

AGORA, Place Cosandey

EPFL CAMPUS LAUSANNE



AGORA, Place Cosandey. credits @Dylan Perrenoud

PROJECT SUMMARY

A public square designed through a collaborative process of around 30 authors, under the guidance of ALICE EPFL (Atelier de la conception de l'espace / Design studio for the conception of space).

The Place Cosandey is a place of life. It is a large surface area where any event can take place, formally or spontaneously. It is a void underlining the beauty of the landscape, bringing the coasts and the distant mountain ranges that border Lac Léman, to the threshold of the campus. It is also a space capable of bringing people together: a setting full of potential, where encounters of all sorts happen, scientific or informal, engaged and supported by the micro-landscape of the square.

CONTEXT

The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL), has, over the past decade and a half, grown significantly in terms of students and staff, with the community numbering more than 15,000 people in 2015. This period has seen continuous constructions of new buildings across the campus, for example, the well-known Learning Center by Sanaa, the ArtLab Building by Kengo Kuma, and the Mechanical Sciences building by Dominique Perrault. The first phase of construction started on the outskirts of the city of Lausanne, in the 1970s, followed by a series of extensions, in the form of masterplans over the following decades. The spatial disposition of buildings and connecting spaces trace this history; the buildings of the EPFL campus have been conceived as functional units, attributed to faculties and disciplines, which themselves are housed in sub-units within the buildings, often separated spatially from one another. This model reflects the way sciences in western societies have been growing and enhancing their power. It models specialization and the spatial compartmentalization of functions and flows.

Historic examples show other possible configurations for university campuses. On Thomas Jefferson's campus in Charlottesville, the Lawn is conceived as a large public and multifunctional space, open for any imaginable activity. Likewise, the faculty pavilions and student rooms placed around the Lawn, function as a network of nodes in a spatial configuration. The layout of the plan itself generates interconnections between disciplines and people.

The project for the Place Cosandey is the first step of the reinterpretation of the spatial structure of the existing EPFL campus in Lausanne. It proposes a common, multifunctional space, creating a new common area – a space of potential, for any activity to take place, from intimate to public, from small to large events. Further projects will enhance the importance of places and nodes in the multilevel distribution system of the campus. Existing spaces will be activated and new nodes will be added – in a thorough reconfiguration of the built structure, the campus will work towards a spatial network of diverse and interconnected temporalities and potentialities beyond the object. The Place Cosandey is therefore a moment, located in a network of transformation, towards a more urban existence.

PROJECT

The southern part of the EPFL Campus has seen significant mutations in recent years. The new ArtLab and Mechanical Sciences buildings were constructed, following on from the Learning Center, which proposes an accentuated relationship to the landscape and the open space of the campus. Between these buildings, the Place Cosandey remains as a leftover. This space is not articulated, and sits as the beginning of an esplanade, without spatial definition, other than that provided by the bordering buildings. The EPFL management, decided that it should be up to the students themselves to design the transformation of this generous space on campus.

Between September and November 2015, the ALICE laboratory coordinated this collaboration, in the form of a series of successive workshops. In order to present a coherent project, based on the student work, to the EPFL management, the results of each workshop were translated into comprehensive concepts. In a trans-disciplinary, trans-faculty, trans-study-cycle approach, about 30 participants engaged in an intense production of documents, drawings and models, in order to superimpose ideas along a structured process, forming the core of the design process. The project was then realized, in close collaboration between the EPFL management and services, the ALICE design research team, the engineers and the contractors. A first phase was completed in November 2016, in parallel with the ArtLab building by Kengo Kuma. The second phase of construction, with the major landscape design elements and the AGORA, began in summer 2018 and ended

in March 2019.

On the scale of the landscape, the project proposes an intensified relationship between the campus and its environment and exceptional setting. It maintains and enhances the opening up of views towards the skies and horizons across the lake, and offers with the Disque-project a moment of elevation, in a close visual and bodily relationship with Lac Léman.

On the scale of the site, the project articulates the relationship between the 'dense' parts of the campus and the southern park-like part of the campus. Here the project plays a double role of square and urban park, acting as a node in an urban system, generously supporting simultaneous activities and movements, intertwined within the existing park system around the Learning Center.

