



Galerie Vivienne

“ A Parisian Covered Passage – Pedestrian axis of Seine river left bank ”

International Workshop

Nagoya University Tianjin University École National Supérieure d'Architecture Paris Val de Seine
14th /18th September 2015

Professors

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The Parisian covered passages :

From the end of the XVIIIth century, especially between 1820 and 1830, Paris attends the birth of a new typology: the covered passages. At the end of the *Terror* period and the Napoleonic wars, Paris enters a period of peace and prosperity. Urban life revives, commercial activity intensifies, real estate programs prosper. Boulevards are filling up again, crowd and strollers go down the city and discover the new shops built in covered passages which go across blocks. Routes take shape to go from a passage to an other, allowing distances shortening, to escape bad weather (rain, wind, snow), to admire fashionable shops' showcases and to find tearooms to break off momentarily.

Built under new buildings, the covered passages are the ancestors of today's shopping malls. Bordered by shops on both sides, topped with glass roofs which supply natural light when there was no electricity, equipped with decorated paved ground (sometimes even warmed), covered passages offer everything to please and to attract passersby. The idea to build covered passages appears as typically urban and as the fruit of a certain intelligence: to combine the idea of a covered market and a shopping street. Market halls existed since the Middle Ages (Arpajon, Milly-la-Forêt, etc.); it reminds the protected shops of the *Ancienne Comédie* street and of the *Royale* street, as well as those we find *Place Dauphine* and *Place des Vosges*: the workshop is located at the level where the street is open to the sight of passersby, the low height storekeeper's housing being located up to the store, a small staircase connecting both levels.

Both typologies are equipped with an invention peculiar to XIXth century: a steel structure covering the passage, surmounted by a glass roof. These three combined typologies create a new one: the covered passage.

"Each period dreams about the following one" said Michelet. Walter Benjamin offers us, to decipher the ambiguous figures of a dream peculiar to XIXth century, categories as original as fertile that it is up to the visitor to associate and combine: boredom, idleness, iron construction, World Exhibitions, fashion, collector, inside, mirror, player, passages, etc. They allow to show the emergence of construction forms, communication and transports in the cities, among which only XXth century was able to measure the political impact, at the same time as they offer the ability to identifying a trend, at the very beginning of these mass techniques, a fragile utopian aspiration and forgotten promise of freedom. This ambivalence makes of "Passages", even under their fragmentary aspect, an extraordinary critical homage to the XIXth century of Paris, to its architecture and to its writers. (Extracted from a introduction text of the work).

The site :

Crossing of the Urban Development Zone of Seine river left bank. Course going from the *boulevard Vincent Auriol*, at the level of the metro station "Quai de la Gare" (ligne 6), to the passage under the *Petite Ceinture* and the peripheral express road (Boulevard Périphérique) of Paris, until *Ivry-sur-Seine* side.

Compared to districts where are located most of Paris covered passages (2nd and 9th districts), the Urban Development Zone of Seine river left bank distinguishes itself by its youth. The very first studies of this area were established at the beginning of the 80s. And by the end of the 80s were delivered its first buildings located between the *boulevard Vincent Auriol* and the BNF (French National Library) (section n°1). At the beginning of the 90s were delivered buildings on the quai Mauriac and the rue Neuve Tolbiac (section n°2). Housing built around the Rectory were delivered in the 2000s and beyond. The ENSAPVS building was delivered in 2007, just a little time after the Biopark, which are both part of the 3rd phase of the Urban Development Zone. An area where the oldest part is not 35 years old and the most recent one a little bit more than 8 years old.

Most of Parisian covered passages are today about 190 years old and some even more than 200 years old (Passage du Caire, 1798). Three centuries are separating the first Parisian covered passages and our today's project.

