L I M O G E S

I. Diagnosis

A. Defective synapses

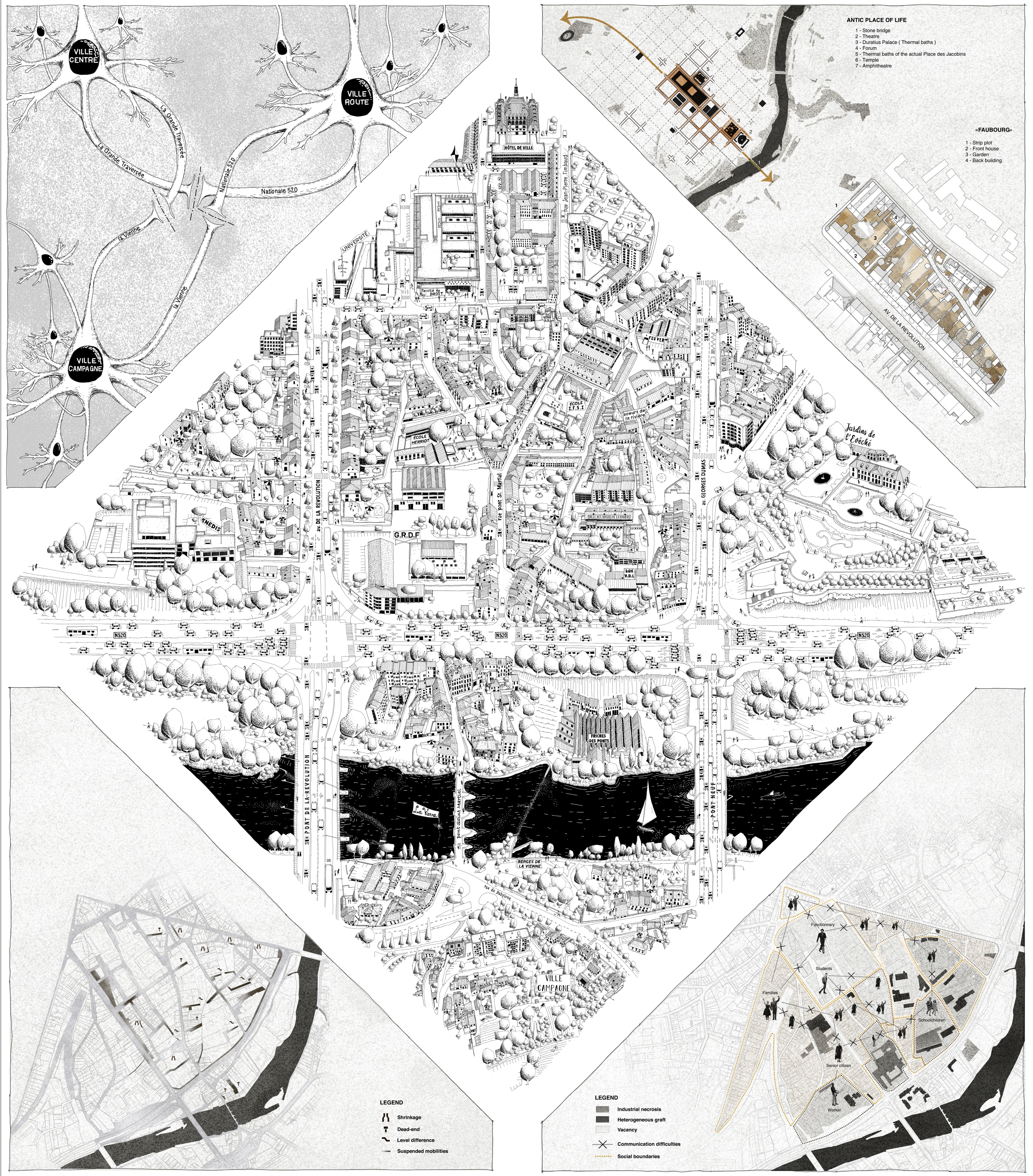
A three-headed living organism, the Limoges metropolitan area is affected by a disconnection of its main components – the ville-centre, the ville-route and the ville-campagne. The project site benefits from an ideal situation: the N520 connects the ville-route, and the Borders of Vienna project opens the ville-campagne. This is a unique opportunity to open the city centre, reconnect these components and implement new synergies between the stakeholders and the inhabitants of both the neighborhood and the larger city. But as long as this urban synapse remains inoperative, the nervous influx of the metropolitan organism cannot flow.

