

Die autistische Organisation dieser dreigeschossigen Luxuswohnungen wird vor allem an zwei Eigenschaften deutlich. Weder besteht eine Blickbeziehung zum umliegenden Straßenraum noch verfügen diese Gebäude über Bodenhaftung: Über Rampen und Treppenhäuser muß eine Zwischenzone im Erdgeschoß erst überwunden werden, um das erste Wohngeschoß zu erreichen. Von hier aus entfaltet sich über drei Etagen eine geräumige Wohnlandschaft in unterschiedlichen Apartmenttypen zwischen ca. 102 und 222 m<sup>2</sup> Wohnfläche. "Das erste Geschoß enthält einen privaten steinernen Garten und Eingang, das zweite verschiedene Schlafräume, und im dritten Geschoß befinden sich ein kombinierter Bereich für Wohnen und Essen sowie ein gesondertes Zimmer. Während im zweiten Geschoß alle Zimmer intim und introvertiert sind, entladen sich im dritten Geschoß die aufgebauten Spannungen in einem einzigen extrovertierten Raum, der sich zum Außenraum, zur Aussicht, zum Himmel öffnet." (ebd.)

Was im japanischen Kontext noch als Anpassung an die kulturellen Konventionen einer Gesellschaft ohne Öffentlichkeit verständlich ist, wird bei den europäischen Nachfolgeprojekten sichtbar als Vision einer, so Hoffmann-Axthelm polemisch, "asiatisch globalen Stadt" (132 ARCH<sup>+</sup>, S. 76). Insbesondere das Projekt von Vollaard, das mit seiner horizontalen Megastruktur von aufgeständerten Patiohäusern vertikal dem Vorbild von Koolhaas entspricht, in seiner Ausdehnung jedoch die Größe eines Quartiers annimmt, macht die Abwendung von gesellschaftlichen Bezügen deutlich, obwohl es programmatisch unter dem Label 'Kasbah' gerade die kommunale Tradition des Team X beschwört (Piet Blom hatte 1965-1973 in Hengelo die Siedlung Kasbah gebaut).

Die Antwort auf den atopischen Zustand der Peripherie ist nicht mehr der heroische, 'alteuropäische' Versuch einer Ortsbildung, sondern die rationale Organisation der Ortlosigkeit. Hier nun wird der Abstand zur kommunalen, humanistisch motivierten Tradition strukturalistischen Bauens deutlich. Piet Bloms Wohnsiedlung Kasbah, Frank van Klingeren Quartierzentrum in Eindhoven (1973), aber auch die Wohnsiedlung in Halen bei Bern des Atelier 5 (1961) sind formal als Prototypen der neueren Europeanentwürfe erkennbar. Gleichwohl wurde damals noch der Anspruch artikuliert, in der Tradition eines protestantisch und republikanisch (nicht sozialistisch) motivierten Gemeindegedankens, Individuierung und Gesellschaftlichkeit ortsbildend Raum zu geben.

Andererseits wird in der Verarbeitung dieser Programmatik durch Koolhaas ein zweiter Traditionsstrang übermächtig: die Megastruktur. Auch diese Richtung hat ihre Ursprünge in den strukturalistischen Debatten der sechziger Jahre, wendet die Idee der Vernetzung und Überlagerung modularer Elemente aber in Richtung technoider Superstrukturen: die englischen Großsiedlungen der Smithsons, Kenzo Tange und der Metabolismus, Yona Friedmans Raumstadt oder Archigrams Plug-In-City. Ihrer utopischen und poppigen Momente beraubt, mündete diese Richtung in der Praxis in den Selbstlauf technokratischer Großprojekte, etwa in der Großsiedlung Toulouse LeMirail oder der sogenannten Rostlaube in Berlin, beide von den Team-X-Mitstreitern Candilis und Woods. Der technokratische Strukturalismus erstickte somit gerade die Potentiale sozialer Selbstbestimmung, die der humanistische Strukturalismus des Team X freisetzen wollte.

Es ist diese Logik der Megastruktur, die sich bereits in den achtziger Jahren wieder in der Lancierung der Großform als Antwort auf den Siedlungsbrei der urbanen Zwischenräume geltend machte, nicht zuletzt auch in den Konzepten von OMA. Die neuen Konzepte serieller Teppichsiedlungen, etwa von MVRDV mit 140 Patiohäusern in Den Haag, entsprechen eher dieser technokratischen Strukturidee als der sozialen Philosophie des Amsterdamer Waisenhauses: was die Großform in der Vertikalen, ist der Teppich in der Horizontalen. Sollte Yona Friedmans utopische Raumstadt als Stadtutopie auf gigantischen Stützen hoch über den Dächern von Paris schweben, so lastet die reali-

stisch gemeinte Teppichsiedlung von Vollaard in Höhe des ersten Stockwerks über einer verdunkelten Halbwelt aus Garagen, Mülltonnen und Autozufahrten. In Friedmans 'himmlischer' Vision jedoch fehlte es immerhin nicht an 'rooms with a view', in der ebenso luxuriösen wie autistischen 'Nexus World' bleibt hingegen nur die 'Aussicht' in den 'Himmel', die angesichts des bleiernen Himmels in West- und Mitteleuropa wohl kaum als 'Entladung von Spannungen' zu begreifen ist.

Bei aller Kontinuität zu diesem Erbe der Moderne der sechziger Jahre ist auch hier das Neue nicht zu übersehen: wurde die Megastruktur der sechziger Jahre noch als technologisches und sozial-utopisches Projekt der Moderne betrieben, so ist der von allen utopischen Dimensionen gereinigte 'amerikanisch-pragmatische' Modernismus der Randstädter Architekten dort gelandet, von wo Archigram noch abheben wollte: im Innenhof eines - und sei es noch so avantgardistisch gefalteten - Vorstadthäuschens in der Allerweltsstadt zwischen Manchester, Den Haag und Fukuoka. Der emphatische Gesellschaftsbezug, den sowohl das Team X als auch noch die technischen Utopisten bis hin zu ihren Nachzüglern etwa im Coop (!) Himmelblau beanspruchten, ist aufgegeben. Statt dessen: Introvertiertheit, Privatismus, die Idylle im Hof, der Verzicht auf den Blick 'nach draußen': Patio-Moderne in der Wohnfestung als Traum des post-postmodernen Angestellten zwischen Blade Runner, Pulp Fiction und Short Cuts.

Telepolis als Teppich: dem introvertierten Lebensstil öffnet sich die Welt medial, die Nutzeroberfläche ersetzt die Nutzung städtischer Räume. Je weniger der Blick aus dem Fenster sieht, um so mehr bietet das multi-medial vernetzte elektronische Fenster. Introvertiertheit kann in dieser Vision nicht mit der Konzentration klösterlichen Lebens verwechselt werden.

