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asiatischem und westlichem Text
nicht anpassen

We used to pass by, now we stop by – The experiences of shared space in the central square of Biel /Bienne

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Abstract

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Biography

- 2003 to date Town Planning Directorate, Biel/Bienne, Switzerland
- 2001-2003 WAT – (NGO, Tanzania, East Africa)
Assistant Coordinator – Housing Development
- 1998-2001 Collaboration in Swiss Architecture practices
- 1991-1998 EPFL - Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne / Swiss Federal Institute of
Technology, Switzerland
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We used to pass by, now we stop by – The experiences of shared space in the central square of Biel /Bienne

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The “Place Centrale” is a square in the middle of Switzerland’s biggest bilingual town. Biel is the German name and Bienne is its French name. Biel-Bienne is an industrial city of about 50,000 inhabitants.

The square has existed since the late 19th century and has always been an important public space where streets from east, west, north and south meet. And during the time that Biel had a tramway - it doesn’t have one now - this place had also been one of the city’s most important tramway stations.

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For some time the square was a wide, rather empty but generous space; an important public space which has always been part of the identity of the town.



Zentralplatz / Place Centrale 1940

But with the increasing mobility of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and especially private vehicles, the “Place Centrale” which is on the axis between the train station and the oldest part of town, became more and more a crossroads than a site and could not longer be called a “public space”.

During rush hour floods of pedestrians returning home from work or going from the shopping area in direction of the station crossed the square on the pedestrian crossings and blocked the motorized traffic, not only individual but also public transport.



Zentralplatz / Place Centrale 1995

A solution had to be found for the traffic situation which reduced the square to a big, blocked crossroad but, it also had to give back to the square an identity as an open public space.



Situation 1995

In 1997 The Department of Construction organized a competition for planners to propose a solution for the situation on the “Place Centrale”.

For this project the design group of Montmollin / Widmer / Gebert / Zulauf / Tufo / Wyseier won the competition in 1997. Thereafter a four year phase of design and plan implementation followed, from 1997 to 2001.

The Project for the new “Place Centrale” was realized from July 2001 to April 2002. The realization was carried out by the working group of S. de Montmollin + B.Widmer, Architects; Gebert Liechti Schmid, Architects; Zulauf Seippel Schweingruber, Landscape Architects; Mathys + Wyseier, Engineers;Piazza, lighting Engineer



Situation 2002

After the official opening of the square in spring 2002 there followed a test phase of several months to observe if the diverse traffic participants would respect the new rules of the of the square, e.g. the speed limit of 20 km/h.

In December 2002 The Square was officially opened and declared an Encounter Zone or in German "Begegnungszone".



Pictures: Stadt Biel / Ville de Bienne, Planum AG Biel / Bienne, Stöh Grünig, Biel / Bienne
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