The square itself is conceived as a Supersurface; it supports all the movements, activities and events, and it correlates between the recently constructed buildings, their different surroundings and their levels. Moments of intensity articulate the space of the square, and propose a diverse rhythm, another exposure to the space, and a certain intimacy. These moments play with the square's horizon and the strong presence of the growing vegetation— in order to exist adjacently to the flux of movements, which are becoming places of encounter and co-presence. Each of these moments have a unique relationship with movement and the surrounding horizons, as a result of their proportions and materiality. The soft contact with the attentively sanded concrete seating, or the color of the flowers in front of the diverse buildings, have been thought about with the same care as the articulation of movement at a larger scale, which now seem to reverberate off one another.

The square has become an active place for everyday activities. The food-strip at the Parvis, in the north, has led to a weekly rhythm of small businesses and food trucks, selling meals and beverages, across cultural boundaries. Students and visitors are using the square and its surroundings as a place of leisure, exchange and play. On the other end of the scale, the square is home to large-scale events such as the Balélec, a yearly electronic music festival, drawing 15,000 people over one evening.

As a public space, also visited by large numbers of families and Lausanne citizens, the project for the Place Cosandey embodies the objectives of the future EPFL campus; it inscribes itself into the Open Campus Initiative and responds to the newly launched Resilient Campus endeavor. It is a project conceived and lived by all. Open to the citizens and becoming part of a collective imagery, it has grafted itself into the existing potential of the EPFL campus and its surrounding environment. In its thoroughly urban nature as a place of exchange and sharing, it projects a timely spatial figure, as an expression of the future missions of research and education in our society.

PROJECT DATA

TYPE

Urban Space / Spatial Design

YEAR

2019

KEY DATES

Official Opening: 18th March 2019
Construction phase II: April 2018-March 2019
Construction phase I: November 2016-April 2017
Project Phase: December 2015 - August 2016
Workshops: September-November 2015

LOCATION

Place Cosandey
EPFL Campus
Route Cantonale
CH-1015 Lausanne

KEY DATA

PLACE COSANDEY

Surface 16'600 m²
Figures 5

1/ AGORA

Diameter outer 30 m
Diameter inner 15m
Height 6.5m
Seats 520
Materials Concrete, Steel frame, Pin wood, Gravel
Maple Trees, Hornbeams, Basswoods, Alder Trees

2/ GREEN

Diameter outer 27 m
Height 0.3m
Materials Polished concrete / Grass

3/ POLY GRILL

Diameter outer 20 m
Height 0m
Materials Gravel / Oak Trees, Grassland

4/ FOOTPRINT

Diameter outer 14.5 m
Height 0m
Materials Washed concrete

5/ HORTUS

Diameter outer 21.7 m
Height - 0.3m
Materials Polished concrete, Gravel / Amélanchier Trees

PROJECT DATA

ARCHITECT/DESIGNER

EPFL (Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne)
ALICE studio (Atelier de la Conception de l'Espace)

TEAM

Dieter Dietz, Daniel Zamarbide, Arthur Blanc, Laurent Chassot, Aurélie Dupuis, Alexa den Hartog, Rudi Nieveen, Camille Vallet

STUDENTS

Antoine Amphoux, Guillaume Bland, Marta Martinez-Camara, Louis Chabod, Titouan Chapouly, Yannick Claessens, Benoit Cousin, Hanna Elatifi, Justine Estoppey, Rodolphe Farrando, Jasmine Florentine, Bastien Horn, Bastian Marzoli, Thibaut Menny, Francesco Montresor, Javier Perez, Mikaël Sachs, Yann Salzmänn, Eda Senn, Emmanuelle Vernet

ENGINEER

INGENI Ingénierie Structurale

CLIENT

EPFL

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

MARTI Construction SA

CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

AMAUDRUZ Électricité, BAUDAT Pépinières, FORMAT-PAYSAGE Paysagiste, INGPHI Concepteurs d'ouvrages d'art, JAKOB Rope Systems, L'ATELIER DU PAYSAGE Paysagiste, REMUND Holzbau, SOTTAS Construction métallique, SRG Ingénieurs sécurité

SPONSORS

Foundation Lombard Odier

PHOTO CREDITS

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CONTACT COMMUNICATION

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ALICE LABORATORY

ALICE (Atelier de la conception de l'espace) is a laboratory for architectural design at EPFL Lausanne. It consists of a team of young architects and researchers, scientists and doctoral candidates from Europe and abroad. The laboratory strives for collective, open processes and non-deterministic design methodologies, driven by the will to integrate analytical, data-based approaches and design thinking into actual project proposals and holistic scenarios. Research, teaching and design are conducted in close proximity to innovate education- and design-processes. The lab engages in developing and building full-scale installation-size artefacts, innovates in designing and constructing public space and architectures, and invents new types of ephemeral structures for social and cultural events.

