Le Havre a port metropolis open to the world

With 255,000 inhabitants in 1999, the Le Havre conurbation (25th national conurbation) is an average sized Urban District that includes 17 communes and which is organised around the City of Le Havre (190,000 inhabitants), the 11th city of France.

Situated at the southern limit of the Caux plateau and on the right bank of the Seine Estuary, Le Havre is the main port of the French West coast. At the entrance to the "North European range" of ports, on the most frequented stretch of sea in the world, Le Havre is, by river, rail and motorway, about 90 km from Rouen, the prefecture of the department of Seine Maritime, and 200 km from Paris. Because of the huge importance of its port function and the historical and geographical conditions of its development, the Le Havre urban agglomeration presents a certain originality in national urban structures. Since its creation, Le Havre is indeed traditionally turned towards the sea. Its original military functions have been superseded by trading functions (gateway to the colonies, coffee trading, and financial market) and the city has spread out over the surrounding marshes and hills. In the 1930's, a strong industrial port development enabled the pursuit of this growth and today still marks the economic positioning of the conurbation.

The Normandy bridge and the completion of the A29 motorway, today set Le Havre on the "Road of the Estuaries", an element of the European Atlantic trunk road that will connect North West Europe (Belgium, the Netherlands) to Southern Europe (the Iberian peninsular).
The City of Le Havre

The City of Le Havre is only five centuries old. 80% of it was flattened by bombing in 1944 and was rebuilt by the architect Auguste PERRET. The Perret city centre is listed as a World Heritage site since July 2005.

At the same time as the post-war reconstruction, the City of Le Havre continued its spatial expansion by absorbing surrounding communes. The locomotive for its development during the Sixties and Seventies stemmed from the will to develop industry in France and, for the Lower Seine, to build a major centre based on the automobile and petrochemicals industries.

It is today the 11th city of France, but with a falling demography over the last 20 years. Its image as an austere industrial city is in the course of being changed through its numerous urban projects.

- **A metropolis open to the world:**
  Top ranking city in Normandy, Le Havre benefits from an attractive geographical situation on the most frequented stretch of water in the world and less than 2 hours away from Paris.

- **An international trading centre:**
  The presence of regional headquarters operating over the 5 continents and of big international groups reinforces the Le Havre region in its historic role as a trading centre.

- **An European industrial centre:**
  Aeronautics, petrochemicals, automobile, eco-industries, packaging …
  In high technology, innovation and performances, the industrial centre of the Le Havre region is proving its vitality. From the nacelles for the A 380 Airbus to the production of a third of France's fuel, this centre plays a big role in the economic drive of the country.

- **World Heritage site:**
  By listing the Le Havre city centre rebuilt by Auguste Perret as a world heritage site in 2005, UNESCO has recognised the exceptional work of the famous architect and has placed Le Havre alongside the world's greatest historical references.

- **Nautical and seaside resort:**
  With the labels of seaside resort and nautical resort, port of call for the biggest liners, Le Havre provides all the tourist advantages of an ocean metropolis: a 2km long beach in the city centre, a yacht harbour with 1500 moorings, the practice of all nautical sports, a casino… as an illustration of this natural maritime vocation, since 1991 Le Havre is the start port for the famous Jacques Vabre transatlantic sailing race between France and Brazil.

- **The Port of Le Havre, ocean gateway between Europe and the world:**
  Top ranking French port for containers, Le Havre is the spearhead for national foreign trade where it is the major player in overseas exchanges. With more than 70 regular shipping lines, calling at 600 ports and with the recent putting into service of ‘Port 2000’, the Port of Le Havre represents a real locomotive for economic growth.

The Port of Le Havre

Deepwater seaport with no draught limits and completely free of tidal constraints, the Port of Le Havre is situated at the centre of the North West maritime façade of Europe at the entrance to the Seine estuary. It is the leading port in France on this façade. It is french leading port for containers and general cargo.

With the first two berths being put into service in 2006, followed by the second two in 2007, ‘Port 2000’ that will, at term, comprise 12 berths, is giving the Port of Le Havre the means to improve its position in the leading group of North European ports.

National and international rankings: 1st French port for foreign trade and for containers – 6th Port in Europe.