Yet, this neighborhood's rightful place is to be a synapse, as it shall be the connection between the ville-centre and the territory. To this end, we postulate that its urban revitalization is necessary. Its purpose would be to reassert the preexisting neighborhood identity, restore the consistency of roads and landscapes, and reactivate the lost, or ignored, economical, ecological, and social dynamics.

B. Disturbed vascularity

Over time, the neighborhood's mobility has been disrupted. Many elements prevent the flows from circulating fluently. Many retaining walls have been built as an adjustment to the rugged topography. The road profiles, the invasion of parking spots and the lack of transversal porosity of the trio of Mairie-Pont Saint Martial-Portes Ferrées all contribute.

Additionally, the neighborhood's porosity has been undermined by the opaque skyline of the Avenue de la Révolution, and by the crossing of the N520. Fluidity is critical, as capillarity will propagate the urban dynamics to come, so that consistency and unity can be brought back within the area. The first step to a successful frugal requalification is to fluidify this vascular system. This requires an upgrade of the crossing of Rue du Pont Martial. Yet, this upgrade cannot be just about crossing the neighborhood. It needs to deeply irrigate it, so that the organism will work again. Amongst other things, the original neighborhood genetics was based on the inheritance of the orthogonal roman layout functioning and on the strip-based parcels. These genetic components shall be summoned.



The buildings of the neighborhood participate to its lack of consistency. The older strip-based tissue of the faubourgs was once rather homogeneous. At the borders of the riverbank, it is now tangled with the necrotic tissue of the ancient industrial footprint. Several empty spots and sporadic interventions also stain the north of the site. On the centre-ville side, the large exogenous university buildings present their back to the neighborhood. The perfectible organism circulation will not irrigate organs of such heterogeneity. The body functions must be made clearer, by promoting the tissue of the preexisting faubourgs, reactivating the brownfield sites and putting a halt to the erratic property transactions. The propagation of these undesired urban transplants must be stopped. These disruptions, these heterogeneities are all symptoms of an exhausted organism. A healthy vascular system, based on a consistent urban landscape and on the reconnection of the disconnected functional organs, is the only way to the neighborhood revitalization.

The limits of this organism have also an impact on the social links at both neighborhood scale and territory scale.

C. Disruptive urban transplants

Locally, the populations of the old faubourgs and of the universities, the users of the riverbank, etc. have very little opportunity for onsite interactions. They would act as a set of isolated, self-sustaining cells rather than as a combination of tissue, organs and arteries of the living city. This phenomenon impacts the larger territory. The current neighborhood dysfunctions deprive the metropolitan area from a valuable meeting point; a space where multiple publics could feel home, and where the potential synergies could be revealed. Yet, the merchants of the centre-ville, the researchers from the technopôle, the businesses from the commercial zone, the families from the ville-campagne and even the neighborhood inhabitants themselves are all destined to live together in this space. From an ethical, ecological and productive standpoint, we cannot hope to establish this synergy without restoring our urban synapse. For The Cure, Limoges is a living city which is experiencing disease. The cure must be designed for the long-time effect. It has to be realistic in terms of resources and processes, and positioned to serve the environment, the landscape, and the inhabitant.