Die Raumfahrerideologie der sechziger Jahre ist hart auf dem Boden der Vorstädte gelandet und verschanzt sich dort, ohne wirklich Fuß fassen zu wollen. Ortsbildung und Identifikation sind nicht vorgesehen: ein Programm, das dem atopischen Wohnverhalten von Singles durchaus entgegenzukommen scheint.

Soweit die soziale Vision des Teppichs in der 'Teppichmetropole' (W. J. Neutelings), wie sie aus der neuen Entwurfshaltung, trotz mancher gegenteiliger Begleittexte, abzulesen ist. Zumindest Rem Koolhaas aber ist ein zu guter (intuitiver) Soziologe, um nicht zu wissen, daß diese Vision nur ein Bild unter vielen, tatsächlich aber keine realistische Prognose der (post)urbanen Entwicklung ist. In seiner Eindimensionalität unterschlägt es gerade die auch in der 'eigenschaftslosen Stadt' vagabundierenden Bedürfnisse nach Öffentlichkeit und Orten mit Eigenschaften. Als ästhetisierende Form dementiert der neue Strukturalismus gerade seine vorgeblich nur empirische Begründung. Er ignoriert, darin doch wieder dem Fortschrittsbegriff der alten Avantgarden verpflichtet, alle 'überholten' Ansprüche, die dem vorgeblichen Zeitgeist widersprechen. Hinter dem Pathos empirischer Nüchternheit wird die Lancierung eines ästhetisierenden Lebensstilentwurfs sichtbar, der in der Konkurrenz der postmodernen Politik der Lebensstile um seinen kulturellen Marktanteil ringt.

Empirisch dürfte das Marktsegment für den hier vorgestellten Lebensstilentwurf eher schmal sein. Der Publikumserfolg der Stadtsimulationen etwa von Carmel in Kalifornien, Seaside in Florida bis hin zur 'Altstadt' von Luzern wäre nicht zu begreifen, wenn er nur auf "leerer Inszenierung" (Kenneth Frampton) beruhte. Vielmehr meldet sich hier in kitschiger, kommerzialisierter Gestalt der alte Anspruch nach gesellschaftlichem Ausdruck und öffentlichem Raum wieder, ein Anspruch, den die Generation der 'Neuen Individualisten' (so der Buchtitel von Paul Leinberger und Bruce Tucker, 1991) keineswegs verabschiedet hat. Ob er nur noch über Bilder simulativ erzeugt oder als gelebte Form Architektur werden kann, ist die Frage, an der auch der neue Strukturalismus zu messen sein wird.



## Summary

### The Town Upon the Town?

Sabine Kraft

p. 18

The 'Town Upon the Town' was the theme of the fourth European competition for young architects, really more a metaphor than a theme - but what for?

Perhaps for the hope that the voraciousness of the urbanization process could be sublimated in the end after all, the vital, rampantly growing city converted to orderly growth, the unconcerned megalomania of the metropolises checked. A metaphor for internal growth instead of consumption of land, for the reinterpretation of the substance of the city instead of its negation, for combining and compressing, weaving new patterns and meanings into existing structures.

Is it a metaphor for the wish for homogeneity? Or a metaphor for implosion?

The town over the town? The concept of the city comprises its entire history in the west. What dimensions of the urban, what forms of urbanity are still present in the modern city? Which substratum of the city is referred to?

The city where democracy was born? The city as secure island of settledness, where the free citizen comes onto the stage, where there is the rule of law, where the manufacture and exchange of goods made by craftsmen constitute public and private space, where energy of the guilds and civic pride show their facades? Or the city that bursts its bounds, pulls the veil of religion from the heavens, where research, analysis, the composition and the making of music and the writing of poetry take place? Or the city that is coming apart at the social seams, the city of unfettered private enterprise that swallows up its surroundings in its slipstream, puts the free wageearners into barracks and forces public institutions - schools, hospitals, jails - into its fabric, the city of leisurely strolls and violent demonstrations, of magnificent boulevards and street barricades, the city where technical progress is invented and mobility blazes revolutionary new trails for itself? Or the city that idolizes light, air and sun, consumes nature and spits it out half-digested as greenery, the city where office workers rehearse leisure time and the avant-gardes, cultural rebellion?

Has the city brought on its own death by winning a great victory over itself? Lost itself with its opposite?

The process of modernization emanating from the city and subsuming the countryside has boomeranged. In a decentralizing dynamics, the mechanisms of concentration through which the city has made itself into the focal point of all the advantages of the region have gone into reverse: in the dispersal of the city into the region. Since housing has been forced out of the inner cities, the erosion has accelerated: the shopping centres have been followed by small businesses, service enterprises, industrial and business parks, research laboratories, centres of technology, branch offices of major concerns and facilities for relaxation, leisure and sport. It is no longer a matter of growth on the periphery; the revolutionary upheaval of the economic structure of the city is de facto the dissolution of the old city.

A new, large-scale form of city without clearly defined boundaries has come into being, without structural hierarchy, amorphous, a-local. It far surpasses the historical core in area, population and jobs. Neither urban nor rural nor suburban, it reminds one of no urban form, but rather is an amalgamation; it knows no inside, no outside, no dominant centre, only chaotic, concurrently flowing urban fragments. It has no face.

This city is not to be understood through the category of place, the model of stationary immobility. It is a flowing space, four-dimensional, its inner logic based on the integration of time. The precondition for it was the unavoidable mobilization of all spheres of life by modern capitalist production - mobility is the result. A city founded on the temporal dimension can form no unit(y), but falls apart into a multiplicity of cities. Every individual, every family defines its own specific city through the regular places of its day-to-day life - piers of a bridge in flowing space. Between is no-man's-land. The centre of this city is the private dwelling which forms special whirlpools and flow patterns. Movement is the only constant; it generates the city. Traffic networks, streets of all kinds are its spatial identity.

Topology steps into the place of topography, describes the individual places as part of an abstract spatial structure. Space and time are linked in speed. In accordance with speed, distance is measured as varying amounts of minutes, not meters; linear patterns of relation are bent into wandering valleys and mountains, deformed by time. If time is a fixed constant, then the individual modes of locomotion with their different speeds define a space of the same time. Synchronized spaces are the mediating link between abstract, topological space and concrete, subjective spatial experience: a quarter of an hour on foot, by bicycle, by car, etc.<sup>1)</sup>

The new form of city is a fleeting city, privatized through and through, changing with habits and phases of life. For the thirty percent at the top, perhaps it is the city à la carte.<sup>2)</sup>

Whether garden city, green centre or green suburbs, whether green wedges, green belts or urban landscape - there is no concept for urban reform that does not have its roots in green areas. Green areas were the general cure-all for the shortcomings of the big city and, with the parallel circuit of nature and health, the subversive germ of the dissolution of the city. Is the new form of the dispersed city the green city? The reality of urban reform? Partially only planned, without any overall concept, it is the result of the sum of innumerable individual decisions. The driving force behind it was and is the ideal of the single family house with garden - in forever new combinations, even as economy variant that is hardly recognizable any more.

