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THE UPPER PART OF THE RUE NATIONALE AND THE PLACE ANATOLE FRANCE: RECENT EVOLUTIONS AND FUTURE PROJECTS

INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with recent developments in the production of the territory, starting from the example of the spatial planning project of the **upper** part of rue Nationale and the Anatole France Square. By the early 1980s, in a deeply changed social, cultural, economic and historical context, the French central government has encouraged the development of local and regional authorities, affecting at the same time the process of planning projects (and in particular of urban design) and what is expected from them. Starting from this statement, we can study the relationship between the changes in the context and the ways of fabrication of a 'project territory'.

The contemporary way of making a project seems to be based on at least five major components: the definition of the expectations of the project, its design, its realization, but also its appropriation by the recipients, and the consequent and inevitable changes due to this appropriation. The project becomes then less a result than a framework of action. The sharing of development issues, the proliferation of stakeholders, the cooperation and the coordination among actors, etc., acquire a capital place and become an outcome, as well as the space transformation in itself.

This article aims to gain insight into this system by looking at an example of contemporary territorial construction that corresponds to the recent vision of the future of the urban area as promoted by the city of Tours and by the urban community Tour(s) Plus over 2013-2014, and more specifically by analysing the vision that unfolds through the territorial projects taking place around Anatole France Square: the Contemporary Creation Centre 'Olivier Debré' (at the place of the School of Fine Arts) and the project of the top part of rue Nationale. These projects are placed in a context of decentralization (and crisis), in a framework where a more or less effective participation in decision-making of all

actors is constantly evoked (especially regarding the decisions that leave a visible mark in terms of presence in space and that are able to reinvent the image that the city conveys). In addition to these projects, managed as 'one-spot' or 'episodic' events (for obvious reasons of management and control of an otherwise too complex an environment), we have one of the flagship projects of the city: the first tramway line, which runs through this space, as a sort of symbolic as well as a material, functional link. The framework that legally made all of this possible, is the revision of the Conservation and Development Plan (PSMV¹) regulations and the revision of the limits of the Protected Area², the conservation perimeter where the great majority of the projects are located. The projects specifically addressed here are related to the wider territorial project, and are based on strong architectural, urban and landscape components ('guaranteed' through the organization of international design competitions), and on a process that in theory strongly implies citizens and associations in the formulation of the programme. Indeed, following the inscription of the Loire Valley on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2000, the construction of a territorial image through urban and architectural policy strongly connected to heritage and culture becomes one of the keywords of the urban development strategies.

FROM A CONCEPTUALIZED TERRITORY TO AN IDEALIZED TERRITORY

For elected officials as well as for technicians, the space of the city has to be maintained, organized, built, and lived in. But the space is not empty, and its existing material, tangible character, is as much a constraint as an asset. Moreover, territorial boundaries are plural: sometimes they correspond to a neighbourhood, sometimes to the limits of the town, sometimes they spread out to the conurbation ... When we think of an urban project, existing buildings and features which make up a space are

a constraint that we can choose to eliminate or to integrate. Depending on the cities, post-war reconstruction followed one or the other strategy. In Tours, in the 1950s, the Municipality started a policy of treatment of what remained untouched by the war of the old centre and its harmonization with the rapid reconstructions made out of post-war urgency. Several proposals of redesign of the old centre were submitted to the Municipality, who preferred a project respecting and restoring the remaining historical heritage to a so-called 'Bulldozer-renovation' project, which advocated the demolition of the ancient city in favour of a modernization programme including the widening of the streets, and the construction of new fifteen storeys buildings and towers. This choice, valuing heritage, is one of the premises of a growing awareness of the importance of inheritance, reaffirmed in 1973 by the creation of the 'Secteur Sauvegardé'³.

Speaking about the area at the top of rue Nationale and of Anatole France Square, one of the most damaged areas in town (the bombing focusing on destroying the bridge but destroyed also all the surrounding area, saving only, of these two blocks, the Saint-Julien ensemble and the Hôtel Gouin⁴), the project of 1955 (called « entrance North of Tours »), designed by the architect Pierre Patout, was organised around:

- a composition plan in perfect symmetry;
- the showcase of historical monuments (especially the Saint-Julien's church and what remain of its old abbey);
- the creation of three public facilities: the municipal library, a conventions centre and a School of Fine Arts (the convention centre, west twin of the library, was never built);
- the construction of a group of shops and housing around the two blocks originated by the project.

