

The Flon Platform

**As an Artefact of Architectural History
through the Failure of endless Proposals**

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Le Quartier du Flon face à la Voie du Chariot, 1980

I would like to especially extend my thanks to,

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Lausanne City and EPFL Archives
for their enlightening materials.





Dufour Map of Lausanne, 1864

A video employing archival material to delve into the resilience of the Flon platform throughout the 20th century complements the énoncé théorique.

Its primary intention is to showcase the evolution of media, their forms, and their role in representing and illustrating the multitude of projects submitted for the development of the Flon district. Furthermore, this exploration serves as a lens to identify the ideologies that have influenced distinct periods in the theory and history of architecture during the 20th century.

The video is available on YouTube,
Louis Caloz, The Flon Platform, EPFL PDM24

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Introduction

In the heart of Lausanne, the Flon platform stands as a captivating urban laboratory,¹ offering a unique lens for scrutinising the intricate intersections of architectural discourse and the evolving landscape of public-private ownership. Originating from the city's industrial roots in the early 19th century and molded by the visionary initiatives of the affluent Mercier Family, the private ownership of the Flon platform distinguishes it as an exceptional and singular case study in Switzerland's urban landscape.² Beyond a traditional architectural study, the Flon district emerges as a comprehensive artefact reflecting not only the ongoing architectural discourse but also the continuous evolution of architectural theory in the 20th century.

The énoncé théorique delves into the complexities surrounding the Flon platform, exploring its historical roots, the ongoing debates between private and municipal control, as well as the rejection and failure of architectural projects that have unfolded within its boundaries. The Flon platform, nestled within the rugged topography of Lausanne, emerges as a captivating subject of study, inviting us to reveal the layers of its historical evolution. This unique nexus is transformed into a living narrative canvas reflecting the dynamic dialogue between architectural ideas and the ever-evolving tension surrounding public and private interests.

1. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon :
N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 54.

2. Berthod, "Nouveau poumon pour
Lausanne", 12.

Exploring the historical origins of the Flon platform is essential to grasp its dual role as an architectural time capsule and a contemporary battleground of ideas. As the industrialisation of Lausanne took hold, the Mercier Family undertook the ambitious task of shaping this district. However, this private ownership has positioned a substantial portion of the city center beyond municipal control and the reach of public governance, triggering persistent debates and disagreements between the private entity and the municipality. This tension provides the context against which various architectural proposals, each reflective of its time, have been put forward.

Moving beyond historical narratives, the research pivots towards a forensic examination of the failure and rejection of various project iterations within the Flon platform. This analytical approach involves identifying the key actors in the district's development and understanding the forms of rejection these projects encounter. Each proposal serves as a window, unveiling the idiosyncrasies and debates inherent to specific periods of architectural theory and history, as well as ideologies that have shaped the discourse of the 20th century.

At the core of the exploration lies an investigation into the rhetorics of project employed by architects across different temporal landscapes to convey their arguments, utilising media, discourse and solutions, contributing to the ever-evolving architectural theory. Research initiates a rigorous examination of the Flon platform, weaving together historical narratives, rejected projects, and rhetorical strategies.

In summation, the énoncé embarks on a multifaceted journey through the Flon platform, unraveling its complex blend of architectural discourse and public-private ownership. By delving into rejected projects and the rhetorical strategies employed, this research seeks not only to contribute to the understanding of Lausanne's urban development but also to offer broader insights into the evolving nature of architectural practice and theory over the course of the 20th century.



VALLÉE DU FLON
LAUSANNE
MÉRITE MIEUX
QUE ÇA...



VOTEZ
NON
AU PLAN D'EXTENSION

IMPRESSION: ATELIER OFFSET PERRIN

ADP. P. LAMBERT

I

The Initial Development of Lausanne

From the earliest days of Lausanne, the *Flon* and the *Louve* rivers flowed through, creating one of the most intricate geographies where a city has ever originated.³ The development of the city is quite paradoxical and its structure reveals several anomalies. Streets and places are extremely narrow to the extent that their expansion is almost impossible.⁴ Efforts to traverse these valleys have resulted in Lausanne being oriented perpendicularly to them.⁵ Nevertheless, these two rivers serve as the foundation for the initial activities of the city, supplying sawmills and mills along their course.⁶

In the early 19th century, it became essential to vault the *Flon* and the *Louve*, for two main reasons. The primary concern was sanitation and health issues, as these streams were used to evacuate sewage from the city.⁷ Works began at the Riponne in 1812 to address the deficiencies of the Louve valley and create from scratch the square we know today.⁸ The vaulting process extended throughout the city, with the major cholera epidemic of 1859 and 1865 serving as the triggering factor that encouraged the definitive vaulting of both rivers.⁹

3. Vouga, "Le développement de Lausanne: quelques problèmes de la ville de demain", 338.

4. Vetter, "La Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon à Lausanne", 313.

5. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, 5.

6. "La vallée du Flon - Un renouveau au centre-ville", dartfish.tv.

7. Gasser, "Adrien Pichard, ingénieur et premier urbaniste de Lausanne", 311.

8. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement urbain - Lausanne", 292.

9. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon : *N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 31*.

Adrien Pichard, Engineer and first Urban Planner of Lausanne

The development of city was initiated by Adrien Pichard, considered the first urban planner of Lausanne. Following his studies in Paris at *L'École Polytechnique de Paris* and *L'École des Ponts et Chaussées*, he returned to Lausanne and was appointed *Ingénieur Cantonal Vaudois*.¹⁰ In 1836, he initiated the new primary circulation layout around the city centre to facilitate the transportation of goods and simplify the traffic. This was a key element that the city had to improve, given that Lausanne was a crucial point along one of the largest trade routes in Europe. Connecting Paris to Milan, this route was known as the most challenging city to travers.¹¹ Through the conception of a new city layout, named the *Ceinture Pichard*, he would transforms the traffic organisation in Lausanne and shapes the future road infrastructure.¹²

This would be achievable, especially through the construction of the *Pont Pichard*, a significant structure reaching a height of 25m composed of a double row of arches, built between 1839 and 1844.¹³ Adrien Pichard passed away in 1841 and he would never see the completion of the bridge, which was officially named the *Grand-Pont*, at the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁴ After its construction, the bridge had a significant impact on the urban development of Lausanne. For instance, the creation of the *Bel-Air* square is a direct consequence of this development.¹⁵ The *Ceinture Pichard* plays a crucial role in Lausanne, contributing to its transformation into a major city in the coming years.¹⁶ Its efficiency was such that, two years later, the *Conseil Municipal* was already discussing the need to widen the bridge, which was frequently congested due to increased traffic and population growth.¹⁷

Louis Gonin, New Cantonal Engineer

Once the *Pont Pichard* was completed, it quickly became the emblem of Lausanne, representing the modern city. It served as an example for many generations of engineering students, especially for Louis Gonin, who became the new Cantonal engineer in 1862. ¹⁸ Truly passionate about his engineering profession, he founded

10. Gasser, "Adrien Pichard, ingénieur et premier urbaniste de Lausanne", 308.

11. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement urbain - Lausanne", 258.

12. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, i 8.

13. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement urbain - Lausanne", 259.

14. Gasser, "Adrien Pichard, ingénieur et premier urbaniste de Lausanne", 309.

15. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement urbain - Lausanne", 289.

16. Vouga, "Le développement de Lausanne: quelques problèmes de la ville de demain", 337.

17. Gasser, "Adrien Pichard, ingénieur et premier urbaniste de Lausanne", 310.

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If you are not familiar with the city of Lausanne, flipping this bookmark can be useful to better understand the situation of the city center and the Flon platform.

Louis Caloz

the *Société Vaudoise des Ingénieurs et Architectes*, which would publish bulletins on a wide range of subjects related to engineering, known from 1900 as the *Bulletin Technique de la Suisse Romande*.¹⁹

In 1868, Louis Gonin continued research on connecting the heart of the city of Lausanne with the Ouchy harbour, initiated years earlier by the municipality through a competition.²⁰ This development aims to promote the industrial initiation in Lausanne by connecting the Flon valley to Ouchy, one of the key harbour of the lake for importing goods in the 19th century.²¹ Additionally, it passes by the Lausanne railway station, inaugurated in 1856.²²

The Flon valley, primarily occupied by the infrastructures and tanneries of the Mercier company, is about to be further developed through the initiative of Jean-Jacques Mercier-Marcel, together with the cantonal engineer, Louis Gonin.²³ This collaboration will lead to the execution of the most influential project in Lausanne during the late 19th century.²⁴

18. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement - Lausanne", 261.

19. Ibid., 262.

20. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 15.

21. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66,32*.

22. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement urbain - Lausanne", 272.

23. "Histoire du Flon (2)", guillaumemorand.wordpress.com.

24. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement urbain - Lausanne", 262.



Siegfried Map of Lausanne, 1873 - Legend and Explanations - Image 05, Page 11.

1. La Rivière du Flon, giving rise to the valley.
2. La Plateforme du Flon, resulting from the backfilling.
3. Le Grand-Pont, part of the Ceinture Pichard (East).
4. Le Pont-Chauderon, connected to Place Chauderon (West).
5. La Place Bel-Air, where the Tour Bel-Air is located (North).
6. L'Esplanade de Montbenon, green space with a view (South).
7. La Place Saint-François, central square in Lausanne.
8. La Place de la Riponne, to the north of the city.
9. La Gare du Funiculaire Lausanne-Ouchy.
10. La Gare de Lausanne, main train station.
11. Le Port de Ouchy, key harbour of the Lac Léman (1,5 km).
12. Le Lac de Bret, accumulator basin for the funicular (11km).



06

Vaulting of the *Flon*, 1890

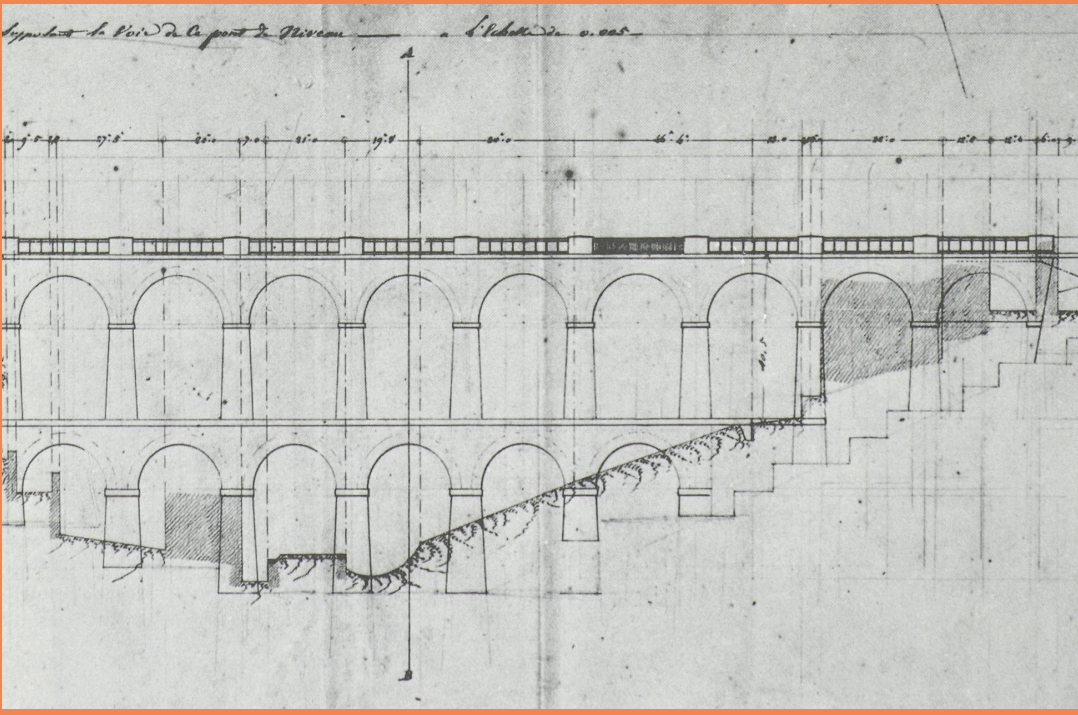


07

Le Grand-Pont et la vallée du Flon, 1846



08 Project of the *Ceinture Pichard*, 1838



09 Elevation of the proposed level bridge by Adrien Pichard, 1838

II

Inception of the Industrial District

Under the reign of Louis XV, in 1740, three Mercier brothers left France and came to Lausanne, escaping persecution in their homeland. Having learned from their father, who was a master tanner, they established the Mercier Tannery in Lausanne. Several generations succeeded to the direction of the company, leading to Jean Jacques Mercier-Marcel in 1864, who will change the destiny of Lausanne and the Flon Valley.²⁵ The Merciers became very wealthy and renowned for their leather, even in English and American markets.²⁶ Thanks to the flourishing development of these companies, Jean-Jacques Mercier-Marcel had the financial means to invest significantly in infrastructure to further expand his businesses.²⁷ He advocated for the creation of the connection from the Flon valley to Ouchy, for which he will finance the tunnels excavation and the construction of a funicular. In return, the city of Lausanne provided the entire Flon platform for its backfilling and the construction of warehouses to store goods.²⁸ These two major event had the direct consequence of equipping Lausanne with facilities for the overall industrial development of the city.²⁹ Conditions of use and regulations on the development of the Flon platform

25. "Histoire du Flon (1)",
guillaumemorand.wordpress.com.

26. "Histoire du Flon (2)",
guillaumemorand.wordpress.com.

27. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité
dans le temps et l'espace*, i 18.

28. "Histoire du Flon (2)",
guillaumemorand.wordpress.com.

29. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité
dans le temps et l'espace*, i 18.

were discussed between the municipality and the Mercier's Family in 1873.³⁰ This convention is the one initially establishing the building height limitation, which will be maintained through the further development of the Flon platform.³¹ As the vaulting of the Flon currently extends only up to the *Grand-Pont*,³² the municipality commits to continue the vaulting of the Flon as the infill progresses. In exchange, it allocates more than 20'000 square meters of land along the *Montbenon* esplanade to the Mercier company. Thanks to this agreement, since 1874, the tannery owns the entirety of the Flon platform and opportunities of development, from the *Grand-Pont* to the *Chemin de la mine*.³³

Compagnie du chemin de fer Lausanne-Ouchy et des eaux de Bret

Discussions about the funicular begins, and, since a significant source of energy for such a system was required, they came up with the idea of using hydraulic power and employed the *Lac de Bret*, situated at a distance of eleven kilometres from the centre of Lausanne, as an accumulator basin. It would provide energy for the proper functioning of the funicular, as well as for hydraulic engines in the artisanal sectors in Lausanne and Morges.³⁴ On the 12th of March 1874, the *Compagnie du chemin de fer Lausanne-Ouchy et des eaux de Bret* was founded. Subsequently, the facility at Bret entered in service and a year later the Lausanne-Ouchy funicular was inaugurated.³⁵ The railway, connecting various levels of the city and a multitude of distribution networks,³⁶ soon became an emblematic infrastructure of Lausanne, better known as the *Ficelle*.³⁷

The Lausanne-Ouchy company initiated the backfilling of the valley to create a vast, flat terrain suitable for the development of its industrial district. Works started under the *Grand-Pont* in 1874, and gradually, the western boundary of the platform was reached in 1915. The dirt and rubble employed came from the excavation of funicular tunnels and various construction sites in the city. However, it also became a public dumping ground where all kinds of waste were thrown away.³⁸

30. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon* : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 41.

31. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 15.

32. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement urbain - Lausanne", 260.

33. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 15.

34. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, i 18.

35. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement urbain - Lausanne", 263.

36. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, i 22.

37. Zuppinger, "L'aménagement de l'espace non bâti de la plate-forme du Flon", 15.

38. Neyroux, "Du "Pas-des-Anes" à la vallée du Flon", 74.

The development of the district begins with the construction of light structures, primarily warehouses. The first masonry buildings will only be feasible a few years later when the ground will be stable enough. Except three specific buildings, the Federal Warehouse, in 1886, and the twin Lausanne-Ouchy Warehouses, in 1894 and 1896, built directly at the forefront of the valley on the initial ground.³⁹ The aim is to take advantage of the backfilling to easily underground the lower floors.⁴⁰ Moreover, since the building height limit is established, it was clever to build them before the backfilling, to underground the lower floors and considerably increase the building volume.⁴¹ The structural quality of the twin warehouses, perceived at the time as revolutionary, played a significative role in the further development of the district. They are composed of monolithic beams of reinforced concrete developed by François Hennebique and patented in 1892 to replace traditional brick constructions.⁴² The two Lausanne-Ouchy warehouses are the first construction using reinforced concrete in Lausanne⁴³ and among the first ones in Switzerland.⁴⁴ This technical innovation enables the construction of large and easily adaptable interior spaces. It allows for the creation of floor surfaces with unparalleled strength, which will be a crucial factor in the coming years.⁴⁵ This feature involves rooftops capable of easily withstanding modifications and installations without damage.⁴⁶

The further development of the Flon Platform

At the end of the 19th century, a global construction boom in Lausanne had a direct impact on the number of firms supplying building materials. For such companies, the industrial district of the Flon valley is the ideal place. The funicular can easily transport materials arriving from the Ouchy harbour or the Lausanne station to warehouses located on the Flon platform.⁴⁷ It will encourage the progressive densification of the area, as well as the diversification of firms established on the platform.⁴⁸ These two realisations, initiated by Jean-Jacques Mercier-Marcel providing easy access to the city contributes a lot to the development of the city of Lausanne.⁴⁹ In the meantime, Jean-Jacques Mercier-Marcel exiled to Rome in

39. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 34.

40. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 30.

41. Ibid., 32.

42. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, i 31.

43. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 42.

44. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 16.

45. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 41.

46. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 55.

47. Ibid., 33.

48. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 32.

49. Neyroux, "Du "Pas-des-Anes" à la vallée du Flon", 73.

1886 due to tax reasons, and his son Jean-Jacques Mercier de Molin took over the company. Since the influence of the Mercer family leads them to become multi-entrepreneurs and significant owners,⁵⁰ they decided through a mutual decision, to halt the tannery's operations.⁵¹

Their property extending up to the *Chemin de la mine* is about to be better delimited thanks to the construction of a second bridge on the west, on the opposite of the *Grand-Pont*.⁵² The competition for the *Pont Chauderon* is won by the Swiss architect Alphonse Laverrière, and the bridge, aligning with the vision of Adrien Pichard for the new urbanisation of Lausanne, is constructed in 1905.⁵³ Alphonse Laverrière will be later responsible for the design of the *Tour Bel-Air*, completed in 1932 as the first skyscraper of Switzerland.⁵⁴ Since the tower is a significative element shaping the landscape of Lausanne and is situated adjacent to the platform, on the *Place Bel-Air*, it will be a relevant landmark to easily situate and understand the Flon district.

50. "Histoire du Flon (2)",
guillaumemorand.wordpress.com.

51. "Histoire du Flon (5)",
guillaumemorand.wordpress.com.

52. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 15.

53. "Pont Chauderon", Lausanne.ch.

54. "The first high-rise building in
Switzerland", modernism-in-architecture.
org.



12

Flon valley, 1884



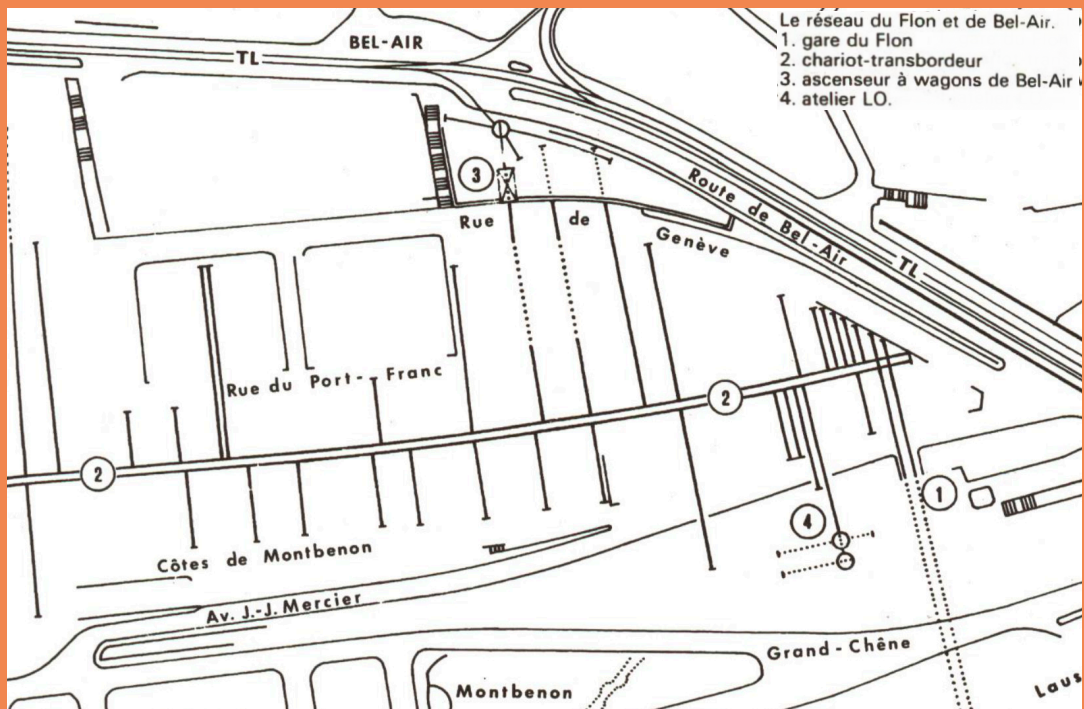
13

The *Grand-Pont* at the backfilling period, 1875



14

Flon platform, 1905



15

Railway network of the Flon district, 1915

20



16

Backfiling of the valley, 1910



17

Pont Chauderon, 1905

III

Car Era shaping First Intentions

Guidelines regarding the development of the Flon platform established in 1873 were revised in 1930 and outlined in a convention effective for a period of 50 years. Two main elements emerge; the height limitation of buildings and the maximum building footprint.

The height limit is established up to the level of the *Grand-Pont* to consistently preserve the view of the Jura, considered a crucial charming element of the city when standing on the bridge.⁵⁵ Consequently, the question about the shape of roofs has been raised and was a major concern. The choice of flat roofs, rather than pitched ones, has been made to have a more profitable land use, since at equal height it implies a bigger volume.⁵⁶ As an exemple, since Hennebique beams were still not patented in 1886, the Federal Warehouse initially built with a two pitched roof, was transformed with a flat one in 1915.⁵⁷

55. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 47.

56. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 16.

57. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 34.