On the whole, the dispersed city is no more than the sum of its parts - rather less, as every new construction spoils the view of the countryside that was so desirable. But the popular housing model remains untouched by this. The accents propagated by modernity in the relation between the building and nature, between inside and outside have shifted: the opening of the dwelling, flowing out into the space outside, have turned into a drawing-in, a closing-in of the space outside; the feeling that while inside, one can

be outside as well has given way to praxis, to being inside even while outside. The view of the countryside has been turned inwards. Between the Hollywood swing, the sand box, the geraniums and the barbecue, nature has been definitively domesticated; it has been transformed from the idealized into the idyllic. Because city-dwellers associate nature above all with leisure time, it is the ideal stage prop for a hard-won, intimate world of relaxation that offers a wealth of opportunity for self-representation.

Urbanity in the sense of the public sphere is not present in the scattered city, it is split up into intimacy, collectivity and anonymity. The communal sphere of the residential enclaves has not got as far as becoming public, yet neither does it define a contrast to the intimate world: a fundamental problem, because when the density of the housing units increases, forced collectivity is only to be avoided through social fantasy and the development of new patterns of behaviour.

Like Morgenstern's picket fence,<sup>3)</sup> the interstitial spaces and the empty spaces define the actual substance of the scattered city. They form the ground on which the figures move, whereby the figure : ground ratio is only a subordinate amount of the ground : ground ratio. It is spaces left over and areas awaiting (development), every kind of space between, and 'distance zones,' criss-crossed by and separated from each other by supply routes and traffic arteries, agricultural residues, allotment gardens, green belt and protected landscape disconnectedly following upon each other, flowing into each other or hacked up. These interstitial spaces left hanging between areas left over, no longer available for construction and not yet occupied, testify to the provisional nature of the scattered city, its perpetual state of incompleteness. As urban spaces, they are anonymous in accordance with their character, concealed by their green condition. They describe the possible attraction of the landscape, the unequal equivalent to the public spaces of the historic city.

Only the interfaces where traffic converges and diverges again apparently generate a new form of public sphere.

'Traffic must flow' was the doctrine of the most narrow-mindedly radical modernization of the city. Traffic is in fact the very special juice that flows through the veins of modernity. Mobility and modernity are brother and sister. When traffic restricts mobility, then it is more than just exhaust fumes that are wasted in traffic jams.<sup>4)</sup> Immobile progress has yet to be discovered. Or is it already here - if, in the immobility of data transmission, the permanent acceleration of locomotion coagulates into a racing stillstand?<sup>5)</sup> But the material circulation of wares and human beings does not take place on the data highway. Therefore it is a real dilemma when traffic, especially the automobile that constituted the city, threatens to destroy it, if opposing strategies aim to achieve the same effect: rendering the traffic flow more fluid produces even more traffic and further traffic jams, which in turn paralyze the urban metabolism: obstructing traffic has the same result, but with less pollution.

The pleasure of owning a car is now bound up with feelings of guilt. But the great advantage of the car, its ability to provide access, is not exchangeable. Can the service so-



ciety, the substitution of services for wares, show a way out of the dilemma? A new link between car and effectivity through the transformation of mobility into a service?

Whether the dispersed city can develop any further or not is dependent on resolving the mobility problem; the traffic infrastructure will determine how it develops. Between concentration and dispersal there is an interplay: concentrating at the point of oversaturation, it bursts asunder, the exploded particles form the nuclei of new centres of attraction. The price of land and the traffic infrastructure set the parameters of this game. The most sought-after points of attraction are those where the networks of the different modes of locomotion interconnect. There, the first to accumulate are other functions, drawing other uses after them, density increases, etc. A polycentric structure arises.

But the traffic infrastructure cuts up flowing space as well. It is as cemented as the traffic is mobile (if it flows). The consequence of this is that connections create separations. In a new system of proximities, the more distant lies nearby, while that which is in sight disappears into the distance behind barriers. Left and right of the motorway is foreign territory, the territory of enemy tribes - spatial barriers acquire social dimensions.

For a short time now, all cities have been situated at the heart of Europe, centrally, with the best connections to everywhere else. Is it the new attraction of a city, that one can leave it quickly? Will it become an advantage of the location to be able to be somewhere else? Is this internal contradiction the fifth dimension of space - the touristic? Or the location vanishing into the thin air of the global economic network?

Locations are by definition local, even in the context of a global economy. But only for the commercial micro-structure always springing up anew in niches; for services and some small businesses even the markets are still local. In the fierce competition between the cities, using the competition to advertise is the sign that, accelerated by telecommunication, the respective advantages of the locations are running neck to neck, and thereby the location itself loses some of its direct economic relevance. New factors like the range of cultural events and consumer products on offer - leisure time values in general - are brought into play; they place the communities under the obligation of proving their modernity as well as their historic identity (historical identity has virtually become part of modernity), unspoilt natural attractions as well as convenient access to everything the landscape has to offer.

The historic city appears to be the place of conservative urbanity while the city in dispersal appears to be the space of modernity. But this is deceptive. The dead inner cities, monuments to petrified learning, are like the phoenix rising out of the ashes and the last spear-tips of modernity. An event that can turn atheists into believers. The historic centres are experiencing a hectic permanent boom; they are bursting with vitality; a permanent, hotly-contested change is taking place. The inner city is a shopping mall, miles ahead of other malls without even having to redecorate the shop windows. The

universal range of goods on offer and the newest design that is all the rage throughout the world profit from the historical nimbus, reflected in the appearance of authenticity.

How many bars, bistros, bodegas and pubs, how many snack bars and specialty restaurants can a city sustain? How many hairdressers, fashion boutiques, how much luxury consumption? Formerly modest pedestrian zones have become autonomous, coming together to spread out over the city. Handicraft and flea markets, hawkers, open air concerts, every kind of special event, street musicians, street-actors, pantomimes from all over the world - the historic centre is transformed into a consumer and leisure park that one can visit among tourists like a tourist in one's own city. Goods for everyday use that do not fit the leisure image are banished to the outskirts.

