

Living Cities

Contributions to the theme European E16
European France

E U R O P
U A N
P A N

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Editorial

Every session of the European competition has a focal theme. After two sessions dedicated to PRODUCTIVE CITIES, the theme of LIVING CITIES is the logical next step. European Europe's Scientific Council developed this theme from their observation of the results across the different participating countries. The shared European theme is the starting point for the ideas advanced in this pamphlet. This position paper introduces a number of avenues that need to be explored in order to reveal the issues, illustrate the problems to be overcome, and specify the key arguments. Several contributions thus help to develop concepts associated with this theme.

In an extract from their book, Alain Maugard, Chairman of European France, with Emeline Bailly, an urban design researcher, and Dorothée Marchand, a researcher on environmental psychology, introduce the idea of a specifically urban biodiversity, and show how the question of the well-being of citydwellers is interwoven with the ecological impacts of the city. The ecologist Philippe Clergeau develops the question of biodiversity as a rich system of relations that contribute to the capacity for resistance. Raphaël Besson, a researcher and an expert in the last session of European, sketches the portrait of a new form of life for urban production and reports on potential symbiotic relations to be developed with nature and the need for re-connections between human activities that are currently separate. Emmanuel Redoutey, an urban designer and expert who supports European in post-competition implementation processes, describes the role of municipal and regional actors in the context-sensitive interpretation of living environments. He also emphasises the operational project practices that are challenged by this paradigm shift. The urban anthropologist Sonia Lavadinho sets out five messages that define urban vitality over time, which are embodied in multiple and parallel timeframes, with slowdowns, accelerations, proliferations and resurgences. For his part, the architect and researcher David Malaud explores the social dimension of this theme, illustrating the idea of an inclusive vitality with the example of the city of Detroit. In this example, it is community initiatives and self-organisation that are triggering an urban renewal in which socio-economic phenomena are not disconnected from natural spaces. Finally, Marion Serre and Gabriele Salvia, architects and researchers, draw on their POPSU experience in Briançon to demonstrate the opportunities created by in-between situations, such as third land, in creating instruments of action for the regeneration of declining population centres.

The aim of this collective publication, therefore, is to set out the broad lines of a theme, which will then be situated and enriched contextually with the sites proposed for the European 16 competition, and then by the submitting teams.

European France

Villes
Vivantes

Living

Cities

creative process-projects to regenerate inhabited milieus

EUROPAN 16 THEME

In the conditions of the Anthropocene –a new bio-geological period where human activities on the global scale have a destructive impact on life on earth– how to face climate change and inequalities? How to imagine other possibilities to inhabit the planet Earth?

The European 16 topic focuses on living cities as a new paradigm, in which new kinds of synergies can be considered between the environmental, biological, social, economic, cultural and political dimensions.

This paradigm leads us to think the space in terms of co-evolution and interactions, and to work with regenerative project dynamics, combining metabolic and inclusive vitalities.

METABOLIC VITALITIES

Metabolic vitalities go beyond the nature-culture combination, allowing the European projects –mixing architecture, urban design and landscape architecture– to identify and to negotiate with an ensemble of transformations taking natural elements into account –like water, material flows, energy...– which are all part of the life cycles. These new relations generate inhabited milieus.

These milieus are considered as complex ecosystems generating flows (with entries and exits) and in constant evolution. Developing such cyclic processes leads the design process to minimize the environmental footprint and the consumption of non-renewable energy, and to promote new forms of dwelling.

Metabolic vitalities encourage design processes on different scales. The recycling competence, the enhancement of organic or energy material, the adaptation to climate change, the integration of nature and biodiversity are as many metabolic vitalities that European 16 sites should trigger to allow their own transformation into ecosystems between nature and culture. To be rewarded, the projects should translate this metabolic dynamic in their proposals.

