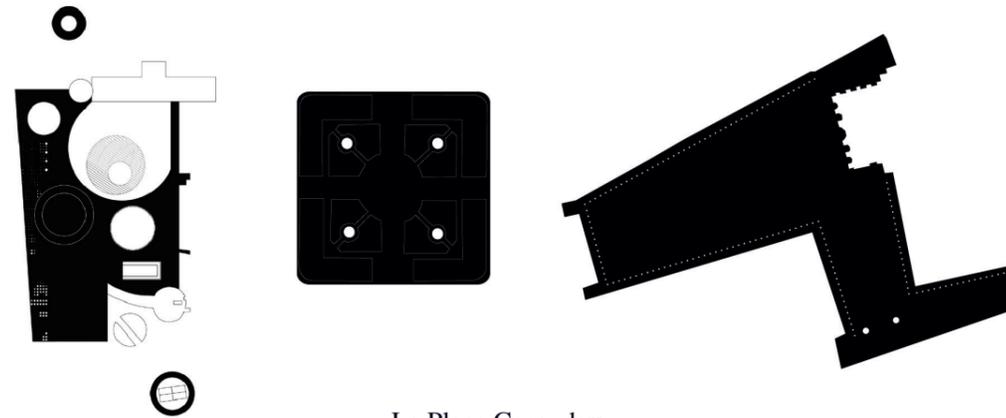


BLOOM  
LA PLACE COSANDEY  
EPFL CAMPUS LAUSANNE



La Place Cosandey  
EPFL Campus Lausanne, Switzerland

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

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

#### CONTEXT

The Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne EPFL has been growing significantly in student numbers and staff in the past decade and a half, with a community doubling to more than 15'000 people by 2015. The same years have seen a continuous construction of new buildings like, for instance, the well-known Learning Center by Sanaa, the ArtLab Building by Kengo Kuma, or the Mechanical Sciences building by Dominique Perrault. The first phase of the construction of the campus started in the 1970s on the outskirts of the city of Lausanne, followed by a series of extensions in the form of master plans in the decades thereafter. The spatial disposition of buildings and connecting spaces trace that history: The buildings of the EPFL campus have been conceived as functional unities, attributed to faculties and disciplines, which themselves are housed in sub-units in those buildings, often in spatial separation from one another. This model reflects the way sciences in western societies have been growing and enhancing their power. It models specialization and the spatial compartmentalization of functions and flows.

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

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

#### PROJECT

The south of the EPFL Campus has seen significant mutations in recent years. In sequence to the Learning Center, which proposes an accentuated relationship to the landscape and the open space of the campus, the new ArtLab building and the Mechanical Sciences building have been constructed. Between them, the Place Cosandey remained as a left over rather than as an articulated space, as the beginning of an esplanade, without spatial definition other than that provided by the bordering buildings. The EPFL Direction decided that it should be up to the students themselves to design the transformation of this generous space of the campus.

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

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

At the scale of the site the project articulates the relation between the 'dense' parts of the campus and the southern, park-like part of the campus. Here the project plays the double role of square and urban park, acting as a node of an urban system, generous, and supporting simultaneously activities and movements, intertwined with the existing park system around the Learning Center.

The square itself is conceived as a *Supersurface*: It is the support of all the movements, activities and events, and it correlates the recently constructed new buildings, their different surroundings and their levels. Moments of intensity articulate the space of the square and propose a diverse rhythm, another exposure to the space, a certain intimacy: They play on horizons of the square and the strong presence of the vegetation to come – in order to exist adjacently to the flux of movements, becoming places of encounter and co-presence. Each of those moments is unique in its relationship to movements, to the surrounding horizons, in its proportions and in its materiality. The soft contact with the attentively sanded concrete of the seating, or the color of the flowers in front of the diverse buildings, have been thought about with the same care as the articulation of movements at larger scale, which seem now to reverberate from one another.

The square has become an active place of everyday activities. The food-strip at the *Parvis* in the north has led to a weekly rhythm of small businesses and food trucks selling meals and beverages across cultural boundaries, and students and visitors are using the square and its surroundings as a place of leisure, exchange and play. On the other end of scale, the square is home to large-scale events such as the *Balélec*, a yearly festival of electronic music drawing 15'000 people in one night. As a commons, also visited by large numbers of families and Lausanne citizens, the project for the *Place Cosandey* embodies the objectives of the future EPFL campus: It inscribes itself in the Open Campus Initiative and responds to the newly launched Resilient Campus endeavor. It is a project conceived by and lived by all. Open to the citizens and becoming part of a collective imaginary, it has grafted onto the existing potential of the EPFL campus and its surrounding environment. In its thoroughly urban nature as a place of exchange and sharing, it projects a timely spatial figure as an expression of the future missions of research and education in our societies.