We realized that the spatial and functional unity of the space was played in the centre, and more literally than what first expected. We decide to propose to the jury a junction in the centre, linking physically, creating the unity and the identity of the two cut halves. There was no need and no budget to cover entirely the train, and we didn’t want to make a simple footbridge over it, so we proposed to put a real public space over the train. This space was designed in relation to the previous implantation geometry and opens in section and plan to match the historical axe. The space had to follow the rail company constraints in terms of height and safety measures, but we decided to pinch it in its centre in order to show the infrastructure and not hide it.

Two large seating steps were proposed on each side facing the existing continuous benches, allowing the passage from one part to the other but also the use the space as a real open place. The existing space has been maintained as much as possible.

The structure is made of steel, except the seating which are made of wood to ensure a comfortable seating. The steel structure functions like an arch-bridge composed of two large lateral beams. It is completely painted white to give a more precious and luminous aspect to the space.

* EVALUATION

Being just open to the public it is still a bit early to get some immediate conclusions on the acceptance of such a project by the people and in particular of the young audience passing regularly there. However the inhabitants have closely followed the work, even late at night or early in the morning, and all positive comments in the street and public meetings showed a surge of affection for the project.

For a rather conceptual project, we were quite pleased to see the intentions were so well understood by everyone.

On the engineering point of view, tests carried out by a university laboratory showed some particularly interesting static behaviour of the structure. This interest also contributed to the reputation of the project and the changing of view on the neighbourhood.

Official project name:
Urban Renewal of Square Eugene Verboeckhoven
Architects
MSA / NEY & Partners
Location
Square Eugene Verboeckhoven in Schaerbeek
Completion
February 2014
Program
Public space & pedestrian bridge
Surface
3.725 m²
Client
Municipality of Schaerbeek
208, rue d’Aerschot 1030 Brussels
Budget (Excl. VAT and fees)
600,000€