



## **MASSENA AREA \_ PARIS XIII**

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# HISTORICAL & SPATIAL INTRODUCTION

The 13th district is located on the Seine left bank. It was created after Paris extension, realized in 1860. Its situation and the presence of big infrastructures, such as **Austerlitz train station** (which was the biggest in Paris), allow this district to develop a very important **industrial activity**. It's during the XIXth century and a part of the XXth century, that the 13th district has known this important and very diversified industrial activity. A lot of factories settled down there, such as the Lombart chocolate, Say, Panhard, Thomson factories, as well as a many companies of joiner's workshops, tanneries, electrical manufacturing workshops, radiology, mechanics of precision, and locksmithery... This attracted a **labor population**, whose has settled down little by little in the district.



Map of the 13th district of Paris



In the XXth century, the district **changed little by little**. In the second half of the XXth century, the part of the district situated in the South of the Italy place was the object of an important transformation. And **unhealthy blocks were renovated**. However in this period, the most important operation is "**France 13**". Inspired by the urban theories of Le Corbusier, an area from the "Butte aux Cailles" to the National street and and from the Vincent-Auriol boulevard to the "Porte d'Italie" was redesigned. This operation left in the 13th most of **30 hundred height meters towers**, and particularly the Olympiads paving stone district. This operation broke off, in the middle of 1970s.



Olympiade district

Further to that, the district welcomed a lot of refugees. The first Vietnamese refugees arrived in the 80's. They began to settle down in the towers, placed on the Masséna boulevard. Then, other waves of refugees or immigrants of Southeast Asia, Laotians, Cambodians, and then of Chinese, came to transform the Southern area to an **Asian district**.



# HISTORICAL & SPATIAL INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of the 90s, industrial buildings were settled in the "Paris Rive gauche" area, and some of them closed down because of the decrease of industrial activity.

In 1991, the Council of Paris approved the Seine left bank UDZ (Urban Development Zone) officially known as "Paris Rive gauche". The site planner is the SEMAPA (Semipublic development company of Paris). The project appealed to many french and foreign architects/urban planners/landscape designers such as C. de Portzamparc, Norman Foster, Ricardo Bofill, Jean-Michel Wilmotte...

This huge urban planning operation was divided into five districts:

-> **France avenue** (overall conception: Paul Andreu; development: Jean-Michel Wilmotte and Patrick Céleste): this completely new axis follows **railways** by **overhanging** them, from the Austerlitz station to the boulevard Masséna. The southern part of this axis is not completed yet.

-> **Austerlitz district** (architect coordinator: Christian Devillers), from the train station to the Vincent-Auriol boulevard. Some old housing buildings were preserved. The train station, being the only Parisian station able to bearing an important traffic increase, is going to be the object of a vast rehabilitation.



Austerlitz-Gare    Austerlitz-Nord    Austerlitz-Sud    Tolbiac-Nord    Tolbiac-Chevaleret    Masséna-Nord    Masséna-Chevaleret    Masséna-Sud

-> **Tolbiac district** (architect coordinator: Roland Schweitzer), from the Vincent-Auriol boulevard to the Tolbiac street: the key building of this district is the **French National Library**, surrounded by housing, offices and leisure equipments (cinemas, restaurants...). This district is almost completed.

-> **Masséna district** (coordinating architects: Christian de Portzamparc for the northern part, Yves Lion for the southern part, still in course of study), from the Tolbiac street to the beltway: Paris 7 university - Denis Diderot. Masséna is an **old industrial area** converted in a new mixed frame of open blocks and open spaces linked between them.

-> **Chevaleret street** (coordinating architects: Bruno Fortier and Jean-Thierry Bloch): It is widened and lined with gardens which facilitate the transition with the heightened modern district.



French National Library

# CHRISTIAN DE PORTZAMPARC'S THEORIES APPLIED TO MASSENA AREA

In 1995, the architect and urbanist C. de Portzamparc won the Masséna district competition which consists in designing its urban plan. He started by defining the «three ages» of the City:

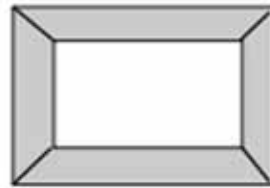
The **Age I city** is characterized by the Haussmannian block. It is a closed block in which the separation between private / public / collective spaces is clear.

The **Age II city** is based on the Modern theories (Le Corbusier) and « large area » free plans. There are no blocks. The result is an important waste of space.

Finally, the **Age III city** is characterized by open blocks. The city is designed as a public space. There is no common ownership between buildings, that makes possible a multiple exposure as well as visual breakaways inside the block.

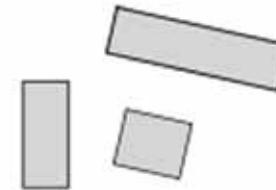
This "urban bocage" is characterized by the variety of constructions. An urban conversion is induced from inhabited space. A research about the block and about the scale of a kind of "micro town planning" has begun. It is an intermediate dimension between the district and the building.

By taking as an example the Age III city C.de Portzamparc is going to develop the project of Masséna district.