Sixty years later, the area formed by the two blocks flanking the entrance to rue Nationale and Anatole France Square is suffering the

consequences of time: the concrete terraces-roofs of the buildings along the street are cracked, which means that water leaks into shops, and the panoramic terraces are unusable and closed to public use for a long time. The city faces a choice: undertaking a big renovation project, based on conservation, or enjoy the opportunity to build a new image of the city by giving a new look to the top part of rue Nationale.

TERRITORIAL ATTRACTIVENESS AS A GOAL

The option preferred by the Municipality is the one of total renewal. The area hadn't experienced a real showcase since the work done during the post war period. From an administrative point of view, local authorities have systematically integrated the project in each strategic planning document (of urban planning and heritage protection): the Planning and Sustainable Development Plan (PADD⁵), the Local Urbanism Plan (PLU⁶) - approved in 2011 – that must also ensure heritage protection⁷, the Conservation and Development Plan (PSMV⁸) of the Protected Area, through its amendment of 2012 that allows building on the Saint-Julien and the School of Fine Arts blocks. Moreover, the protected area also straddles the UNESCO site of Val de Loire (so a part is subject to the legal constraint of this site) and is than accountable for the aesthetic and respectful integration of each project of the landscape and identity of the territory, as well as fulfilling the guidelines set by the Management Plan of the Val de Loire site.

The four goals at the base of the 'urban project' of the Conservation and Development Plan of the Protected Area are formalized as following: *"an urban and economic development driven by commerce, tourism and culture; a residential diversification project; a qualifying, recovery and re-appropriation of public spaces project; an incentive plan for sobriety and energy efficiency"*⁹.

Thus, in the late 2000s, some projects directed to the 'top of rue Nationale' appeared and progressed in the recommendations of several strategic planning documents. The major goal for the Municipality was to improve the image of the city and thus its attractiveness, especially touristic, through culture, answering at the same time to a need. Indeed, the PADD of 2009 states that *"the whole project will strengthen the cultural and tourist image of the city while giving back to the top of rue Nationale the appearance it has before the war"*. Architectural projects and urban project are highly correlated in a single area, designed around the Anatole France Square. The area was to be redesigned as a whole, organized around three major projects: the Centre for Contemporary Creation 'Olivier Debré' (CCCOD), the project called of the 'top of the rue Nationale' and the project of the International City of Gastronomy.

The rearrangement of the area is achieved through placing new structures, intended to create a landmark in the landscape of Tours. Tours already performed this type of operation. Actually, an earlier project of redesign of the train station square was the occasion to locate a new landmark building (intended as iconic) designed by the 'starchitect' Jean Nouvel. Opposite the train station, at an hour by high speed train from Paris, stands the 'Vinci International Congress Centre of Tours', with its three auditoriums for 350 to 2000 people, competing with the capital for conference rooms since it offers very attractive prices for an acceptable time-distance from the train station of Paris-Montparnasse.

Working on the attractiveness of the city is a major challenge for the municipality that wants to attract businesses in order to promote employment, and thus attract new residents, and always more tourists. It is about entering the virtuous (or vicious – depending on one's point of view) circle of the growth economy. Attractive cities compete, doubling their imagination on territorial marketing strategies.

“The Anatole France Square, remodelled during the construction of the underground car park in the early 2000’s, is a major public space for the city. [...] The incompleteness of the initial project and the general site topography, however, make the site difficultly readable. [...] The arrival of the tramway, the perspective of the implementation of the Contemporary Creation Centre ‘Olivier Debré’ and of a hotel complex offers the opportunity to rethink the urban project. [...] The three projects contribute to enhancing the attractiveness of the site. [...] As programme elements and design factors, they allow the emergence of a real urban project that will also focus – to respond to the diagnosis made in the context of the revision of the PSMV – on a plan to ‘beautify’ public spaces and to supply renewed and densified housing”¹⁰.