The intensive consumption of culture is integrated in leisure and consumer culture. It promises a deeper dimension for the shallow simultaneity of the world of leisure activities. The museums, formerly the preserve of elite society, have long since become popularized and stage themselves as multifaceted experience. The urbanization of the museum corresponds to the transformation of the city into a museum piece.<sup>6)</sup> The symbolic and sign language of the city is universal, part of a global culture propagated by the media, indifferent to the concrete locality. 'Museumizing' plays the role of the counterpoint: as universal tendency that touches all spheres of society, it is actually an attempt at local particularity, the specific synthesis of global and local.

Whether mall, leisure park or open air museum, the historic city has presented as a novelty a centre that, without economic centralizing power, promotes and obtains priority for itself.

The directing of leisure time in the urban space is experiencing fierce competition from the media, it is confronted with the permanent reproduction of spaces to the n-th dimensionality of the virtual world. 'Historic,' whether cored or reconstructed, converted to other uses or conserved, stands for authenticity and uniqueness, promises apparently stable systems of reference. Authenticity, probably not for the last time torn from the dustheap of history, is just the opposite of virtuality. What can a chimera do against a seething mass of possibilities? A new variation on tilting against windmills. For a long time reality has had nothing to hold onto any more, the hard ground of facts has become soggy beyond recall. The "frosts of liberty" that made the big city of the Twenties shudder<sup>7)</sup> have given way to vertigo, the feeling of sponginess, melting identity. Is identity bound to authenticity?

Only in mathematics is identity a constant characteristic. The self comes into being through relationships: "I is that to which you is said."<sup>8)</sup> How can the self of the city stick to its walls alone? Don't the city's chances vis-à-vis the media lie in the virtuality of the urban space, in the multiplicity of integrated worlds that become so likely that they hunger to be realized, in the possibility of gliding without difficulty between scenes simultaneously playing on the urban stage, as if between television programs? This form of urbanity would need transcendence and transparency.

The counterpart to global economy, global culture and globalized politics is the private person.<sup>9)</sup> Private/public is an outdated pair of opposites: the emigration of the public sphere into the media space corresponds to the private immigration: privacy is no longer a social sphere protected by the facade of representation; privacy means individuation. Is the city-dweller freed of all class barriers (vertical permeability prevails at least theoretically), social conventions and social ties the ultimate consequence of the free citizen with whom the history of the modern city began?

It looks as if it must be written anew: re-feudalized structures in the context of large industrial concerns and mergers to form communities that exhibit obviously tribalistic traits appear to go back to pre-urban times. When private affairs become affairs of public interest - talkshows about intimate issues, matchmaking shows - aren't these more the characteristics of a tribal community than of civil society? The repetition of history as farce? Is society on the way to becoming a community, on the way to the tyranny of intimacy?<sup>10)</sup> Will the homogeneous community become the dominant form of intersubjectivity?

Obviously the community functions as the tie that apparently heals the rift between the private and the global world, as the cement that holds together crumbling norms and value systems. But 'community' means very different things for the social groups: when modernity does not fulfill its promises, the fairy tale of olden times exerts its seduction. The flight into the warm embrace of religious, racist, regionalistic or nationalistic communities is not a farce, but reacts to sequestration and exclusion - to the cold outside the door.

It is otherwise for the groups with international tickets, where the global world does not only implode in domestic introversion. They whiz around through the inner and outer districts of the city like atoms with free valences looking to bond. They recognize each other through labels, form cliques, but they belong too to several tribes. Their tribalism is playful, promiscuous, transitory. Their identity does not result from work, or being members of families or belonging to social strata; they define themselves through being 'in' and through their leisure activities. Social relationships are ties of leisure-time, self-determined and of one's own choice. The contingency of their way of living is based on the credo of the 'and'; the 'either/or' is shed like a skin that is too small: individuation and communicative gregariousness, convenience and sportiveness, nature and culture, second-hand and design...

Modern society lives in cities and already more than 50% of the population of the world do. What is still urban about society?

The political dimension - the function of the city as the forum of democratic debate and decision? The formation of political volition takes place between commercials. Even the fundamental democratic movements - to the extent that they have any permanence - are no longer local, rather, they define themselves through political concerns without lobbies or as marginalized groups. Even if it has been said repeatedly: the political public sphere is no longer urban, the public sphere of the city is no longer political space. Only one



thing has remained true to itself: protest has gone into the street for centuries - in order to ask the media about its effectiveness.

The economic dimension? The international interweaving of economic regions culminates in the concentration of economic power in the - perhaps five - global cities.<sup>11</sup> In these interfaces, claims are staked out on a world scale and the parameters are set for the prosperity or the decline of whole regions.

The social dimension? Social segregation and spatial separation detonated the city of the nineteenth century before a conciliatory middle class began to sustain it. The spatial model of the time, developed in order to canalize conflict, is gentrified urban districts. Neither models of social integration nor of spatial organization exist for the imminent brutal cleavage of bourgeois society into winners and losers on one hand and its dissolution into individuation on the other.

Is it that the city is too big, as conservative urban criticism claims, or rather that it has become too small for the social problems and conflicts? Blaming size as such would lead to absurd consequences. The sharing out of competences and responsibilities has been the central problem of democracy since the rise of the nation-state: it is not so crucial who decides - that changes, as we know - rather, the question is: what will be planned, decided and fixed on what political level? In the cities the scissors cut crassly between problems/tasks and competences/responsibilities.

Is the city just about to disappear, on one hand atomized in thousands of individual introversions, on the other hand absorbed in the rapidly progressing global networks? Don't its prospects, its independent existence lie in mediating between the private and the global world, in becoming the interface where the worlds drifting apart join together again? How can it do this without itself being an entity any longer?

The route to homogeneity as it is practiced by communities is a strategy of the blind. Cordoning-off creates no uniformity. It does not stop ever more simultaneous worlds reaching into the concrete life-world. One can only live more openly or more narrowly in these worlds. Homogenization as aesthetic strategy is just as futile and will be reactionary when it excludes and cleans up the city. Breaches always function as niches as well.

The route to multiculturalism seems to be the strategy that is openminded. But pluralism is more indifferent distance than it is unbounded tolerance. Only consumption is boundless, properly free of prejudice. Does the hedonism of consumerism and leisure activities bear the seed of the new society that is growing in the lap of the old? What creative potential is there beyond the cult of consumerism and the cult of the body and the hobby world?

The city was the favourite child of both cultural despair and utopic modernism. Both of them wanted to bring it up strictly and form it according to their wishes. But the city withdrew from their clutches and developed its own dynamics. Where is the middle way between conservative cultural criticism and blind affirmation of modernity, the way that accompanies urban processes and does not go astray?

Is the telematic spatial model of nodes technically interlinked in a network gaining increasingly in spatial reality too? Does the dispersed city anticipate a digitalized model of the city in which space is only the user surface?