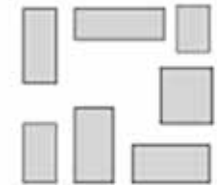
Haussmannian block

Closed plot



Free plan

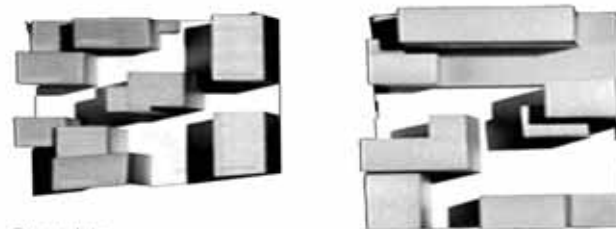
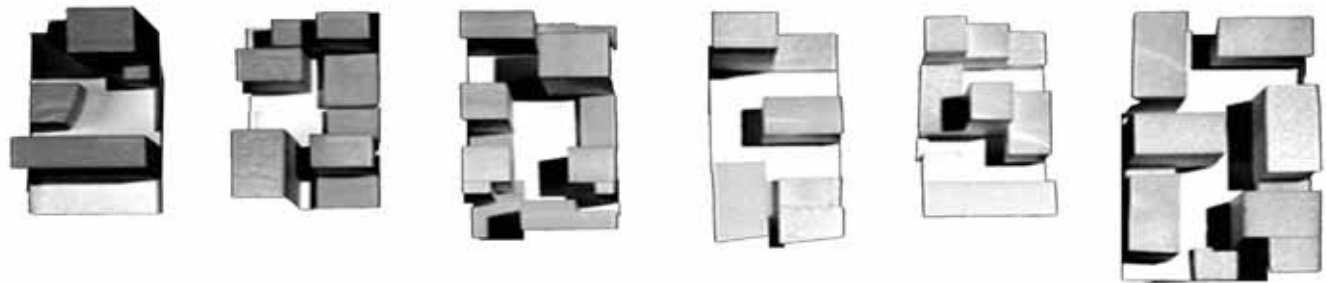
No plot



Open block

Open plot

The three ages/city



Open plots

The Environment plan of the project takes into account the notions of garbage, water, ground and underground, energy, noise, moving, urban landscape. It also includes soft circulation (bicycles, pedestrians, ...) and green spaces.



# CHRISTIAN DE PORTZAMPARC'S THEORIES APPLIED TO THE MASSENA AREA

The project of Masséna district is a part of the vast plan of Paris XIIIth district reorganization. The object of the development of Masséna sector is to look for an **urban quality** in a sector today qualified as peripheral, searching new manners to treat the urban project. Thus the organizer of the competition wished a consultation in two phases, first to confront ideas on the subject of the " frame in the dense city ", then to test the best urban structures propositions.

The designers had to think about the **hierarchy**, including parameters such as the division of the plots, their links and the configuration of blocks, the **status of the public and private spaces**, the size and the organization of the programs, the use of ground floors, combination of gardens and reliefs, presence of the water, and coeducation of the functions offices, businesses and housing.

A «game» began between architects and landscape designers, between professionals of the build act and decision-makers.

Indeed, a new way to work and think the city appeared. Its aim is to give to the city players, the public financiers and the private project owners, the architecture and the landscape professionals, respective local residents and the inhabitants, their place and their role in a project process which needs them all to work together so as to succeed.



The project is settled over time (over 20 years), thus the initial project has to be able to hold until the end. To protect the later program evolutions, the city and the planner refrained themselves to realize a motionless mass plan. The district has to **remain opened to the possible evolutions** and contains the principles which assure the initial idea preservation. Thus, C. de Portzamparc applied to this district his concept of open plots.

Varied forms buildings are placed in staggered rows inside rectangular blocks. In the **heart of the block**, a **garden is visible of all**. Thus, Masséna district is a frame of streets and unpredictable plots in which buildings are settled in an **alternative way** which **create openings**. The idea of the project is to welcome **autonomous buildings** and to **open sights inside the blocks**. In the suburb of the plots, the front row has to **assure the continuity with the Parisian plans**, and authorize a **more split up and free plan** inside the district.



# CHRISTIAN DE PORTZAMPARC'S THEORIES APPLIED TO THE MASSENA AREA

Open blocks give a strong expression of the city as a **public space**. The connections between the various spaces voids and built, are organized according to the principle of the "bocage" with progresses in voids, standing banks and **alternations of gardens and buildings**. The physical nearness between offices and housing shoot to be reflected about the notion of transition; transition by common public or deprived places (gardens, private paths or public highways, places, ...)

Three rules are privileged to shape the image of Massena district. They concern the blocks arrangement, the buildings' sizes and their architectural treatment. **Buildings are autonomous**, they have their own volume and their own materials and colors. It allows to give an alive, new, airy and intimate urban aesthetics. **The street is the link which assembles this variety**. The unpredictable plot allows the cohabitation of manners and functions. It's a way to give more freedom to architects who can mix each in their individuality and nevertheless create a «whole» assembled by the volumetric unity of the street. The **functional mixity** is bound to the nearness between housing, businesses and offices. All these various activities which cross throughout the site facilitate the communication and the exchanges between the district inhabitants and users.



Alternations of gardens and buildings



Buildings are autonomous, they have their own volume and their own materials and colors.



# CHRISTIAN DE PORTZAMPARC'S THEORIES APPLIED TO MASSENA DISTRICT

The buildings' autonomy implies that their height is also free. The blocks are characterized by a dynamic variation of the buildings heights (GF+1 to GF+15). That gives a **vertical dynamic** to the street, and also a **better penetration of the light** in the plot. It permits to draw more narrow but brilliant streets. This solution offers **sights crossing blocks** by avoiding the courtyard. Furthermore, **the private spaces are planted**. The wish to control the heights variation, in connection with the estrangement concerning the street, and the distances with the constructions on the nearby blocks is taken into account. The arrangement should allow at the same time the opening and the close of the plots. Islands are fenced in by outer walls or bases. Fences have to solve the problem of ground floor, occupied, from time to time, by garden housing.



dynamic variation of the buildings heights



A building cannot exceed 45meters without being interrupted by a void of 8meters minimum



Opened blocks whose allow an intimacy and a transparency

Thus the configuration of the blocks is determined by openings and compulsory retreats, the length of a building cannot exceed 45meters without being interrupted by a void of 8meters minimum. This void creates a reversal of point of view and almost every housing has 3 orientations and many nearby and distant sights.