Surface area of the Le Havre port domain: 9 500 hectares, of which 1 500 hectares of water surfaces (within the breakwaters and not including the maritime area under its administrative control).
Administrative and Legal status: Autonomous port, an organisation with a legal personality and with financial autonomy, placed under the supervision of the Minister charged with the seaports and subjected to economic and financial control of the State.

Traffic 2006 (millions of tonnes):
- Overall traffic: 73.8
  - general cargo: 22.7
  - Liquid bulk: 47.5
  - Dry bulk: 3.6
- Container traffic (TEUs): 2.1 millions
- Passenger traffic: 800 000

Number of direct jobs: 16 000 jobs in maritime and port activities

The container capacity will be multiplied by 3 with ‘Port 2000’: from 2 million TEUs to 6 million TEUs. In the long term, taking into account the capacity of Port 2000, and the vitality of both globalisation and container traffic, the Port of Le Havre should undertake new major developments to reinforce its presence and enhance the advantages it already has by its geographical position at the entrance to North European waters.

The present fore port has strong potential that would enable a container terminal with excellent nautical qualities to be developed there, without any tidal or lock constraints.

The re-composition of this space close to the city – port interface should be carried out by articulating in the best way the problematic of inland connections – road rail and waterway – that border part of the South districts, whilst guaranteeing margins of manoeuvre and the space necessary for the development of existing port activities – such as the sectors of agro-foodstuffs, energy and cruises.

In this context, the handling of the city - port interface will be a major factor for the development of the port which, after having regularly moved further away from the city, would return to the Urban District, close to a particularly strategic zone for urban renewal: the South districts of Le Havre.

This is why, parallel to the economic investment programme of national interest that Port 2000 constitutes, the City of Le Havre is engaged in a huge sustainable social, environmental, and economic regeneration programme for the South Districts. It has received support from the European Union through the URBAN Community Initiative Programme.

The South districts, a territory of major challenges

The physical characteristics of the South districts

The South districts of Le Havre are spread over the lower part of the city, at the entrance to the city and its centre. This urban district, close to the Seine Estuary, covers 800 hectares.

Situated at the Southern limits of the urban agglomeration and in direct contact with the quarters of the city centre, this sector, whose South and East boundaries touch the Port and industrial zones, is comprised of five main wards: Saint-Nicolas de l'Eure, Brindeau, Vallée/Béreult, Champs Barets, Les Neiges.
In these quarters there are a little over 17,000 inhabitants (1999 census) mixed with some 1,500 business firms employing about 11,500 private individuals. The dominant activities (transport, mechanical engineering, construction and public works) are in close proximity to 7,000 housing units of which 3,400 are social accommodation.

The South districts have a history closely linked with that of the Port of Le Havre, the extension of which was driven by the growth of shipping activities. They remained separated from the urbanisation movement and economic development up to half way through the 19th century when the creation of dock basins and the first industrial installations led to development of housing until a certain balance was attained by the start of the 20th century.

The “Plaine de l’Eure” – (“Eure plain”) became urbanised as from 1875 with, as a main characteristic, the accompaniment of each industrial unit with its lot of housing units. This mode of bit by bit urbanisation (with the exception of the Saint-Nicolas ward), with no goal other than to provide lodgings close to the factories for the population working in them, is at the origin of the main characteristics of the South districts:
- the intermingling housing/workplaces;
- the heterogeneous and dispersed character of the urban tissue;
- the very large weight of privately owned real estate;
- the predominance of a workman population.

However, after 1918, their residential function started a long decline, following the movement of port and industrial activities towards the South-East between the wars, and then, in the years 1960/1970, the development of social housing in the higher part of the city, the characteristics of which responded better to the aspirations of the population.
The appearance of containers in the Seventies constituted a real revolution for international trade, and ocean shipping in particular, and provoked the abandon of historic ports with their small dock-basins to the benefit of immense storage areas and deep-water ports capable of receiving ever bigger container vessels.