There is no longer any intrinsic relation between forms of living and city or between building structure and urban situation as the centre/periphery model suggested. Neither building density or urban configuration nor building or apartment type have any justification, they are to be deduced from the context of the city. The city generates itself from individual parts, but it does not define them. In the urban patchwork everything is possible; any additional patch can be inserted or slipped onto the archaeology from the middle ages to (post)modernism. Autonomous, every part is self-sufficient, stands for itself, can develop its logic from itself alone and enters into - if it does so at all - a new contextualism of a self-defining sort only with the immediate neighbourhood.

The spatial dispersion of the city has not only surpassed the centre/periphery model, but also blurred the distinction between inside and outside. The mediated separation between inside and outside was the constitutive spatial model of bourgeois society, the facade of the spatial inventory. With this blurring of distinctions, a late victory of modernity, urban spaces, streets, squares, parks forfeit their social significance as opposite space, as outside, and are open for new interpretations - but also for extraterritorialization. In the flowing space of the modern city, the bourgeois spatial model was only able to establish itself to a limited extent; now a spectrum of behaviour that is influenced more by the private sphere is developing in the closed rooms of the historic city too. The casual leisure-wear look is only a symptom. Does an opening of the apartment, an integration, e.g. of the work sphere, or other introversion result from this oscillation of the boundaries between inside and outside? Is everything on the way to becoming inner, is it on the brink of implosion?

There is no valid model for living, no model for living together that can claim general validity. Must the city, humanity's great invention, be reinvented or is it happening right now, as it has done so often in the course of its history? Is this what the 'town upon the town' means?

Artificiality is the fate (not only) of the city. The ideal of a synthesis between green nature and building culture just remains on the urban surface; it is an external phenomenon. Urban nature is a meta-nature that has nothing in common with vegetation or natural cycles. But it has an artificial liveliness and, like nature has the principle of having its own laws that develop processes once they have been set in motion. Self-activated evolutionary dynamics is a mark of urban meta-nature, but the driving forces are economic. The quasi natural character of the modern city results from the power with which it determines life-connections and it will be experienced in the inevitability with which it confronts its inhabitants.

Artificiality does not describe the artificial in contrast to the natural but rather the dissolving of the distinction between the two of them through the continuation of biological evolution by humans. The artificial is neither

handicraft nor artificial naturalness, but the synthetically created; it is not the simulated in the sense of being imitated but computed, the world as project. The artificial is the mutation of authenticity.

An artificial, no longer heroic modernism<sup>12</sup> reacts to the meta-nature of the city. It gets its conceptual inspiration from the dynamic observation of the city; its designs are open to being soiled. The hybrid conceived for each case and the mutant repress the classical and the modern urban typologies. They appear to be the favourite working material of the new modernism, a response to the difficulty that - theoretically - almost everything will be possible everywhere, that new urban forms, configurations and logics are to be developed.

The projects in this issue, both those that have won prizes and those that have not, contain answers to the city. Orientated on the awkward competition theme, they have been selected according to strategic criteria. The city will be taken up in many themes; in a way, the projects are seismographs of urban trends to which they react by making emphasis method.

Thus: through the injection of 'parasitic elements' with catalytic functions into desolate suburban structures (p. 24) - or through the implantation of electronic technology into almost village-like tranquillity; an attempt at synthesis between global and local (p. 28) - or through the integration of traffic and town planning by means of a sequence of scenes of nature (p. 58) - or the scattered city is stylized into a design principle, be it in a townscape that claims to be an artificial context (p. 62) or in the loose distribution of miniature clusters that do not operate only with the building structure but also generate the electromagnetic field of the empty 'between' (p. 64).

With one exception, purely residential projects form the large middle section of the issue. From a formal viewpoint, they can be interpreted as hybrids, crosses of well-known vocabularies of urban design, whereby frequently off-spring with several parents are conceived. But they continue in the structuralist tradition of designing in patterns too, i.e. the hybrid forms arise out of neutral structures: points form into punched computer tape, rows of lines which from time grow smaller to form of courtyards, take on the character of blocks; blocks are penetrated or broken open by empty spaces, buildings with courtyards conceal themselves in individual buildings and lift off from the ground, forming clusters of all kinds, spottily scattered or evenly covering an area with homogeneous or mixed types of artificial urban landscapes. One gene is almost always present: the introverted model of living of the building with garden-courtyard and angular ground plan 'mendels' through numerous mutations, be it as flat with courtyard, as two-storey building unit or as wall-to-wall carpeting. A few projects are more strongly influenced by the structuralist heritage (pp. 32, 36), and others show a more hybrid character (pp. 34, 48, 50, 54), and some are arbitrary (pp. 40, 44).

From the point of view of content, the way that living is conceived of is at the same time a form of interpretation of the city, a reaction to urban conditions. The disappearing city in the background lends the statements



made by the projects a certain acerbity. Thus the dominant theme is individuation, but also individuation in communality - which amounts to the same as heroically attempting to square a circle.

On one hand, the extent of the introversion is noticeable; the main idea of some projects being the withdrawal to the dwelling. Living grouped around a patio appears to be an adequate sheathing of individuated privacy. It represents the tendency towards an enclosed exterior space, in the last analysis, of being inside outside as well. In an extreme case it corresponds to the model of networked nodes: the window on the world being turned inwards, vaulted over now by the universe alone, replaces the reference to the concrete exterior space (pp. 40, 44).

On the other hand, the arrangement or stacking of the housing units shows a high degree of interiorizing of exterior space, i.e. intimacy and auto-referentiality. Interwoven, self-sufficient enclaves, rather indifferent to the place where they are, suggest the image of modern community castles. Combining into large urban formats strengthens this impression still more (p. 48, 54). It is relativized where the mixture of living and commerce introduces an alien element that brings openness with it (p. 50).

Contemporary living is confronted with the problem that proximity and distance have lost their spatial dimensions - a tendency that increasingly applies to familial ties and relationships between couples. Introversion and spatial cordoning-off can lead to 'anonymization', with the risk of socially neglected space, whereas the loss of an unambiguous inside/outside relation tends to 'intimize', with the danger of forced collectivity. Vaccillating between 'anonymization' and 'intimization' reflects the formatting of the model of private and public. If there is only gradually decreasing intimacy and a sequence of interiorizing, then the codicils of behaviour are missing.

Is there a replacement for the outdated model of private and public? For architecture at the moment, this question can be described only as the problem of specifying and openness, or whether there is a choice. Spatial structures which - realized as such - mean determining can develop openness in multiple coding. Multiple coding is a function of distribution and access. It renders spatial structures flexible as it builds in several modes of reading. Multiply coded ground plans for living are to be appropriated anew again and again. Why shouldn't this principle be applicable to building configurations and the inside/outside relation? It is precisely the neutrally structured kind of weave that offers good opportunities.

