rainwater, which is incorporated into our urban design strategy.
- A basic principle of the creation of successful public spaces is that the community has the knowledge to create. Accepting this idea, we took the collective wisdom from the street and applied it to our design scheme in order to respond to the need for more green along the 1250m of the pedestrian stretch between *Place Jean Jaures*, marking the southern point of the *Rue Nationale*, and *Place Choiseul*, on the northern side of *Pont Wilson*. The use of green areas in the design will break the monotony of the single-colour paving (which fails even at separating different movement modes) and help define movement from pausing by designating spaces for each use.

- Working further with green, trees do not only offer shading opportunities, but can also create lines that frame views. A very important quality that the green will bring to the area is the variety in the image of the space during the different seasons of the year, which is of course available outside this particular stretch but was taken away from the recent development scheme.
- The inclusion of green spaces and landscaping will offer the possibility for taking a pause and this quality is also complemented by the (at present inadequate) urban furniture and equipment. The use of one of the numerous recreational businesses will no longer be the only available alternative for the users as carefully placed benches and picnic tables will be introduced in the area, inviting people to use and enjoy them.

The synergy of the previous actions will take the effect of the proposal one step further and induce the desired result of integration between the different pieces of the puzzle that comprise the site and complete the physical, mental and sensory relations with the city.

FORMULATION OF OUR PROPOSED RESPONSES

In line with the theme of the Summer School - cultural heritage and sustainable development - we are proposing a redesign of the area to bring back the human scale and human activities. We wish to reconnect the river *Loire* to the city of Tours and to (re)activate the inner city neighbourhoods and the areas around them. We want to bring the existing assets to life by inserting activities in and around them. Many of the proposed interventions are based on suggestions provided by the citizens who took part in our survey, as it is ultimately they who know best what they and their city need. Our proposal focuses on two main efforts:

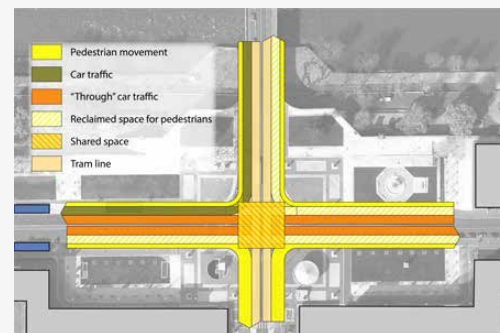
firstly, to reimagine the interface between the city, the river and its people, and secondly, to turn the inner city neighbourhoods into places for culture and creativity.

REIMAGINING THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THE CITY, THE RIVER AND ITS PEOPLE

The splendid view from the two corner towers marking the northern edge of the *Rue Nationale*, overlooking the river *Loire*, *Place Anatole France*, *Pont Wilson*, and northern Tours, is a view that should not be reserved solely for tourists spending a night in a fancy hotel, but should be the pride of all *Touraines*. Therefore we suggest deviating from the proposed development to turn both towers into hotel facilities (Ballet, 2014), and instead only assign hotel functions to one of the towers, releasing space in the second tower for mixed use to meet the needs and wishes of local residents.

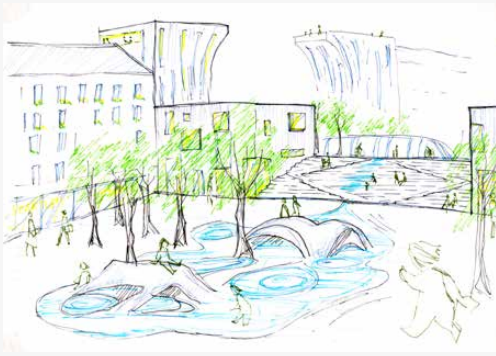
We also propose altering the shapes of the towers so that they create the illusion of an arch, implying the bridging of the wide gash in the urban fabric created by the *Rue Nationale* and transmitting a feeling of continuity. The large roof surfaces can be deployed as public roof terraces, providing the 'best view of Tours' to all, and creating a strong visual connection between the river and cityscapes (see Figure 7).

Radical but also prudent alterations to the traffic conditions on *Place Anatole France* are necessary for the success of the proposed interventions. *Avenue André Malraux* is engraved in the perception of people and the functions of the city as a road that facilitates motorized traffic and its forced removal could possibly create a different type of problem elsewhere in the city. *Pont Wilson*, however combines all three traffic modes (car, tram and pedestrian-cyclists) in a way that seems to function effectively. Our proposal incorporates and indeed cannot succeed without the reclamation of the part of *Avenue*



6. The traffic reconfiguration diagram.

Source : Diagram by group, visualisation by Nasos Alexis



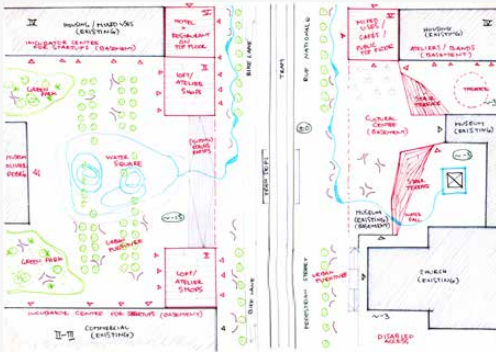
7. Conceptual view from the western inner quarter towards the new towers.