The second major regulation of the convention concerning the acceptable building zone aligns with the shape of the railway network. The *voie du chariot* is the main axe of the electrical transport system, which traverses the entire industrial district.⁵⁸ The orthogonal layout it enforces plays a crucial role in shaping the arrangement of roadways and buildings.⁵⁹ This strict design becomes, therefore, the main element causing a distinct rupture with the established urban fabric of the old city.⁶⁰

The 1930 convention, coupled with the new vision of Jean-Jacques Mercier de Molin and his keen interest in the development of the Flon platform, drastically transformed its architecture. Wooden double-pitched-roof sheds transitioned to reinforced concrete structures with flat roofs, aligning on a strict orthogonal grid.⁶¹ As a result, the platform has earned the nickname *Petit Chicago* referring to the numerous aligned flat roofs and the checkerboard pattern reminiscent of the American city.⁶²

Grand-Pont Circulation Problems

At the beginning of the 20th century, the *Grand-Pont*, the eastern boundary of the Flon platform, faced a significant capacity issue. The initial construction width of 10 meters was adequate and large enough for the only type of vehicle we knew at this period, horse-drawn carriages.⁶³ However, Lausanne faced a growth crisis leading to overcrowded roads and the bridge turned into the most-used road in Lausanne.⁶⁴ To facilitate pedestrians access, metallic cantilever sidewalks were built in 1892 on each side of the bridge, expanding its width from 10 to 13 meters.⁶⁵ However, due to the growth of the automobile sector and the increasing weight of vehicles, the condition of the bridge continues to decline, with only light renovations made in 1904.⁶⁶

58. "Histoire du Flon (9)", guillaumemorand.wordpress.com.

59. Neuenschwander Feihl, "Développement urbain - Lausanne", 263.

60. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon : *N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66,34*.

61. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, i 33.

62. Tauxe, Chantale, "Dompter les creux", 5.

63. Wanner, "La question du *Grand-Pont*, à Lausanne", 20.

64. Deslandes, "Le pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon*", 3.

65. Wanner, "La question du *Grand-Pont*, à Lausanne", 20.

66. Peitrequin, "Elargissement du *Grand-Pont*, à Lausanne", 159.

The capacity and static situation of the *Grand-Pont* was definitely outdated and finding a solution has become urgent. A project aiming to enlarge the bridge to a width of 20 meters is discussed, primarily for economical reasons. However, since the expropriations to widen the bridge were not ready, the project was never developed further.⁶⁷ The intermediate solution proposed in 1933 was to replace the metallic sidewalks with larger reinforced concrete ones and enlarge the roadway to 8 meters, for a total width of 15 meters. However, this solution wasn't convincing, and the authorities already announced that the dimensions of the bridge would be outdated in less than ten years.⁶⁸

The municipality nonetheless decided to undertake the 15 meters widening works, considered efficient enough for the moment. This decision was influenced by an interesting project proposed by the Lausanne-Ouchy company, along with the architects René Bonnard and Edouard Boy-de-la-Tour.⁶⁹

Bel-Air-Montbenon

The project *Bel-Air-Montbenon* links the two sides of the Flon valley trough the simple realisation of a bridge supported by buildings located on the platform.⁷⁰ The aim is to subdivide the dense traffic of the *Grand-Pont*, improve circulation, and provide new car parks on building rooftops, addressing the significant lack of them in the city centre.⁷¹

Two buildings are involved into this project, the one on the side of *Bel-Air* is already built and houses different offices such as the central printing works or the *Gazette de Lausanne*. The second one still has to be built by the Lausanne-Ouchy Company, which gives the municipality hope of construction soon.⁷² As the buildings of the Lausanne-Ouchy company are known to meet high structural requirements, they have been constructed robustly enough to withstand the loads resulting from the passage and parking of vehicles.⁷³ Concerning foundations, they

67. Wanner, "La question du *Grand-Pont*, à Lausanne", 20.

68. Peitrequin, "Elargissement du *Grand-Pont*, à Lausanne", 160.

69. Deslandes, "Le pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon*", 3.

70. Peitrequin, "Un nouveau pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon* à Lausanne", 169.

71. Deslandes, "Le pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon*", 3.

72. Peitrequin, "Un nouveau pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon* à Lausanne", 170.

73. Deslandes, "Le pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon*", 3.

are calculated to support the lateral thrusts of each bridge connected to either side of the building. Moreover, tests have been conducted regarding the noise and vibrations that could potentially impact offices located just underneath, and it has been proven that there will be almost no impacts.⁷⁴

The *Bel-Air-Montbenon* bridge, crossing the Flon district perpendicularly, can be seen as three smaller bridges linking each side of the valley via two buildings. These three bridges and two rooftops are finally assembled into a large 12 meters bridge, 8 meters of carriageway and 4 meters of pavement, crossing the entire Flon valley on a length of 185 meters.⁷⁵

This new infrastructure will provide an alternative to the *Grand-Pont*, helping regulate the traffic within the city centre and offering a large amount of parking spaces.⁷⁶ At this period, the idea of transforming and using the two large flat roofs into parkings is already considered as quite an evident idea.⁷⁷ As a comparison, ten years before, in 1923, the Lingotto building in Turin was completed by Giacomo Matté-Trucco, where a test track is directly built on top of the building.⁷⁸ However, since the two parking areas propose in total more than hundred spots and considering that the surrounding area only has around eighty, this solution is relevant.⁷⁹

The main strength of the project is certainly its simplicity, undeniably implying low cost. Assuming that the new building is under the responsibility of the Lausanne-Ouchy Company, the structure consists only of three linking bridges, costing the municipality only three hundred thousand in total. As a comparison, the construction of an independent bridge can be worth more than two million.⁸⁰

Unfortunately, one main issue raises many doubts about this potential development of the Flon District. The bridge would not allow the passage of horse-drawn carriages due to the nuisances they cause, trucks could not use it since it would not be strong and resistant enough, and tramways would be forbidden for both of these reasons. This means that neither the *Grand-Pont* nor the *Bel-Air-Montbenon* could be turned into a one-way traffic road to propose a comprehensive solution

74. Peitrequin, "Un nouveau pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon* à Lausanne", 170.

75. Ibidem.

76. Deslandes, "Le pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon*", 3.

77. Peitrequin, "Un nouveau pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon* à Lausanne", 170.

78. Melet, *Rooftop Architecture: Building on an Elevated Surface*, 42.

79. Deslandes, "Le pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon*", 3.

80. Ibidem.

to the Lausanne traffic issue.⁸¹ Moreover, when looking at the global circulation and traffic of vehicles in the city centre of Lausanne, the main axis used is the east-west, which is the orientation of the *Grand-Pont*. The other one, running from north to south is less used, as the frequency of the *Pont Chauderon* exemplified.⁸² Subsequently, *Bel-Air-Montbenon* would help to reduce the number of cars on the *Grand-Pont*, but it will certainly not have the impact required to solve traffic issues, and this would be the reason why the project has been abandoned.⁸³

At that time, it was believed that even if the project has been completed, it would not have provided a sufficiently effective solution to avoid the potential widening of the *Grand-Pont*.⁸⁴ However, its future development proved otherwise, and no other widening was undertaken. Significant restoration works was only done on the edifice in 2022, and the width of the deck stayed at the dimension set in 1933 during the second enlargement of the bridge.⁸⁵

This simple constatation say a lot about the further development of the area. The reason why the *Grand-Pont* was not widened for a long time is not that traffic issues have been solved in Lausanne. The circulation in the hearth of the city was a major concern until the end of the twentieth century, and the *Bel-Air-Montbenon* project is among the first of a long series of propositions. More complex projects are suggested, dealing not only with the *Grand-Pont*, but with the entire Flon platform, which is reexamined to bring a solution to the city center. However, the development of this area proves to be particularly tedious, leading to almost no transformation until the beginning of the twenty-first century. This is the main reason why the situation of the *Grand-Pont* stayed unexpectedly unchanged for a so long period.

Moreover, the importance and image attributed to the car gradually degrades along the twenty century. As Bonnard and Boy-de-la-Tour suggested in their project, at this period, the ideal city center was completely oriented around car traffic, and every new infrastructure aims to easily bring them within the city center. However, we start realising that it requires huge infrastructures to manage the always rising

81. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 51.

82. Peitrequin, "Un nouveau pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon* à Lausanne", 171.

83. Tauxe, Chantale, "Dompter les creux", 5.

84. Peitrequin, "Un nouveau pont *Bel-Air-Montbenon* à Lausanne", 171.

85. "Remise en état du *Grand-Pont*", Espazium.ch.

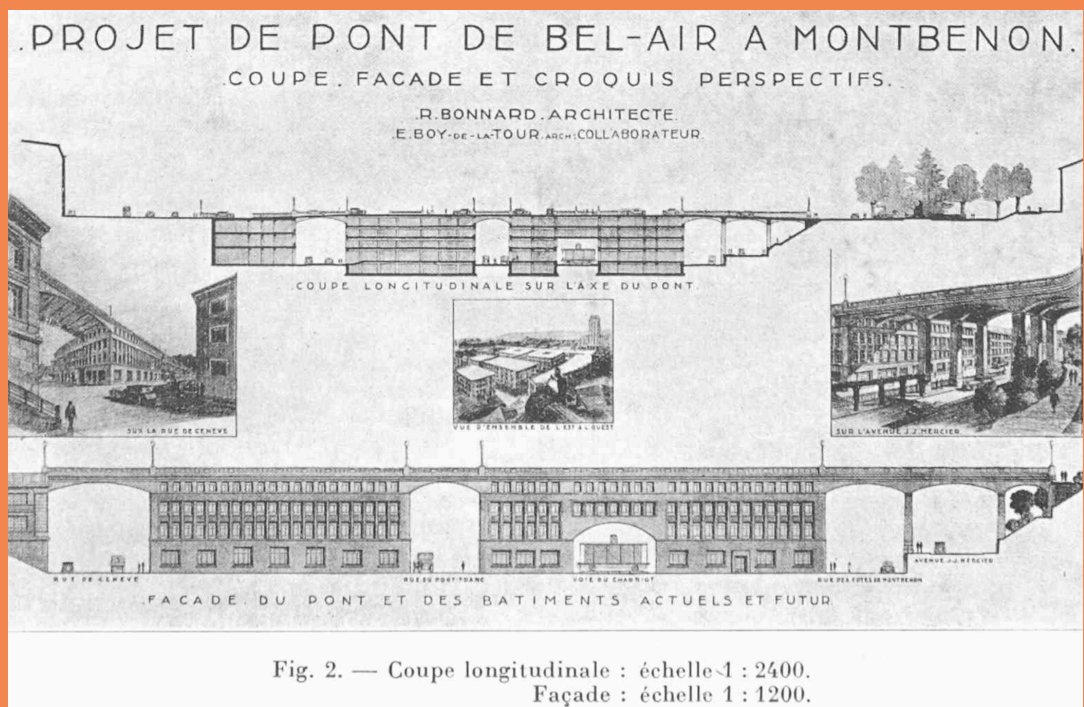
number of cars within the city. Since it becomes hard to use them in the centre as such, alternatives are found, and the number of cars used within the city centre has significantly dropped. Mainly for this reason, a hundred years later, when the *Grand-Pont* has to be restored, its enlargement is no longer necessary.

The *Bel-Air-Montbenon* project is an interesting first intention, highlighting how advantages can be taken from Lausanne's topography to offer new solutions. The two implicated buildings, situated on the Flon platform level and connected to the main city level through the bridge, engage in a dialogue with both levels simultaneously.



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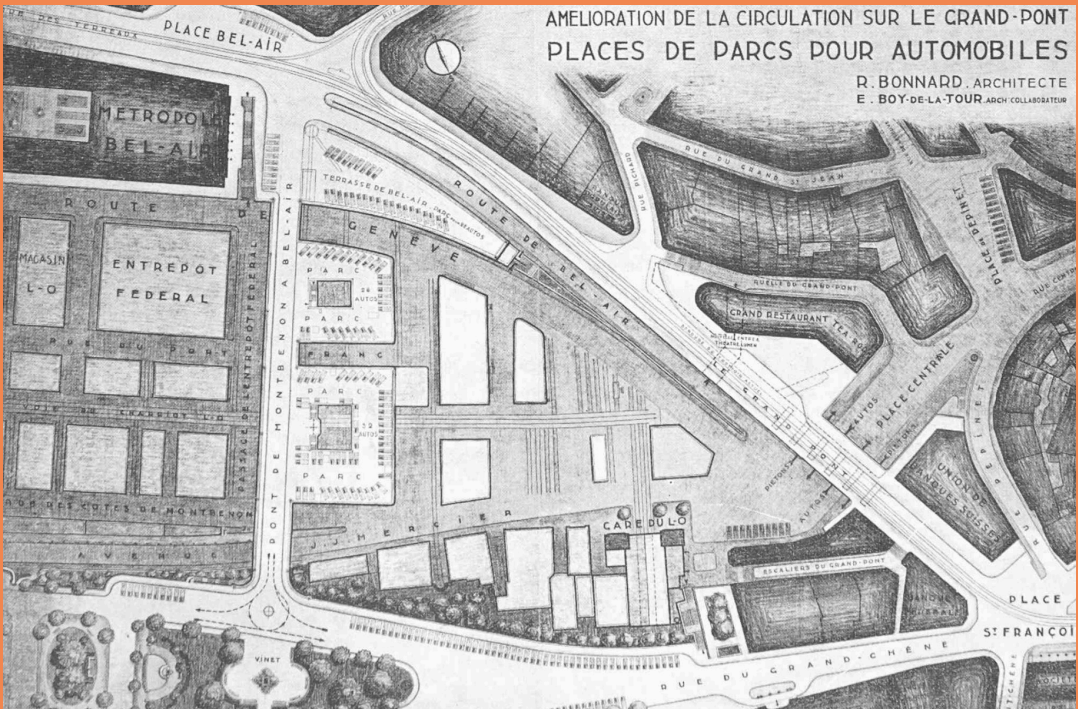
Restoration of the *Grand-Pont*, 1933



19

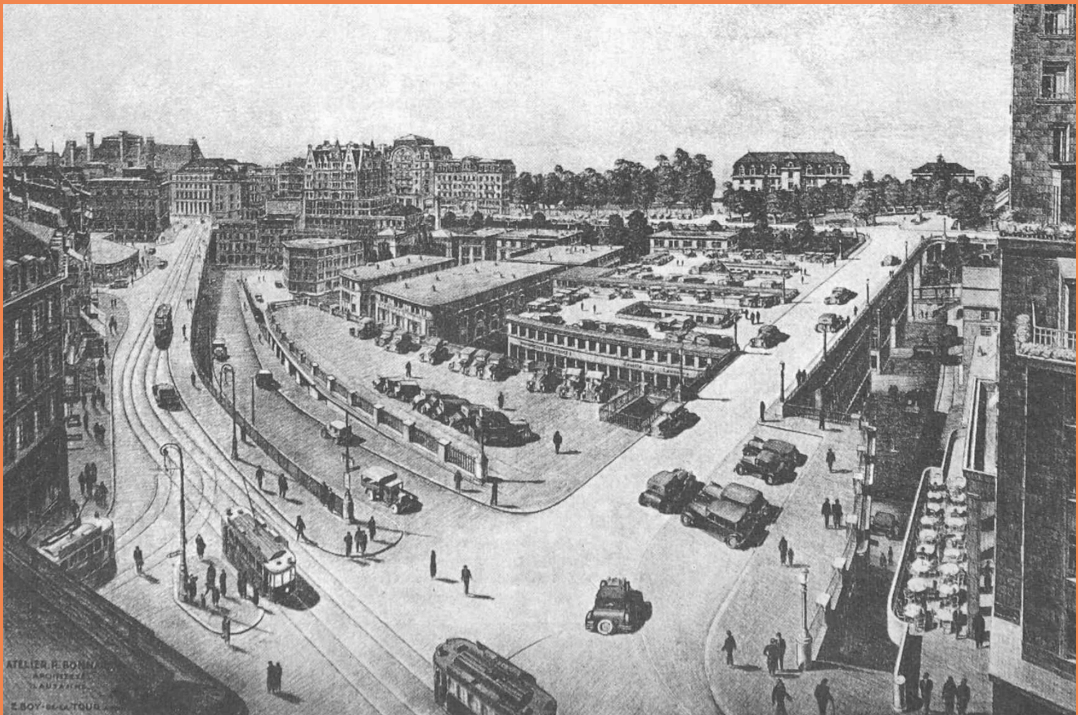
Section and elevation of the project *Bel-Air-Montbenon*, 1933

28



20

Plan of the project *Bel-Air-Montbenon*, 1933



21

Aerial view of the project *Bel-Air-Montbenon*, 1933

IV

Modernism hits the Flon Platform

The Flon area continues its development and since 1920, an important period of densification and diversification of the area is initiated. A recess of companies occupying the industrial district is made in 1939; more than forty per cent of all wholesale companies, more than half of food and beverage stores and two-thirds of fuels and construction materials of Lausanne are found on the Flon platform. Following the Second World War, the Flon district has to answer new demands especially regarding the growth of the tertiary administrative sector.⁸⁶ At that time, the Flon platform played a major role and provided many facilities to the city.

Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon

The group of study Amphion, composed of William Vetter, Jean-Pierre Vouga, Marx Lévy and some architecture students, considered the Flon platform as *une plaie béante au centre de la cité**.⁸⁷ They would thus conduct a study on the area, without being appointed by either the Lausanne-Ouchy company or the Municipality.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 35.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 60.

⁸⁸ Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 53.

*a gaping wound in the centre of the city

The group Amphion proposed the project *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon*, which aims to transform the Flon platform into a civic, administrative, cultural and commercial center,⁸⁹ aiming to be an organic growth complementary to the area of *Saint-François*.⁹⁰ Moreover, to better understand and situate the project, it is important to mention that it was presented in 1951 at the CIAM 8, The International Congresses of Modern Architecture, where the project is considered interesting and striking by Sigfried Giedion.⁹¹ This eighth edition, titled “Heart of the City”, was held in England, twenty miles from London, in Hoddesdon.⁹²

This study originates from the observation, that the region of Lausanne, lacks a city center suited to its expending population, currently reaching one hundred thousand inhabitants.⁹³ The geographical center of the city, being precisely the Flon,⁹⁴ the aim is to develop a three-dimensional center, where noble functions dominate over the organic functions, an ideal solution already envisioned by Leonardo da Vinci.⁹⁵ The *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon* appears as a drastic proposition, aiming to completely erase Lausanne’s natural topography by erecting a large continuous concrete slab going from the south of *Montbenon* esplanade to *Place Bel-Air* and from the *Grand-Pont* to the *Pont Chauderon*, literally covering the whole valley.⁹⁶ This heavy intervention proposes many different facilities, such as several commercial buildings, a forum, a market hall, a large forum and esplanade, an imposing town hall, and a complex node of circulation on the eastern part of the plot.⁹⁷ This larger-scale development is influenced by significant northern cities, such as Stuttgart or Stockholm.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, the existing constructions will not be demolished and their utility is not contested considering them as unworthy and not relevant enough to be at the centre, they will be covered, implying a formal hierarchy in the vertical distribution of functions. The under level tends to be a buzzing area completely blind, dedicated to wholesales and warehouses, where the major actors will be labourers, handlers and deliverymen.⁹⁹ As William Vetter mentions, such facilities do not require any particular lighting, large openings within the slab would be enough to properly ventilate the lower level.¹⁰⁰ On the contrary, in an authoritarian manner,

89. Vetter, “La Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon à Lausanne”, 314.

90. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 53.

91. Giedion, “The Heart of the City: a summing-up”, 162.

92. Marchand, “Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis”, 27.

93. Vetter, “La Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon à Lausanne”, 313.

94. Ibid., 314.

95. Ibid., 317.

96. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 24.

97. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 52.

98. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 44.

99. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 24.

100. Vetter, “La Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon à Lausanne”, 316.

the top of the platform is the location of every municipal service, especially within a huge town hall visible from everywhere, where the municipality is enthroned at the most prestigious place. This building aims to be the landmark of the new Flon valley development, and for this reason, the architects imagined a twenty-story height building, which will be higher than the existing *Bel-Air* tower.¹⁰¹ Its shape and signification echo the massive town hall Le Corbusier envisioned for the Marine district within the Obus plan in Alger.¹⁰² Similarly, the global urban form seems very influenced by Le Corbusier, which is surprising, since William Vetter worked in Paris with Auguste Perret and considered him as his mentor.¹⁰³ On the northern part of the valley, a row of commercial buildings aligned aims to give the district a state of directional centre.¹⁰⁴ Facing the *Grand-Pont*, a lower building delimits a forum and on the western side of the town hall, a large esplanade linked with *Montbenon* emerges. This large area overlooking the lake is dedicated to pedestrians and has been designed in reference to the Piazza San Marco in Venezia, which is considered as a major paradigm mentioned several times at Hoddesdon.¹⁰⁵

Circulation problems being at the heart of the project, the eastern part of the platform is articulated through a massive double spiral road aiming to connect the lower and upper levels of the *Grand-Pont*. Within this heavy node of circulation, it is planned to develop at mid-level the new central station of buses and on the lower level, the metro station.¹⁰⁶ This helicoidal interchange aims to remove the *Bel-Air* and Jean-Jacques Mercier traffic roads which are considered inefficient.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, further ideas are developed aiming to reevaluate the public transport system. They proposed to replace the old Lausanne-Ouchy funicular system with an electrical one, more efficient, which extended until the Riponne place located on its continuity heading north.¹⁰⁸

The *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon* has never been further discussed with the municipality. The project was too disproportionate regarding the scale of Switzerland, the city of Lausanne would have never consider realising such a massive project.¹⁰⁹ Its vast and radical dimensions would have poses almost insoluble problems.¹¹⁰

101. Neyroux, "Du "Pas-des-Anes" à la vallée du Flon", 76.

102. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 9.

103. Vouga, "Nécrologie, William FVetter, architecte, 1903-1986", B22.

104. Vetter, "La *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon* à Lausanne", 315.

105. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis", 27.

106. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 53.

107. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 17.

108. Neyroux, "Du "Pas-des-Anes" à la vallée du Flon", 76.

109. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66,45*.

110. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis", 27.

Moreover, the aim of turning the Flon valley into the centre of Lausanne, where high buildings represent signals of a city of congress and tourism are arguments that the population is not interested in.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, it highlights the main concerns of the Flon platform's development; the desire to rise up from the lower level of the valley, the creation of a public transport infrastructure, and the development of an esplanade to complement the one of *Montbenon*.¹¹²

Since the project precisely matches the theme “The heart of the city”, its presentation at the height edition of the CIAM is pertinent.¹¹³ What is particularly fascinating is its seamless alignment with the ideas advocated by the members of the CIAM, highlighting significant aspect of the urbanism of the fifties.¹¹⁴ As Jean-Pierre Vouga explained, the Flon valley takes advantage of the topography to develop a center composed of three dimensions, providing an ideal situation where higher functions dominate lower ones. However, this divisive distinction reflects a desire to extreme social hierarchies, emphasising social conditions with workers laying under the weight of leaders who want to be seen from afar. This distinction aligns perfectly with the ideology of technocracy, where decisions are made by architects acting as technical experts aiming to provide a more modernist organisation through the use of radical methods.¹¹⁵

The *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon* undeniably embraces a significant influence of Modernism and aligns with its principles. The tremendous concrete slab can undoubtedly be considered a *tabula rasa* of the old industrial district. However, the existing building stock is not demolished and is part of the project. Nevertheless, the concept of *tabula rasa* and the use of existing buildings are normally two distinct methods opposed to each other, but here, they can coexist within the same area. Even if this suggestion is definitely not the most reasonable one, it highlights the advantages of such a topographical context, which allows the development of several distinct levels simultaneously. With this project, the group Amphion is also anticipating the prevalence of the “Urbanism of Platform”, which foreshadows the following decades.¹¹⁶ A form of urban planning that aims to develop the city on

111. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 42.

112. Neyroux, “Du “Pas-des-Anes” à la vallée du Flon”, 77.

113. Ibidem.

114. Neyroud, “Vallée du Flon : Schattenboxen in Lausanne”, 39.

115. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 24.