1) Simultaneous spaces also provide the starting point for fitting the networks of different means of transport into each other. Something similar is implied in the rhythm of the means of progress. But the starting point should be the pedestrian with the slowest means of progress. Bruno Schindler has developed a comprehensive model for this.

2) Robert Fishman, "Die befreite Megalopolis, Amerikas neue Städte"; in: 109/110 ARCH<sup>+</sup>, 1991, p. 73ff.

3) Translator's note: this fence is the central figure in a fine limerick by Christian Morgenstern, 1871-1914.

4) Cf. Peter Sloterdijk, in: 94 ARCH<sup>+</sup>, April 1988, pp. 30-31.

5) Cf. Paul Virilio, *Rasender Stillstand*; Munich, Vienna 1992.

6) Cf. F. Dröge and M. Müller, "Musealisierung und Mediatisierung, Strategien urbaner Ästhetik und der Widerspruch von Ort und Raum", in *Werk; Bauen + Wohnen* 7/8 1996, pp. 45ff.

7) Marieluise Fleißer described her experiences with the city and the young Brecht as "frosts of liberty".

8) Vilém Flusser, "Die Stadt als Wellental in der Bilderflut", in: 111 ARCH<sup>+</sup>, March 1992, p. 61.

9) Cf. Alain Touraine, "Die Stadt - Ein überholter Entwurf?", in: 132 ARCH<sup>+</sup>, June 1996, p. 68ff.

10) Cf. Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, New York 1974.

11) Cf. Saskia Sassen, "Wirtschaft und Kultur in der globalen Stadt," in: B. Meurer, ed.: *Die Zukunft des Raums*. Frankfurt/New York, 1994, p. 71ff.

12) Cf. Michael Speaks, *Artificieel modernisme*, in: *de Architect*, 1995-9, S. 34ff.

## EUROPAN

### Between Innovation and Realization

Didier Rebois in conversation with Yorgos Simeoforidis  
p. 68

*Yorgos Simeoforidis: Between 1988 and 1995 European became an incredible network in the field of architecture; a joint venture of 21 European countries, who participate in it with a double status: as organizing countries that hold competitions and help prize-winning architects obtain what is often their first building commission, and as associated countries which together bring the competitions to the attention of the public and offer architects the opportunity to express themselves. The theme, the rules and the objectives of the competitions are the same in all the countries participating. What are the difficulties in such a complex structure?*

Didier Rebois: The original aim of European, to stimulate architectural ideas on themes relating to the evolution of lifestyles in the European cities, has lost none of its actuality. To ask young European architects to formulate these ideas is important today, at a time when the definition of the task of architecture is in crisis, and culture is in a state of flux. In spite of their talent and their ideas, these young professionals are having more and more trouble in finding openings in their own countries - not to mention abroad - and having any say in the architectural debate. Therefore we consider essential European's second aim, to transform the outstanding ideas into built reality. And thirdly, we want to instigate a genuinely European debate in the networks of architects, clients, cities, administrations, researchers and critics on the themes and projects chosen. This role of European must be stressed as well, because the architectural debate is not very fruitful in Europe at the moment. The aims that European has had for nine years therefore remain useful and relevant.

It has become more difficult to put them into practice, however, both because of the diminishing importance of architecture and, paradoxically, because of the very success of European. The member states are individually responsible for organizing the competitions and realizing the subsequent projects, but within a defined federative framework, with

common rules, themes and procedures, as well as a program to stimulate public interest and debate on a European scale. In 1988, with nine countries, this system functioned well, because although everyone had a say, it still allowed agreement on the principal lines and putting the programs into practice. Now, with thirteen member countries, five sponsor countries and new candidates, the scale of the problems has changed. The federation is more difficult to manage, nationalisms have become more pronounced, the differences in regard to the representation of European have widened, there are disparate modes of management of the competitions, while at the same time, the number of prize-winning projects to be brought to public notice and to be realized has increased. The problem that European is faced with today is to find a way to maintain its objectives and obtain significant results on a cultural level in spite of this mosaic of national peculiarities. There is a risk of exacerbating the nationalisms to the detriment of European cultural and professional ambitions. The exigency for qualitatively better results must be raised within the frame of the thematic orientations while reinforcing the European dimension, without which European would make no sense. At the same time, we have to respect the cultural and professional differences, not by retreating, so to speak, but by exchange, creating added value, in order to produce something that could be called an acculturation between the countries and the architects. That is European's mission.

*Since its conception, European has pursued - in reaction to the uncontrolled growth of the urban tissue - a thematic investigation of housing, from the suburbs of single family houses to highly concentrated housing developments. By bringing together the actors concerned, architects, builders and city representatives, not only are young architects to be given a chance, but also, and in particular, with their innovative and experimental ideas, better quality housing should be produced. The first three sessions touched on the interior of the dwelling, its surrounding urban context, and the crucial interface between them. The theme of European 4 - 'constructing the town upon the town' concerned strategies for the periphery and interstitial spaces. What were the results?*

It is very difficult to make a global evaluation of the results of a session. As in European 3, a group of international critics was asked to analyse the prize-winning projects from different thematic angles and to see what the predominant ideas were and what professional attitudes emerged. Some countries carry out an analysis of the projects receiving mention in the last phase of judging; the evaluation of the results would be interesting if all the countries undertook this with the support of experts, for it would undoubtedly reveal a thematic cartography of the regions of Europe. In European 4, the principal question posed was how to modify the urban situations on the periphery that are difficult because of their spatial heterogeneity formed of networks of infrastructures, isolated buildings and vacant public spaces and because of their socio-economic problems. The objective is to create new contemporary residential landscapes in a city in transformation. And the program put the accent on the search



for new ways of planning residential areas which, without submitting to a difficult urban reality, do not simply wipe the slate clean, and support urban development in the transformation and recognition of the value of existing elements, whether communication networks, natural elements, buildings which although not part of the national heritage are nonetheless to be conserved, traces of countryside, or available open space. It was also a question of reflecting on the social transformation of these contemporary spaces. It was necessary to create new architectural formalizations while integrating the complex parameters of a difficult urban situation with its aspects of heritage, programming and process. 110 prize-winning projects from the four corners of Europe necessarily represent a cultural and qualitative heterogeneity; but one can discern some common themes running through the prize-winning responses to the questions posed.

