

LAN

Press Release/
April 2016



Town-Hall St-Jacques- de-la-Lande

The new town hall building has to be a place
capable of generating life

PROGRAMME: Construction of a municipal
administration and training building
CLIENT: Town of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Lande
LOCATION: Saint Jacques de la Lande, France
BUDGET: €3,7M excl. VAT
BUILT UP AREA: 2,260m²
CALENDRIER: 2010 - 2015
TEAM: LAN Architecture (lead architect),
Agence Franck Boutté (HEQ consultant), LBE
(fuides),
Batiserf Ingénierie (structure), Michel Forgue
(économie), Lamoureux (acousticien)

This place provides a response to the
question: “How do you make a symbol
with just a few square meters, with few
means, and too much land?” Or, said
another way, “Is it possible to resolve
the problems of scale specific to this
parcel, and to transform its constraints
into advantages?”

The City Hall building has to be a
place full of life, a place that generates
life. It is:
- a place more than just a building;
- a meeting point more than a place
where one goes simply to resolve an
administrative matter;
- an architecture that has a specific
relationship with each bordering street,
more than a building that asserts itself
due to its size or the design of its
façade;
- a clear, unified image that fosters
a sense of identity without falling
into the clichés of emblematic
representations of power;
- a workplace that is comfortable and
provides quality spaces due to the
intelligence of its materials, more than
their brilliance, and to the techniques
used.

This project is the logical extension
and contemporary version of the long
architectural history of city halls.
From the common houses of the
Middle Ages to the birth of town
halls (with the 1884 law on municipal
freedoms) and up to recent times, the
problem of the square is systematically
tied to that of the city hall.
Despite this long history, architects
have not developed a true typology,
only an eclectic formulation of a
certain number of elements: the square,
the fountain, the city council hall
which looks out onto the street via a
small gallery called a “bretèche” or an
“oriel,” a ground floor that leads to a
large vestibule and serves as a hall, and
so on.
Our proposal contains these elements.
We believe that the unifying element
is a sense of the contemporary, and for
us, being contemporary means above
all minimizing impacts, developing
potential, and predicting the
unforeseeable. This is why the building
and the square become a single entity,
and why the upper square (the roof
of the PAE and CCAS) becomes a
belvedere facing Blvd. Roger Dodin

and rue André Malraux that leads
intuitively to the marriage hall.
Because of its horizontality, the
building also reveals the hedge from
rue André Malraux.

Lastly, when viewed from the route
de Redon, it appears as a line that
underlines and frames the entire
complex.
The future City Hall is the last element
in the ZAC Morinais mixed-use area
that opens out onto the city. With its
two squares, it is readily identifiable
from the heart of the Morinais area as
it is from the route de Redon.

The principle of its functionality is
based on the clear visibility of its
various services, the obvious location
of the reception areas surrounding
the naturally lit patios, and a spatial
organization revolving around the
central hall.

The central hall on the ground floor
contains the city’s public service
offices, while the access from the
upper square leads to the council and
marriage hall; if necessary, this upper
entrance can also serve as an entrance
or exit for public officials. The Council
Hall, located on the 1st floor, opens
widely onto the western square. Its
independent access helps manage traffic
flows more easily, whether for a city
council meeting or a marriage. When
marriages are being performed, the
couple and the guests will access the
hall directly form the square, just as on
days of city council meetings, thereby
providing at once an indoor and
outdoor reception area to participants.
The general administration services are
located on the upper floor. The offices
are all placed around the technical
core. They respect a 1.35m framework,
which will allow for adaptations
to changes in the bureaucracy’s

organization. The Mayor’s Office is
at the very western end of this floor,
and extends to the outdoors with a
loggia that overlooks the city hall main
square.

The façades are defined by their two
layers, each one answering different
needs and complementing the other
perfectly.
The first is a light and delicate skin
of steel, which creates a sensation
of visual penetration. This layer
provides protection from the sun and
it covers the second, “thicker” façade,
which meets the building’s thermal
performance needs.
Within this structure, everything is
about overlap, reading a distance,
transparency, counter-light, and
reflection. Everything is about light
and character.