116. Marchand, “Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis” , 27.

two different level, where most of the time, the lower one, accommodating services, parking, and delivery areas, is buried beneath the platform dedicated to pedestrians and buildings. The business district *La Défense* in Paris, whose development plan was adopted in December 1964, is a relevant example of such urban development.¹¹⁷

Construction of the new Metro Station

At the end of this period animated by the proposition of the *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon*, the reconstruction of the Lausanne–Ouchy railway station is undertaken in 1958, marking the first and unique substantial modification since the creation of the industrial Flon district. As the group Amphion suggested seven years before, these works are linked with the transformation of the old funicular by an electrical one, the metro we know today, where architectural features of Métropolitains are incorporated in the design of both vehicles and access docks.¹¹⁸ This change has been possible thanks to the sale of the *service des Eaux de Bret* to the municipality of Lausanne. Additionally, since the new station provides public facilities and pedestrian paths, the municipality contributed to the costs.¹¹⁹ The building has been constructed to offer a light footbridge and a pathway on the rooftop to easily reach the *Grand-Pont* and *Saint-François*.¹²⁰ This building is, in a way, the first one to take advantage of the easily reachable rooftops of the Flon district and echoes the aspect of the project *Bel-Air-Montbenon* suggested by the Lausanne–Ouchy Company twenty-five years before.

Saturation of the Ground and Development of the Tertiary Sector

Following this period, the Flon area, as well as the entire city of Lausanne, is facing a relative saturation of the ground, impacting the urban layout of the city centre.¹²¹ However, this situation is more challenging in the Flon platform since the

117. “Une dalle pour La Défense”,
defense-92.fr.”

121 Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un
espace urbain central*, 36.

118. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon :
N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 37.

122 Ibid., 30.

119. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un
espace urbain central*, 55.

120. Bonnard, “Reconstruction de la Gare
du Flon”, 50.

capacity to extend the district and its activities becomes unfeasible, and the lack of place is proving to be a serious problem, leading to the inadaptation of the area.¹²²

For this reason, the Flon District will face several changes regarding the building allocation of the area. Larger companies, which have grown since their establishment at the beginning of the century, are now confronted with an overcrowded urban fabric where it is no longer possible for them to extend, posing a problem. However, since they have grown and thus expended their distribution network, they no longer need to be located in the city centre of Lausanne. For both of these reasons, a few of the larger companies will leave the area. Subsequently, many of these warehouses are transformed into offices to better align with the growth of the tertiary administrative sector. However, other companies will still take advantage of the centre and keep a small warehouse as well as a showroom within the Flon district.¹²³ The Lausanne-Ouchy company is receptive to the demand for a growth in the tertiary sector within the Flon valley since the administrative sector is more profitable than warehouses or wholesale shops.¹²⁴

Building allocation is being reconsidered, but not the buildings themselves, as they were structurally well-designed and far from being outdated or unusable.¹²⁵ Moreover, many people of the Lausanne-Ouchy administrative council are emotionally attached to the ideal industrial urban situation designed by Jean-Jacques Mercier-Marcel.¹²⁶ Therefore, no major construction work is carry out, and only temporary buildings have been constructed on the Flon Platform.¹²⁷

123 Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 36.

124. Ibid., 40.

125. Ibid., 55.

126. Ibid., 56.

127. Ibid., 30.



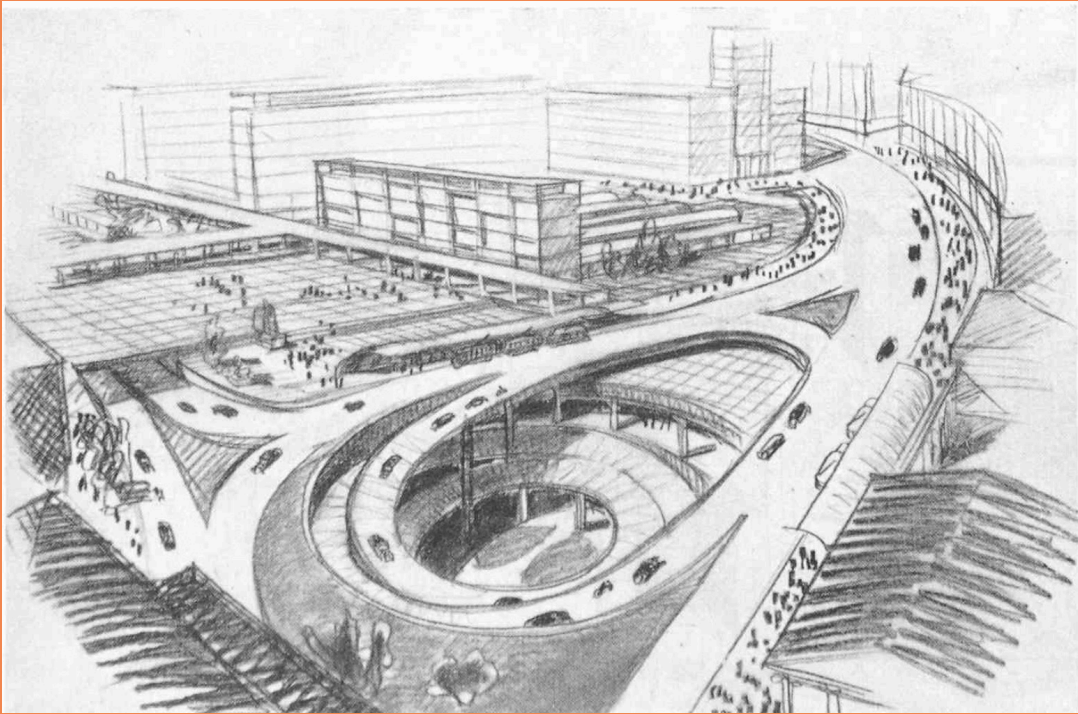
22

Aerial view of the Flon district, 1952



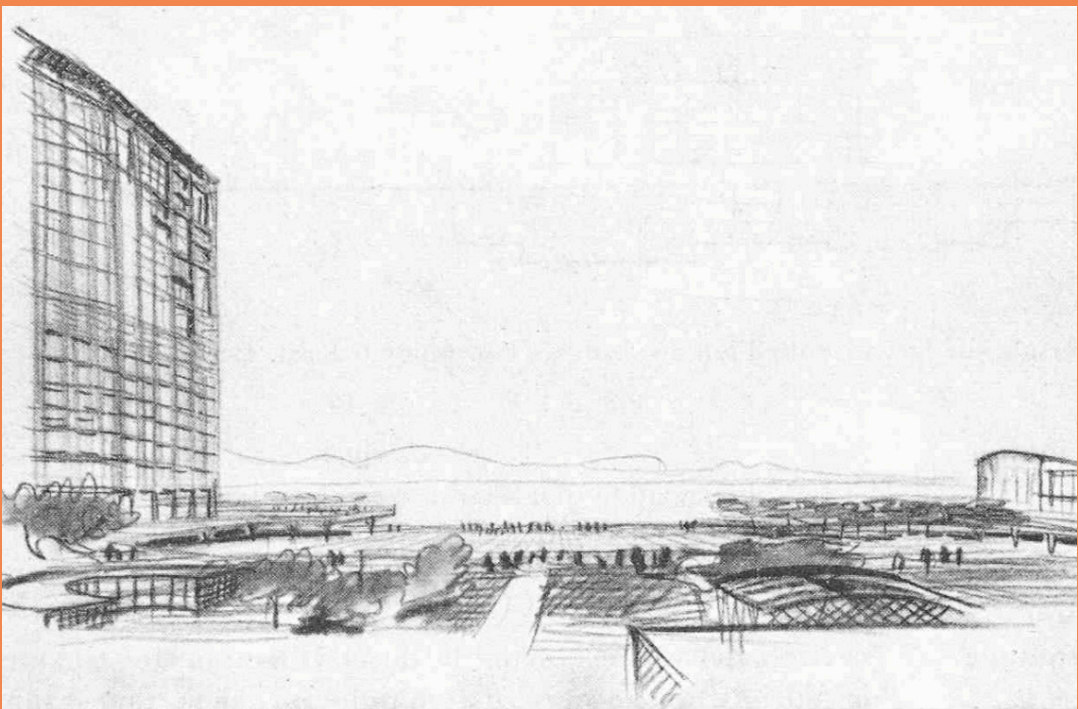
23

Plan of the Flon district, 1952



26

Node of circulation of the *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon*, 1952



27

Esplanade de Montbenon within the *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon*, 1952



28

New Lausanne-Ouchy metro station, 1958



29

La Ficelle, 1958



An almost Successful Collaboration

Marx Lévy, former member of the group Amphion and now member of the *Conseil Communal*, highlights the importance of the municipality's involvement in managing major topics, such as the circulation of the city center.¹²⁸ For this reason, in 1960, he proposes a motion suggesting that the development of the Flon district should be done through a collaborative effort.¹²⁹ As the Lausanne-Ouchy company is already in contact with the architect Pierre Quillet to study a redevelopment project of the area, things progress quickly, and at the request of the public authorities, an agreement is signed between the Lausanne-Ouchy company and the municipality. Therefore, the city is completely involved within the development of the Flon district and can better look after the evolution of such a large area at the heart of Lausanne.¹³⁰ The aim of this collaboration is to redevelop the entire platform through a new master plan, which would be in the interest of the company, the municipality and the inhabitants as well.¹³¹ A win-win situation is

128. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 57.

129. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis", 27.

130. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 56.

131. Ibidem.

therefore found, where the company would be able to develop its district with the financial participation of the municipality, and on the other side, problems linked with the road network and the global circulation of the centre would be easily managed by the city. Moreover, because of mutual participation, oppositions should be avoided.¹³²

Plan d'Intention

Since 1960, studies were then carried out jointly by Pierre Quillet on behalf of the Lausanne-Ouchy Company, and on behalf of the Municipality, Max Richter and Marcel Gut.¹³³ As a point of information, Richter & Gut were the founders of the office that later evolved, in 1993, into the well-known Richter Dahl Rocha and Associates, initially based in Lausanne. This office, for instance, designed the SwissTech Convention Center on the EPFL campus.¹³⁴ In 1962, the municipality is asked about the development of the project and the only answer provided is regarding traffic studies, nothing about pedestrians and public transports. The further development will then be overshadowed by the organisation of the next Swiss National Exhibition happening in Lausanne, *Expo64*.¹³⁵ Following this major event, further information is given about the project, where for the first time the idea of building a large shopping mall within the Flon Platform emerges. After this, no more information regarding the project will be given neither by the Municipality nor by the Lausanne-Ouchy Company until the official publication of the results, through the préavis n°183, in 1968, after eight years of study.¹³⁶

This publication presents the main characteristics of the project, which echoes, in a softer manner, the intention of the project *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon*, suggested almost twenty years before by the group Amphion. A large platform, this time discontinuous, is envisaged on top of the valley, at the *Grand-Pont* level, providing a new commercial district dedicated to pedestrians, where offices, hotels and dwellings will be constructed.¹³⁷ Moreover, it aims to link *Bel-Air*, the *Grand-*

132. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 44.

133. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66,45*.

134. "RDR Architectes", rdrarchitectes.com.

135. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 58.

136. *Ibid.*, 59.

137. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 18.

Pont and the *Montbenon* esplanade to integrate this area, which is currently isolated. Under this new platform, within the Flon District, we can find every service required for a commercial area, car parks, warehouses and offices. Additionally, aligning with an overall reorganisation of the city center's traffic, a large 40 meters wide bridge is imagined at the *Grand-Pont* level, and will host many facilities of public transports.¹³⁸ These intentions, submitted to the *Conseil Communal*, are accepted in July 1968 and will therefore be part of the future *Plan d'intention*. This plan aims to be the basis for the development of further projects by providing first intentions such as, circulation schemes for pedestrians and cars. However, the allocation of each building is not clearly defined, except the eastern part situated in between the new bridge and the *Grand-Pont*, which aims to be a large shopping mall.¹³⁹

Due to their respective interests, it is noteworthy that serious discussions are initiated between the Lausanne-Ouchy company and the municipality. These discussions even extend to the point of agreeing to revisit the 1930 convention, which imposed limitations on the height of constructions. The Lausanne-Ouchy company would be more flexible in developing ideas of the municipality, such as traffic schemes, if it has the opportunity to establish higher buildings, which are more profitable.¹⁴⁰ As the municipality has already taken part in the *Plan d'Intention*, the subsequent development of the Flon platform will be primarily led by the Lausanne-Ouchy company. The municipality will play an advisory role in the process and only provides additional aspects that must be respected and present within the final project;¹⁴¹ the 40 meters wide bridge linking *Bel-Air* to *Montbenon*, different facilities for public transport, a pedestrian connection from the upper to the lower level and a large platform at the *Grand-Pont* level aiming to create a direct link with the *Montbenon* Esplanade, which as always been detached from the city centre and far away from everything.¹⁴²

138. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 60.

139. Ibid., 64.

140. Ibid., 63.

141. Ibid., 64.

142. Ibid., 45.

The Viennese architect, Victor Gruen

Following this, in 1969, the Lausanne-Ouchy company decided to commission the architect Victor Gruen to supervise the key and major aspects of the preliminary project, nicknamed *Grün*.¹⁴³ The focus is mainly on the development of a large shopping mall, aiming to revitalise and reactivate the city center and avoiding the proliferation of peripheral shopping centres.¹⁴⁴ The building offers as well four levels of parking to address the shortage of parking spaces in the city center, providing over one thousand six hundred slots.¹⁴⁵ In addition, this large commercial complex aims to improve traffic in the city center through the establishment of a central public transport station and distributing pedestrian flow.¹⁴⁶ Victor Gruen envisions this shopping mall as a new community center and sees it as a catalyst with an essential attracting force for establishing polarities,¹⁴⁷ as well as a focal point for local art and culture.¹⁴⁸ The Viennese architect is certainly the most competent to develop such a program, since he is considered as the initiator of the climate-controlled indoor mall thanks to the Southdale Shopping Center he realised in 1956, in Edina, Minnesota. This significant realisation initiated the proliferation of indoor malls, up to the point that, fifteen years later, anything open-air was considered below standard.¹⁴⁹ Moreover, Gruen has a keen interest in multilevel urbanism centred around retail spaces. The commercial complex being on the lower level of the Flon platform and surrounded by two large bridges, is therefore the ideal place to imagine such a project.¹⁵⁰ The upper terrace, which seamlessly blends with the urban center, echoes with this intention of dealing with several level simultaneously.¹⁵¹

In 1972, when the project *Grün* is published and presented in the local newspaper, it is striking to note that main titles only speak about the situation of the Flon district, rather than about the project in itself. The platform is considered as a necrosis of Lausanne which needs to be revived, where for the past forty years, projects have been presented without any tangible progress.¹⁵² This inevitably shows the general frustration regarding the situation of Flon, which is not evolving, and where nothing is happening.

143. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon* : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 46.

144. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 64.

145. Neyroux, "Du "Pas-des-Anes" à la vallée du Flon", 77.

146. Gruen, *Aménagement de la vallée du Flon* : phase 1, 3.

147. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping

mall et à Métropolis", 27.

148. "The Multilevel Metropolis", placesjournal.org.

149. Kenneth, Jackson, "All the World's a Mall", 1114.

150. "The Multilevel Metropolis", placesjournal.org.

151. Gruen, *Aménagement de la vallée du Flon* : phase 1, 3.

152. "Nécrose de la ville de Lausanne, la vallée du Flon doit être ressuscitée",

The Final variant

The preliminary project proposed by Victor Gruen, will be further developed by Richter and Gut, who are appointed by the Lausanne-Ouchy company to explore different variants.¹⁵³ The first and second variant suggested will be rejected, mainly because the requirements given by the municipality were not fully respected. For instance, the first variant does not allow the realisation of the public transport station on the lower level. In 1973, a third variant, which perfectly matches the requirements of the municipality and the intention plan of 1968, is suggested by the two architects on behalf of the Lausanne-Ouchy company and will be accepted by the city's direction of works and the municipality.¹⁵⁴

Keeping in mind that these projects are following the intention plan accepted in 1968, it is interesting to note that every study that has been conducted until 1974, six years later, by the Lausanne-Ouchy company are only focusing on the eastern part of the area, between the forty meters bridge and the *Grand-Pont* where the shopping mall is expected to emerge.¹⁵⁵ The main reason of this, being undoubtedly the profitable location of the eastern part, which is the most central and favourable one of the Flon platform that provides a better financial profitability.

Hesitation and Strategy

Following the acceptance of the shopping mall's third variant by the city's direction of works and the municipality, the process is slowed down by reticences coming from socialist members of the urbanism commission. These discussions mark the beginning of an extremely tumultuous period of two years where political members start doubting about the project.¹⁵⁶ It seems unfeasible given the investments that the municipality would have to make,¹⁵⁷ and they push forward that the project is only in favour of the Lausanne-Ouchy company that will capitalise on its location in the heart of Lausanne.¹⁵⁸ However, the shopping project, which initially matched

153. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 64.

154. Ibid., 65.

155. Ibid., 64.

156. Ibid., 67.

157. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66,47*.

158. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 67.

the intention of both the municipality and the Lausanne-Ouchy company, certainly has not been presented further to the *Conseil Communal*, as the political elections of autumn 1973 were approaching.¹⁵⁹

A strategy is therefore initiated by the Lausanne-Ouchy company to increase the chance of seeing its project realised. In parallel of the shopping mall project, another variant, which is only composed of offices building, is developed by the Lausanne-Ouchy company. This second project, submitted to the municipality, is only part of a strategy to get more chance to see the realisation of the shopping mall. Financial analyses have shown that office buildings provide a value forty per cent higher than the shopping mall.¹⁶⁰ However, since the location is a significant factor in the success of a commercial center and for the attraction it will provide to the Flon platform being in the heart of Lausanne, it seems like a more attractive option, being the reason why this is the main project pushed forward by the Lausanne-Ouchy company.

The significative differences between the two projects are key elements within the process. The office buildings project does not contain the construction of the bridge linking *Bel-Air* to *Montbenon*, being one of the most important element for the Municipality, the project would therefore be seen as dangerous. However, regarding the 1930 convention, the alternative project respects the buildings height limit on the contrary to the shopping mall building, which is higher than the Grand-Pont level. Knowing that the Municipality has before agreed on this to easily see the construction of the bridge that provides public transport facilities, the commercial center is still the better solution.¹⁶¹ Even if the shopping mall is now seen as a too expensive variant, being one of the main divisive aspect, a choice has to be made between two projects with identified flaws. The Lausanne-Ouchy company will then issue an ultimatum to the municipality, stating that it would agree not to proceed with the variant of the office buildings if a building permit for the shopping mall is granted within a fifteen-month period.¹⁶² In conclusion, the new variant presented by the Lausanne-Ouchy company only aims to put under pressure the municipality to accelerate the evolution and development of the Flon Platform.

159. Ibid., 78.

160. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 68.

161. Ibid., 63.

162. Ibid., 68.

In the meantime, this intricate situation prompted the involvement of multiple stakeholders and even the construction of the bridge wished by the municipality is questioned. At that time, the traffic in this area was far from being the most difficult in Lausanne and as it has already been discussed regarding the project *Bel-Air-Montbenon* suggested by Bonnard and Boy-de-la-Tour, a north-south bridge is not a convincing solution to improve circulation. Moreover, since the main trolley station will be placed at the centre of the bridge linking *Bel-Air* to *Montbenon* and because it will be the main pedestrian path, shop windows become an obligatory stop-off for residents. Consequently, the only beneficiary of such a bridge might be the shopping mall.¹⁶³ It might be questioned if the shopping mall variant is finally not financially profitable to the Lausanne-Ouchy company, as well as the Municipality.

Marx Lévy, New City's Director of Works

Against all expectations, in 1974, a significative event will completely change the landscape, the city's director of work resigns from his position and Marx Lévy, former membre of the group Amphion, is the one who takes over his position. Since he has always been interested in the Flon district, he will be especially involved in its development. As soon as he took office, he decided to not carry out the shopping mall project proposed,¹⁶⁴ what irrevocably ends the dialogue between the municipality and the Lausanne-Ouchy company after 15 years of costly studies.¹⁶⁵ Two main reasons are highlighted. The first one is the excessive high cost of the project, which the municipality would have to shoulder.¹⁶⁶ And the second one is the location of the new bridge, which is considered not convincing since it split in two the possibility of building a large pedestrian platform on top of the Flon valley, which is an aspect of the city he aims to develop. Therefore Marx Lévy suggests to move the bridge more on the east, even if it faces tight spaces that do not allow for proper traffic layout, as already discussed in 1960.¹⁶⁷ Above all, this change would deviate from the intention plan established in 1968 in collaboration with the municipality.¹⁶⁸ Additionally, the modification of the bridge position, would

163. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 45.

164. Ibid., 68.

165. Ibid., 70.

166. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis", 28.

167. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 68.

168. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 26.

therefore locates the shopping mall on the west side of the bridge. Unfortunately, this new emplacement will no more satisfy the shopping center *Placette*, now known as *Manor*, which was already involved in the project and would then refuse to set up there, as the location would no longer be as favorable.¹⁶⁹

In 1975, to better present his vision of the Flon district, Marx Lévy presents a project developed by its urbanism service.¹⁷⁰ The main intention, as mentioned before, is to build a large pedestrian platform on top of the Flon valley.¹⁷¹ This intention of giving more importance to pedestrians originates from a straightforward observation about the city of Lausanne. At this period, there is no intentional design to interact and have discussions, only few spaces have been allocated for pedestrians.¹⁷² In addition, the project aims to provide the Flon platform with facilities the city needs, such as the regional tribunal, educational institution, indoor ice rink, and an hotel tower.¹⁷³ Additionally, Marx Lévy spreads many towers among the Flon district. These massive and high buildings are indispensable key elements within a politic which aims to turn Lausanne into a city of tourism and congress, especially to concurrence the already well-established centres of Montreux and Vevey.¹⁷⁴ As Marx Lévy already suggested similar intentions with the group Amphion through the *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon*, this is the second time he proposed a program, which aims to develop the Flon platform as the nerve centre of Lausanne aspiring to become a city of congresses and tourism.¹⁷⁵ Therefore, we can assume that this missing element within the Lausanne-Ouchy company project, could also be a reason why this project has been rejected as soon as he becomes the new city's director of works.

However, for several reasons, this project will not be presented further and will not come to fruition either. The political aspect of the project does not provide any benefits for the inhabitants, who do not really care about this concern of superiority and have already exercised legal recours, notably against a tower project in Ouchy.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, considering that the current state of the area is deemed highly unfavourable, realising such a reorientation of the Flon district necessitates extensive renovations to restructure the platform.¹⁷⁷

169. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 69.

170. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis", 28.

171. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 68.

172. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 26.

173. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 69.

174. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 42.

