Istres
France

SCALE: L & S, urban and architectural

TEAM REPRESENTATIVE: architect/ urbanist/ landscpae architect

SITE TOPIC: Care / Dealing with new Uses

LOCATION: Istres - Bouches- du-Rhône (13)

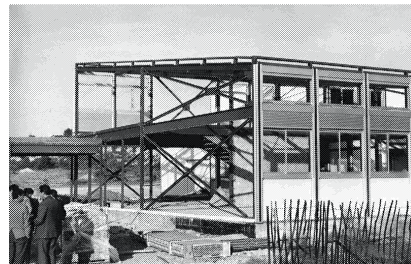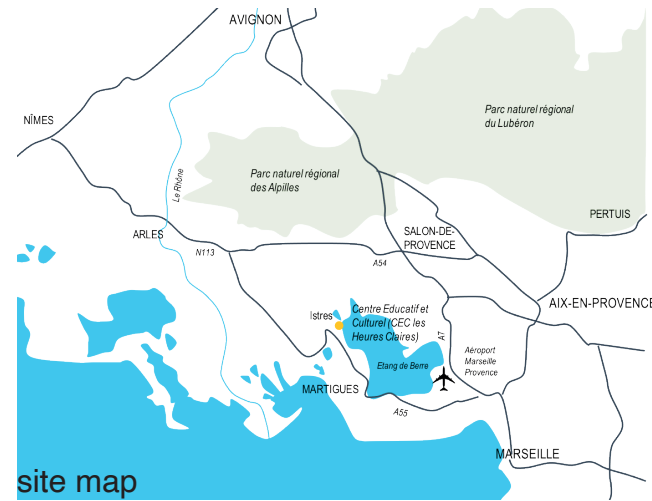POPULATION: city : 43 133 inhab./ Métropole Aix-Marseille-Provence : 1 895 600 inhab.

STUDY SITE: 20 ha

PROJECT SITE: 12 ha

SITE PROPOSED BY: city of Istres

ACTORS INVOLVED: city of Istres, Métropole Aix-Marseille- Provence

OWNER(S) OF THE SITE: city of Istres

COMMISION AFTER COMPETITION: Urban and architectural feasibility study and/or architectural contract.