TERRITORIAL COMPETITIVENESS AS A CHALLENGE

Following the success of Vinci Congress Centre, the elected officials and politicians of Tours by offering quality, attractive and able-to-convey-a-new-image-of-the-city services and facilities, intended to upgrade the city in the regional competitiveness and in the medium-sized cities national scene rankings. Capitalising on what has been learned through the realisation of the Jean Nouvel building facing the railway station, the city of Tours asked the artist Daniel Buren to draw the tram and punctuate his route with outstanding art-works. While some critics presented this tram as “*a cross between an aluminium foil roll and a zebra*”¹¹, the Mayor had hoped that the work of a renowned artist will attract tourists¹². The Municipal Council, ending its third mandate, launched the renovation of 11,000 m² of public spaces, including the parvis of the future Centre for Contemporary Creation ‘Olivier Debré’ (CCCOD), the parvis of the Saint-Julien church, and the area around the top part of the rue Nationale, promoting

the growing autonomy of local authorities in the fields of development and territorial marketing. A first axis to enhance attractiveness is identified in the supply of housing; the overall project schedules a huge housing restructuring programme: 260 mixed units on 2,700 square metres, behind the alignment of rue Nationale, at the heart of the blocks. However, the super-visible ‘mega-project’ (at the small local scale), is primarily on the Anatole France Square and at the top of rue Nationale, around two major interrelated key-words: tourism and culture.

Definitely, the CCCOD answer to the municipal aspiration to create a cultural centre able to accommodate the collections that the artist Olivier Debré bequeathed to the city of Tours, in 1999, including large formats on the theme of the Loire river. The CCCOD will bring together on one site the Debré donation, and the Contemporary Creation Centre (CCC) whose mission is to produce, distribute and exhibit contemporary art in all its forms. It will take place in the premises of the Fine Arts School (ESBAT), that will be transferred (after a transition period in the Béranger site, belonging to the university of Tours, since 2012) on the site of the former printing house ‘MAME’ as part of another project that should lead to the creation of a multidisciplinary art centre. The project management was assigned, through an international competition, to the Portuguese firm Aires Matéus, the contracting authority is the Urban Community Tour(s)Plus and the responsible of the operation is the city of Tours. Due to the nature of the project, interfering with State competencies (on heritage for example), at the heart of a UNESCO site, inside the Conservation Area, the process is also followed by the Direction of Cultural Affairs at the Regional level (DRAC Centre) and by the Territorial Service of Architecture and Heritage of Indre et Loire (STAP 37¹³). This truly multi-partner project is to be delivered in the autumn 2016.

Furthermore, increasing the tourist attraction of the city also implies the restyling of the public space (or public use space) that connects the strong points of the square: CCCOD and Church Saint-Julien. This re-design proposes the demolition of the existing commercial buildings (those with the leaking roof-terraces) along the East and the West of rue Nationale so as to take advantage of the real estate value, to partially reconstruct the original project by Pierre Patout (with its two towers highlighting 'the entrance to town'¹⁴) and to build a twin high-end hotel complex overlooking the Loire (a 3 and a 4 star hotel, with a total of 178 rooms on 6,700 square metres). Such equipment is naturally accompanied by restaurants, shops and other commercial spaces including three supermarkets of 800 square metres each for a total area of 5,500 square metres.

Finally, since the inscription of the "gastro-nomic meal of the French" on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in November 2010, Tours, Paris-Rungis, Lyon and Dijon, make up the network of International Cities of Gastronomy. Moreover, since Tours already hosts the *Mission française du patrimoine et des cultures alimentaires* (MFPCA¹⁵), as well as the UNESCO Chair "Safeguarding and Promotion of Cultural Food Heritages" (created in 2011 at the François Rabelais University of Tours¹⁶) and the European Institute of History and Cultures of Food (IEHCA¹⁷), institutional stakeholders had naturally thought it useful to set up a multi-partner project so as to make the city an internationally recognized capital of this particular territorial and cultural expertise. Within this plan, the building of a "lighthouse" on the top of the site of rue Nationale should have taken place, 3,400 square metres for the headquarter building, facing an area of 5.5 hectares of 'thematic gardens at the heart of the town', located on the Simon island. The part of the project that concerns the realisation

of this building, but not the International City of Gastronomy project, is today under rethinking by the new elected municipality, installed after the latest municipal elections of 2014.