INCLUSIVE VITALITIES

Urban environments are facing increasing inequalities and conflicts produced by invisibility, exclusion, marginalization, and inaccessibility to housing, to work, to education and to public services. To fight against these social fractures, inhabited milieus should become places where new inclusive policies and practices are supported.

Inclusive vitalities put on the foreground modes of doing that can support territorial justice articulating social and ecological concerns. Issues of accessibility to public infrastructures and to housing should get a predominant role, promoting conviviality. Taking care of living environments could promote inclusion by transforming marginalised spaces into places of exchange, co-learning and biodiversity. This could allow new inclusive narratives of inhabited environments across scales and generations, promoting new forms participatory democracy. When choosing the sites, when defining the programmatic frames that come with their evolution, and when judging the participants' proposals, European 16 will emphasise on the consideration of the inclusive dimension of the inhabited milieus.

CONCLUSION

If we want to face these social and environmental emergencies, we have to address new creative and responsible project dynamics, which should be able to reconnect with the cycles and rhythms of the living nature, associating metabolic and inclusive vitalities.

The European 16 sites should therefore consider these two dimensions in their transformation goals. How can the project spatialize and, at the same time, spare resources, common goods, recycling processes, hybridisations, sharing and the different temporalities ?

This is the question raised for European 16.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Setting out to conquer the living city

Alain Maugard, Emeline Bailly et Dorothée Marchand

“Here we are at the meeting of the paths. As more and more of us live in cities, people today find themselves facing a major twofold environmental problem: climate breakdown and the accelerating disappearance of species.

Held liable for the heavy responsibility it bears in this process, could not the city mitigate the trend and become a source of regeneration for biodiversity and for urban life? In this book, we argue that the paradigm shift that the situation demands is founded on our profound connection with nature. The need for nature among citydwellers is so great that we could draw on this powerful urge to conceive a city that is greener, more ecological, more diverse. A city with more life !

Insufficient efforts

It is an indisputable reality: the city has long caused damage to nature, undermined biodiversity, even contributing to imperilling our entire planet. Despite the efforts made, transport and construction remain the two main sources of the greenhouse gas emissions that are feeding climate disorder. For its part, the urbanisation of recent decades has often led ineluctably to encroachment on farmland and to a deterioration in land drainage, trends that are having serious consequences today.

Salutary as it is, this awareness has come late. Major efforts are underway to reduce the negative impact of the city. But the situation is so urgent that much more is needed.

Desire for nature

Faced with an ever more polluted environment and an ever denser urban fabric, urban populations are thirsty for nature. They want to be able to breathe, to feel and experience, to escape, to rebuild their resources. Some have understood, others sense that contact with natural elements promotes good health and well-being in the city. All three of us have often seen this desire for nature in our respective work on the living environment. It is expressed in many ways: in one place, residents may spontaneously take the initiative to “de-tar” the street and replace it with vegetation; in another, an innovative project may reveal this need for reconciliation with nature...

As we will describe in the first part of this book, this desire for nature is much more deep-seated than it might seem. The analysis of the relations between city and nature helps us to perceive and understand this interweaving of individual and collective impulses. It also shows how fundamental, how essential, how metaphysical this quest for nature is. Because what is at stake here is humanity's destiny on earth ! Our relationship with the cosmos !

The city as source of biodiversity

Sharing this observation, in the second part of the book we explore an original idea: does not this strong desire for nature in urban populations give the modern city the ammunition it needs to defend biodiversity? Here, biodiversity is understood from the broader perspective of the diversity of life, of plant and animal species, but also of social and urban vitality. In the course of these three-way discussions, we speak of the need for a new alliance between city and nature, of a city that lives in osmosis with nature. A city capable of generating its own kind of urban biodiversity. And capable too, through its influence, of contributing to this biodiversity beyond its walls. A

living city, which is self-animating, self-regenerating and self-transforming.

More and more urban planning and innovative urban projects take into account this need for nature. Eco-neighbourhoods are proliferating, seeking to optimise their use of eco-systemic services, the solutions that nature offers to combat heat islands, to capture CO2 and help us to breathe better, to prevent floods or to provide spaces of peace and spiritual resource.