175. Ibid., 41.

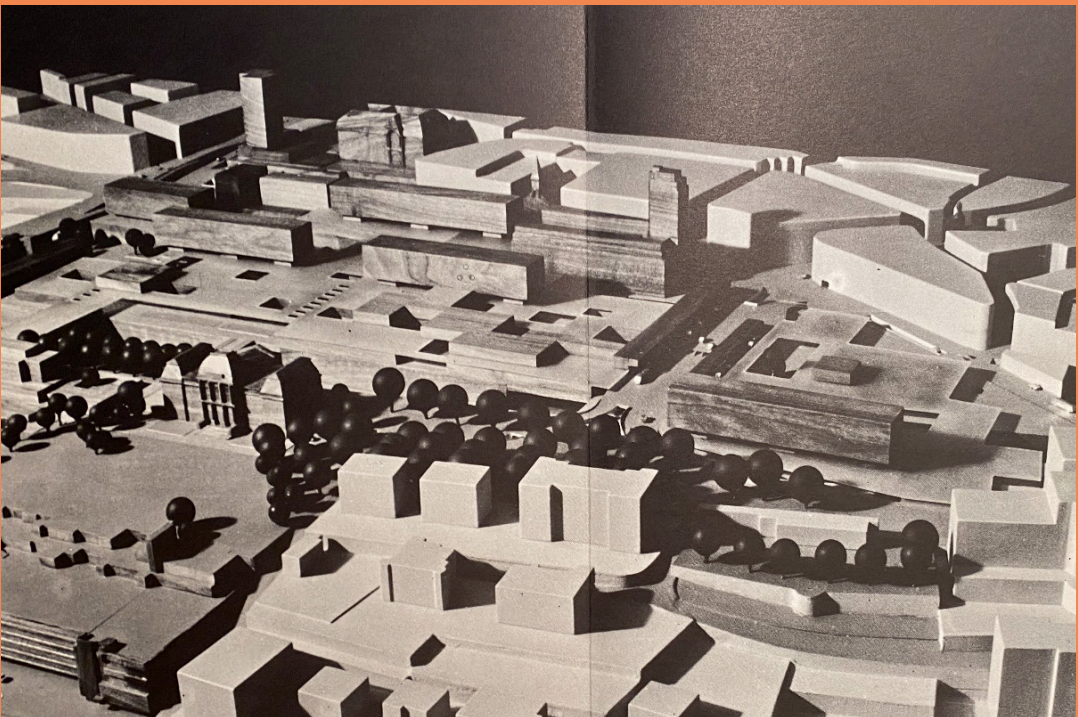
176. Ibid., 72.

177. Ibid., 79.



30

Flon platform, 1968



31

Plan d'Intention, 1968

48



32

Inside view of the Victor Gruen shopping mall, 1971



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Floorplan of the Victor Gruen shopping mall, 1971



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Aerial view of the eastern part of the Flon district, 1971



35

Aerial view of the Victor Gruen shopping mall, 1971



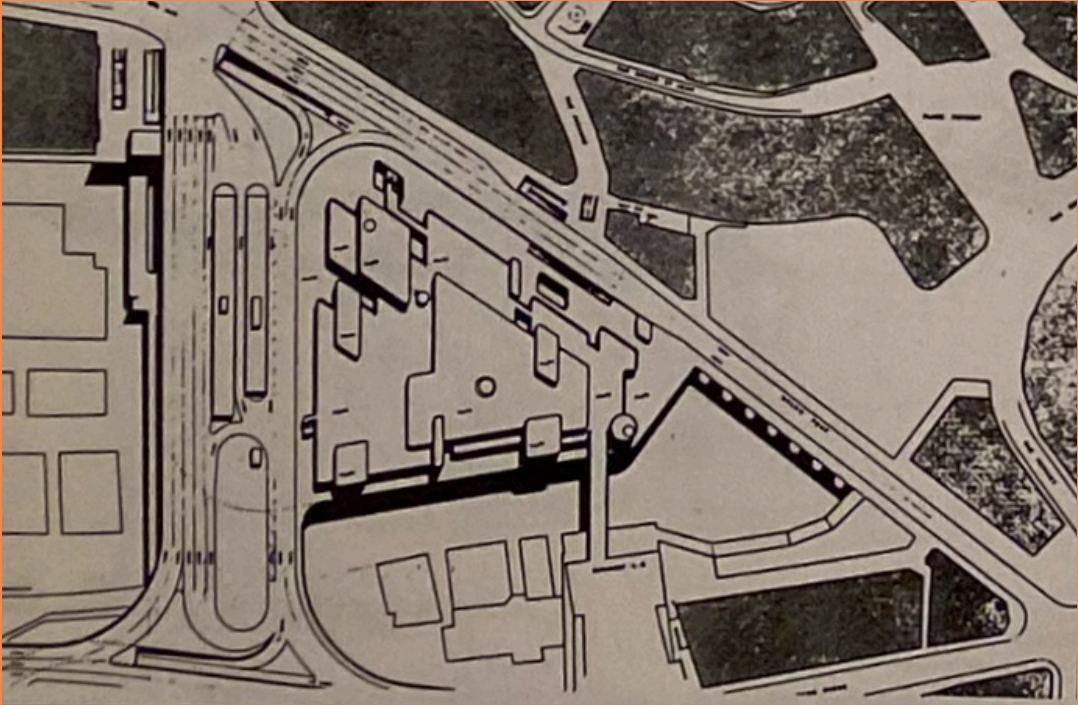
36

View on the *Tour Bel-Air* from the *Grand-Pont*, 1971



37

Eastern view of the Victor Gruen shopping mall, 1971



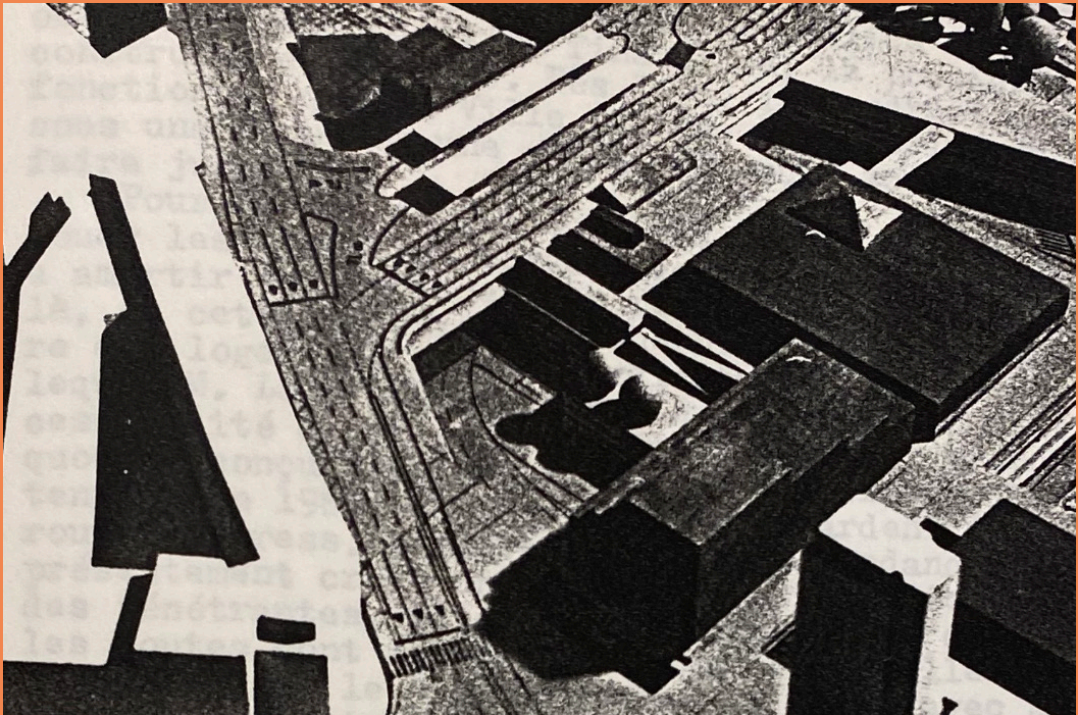
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First variant of the project Grün further developed by Richter & Gut, 1973



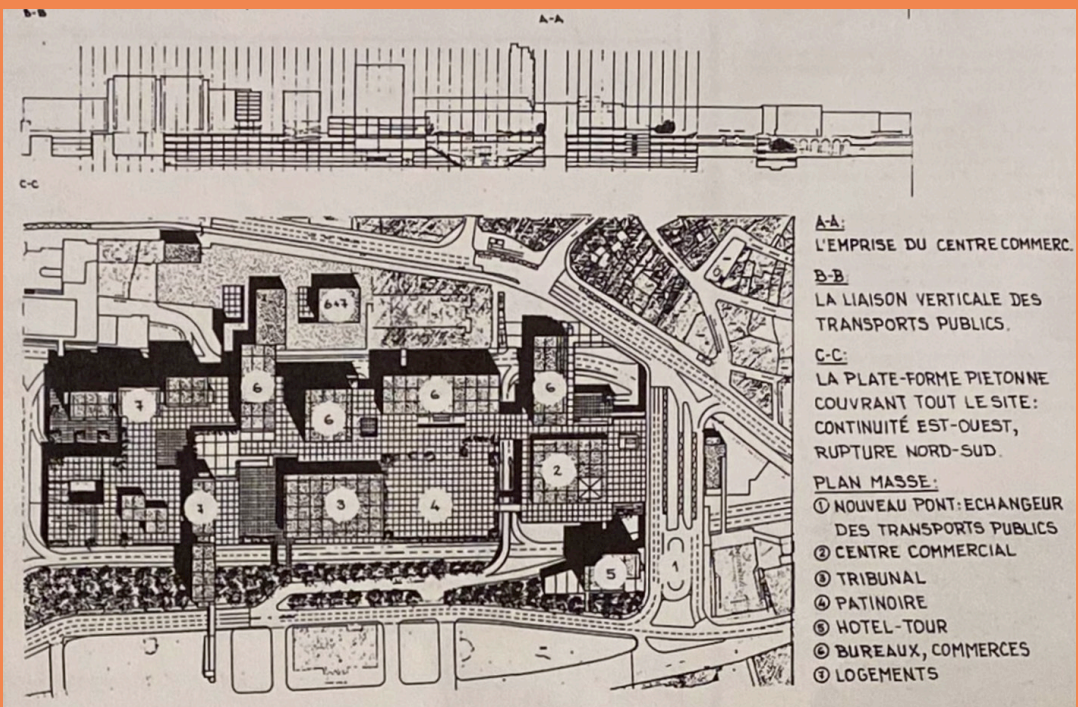
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Third variant of the project Grün further developed by Richter & Gut, 1973



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New location of the bridge on the Marx Lévy variant, 1975



41

Floorplan of the Marx Lévy variant, 1975

VI

Inhabitants joined the Game

These recent refusals have undeniably strained the relationship between the Lausanne-Ouchy company and the municipality. However, the company is not satisfied regarding the actual financial profitability of the Flon platform¹⁷⁸ and agreed, in 1976, to start another study to find a common ground with the municipality.¹⁷⁹ They both realised that they still have common interests.¹⁸⁰ The company sees the opportunity to increase the attractiveness of the district and draw in a larger number of pedestrians, through the construction of different public facilities.¹⁸¹ In addition, the traffic improvement the municipality intends to carry out is an interesting condition for the Lausanne-Ouchy, aiming to enhance and increase the productivity of its territory.¹⁸² Moreover, as the Flon platform provides a valuable reserve for constructing high-yield buildings, particularly considering the lack of residents in the entire area and, consequently, the absence of relocation operations,

178. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 74.

179. Zuppinger, *Luttes-à-Flon*, 36.

180. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66,47*.

181. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 74.

182. *Ibid.*, 80.

the company aims to seize this opportunity.¹⁸³ Their collaboration aims to develop a *Plan d'Extension Partiel*, *PEP*, required to further develop the entire area of the Flon platform, the so-called *Gare du Flon*.¹⁸⁴ It defines the areas and volumes which could be built and organise the general operation of the area.¹⁸⁵ If this plan is accepted by the *conseil communal*, the fate of the Flon Platform would be sealed for the next fifty, hundred years, which is the greatest desire of the two main stakeholders.¹⁸⁶

Regarding this *PEP*, the main concern of the municipality is to solve the traffic of Lausanne center, but the city does not own every street within the district. Therefore, the Lausanne-Ouchy company agrees to transfer more than ten thousand square meters for free to the municipality.¹⁸⁷

For a period of four years, because the municipality is always changing his intentions, until 1979, discussions did not lead to any tangible outcomes.¹⁸⁸ The same year, building regulations of 1930 are outdated, since the period of fifty years is over. However, this convention will still be used as a reference for the elaboration of the *PEP* of 1985.¹⁸⁹

Plan d'Extension Partiel "Gare du Flon"

In 1981, the Lausanne-Ouchy company and the municipality, together with the architects Musy and Vallotton, develop a first project, which requested the 1968 *plan d'intention*. The large 40 meters bridge hosting public transport facilities is strongly reconsidered. This heavy infrastructure is now considered obstructive and a softer solution is proposed, where public transport infrastructures are part of the *Grand-Pont* widening. Moreover, the less monolithic aspect of this alternative is pushed forward and allows a step by step construction, where existing buildings might be preserved.¹⁹⁰ The idea of a large shopping mall connecting the different levels of the platform, as studied in 1969 by Victor Gruen, is still part of the project and aims to be a dominant and prestigious element of the district.¹⁹¹ In addition, the

183. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 82.

184. Service d'urbanisme, *Concours d'idées pour l'aménagement du lieu dit "Gare du Flon"*, 2.

185. "Campagne de votation pour le plan d'extension du quartier du Flon", dartfish.tv.

186. APAHF, *Aménagement du Flon : une chance à ne pas manquer*, 3.

187. "Une grande chance et une réussite", 1.

188. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66*, 47.

189. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 16.

190. Ibid., 18.

191. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 27.

project is characterised by a continuous pedestrian pathway traversing the district from end to end at the *Grand-Pont* level. This covered footbridge with a glass roof aims to echo the industrial era of the platform and the distribution network that served the entire district.¹⁹²

This first project is slightly modified and will serve as a base for the *PEP Gare du Flon* of 1985. The main update is regarding building heights. The few towers spread among the district within the previous project have been removed and the overall maximum building heights is now two meters above the deck of the *Grand-Pont*.¹⁹³ Therefore, it still challenges the height limitations set in the 1930 convention, but it is now outdated and only used as a reference.¹⁹⁴ The covered footbridge is reworked and a simpler pedestrian network aims to link every rooftop terrace longitudinally and transversely. This would be possible thanks to a large building which adjoins the *Rue Bel-Air* and extends its rooftop terrace as a continuation of the *Place Bel-Air*.¹⁹⁵ The main idea of the *PEP Gare du Flon* is to turn the Flon district into kind of a Londonian City, where activities are concentrated. This allows for relieving the pressure of the tertiary sector on the Lausanne hillsides, more suitable for residential purposes.¹⁹⁶ Regarding traffic, a large road aiming to be the main transit axe within the Flon platform is replacing the *Voie du chariot*.¹⁹⁷ In 1986, the *PEP Gare du Flon* proposed by Musy and Vallotton on behalf of the municipality and the Lausanne-Ouchy company is approved by most of the *Conseil Communal*.¹⁹⁸ However, not everyone was convinced by this new plan *Plan d'Extension Partiel*.¹⁹⁹

L'Association Pour un Aménagement Harmonieux du Flon, APAHF

Since 1981, when the first project of Musy and Vallotton was presented at the town hall, it did not meet unanimous support.²⁰⁰ The *PEP* soon coming to an end, on the 13th December 1984, the *Association Pour un Aménagement Harmonieux du Flon, APAHF* is founded by the president of the socialist party and architects.²⁰¹ It will then be joined by other architects, urban planners, as well as users actively

192. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 27.

193. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon* : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 47.

194. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 18.

195. Ibidem.

196. Ibid., 19.

197. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 30.

198. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon* : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 47.

199. "Campagne de votation pour le plan d'extension du quartier du Flon", dartfish.tv.

200. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 19.

201. Cottet, "Opposition et demande d'annulation", 17.

involved in social and ecological initiatives.²⁰² For the *APAHF*, the Flon platform is the backbone of the urban organisation of Lausanne and deserves better, they will therefore be firmly opposed to the *PEP Gare du Flon*.²⁰³

Unfortunately, this project which aims to end decades of study and debate between the municipality and the Lausanne-Ouchy company will be at the hearth of a public debate, as soon as it is presented, on the 18th of June 1985.²⁰⁴ The *APAHF* will be the organisation responsible for the rise of a *référéndum spontané* by the *Conseil Communal* concerning the *PEP Gare du Flon*.²⁰⁵ As a quick note, in Switzerland, a *référéndum* is the possibility for citizens to give their opinion about a law or a changement. There is two types of them, the *référéndum populaire*, which required a collection of citizens signature to propose an alternative to the *Conseil Communal* decision. And the *référéndum spontané*, which is directly suggested by the *Conseil Communal* to have the citizens opinion.²⁰⁶

On 9th September 1986, the *Conseil Communal* have to vote on the *PEP Gare du Flon*, and it will be accepted. However, since the *APAHF* clearly stated that if the *PEP* is accepted, they will launch a *référéndum populaire*, the *Conseil Communal*, being aware of that, do not lose time and directly asked a *référéndum spontané*.²⁰⁷ The inhabitants would therefore have to vote on the *PEP Gare du Flon*, but the *Conseil Communal* is confident enough regarding their suggestion to submit their decision to the population. However, they do not measure the opposition which is slowly growing and it becomes an opportunity for the Left and the Greens to join the *APAHF* through the composition of an opposition committee in order to face the Right politic.²⁰⁸ A month later, on 12th October 1986, the plan was rejected by the majority of Lausanne's inhabitants.²⁰⁹ The *APAHF* is therefore the organisation responsible for the failure of the *PEP Gare du Flon*.²¹⁰

The arguments pushed forward by the *APAHF* to contest the *PEP Gare du Flon* and to convince the inhabitants are numerous. For the association, the *PEP* emerged from a precise political choice aiming to transform the Flon district into a specialised zone dedicated only to commercial, administrative and artisanal activities

202. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 30.

203. *APAHF*, *Aménagement du Flon : une chance à ne pas manquer*. 9.

204. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 20.

205. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 30.

206. Cottet, "Les effets d'un oui ou d'un non", 18.

207. Cottet, "Oui au Flon et un *référéndum* à la clé", 22.

208. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 30.

209. "Campagne de votation pour le plan d'extension du quartier du Flon", dartfish.tv.

210. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 30.

in order to keep activities and jobs within the city center, as well as avoiding a concurrence with the historical center.²¹¹ Mono functional districts do not meet the inhabitants needs and the city's development. It is necessary to ensure the animation and revitalisation of neighbourhoods in order to reduce urban exodus.²¹² Moreover, the development chosen by the *PEP* is still rooted in the sixties, rejecting the district's history and identity,²¹³ as well as the topography of Lausanne, which must be better taken into consideration.²¹⁴ In addition, the vaste building located along the *Grand-Pont* gives a rather narrow character to the *Place Bel-Air* and the *Voie du chariot*, considered as the hearth of the platform, is now part of the heavy traffic flow.²¹⁵

The *APAHF* is therefore proposing a counter-project to the *Gare du Flon PEP* published in a complete document tackling every challenges,²¹⁶ as well as an alternative regulation stating several rules on different subject such as buildings affectation and environmental protection.²¹⁷ The primary objective of the *APAHF* is to animate and revitalise the district, serving as the main argument for the necessity of constructing housing.²¹⁸ Despite the *Institut de recherche sur l'environnement construit*, *IREC*, is declaring that the Flon district is unsuitable for residential development,²¹⁹ the main demand of the *APAHF* socialists members is the need for dwellings within the district.²²⁰ The *APAHF* is convinced that even if the Flon District has a bad reputation and considered gloomy, this is still a neighbourhood that has many potentialities.²²¹ Preserving current activities is crucial to prevent employment issues, and protecting existing buildings, especially those with architectural value, is essential.²²² In addition, new buildings should not fill the entire valley but rather be organised around an attractive central space to encourage pedestrian access.²²³ As mentioned before, the *APAHF* is also composed of Flon platform users and for this reason, the association is close to craftsmen and merchants of the Flon district. They will therefore conduct interviews to get a better idea of their opinion regarding the *PEP Gare du Flon*.²²⁴

211. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 28.

212. Ibidem.

213. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 30.

214. *APAHF, Aménagement du Flon : une chance à ne pas manquer*, 3.

215. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 20.

216. *APAHF, Aménagement du Flon : une chance à ne pas manquer*, 11-23.

217. Ibid., 31-34.

218. Ibid., 7.

219. Neyroux, "Du "Pas-des-Anes" à la vallée du Flon", 77.

220. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 20.

221. *APAHF, Aménagement du Flon : une chance à ne pas manquer*, 1.

222. Neyroux, "Du "Pas-des-Anes" à la vallée du Flon", 77.

223. Morsier, *Lausanne : une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 28.

224. *APAHF, Aménagement du Flon : une chance à ne pas manquer*, 10.

