

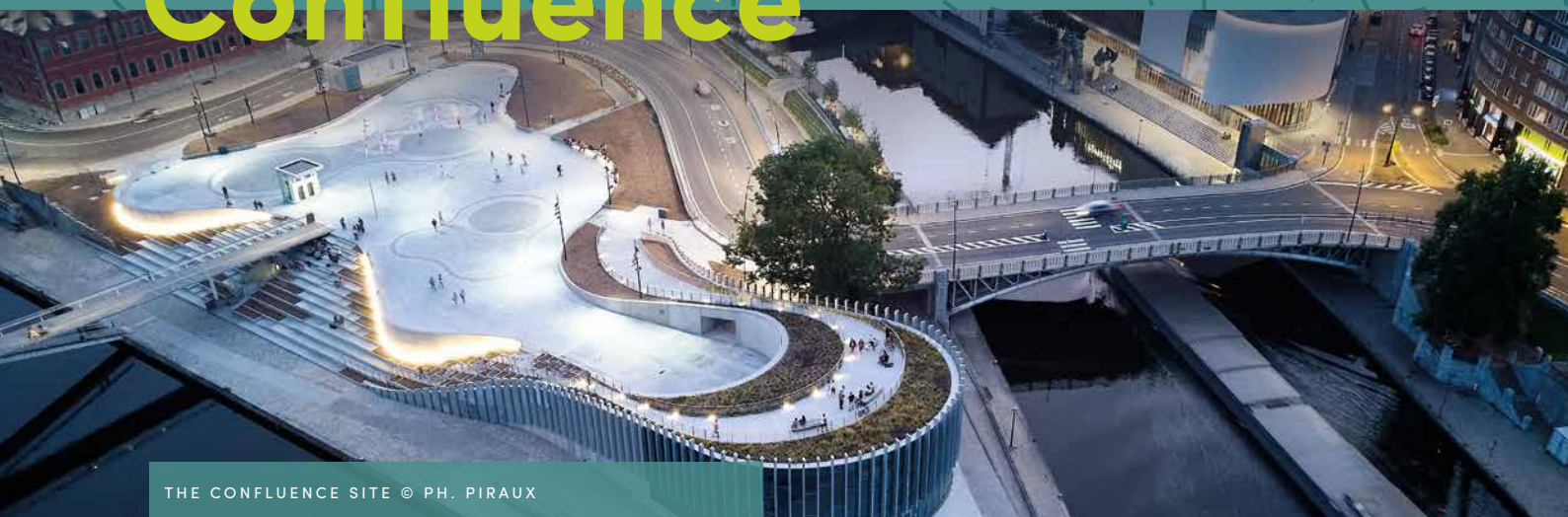
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EXPLORER
CO-CONSTRUIRE
MONTRER



NAMUR
CAPITALE

The Confluence



THE CONFLUENCE SITE © PH. PIRAUX

At the foot of the majestic site of the Citadel, the Confluence (commonly called “Grognon”) is the geographical and historical heart of the Municipality of Namur. The first inhabitants would have settled there permanently 2000 years ago.

Its primary purpose is related to river traffic. In the second half of the 19th century, competition from the railway led to the decline of the use of the harbor and the transfer of economic activities to the upper town.

A BIT OF HISTORY

From the beginning of the 1950s, the policies of sanitation and “everything by car” definitively sealed the fate of the district. By the end of the 1960s, the

Grognon was completely razed.

More than fifty years have passed since the original core of the city was destroyed. Five decades marked by an impressive stream of projects and debates, however without any major project managing to impose itself.

Namur had a historic opportunity in 2015: for the first time, the allocation of European funds (ERDF) finally gave the City the means to build a global and coherent project that would allow this emblematic site to be returned to all the people of Namur. This brochure invites you to discover the projects that are giving the Confluence site the chance to regain its reputation.

ONE SITE, FIVE PROJECTS

Although a strategic and emblematic place of the Walloon capital, the “Grognon” was not sufficiently developed: omnipresent road traffic, lack of facilities, feeling of emptiness and inactivity, etc. However, this exceptional site could become a melting pot and a place of conviviality recognised by the citizens of Namur.

The City of Namur and the Walloon Public Service, with the help of subsidies received under the European ERDF funds, have examined the various projects developed at the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse rivers. After several years of work, these projects are now open to the public, and bear witness to the renewal of the district and more widely of the city. They fully meet their objective by reinforcing the image of the site and positioning it as a showcase for the Smart City, displaying an innovative Region.

The ERDF project portfolio “*NAMUR INNOVATIVE CITY LAB*” had the ambition to develop this urban innovation dynamic, favouring the emergence of new urban products and services.