These open blocks show at the same time **intimacy and transparency**. The purpose is to establish a **visual permeability** between the inside of the blocks and the outer public spaces. The objective is to **feel at home in public spaces**, and to feel the city at home thanks to openings.

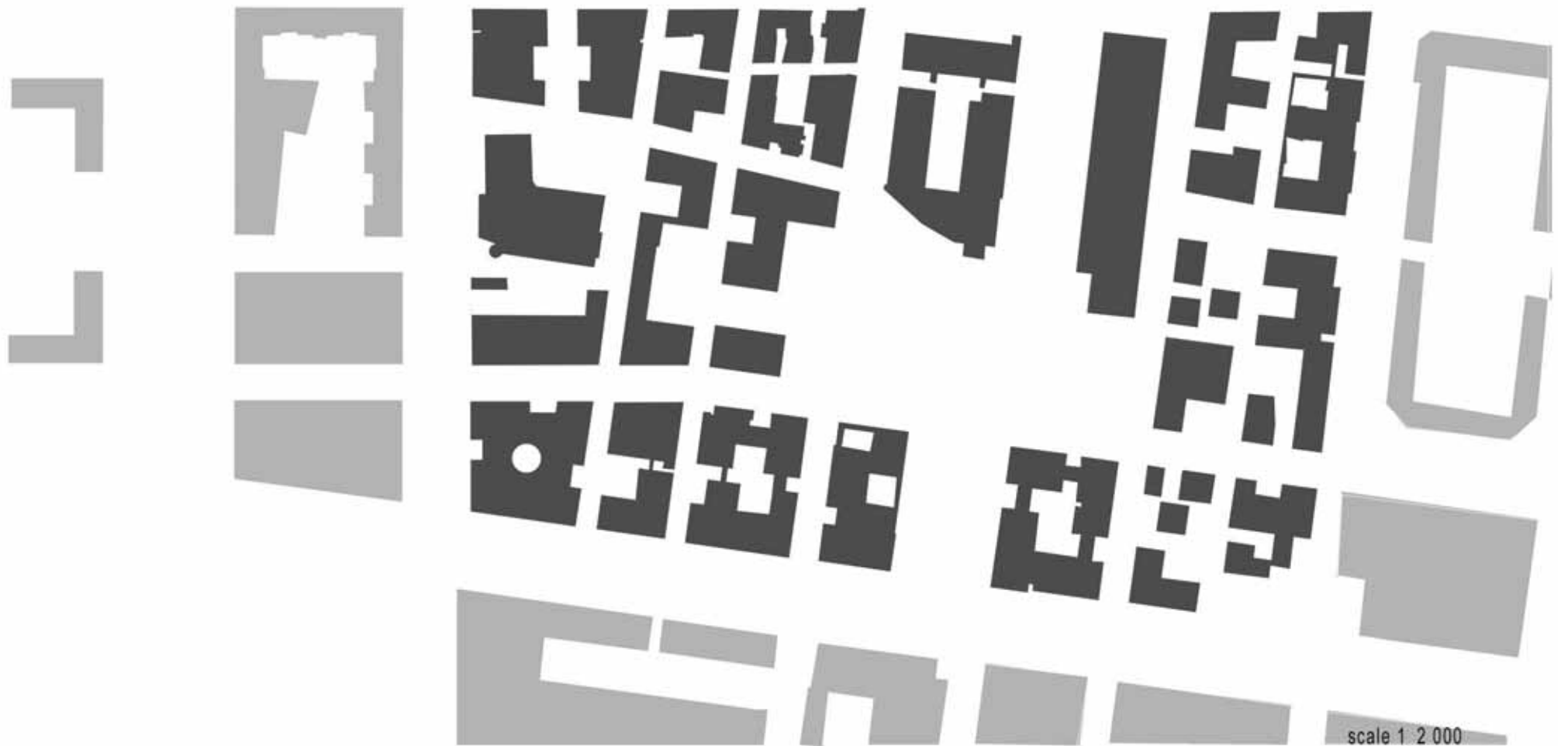
# ATTRACTIVES POINTS AROUND MASSENA



scale 1\_10 000



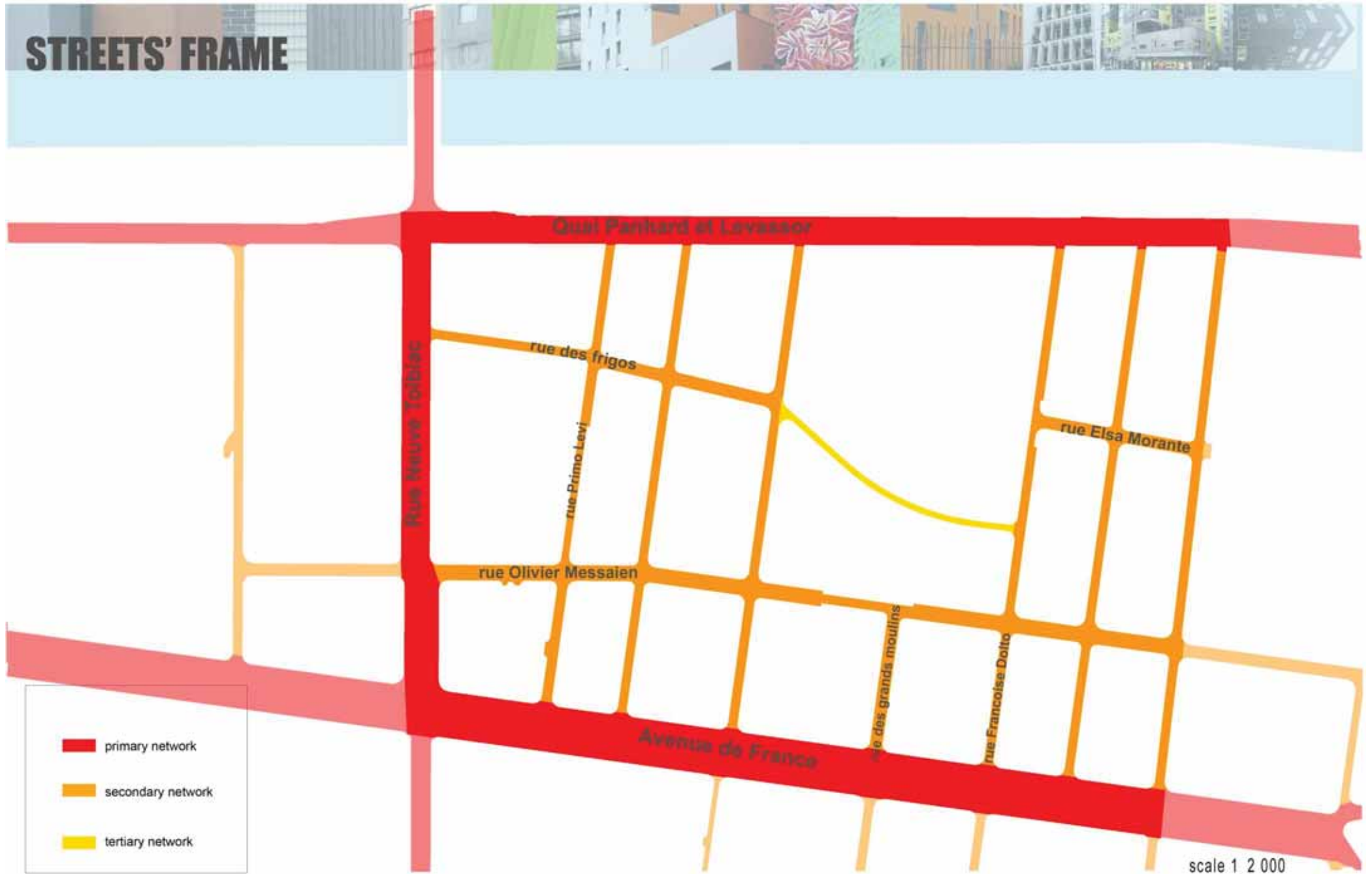
# VOIDS & SOLIDS



scale 1\_2000



# STREETS' FRAME

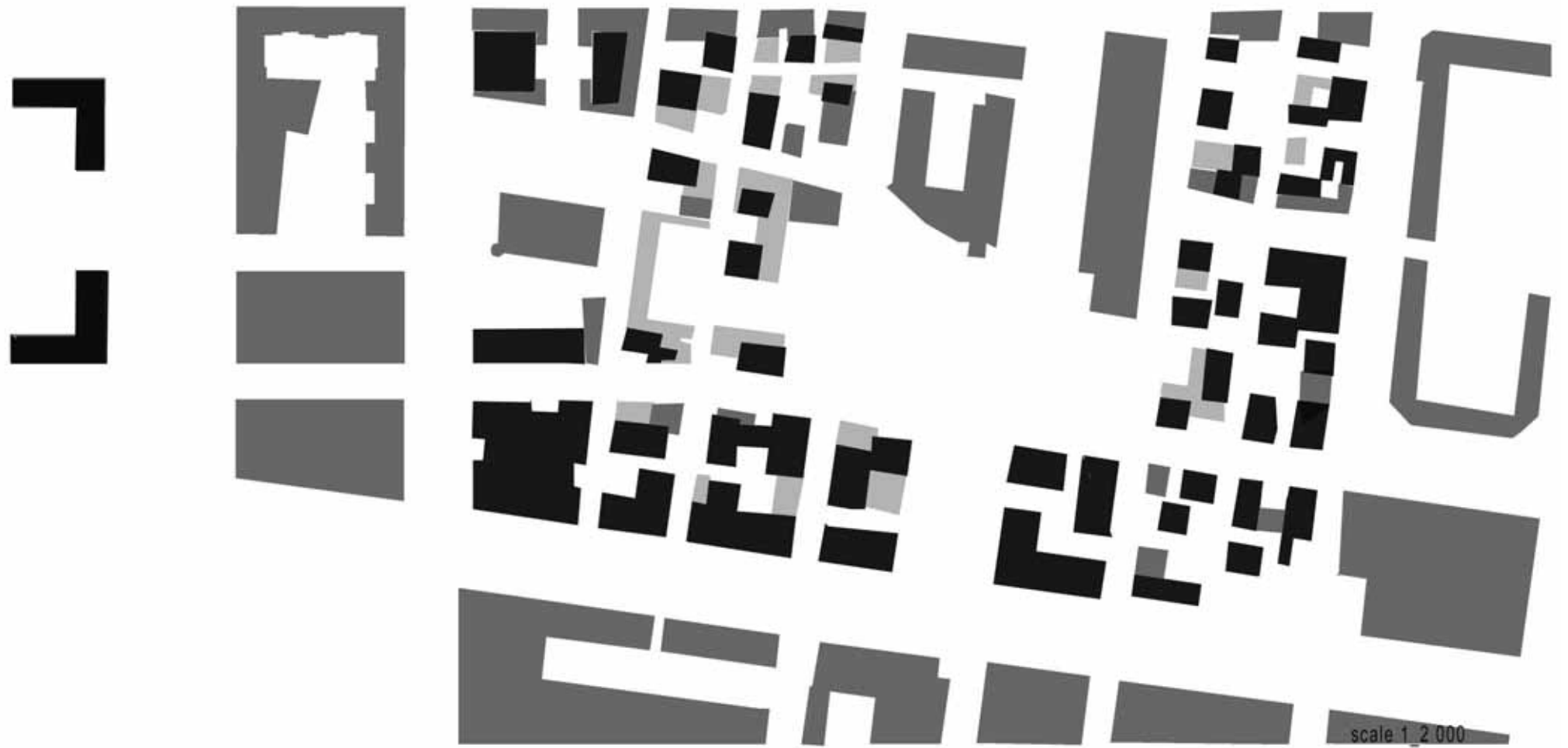




# GREENERY





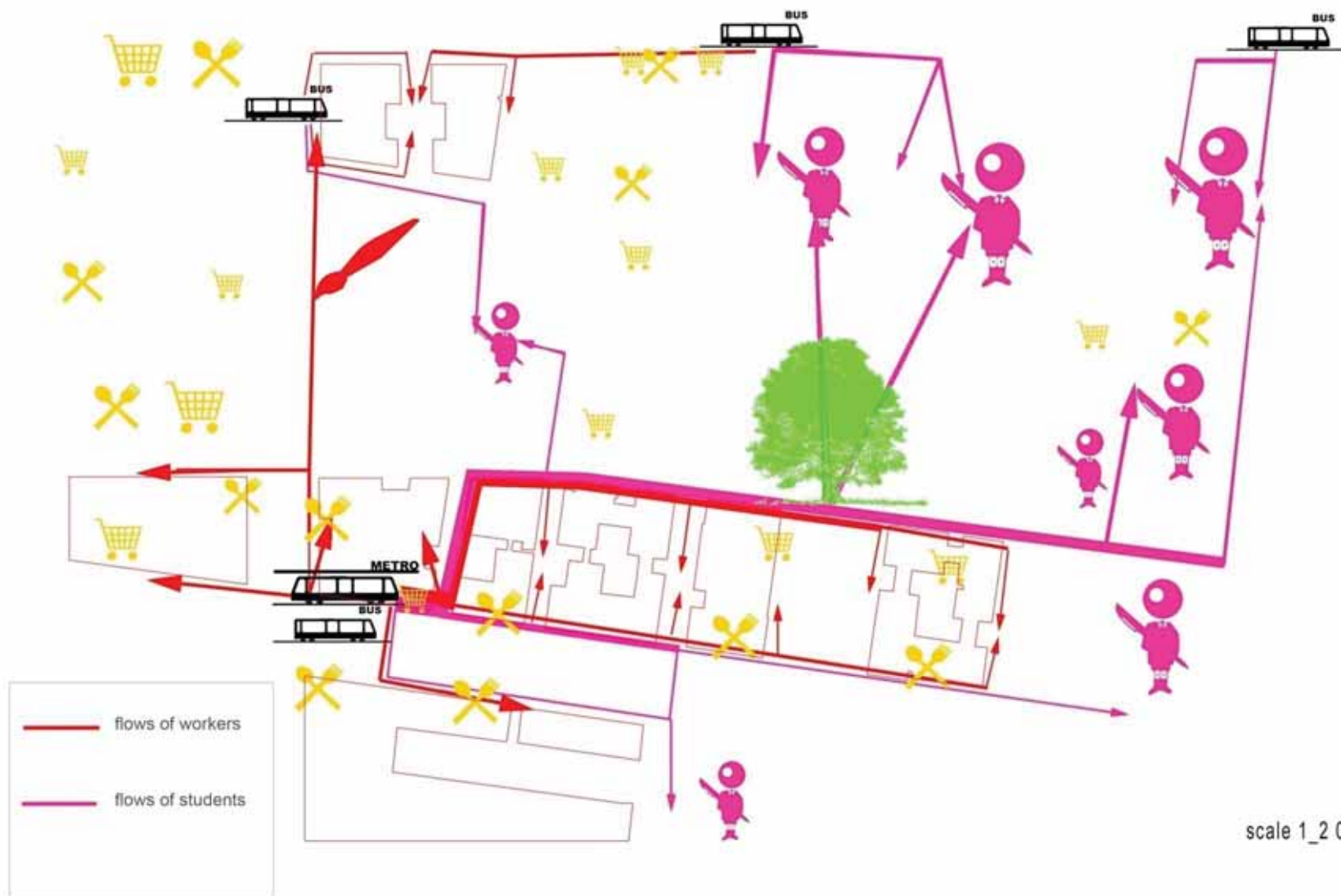


scale 1\_2 000





# MORNING FLOWS OF PEDESTRIANS



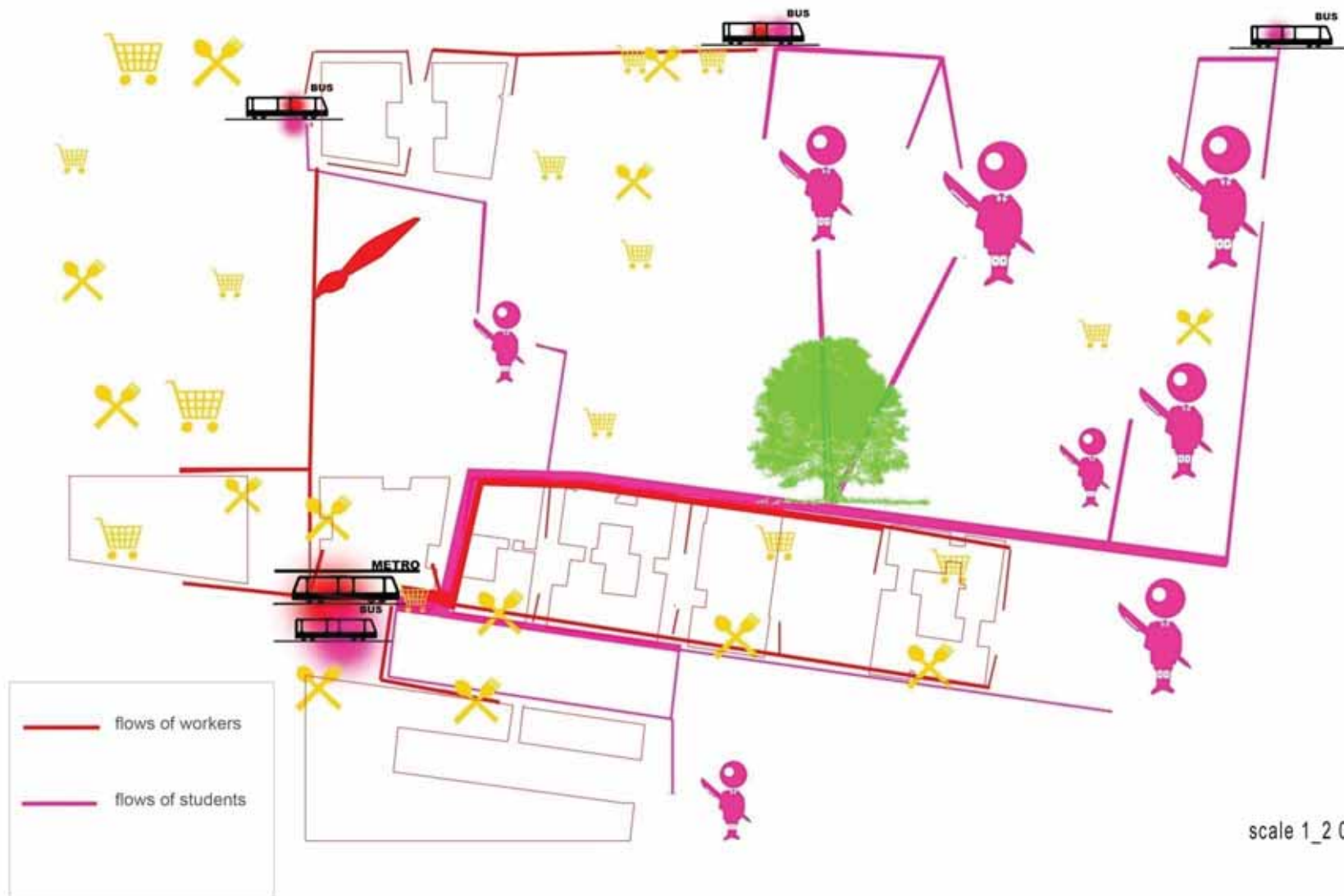
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# NOON FLOWS OF PEDESTRIANS