“If we can build buildings that remain at a human scale... that would be wonderful.”
(a user)

“I don’t think creating this model addresses a need. We could do something they consistently refuse to do, which is renovate.”
(a user)

“Your project scares me; if I were a financier, I wouldn’t do it.”
(a shopkeeper)

“Lausanne must be considered much more comprehensively before carrying out this; that’s what scares me.”
(an artisan)

“I believe that a city center should bring together all activities; it’s not the tertiary sector that animates, but likely craftsmanship. However, there are almost no more artisans due to cost issues.”
(an artisan)

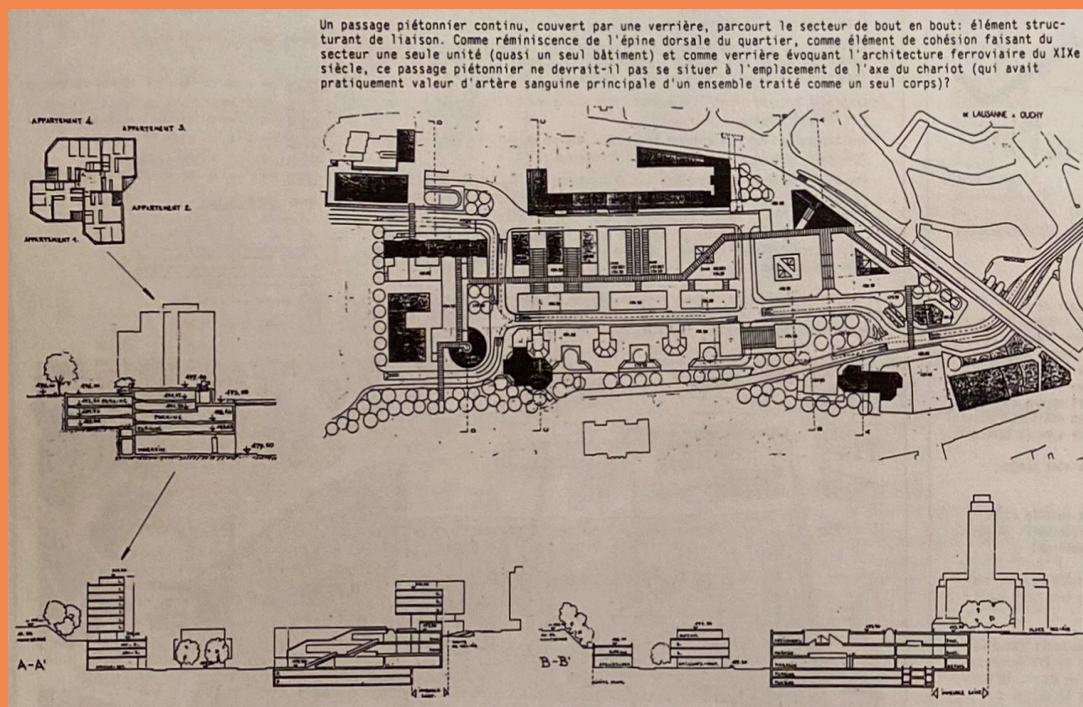
“When we made the mistake of thinking everything in terms of the car, we should at least now, as we realize the error, have the courage to leave things untouched until we can reshape, rethink, reimagine.”
(economic context)

“I find it horrible. They will probably build air-conditioned buildings where you can never open the windows.”
(an artisan)

“There are too many vehicles in the city centre, and this is expected to worsen with the penetration project: it’s likely to become quickly unbearable.”
(a shopkeeper)

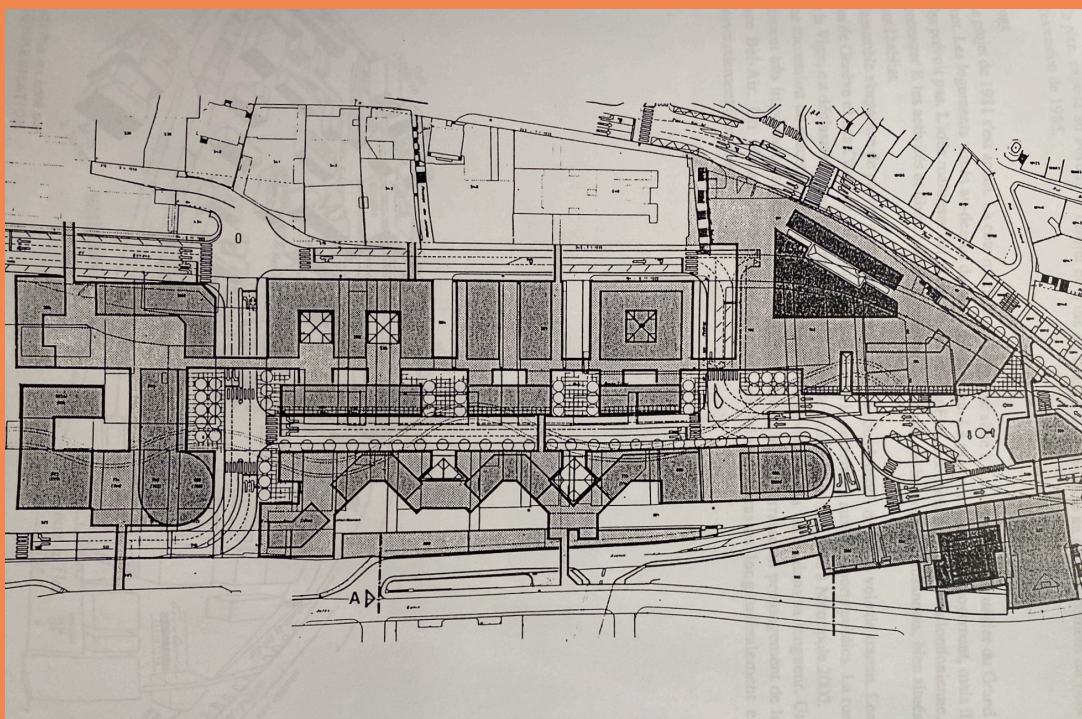
“The project does not correspond at all to the needs.”
(a shopkeeper)

“Even though the project is gigantic for the city of Lausanne, it gives me the impression that we are continuing somewhat in the line of past mistakes and that we lack the courage to completely rethink this area based on exchanges.”
(economic context)



43

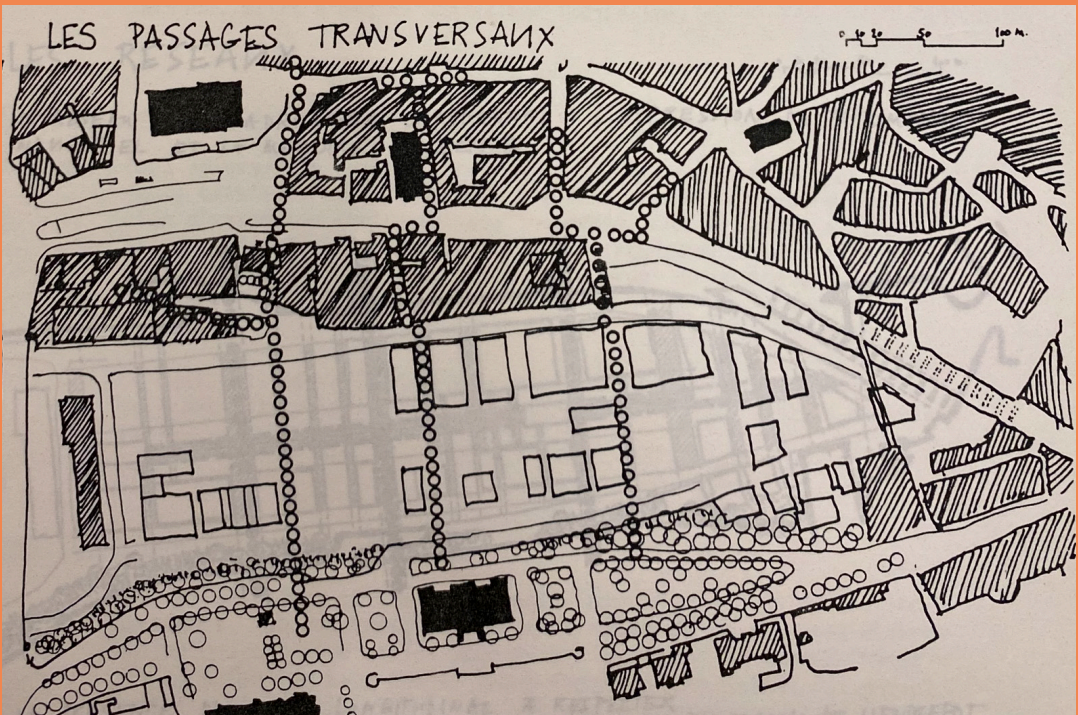
First variant of the project Musy and Vallotton, 1981



44

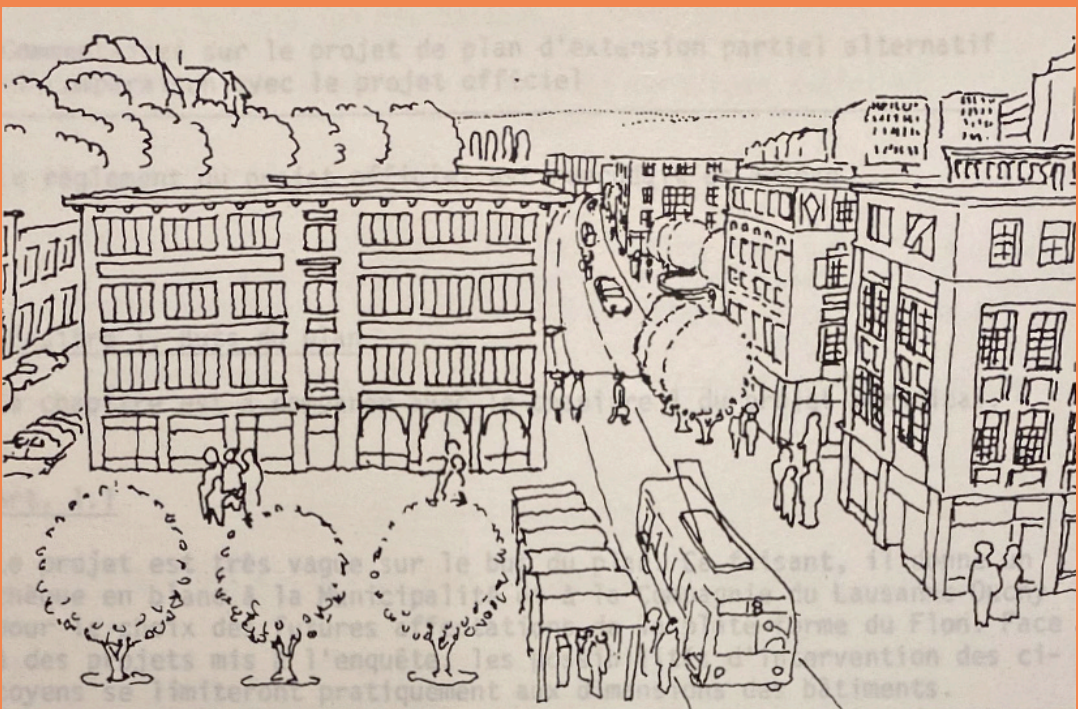
Plan d'Extension Partiel "Gare du Flon", 1985

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Plan of the key access points in the Flon district, APAHF, 1986



46

"The park extends into the valley", APAHF, 1986

VII

A Competition of Ideas as a Solution

In parallel to the complications arising from the *PEP*, the municipality is in discussion with the Lausanne-Ouchy company regarding public transport. Following the 1958 reconstruction of the railway station and the transformation of the old funicular, the metro becomes a major element in city's public transport. However, even if the infrastructure is owned by the Lausanne-Ouchy company, it is the responsibility of the municipality to establish the rates for transportation. Given that the situation was far from ideal for both parties, after years of negotiations, the Lausanne-Ouchy company handed over the metro to the city. Following this significant event, in 1985, the company is no longer operating as a railway company and is exclusively transformed into a real estate firm under the name of LO-Holding Lausanne-Ouchy SA.²²⁵

Following the rejection of the *PEP*, the 12th October 1986, the *APAHF* is pleased with the outcome, however, the LO-Holding feels deprived of its property rights.²²⁶ The company has already announced that if the *PEP* proposition fails,

225. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon* : *N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66,38*.

226. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984–2000", 32.

no further discussions and agreements will be made with the municipality.²²⁷ Therefore, due to the failure of the *PEP* proposed together and political tension, the collaboration between the municipality and the LO-Holding is over.²²⁸

In its efforts to see the Flon district properly developed, the *APAHF* will propose various options, including the possibility of the expropriation of the LO-Holding property, but even if the municipality is owning the entire Flon platform, for sure not every problems will vanish.²²⁹ They prefer to concentrate on the main outcome proposed by the opposition committee, which is the organisation of a participative and open competition of ideas for the entire development of the Flon platform.²³⁰ Therefore, the authorities, as well as the opponents of the *PEP Gare du Flon*, discuss together the conditions and specificities of the competition.²³¹ The *APAHF* still advocates for housings within the Flon district, but it will not be taken into consideration by the municipality.²³² In 1987, the urban planning department of the city of Lausanne launched the *Gare du Flon* competition of ideas.²³³ The aim is to bring forth ideas without delving into details, providing the groundwork for the future development of the Flon district.²³⁴ It is intended to serve as a reservoir of ideas,²³⁵ distinct from a project competition where the winning suggestion submitted is built in its current state.²³⁶ The competitors must be Swiss, but they are free to collaborate with foreign architects and urban planners.²³⁷

It is worth noting that the situation of the Flon platform is currently delicate. Since the 1930 convention is over and the *PEP Gare du Flon* was rejected in 1986, the current extension plan valid for the Flon platform remains the one from Lausanne dating back to 1942. This plan mandated the establishment of a *PEP* to further develop the Flon district, designated as an industrial zone.²³⁸ Furthermore, the term *Plan d'Extension Partiel*, *PEP*, known until the 1986 *référéndum*, will change into the term *Plan Partiel d'Affectation*, *PPA*. This changement just concerns the name, the aim and objective of such a plan is still the same.²³⁹ The winning project of the competition aims, therefore, to serve as the basis for the futur *Plan Partiel d'Affectation*.

227. "Le point de vue du propriétaire", 16.

228. "Campagne de votation pour le plan d'extension du quartier du Flon", dartfish.tv.

229. Cottet, "S.O.S. concours", 29.

230. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 32.

231. Barraud, "Flon: autorités et opposants se mettent à table, 2.

232. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 32.

233. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 21.

234. Ibid., 20.

235. Service d'urbanisme, *Concours d'idées pour l'aménagement du lieu dit "Gare du Flon"*, 7.

236. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66,49*.

237. Service d'urbanisme, *Concours d'idées pour l'aménagement du lieu dit "Gare du Flon"*, 13.

238. Ibid., 8.

239. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 30.

The LO-Holding stands apart

Considering the current strained relations between the LO-Holding and the municipality, the company completely dissociates itself from the process initiated by the city. On the 10th of June 1987, the LO-Holding commissions the architects Mario Botta and Vincent Mangeat to conduct a study on the Flon platform and develops its own project.²⁴⁰ Moreover, given that the development of the Flon district has never been able to commence, it becomes necessary for the LO-Holding to renovate some of its old industrial buildings.²⁴¹

However, the municipality is not pleased at all that the company has commissioned these two architects, and will therefore request the *Conseil d'État* to designate the status of reserved zone for the Flon district.²⁴² This will result in prohibiting any construction or development of the platform until August 1994, any request for building approval is subject to prior approval from the department of public works, planning, and transportation.²⁴³ Due to this decision initiated by the municipality to prevent LO-Holding from interfering with the competition, the Flon platform is therefore subject to building restrictions at the cantonal level. This event will have a direct impact on the initial competition from 1987, which is abandoned in favour of organising a two-phase competition, launched on May 1, 1988.²⁴⁴ This decision has been made, since many architects decided not to participate to the competition under these conditions, where Botta and Mangeat would have an advantage. For this reason, a two-phase competition is proposed, to allow more in-depth studies.²⁴⁵

The Gare du Flon two-phase Competition

At the beginning of the *Gare du Flon* competition, it is clearly stated that it is an urbanism competition and not an architectural competition.²⁴⁶ However, the architectural aspects have overtaken urbanism ideas.²⁴⁷ As the situation and the

240. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 33.

241. Neyroud, "Vallée du Flon : Schattenboxen in Lausanne", 39.

242. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 20.

243. Ibid., 17.

244. Ibid., 21.

245. Schilt, "Le concours du Flon", 3.

246. Dumas, "Le concours du Flon", 2.

247. Wasserfallen, "Le concours du Flon", 3.

development of the Flon platform have remains stagnant for decades, it has become a district with which citizens struggle to identify, as it diverges significantly from the traditional urban landscape. This will ultimately result in assigning less value to the existing situation and, consequently, proposing more drastic alternatives challenging the industrial urban fabric.²⁴⁸

Furthermore, considering that the participation of Botta and Mangeat in this study has received significant media coverage, it will have a catalytic effect on every participant, encouraging in a certain way the conception of spectacular projects and the vast majority of competitors will tend to propose very radical designs. Therefore, for all of these reasons, the competition is taking a turn no longer in line with the intentions of the *APAHF*, which claimed for the organisation of a competition advocating the qualities of the urban fabric inherited from the industrial era.²⁴⁹

While this competition is crucial, given that almost nothing has happened in this district for more than fifty years, it does not experience significant success among architects and urban planners. At the end of October 1988, only forty-seven projects have been submitted, where the jury was expecting twice the number.²⁵⁰ On the 3rd of February 1989, the jury announces the results of the three awarded projects. Following the drafting of requirement for the next phase established by a commission composed of every stakeholder participating in the Flon district development, including the LO-Holding, the three awarded projects are commissioned to continue their study. One year later, in March 1991, the municipality received the three winning projects further developed and the one from the architects Botta and Mangeat.²⁵¹

Eugène Ruffy, managing director of the LO-Holding, highlighted concerns regarding the competition. The primary issue was the lack of communication between the participants and the LO-Holding. Only one contestant out of the forty-seven has discussed about the existing situation and the potential further development of the area, contributing to the incompatibility observed in many projects. For instance, numerous projects suggested the implementation of housing

248. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 33.

249. Ibidem.

250. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66*, 49.

251. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 22.

on the lower floors of the Flon district, without realising the infeasibility of such a program due to the noise caused by the nightlife of the district and early morning truck deliveries.²⁵² Botta and Mangeat, guided by the LO-Holding, have therefore provide better housing solutions.

Botta & Mangeat, *Un Projet pour la Ville*

Although the project commissioned by the LO-Holding is not part of the competition, it is evaluated alongside the three winning projects within the final report of the *Gare du Flon* competition of ideas.²⁵³ When they appointed these two architects, the intentions of the LO-Holding are crystal clear, the company wishes to completely metamorphose the place,²⁵⁴ creating a new distinct piece of the city.²⁵⁵ They aim to create a contemporain district featuring all the infrastructures typically found in the periphery, but centrally positioned, adjacent to the historic city.²⁵⁶ The aim of the project is to build construction on the north and to let a large open space traversing the whole Flon platform on the south to bring back the greenery into the valley.²⁵⁷ The project primarily distributes commercial and service activities across the entire platform. Additionally, on the upper floors, where they surpasses the ridges of *Montbenon*, there are housings opening to the south with views overlooking the lake.²⁵⁸

Public transport facilities aim to solve the detachment of the Flon platform from its surroundings by strategically distributing them on each side of the district. They are not force into a single point, but split on each side of the district, to the *Pont Chauderon* and the *Grand-Pont*.²⁵⁹ This naturally results in an active flow between these two poles, essential for the life of the district. Therefore, the city gate shifts towards the *Pont Chauderon*, finally bringing the Flon platform at the heart of Lausanne.²⁶⁰ Additionally, it has the advantage of not centralising all public transportation at a single point, avoiding a significative concentration and concentric hierarchy of the urban landscape.²⁶¹

252. Ruffy, "A propos du Flon", 31.

253. Service d'urbanisme, Les projets du Flon, 4.

254. Demont Catsicas, Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 51.

255. Botta, "Un Projet pour la Ville", 19.

256. Botta, *La vallée du Flon : un nouveau quartier au centre de Lausanne*, 6.

257 "La Vallée du Flon", dartfish.tv.

258. Botta, "Un Projet pour la Ville", 19.

259. Ibid., 18.

260. Botta, *La vallée du Flon : un nouveau quartier au centre de Lausanne*, 7.

261. Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 80.

Nevertheless, the project is quickly discarded due to its massive scale, which has a significant impact on views, as well as the logistical complexity arising from splitting public transport facilities on each side of the Flon platform.²⁶² Moreover, it did not find the expected reception among public opinion, the plastic and monumental aspect of the project did not meet with unanimous approval.²⁶³ This lack of approval was evident when the model of the project was exhibited in the Flon district, where a journalist characterised this vision of the Flon as a *galerie pharaonique et lugubre**.²⁶⁴

Dodes-Kaden & Down-Town

Among the three selected proposition, the two proposals maintaining the current model of constructions, do not win the competition as they lack pretension and ambition.²⁶⁵ Knowing that it was the *APAHF* which advocated for the initiation of a competition promoting the qualities of the urban structure inherited from the industrial era, it decidedly deviates from their initial intentions.²⁶⁶

The third prize is awarded to the architects Delessert, Pfister and Rochat with the project Dodes-Kaden which mainly aims to maintain and complete the existing structure of the district and ensure both daytime and nighttime events through a blend of building allocation, with a particular focus on housing.²⁶⁷ The issue with this project lies in the urban structure, which fails to operate as a cohesive urban entity, thereby making the overall quality of the district dependent solely on the individual architectural merit of each new building.²⁶⁸

The second prize is awarded to the architect Rodolphe Luscher with the project Down-Town which aims to revalorise the Flon district through the recomposition of the fifth facade, the rooftops landscape.²⁶⁹ For the second phase he further develops the project and presents a second version into a complete document, notably incorporating illustrations created through a remarkable collage

262. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 21.

263. Service d'urbanisme, *Les projets du Flon*, 18.

264. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66*, 51.

265. Wasserfallen, "Le concours du Flon", 3.

266. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 33.

267. Delessert, "Le concours du Flon", 12.

268. Service d'urbanisme, *Les projets du Flon*, 14.

269. Luscher, "Le concours du Flon", 9.

270. Luscher, *Quartier du Flon : down-town* 2, 7.

* *pharaonic and gloomy gallery*

method.²⁷⁰ He proposes strategies and rules to enhance and valorise the inherent dynamics of the urban territory, stepping back from the *tabula rasa*, an approach he considers archaic. The aim is to strengthen the unique identity of the district while accommodating the evolving needs of the city.²⁷¹

Tschumi & Merlini, *Ponts-Villes*

In September 1991, Bernard Tschumi and Luca Merlini won the competition with their project *Ponts-villes* aiming to gradually transform the entire Flon platform. They introduce four inhabited bridges traversing the valley above three longitudinal bands. These include a constructed area to the north, a central traffic corridor, and a southern green strip.²⁷² According to the Jury, the most evident strength of their proposal is the way the four bridges crosses the valley, while simultaneously creating a green area within the district.²⁷³ The project, considered brilliant and unconventional, is selected as well for its theoretical merit and the formal transcription it proposes.²⁷⁴ However, several aspects of the bridges must be re-examined, especially, their number, location, function, and dimensions, as well as their connection to the banks, which must be improved.²⁷⁵

Since Luca Merlini and Bernard Tschumi have both spent their childhood in Lausanne, they know well the history and complexities of the city.²⁷⁶ Therefore, the project aims to address the specific rugged topographic contexte of Lausanne, where streets are suspended, rooftops serve as ground floors, and constructions transform into vertical passages from one street to another.²⁷⁷ As he wrote in the book *The Manhattan Transcripts* in the late seventies, the city of Lausanne mirrors the film “Metropolis” in its urban dynamics.²⁷⁸

Inhabited bridges are concept inspired of repurposing infrastructure into architecture, such as the Ponte Vecchio in Florence.²⁷⁹ Their objective goes beyond connecting the two sides of the valley, it also includes linking upper and lower

271. Luscher, *Quartier du Flon : down-town* 2, 2.

272. Service d'urbanisme, *Les projets du Flon*, 5.

273. Wasserfallen, “Le concours du Flon”, 3.

274. Marchand, “Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis”, 28.

275. Service d'urbanisme, *Les projets du Flon*, 21.

276. Merlini, “Je me souviens que la place de l'Europe s'appelait la place de la Gare-du-Flon”, 40.

277. Tschumi, “Le concours du Flon”, 6.

278. Marchand, “Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis”, 28.

279. “Si l'outil est trop banal, on pense banal”, actu.epfl.ch.

levels.²⁸⁰ Therefore, the *Ponts-Villes* project aims to not only complete the existing bridge system but also function as multi-level intersections.²⁸¹

The four bridges are considered as urban fragments made of three superimposed programmatic layers, the piers are hosting commercial activities, the deck, public activities and the emergences propose housings and hotels. As historical inhabited bridges, the Tschumi & Merlini bridges aims collective and event-driven appropriations. Their strong rythme and presence dialogue with the *Montbenon* esplanade and dominates the hybride composition of the Flon valley.²⁸² These monumental gestures, which convinced the jury, will however have a massive impact on the historical configuration of the district and on the already established roads and axes.²⁸³

As Bernard Tschumi explains in this book, “Architecture is not simply about space and form, but also about event, action, and what happens in space.”²⁸⁴ For this reason, there is a significant emphasis on functions of the inhabited bridges, and each of them aims to operate as an independent fragment of the city.²⁸⁵ Additionally, Luca Merlini highlights that the main focus of *Ponts-Villes* is to “reprogram” the Flon district, which he considered as a foreign object in the city, obsolete and disconnected.²⁸⁶

Given that Tschumi and Merlini won the competition, the *Ponts-Villes* project is subsequently chosen as the basis for the *PPA Gare du Flon*. To validate its adherence to the defined objectives, a preliminary design of one of the four bridges must be developed. Consequently, a study of the Métropont is initiated. The infrastructure does not replace the existing metro station but complements the public transports facilities, providing both transversal and vertical connections on the east side of the platform.²⁸⁷ A preliminary design is commissioned by the three main stakeholders of the *Gare du Flon*; the municipality, the LO-Holding and the Lausanne–Echallens–Bercher, LEB, another railway company serving the northern area of the region.²⁸⁸ A second bridge, the one on the west side, has also been further developed. It was supposed to host the new Cantonal Museum of Contemporary Art.²⁸⁹

280. “Bernard Tschumi, architecte, New York”, Youtube.com.