The first - and probably the richest vein - is that of housing and lifestyles. There are numerous interesting projects relating to the way to live on the margins of the city centres, a search for forms permitting an intense urban life with the supposed advantages of the periphery, which is to say, more space and less cramped living quarters, a better transition between living environment and city. In games of mix and match of 'houses' with courtyards, gardens, terraces, new hybrid urban entities between block, building and garden city are formed; often systems which could contextualize themselves in different situations. With very rare exceptions, low density of the individual living environment in series is rejected in favour of housing aggregations - less dense than in the city centre - but whose compactness nonetheless permits freeing up more collective open spaces than the suburban single-family houses would do. Built density has become not a dogma - weak or important - but a question of urban contexts. However, one common thread running through this session is the introverted character of the majority of projects for housing on the periphery, the retreat to the dwelling and its extensions, as if it were necessary to protect intimacy from the eruption of modern collective life with its audible and visual nuisances...

The second dominant theme is that of nature and vegetation. Gardens, courtyards, promenades, green spaces, park, forest, the whole range of green spaces from the intimate to the collective are invoked, most often overlapping with the built environment. Many projects refer to the metaphors of the urban 'tapestry' as if the landscapes on the periphery would permit a subtle 'weaving' between the built and the plant environment, whether the projects exploit areas already covered with vegetation, in which the building is to be inserted, or spread vegetation in the interstices between existing or created objects. This idealization of nature on the periphery, already present in the preceding session but to a lesser degree, indicates that the architects are at last integrating vegetation as material in the conception in the same way as the built, doubtless in a way still too therapeutic, as if it were enough to put in greenery to mask the poverty in order to resolve the problems of the modern city. But some projects treat the city of masonry/green city relation intelligently, and they convey ecological qualities that are not naive. There is a search for values that are shared with the

users and, for architecture, a will to emerge from the cultural ghetto. The clients and the cities still have to be convinced of the justification for investing in green spaces, because it is this part of the projects that is the most difficult to realize afterwards.

Linked in part to the preceding, a leitmotif of the prize-winning projects is the status of public space in fragmented urban situations where its loss is felt as negative. Some projects still refer too often to a traditional urban culture in order to recreate empty spaces in continuity with the built environment, whereas outside the centres, this classic method fails. But a series of more innovative projects explores other avenues in order to make better use of the potential of the numerous green spaces on the periphery. It is no longer a matter of bounding public space with buildings, but of utilizing it differently. Either they create a big urban oasis, a bit of breathing space often empty of construction in the city, whether a park, a field of lava or a masonry sea front with the built interventions on the public land minimalist, like land art. Or the collective space becomes a fluid material which spreads between the buildings-objects, playing with topographic chance or the traces of heritage, transforming the classical public space of representation into a modern space, qualified but propitious for urban movement and exchange. Some projects cross the themes and play games of meeting/confrontation between two elements like earth and water, in order to find a dynamics of public spaces. In some extreme situations, for instance, a site between a motorway and a railway, the prize-winning projects often proposed a public space that invades the built in the form of 'pockets' in the constructed mass, protected from the nuisances of an environment considered hostile. And lastly, at the other end of the scale, in high quality open sites, a field of glasshouses, a sea front, a forest, some projects reject the idea of planned public space and they compact the buildings in points of intensity in the middle of an open site which has been conserved, forming a hybrid landscape. But some architects still have difficulty in knowing how to qualify large-scale exterior space, contenting themselves with interventions at intervals, which is not always adequate to addressing the problem.

The fourth theme that is very present is that of urban usage. The periphery - and more particularly, the residential sites - are considered poor from the point of view of social dynamics. In the results, one can clearly see two opposing attitudes. Some of the projects - particularly those which received prizes in northern European countries - consider the residential area as a monofunctional unity to be protected, to be separated from other, more animated areas of the city, an island of calm in the urban archipelago in motion. But in contrast to this, many prize-winning teams seek to remove the housing unit from the urban zoning well known on the periphery, in order to tap urban life around the living environment. Quite a lot couple the habitat with local services, businesses, teaching, sport, in order to create a 'community' life. But others, more audacious, marry apartment buildings and facilities of metropolitan importance, in the hope of grafting one to the other. This eastern European or southern European culture of the city has been partially lost in the zones of ex-

pansion since post-war times. We find, then, projects that develop a hybrid programming where chiefly commercial activities, but also sport and cultural activities are injected into and imbricated with the habitat. This question of the functional mixing of residential areas is important, for it forces an enlargement of the debate to the more global scale of the contemporary city. Should it be hyper-centralized in a single centre? Or polycentral, but around how many poles? Or will it grow without any hierarchy into an intermingling of functions? However, many teams find indecisive the attitude that consists of programming multiple usages in a city where, to use Koolhaas' expression, what we are experiencing is a formidable 'programmatic instability', prediction always being thrown into question. Their projects content themselves with furnishing a flexible framework for urban events, whose changing, ephemeral character seems to them to be more appropriate for animating areas which do not have the means to secure urban functions of prime importance. Lastly, it is in proposing to render the inhabitants active in the life of their districts that many projects sought to promote socialization through participation, either in the elaboration of the space, or in the diversified and flexible use of the collective spaces.

A fifth theme is that of the modernization of residential districts on the periphery. One is obliged to admit that few projects bear any interesting ideas. The question of the means of public transport (e.g. tramline or train) was not posed, with the exception of two sites which made this their theme. Even if this necessitated a reflection on an area larger than the site, it would have been interesting to have treated the theme of the improvement of accessibility in the development of a disadvantaged urban situation. As to other existing networks, like roads or motorways, the most widespread attitude is that of the preservation of residential areas by constructed walls protecting the residential 'cloisters' or bridges flying over the route as if speed and getting from one place to another were an irreversible evil to be put up with and not an element of urban dynamics. However, if it is necessary to protect oneself from the nuisances of pollution or the noise of traffic, there are other attitudes than simply consistently turning one's back, and the question of the passage from areas of rapid transit routes to residential surroundings remains open. A few rare projects were interested in the networks of telecommunications in the dwelling and often used them as a sedentarizing factor for the inhabitants in their dwellings. However, explicit reflections on workplaces in the home linked to central offices by telecommunications networks, on the association of these networks with urban services and on the influence of these technologies on residential lifestyles were missing.