EXPERIENCING AND BELONGING TO THE TERRITORY

From the perspective of the inhabitant, if the urban territory in its spatial dimension can, as for elected officials and their technicians, be experienced as a constraint, its built physicality usually transmits a reassuring feeling. The spatiality of the city is a milestone, a frame. Urban structure opens perspectives on architectural objects or vegetation that function as urban evidence, essential to establish benchmarks. Looking at the emotional relationship that can link an individual to his city, we observe that the history of a city is closely linked to the history of society, and a sense of belonging to a territory contributes to and strengthens the identity and character of the individual. The spatial character of the territory, that sense of belonging, plays a reassuring role on a larger time scale. When it is strong, the sense of belonging drives people to become actors in the transformation of the territory, actors in the city projects, whether spatialized or not.

In the case of the project of Anatole France Square, and more generally of the top part of rue Nationale, residents have expressed "*worries and even fears about the project of building towers on familiar sites that carry strong identity and heritage values*"¹⁸, as evidenced by the report of the inquiry commissioner about the PLU project of Tours made in 2011. The first sensitive element that embodies that fear was the mass cutting of existing trees in the sectors concerned by the work (which, obviously, comes before any transformation). The fact that some of these trees, that were protected by a "planted protected area", were downgraded by the revision of the PSMV as to allow their cutting, worries many inhabitants.

Some inhabitants mobilized against the cutting of old lime trees, particularly through associations such as the Association for the QUALity of LIfe in Tours urban area (AQUAVIT¹⁹). The disappearance of these heritage trees in several city projects has increased the vigilance of the inhabitants on this respect (Halles square, Choiseul square, Sanitas block, general route of tramway²⁰ ...). Today, more than a hundred trees are threatened by the new project (also trees that are located along the Loire, inside the UNESCO's site perimeter and that constitute a great landscape attraction). The attachment of Touraineans to the present image of their city, even if the dilapidated state of the roof-terraces along the top of the rue Nationale required complete reconsideration, forced the Municipality and the urban community to show the utmost attention while communicating on the project. Nevertheless, the project is facing much opposition, expressed through the local press, internet blogs, associations, even constituted on purpose²¹ and witnesses during public enquiries (insufficient, according to users).

"If people are given an active role in decision-making on landscape, they are more likely to identify with the areas and towns where they spend their working and leisure time. If they have more influence on their surroundings, they will be able to reinforce local and regional identity and distinctiveness and this will bring rewards in terms of individual, social and cultural fulfilment. This in turn may help to promote the sustainable development of the area concerned, as the quality of landscape has an important bearing on the success of economic and social initiatives, whether public or private"²².

Beyond the fear of change, which could undermine the sense of belonging, and prompt the inhabitants to no longer identify themselves with their territory, projects also face the fact that any experience of the territory produces a feeling. Closely linked to the sense of belonging to

the territory, the feeling of the territory as a living space could not be more subjective. If it is based on a multitude of very individual factors, this feeling is also influenced by objective factors related to public services and public spaces, that make the space a place to live, to move in, to work in, to spend spare time ... Any restructuring project will involve changes in spatial practices, on a large or small scale and more or less desired. For example, to realize the CCCOD project, the School of Fine Arts will be moved to the MAME site, changing the habits of students and teachers used to a perfectly adapted building located in a very central position. Directly affected by this major change, they are among the first to seriously study the project and question the creation of the CCCOD. Actually, while other foundations close (Chillida's one, for example), they fear that €1.4 million (that corresponds to the amount that the CCCOD expect to raise through paid admissions during the first year) will not be enough to financially balance the project, especially since the entry to other centres for contemporary art in France is free. And, even if enough evidence can be found to support the project, they wonder if it would not be more relevant and rewarding to combine on the same site with the CCCOD and the School of Fine Arts.

Even though the project has 'germinated' for over ten years in terms of communication and references in the political discussions of elected officials, preparing a new mind-set, some big questions persist among the Touraineans. At the same time, the shopkeepers under the existing roof-terraces of rue Nationale blame the Municipality for a lack of communication on the hotels project and on their commercial impact. *"It would be wise to inform shopkeepers so they know their future and those of their employees"²³.*

Even the programme of the twin high-end hotels project met some opposition, from the hotel managers of Tours, according to whom the supply of hotel beds is already saturated. They estimate

that an additional supply, even luxury, will not necessarily create additional demand but could just lead to a different distribution of the existing one. All these criticisms occupy local people who feel that they are funding a collective municipal project that will result in a downturn despite the announced objective of boosting the economic development as the very vocation of the project.