281. Tschumi, “Le concours du Flon”, 6.

282. Marchand, “Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis”, 28.

283. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66*, 49.

284. “The Manhattan Transcripts 1976–1981”, tschumi.com.

285. Tschumi, “Le concours du Flon”, 8.

286. Merlini, “Je me souviens que la place de l’Europe s’appelait la place de la Gare-du-Flon”, 38.

287. Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d’une vallée*, 27.

288. Tschumi, *Métropont : un avant projet : vallée du Flon Lausanne*, 3.

289. Merlini, “Je me souviens que la place de l’Europe s’appelait la place de la Gare-du-Flon”, 40.

Jean-Jacques Schilt, the new director of city's work appointed in January 1994, is strongly defending the project *Ponts-Villes*.²⁹⁰ He considers *Ponts-Villes* as a nice proposition to encourage the use and activation of roofs. Moreover, the addition of access it creates within the district will provide nice promenades for the citizens.²⁹¹ However, the project *Ponts-Villes* will face the paradox of being supported by the political and administrative authorities of the city of Lausanne, but not by the landowners, the LO-Holding.²⁹²

Eugène Ruffy, the head of the LO-Holding, strongly opposes the Tschumi and Merlini project for various reasons. He finds the bridges excessively long for pedestrians, and he refers to them as dams, arguing that they further enclose a valley already confined and isolated.²⁹³ Additionally, he raises concerns about the project's conception, aesthetic aspect, and financial profitability. As a result, the project does not align with the preferences and goals of the LO-Holding.²⁹⁴ The objective of the company has not change since its last collaboration with the municipality, its only motivation regarding the competition is the financial profitability of the project involved. Therefore, he would mainly embrace projects that are dealing especially with the development and extension of the tertiary activities.²⁹⁵ Bridges are considered by many as massive buildings obstructing the flow of the valley and involving the demolition of quality buildings. Furthermore, the construction of such volumes, especially considering the abundance of vacant spaces in the Flon district, is not unanimously supported.²⁹⁶

The competition outcome

As the intentions of the *APAHF* strongly oppose the development of a project like *Ponts-Villes*, anxiety about its realisation is increasing. Therefore, in the case of the *PPA* is accepted, the association is initiating a referendum,²⁹⁷ on which Flon users already announced their alignment.²⁹⁸

290. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.

291. Schilt, "A propos du Flon", 30.

292. Merlini, "Je me souviens que la place de l'Europe s'appelait la place de la Gare-du-Flon", 40.

293. Ruffy, "A propos du Flon", 31.

294. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66*, 51.

295. Wasserfallen, "A propos du Flon", 30.

296. Hartmann, "Les ponts Tschumi sur le vide", 21.

297. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.

298. Abimi, "L'ombre d'un référendum place sur le quartier du Flon", 19.

However, on the 6th of September 1994, the *Conseil Municipal* rejects the *Ponts-Villes* project, burying it for good.²⁹⁹ The primary reason for this outcome is a an alliance between the Right, the Environmentalists, and the *Parti Ouvrier Populaire*,³⁰⁰ aligning with the interests of the owner, the LO-Holding.³⁰¹ Other reasons are brought forward, such as the revaluation of the project, due to the economic recession of 1992, where the project *Ponts-Villes* is now deemed too expensive and out of step with the economic reality.³⁰²

Despite the project is rejected for being considered out of scale and unrealisable,³⁰³ it is quite ironic that the second and third projects were discarded for lacking of pretension and ambition.³⁰⁴ The influence of Bernard Tschumi might have played a role, particularly if even the more defensive movements of Lausanne's city were captivated by its prestige.³⁰⁵

299. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.

300. "Si l'outil est trop banal, on pense banal", actu.epfl.ch.

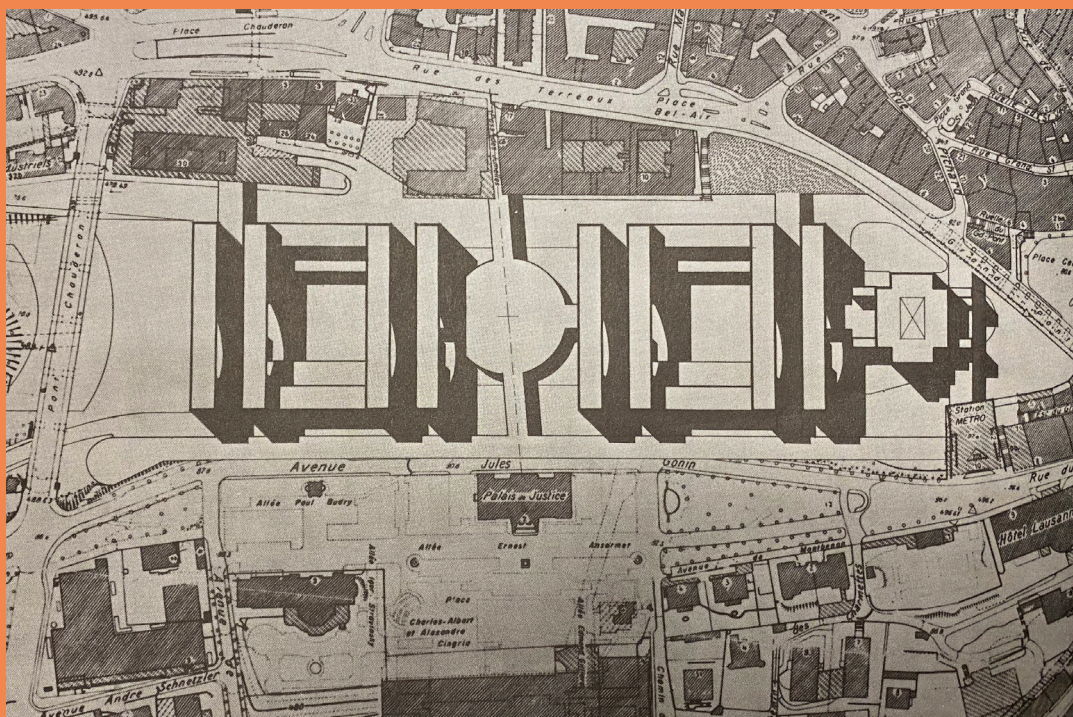
301. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.

302. Ibid., 33.

303. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis", 28.

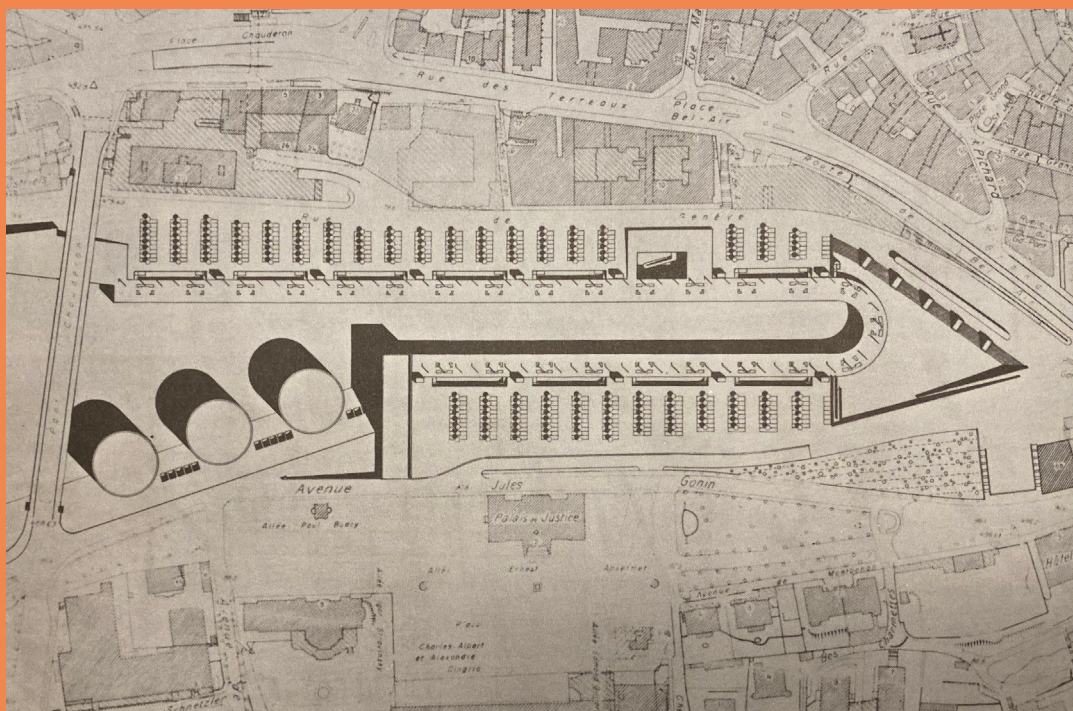
304. Wasserfallen, "Le concours du Flon", 3.

305. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.



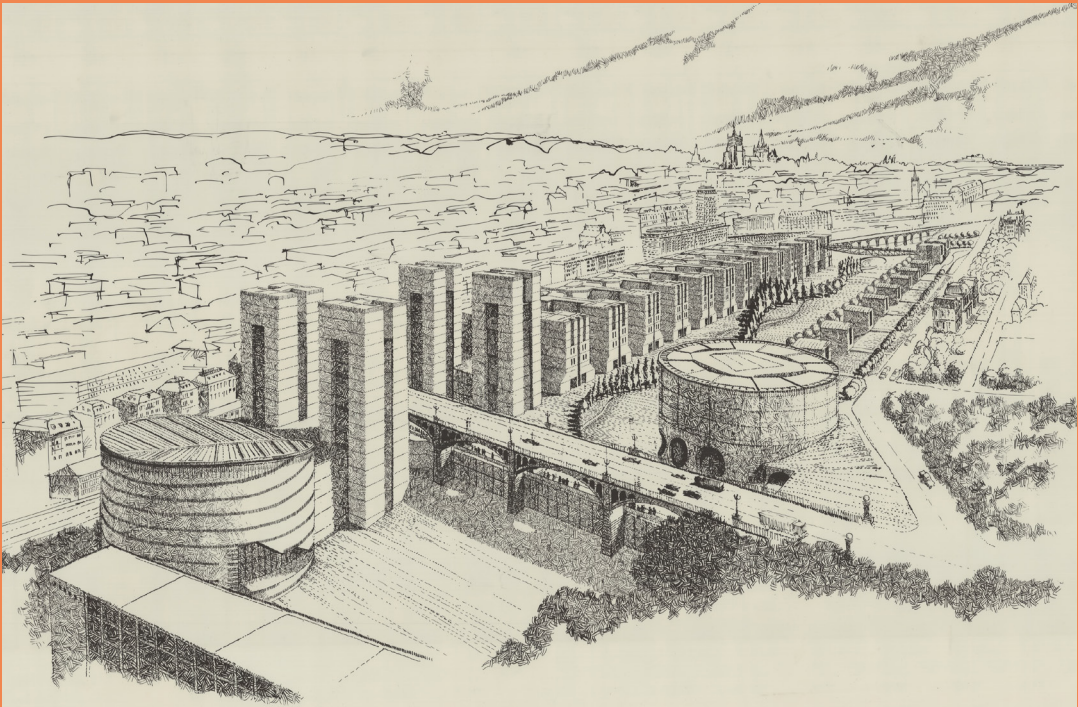
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Arche (unrewarded project), 1989



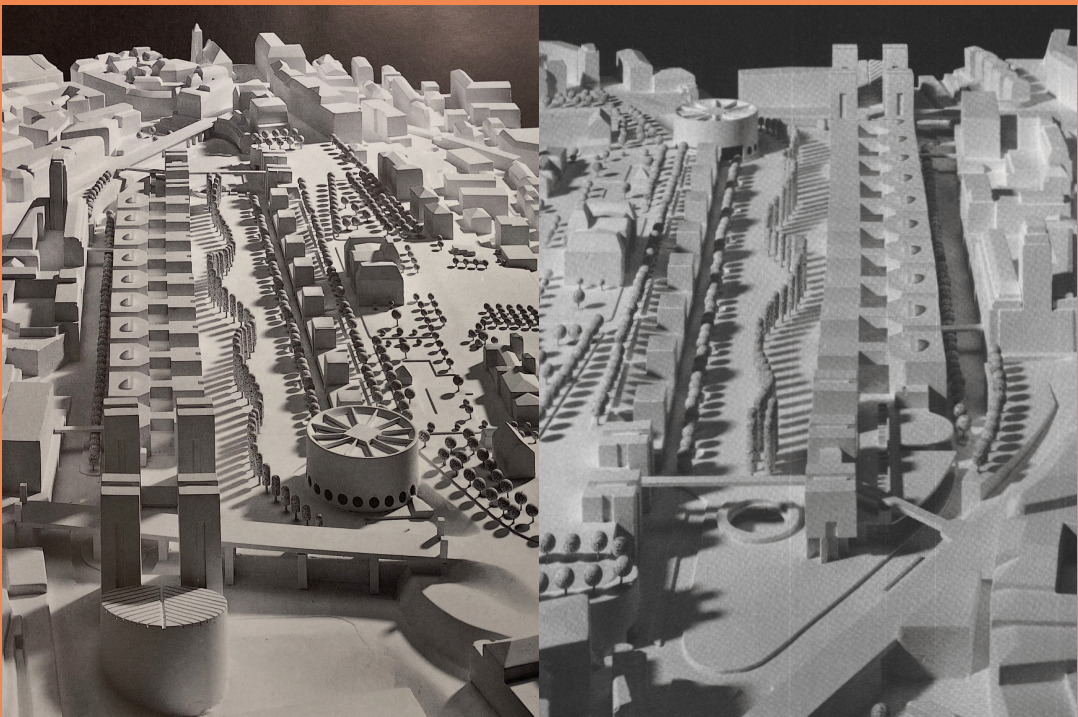
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Quand les cathédrales étaient blanches (unrewarded project), 1989



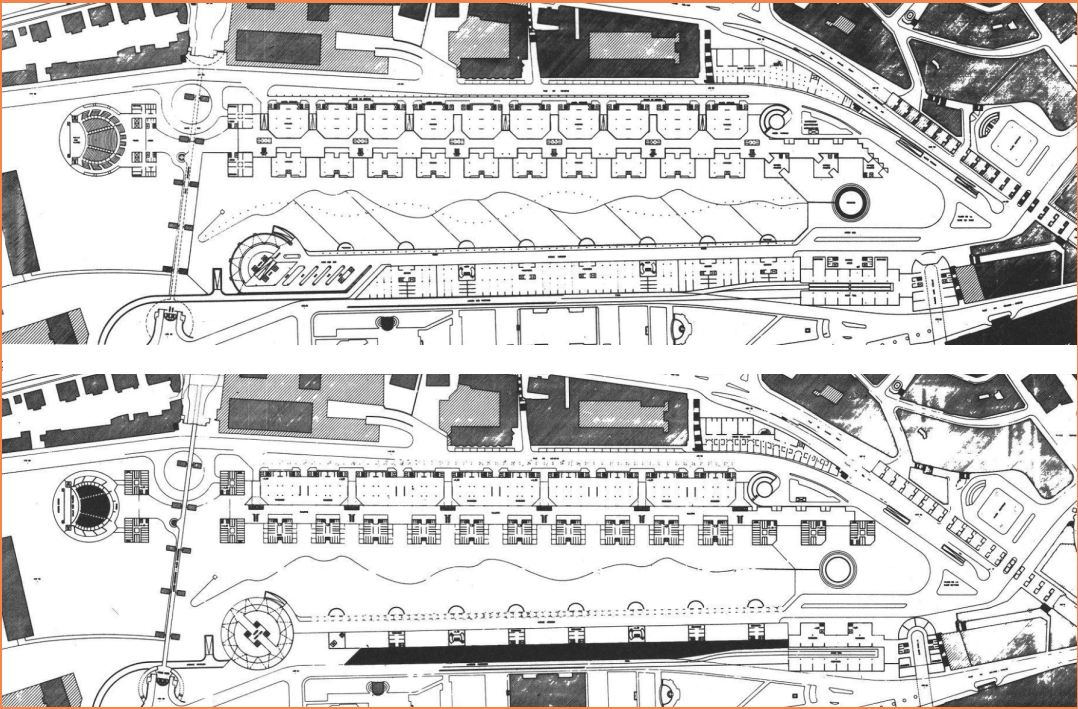
51

Western view, *Un Projet pour la Ville*, Botta & Mangeat, 1989



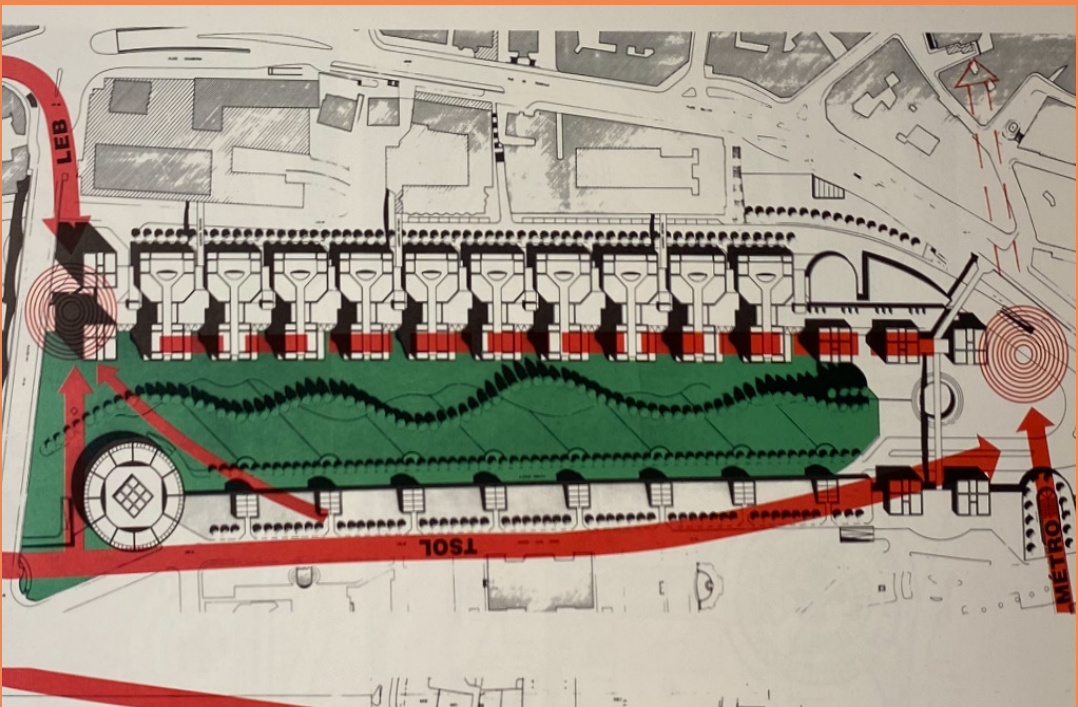
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Western and eastern model view, *Un Projet pour la Ville*, Botta & Mangeat, 1989



53

Groundfloor and first floor, *Un Projet pour la Ville*, Botta & Mangeat, 1989



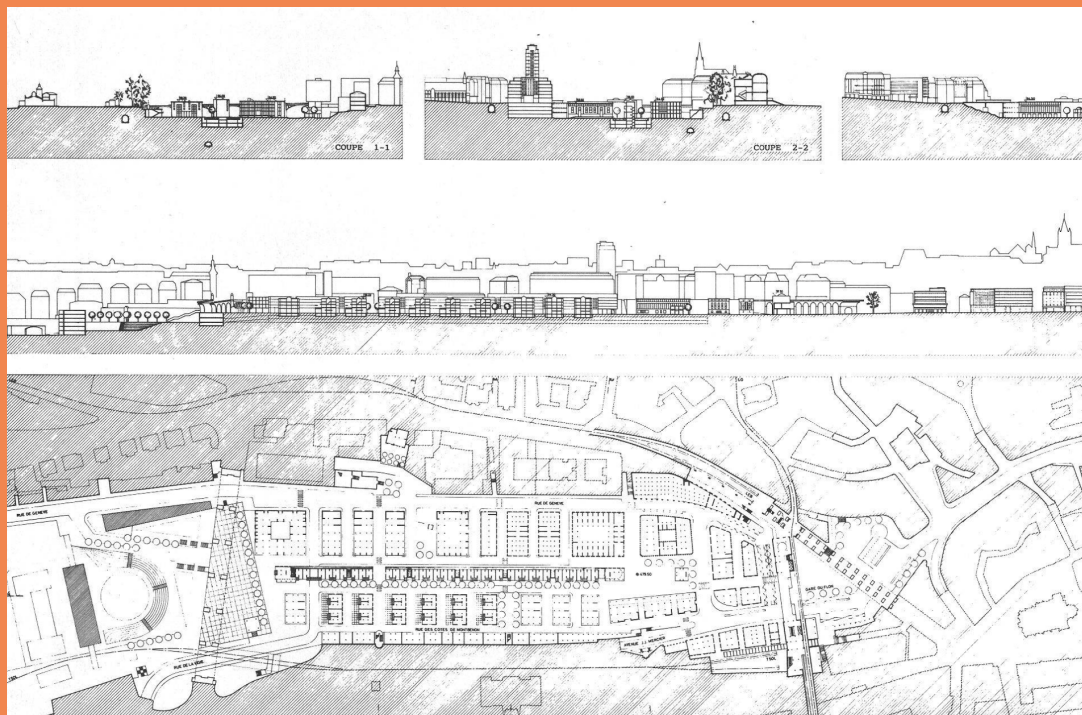
54

Two public transport stations, *Un Projet pour la Ville*, Botta & Mangeat, 1989



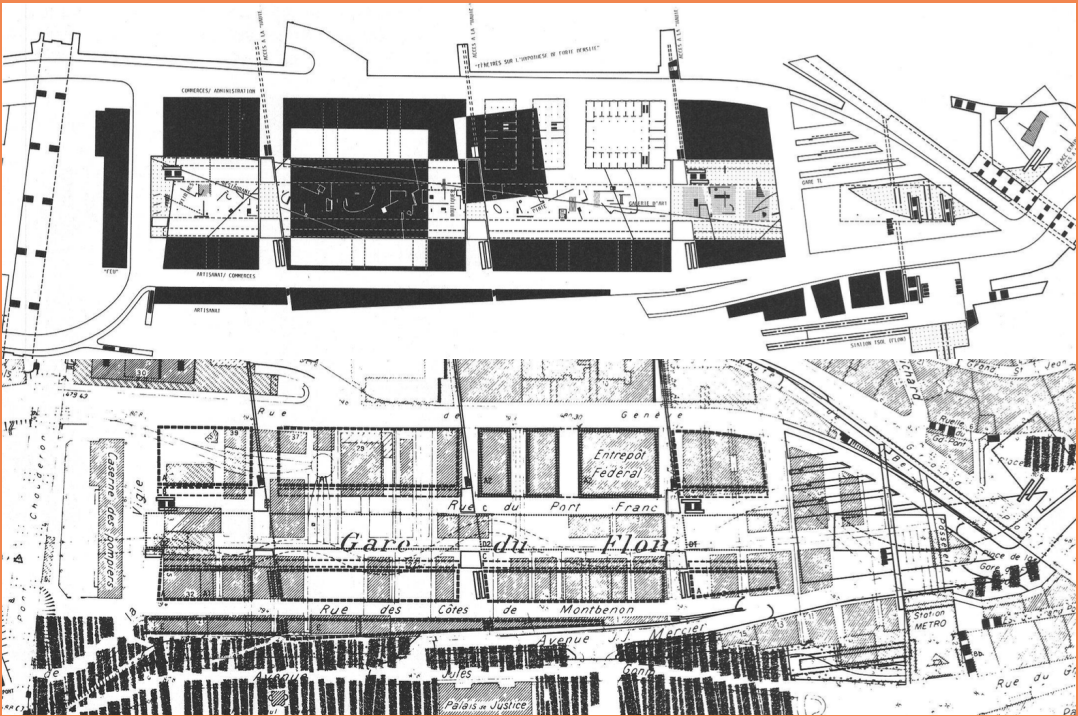
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Floorplan, Dodes-Kaden, Delessert, 1989