D. Isolated cells

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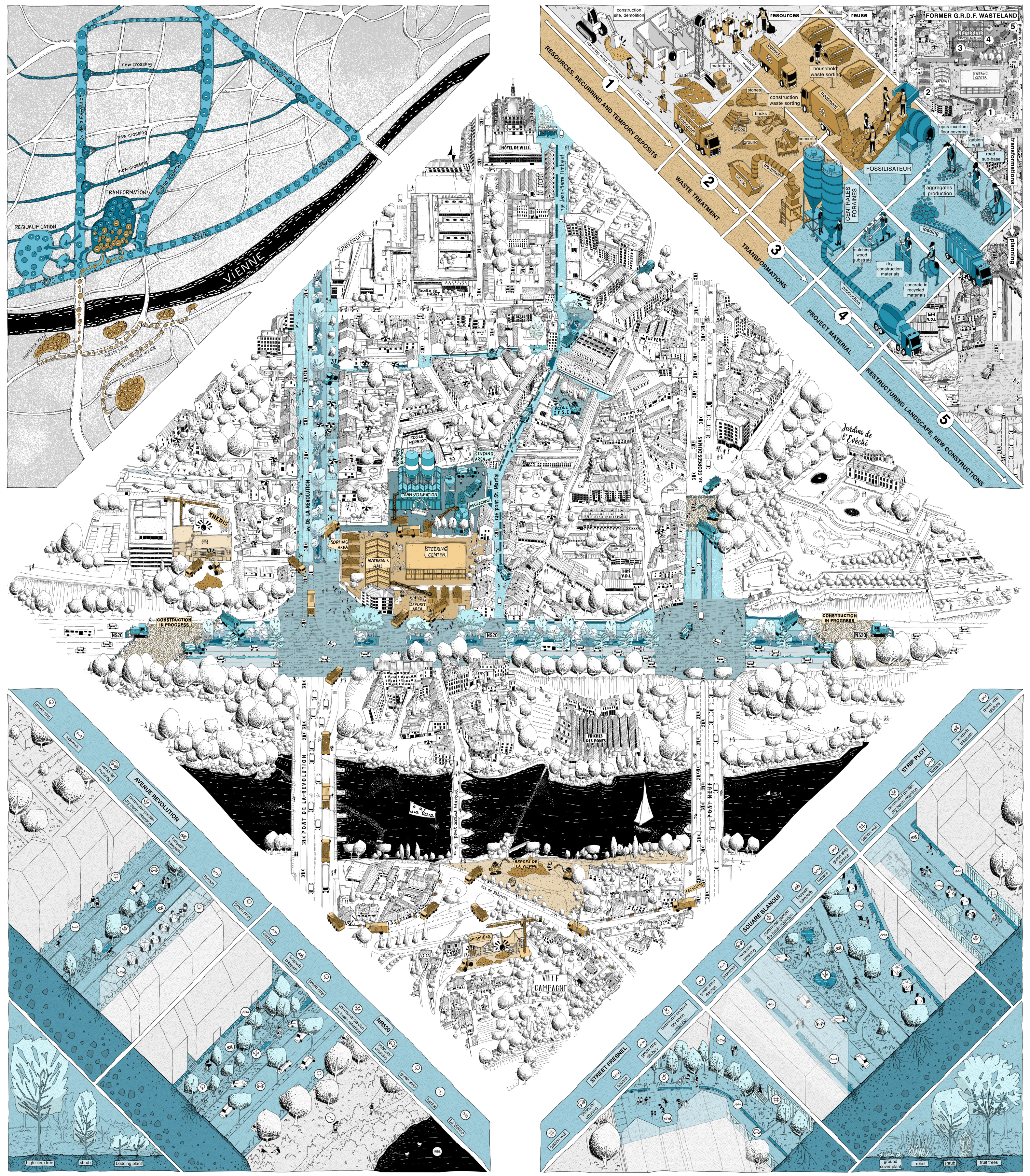
II. Convalescence

A. Blood system

The project proposes two different scales of intervention, deployed on two different temporalities. The first intervention must answer the challenges at the neighborhood scale, in the short time. This is the first key to the convalescence of the global urban organism. Here, we deal with implementing a negotiated landscape, reintroducing a parsimonious management of the core neighborhood landscape and roads, giving the place back to the inhabitants, in an attempt that revolves around the landscape, geological and social site specificities. Our proposal is to preserve the most of what is built. We only foster the existing vacancies to host programs of proximity which are destined to local inhabitants. Our proposal is focused on requalification of empty spaces rather than full ones. It shall generate a first cycle of urban requalification, thanks to targeted, small-scale interventions destined to give consistency and healthiness back to the veins and the arteries of the neighborhood blood system. For this first phase, the brownfield sites are made productive again. They must enable the self-regeneration of this neighborhood, thanks to the introduction of reusage activities around the old GRDF site.

B. Stem cells

The temporary deposits, waste, and soil coming from the surrounding sites (eco-district of Portes-Ferrées, Borders of Vienna project) and the recurring deposits coming from the inhabitant initiatives provide the raw materials of the neighborhood landscape. The project generates a reuse and co-management cycle in which all the local stakeholders – inhabitants, private or public entrepreneurs – take part. This includes: a reference center for the project management, mobile centrales foraines for the manufacture of recycled concrete from the temporary deposits, a fossilisateur that transforms household waste into granulates, and a recycling center for the materials coming from the recurring deposits. This combination of processes shall place the inhabitant at the heart of the various projects of this urban acupuncture. These small productive, mobile or adaptable units are the first step of the project implementation over the brownfield sites. Above all, they are destined to the genesis of a negotiated landscape. In addition to the production of raw materials, the vocation of this site is to foster interactions between the various implicated civilian and professional populations.