ALICE searches for novel approaches towards valuing environment and human habitat as mutual resources. In a venture for Architectures of Contribution re-search projects seek synergies to teaching and contribution to public life. In evaluating embodied experience ALICE works in trans-scalar mode from the detail to the territory. Engaging tectonic innovation, ALICE researchers collaborate with iBeton EPFL and UFBA in Salvador de Bahia on thinnest-shell fiber-reinforced concrete-structures to implement sustainable, adaptable construction methods in socially fragile context in legacy of Brazilian architects Lina Bo Bardi and Lélé. In Europe the research project 'Protostructures' has led to the collectively designed HOUSE 1. Built by its 227 authors, it obtained the 2017 Swiss Design Award in the category 'research'. The experience HOUSE 3 is currently hosting events in CIVA / KANAL – Centre Pompidou in Brussels until June 2019. A more recent research project named 'Protofiguration' investigates operational, cultural and spatial aspects of primary acts that 'relate' habitat to the land. The concepts of 'Protofiguration' will be implied and tested in research and design projects in forthcoming projects in Switzerland and Europe. On the scale of public space recent design research projects include the Place Cosandey, the main square of the EPFL campus, located between the Rolex Learning Center by Sanaa and the ArtLab building by Kengo Kuma architects. The project is authored by 33 people including architects and non-architects and has obtained the prize 'Distinction de l'Ouest' for its contribution to public space and community life on EPFL campus. The second phase of the project will be inaugurated in early 2019. In all these projects research questions focus around how to operationalise ideas into tangible concepts and physical concretisations, where the principles of 'scaffolding' and the role of embodied cognition (enaction) – with emphasis on its consequences on democratic identity, sovereignty and cultural construction of world-views – form a key part of the theoretical background of ALICE-led research.

ALICE has developed new tools to act on space and our environment in holistic, ecological and economical ways. Aimed at being shared with many and in the spirit of mutual contribution the lab's projects are not confined to 'buildings'. They aim to engage any aspects of space from its material delimitations to its social implications as the key dimension that interplays with our environment and us as human beings. It is in the spirit of an urgency that we propose to first work on values other than short-term efficiency and profitability, or longstanding knowledge of architectural types and languages: In initiating architecture as a thinking and making of space that is aimed at an intrinsic principle of contribution and care, based on individual and collective desire (Man Ray, Bernard Stiegler). It is the sense of experience of this very possibility that we want to share with communities of people in most diverse environments – projects, spaces, habitats – imagined, conceived, thought, drawn and built by, with and for many. These future spaces that emerge between many souls in constant deliberation are expressions and contributions of desire, beyond the object.

ALICE dreams its architectures as poetic ground for open exchange and deliberation.

ALICE ACHIEVEMENTS

Since foundation of the lab in 2006 ALICE focuses on the importance of synthetic and parallel processes that are involved in the conception of space. The laboratory's design research activities englobe therefore all aspects of theory, conception, making and constructing space and the operational processes that cannot be separated thereof. With its design research platform ALICE has developed a precisely structured method for architects and non-architects, scientists, professionals and laymen to interact in common design projects. With its methodologies that adapt spatial and time-based support-tools ALICE is capable to respond to challenges in urban development, spatial planning, architectural intervention, landscape design or public space. Its research provides ground for collectively driven processes involving actors at all levels. The agile formats of design research workshops provide a wide variety of elaborated and tangible results within tight timeframes. The experimental basis of the formats allows for open processes with often unexpected results, capable of alimentering public debate. The projects are generated through operational processes with actuations in trans-scalar mode that facilitate transitions from ideas to built materialised projects.