LAN (Local Architecture Network) a été créé
par Benoît Jallon et Umberto Napolitano en
2002, avec l'idée d'explorer l'architecture en
tant que matière au croisement de plusieurs
disciplines.

Cette attitude, aujourd’hui devenue métho-
dologie, permet à l'agence de parcourir de
nouveaux territoires à la recherche d'une vision
impliquant à la fois les questions sociales,
urbaines, fonctionnelles et formelles.
Les projets de l'agence traduisent cet univers
variant les échelles et les contextes.

De l'objet architectural sophistiqué et technique
comme les archives nationales d'EDF aux
projets de logements expérimentaux (Paris,
Bègles, Beyrouth), en passant par les lieux de
travail (Tour Euravenir à Lille), ainsi que les
projets culturels (Théâtre du Maillon, et derniè-
rement le Grand Palais) et les projets urbains
(Île de Nantes – secteur Brossette, les Neue
Hamburger Terrassen) le travail de l'agence a
été reconnu à plusieurs reprises en France et à
l'international.

En 2004 l'agence a été lauréate des Nouveaux
Albums de la Jeune Architecture décernés par
le Ministère de la Culture et de la Communica-
tion. En 2009 LAN a reçu l'International Archi-
tecture Awards (Chicago Athenaeum), l'Archi-
Bau Awards, le Prix Spécial de la XIIe Triennale
Internationale d'Architecture de Sofia. En 2010
le AR Mipim Future Projects Awards et l'Europe
40 Under 40. En 2011 l'agence a été récom-
pensée au LEAF Awards avec le prix Best
Sustainable Development, et au Prix AMO de la
Fondation d'Entreprise Excellence SMA. LAN
a été nommé à l'Équerre d'Argent 2011. En
2012 l'agence a remporté l'International Prize
for Sustainable Architecture Fassa Bortolo –
Silver Medal. En 2013, une «Commendation»
lors des Civic Trust Awards, le WAN Residential
Award et le premier prix BIGMAT France 13
lui sont décernés. En 2014, la Tour Euravenir
est nommée au Prix de l'Équerre d'Argent et
au European Union Prize for Contemporary
Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award 2015,
et les Neue Hamburger Terrassen remportent
le Carl-Friedrich Fischer Preis 2014 – Humanes
wohnen.

LAN est aujourd’hui un acteur engagé dans le
débat disciplinaire international.

L'agence participe activement à la diffusion et
au questionnement sur les valeurs de l'archi-
tecture contemporaine, tant dans le cadre
universitaire, (TU Graz et Università degli Studi
Roma Tre en 2011, Berlage Institute et Welsh
School of Architecture en 2012, Université de
Ferrare en 2013, Bergen Architecture School
en 2014, etc.) qu’au sein des principales
institutions et manifestations culturelles (MoMA
à New York, MAXXI à Rome, Garage à Moscou,
Archifest à Singapour, Congrès National des
architectes de Panama, Biennale de Venise,
etc.)

En 2013, la maison d’édition espagnole Actar
donne carte blanche à LAN pour constituer un
ouvrage, qui paraît en 2014. Intitulé *TRACES*,
ce livre fait dialoguer des recueils de réflexions
sur la ville avec les diverses thématiques carac-
térisant les projets de l'agence.



Power and Architecture

Certain projects raise ethical issues more readily than others. When a space is asked to express forms of culture or power, an architect will have a hard time not questioning the values that this place is asked to embody. Power demands that it be actualized, rendered visible to an audience – its abstract reality must be made manifest. The space has to embody this content. This two-way interaction has a symbolic function: by concretely representing power – for example, a state over a particular territory – the place allocated for this representation itself becomes a symbol.[1]

In fact, architecture is one of a regime’s favorite means of expression. Buildings are often built as a result of proactive policymaking that seeks to endow a city with facilities, especially cultural ones, and by extension, to leave a tangible trace of a government or a personality for future generations. For example, the “great public works projects,” a series of monuments constructed during François Mitterrand’s presidency, are more than just a reflection of France’s cultural policies in the 1980s; they also project an image of a “builder president,” who once wrote: “I feel in every city as if I am the emperor or an architect. I resolve, I decide, and I judge.”[2]