This requalification will sustain the core neighborhood identity, and will also take advantage of what already exists: the runoff landscape, the buildings and parcels legacies, but also the rich history of the site. The site is located on the top of a rocky, low permeability soil, with a strong topography and many artificial grounds. This low porosity creates islets of heat and a landscape where water runoff is high. We are today the effect of this specificity. But it could be the key to tomorrow's landscape. The water irrigates all the project spaces and goes by the requalification of the public spaces, where it brings a landscape consistency to the entire neighborhood. Its subtle presence is the guiding principle which brings freshness islets and new usage through several spatial layouts. The project rethinks the limits. It creates parking lots on boundaries of the site to give back space for the pedestrians. The profiles of the avenue de la Révolution and of the N520 are redefined to give a real stand for soft mobility and natural landscape. The neighborhood boundaries are made softer and are reopen towards the city and the riverbank. The synapse finds back its road connections and the neighborhood blood system reestablishes the metropolitan system nervous connections.

C. System intersection

The water runoff landscape lets the neighborhood find back transversality towards the grand crossing of Mairie-Pont Saint-Martial-Portes Ferrées. It relies on the penetration capacity of the strip-shaped faubourgs, which is a strong heritage of this site, the thinness and the depth of which generate chosen urban porosities. The meeting spaces between these porosities and the crossing are an occasion to requalify the spaces that surround this specific, permeable landscape, and, also, to reintroduce life and biodiversity at the heart of the neighborhood. Mobile and fluid, the rainy days water gives place to the vegetal landscapes on the sunny moments. Water's linear figure follows the neighborhood mobilities and generates an evolutionary landscape. It fluidifies all the organs of the system. This attention to soils is nurtured by the recycling culture, as the waste of inhabitants become the new raw materials of the others' vitality. This is also what makes this project ecologically positive, as its frugality guarantees viability, and as it shows minimal amount of destructions and excellent economical impact for all the stakeholder of the recycling process.