# EVENING FLOWS OF PEDESTRIANS

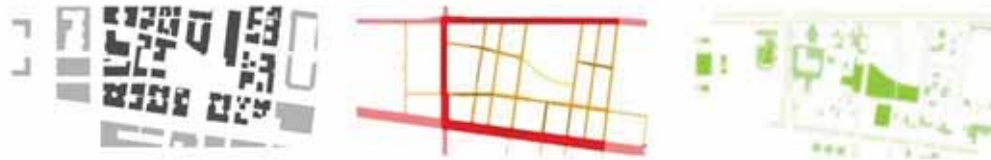


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# ANALYSIS OF THE MAPS

The first three maps show different layers of the city.

- voids and constructions
- urban net of streets and sidewalks
- greenery



On the first map, we can see that the plots are open and sculpted as C. de Portzamparc wished.

No one looks like the other. Inside the plots, we can notice at first compression and then dilatation of open spaces.

Even this plan shows the spatial diversity (in an horizontal plan) which makes the project rich and complex, but yet not complicated.

The buildings are aligned on the streets which create the link between them, we can suppose that there is a quite large public space in the heart of the area.

The second one shows the hierarchy of the streets' net. Massena is surrounded by three main arteries, one going along the Seine.

It is irrigated by a clear frame of regular streets making the link between the plots.

The third one shows how the greenery also participate in making the link between all these elements. It reinforces the previous hypothesis of a big central public space.

The next three maps show the diversity in:

- height of buildings
- functions of buildings
- attractive points



As said before in the theory applied to this area, we can underline that there is an important variety of height, even inside the plots.

That creates a dynamic skyline and still a spatial diversity, that time, in a vertical plan.

The mixity of functions, offices, housing, educational, commercial and cultural buildings, makes the area alive at anytime.

Moreover, there are a lot of attractive points which strenghten the life of the area.



# ANALYSIS OF THE FLOWS



Concerning the pedestrians, the main flows in the morning and the evening are concentrated around the attractive points such as offices and universities.  
Due to the mixity of functions, the area has lots of crowded points such as metro/bus station and two main arteries.  
Because a lot of people come in this district from other places, they use public transportation to cross the city.  
And they walk on the pavements.