WHEN IDEALIZED AND EXPERIENCED TERRITORY MEET

The project is presented by the decision-makers as integrated and designed for international development (attracting tourists but also investors or international companies), while the stakeholders who drive the implementation of the project itself have a priori few international relations. The politicians and officials suggest that the project will attract big names, such as the former municipal councillor to big projects: *“All the big names want to come!”*²⁴, while residents complain that the project is detrimental to local nearby commerce. If some people believe that the current distance of the Contemporary Creation Centre from the city centre makes its access difficult to tourists²⁵, others feel that moving it into the historic city would strengthen the centralization of cultural facilities in the very core of the town at the expense of less well-located areas, raising ethical questions about the accessibility and mission of public service, split between local interests and tourist interests.

The design of the territory, expressed through these projects, refers to three dimensions:

- **a conceptual dimension** of the project: the spatial project must now integrate economic, socio-cultural, environmental and development dimensions, which refers to a series of issues that are materialised and made visible through the building of that space. The wish to meet economic goals of attractiveness, of better ranking in the list of

cities providing high quality of life requires at least a dynamic, adaptive, and flexible strategy, and the choices made (under some pressure) by the public authorities will be constantly reminded to the memory by the landmarks to which they correspond;

- **an implementation dimension:** the implementation of the spatial project requires alliances between stakeholders in order to be realized; political alliances are a first step, the award of the tenders is another;
- **a legitimacy dimension:** the involvement of the public, inhabitants and users in general (final recipients of the project) becomes a necessary component for the legitimation and support granted to the project. If, for some people, space is a constraint (in terms of construction, development, work), for some others, it is a frame, a support and can more easily be an ally.

CONCLUSIONS

In the current context of competition between territories, which, if it has always existed, has increased dramatically with decentralization, delegating more powers and responsibilities to smaller territorial units, Tours, being the main city in Indre et Loire, is trying to pull out of the game. In the years 1970-80, modernity and attractiveness of a city was implicitly measured by its suburban shopping centres. Today these have been revalued and appreciated far less by planners even if the ‘peripheralization’ of public services so as to improve accessibility from suburban areas, ‘penalizing’ the central city, continued, for example, with the relocation of hospitals. Tours and its urban area are today pursuing a renewal that they initiated by opening the (first) tramway line, and that they plan to consolidate through the implementation of several closely interwoven projects focusing on a single area: the top part of the rue Nationale. They expect a new city entrance overlooking the

river (full site inscribed on the UNESCO list of World Heritage under living evolving cultural landscape); a twin hotels complex; the rehabilitation of part of the Reconstruction; a Centre devoted to Contemporary Creation and Art; and, probably, the headquarter of the International City of Gastronomy, even if not necessary located in a brand newly built building.

In terms of territorial design, the objectives of the Municipality, converging with the ones of the urban community, seem intent on getting back into the geographical centre of the urban area a series of infrastructures, especially cultural, using public transport. The city, in recent years, and particularly after the inscription of the Loire Valley on the World Heritage list of UNESCO, has embarked on a series of cultural projects, rather 'soft projects', addressing the so called 'leisure society', in strong connection with heritage and landscapes and intended to outline a 'new' image (based on the so-called 'consolidated identity') of the Touraine.

In terms of territorial competitiveness, the Municipality makes Tours a real 'project territory', hoping that the cultural cocktail will give a new breath of dynamism to the city. However, several voices from residents, users and citizens expressed opposition to this set of ambitious projects, especially in times of crisis. Today, against the background of progressive decentralization and the direct test of public approval through elections, enabling all levels of civil society to participate in strategic decision-making appears evident. Obviously, the perfect project does not exist, nor does the possibility of satisfying all categories of users. This sometimes makes opposition and resistance seem stereotypical and excessive. Moreover, in Tours, being a city rather inward-looking in its habits, any attempt to change meets outright opposition. However, the expression of protest (organized or not) by civil society reveals a number of poorly managed elements in the

project by local authorities. Despite the many written and spoken discussions and communications that reflect well a recurring participatory democracy, the non-decision-making bodies in society have felt excluded and marginalized on what concerns the recent projects for the city.

