

THEME EUROPAN 13

THE ADAPTABLE CITY 2: AUTO-ORGANIZATION / SHARING / PROJECT (PROCESS)

It is proposed for European 13 to continue with the generic theme of "the adaptable city": adaption to the need for more sustainable development but adaption also to the context of an economic crisis that the majority of European cities are currently undergoing.

Three generic concepts structure this overall theme:

Resilience as a challenge: to be able to extend or find again the identity of the city's structural elements (built or landscaped) in a context of significant changes.

Social adaptability as a goal: reconciling the coherence of these structures with the evolving uses and practices.

Economy as a method: managing urban transformations in different contexts of actors and means, yet with limited resources and in the era of the "post-oil city"

Taking these three themes into account induces changes in the urban and architectural order in the logics of actors (Welfare State Versus Self-Organization), in the contents (Segregation Versus Sharing) but also in the design processes (Object Versus Project (Process)) – see details hereafter.

European therefore wishes that the sites be confronted to the major challenges concerning the adaptability of European cities and also propose concrete innovations in the order given by the site representatives, arousing new project approaches by young competitors.

EUROPAN 13 CALENDAR

2014

From January to September: preselection of the sites at the national levels

September: classification of sites through theme families and European Forum of Sites to study the shared issues

September-December: finalization of site folders

2015

Early February: Launch of the competition

Late June: Deadline for entries

July-October: preselection of the preselected projects (20%)

Early November: Forum of the Cities and the Juries

November: Choice of the winning teams by the juries

Early December: results announcement

THREE EVOLUTIONS OF THE URBAN/ARCHITECTURAL PRODUCTION FOR THE EUROPEAN 13 SITES

EVOLUTION 1: WELFARE STATE VS. SELF-ORGANIZATION

The essence of the European city is a certain sense of the collective. A change is currently taking place from less “welfare state” to more “self organization”. What will the new relation between the public and private domains be? Who will take care of the public domain if the state is less involved? And what does it mean for the practice as architects or urban planners?

a- A new public / private relation

If today the planners and architects cannot have complete control at the urban scale, they can promote and establish new levels of urban design. That includes and integrates participation of users and cooperative urbanism can become a methodology to create a new relationship between public and private. Instead of the traditional dichotomy, the goal is to underline and promote co-strategies: cooperation, collaboration, co-programming, co-conception... Small scales interventions, bottom-up initiatives, cooperative buildings, privately funded projects. It is a changing attitude in urban planning that becomes more open and perceptive.

b- Entrepreneurial task for young architects

Young professionals could see those changes as a chance to rethink their role. By involving new actors from the civil society (inhabitants, etc.) or some groups of action (farmer syndicates, cyclist association...) caring for some aspects of the public good, their task will be much more focused on the moderation of a team than on the service of a omnipotent client. The architect or urban planner have to develop a sense of enterprise: initiate projects in the field of housing development in cities or regenerate empty building based on collective initiatives. The architect has a pro-active role teaming up with economical actors to initiate the project together.

c- Hands on during the crisis!

Considering the city not as a passive victim of the crisis but as a productive field of activity can favour alternative types of urban development: a sort of “performative urbanism” as building temporary installations or setting up new socio-cultural programs in abandoned sites to revitalize the city. Architects and planners could propose a programme after the needs of the city or point out –by themselves– a strategic intervention, and then establish a financing plan through crowdfunding for example and develop a design that takes those conditions into account.

Consequences for European

These new logics of actors between private and public initiatives must be taken into account for the European 13 sites and the role given to the designers must be enlarged

This implies that:

- *the sites, although linked to the public actors, can involve private partners of different types: owners, clients and users, who may be partners involved from the beginning of the competition and in the implementation processes afterwards.*
- *the sites must make recommendations on the other partners that the designers can or must integrate in their answers. This multi-disciplinary approach, joining different skills depending on the contexts is a key for the emergence of entrepreneurship design.*
- *but to achieve this goal, the sites proposed in a context of uncertainty about their future must also give some flexibility to designers to formulate strategic projects based on innovative logics of actors and realization processes.*

EVOLUTION 2: SEGREGATION VS. SHARING

Sharing is an issue in the design and regeneration of an adaptable city: sharing of spaces, expertise, values, imaginary; not just an idealistic point of view but also a repositioning for a performative economy and society of another type. Sharing at the urban scale can stimulate the "empowerment" of coexistences between different cultures: preserving the collective while inventing a more appropriate organization of the society. How could sharing be a way to develop cheaper and lighter solutions to build an ecological and sustainable city? How could it be a way to co-regenerate the inhabited environments? The figures for sharing are an antidote against a strong tendency to individualism and against excessive division and artificiality. They are strong project tracks and a "capacity to do". Could sharing help support change and foster "productive frictions" in respect of the other in other forms of activation of citizenship?

a- The figure of solidarity to increase active sharing

Installing solidarity amongst different kinds of people at the urban scale implies a dimension of culture. In other words, investing in active social engagement allows the creation of a "common" between an increasing diversity of the cities' inhabitants.