It's not that pleasant to walk from the bus or metro station to the office or university, next to cars.  
Cars making a lot of noise, pollution making the air unbreathable, it would be rather good to go to university, going through the plots, in the middle of open public spaces.  
Pedestrians should have their own space, their own path to go through the city, to see it in a different way than in a car.  
As C. De Portzamparc wished, it would be interesting not only to feel the



# 3rd AGE THEORY APPLIED ON MASSENA



different scale of buildings



privacy + transparency



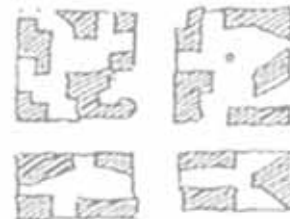
open streets, open plot, open block

- shop
- doctors
- offices
- university
- housing

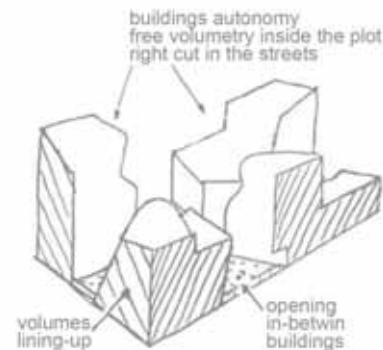
The plot generation of the 3rd Age of the Town, designed by Christian de Portzamparc are now open to the street.

They also allow to combine different fonctions and status.

The difference between public and private spaces remains clear.



open block



volumes lining-up  
opening in-between buildings



# PLOT ORGANISATION

This new district is based on specific rules concerning the plots :

- each building is specific and has its own architect & identity
- vertical asymetry : dynamic heights and skyline
- horizontal discontinuity : opening from the streets
- fragmentation in thickness
- permeability of the inside part of the plot
- the inside part of the plot can be both collective and private
- Importance of green spaces.



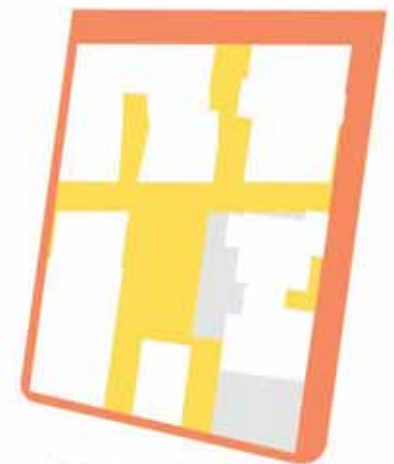
studied plot location \_ scale 1:1000



solid / void



vegetal / mineral



public / collective / private  
public / collective / private

# DENSITY & FUNCTIONS

Buildings with varied shapes are placed in staggered rows inside a rectangular block.

This plot offers several functions such as housings, shops, offices, universities, doctors, ...

These different functions can be mixed in the same building? All of them are connected with the inside part of the plot : a collective garden.

This collective space is restricted to the use of the people living in the plot ; it is not a public space.