On a much more somber and dramatic

note, the ordering of a space can become the vehicle for an ideology. Through the Nazi rehabilitations of Thingplätze, the “Gesamtbauplan für die Reichshauptstadt,” Albert Speer’s design for the “ideal capital” of the Third Reich, the Eur quarter in Rome, and Stalin’s skyscrapers, the “Seven Sisters of Moscow,” 20th-century totalitarian governments appropriated architecture as a language which used space to create and embody a new world order. These examples demonstrate how power views space as a way to explain its paradigms, and uses it as a strategy that extends far beyond merely promoting an official culture. It can be a small gathering place or an entire ideal city: the scale matters little.

The idea is to stake out a territory to communicate, if not proclaim, a worldview.

We kept ourselves very aware of the symbolic weight that places of power exert when we entered the competition to design the Nanterre prison and the Saint-Malo courthouse. Prisons, courthouses, city halls, or any kind of public building first and foremost express the symbolic power of the state over its territory, above and beyond their primary functions. They are in fact highly iconic places.

As a result, we thought it both necessary and fundamental to reflect on the values underlying our projects and to ask ourselves whether we agreed with

the political strategy underpinning the decision-making on these new projects.

It takes great courage to give up actively participating in the construction of our society. We chose the second option instead. Our idea was to enshrine civic commitments in our projects that would get the better of political will. Our aim was to influence political attitudes by tackling how they were materialized in architecture.

Abstraction doesn’t really make any sense in architecture, because there’s nothing less abstract than a building. At the same time, erasing scale, challenging typologies, and breaking up the characters that form representational systems enable us to

interpret history and to insert projects within a newer, more submerged and implicit narrative into an underground strategy.

The project of the town-hall of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Lande confirms this reflexion : the town-hall becomes a place, architecture vanishes to give space to a public area.

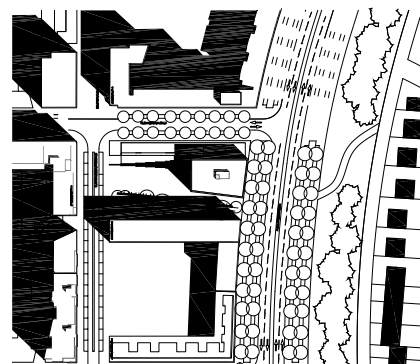
Notes
[1] Originally the symbol (gr. σύμβολον) is a broke object used as a recognition sign. The fragments are given to unknown individuals to each other, their identification made by the perfect joining of the parties.

[2] F. Mitterrand, *La paille et le grain*, Flammarion, Paris, 1975.



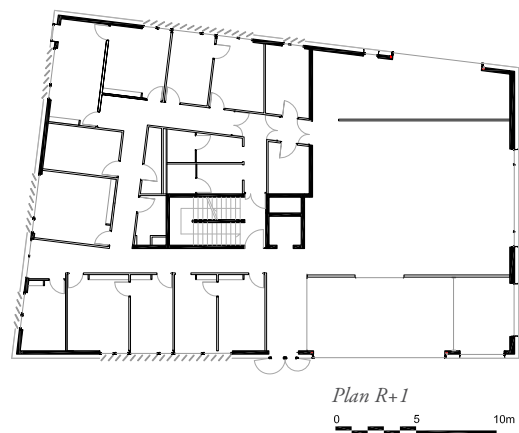
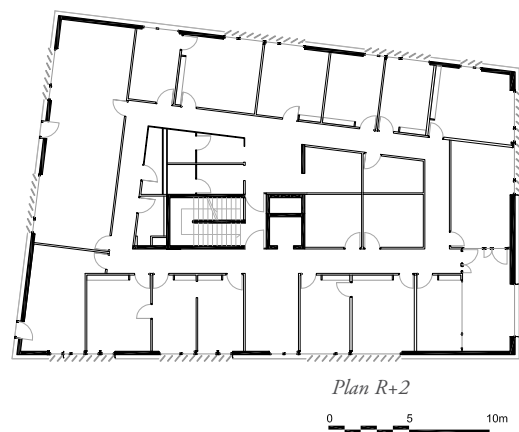
Location

Nestled within the heart of the Morinais area, between Boulevard Roger Dodin and rue André Malraux, the new City Hall opens itself to the city. It caps the creation of the Saint-Jacques-de-la-Lande's new city center.