To this end, five projects have been developed on the site:

- the creation of a pedestrian-cyclist bridge between the two banks of the Meuse;
- the development of the Grognon esplanade into a convivial public space;
- the construction of a building dedicated to the city of tomorrow;
- the adaptation of the roads and the creation of a roundabout;
- the creation of an underground car park (not in the ERDF budget).



A PEDESTRIAN-CYCLIST BRIDGE TO LINK JAMBES AND NAMUR

For many years, there has been talk of a **bridge over the Meuse to link the two banks by bicycle or on foot**. Planned in a development plan since 1962, this bridge has finally received the means to its funding.

After a first phase of in-depth study, the Municipal College of the City of Namur and the Walloon Region validated the Confluence site as the location and the “strutted” model of a bridge. The second phase of the study, completed in 2015, allowed for the refinement of the architectural project and the preparation of the permit application.

Approximately 100 metres long and 6 metres wide, the bridge really blends into the Namur landscape thanks to its thinness (40 cm in its narrowest part, halfway along the span). **An innovative work of art, it is therefore almost invisible in the panorama of the river and offers an exceptional view of it.**

The entire load-bearing structure of the bridge was made of steel painted in a light colour. The coating was made of exotic moisture-resistant wood (FSC-certified Azobé). The accesses, on one side towards the Grognon, and on the other side towards Jambes, are ramped and gently sloping (less than 4%) being therefore accessible to people with reduced mobility and to bicycles. There are no pillars in the Meuse, thus not hindering river traffic in any way.

The studies were carried out by the City of Namur and entrusted to the Greisch firm. The work was carried out by the Walloon Public Service, DGO2-Directorate of Waterways.

Planning permission was granted on 6 December 2016, allowing work to begin in February 2017 with the demolition of the expropriated houses and the relocation of the underground utilities. In August 2018, the contractor Franki carried out the rotation and installation of the Enjambée.



On the Jambes side, the installation of the bridge was accompanied by the creation of a public square, originally planned in the 1962 municipal development plan. The square, called Square de la Franco-phonie, is bounded to the south by Rue Mazy, to the north by the Meuse, and to the east and west by the low walls of the adjacent properties.



DID YOU KNOW?

The name of the Bridge was chosen following a call for ideas from the citizens. Many citizens of Namur responded (nearly 1120 proposals).

The final choice was the “Enjambée”, suggested 82 times, a name that refers to the link between Namur and Jambes, and that also shows the dynamism of a city on the move, which wants to move forward.

THE ESPLANADE AND THE NID

THE INITIAL PROJECT

The City of Namur has launched a works competition to design the new face of the Confluence, based on the principle of a design and build contract. A panel of judges (made up of internationally recognised experts and municipal staff) was tasked with selecting the five best candidates from among the potential service providers. **The candidates developed a project including:**

- **a pedestrian esplanade:** of the “agora” type, open towards the banks of the river to allow the public to enjoy the Meuse. This new public space

had to fulfil a triple function: a location for holding events, a tourist attraction and a community focus.

- **a building, the NID** (Namur Intelligente et Durable) (Intelligent and Sustainable Namur): located at the tip of the site, it was to consist of a reception area, a multi-purpose area and a HoReCa area. The idea was to create a place for citizen and technological convergence, a sort of embassy for the necessary transitions that await the cities, a place of exhibition, dialogue and citizen exchange.

Three projects were submitted in July 2016 and were analysed by the panel of judges. On the basis of the latter’s report, the Municipal Council awarded the contract on 1 December 2016 to the winner of the competition: the joint venture of the companies *SA Degraeve - SA Nonet - SA Duchêne*, notably on the basis of a project studied by the Danish architectural firm *3XN*, assisted by the Namur firm *Bee Architect* and the landscaping firm *JNC international*.

The selected project is a modern project with curves, intimately blending mineral and vegetation, which fits perfectly into the landscape. The contemporary architecture of the NID makes it a landmark in the landscape, embodying a strong urban message. This space, which is very pleasant both day and night thanks to sensitive lighting with variable tones and intensities, meets the expectations of the City, which wished to have a place of convergence and meetings, a place of conviviality and relaxation. The beautiful articulation between the public space, the building and the Meuse (monumental terraces) meets the demands in terms of attractiveness and versatility. The offer also meets the City’s accessibility objectives for both the exterior and interior spaces, with fluid traffic between them.

The permit for the creation of the new esplanade and construction of the NID was granted on 20 April 2018. The works started in March 2019 for the building part and at the end of September 2019 for the esplanade.