Completed design research projects of the last 5 years are: 2018. The Disc (Agora Lombard Odier), Place Cosandey EPFL; 2018. Montreux Jazz Heritage NINA. Mobile Installation; 2017. Montreux Jazz Heritage NOMAD. Mobile Installation; 2016. Place Cosandey EPFL. Public Space, Award : Distinction de l'Ouest; 2016. Montreux Jazz Heritage Lab II. EPFL, Installation; '2055', Architecture, Les Diableret; 2014. METROLAB iDmêtro/Seuil Continu, Interdisciplinary Design and Research Project, Concept and Tool Box, Paris 2014 (confidential); 2014. METROLAB iDmêtro/Seuil Continu, Interdisciplinary Design and Research Project, Case Studies, RATP Paris (confidential); 2014. SOL-id, Caustic installation at the Rolex Learning Center, Installation, with Mark Pauly EPFL, Lausanne; 2014. Porte des savoirs, Vaudoise assurance, Lausanne. Architecture, with EPFL + ECAL LAB, interaction design team: Nicolas Henchoz, Thibault Brevet; 2014. METROLAB iDmêtro/Un Seul Espace, Interdisciplinary Design and Research Project, Case Studies, RATP Paris (confidential); 2013. METROLAB iDmêtro/Un Seul Espace, Interdisciplinary Design and Research Project, Concept and Tool Box, RATP Paris (confidential); 2013. L'Etoile d'Avenches, a retractable and demountable roof structure, Interdisciplinary Design and Research Project, Avanches.

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CONSTRUCTION AGORA

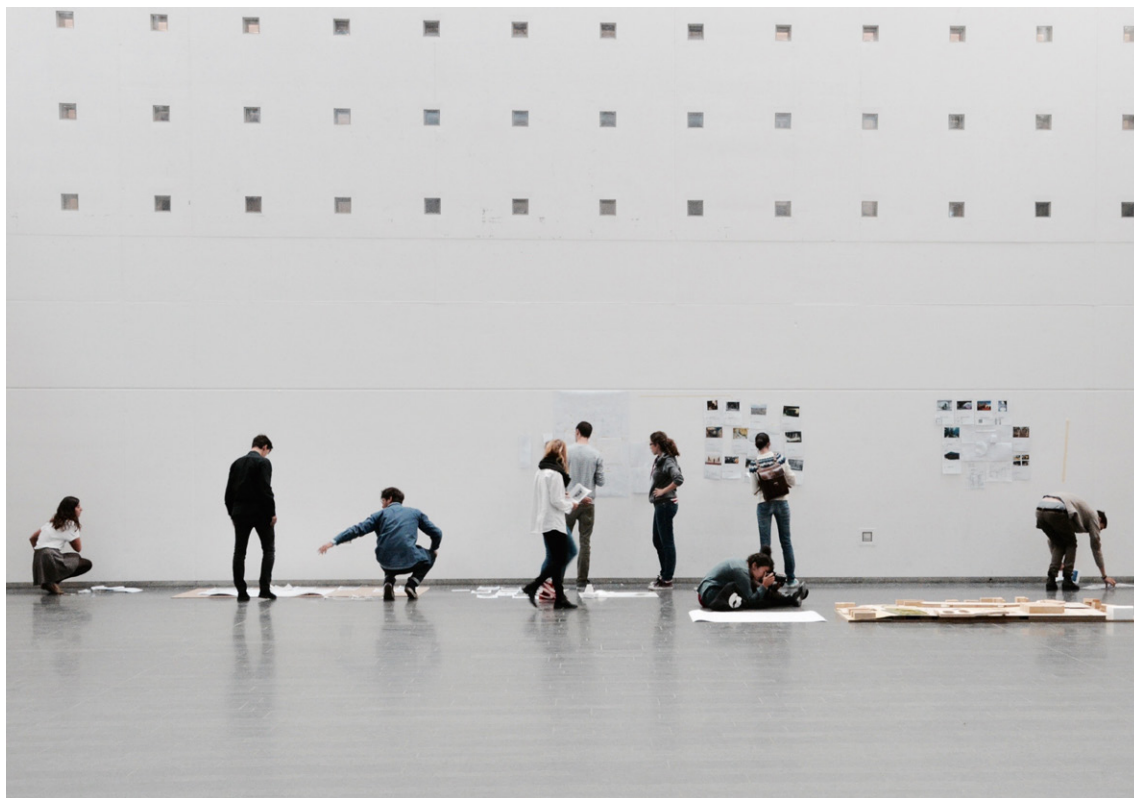


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WORKSHOPS



WORKSHOP, October 2015. credits @ALICE



WORKSHOP, October 2015. credits @ALICE