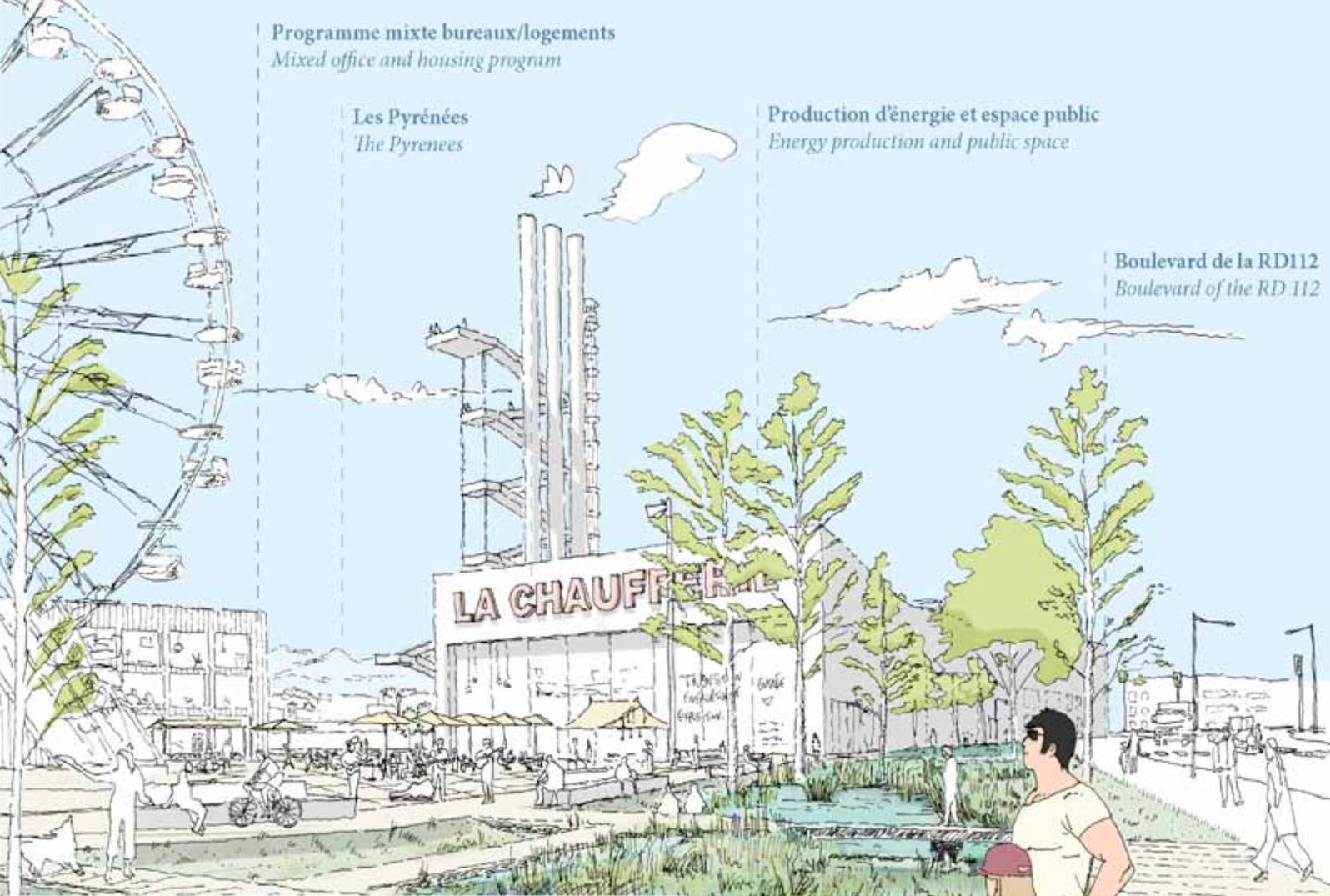
The progress is visible. However, the idea of a living city goes beyond this vision, in which the tendency is to exploit and to artificialise nature, without really taking into account the human factor, nor the essential connection we enjoy with nature.