THE FINAL PROJECT

The NID building has two levels:

A SCENOGRAPHY SPACE

Located on the esplanade level, **the NID is a unique place that puts citizens at the heart of the debate on the future of their city. It questions the role of cities, and in particular Namur, in the face of major challenges for the future:** How do we build a smarter

and more sustainable city? How can Namur, at its level, act to limit the climate crisis? Why ensure food autonomy for the population? What are the impacts of our mobility and how can we improve our travel habits? In what way does the development of the Namur territory have an impact on social cohesion? How can we be more resilient in order to cope with crises (health, climate, etc.)? Through the scenography in the building located at the Grognon and also through events, debates, conferences, exhibitions, etc., these questions and many others are raised and debated at the NID.

The NID is set to accompany a revolution towards an intelligent and sustainable territory, i.e. one that promotes the ecological transition while at the same time being connected, smart, more respectful of the environment and offering ever more services to citizens.



THE NID: AN INFORMATION AND AWARENESS-RAISING SPACE LOCATED ON THE CONFLUENCE SITE © PH.LAVANDY

A HORECA SPACE

The level of the Sambre and Meuse quays is home to a HoReCa space.

Given the configuration of the premises, **it was essential for the HoReCa project to be consistent with the scenography space.** Following a call for applications, it was a trio of experienced companies headed by an association of 4 young people of Namur with different and complementary profiles who are the founders of *Confluence Brasserie*:

- Ludovic Vanackere of *L'Atelier de Bossimé*;
- Thierry Bachez and Sander Dethiège of *Blackbird's Gin*;
- Benjamin Schaul, sommelier at *Sens du Goût*.

The venue offers a local, seasonal and sustainable menu for all tastes and ages.



THE CONFLUENCE BRASSERIE: A HORECA SPACE AT THE QUAYS OF THE SAMBRE AND MEUSE © PH. LAVANDY

A WELL THOUGHT-OUT PEDESTRIAN LAYOUT

As the project is closely linked to the development of the Confluence site, adaptations to the initial project have been made to improve the connections:

- extension of the bridge to reach the esplanade;
- creation of a pedestrian access to the Confluence car park directly from the Meuse quays.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Grognon is the oldest district in Namur. It **takes its name from the "pig's snout" (groin de porc)** shape of the strip of land on which it is located. It is also called the "Confluence Site" because of its location at the convergence of the Sambre and Meuse rivers.

THE CONFLUENCE CAR PARK

In order to improve the accessibility and offer of parking space in the city centre, a call for tenders for the design, construction and operation of a car park was launched by the City of Namur.

The concessionaire was chosen on the basis of the following criteria: the quality of the project (pricing policy, accessibility, smart city aspect, safety), the number of spaces and the fee to be paid to the City. *SA Interparking* was thus appointed on 28 April 2016. The permit to carry out the work was granted on 28 June 2017.

With a capacity of 670 spaces on four levels, the car park has 17 spaces reserved for people with reduced mobility, 53 for bicycles, 20 spaces for motorbikes and 18 spaces equipped for electric vehicles. It offers public toilets, tourist information via multimedia screens and a timeline dedicated to archaeological finds, as well as information about the Parliament of Wallonia.

This infrastructure, which was inaugurated on 30 June 2021, **is equipped with the latest technology** to enhance the visitor experience: lifts, air purification system, license plate recognition, motorbike and bicycle parking spaces, lockers, parking assistance, charging stations for electric vehicles, the possibility of booking a parking space online and benefiting from advantageous rates, particularly in the evenings with the free Pcard, etc.



Accessible to vehicles via the new rue du Grognon (along the Sambre), the car park offers several exits for pedestrians: on the Sambre side, on the Meuse side and on the Parliament of Wallonia side.

This car park is also part of the overall strategy of the City of Namur as set out in its Municipal Structure Plan (2012), now called the Municipal Development Plan, and in its Municipal Mobility Plan (updated in 2018).



For this ambitious project, the City has requested the participation of *Inasep* for the feasibility study. The “Buildings & Energy” and “Roads & Sewerage” consultancy offices have studied the feasibility of the car park, the new roundabout, the traffic pattern and their consequences for the neighbourhood.

In view of the location, the engineers and architects planned several flood control devices: On the Meuse side, on the quay, under the bridge, two watertight cofferdams have been placed: one lifts off the ground and the other closes like a door. These mechanical barriers should prevent water from entering the first floor of the car park if the Meuse floods. In the event of even more exceptional flooding, it is even possible to submerge the last level to ensure the stability of the building.

THE NEW ROAD LAYOUT

This project is part of the overall strategy of the City of Namur, which is reflected in its Municipal Structure Plan (2012), now called the Municipal Development Plan, and in its Municipal Mobility Plans of Namur and Jambes (1998 and 2010).