Consequences for European:

Each site brief could encourage the participants (cities, users, site developers and young designers) to visualize a fantasy of solidarity and active sharing beyond the mere representation of physical objects and linking the final result and the process of making.

b-Sharing by increasing accessibility to urban amenities

Urban amenities and services generate a sense of sharing and belonging at the proximity scale of neighbourhoods. Still, the safety regulations and fragmented governance too often transform such infrastructures into isolated mono functional enclaves.

Consequences for European:

The sites must allow offering alternatives of uses and spatial connections to proximity. Timesharing through reversibility or the evolution of uses increases accessibility and adds new urban roles to such services (schools, athletic facilities, shopping centres, public transport, roads, etc.) The sites must allow increasing accessibility for alternated uses.

d- Sharing to reduce self-sufficiency

The crisis brings out the necessity to design and manage spaces with fewer resources. It helps break open the self-sufficient consumerist bubble and introduce a collective dimension in the urban everydayness.

Consequences for European:

The sites can propose new programs that encourage such kind of sharing. For example, the retired persons living alone and unable to pay for separate facilities generate new residential developments with sharing services. Or car sharing decreases car use in the city therefore increasing the possibilities of multi-use of liberated public spaces.

e- Sharing between humans and non-humans

The energy sufficiency and reversibility of human actions require rethinking new alliances between human and non-human actors: people, natural resources, animals, technology, etc. While creating a diversity of associations this sharing modifies the representation of actors in the making of the urban environment.

Consequences for European:

The sites briefs must propose new representations of sharing in human and non-human actors spaces, of their conflicts or convergences and their priorities

EVOLUTION 3: OBJECT VS. PROJECT (PROCESS)

With communication tools and social networks in the rising, our culture grows less object-based; and this phenomena affects architecture and urbanism. Many young architects are emerging though the implementation of projects presenting less physical objects, yet where the scope of the projects is as important as the objects involved. The objects can already partly exist and the project is about managing the existing, dealing with social constructions, *developing* a context and raising the question of “urbanism with less or without growth”.

a- Contexts and not only sites

The project can become one additional “layer” over a context, without a clear predefined outline for the intervention on the ground - a context that may also be social, cultural or economic and not only physical.

Consequences for European

The sites briefs must include maps of a context around questions of identity, proximity, production, social relations, generational conflicts... The questions must allow strategic projects, projects as a route map. Some sites can be small as long as their mutation is strategic on a larger context. Some sites can encourage opportunities for upcycling, not just recycling but rather taking them as they are, as raw material to integrate in a higher cycle of production.

b- Programmatic innovation

An open question may lead to an unexpected answer. There may be room for programmatic innovation, even redefining the relationship between programme and physical support - both the question and the answer may only be about reprogramming the existing.

Consequences for European

New agents in the production and management of space –other than the classic trio of promoter-designer-user– may be called for, both in the questions and in the answers. A project may be based more on the actors sitting around the table, on social construction and not only physical construction.

c- New implementation process

Focusing on the project in its level of appropriation rather than on the object may imply redefining the implementation process.

Consequences for European

Some sites can need more incremental projects, projects to develop step by step, with different scopes in time from short to long term, re-definable projects, able to change direction depending on the results of the first steps. Allowing for multiple small interventions –spread over time or over space– requires redefining procedures for a new kind of light urbanism.

d- Innovative representation

How can we describe a social context or a question of identity? What can we give as information to stimulate the research of opportunity areas? And unusual shapes of representation may arise in this context because a classical render of the project may not be very adapted to describe this kind of projects/processes.

Consequences for European

The sites briefs must give information on innovative ways. But we can also ask for new graphic languages to be developed in the answers. It may not be easy, misinterpretation is possible... but a flashy rendering can also lead to a wrong impression!