This relationship is unfathomably rich. It is intuitive, physical, but also philosophical. It relates quite simply to our condition of being on the earth.

Paradigm shifts

This kind of paradigm shift presents a profound challenge to anyone involved in the urban. To politicians, developers, urban designers, architects, landscape architects, to ecologists, psychologists, sociologists... To pursue this path in order to make our cities living places.”

Alain Maugard, Emeline Bailly, Dorothée Marchand
Extract from the book *Urban Biodiversity for a Living City*, p. 17-20, Edition PC-2019



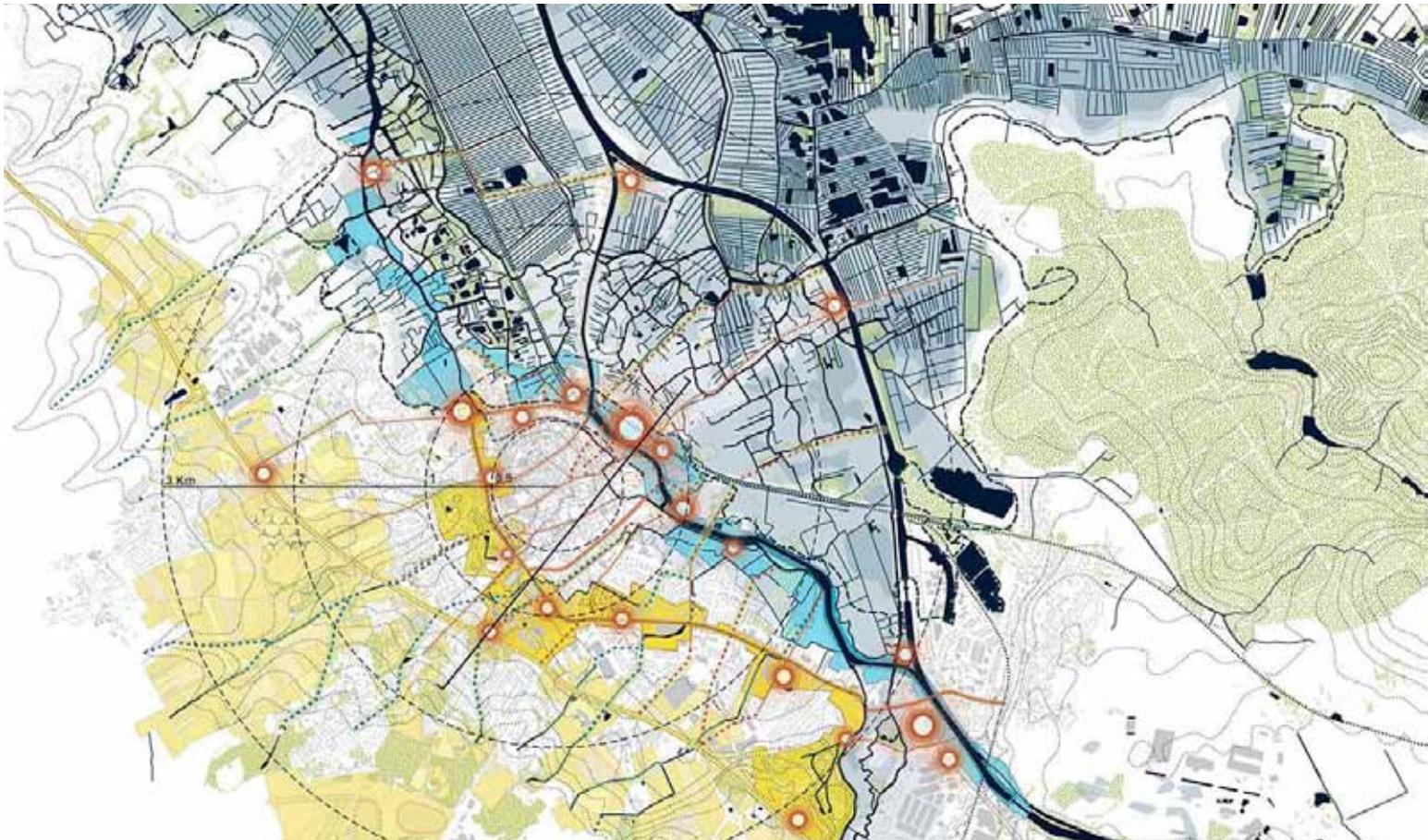
Programme mixte bureaux/logements
Mixed office and housing program

