



THE ROLE OF GREEN SPACES AND NATURAL STONE IN URBAN REGENERATION SCHEMES

After the smart city model—a pet subject at the turn of the millennium that placed technology at the centre of urban life—the climate-driven sense of urgency in more recent years has seen a shift toward a new urban ideal: that of the sustainable, resilient town. In France and other countries, more and more initiatives are emerging to tackle the transitions we are now faced with, initiatives to help make tomorrow's towns pleasant places to live in—or even possible to live in in the case of a city like Paris, where temperatures could soon run out of hand according to the “Paris at 50°C” report commissioned by the city authorities.

There are many angles of attack for improving the quality of town life, among which are green spaces and the use of natural stone in urban development. Those are the two key themes at the centre of the Paysalia and Rocalia trade shows being held on 5th–7th December, 2023 in Lyon, France. They will offer professionals a panoramic view of the issues and prospects related to vegetation and minerals in the town.

The town of the future will be 80% based on the town that now stands.

Source : *Let's repair the town! Proposals for our towns and districts.* — Christine Leconte and Sylvain Grisot

REGENERATION AND MEDIATION: TWO PILLARS OF THE TOWN OF TOMORROW

The collective ideal is that of a future town designed with intelligence and agility by experts and constructed accordingly. But the reality is quite different. “*When we speak of the towns and cities of tomorrow, we must never forget they are also those of today,*” says Sébastien Sperto, Director of CAUE¹ Rhône Métropole. Urban developments that involve construction from scratch or demolition and rebuilding are no longer an option: “*today's issue is to compose as best we can with what we've got.*”

A whole range of possibilities exists for tackling the national “**net-zero artificialization**” objective, which demands that planning rules be modified to **privilege urban regeneration and the densification and renaturalization of abandoned artificialized areas**. Among those possibilities are renovation, refurbishment, repurposing, upgrading, or mixed development projects.

To evolve in this direction, the powers that be along with the town's professionals and its users need to understand the approaches and the aims: “*It's essential to explain the impending transitions that will affect the town, not least their possible non-linear nature. This education is vital if we want townspeople to understand the projects and buy into them,*” states Anne Marchand, President of Hortis².

¹ CAUE: Council of Architecture, Urban planning, and Environment.

² Association of in-town nature area managers.

REPOSSESSING UNUSED SPACES: ONE WAY OF REVEGETATING THE TOWN

Bringing temperatures down in heat islands, limiting air pollution, creating shaded areas, improving the water cycle, fostering the well-being of users—no one needs reminding of the benefits of green spaces: their presence has become an essential criterion of happiness in the urban environment. **Many towns, however, lack space for landscape developments and can't keep perpetually expanding to make room for new ones.**

More and more towns are therefore taking over sites previously dedicated to other uses or simply abandoned in order **to develop new green spaces close to dwellings and public areas:**

- **Wasteland or brownfield:** this can be rehabilitated and turned into large parks or community gardens, thereby creating new green, friendly outdoor living areas.

Close-up on an initiative in Toulon!

- **The roofs of buildings:** harshly ignored during long years, roofs can be covered in plants to help decrease the heat-island effect. Certain roofs, if the building layout so allows, can then be opened up to the building's users (inhabitants, workers, etc.), **thus providing instant access to nature and a new place for encounters.**

Close up on an initiative in Dijon!

- **Spaces alongside travel corridors:** railways, tramlines, roads, even cycle paths are often built close to nature to limit disturbance to inhabitants, so it's quite a simple matter to **plant strips of vegetation where flora and fauna can thrive.**

Close up on an initiative in Guadeloupe!

- **Schoolyards:** nature is gradually making a comeback with vegetable patches, sensory gardens, and permeable soils. Not only do these **revegetated schoolyards improve the quality of school life, they also diminish heat islands and filter ambient noise.**

Close up on an initiative in Brussels!

OPTIMIZATION OF EXISTING LANDSCAPED AREAS, A KEY LEVER IN URBAN REGENERATION

Another challenge towns have to face in their quest to make nature more accessible is the **optimization of existing green spaces.** *"It's important to work toward the preservation of existing vegetable structures. Flattening and redeveloping existing green spaces because they don't match up 100% to today's standards and expectations is a mistake. Today's priority for creating the sustainable town of tomorrow is to assist the natural life that's already there,"* says the aforementioned Sébastien Sperto of CAUE Rhône Métropole.

When rehabilitating existing but unattractive green spaces, it's important to get the **townspeople involved.** Consulting them to find out their needs, expectations, and desires, taking an educational approach to future transitions, encourages the town's users to get on board with the projects. It helps ensure the green spaces and leisure areas will be used, while allowing biodiversity to develop unflustered. It can sometimes be a complex mission, but according to Claire Topin, mission leader with Ville & Aménagement Durable³, it's essential. *"I think the best way to get people interested in a project is to go out and meet them individually. For urban development projects, we can also envisage town walks with target groups."* It's an original format for encounters, which helps establish a sensory diagnosis of the existing and analyse its current uses. Arising therefrom are some first lines of thought about its rehabilitation.

Discover thirteen benefits of sustainable urban development



³Sustainable town and development.

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Whether a town chooses to transform neglected places into green spaces or to rethink an existing green space, some essential points, like **water management**, must always be borne in mind. *“These days, one way to develop vegetation in the town is to plant a lot of trees,”* observes Anne Marchand. “But droughts are becoming more common and watering and maintaining these groups of trees is not without its difficulties. Finding the right benchmark is impossible without first addressing the water issue.”