A symbol of the everyday

A city hall is a space for work and public service, a symbolic representation, and a public space that generates new collective uses. It is an urban reference point.



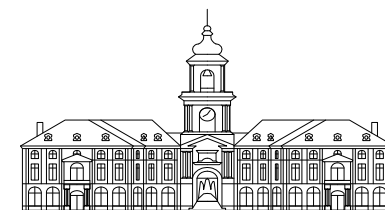
Typology

City halls have a long history in France, but their typologies continue to change. Here, the unifying element is a sense of the contemporary, which – if necessary – translates to a minimization of impact, the development of the potential, and the prediction of the unforeseeable.

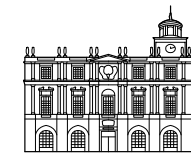


Identity

The architectural project is based on an image of unity, reassurance, and clarity that fosters a strong sense of identity without falling into the cliché of emblematic representations of power.



Rennes - 1743



Arles - 1676

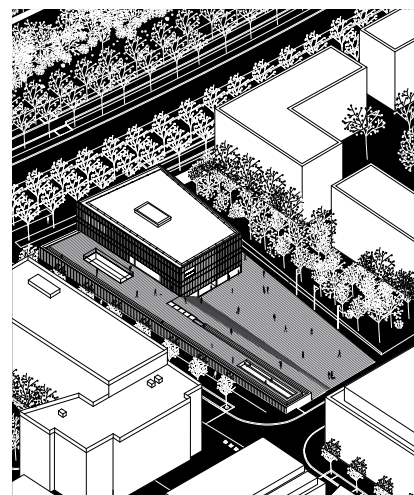


Troyes - 1672



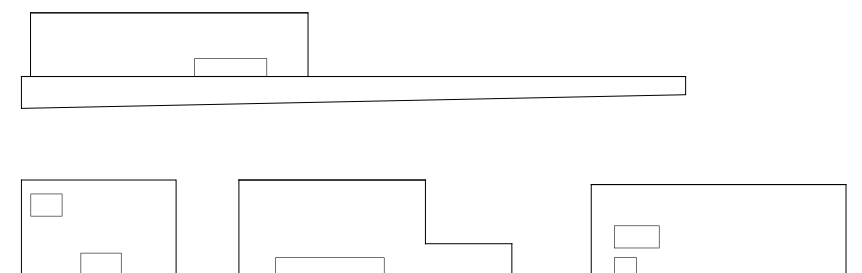
Square

An outdoor extension of Saint-Jacques-de-la-Lande's city hall, the square invites users to enter the interior spaces. A veritable meeting place, it reinforces the city hall's identity.



Dialogue

The building acts as a catalyst for social interactions. The architecture of each side of the building creates a specific relationship with each bordering street. This stimulates the daily life of this area.





Upper square

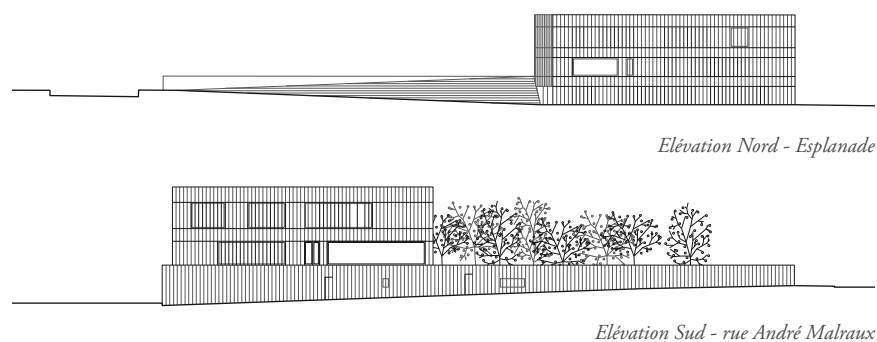
With its two squares, the city hall is equally identifiable from within the Morinais area and the road to Redon. The upper square enables a better management of flows, both for the organization of the municipal council meetings and for marriages.