56

Overview, Dodes-Kaden, Delessert, 1989



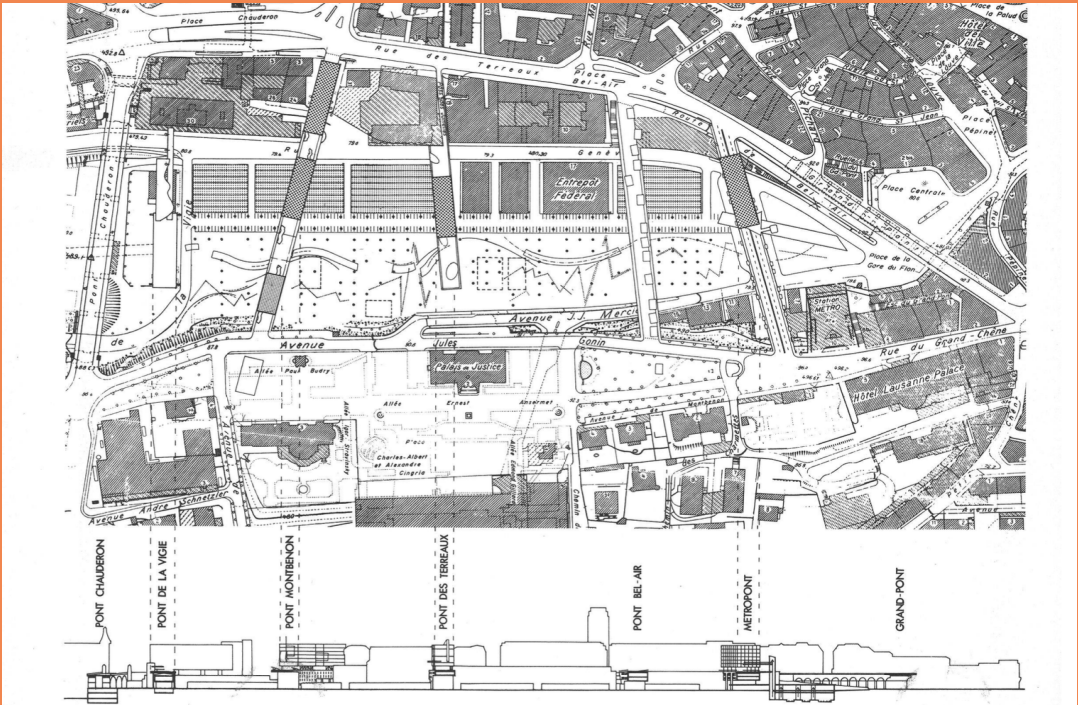
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Floorplans, Down-Town, Luscher, 1989



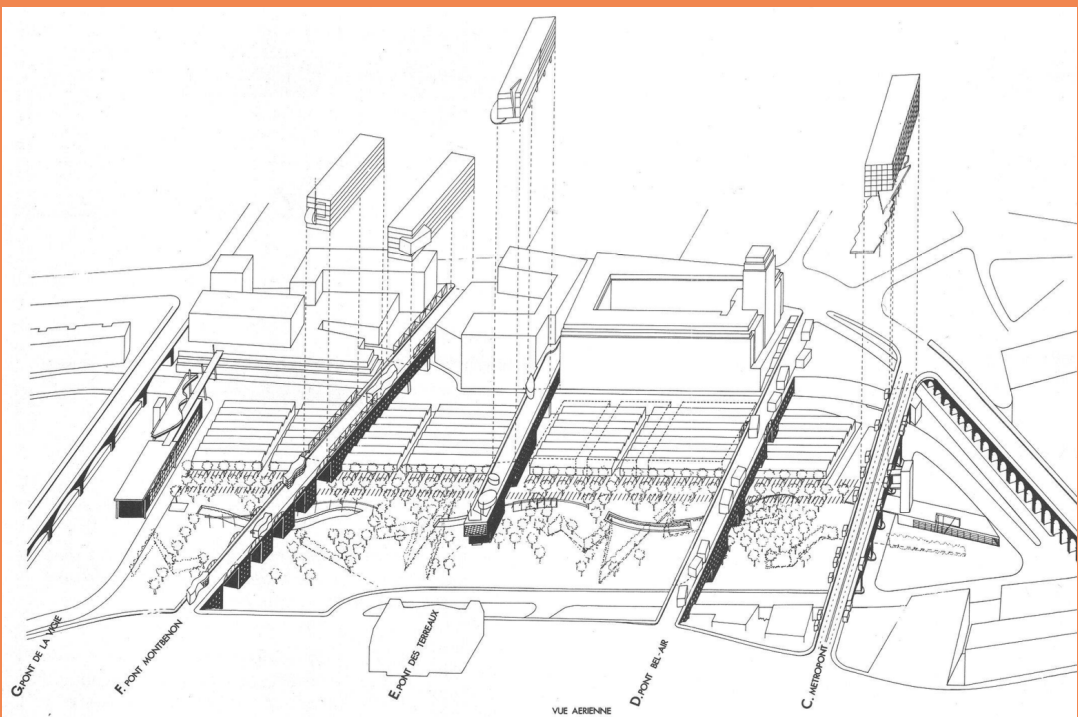
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Collage, View on the *Tour Bel-Air*, Down-Town, Luscher, 1989



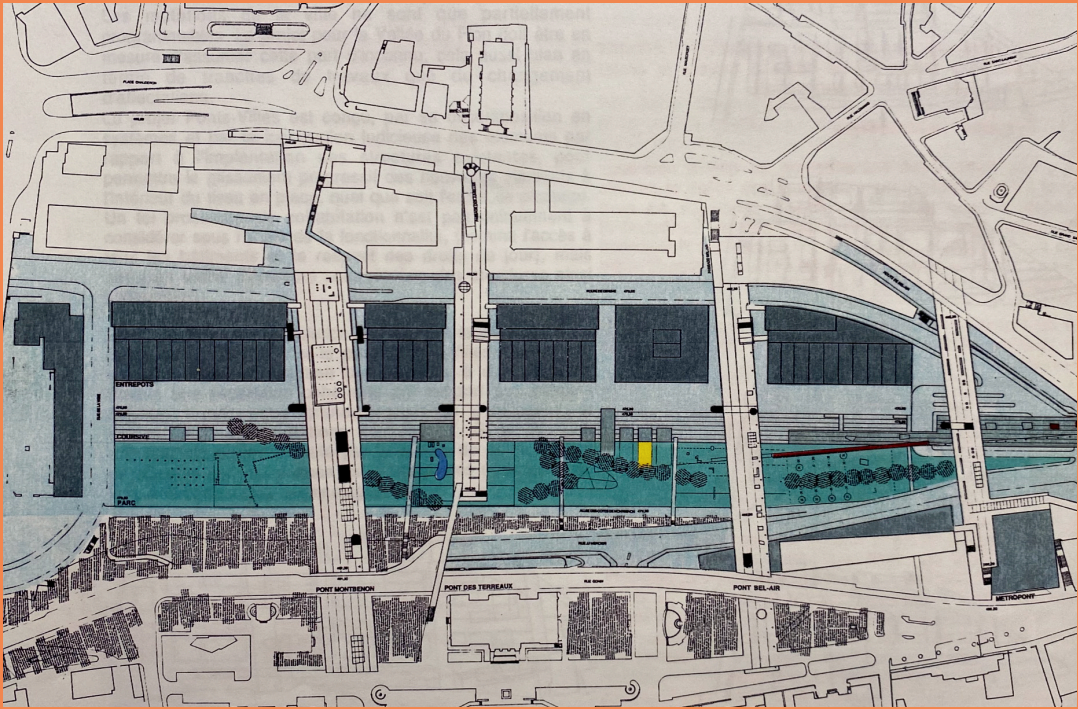
59

Floorplan, *Ponts-Villes*, Tschumi & Merlini, 1989



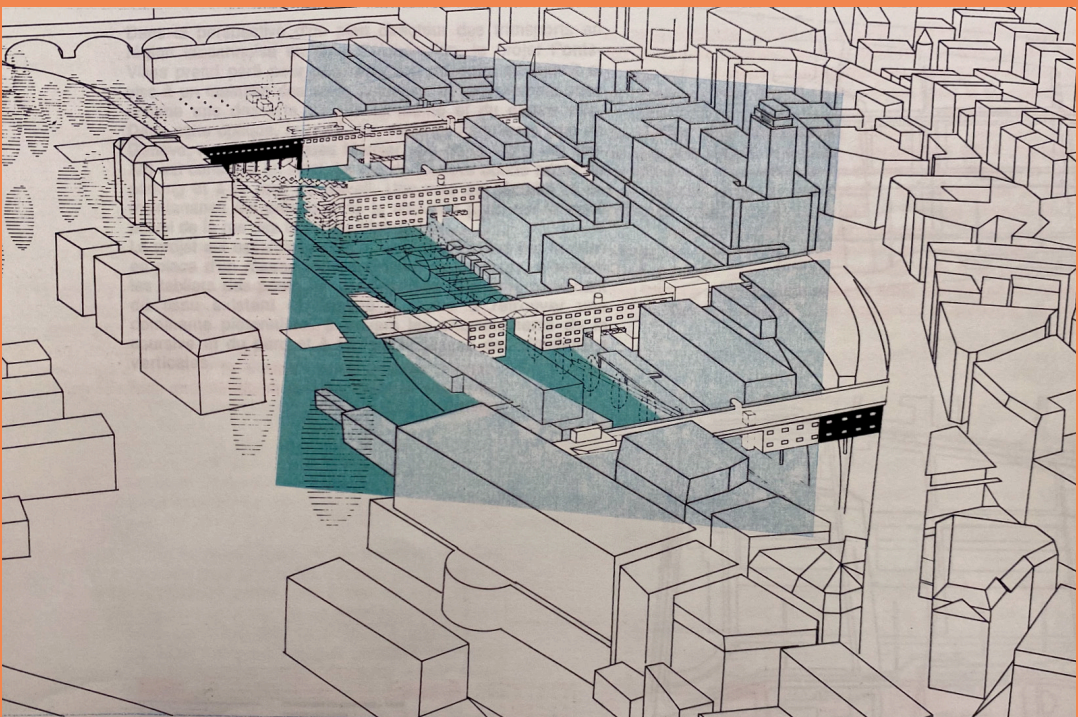
60

Axonometry, *Ponts-Villes*, Tschumi & Merlini, 1989



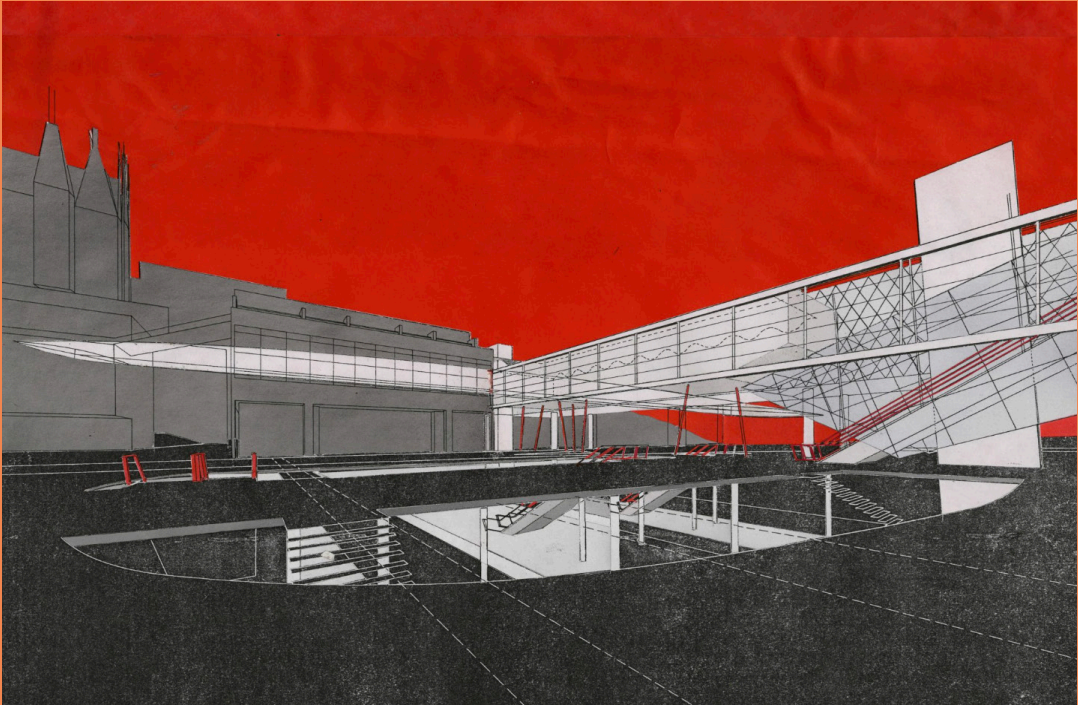
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Floorplan, *Ponts-Villes*, Tschumi & Merlini, 1991



62

Axonometry, *Ponts-Villes*, Tschumi & Merlini, 1991



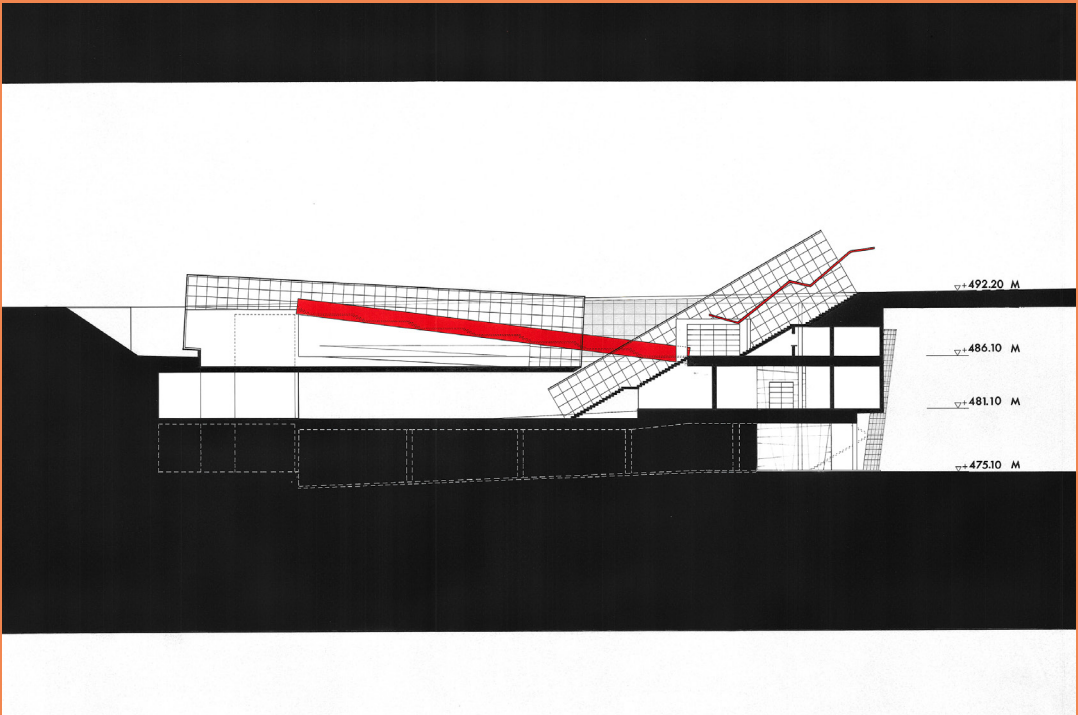
63

Perspective, Métropont, Tschumi & Merlini, 1991



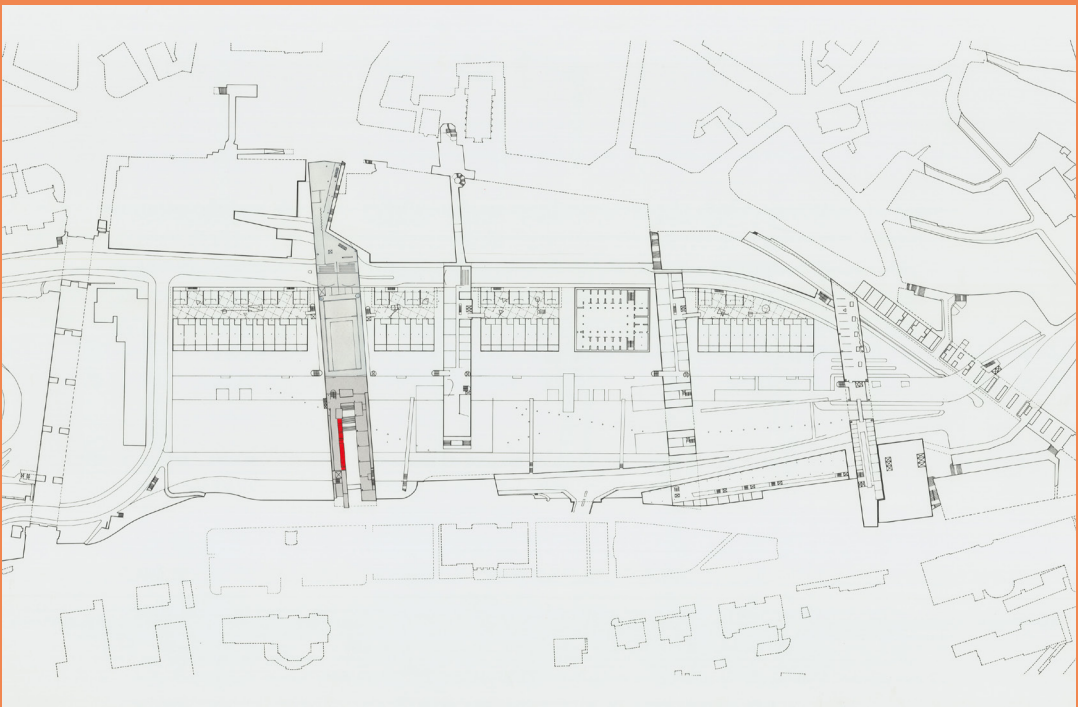
64

Model, Métropont, Tschumi & Merlini, 1991



65

Elevation, Cantonal Museum of Contemporary Art, Tschumi & Merlini, 1991



66

Floorplan, Cantonal Museum of Contemporary Art, Tschumi & Merlini, 1991

VIII

The Emergence of a Final Vision

As previously highlighted, *Ponts-Villes* does not enjoy unanimous support.³⁰⁶ Marx Lévy, former member of the group Amphion which presented the project *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon* and former director of city's work, describes the results of the competition as a vast joke.³⁰⁷ Unsatisfied with the outcome and encouraged by the positive reception of journalists towards the *Bel-Gare* projects he submitted for the competition, he decided to further develop the project. Collaborating with Pierre Foretay, Marx Lévy presents a new and more elaborated project named *Flon 90*.³⁰⁸ The proposal envisions a large, multi-functional district with public transport facilities organised around a large square on the east side of the platform.³⁰⁹ Despite capturing public attention, the complex current situation and its ambitious costs prevented its realisation.³¹⁰

306. Hartmann, "Les ponts Tschumi sur le vide ", 21.

307 Cottet, "Vastes escaliers sur 70'000m2", 3.

308. Lévy, *Une place pour Lausanne*, 102.

309. Ibid., 103.

310, Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66,51*.

The Initiation of the new Alternative Flon

In parallel to these conflicts regarding its further development, the LO-Holding is tired of waiting for an uncertain planning process to conclude, begins to rent out his warehouses at a low cost, without imposing renovation requirements.³¹¹ Consequently, the Flon district starts to be slowly and freely transformed by the users. It evolves into a more alternative and hybride area, giving rise to various artistic workshops and facilities that attract a young and relatively marginal community.³¹² With an increasing number of activities, both artisanal and artistic, taking root in the old warehouses, the district starts to come alive.³¹³ Additionally, in the early nineties, the nightlife of the Flon district gained an international esteem, becoming an undeniable tourist asset for the city.³¹⁴ However, with certain associations going as far as appropriating the district and fostering a sense of insecurity, it transforms the Flon into a no man's land, that the majority of the Lausanne population rarely frequents.³¹⁵

APAHF, Flon-Ville

While the redevelopment of the Flon district is currently relatively marginal, the *APAHF* is pleased to demonstrate that the existing buildings are repurposable. This revitalisation of the Flon platform highlights how the old industrial urban fabric can be well-suited to confront the future.³¹⁶ Recently, the district has experiences exceptionally positive changes, leading to a significant reconsideration of pertinent factors. Therefore, the *PPA* must acknowledge and take into consideration these new developments.³¹⁷ The *APAHF* aims to preserve and protect the extraordinary urbanistic and architectural interest of the district while seeking solutions that better align with the users needs.³¹⁸ Consequently, the association is strengthening its connection with the new occupants of the Flon platform.³¹⁹

311. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 33.

312. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66*, 48.

313. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 33.

314. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66*, 16,12.

315. Ibid., 48.

316. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 33.

317. *APAHF, Flon-Ville ou comment bâtir sans trop détruire*, 3.

318. "Les Matinales - Radio Acidule FM - 1993.03.24", dartfish.tv.

319. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 33.