site map

The construciton of the CEC, 1971

The Library of the CEC, 1973

Aerial view of the study site in red and the project site in yellow

«Les Heures Claires»
From one utopia to another

Map of the main Third Places
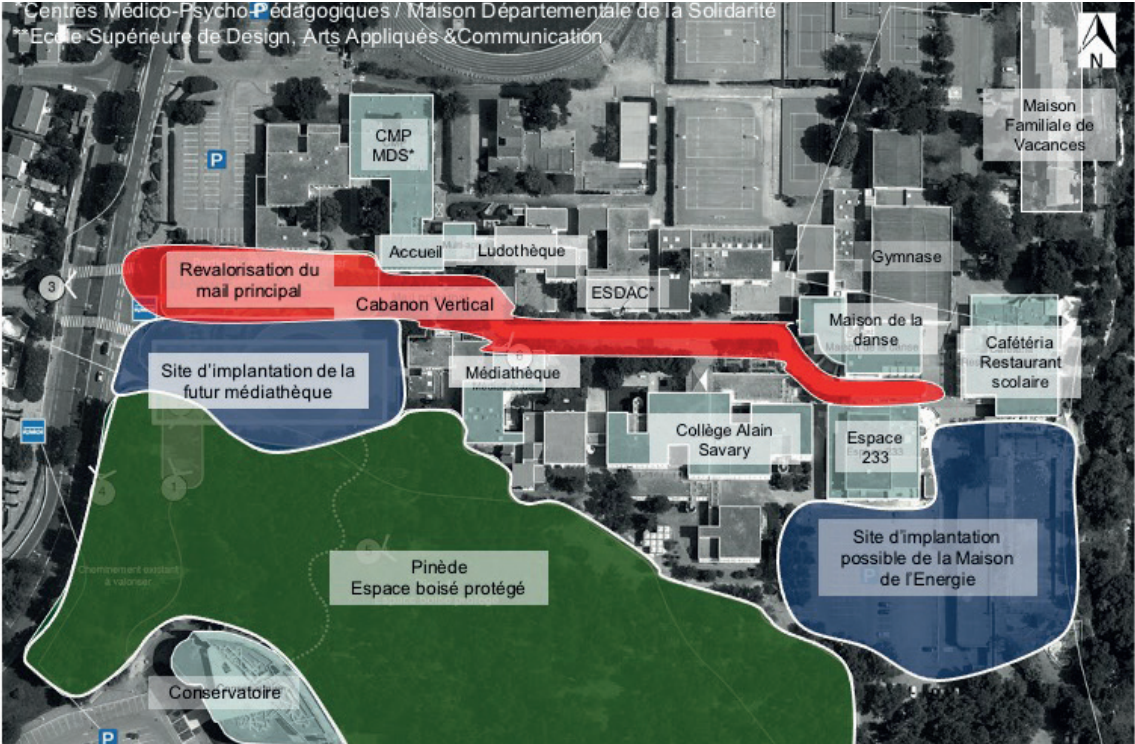

Aerial view with the study site in red

URBAN CITY STRATEGY

Istres is a town in the recently created metropolitan area of Aix-Marseille-Provence (AMP); it was originally an old Provencal village looking down over the lagoon, Étang de Berre. During the end of the 20th century, Istres saw its population grow considerably under the auspices of a new town that spread out like a blanket, with a new town centre and residential areas (clusters of houses, small buildings, etc.), but also with a large number of public amenities, among which the ECC. The town wants to find a new use for the ECC's 'Alain Savary' secondary school, which is going to move elsewhere, to preserve its experimental and working-class character through a project of a 'third place', a collective place, for learning. What is more, the ECC is soon to benefit from the construction of a new multimedia library and the installation of a 'Maison de l'Energie' energy centre. Down the slope on the banks of the lagoon, a project to renovate the marina is underway, with a maritime shuttle to provide a fast link to Marseille-Provence airport, thereby opening up the town.

SITE DEFINITION

'Les Heures Claires' educational and cultural centre (ECC) is located in the South of France, in the city of Istres, which has a population of nearly 43500 inhabitants. Benefiting from its proximity to the agglomerations of Aix and Marseille, Istres is today part of a region strongly marked by the establishment of industrial-port sites and constitutes the center of a life basin still relatively autonomous from the rest of the department, both economically and in terms of services and facilities.

E16 LINVING CITIES - Istres France

*Centres Médico-Psycho-Pédagogiques / Maison Départementale de la Solidarité
**École Supérieure de Design, Arts Appliqués &Communication

The CEC today : Alain Savary' secondary school is moving

Aerial view of the project site

View of the Etang de Berre from the CEC cafeteria

Green patio in the Alain Savary school

Entrance of the Alain Savary school

Central mail of the CEC

HOW MUST BE DEVELOPPED AND CONNECTED METABOLISM AND INCUSIVITY?

'Les Heures Claires' educational and cultural centre (ECC) was built in the 1970s by Atelier Montrouge, with ideas of sharing, of collective reflection and of embracing multi-disciplinary collaboration. The Istres educational and cultural centre 'Les Heures Claires' is also part of the dynamic of development of the industrial area of Fos-sur-Mer and the large-scale influx of workers. Today, the ECC houses an 'open school', arts and sports amenities, a music school, a multimedia library, a dance school, around a tree-lined avenue ending in a terrace and belvedere looking over the Étang de Berre lagoon.

It is a matter of questioning the place of the CEC in the urban landscape and in contemporary lifestyles. Guided by a certain idea of utopia, it is possible to question today the innovative architecture of the Atelier de Montrouge, by rediscovering the virtues of modular, evolutive and adaptable architecture. The relocation of the college will enable a reflection on this 20th century architecture, and to test its possible reinvention.

Based on the idea that relationships between art, sport and education constitute the basis of a society that is more fair and more open, the ECC today needs to rekindle its utopian dimension and build on what is the force of the site, sharing and collaboration, education and creation, while also clarifying its position within contemporary transitions (digital, anthropocene, participative democracy, communal, etc.)