Façades

They are defined by their two layers. The first is a light and delicate skin of steel, which creates a sensation of visual penetration. It provides protection from the sun and it covers the second, “thicker” façade, which meets the building’s thermal performance needs.



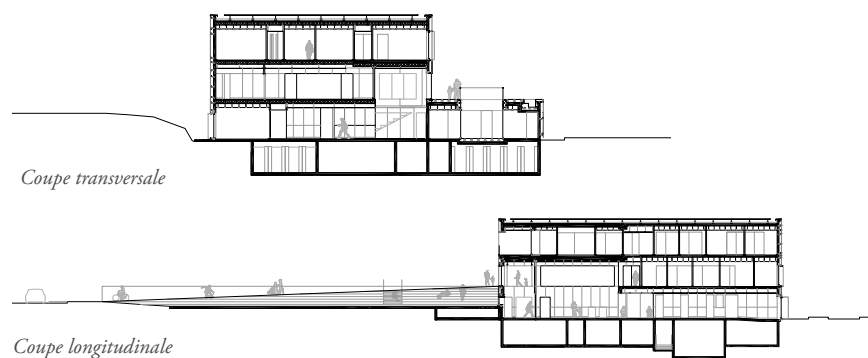
Day and night

Within this structure, it’s all about overlap, reading a distance, transparency, counter-light, and reflection. Everything is about light and character. At night, the façade’s porousness reveals the building’s transparency.



Patio

This provides a considerable amount of natural light and contributes to the sense of welcoming the public and to the quality of the municipal staff's work environment. It is a window onto the interior that reinforces the building's relationship to its environment.