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1. Please refer to footnote number 8
2. Please refer to footnote number 3
3. The 'Secteur Sauvegardé' is an urban heritage protected area set in France by the law n° 62-903 - 4 August 1962 that completes the regulation on historical and esthetic heritage protection in France and helps building restoration, called Malraux Law
4. A private Renaissance mansion, protected as historical monument since the 7 August 1941
5. One of the four documents that constitutes a PLU, together with: the presentation report, a regulation, and the planning and programmeme orientations (OAP). It defines the general urban and regional planning goals
6. Introduced by the law n° 2000-1208 related to solidarity and urban renewal of the 13 December 2000, it replaces the former "Soil Occupation Plan" (POS). The PLU is a strategic planning document fixing planning and use of soils rules
7. According to the Article L 121-1 of the planning code, the PLU must ensure the "protection of urban ensembles and of remarkable built up heritage" and the "urban, architectural, and landscape quality" (translation by the author)
8. Planning document that takes the place of the PLU inside the perimeter of the protected area
9. Quote from the presentation of the project to the city council on 19 March 2012, translation by the author
10. Quote from the presentation of the project to the city council on 19 March 2012, translation by the author
11. Video « Bref. J'ai testé le nouveau réseau bus et tram de Tours » a parody of « Bref » posted by a Tours inhabitant on YouTube www.youtube.com
12. "People will come from the entire world to admire the work of Daniel Buren in connexion with the first tramway line of Tours? This is the hope of Jean Germain [Mayor 1995-2014], reaffirmed during the municipal council of last Monday" (translation by the author). Christophe Gendry, « Tramway de Tours : les sept travaux de Daniel Buren », *La Nouvelle République du Centre-Ouest*, 16/03/2013 05:44 <http://www.lanouvellerepublique.fr/Indre-et-Loire/Actualite/24-Heures/n/Contenus/Articles/2013/03/16/Tramway-de-Tours-les-sept-travaux-de-Daniel-Buren-1372752>
13. The Direction of Cultural Affairs at the Regional level (DRAC) and the Territorial Service of Architecture and Heritage (STAP) are part of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication with offices in each region and department of the country. To know more about the STAP, please refer to another article of this book: Supportive guidelines as a tool for the conception of local urban plans, by Mélanie Riauté.
14. The historical entrance to town along the Road to Spain became today just the arrival from the North of the town since most of the traffic comes through the highway n. 10, that runs along the East limits of the municipality
15. The French Mission to food heritage and cultures, created in February 2008, is charged to prepare the file to apply for the UNESCO inscription
16. <http://chaireunesco-alimentation.univ-tours.fr/>
17. <http://www.iehca.eu/>
18. http://urbanisme.tours.fr/pdf/conclusion_enqueteur_B.pdf (translation by the author)
19. <http://www.aquavit37.fr/>
20. <http://pressibus.org/blogcvl/arbres.html>
21. <http://www.lanouvellerepublique.fr/Indre-et-Loire/Actualite/Dossiers-actualite/n/Contenus/Dossiers/Actualite/Un-autre-visage-pour-Tours/Amenagement-de-la-rue-Nationale/Rue-Nationale-a-Tours-une-asso-pour-defendre-les-habitants>
22. Council of Europe, European Landscape Convention, Florence, 20 October 2000, explanatory report, part II, paragraph 24
23. Johan Guillermin, « Haut de la rue Nationale : inquiétudes et interrogations », *La Nouvelle République du Centre-Ouest*, 5 January 2012 (translation by the author)
24. Johan Guillermin, « Rue Nationale : la Ville va appuyer sur l'accélérateur », *La Nouvelle République du Centre-Ouest*, 22/10/2013 05:46 <http://www.lanouvellerepublique.fr/Indre-et-Loire/Actualite/Dossiers-actualite/n/Contenus/Dossiers/Actualite/Un-autre-visage-pour-Tours/Amenagement-de-la-rue-Nationale/Rue-Nationale-la-Ville-va-appuyer-sur-l-accelereur-1659570>
25. The CCC is actually located rue Marcel Tribut, some minutes walking from the railway station