Source : Tiina Hotakainen



8. Conceptual illustrations of the proposed concept for Place Anatole France.

Source : Tiina Hotakainen



9. Zoom-in plan of the inner quarters conceptual design proposal.

Source : Tiina Hotakainen

André Malraux that today is occupied by cars. Apart from reducing the number of cars that cross the site by removing one lane per direction, we intend also to slow down traffic to create a safer environment with fewer disturbances for the people. To this end, we propose paving the almost 230-metre long segment between the entrance to the underground parking and the east side of *Bibliothèque municipale de Tours*, using materials that render it unsuitable for high speed. Curving or crooking the path along this part will cause a further deceleration of the cars which have already been informed of the changed mode when entering the shared space by the small rise in the elevation.

This measure alone would only create a “bottleneck” at the point of *Place Anatole France*, causing traffic congestion at both the entrances. In order to avert this side effect, this segment of the road must cease to be considered by the locals as a high-speed, high-load part of the network. What we need to achieve is a change to the character of the area in the driver’s perception so that it will be avoided altogether unless it is absolutely necessary. This is done of course by the surface and design of the road but is complemented further by vertical elements that will be added, which will also be parts of the landscape and new urban design scheme. They will include greenery, urban furniture, signs and other decorative or functional elements but the most essential component of this character will be the people that will inhabit it. Apart from the shared space itself, the new conditions of *Place Anatole France* will also include separate bicycle and pedestrian paths, accessibility ramps and guide ways along with the cultural and recreational outdoor activities that the proposal introduces.

The open, unused spaces of *Place Anatole France* can be put to use in ways fitting to their surroundings. We propose reconnecting the

riverside of the *Loire* with the *Rue Nationale* and the inner quarters by bringing the river into the city. A very tangible way to do so is by means of a waterwheel, powered by people using urban gym installations, to transport water from the river level up to the city level, from where it will flow into town through “water paths”. In front of the library, on the eastern side of *Place Anatole France*, we propose creating an open air reading lounge with reclining chairs and retractable “shade sails”, mirroring the iconic shapes of the sailing boats that used to traverse the *Loire* into the city, while empowering citizens to create and customize a place for themselves. Combined with the planting of trees and bushes to shelter the little park from the shared space road, the area will be transformed into a cosier, more defined place that is designed for and with people (see Figure 8).

On the western side of *Place Anatole France*, the university building and the lively riverfront summer bar *La Guinguette* attract many young students. The existing park will be equipped with picnic tables to provide them with a lunch spot and place to hang out, while at the same time providing the infrastructure for a weekly food market, which cannot be lacking in a Capital of Gastronomy.

TURNING THE INNER QUARTERS INTO A PLACE FOR CULTURE AND CREATIVITY

In the proposed plan, the space between the façades of the inner quarters is re-activated and animated by providing inspiring places for culture and creativity, by making space for ateliers and start-up companies, the opening of a cultural centre that will form a bridge between the cultural heritage on both sides of the *Rue Nationale*, and by creating places for people, combining greenery, urban furniture and water (see Figure 9). Along the whole length of the *Rue Nationale*, spaces for leisure and recreation

are missing. In our proposal, the inner city neighbourhoods will provide a gradual transition from the commercial *Rue Nationale* to the leisure-oriented *Loire* riverside.

The newer one-storey commercial buildings along the *Rue Nationale* do not follow the general street line of the boulevard. They are located further away from the street, forming a huge void of 40 meters between the facades. In the current situation, the void is filled by a diversity of plastic furniture and advertisements belonging to the shops and cafeterias on the site. Our proposal aims at bringing back the glory to this part of *Rue Nationale* by re-aligning the street line by trees. In addition to restoring the monumental uniformity, the trees provide much needed greenery and shade in the inner city. We propose to remove these low, rather insignificant buildings along the street line, in order to highlight the inner city neighbourhoods and the hidden assets they harbour, such as the *École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts*, *Hôtel Goüin*, the church of Saint Julien and the historically significant *Compagnonnage* museum, which are currently hidden behind the low commercial premises. The generous width of the monumental *Rue Nationale* can be better utilised by providing designated cycle lanes in addition to pedestrian zones and the tramway, thereby adding to the sustainable transport options present in the city.