To this must be added the gradual fall-off in traditional crafts and activities (dockers and seamen/port functions) on which were based the foundations of the identity and coherence – social and urban – of these districts, and which have found themselves somewhat in regress over the last thirty years. The City of Le Havre, like all port cities in the world (New York, Liverpool, Rotterdam, Barcelona, etc.) found itself, at the beginning of the Eighties, with huge industrial and port wastelands close to the city centre and at the main entrance to the city. This territory, formerly full of life and economic and social drive, had become a deserted and degraded space thus contributing to the stigmatisation of these districts and the City as a whole. All this therefore provoked a real imbalance in urban functions and human activities.

Nevertheless, the South districts possess several structural advantages:

- an excellent situation, close to the decisional centre of the City and to the inter-modal station, in contact with the port zone, and directly connected to the main trunk-roads (motorways A 131, A 25, and the RN15 main road, etc.);
- the presence of dock-basins;
- the presence of a 19th century architectural heritage;
- big real-estate potential constituted by the industrial-port wastelands.
The main challenges

The South districts constitute a territory of major challenges for:

- **Port development:**
  - proximity of a working port;
  - presence of quaysides and storage areas (West port) providing development opportunities;
  - excellent inter-modal connections.

- **Urban development:**
  - proximity to the city centre, to the inter-modal station and the main centres of the economic activities of the Urban agglomeration;
  - presence of the water, a factor of attractiveness;
  - presence of real-estate and jointly owned land providing opportunities for development;
  - presence of structuring installations and equipment: university, performing arts/indoor sports hall, exhibition park…

- **Economic development:**
  - situation at the city – port interface;
  - a central weight in the economy of the conurbation;
  - a confirmed potential for growth;
  - excellent multimodal connections.

Thus, the port domain surrounding the South districts houses several sites (dock-basins, storage areas, quaysides, buildings…) more or less permanently abandoned by port and industrial activities. This heritage, that has the advantage of being on the waterside, constitutes an exceptional opportunity for the implantation of urban functions with a high added value (municipal installations and equipment, business premises, housing accommodation, etc.).

Situated close to the centre and entrance to Le Havre, these City – Port interface spaces thus represent a potential of the first order for the structuring and installations of the city and the attractiveness of the conurbation. In this logic, several development operations have been carried out or are currently envisaged: Performing arts/sports hall ("Docks Océane"), Exhibition centre ("Docks Café"), Commercial and leisure centre ("Docks Vauban"), Centre for the Sea and Sustainable Development, Aquatic Complex, Private clinic, Head office of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, … and the Urban Park of Saint Nicolas.
The power of attraction of these installations, the lever effect of the "Urban" programme and the competence of great names in architecture and urban planning (J. Nouvel, B. Reichen, B. Fortier, JP. Viguier) bodes well for the success of the urban project thus converging with the positioning of Le Havre as "the international maritime metropolis of the Seine Estuary".

The main objectives

The development strategy for the South districts is organised around the three following objectives:

1. **to reinforce their situation on a scale of the conurbation:**
   - by giving them a locomotive role in the development of the Le Havre region, by the constitution of a supply of innovatory and exemplary products, by means of public and private investments in installations interesting the conurbation (Centre for the Sea and Sustainable Development, Aquatic Complex, Commercial and leisure Centre, private clinic, fire-station, ...), on a line with those recently completed (Docks Café, Docks Océane, University buildings);
   - by improving the living environment by an attractive urban offer (notably by making use of the remarkable urban and port heritage elements) so that the urban quality constitutes a real "social cement" reconciling the inhabitant with his environment and enables a new growth to be engaged by attracting new investors;
   - by developing an innovatory policy in the fight against the degrading of the economic and urban environment.

2. **to ensure the cohabitation of the residential function and the economic vocation:**
   - by organising the structuring and development of the South districts in the framework of an integrated approach, destined to regain the compatibilities between human and economic vocations and activities, and to advantage synergies and blending;
   - by developing a strong real estate strategy to accompany or anticipate mutations of land;
   - by encouraging the installation of new businesses bringing added value;
   - by implementing an ambitious policy of improvement of existing housing units;
   - by reorganising the transport plan and improving traffic conditions.
③ to improve the social climate:
- by encouraging an associative atmosphere;
- by developing the provision of municipal equipment and cultural and leisure practices and by restoring the basic conditions for social life in these quarters;
- by putting the inhabitants on the verge of becoming drop-outs and in very great difficulty back into a process of social and economic reinsertion by encouraging, with targeted actions, their return or access to employment and training;
- by optimising social policies in favour of the most destitute.