Despite the *APAHF* is at the origins of the competition of ideas, they remained unsatisfied with the proposal of Tschumi and Merlini.³²⁰ The four massive bridges disrupt the current structure and are implemented with a geometry incompatible with the existing state. Furthermore, they are anticipated to obstruct the continuity of the valley, turning it into a succession of cells and eliminating its characterising transparency.³²¹ The association strongly opposes *Ponts-Villes*, which solely aims to strengthen the upper level at the expense of the lower level.³²² Consequently, they propose a counter project, *Flon-Ville*, leveraging the topography of Lausanne and the two complementary levels composing the Flon area. The project aims to demonstrate that the district can be developed within parameters aligning with the continuity of the old industrial structure.³²³ The *APAHF* proposes variants for the development of the district, with the primary interventions involving constructions only in existing voids, as well as bridges connecting one rooftop to another, facilitating the crossing of the valley.³²⁴

End of the *Zone Réservée*

On the 17th of August 1994, the reserved zone status designated by the *Conseil d'État* comes to an end, terminating the restriction on undertaking any construction or development of the platform.³²⁵ Subsequently, in February 1995, the LO-Holding attempts to request building permit, but they are all rejected by the municipality, as they do not meet the requirements of the city.³²⁶

However, the *Canton* aims to develop a significant public transport interface on the eastern side of the Flon platform, connected with the existing Lausanne-Ouchy metro. As this intention comes from the cantonal level, it is expected to facilitate progress.³²⁷ The LO-Holding will therefore propose an initial concept developed by a team familiar with the Flon; François Vuillomenet, former head of the city's urban planning department, and the architectural offices Richter and Tschumi-Merlini.³²⁸ In February 1996, the Municipality and the LO-Holding ultimately reach an agreement on the future development of the Flon platform, adhering to

320. "Campagne de votation pour le plan d'extension du quartier du Flon", dartfish.tv.

321. *APAHF, Flon-Ville ou comment bâtir sans trop détruire*, 15-16.

322. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.

323. Ibidem.

324. *APAHF, Flon-Ville ou comment bâtir sans trop détruire*, 22-23.

325. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon* : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 52.

326. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.

327. Ibidem.

328. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon* : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 53.

the industrial urban structure.³²⁹ Bernard Tschumi, Luca Merlini and Emmanuel Ventura will be responsible for the realisation of the LEB and metro station as well as the *Transports Lausannois* facility.³³⁰ These public transport infrastructures, referring to the Métropont, are therefore the sole and final fragment bearing witness to a development of the Flon platform that never came to fruition.³³¹ However, while the M2 infrastructure is considered as the ultimate built embodiment of the *Ponts-Villes* project, it deviates from its initial conceptualisation. In the original project, a large escalator housed within a glass box was designed to enhance the three-dimensionality, connecting the *Grand-Pont* to the underground network.³³²

After a prolonged and stagnant period during which every project related to the overall development of the district faced rejection, the Flon platform has been revitalised by an alternative population, significantly contributing to breathe life into the area and shape its identity.³³³ Numerous artistic, cultural, and commercial activities have emerged within the Flon District, reinforcing its status as a focal point for creative initiatives.³³⁴

Paul Rambert, New Managing Director of the LO-Holding

At the beginning of 1998, the architect Paul Rambert replaces Eugène Ruffy at the head of the LO-Holding.³³⁵ He plays a crucial role in the Flon district development, a new era of development will commence.³³⁶ Then, the situation evolve faster, since Paul Rambert together with the new director of city's work, Sylvia Zamora, who replaced Marx Lévy in 1989, are more straightforward and productive.³³⁷ Objectives have changed, the aim is now to respect the organisation of the original industrial district by conserving its atmosphere with a mineral dominance as well as preserving buildings.³³⁸

To further and properly develop the Flon district, a *PPA* is still required. As the *APAHF* remains active, Paul Rambert initiates discussions with the association to find common ground, aiming to avoid another *référéndum*.³³⁹ Additionally, not all

329. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.

330. Merlini, "Je me souviens que la place de l'Europe s'appelait la place de la Gare-du-Flon", 41.

331. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis", 28.

332. Merlini, "Je me souviens que la place de l'Europe s'appelait la place de la Gare-du-Flon", 41.

333. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon* : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 16,9.

334. Pozzy, "Derrière les murs gris, le Flon explose de couleurs", 1.

335. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.

336. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon* : N46°31'17,18, E06°37'38,66, 40.

337. Ibid., 53.

338. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis", 28.

339. Faucherre, "Plateforme du Flon 1984-2000", 34.

users of the district agree with the proposed development. To address this, he engages in discussions with them, seeking solutions, and they finally align with the LO-Holding, allowing the development to proceed.³⁴⁰ Following these negotiations, no oppositions are raised, and on the 8th of June 1999, the *PPA Gare du Flon* based on the historical structure is unanimously accepted by the *Conseil Communal*, and after years it finally came to fruition.³⁴¹

Plan Partiel d’Affectation “Gare du Flon”

A brochure presenting the *PPA* is published at the end of 1998, aiming to inform stakeholders about the changes. A nuanced solution, drawing on the best of the past to build the future, is proposed.³⁴² The city’s direction of work has established the framework and guided lines to the LO-Holding, which was responsible for filling the gabarit with constructions, and overseeing the general planning of the district.³⁴³ Consequently, every step of the Flon district’s urban evolution was aligned with the intentions of the municipality regarding public transports, traffic and the goal of better linking the different districts of the city center.³⁴⁴

As the people of Lausanne were not willing to accept ambitious projects and significant architectural gesture that disrupt everything within the city center,³⁴⁵ the *PPA Gare du Flon* aims to reaffirm the pattern of filled and vacant spaces originally defined for industrial purposes. It also seek to confirm the remarkably uniform height of the structures and preserve most of the existing buildings.³⁴⁶ Therefore, it maintains the exterior aspect of the industrial district, and the orthogonal framework of the platform, defined by its main axes, constitutes a key element.³⁴⁷

In order to provide a harmonious and coherent development of the platform, Paul Rambert developed the *Flon-Vision*. It aims to be the guiding principle for future major transformations, focusing on the development of collective spaces,³⁴⁸ the Flon district aims to become a large open air shopping mall.³⁴⁹ Consequently, the LO-Holding heavily invests in the construction of a large underground cars park, aiming

340. Faucherre, “Plateforme du Flon 1984–2000”, 34.

341. Ibidem.

342. Groupe LO, *L’avenir du Flon*, 3.

343. Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31’17,18, E06°37’38,66, 16,10*.

344. Ibid., 16,7.

345. Ibid., 16,8.

346. Zuppinger, “L’aménagement de l’espace non bâti de la plate-forme du Flon”, 16.

347. Groupe LO, *L’avenir du Flon*, 13.

348. Faucherre, “Plateforme du Flon 1984–2000”, 34.

349 Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon : N46°31’17,18, E06°37’38,66, 16,7*.

to maximise space for pedestrians. As a reminder, despite the fact that unbuilt space is easily accessible to the public, it is, from the beginning, completely private.³⁵⁰ For Paul Rambert, it is essential for economic and security reasons that the district is fully integrated into the city center's public spaces network and takes advantage of the city center's attractiveness. It would be unimaginable to enclose the district.³⁵¹ The option to transfer unbuilt areas to the public communal domain was explored but discarded. This decision was based on specific regulations, as the cost of development would have far exceeded the amount needed for basic internal improvements within private property.³⁵²

Buildings of the Flon platform have accommodated various uses and will continue to offer broad possibilities for adaptation. Consequently, numerous renovations are being undertaken.³⁵³ Unfortunately, the eviction of numerous artists remained indispensable even after negotiations with the users.³⁵⁴ Regarding new constructions, they will mainly emerge in the western part of Flon and must adhere to the same limitations applied to their predecessors regarding height and volume.³⁵⁵

Even though the strict industrial grid has been preserved, it is undeniable to observe that the approach which gave birth to the current Flon district has somehow impacted the soul of the platform.³⁵⁶ Despite the crucial need for building renovation, it undeniably leads to the loss of their original character and the memory of the old district.³⁵⁷ Additionally, the stylistic eclecticism characterising the new constructions interferes a global and coherent image of the Flon Platform.³⁵⁸

350. Zuppinger, "L'aménagement de l'espace non bâti de la plate-forme du Flon", 16.

351. Ibid., 17.

352. Ibid., 18.

353. Groupe LO, *L'avenir du Flon*, 5.

354. Zuppinger, *Luttès-δ-Flon*, 136.

355. Groupe LO, *L'avenir du Flon*, 15.

356. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping

mall et à Métropolis", 28.

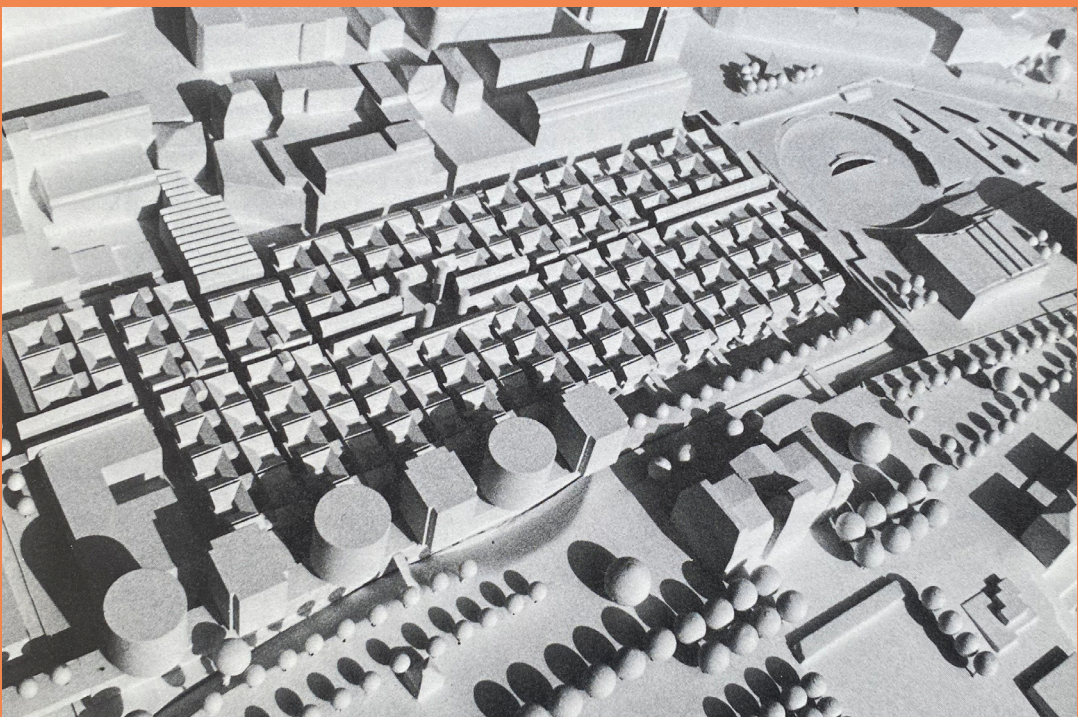
357. Zuppinger, *Luttès-δ-Flon*, 145.

358. Marchand, "Du Forum au shopping mall et à Métropolis", 28.



67

Allocation details, *Flon 90*, Marx Lévy, 1990



68

Model, *Flon 90*, Marx Lévy, 1990



69

Two variants of the *Flon-Ville* project, APAHF, 1993



70

View on the east from the *Tour Bel-Air*, APAHF, 1993



71

Published in the Newspaper 24H, 1993



72

Published in the Newspaper 24H, 1994

90



73

Published in the Newspaper 24H, 1997



74

Published in the Newspaper 24H, 1997

Conclusion

As the Flon situation evolved and became increasingly complex, it became essential to conduct a comprehensive analysis, aiming to understand every aspect from its beginning. This in-depth understanding of each project is crucial and pertinent in addressing the causes of their failures and shedding light on this rigorous topic.

At first glance, one may associate the complex development with ongoing disagreements between the municipality and the LO company. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that this discord between the public and private sectors is not the primary factor behind the numerous rejections, on the contrary, they opted to join forces. If we have a quick look at every project and its reason of rejection, the development of the Flon district can be splitted in different part.

Bel-Air Montbenon project failed primarily because it didn't address the fundamental issue from the start. Despite proposing a north-south bridge, it overlooked the core problem of east-west traffic, presenting a solution misaligned with the actual issue. *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon*, initiated on a personal basis rather than commissioned by stakeholders, faced limited chances of realisation. Its characterisation as a manifest project was considered too drastic, out of scale, and incompatible with the essence of the city, diminishing its serious consideration. *Grün*, a collaborative effort between the municipality and the LO company following the *Plan d'Intention*, faced political tensions that halted its progression until Marx Lévy assumed the role of the city's director of work and decided to stop the project. This time, an individual decision and personal convictions led to the cancellation of a promising initiative. *The PEP Gare du Flon* faced rejection from inhabitants despite concerted efforts from both the municipality and the LO company. Despite their collective endeavours, the project failed to garner community support, leading to its ultimate dismissal. *Ponts-Villes* encountered rejection due to a misalignment of interests between the municipality and the LO company. Born from an intricate situation where numerous issues were already at play, achieving a unanimously supported outcome became an unrealistic prospect.

In a general sense, the historical narrative progresses until 1960, characterised by a prevalence of projects that fell short of addressing authentic issues or demands. Then, following almost three decades of collaboration between the municipality and the LO company in their quest for a resolution, new stakeholders gradually entered the scene, which made things more complicate, leading to a “final” breakdown in communication between the main parties. In other words, during the early 20th century’s construction boom, the industrial district experienced a golden age. Benefiting from its central location, the LO company thrived during this period. However, this success continued until the late fifties, and the district’s central location, once advantageous, became a limitation due to space constraints, disrupting the daily life of the flourishing city center. Prompted by the municipality, the LO company, recognising the need for substantial changes as the area became saturated, embarked on significant redevelopment. The unprecedented challenge of redeveloping a large industrial area with numerous facilities in the city center unfolded. Initially, the redevelopment proceeded incrementally. However, over time, the entry of new stakeholders and other constraints have altered the circumstances.

For decades, the LO company held a pivotal and significant position in the city centre, and everything was going well for them. However, as the industrial district no longer fit within the city centre, a solution had to be found. Despite their willingness to collaborate with the municipality, external factors often threatened all their development efforts; the Expo64, the political elections of 1973, Marx Lévy as the new city’s director of work, the 1986 *référéndum*, the 1989 competition.

If we examine the situation in its entirety, we can identify dozens of different stakeholders involved in the development of the Flon district. These include the Lausanne-Ouchy company as the owner, the municipality, primarily composed of the city’s director of work and the urbanism service, along with representatives from various political parties, Socialists, Rights, Greens, at different levels, including regional through the *Conseil Communal*, cantonal through the *Conseil d’État*, and even at the national level when the *Confédération* is engaged through laws on territorial planning. Additionally, inhabitants play a crucial role, expressing their opinions through *référéndums*, often facilitated by various associations like the *APAHF*. Private companies also contribute to the discussions; for instance, the commercial center *Placette* insists on specific conditions for its participation, and the LEB company engages in conversations regarding public transport. The number of these stakeholders has grown as the development progresses, leading to an increase in contestations and debates. As we observe that the notion of *référéndum* had a significant influence and can have a profound impact, questions arise about the participation process.

Moreover, considering that the Flon district is right in the center of Lausanne and, furthermore, downhill, it's impossible to miss. This is a factor that has had a significant impact, as the entire population could witness the failure of Flon's development, leading to impatience for things to evolve sensibly. It's a delicate situation where everyone would like to express their opinion on the development of Flon. Unfortunately, as seen during researches conducted, opinions are plentiful but, more importantly, divergent. This is further exemplified by the prominent coverage that the development of the Flon district has held for many years in local newspapers. Reaching a consensus seems challenging, especially as time progresses and the LO company aims to capitalise on its district, with a primary intention to develop the tertiary sector, which is not in line with the preferences of the residents.

However, it is important to highlight that this lengthy and intricate development has resulted in the formation of a considerable array of projects submitted throughout the 20th century. As suggested in the introduction and undeniably confirmed after research has been conducted, the Flon platform can indeed be seen as an artefact of architecture, providing pertinent insight into the ideologies shaping the architectural discourse. The Mercier family initiated the industrial district, Bonnard and Boy-de-la-Tour put emphasis on cars and aimed to design a city organised around it. The Amphion group with the *Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon* provides significant insight into the drastic modernism vision. Victor Gruen, who was undoubtedly a major figure of the 20th century for his initial works on the shopping mall. Finally, Bernard Tschumi, who explains in his book "Manhattan Transcripts" that architecture is not simply about space and form but also about event, action, and what happens in space. And last but not least, the APAHF puts forward more conservative intentions, notably through initiatives, which aims to preserve the existing urban structure, as well as reconsider the qualities of the existing buildings. Without all of these failures and rejections, the Flon platform would have never been subject to so many projects and iterations, where five dominant and significant ideologies of the architecture of the 20th century have challenged the Flon platform.

The next step would be to tackle a project within this area that has already faced many iterations. Thus, I started by identifying each aspects that is part of almost every project suggested over the last century. And some intentions came out. The first and main one, is the multilevel approach which is tackled by almost every projects. This, has been possible, thanks to the specific topographic context of the Flon platform, from which many advantages could be taken to provide interesting solutions.

Moreover, for many reasons we might suppose that such a development was also the intention of Jean-Jacques Mercier-Marcel, the initiator of the industrial district. As the regulations of 1930 sets the limits building heights at the Grand-Pont level, rooftops would therefore be easily accessible. And Mercier, aware of this, decided to construct buildings with high structural efficiency to easily withstand such a development of the area. And this has be proven through the project Bel-Air-Montbenon he initiated in 1932. Therefore, the multilevel development of the area can be seen as an initial intention that never come to fruition. For this reason, it would be the main intention I would like to tackle within the project.

Furthermore, another aspect which is closely link with this notion of multilevel and that has been presented through almost every iteration is the aim of connecting the Montbenon esplanade to bel-air. This connection could be easily made, and will provide a direct access to the greenest area of Lausanne city, which moreover provide beautiful views on the lake. This, leads us to the views, the last element that has always been at the centre of almost every suggested project. Therefore, if for the project we supposed that buildings might emerge on this new level, it will be done according to the views. Regarding the current challenges, the notion of multilevel also tackle other subjects such as the sustainability impact it might have, through water collection or even reducing the sun-heat impact on the existing building. Moreover, it can also provide solutions to differently densify the city.

Concerning the current state of the Flon platform, which has been developed since 2009 under the direction of the Swiss real estate company Mobimo, there are already some aspects of the district that might be improved through project intentions. As Bruno Marchand underlines, two observations can be made. If we look at the current situation of the district, which was mainly occupied by a modest and marginal population at the end of the 20th century, the gentrification of the neighbourhoods has been quite important within the last 25 years. And the architectural eclecticism that characterises new constructions interferes with a global and coherent image of the Flon Platform, deviating from the rigidity of the industrial urban fabric. Moreover, in my opinion, public transport infrastructures on the east of the area contributes to the current isolation experienced in the neighbourhood. The building completely obstructs pedestrian flow and create a disruption in the urban dynamic.

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05 “Map Geo Admin”, *map.geo.admin.ch*.
06 Neuenschwander Feihl, “Développement urbain - Lausanne”, 263.
07 Association Vieux Lausanne, *Mémoire vive : Le Flon*, 14. © August Joseph Knip.
08 Gasser, “Adrien Pichard, ingénieur et premier urbaniste de Lausanne”, 313.
09 Ibid., 309.
10 Morsier, *Lausanne une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l’espace*, i 22.
11 Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon N46°31’17,18, E06°37’38,66*, 32.
12 Association Vieux Lausanne, *Mémoire vive : Le Flon*, 52.
13 Ibid., 15. © Emil Kirchner
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15 Zuppinger, “L’aménagement de l’espace non bâti de la plate-forme du Flon”, 17.
16 Association Vieux Lausanne, *Mémoire vive : Le Flon*, 51.
17 Ibid., 47.
18 “Remise en état du Grand-Pont”, *Espazium.ch*. © Lausanne City Archives
19 Peitrequin, “Un nouveau pont Bel-Air-Montbenon à Lausanne”, 170.
20 Ibid., 169.
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22 Vetter, “La Nouvelle Cité de Montbenon à Lausanne”, 314. © Würigler
23 Ibid., 315.
24 Ibid., 317.
25 Ibid., 319.
26 Ibid., 320.
27 Ibidem.
28 Bonnard, “Reconstruction de la gare du Flon”, 49.
29 Demont Catsicas, *Quartier du Flon N46°31’17,18, E06°37’38,66*, 37.
30 Quillet, *Aménagement de la vallée du Flon entre le Grand-Pont et le Pont Chauderon*, 2.
31 Ibid., 3.
32 Gruen, *Aménagement de la vallée du Flon*, 40. © Lausanne City Archives
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34 Ibid., 33. © Lausanne City Archives
35 Ibid., 34. © Lausanne City Archives

36 Gruen, *Aménagement de la vallée du Flon*, 35. © Lausanne City Archives

37 Ibid., 36. © Lausanne City Archives

38 Morsier, *Lausanne une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 26.

39 Cerny, *Perspectives de l'aménagement d'un espace urbain central*, 66.

40 Ibid., 71.

41 Morsier, *Lausanne une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 26.

42 APAHE, *Aménagement du Flon une chance à ne pas manquer*, 10. © Lausanne City Archives

43 Morsier, *Lausanne une ville et sa sensibilité dans le temps et l'espace*, u 27.

44 Cuendet, *Le Flon, aménagement d'une vallée*, 18,1.

45 APAHE, *Aménagement du Flon une chance à ne pas manquer*, 29. © Lausanne City Archives

46 Ibid., 35.

47 Service d'urbanisme, *Concours d'idées "Gare du Flon"*, 127.

48 Ibid., 153.

49 Ibid., 180.

50 Ibid., 184.

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52 Botta, *La vallée du Flon*, 13. / Botta, "Un Projet pour la Ville", 17.

53 Botta, "Un Projet pour la Ville", 18.

54 Botta, *La vallée du Flon un nouveau quartier au centre de Lausanne*, 7.

55 Dumas, "Le concours du Flon", 12.

56 Ibid., 13.

57 Ibid., 9.

58 Luscher, *Quartier du Flon : down-town 2*, 7.

59 Dumas, "Le concours du Flon", 6.

60 Ibid., 7.

61 Tschumi, *Aménagement de la gare du Flon à Lausanne projet Ponts-Villes*, 13.

62 Ibid., 7.

63 "Bernard Tschumi", epfl.ch. © Archives de la construction moderne – EPFL

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66 Ibidem.

67 Lévy, *Une place pour Lausanne*, 141.

68 Ibid., 165.

69 APAHE, *Flon-Ville ou comment bâtir sans trop détruire*, 23.

70 Ibid., cover.

71 Zuppinger, *Luttes-ô-Flon*, 78. ©Burki

72 Pozzy, "Derrière les murs gris, le Flon explose de couleurs", 1. ©Burki

73 Zuppinger, *Luttes-ô-Flon*, 107. ©Burki

74 Ibid., 108. ©Burki

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Originating from the industrial development of the city, the inception of the Flon platform occurred amidst the rugged topography of Lausanne during the early 19th century. Established through the initiative of the prosperous Mercier Family, this expansive district is under the ownership of a private entity. Consequently, a significant area in the heart of Lausanne eludes municipal control, resulting in endless discussions between the two stakeholders, consistently leading to disagreement. This intricate situation gives rise to a plethora of project proposals, embodying a multitude of ideologies that have shaped the architectural history of the 20th century.

The énoncé théorique seeks to offer a succinct overview of Lausanne's development, facilitating a more profound understanding of the region's historical background and significance. Subsequently, the primary focus of the research lies in meticulously examining the failure and rejection of numerous project iterations while identifying each actor involved in the evolution of the Flon platform. Concurrently, the énoncé underscores facets of each proposal that resonate with distinct idiosyncrasies, shedding light on pertinent periods of architectural theory and history.

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