high density volumetry + diversity of functions

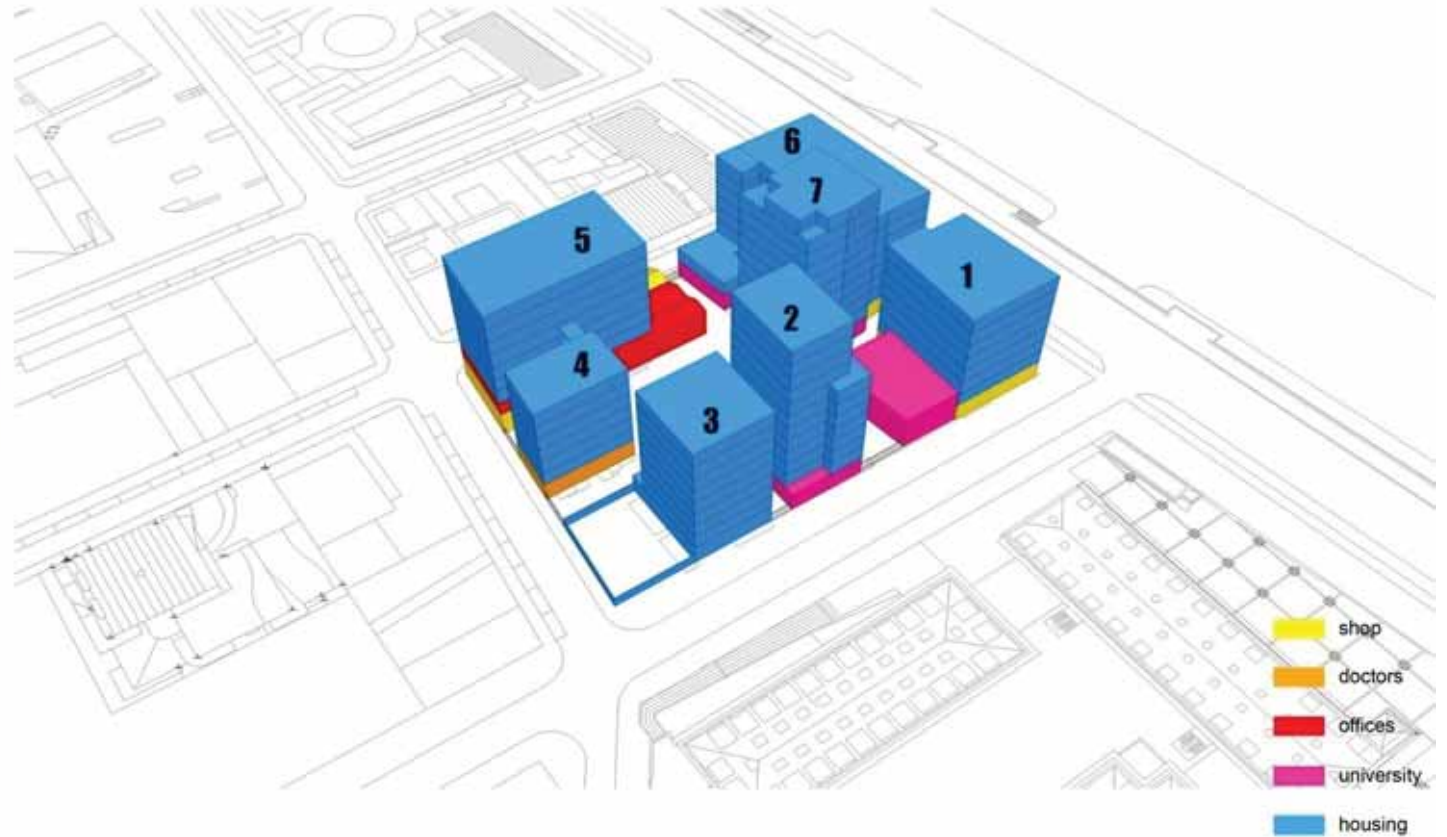




# DIVERSITY OF MATERIALS & COLORS

The plot is composed of 7 different buildings. Each one has a proper style and proportion, materials and colors ... and its own architect.

These variations offer rhythms and dynamics of the public space.



# CREATING SOME REAL «OPEN-PLOT»



Intention plan. 1:2000

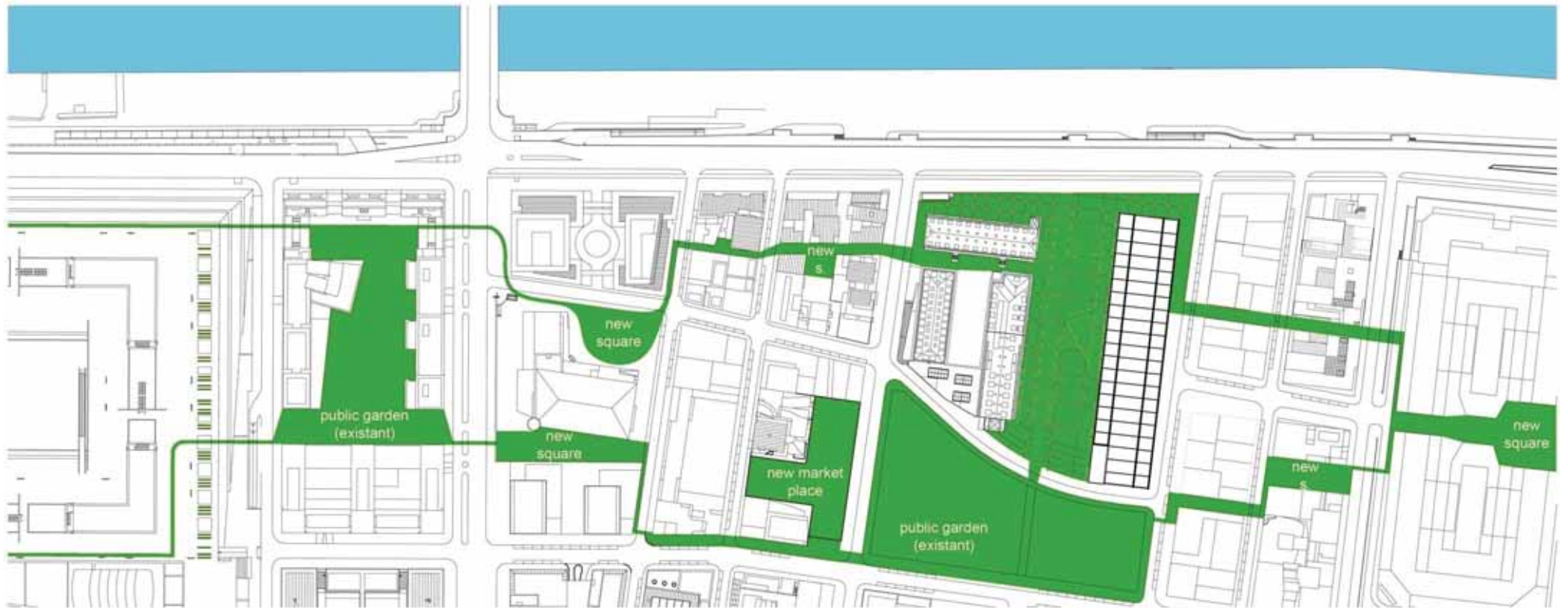
After analysing Masséna's area, we noticed that Christian de Portzamparc's aim to create «OPEN-BLOCK / OPEN-PLOT» was only true in a single sense : the VIEW. In fact, the inside part of the plot are accessible to the sight, but one who doesn't lives in one of the buildings which creates the plot cannot go inside PHYSICALLY.

For that reason, we decided to create, inside Masséna's area, from the university and so on on the docks, some pedestrian walks and bicycle ways which would penetrate the various plots, creating a secondary passage.

This passage would be safe and protected from the cars traffic. Inside the plots, it would enlarge itself so as to create public places such as square, garden, small market, ... It would also be a good way of gathering and socialise people from different plot,strengthening the identity of the area.



# CREATING SOME REAL «OPEN-PLOT»



Project plan, 1:2000

Our proposal is a new link inside the district which could continue all the docks long. This new pedestrian walk and bicycle way create a continuity in Massena flows, but it also put into relation the different equipment which were already present on the site, with the new ones.

The aim is both to strengthen the identity and to create new social relations, by creating some new uses of the public space.