The Urban Development Zone of Seine river left bank :

Each sector of Urban Development Zone of Seine river left bank has been designed according to a different concept: the first sector shows similar typology to Haussmann blocks in its sizes, shapes and colors. In the second one, around the BNF (French National Library), blocks adapt themselves to the relief, are organized around internal gardens and are made of varied architectures. The third sector (Portzamparc) is composed of *open blocks*, *faubourg blocks*, where the relation courtyard/building/street varies from a construction to the other (no aligned dimension).

Pedestrian small alleyways were imagined allowing to connect the 1.5 kilometers of the Urban Development Zone. Nevertheless, all these passages, small places and alleyways are lacking activities to offer a great pedestrian axis which could connect the three sectors (soon four) of the Urban Development Zone of Seine river left bank.

This Urban Development Zone was built between the *Avenue de France* and the *quais François Mauriac* and *Panhard et Levassor*. These two main roads very busy with a very important flow of vehicles. Docks have no

pedestrian activities compare to the boulevards? The *Avenue de France*, animated during working hours and at noon, becomes lifeless as soon as the night falls.

The sector of the open blocks of Portzamparc is composed of a mixture between tertiary and residential buildings. Between these two sectors, the Rectory and the buildings of Paris VII were settled. If more offices are located along the *avenue de France*, the rest of the sector, apartment and university buildings, is irrigated by streets which look like by their sizes the streets of the old Paris. Preferring them narrow and intimate, the architect thought of recreating the animation of Saint Germain or the Marais district. Nevertheless, this objective has not been really achieved. The commercial areas offer significant surfaces to attract great stores' brands and chains. All along docks, pavements are not enough busy to hang on convenience stores and commercial areas surfaces are also too important there. The closeness, the shops and the activities, which usually attract stroll and pleasure to see what is taking place, are here solitary exercises.

The fact remains that this sector, the third, concentrates today a large population of academics, students, teachers, researchers and administration staff. But this district real-life experience, in spite of its urbanistic promises, remains stereotypical. It is an interesting district, but it is not a beautiful district.

Thus a question arises: what can we plan to create a great pedestrian and trading artery to connect and breathe life into this Urban Development Zone?

The program :

Establishing a programmatic framework containing:

- Buildings (closed and covered), composition of various functions: students housing, hotels-shops, convenience stores, galleries, services kioskes, studios, coworking, shops and showrooms, clothing stores, secondhand clothes, etc., asking for small surfaces
- Covered built elements: windows, pergola, sculptural or livable roof
- Landscaped sequences: pathways, equipment, plantations, furnitures...

It is advisable to maintain the dialogue within teams, so that the proposals get numerous while creating coherent passages.

As for project choice, the site has been divided into 5 sections, which include roughly limited areas for building projects and landscaped designs to be handled.

Section n°1: *Jean Arp* street, *Valérie Larbaud* street, *Jean Giono* street. Passage through 2 blocks and a place. Landscaped Continuation: crossing of *Bibliothèque François Mitterrand's* square

Section n°2: *Choderlos de Laclos* street
Landscaped continuation: square *François Mitterrand*, *rue des Frigos*

Section n°3: esplanade *Pierre Vidal-Naquet* and Crossing of the *Halle aux Farines*, Paris VII lecture halls Building
Landscaped Continuation: *Grands Moulins Abbé Pierre* garden and *Elsa Morante* street

Section n°4: Watt-Biopark block
Landscaped continuation: *Elsa Morante* street, site of *Bruneseau Nord* tunnel

Section n°5: end of the ENSAPVS site, tunnel under arches leading to Bruneseau Nord block
Landscaped continuation: Biopark block, continuation towards Ivry-sur-Seine

Layout : Friday 18th September 2015, at 4:00PM

A0 panel:

Analysis and reports through ideograms and texts
Choices made and concepts expressed through project sketches
Images of significant atmospheres of the chosen section

Mock-up:

Analysis, concepts and proposal over all the Urban Development Zone: 1/1000
Section mock-up of the project (most representative part): 1/200