The modification of regional roads was a crucial step in the redevelopment of the Confluence site.

While ensuring the capacity of the traffic flow and of the car park, the reorganisation of the roads has made it possible to free up the space necessary for the development of a beautiful esplanade up to the Meuse, a meeting place capable of hosting large-scale events.

The road layout was designed according to the following constraints:

- free up the Esplanade;
- keep the bridge over the Sambre;
- allow a flow of 12,000 vehicles per hour at peak times;
- integrate the large amount of pedestrian and cyclist traffic;
- integrate public transport;
- allow direct access to the car park, the NID and the towpath.

These roads reorganise mobility for all:

- for pedestrians: a free passage on the esplanade, a passage under the road between the esplanade and the towpath at the confluence and an access to the bridge and to the Boulevard Baron Huart on the Meuse side, to the rue du Pont and the rue Bord de l'Eau on the Sambre side;
- for PRM: direct access from rue Mazy (Jambes) up to the esplanade and the Pont de France towards the city centre;
- for cyclists: same as for PRM, with the additional possibility of joining traffic at the roundabout;
- for other vehicles: a roundabout created at the intersection of pont du Musée, rue du Grognon and rue Bord de l'Eau allows vehicles to turn towards rue Notre-Dame, towards Salzennes, towards the Pont du Musée, towards Rue du Grognon, the car park and the Pont de France.

Planning permission was granted on 22 December 2016. Work began in November 2018 and was completed in spring 2020.



CONCLUSION

At the heart of debates for decades, the Confluence site is finally seeing its future take shape and is anchoring itself in the 21st century. Namur and its citizens will finally reclaim the cradle of their city and benefit from new, modern infrastructure that match the ambitions of the Walloon capital.

KEY DATES

8,500 B.C.	Nomadic hunter-fisher-gatherer camp.
52 A.C. - 476 A.C. (Roman period)	First urbanisation of the Grognon site.
1894	Construction of a footbridge over the Sambre.
1933	Construction of the Pont de France.
1972	Condemned in 1928 to be de-urbanised, the last houses in the district were demolished.
1995-1996	Botta Project to house the Parliament of Wallonia, public consultation and rejection of the project.
1998	Hospice Saint-Gilles renovated to house the Parliament of Wallonia.
2012	Feasibility study for the pedestrian-cyclist bridge.
2015	Launch of the competition for the development of the Confluence site.

February 2017	Demolition of expropriated houses (for work in connection with the bridge).
August 2018	Rotation and installation of the “Enjambée” bridge.
May 2020	Opening of the “Enjambée” footbridge to the public.
30 June 2021	Opening of the car park.
August 2021	Accessibility of the ramp between the “Enjambée” footbridge and the Esplanade.
18 September 2021	Official inauguration of the Confluence site.
18 October 2021	Opening of the HORECA space.
17 November 2021	Inauguration of the NID.

KEY FIGURES

€9.5 million	Development of the esplanade and construction of the NID, including €7.7 million of ERDF co-financing (40% Europe - 50% Wallonia)
€6.3 million	Pedestrian-cyclist bridge including €3.85 million of ERDF co-financing
€3.3 million	Development of roads, including €2.2 million of ERDF co-financing

EXCAVATIONS ON THE CONFLUENCE SITE

A first phase of archaeological excavations was carried out between 1991 and 2000. However, they only affected the central part of the esplanade. Additional excavations were therefore carried out on the site as part of the construction of the car park. Prior to the start of the work, the first phase of the project consisted of diverting all the cables and pipes running along the esplanade. These interventions were the subject of systematic archaeological monitoring, carried out between August and December 2016, by the Archaeology Directorate of the SPW, with the support of *Asbl Recherches et Prospections Archéologiques*.

In March 2017, a major preventive archaeology operation followed. Over a total period of 17 months, it covered the entire area of the esplanade in two stages:

- **Phase 1** : General stripping and examination of the upper levels, mainly along the Sambre (5 months);
- **Phase 2** : Systematic study of all the remains in the car park area, down to the geological substrate (12 months).

These excavations were worked on by 30 people, including 10 archaeologists and 10 workers.

The scientific exploitation of the data (post-excavation) was undertaken after the fieldwork, in preparation for the publication of the results.



EXCAVATIONS AT THE CONFLUENCE SITE
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City of Namur and Wallonia
(SPW-DGO1, SPW-DGO2)

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KNOW MORE

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Timings

Open Wednesday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.,
Saturday and Sunday from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Booking required via the NID website
www.le-nid.be - www.namur.be

Registration is also possible on site or by phone,
subject to availability.