The western quarter currently hosts an educational building, the *École Supérieure des Beaux-Arts*, which the city of Tours wishes to turn into a museum dedicated to a famous local artist, *Olivier Debré*. In our design the new museum is connected to the street by opening the block and bringing activities in the front and around the museum, not only inside it. The opening is enlivened through the creation of an urban park, bringing together trees and greenery, a water square facilitating a rainwater

catchment as well as water activities, and a reinforced physical connection in the form of designated stairs and ramps, which double as urban furniture.

To reconnect the city with the river, channelling the water of the river *Loire* to the inner quarters is one of the proposal's salient points. An exquisite way of promoting the presence of the river in the city is to make small canals or paths of water to the inner quarters. The small "water paths of the Loire" are a subtle way of showing the presence of the river in the *Rue Nationale*. The small water paths lead the water from the *Loire*, all the way along the *Place Anatole France*, along the urban furniture and pedestrian pathways, up to the water square in front of the *Olivier Debré* museum. The water square is supposed to mirror the water level of the river, and it also collects the rainwater of the area, proposing an ecological way of using the resources. The connection with the river can also be made in more abstract terms. *Olivier Debré* is famous for his paintings capturing the essence of the river *Loire*. We envisage creating a trail that leads residents and visitors to outdoor spaces adorned with interpretations of his paintings, tying together the place on a different level and reinforcing the strong link between city and river.

Instead of the new interior shopping malls that the city of Tours is suggesting, we wish to activate the streetscape of *Rue Nationale* and the inner quarters. Our solution is not a single shopping mall but rather small shops and cafés with entrances facing the *Rue Nationale*, its side streets and the courtyard. We suggest commerce in the form of "Loft" or "Atelier" style shops, adding their individual, creative and unique touch to the site and enlivening the façades of the quarters. Additionally we propose the establishment of a new start-up hub in the currently un(der)used apartment buildings and garages that open up to the courtyards of the inner city

neighbourhoods. Most ground floors on the inside of the blocks are used merely for parking or storage purposes, which is a tremendous waste of resources and space in this location, and which also makes the whole area feel empty and neglected. Transforming these underused spaces into a start-up incubator will bring a much needed injection of youthful energy to the site, which can contribute to perpetual economic and cultural benefits for the whole city.

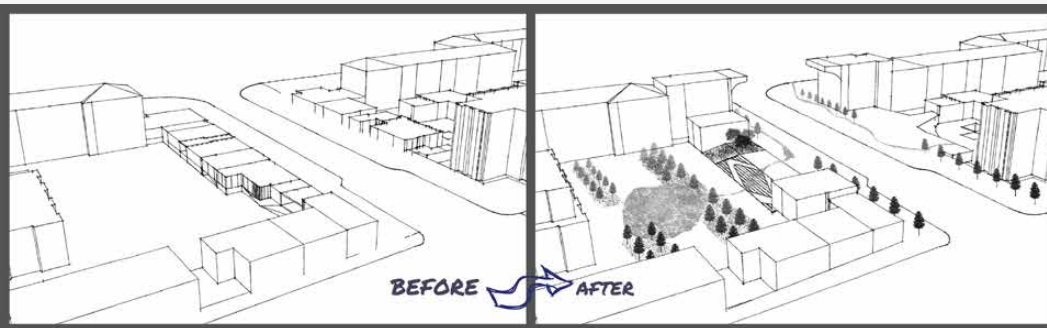
The difficulty of elevation between the *Rue Nationale* and the eastern inner quarter is solved by creating a multi-level cultural centre below street level of *Rue Nationale* with integrated ramps and stairs (see Figure 10). Our design integrates the existing museums, the church and the street by means of the new cultural centre, while also meeting a demand that was identified by the people we surveyed in the streets: a multifunctional cultural centre bringing together music, theatre and dance. Access for people with a physical or visual disability is ensured to all spaces of the courtyard.

On the back side of the eastern quarter there are apartment buildings which are in a rather poor shape and vast courtyards that are used for parking. We suggest that, as the plan unfolds, these buildings can be upgraded to small-scale mixed-use buildings, to create a gradual shift from the monumental *Rue Nationale* to the smaller streetscapes around *Rue Colbert*.

The patchwork of proposals that work together in synergy, will bring to life our vision: to restore liveliness and activity, to turn the spaces into places, and to enable a return of people to this part of the city, creating a new kind of entrance for the city: from a static and lifeless *entrée* to a more dynamic and alive *rentrée*.

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10. 3D illustration of the principal differences before and after the interventions. Source : Nasos Alexis