D. Fluidification of the blood system

L I M O G E S

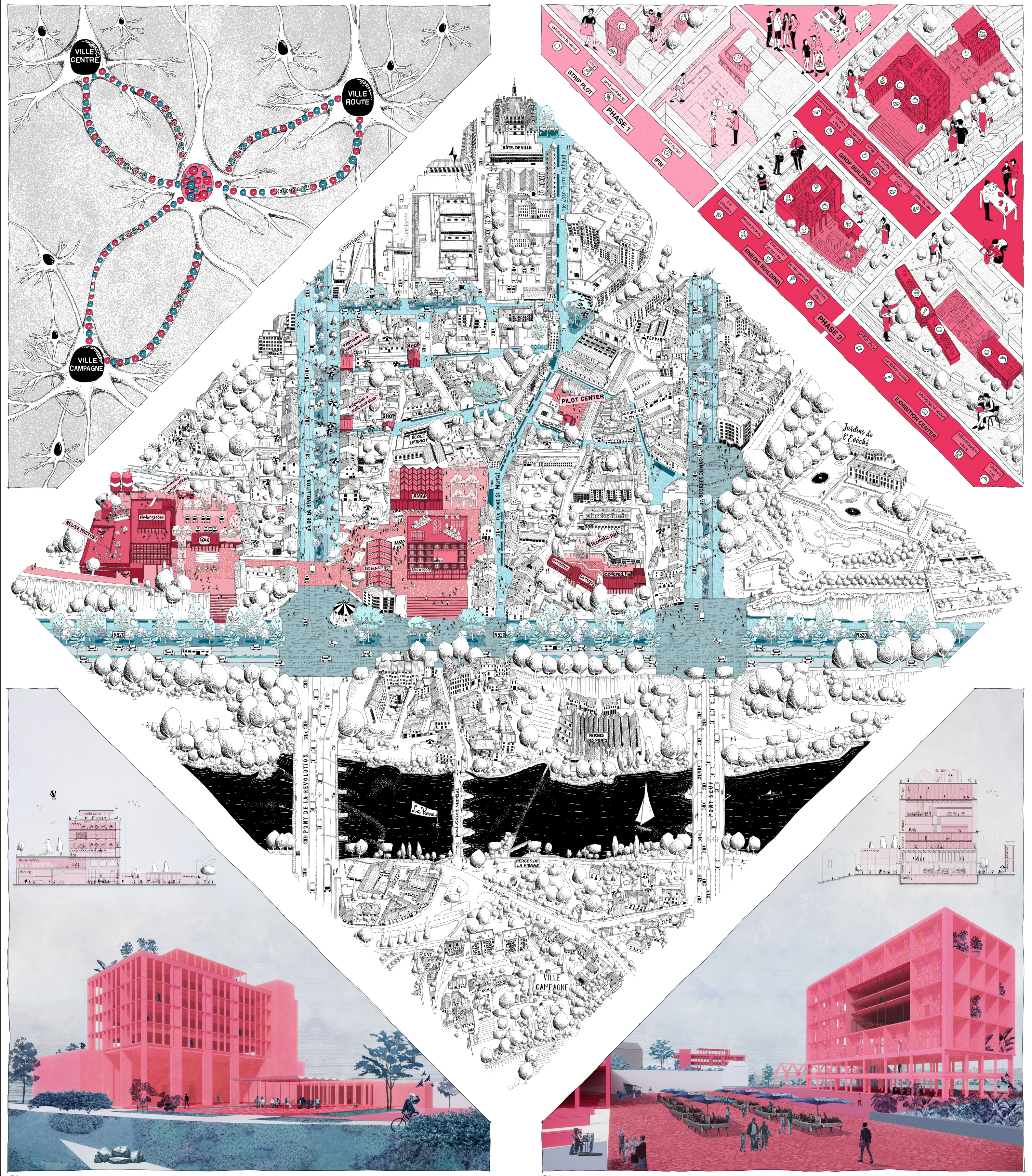
III. Recovery

A. Reconnected synapse

The second intervention must answer in the long time. This is time for the metropolitan stakes. The healing of the metropolitan nervous system requires a program-based reactivation of the defective synapse. It should be noted that the success of the first intervention is independant from this phasis. The brownfield sites are bordering the connection neurons of the ville-route and ville-campagne (that is, the Vienne and the N520) and are a valuable land opportunity for new programs. This is the opportunity to eradicate the boundary of N520 and enable its integration, which better articulate the opening towards the riverbank and the mobility changes of the ville-centre. The main purpose of this intervention is to reveal the latent synergies between the populations of ville-centre, ville-route and ville-campagne, by implementing mixed, shared and flexible programs. Based on both public and private investments, these construction projects must involve several economic actors of the territory. The issues at stakes are economical, but also deal with production and culture. The negotiated landscape and its recycling assets and its water and natural space management also participate to requalify the soils of the brownfield sites, which finally creates a unique and local biotope.

B. Micro-organisms

The ongoing requalification of the Vienne riverbank, the implantation of the Portes-Ferrées eco neighborhood and the implementation of the negotiated landscape are factors that increase the area attractivity. To avoid gentrification and guide densification, the building of housings and offices must be planed and controlled. The disorganized necrosis of the urban tissue must be countered by implementing mixed and flexible program-based micro-organisms that carry human synergies. During the first intervention, the project relies on minimal construction. Reusing the old IFSI school to create the management centre for negotiated landscape was an opportunity to reopen the square of the campus on the Pont Saint Martial street. Then, we reserve the housing offer to local inhabitants by lifting the houses of the faubourg at the angle of the strip-shaped parcels where we want to create new arteries. During the second phase, the mixed brownfield programs are pushed to include offices and housings in sufficient quantity to answer the market needs. This vertical densification matches large parcel morphology, and is beneficial to the free open spaces at ground level.



The former Enedis building is partially rehabilitated, whereas the GRDF warehouse is used to implement a second small tower. These buildings create visual milestones for the walker of the Vienne riverbank, and anchor the synapse in the landscape. Following programs are an hypothetical scenario which is destined to be defined over time. The scenario assumes that tripartite partnerships – the content of which will be negotiated – will emerge between the inhabitants and public and private stakeholders. For the West Synapse hosting the Enedis building, the current scenario envisions on the west side, a Congress Center to host conferences and expositions within a space that is given back to the city, and will be co-managed by the Ester technopole and the municipality. The existing parking lots under the vegetal mound are preserved and enlarged. The mobile reuse cycle leaves the GRDF brownfield to reach the back of Enedis building, and to pursue on its ecological and civic activity. Offices are provided to professionals of technopole, to make their activities closer to the inner city. Programs for the inhabitants are exemplified through a kindergarten and a brewery.

C. West Synapse

The east synapse is implanted on the former GRDF brownfield. Once the negotiated landscape is settled in the neighborhood, the reuse cycle gives place to new stakeholders. Housing and offices are deployed in the tour, which returns the property investment by generating new partnerships with local real estates. In addition to these programs, the tower also hosts, in its first floors, a showroom for the merchants of the commercial zone and of the ville-centre, so they can meet their consumers. A publicly managed cultural place hosts the associations and echoes the negotiated landscape central management. This new entity coordinates the brownfield stakeholders and deploys a cultural offer to this new urban forum. An AMAP market is implemented at the remote warehouses of the parcel, which provides a weekly market to the forum and also uses the rehabilitated industrial hall as a productive greenhouse. Urban agriculture spreads over the parcel. The walkers from the ville-campagne cross through the synapse, up until the entrance of the negotiated landscape, which is then the main thread towards the city center. Overseeing this view, the synapse also makes advantage of the topography to host an underground parking lot, and thus, complete the surrounding parking offer.

D. East Synapse