The strategic orientations in development matters

The Master-plan

The City of Le Havre has given the AURH – Agence d'Urbanisme de la Région Havraise (Urban Planning Agency for the Le Havre Region) the task of drawing up a master-plan defining the big strategic orientations for the development of this territory for a horizon of 2020. This mission, carried out between 2002 and 2006, under the aegis of a piloting committee comprised of the 4 major stakeholders (the Municipality, the Port Authority, the Urban District Community, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry) has concluded in a shared project for the sustainable development of the South districts.

The Master-plan is not uniform in its contents, the degrees of appreciation of the future of the subdivisions of the South districts having to be related with their roles and realities in this huge composite territory. It is therefore an up-gradable tool, the finality of which is to enable the stakeholders to make choices and modify priorities of implementation.

The Master-plan is thus a project of projects that determines the sectors of intervention, of variable scope and time-scale. It aims to define an overall coherence between the various projects. It is the maintained impetus between these projects that will give, through the years, credibility to the reinvestment of the South districts.

The principle of action thus lies in the setting up of an operational strategy that consists in revealing and putting the emphasis on the sites of challenge from which the effects of diffusion and synergy are expected to accompany the processes of urban re-interpretation.

The construction of the project integrates:
- the unavoidable constants that are the presence of the water in the dock-basins, the quaysides and the canals;
- the projects of local interest or of supra-community interest.

The South districts comprise, for the whole partnership, a territory of challenges for the Urban District where two unavoidable issues must be taken into account:
- urban development based on a functional blend;
- the installation of economic activities, to perpetuate and to revitalise.

Three perimeters have been defined, the first two of which are judged as priorities:
① a perimeter in which the objective is to develop mixed urban functions: housing, tertiary and higher tertiary activity;
② a perimeter oriented towards the installation and development of economic functions with high added value;
③ a perimeter where the orientations for the future to be promoted are still undecided.

Such an approach enables, with an overall vision shared in the long term, a perimeter for action and a perimeter for further thought to be associated without the decisions taken for one of these perimeters weighing down on the future of another.
Sites and major projects

Development of mixed urban functions

Long-term developments to be defined

Development of value-added economic functions
The operational project

The South districts constitute the heart of the economic life of the Urban agglomeration (9% of the jobs of the employment pool). This is why the City has given itself a strong urban project to revitalise this territory and to give an impetus to the whole region.

The urban project is supported on history, the urban layouts and the identity of the quarters.

This ambitious long term project (LE HAVRE 2020) is already operational through a first phase carried out with success by the City and its public and private partners.

This first phase has put into application the strategic orientations in matters of development, laid down by the piloting committee of the master-plan:

- to constitute the hyper-centre by improving the attractiveness;
- to constitute the secondary centres by reinforcing the identities;
- to improve the living environment by smoothing out transport and the conflicts of usage.

Creation of an enlarged city centre ("the hyper-centre"):
The Saint Nicolas ward, situated at the extreme West of the South District, should permit the expansion of the city centre by receiving structuring equipments of Urban agglomeration interest: Commercial and leisure Centre, Aquatic Complex, Centre for the Sea and Sustainable Development, urban park, clinic....

Its opening up by the bridging of the Paul Vatine dock-basin extends the city centre, listed as a World Heritage site, whilst answering the needs of the Urban agglomeration in terms of structuring installations and equipment.

Creation of secondary centres ("heart of the ward"):
Taking into account the extent of this territory (800 hectares) and the morphological and historical specificities of each of the sub-districts, the creation of hearts for the wards permits the social functioning and urban legibility of each of them to be improved.

Each centre is supported by:
- the creation of a public installation locally: media library in Brindeau, Social Centre in Vallée Béreult
- the re-qualification of the living environment: renovation of public spaces, refurbishing of facades and residential densification.
By the quality of this first phase, the City has demonstrated its will to enhance these territories through new functions capable of generating territorial vitality and providing impetus to the commune and the conurbation.

The challenge today consists in continuing this ambitious project of an urban conquest of the 800 hectares of the City – Port interface whilst bringing together the conditions for a sustainable and harmonious development of economic, and notably port, functions.