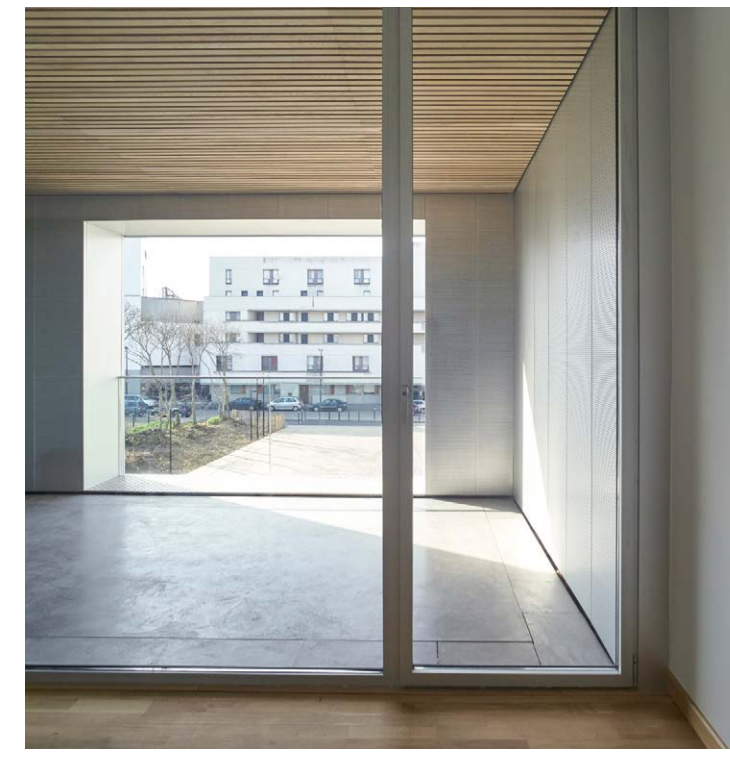
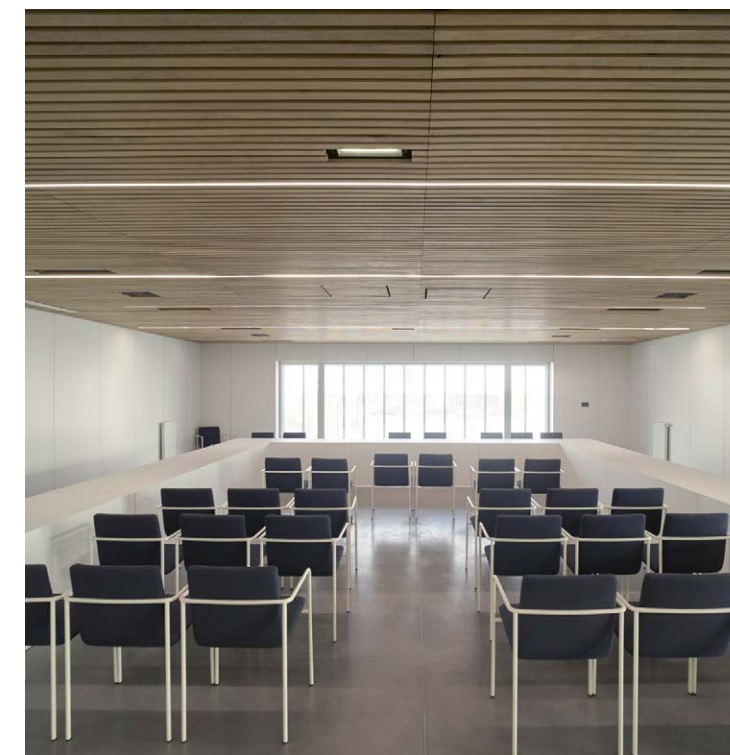
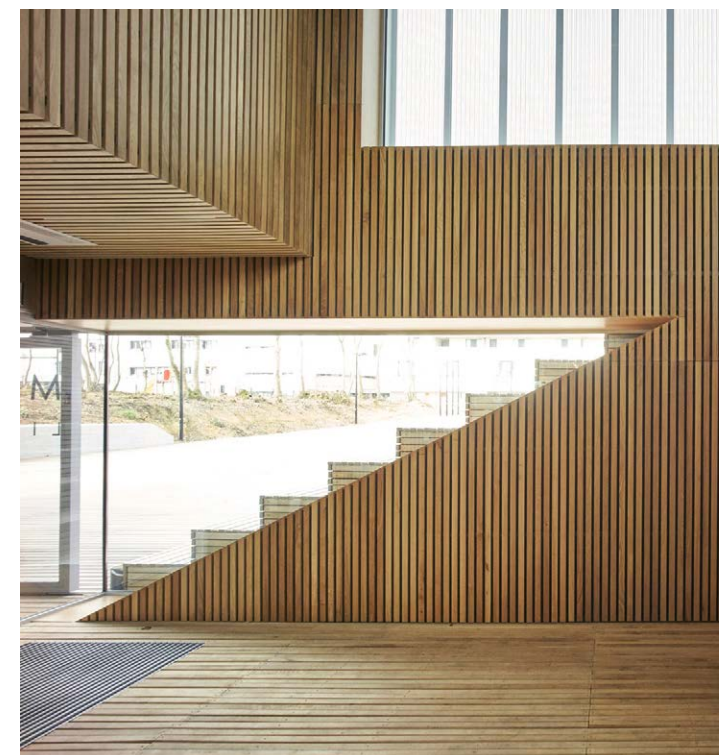
Shutters

The shutter treatment improves the performance of the windows considerably. The perforation rate changes in relation to the building orientation to optimize the natural lighting while protecting against the sun.



Legibility

The full and the empty spaces surrounding the central hall make it natural and intuitive for users to move from one office to another. The hall's double height seeks to connect the core of the building with the secondary entrance from the upper square. This connection is even more important because it facilitates the access points without confusing them.



Circulations

The central hall on the ground floor hosts the city's offices of public services. The council and marriage hall is located on the first floor. The general administration offices are located on the top floor. The Mayor's Office is located at the very West of that floor and it extends to the outdoors through a loggia that overlooks the city hall square.



Reportage: Julien Lanoo

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