Another key subject is the **reintroduction of biodiversity** to these urban nature areas. For towns to once again be habitats favourable to flora and fauna, the installation of these areas needs thinking about now, with **garden designs that favour pollinating insects, include artificial ponds, etc.** Many towns are carving the way with plenty of inspirational initiatives!

Why is protecting biodiversity becoming essential in landscaping?



To address today’s and tomorrow’s issues of responsibility and sustainability, towns don’t just need to work on their green spaces and the place of nature in the town. There are other action areas that need tackling, most notably buildings.

BUILDINGS, THE CORNERSTONE OF THE SUSTAINABLE TOWN OF THE FUTURE

The **construction of urban amenities** (homes, public spaces, roads, etc.) **releases a massive amount of greenhouse gases**, while everyday life inside existing buildings **consumes a lot of energy**. In a town, this stark reality is heightened by the urban density and the constantly rising need for infrastructure. If towns want to take a more sustainable direction, one that takes better care of the environment, they must **make building a central subject and invite the town's stakeholders to implement exemplary initiatives such as the following:**

- Creation of modular, reversible buildings and spaces
- Decrease in or reuse of construction and refurbishment waste
- Improvement in the energy efficiency of existing amenities
- Integration of renewably-sourced energy
- Use of sustainable materials like timber, earthenware... or natural stone

NATURAL STONE, IDEAL MATERIAL FOR THE TOWN OF TOMORROW

Used in construction (outer walls, stairways, etc.), landscape features (low walls, fountains), roads (road surfaces, pavements), or for urban furniture, **natural stone is a sustainable material that can contribute on its own scale to a pleasant urban environment that respects the wider environment.**

Natural stone's availability in a multitude of colours, textures, and finishes isn't its only asset.

For a start, stone is a geo-sourced material that's very easy to recycle and can be easily taken from an existing construction and reinstalled as-is or reworked in a new development. If it's in a really bad state, it can be crushed to make gravel or become part of a landscape garden.

A further advantage of natural stone is its ability to **withstand temperature variations**—an interesting property in the context of a permanent increase in average world temperatures, especially felt by town users. It's also a **material that stands up well to other weather phenomena**, increasingly intense in the urban environment, and has properties that **can contribute to resource management**, as for example dry stone walls that retain water.

Find out more about natural stone's natural fire resistance

Last but not least, choosing natural stone for construction or refurbishment is often **good for the local economy**, the unique characteristics of each region's soils enabling the development of channels all over France.

Find out more about the diversity of French stone and the interest of including natural stone in public sector orders.

Before we see natural stone gaining greater use in construction and refurbishment and replacing the concrete reflex wherever possible, there's still a lot of work to do. *"These days we're giving the sparkle back to construction techniques that were used 100 or 150 years ago, like building in natural stone, and these processes are becoming more and more widespread in towns. To provide long-term support for this trend, we need to assist the creation of sectors and branches so they start creating jobs; we need to develop a business model that has long-term viability,"* concludes Sébastien Sperto.



DEEP THINKING AT THE CORE OF THE PAYSALIA AND ROCALIA TRADE SHOWS

Eurexpo Lyon from 5th to 7th December, 2023 is the venue where the **Paysalia and Rocalia trade shows** will bring together local authorities and public interest groups, along with their specifiers, with landscaping and natural stone professionals around **a global vegetable and mineral offering the likes of which you won't find elsewhere.**

Among the highlights punctuating both shows, a good number will focus on the issues and prospects of the town of tomorrow:



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PAYSALIA

- The **“Ville Verte” (green town) Day**, organized for Thursday, 7th December in partnership with Hortis, CNVVF⁴, and AITF⁵, will feature virtual visits around three outstanding urban green space projects.
- A **conference cycle run by Unep⁶**, will be tackling many subjects in relation to the **revegetation of towns**, with **other conferences on water management, biodiversity**, etc., liable to address subjects related to urban areas.
- The **Paysalia Innovation Booster** feature will enable specifiers, local authorities, and landscape professionals to discover the latest innovations that will be useful in optimizing tomorrow's management of their green spaces
- The **biodiversity & environment village** will be a place for participants to trade thoughts on issues concerning biodiversity and the environment

- The final of the **Carré des Jardiniers** contest will be a showcase for the role of vegetation in towns, as evidenced by the tagline of the 2023 edition: **“Biodiver’Cité: How shall we live in tomorrow’s town?”**

ROCALIA

- **Several conference cycles** being organized on the topics of **circular economy and local stone** can be relevant to towns: Geographical indication and urban developments, Stone reuse and recycling, Eco-mobility, etc.
- The FFPPS⁷ and apprentice guild Les Compagnons du Devoir will be **demonstrating two construction projects** that can be replicated in town.
- The **“Building with natural stone”** contest, which aims to promote the work of architects, has as one of its criteria the issues of urban development.

⁴ Floral towns association.

⁵ Territory engineers' association.

⁶ French landscape companies' association.

⁷ French federation of dry stone professionals.

Full programmes for the Paysalia and Rocalia trade shows will be available this autumn.

Find out all the information on both shows on:

www.paysalia.com/fr

www.salon-rocalia.com/fr

Press Contacts



Léa Valleix
lea.valleix@white-mirror.fr
07 88 85 41 10



Anne Chadan
anne@white-mirror.fr
06 60 85 98 24

#Paysalia23



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