A final significant aspect in the results of this session is the increasing number of projects which do not propose a definitive form, but an urban process. While some teams are still dreaming of the role of the architect as planner, and others want to resolve questions of urban order through the magic of the architectural object, a new attitude is emerging - and that is particularly discernible in some ten projects that won prizes at Europan 4; it is founded on the complex character of the fabrication of the city, with its



multiplicity of parameters, of actors and its development in time. The architect is no longer the great director, at best, he can be a co-ordinator, responsible for defining an open system, who conceives the coherence of the whole and prevents laissez-faire behaviour, and is the guarantor that certain values and themes will be respected, defining fixed points, but permitting urban play, seen as enrichment by a multiplicity of negotiated initiatives. Many projects call openly for such an approach of flexible urbanism between anarchy and rigid planning. The stake is strategic, for without this suppleness defined a priori, the urban projects are doomed to remain either projects on paper or falsified and/or misrepresented; beyond being a competition of ideas, the question as to the nature of the rules of the game and of the culture of actors capable of putting into practice such a scenario remains open.

*Is all this extraordinary amount of activity related to a broad concern about urban development and housing? New life-styles, nomadism, abandoned areas, public open spaces and periphery are all themes which have emerged from the competitions and the projects. Among the participants, a new culture seems to be shaping around these and other issues. However, the question relates to the reception of this supposedly shared culture in the different cultural contexts, particularly for those projects that bring novelty and challenge to their sites. Young architects often seem frustrated - particularly in the last session - by the juries' findings. Do you think we have a problem here? How can we resolve it?*

It is true that European engenders frustration on the part of the architects who participated in the competition but did not win. How could it be otherwise, when out of 2500 teams, only 110 are picked out? It is inherent in the logic of open competitions that the juries retain only a few projects. But one has to distinguish between the fact that to 'lose' is never pleasant, and the fact that some creative projects are not retained. European ought to concern itself with this second category, in the selection and the publicizing of results.

First of all, the juries are very different from one country to another, not in their number or their professional quality, but in their understanding of the theme and the sites. If these differences are the expression of national cultures which are in themselves rich, but nonetheless open to exchange, then they are interesting. But if they express different interpretations of European's objectives, that is not a good thing. The juries should be bearers of the culture of European, which is to say they should choose innovative ideas in relation to a theme and an urban situation. It is necessary to avoid that, for the sake of realism and the necessity of realizing them, the juries select good, constructible projects, but which show no evidence of any reflection; or refuse to select ideas that appear to them too innovative and therefore difficult to make comprehensible or, for the sake of making their own doctrine triumph, choose weak projects that are representative of their leanings to the detriment of strong projects whose ideas they do not share. These are the stumbling blocks.

But it is also an issue of the publicizing of the results. One finds that many project ideas are not retained because they are theoretical with regard to the site, band-aids stuck onto an urban situation whose problem is not solved by the proposed solution. Sometimes these project manifestos merit not prizes, but debate. From a more general point of view, the projects retained in the last phase of judging before the definitive selection should be systematically exhibited on a national level, analysed and discussed, for these are points of view which are usually quite pertinent. One idea would be to have a double evaluation. One evaluation, at first abstract, of the innovative points of view of the teams in relation to the theme of the session and which could receive mention. And in a second step, an evaluation of good ideas adequate to the urban situations in which they are inserted which the prize-winners would be chosen. The projects that are correct from the point of view of realization but weak from the point of view of innovative ideas could receive honourable mention. It is an ideal evaluation for it would be problematic itself...

*The transition from a competition of ideas to the implementation of a project continues to be the most intractable problem, particularly in the case of those architects who submitted their projects in countries other than their own. This transition is one of European's statutory obligations and after the end of the competition phase, the appropriate municipalities and construction companies are urged to go ahead with implementations of the prize-winning ideas and projects. The negotiation of the project, that is, its status as a field of discussion among the professional parties concerned is one of the most delicate passages, one of the most crucial experiences for many young European architects. However, the prize-winning teams have had different experiences as far as this is concerned. Some have been involved in lengthy processes during which a lot of new data in relation to the ideas of the competition has been integrated progressively into the project realized, while maintaining, however, some coherence between the point of departure and its adaptation for a specific site. Others have had more brutal experiences in dealing directly with the builders or succumbing to the norms and the implementation processes or the lack of any implementation at all. Can you comment?*

A first fact: about 35% of the teams winning the prize or being accorded honourable mention go into construction within one to six years after the competition of ideas, 15% benefiting from diverse openings - participation in remunerative competitions, financed urban studies, etc. - all those winning prizes or honourable mention benefiting from a label which in some countries is useful in the search for commissions. It is a significant result, even if the threshold of 50% of the prize-winning teams going on to construction afterwards is an objective still to be attained. It is enough that the realizations be divided equitably among the member countries, because 35% of the projects constructed are in a certain country while others can count none or very few projects realized. However, the figures do not say much about the complexity of the problems. A point to be remembered is that European does not

guarantee construction, it commits itself to helping the prize-winners to have them realized. It is important, for as soon as the competition of ideas under the control of European and its publicity are finished, one starts the normal procedures in professional practice where European does not play any role other than mediating between the brief and the prize-winners. Failures have many causes, a city carries out the competition of ideas but afterwards is uninterested in the operational sequences or does not understand the project selected by the jury; or the land is contaminated which entails non-availability of the site; political changes intervene and interest in the prize-winning project disappears; no client is found; the prize-winning team poses problems in regard to its capacity to master the realization, or no financing is found. In short, the hindrances attached to the context are numerous.

In the face of these difficulties, European still has to make some effort. Each country should be provided with a permanent structure that concerns itself with openings for the prize-winning teams. It is public relations work, explaining the ideas selected to the partners involved; that can be done with the help of the juries. After that it is a task of helping to get the process of realization specific to each situation on the way. Promoting the exchanges between partners, looking over the contracts, establishing overseeing of the procedure for intervening as soon as a problem manifests itself and looking for solutions. The difficulty is in getting the client to understand the idea and to know how to negotiate over it with the prize-winning team, while specifying what interests it has, what can be retained and what should be abandoned in function of the context. It is the basis for a clear contract where the project of ideas serves the client for formulating a dynamic brief that can also be realized. The cities are the most important actors, because only they can bring a client to undertake a complex and innovative operation. It is then necessary to work with national bodies in charge of experimentation or capable of giving support to such projects. Finally, European should not focus its concern too narrowly on just the competition site. A prize-winning team with a good idea should know how to adapt itself to a new context if the competition site is blocked, provided that this new site offers it the possibility to express a part of its proposal. But for the organizers of European, this means increasing the number of cities and towns or client partners beyond those who propose a site. European could propose to these associated partners interesting teams prepared to work with them. Lastly, European ought to propose a range of alternative openings to prize-winning teams, openings that would not all necessarily permit realization, but an interesting task or the opportunity to profile themselves. It is an entirely new mode of 'management' of the realizations which has to develop between the organizers, the prize-winning teams and the urban actors.

Translated from the French by Fiona Greenwood

Didier Rebois is secretary-general of European  
Yorgos Simeoforidis is editor of the Greek architectural magazine TEYXOS