Les Pyrénées
The Pyrenees

Production d'énergie et espace public
Energy production and public space

Boulevard de la RD112
Boulevard of the RD 112

Re-resource - Winner in Toulouse (J. Romane, A. Amiot, G. Clamour, T. Maeder, E. Triacca) Europan 14



Hydro-productive parks - Runner-up in St-Omer (I.Chervet) Europan 15

For urban projects that form an ecological system

Philippe Clergeau

The rapid extinction of species, the need for an ecological and energy transition, the quest for well-being and health, are all major concerns for contemporary society, which turn the spotlight on our relationship to nature, even in the city. Nature in its complex and untamed form is one of the positive elements in the behaviour of any territory, and for human beings wherever they are. To incorporate this reality into the planning process means in particular approaching urban projects in a different way, no longer focusing on human beings and their interrelations with their kind and with the built fabric, but encompassing a wider range of multifunctional relations. Here, the meaning of the non-built fabric takes becomes as important as the built environment, and immediately brings ecology to the same level as architecture. By developing Nature in the city, we are already in the process of changing the paradigm of what a city is.

The challenges of real urban ecosystems

One big issue around nature in the city is reflected in the notion of ecosystemic services, or ecological services, a notion that refers to the functions of ecosystems that are valuable to human beings, in other words that human beings can exploit. Three major functions stand out: supply (water, gardens that produce fruit and vegetables), cultural services (recreation, health, sociability) and environmental regulation (water regulation, controlling atmospheric pollution and urban heat islands). We are becoming aware that the well-being of our society is directly dependent on the functions of nature.

Another issue is biodiversity itself, both through the conservation of the species that constitutes biodiversity, and through the behaviour of the ecosystems that it supports. Biodiversity refers to diversity of genes, of species or of ecosystems, as well as diversity in the relations between species and between species and their biotope. So we need to think not only in terms of richness of species, but richness of function. Cities, for the simple reason that they are occupying more and more space, now have almost no choice but to play a role in the preservation of biodiversity, in the same way as forestry or agriculture need to include measures to protect spaces and species. So even without the justification of ecological services, big cities automatically need to consider the conservation and restoration of their natural heritage in any construction or refurbishment project.

Proper consideration of urban biodiversity means thinking about questions relating to the scale of parks, gardens and mobility spaces, as well as about neighbourhoods or the city as a whole. The challenge of making the transition from incorporating nature into the city to embracing biodiversity also includes notions of sustainability and resilience. Large expanses of lawn, lines of plane trees or sedum roofs are forms of monoculture and therefore vulnerable to the impact of climate or health events. Just as they do in farming, they require regular management and care. Species diversity is much more robust and imparts a kind of stability to systems or landscapes, so one or more species can be lost without the whole plantation being destroyed. Recreating a rich habitat is therefore both a way to guarantee sustainability, but also a way to give habitat a role in urban green corridors that allow species to spread within built-up environments. And finally, it is a way to give cityfolk a much more pleasant environment than the hardstanding features typical of current urban milieux.

From ecological engineering to urbanism

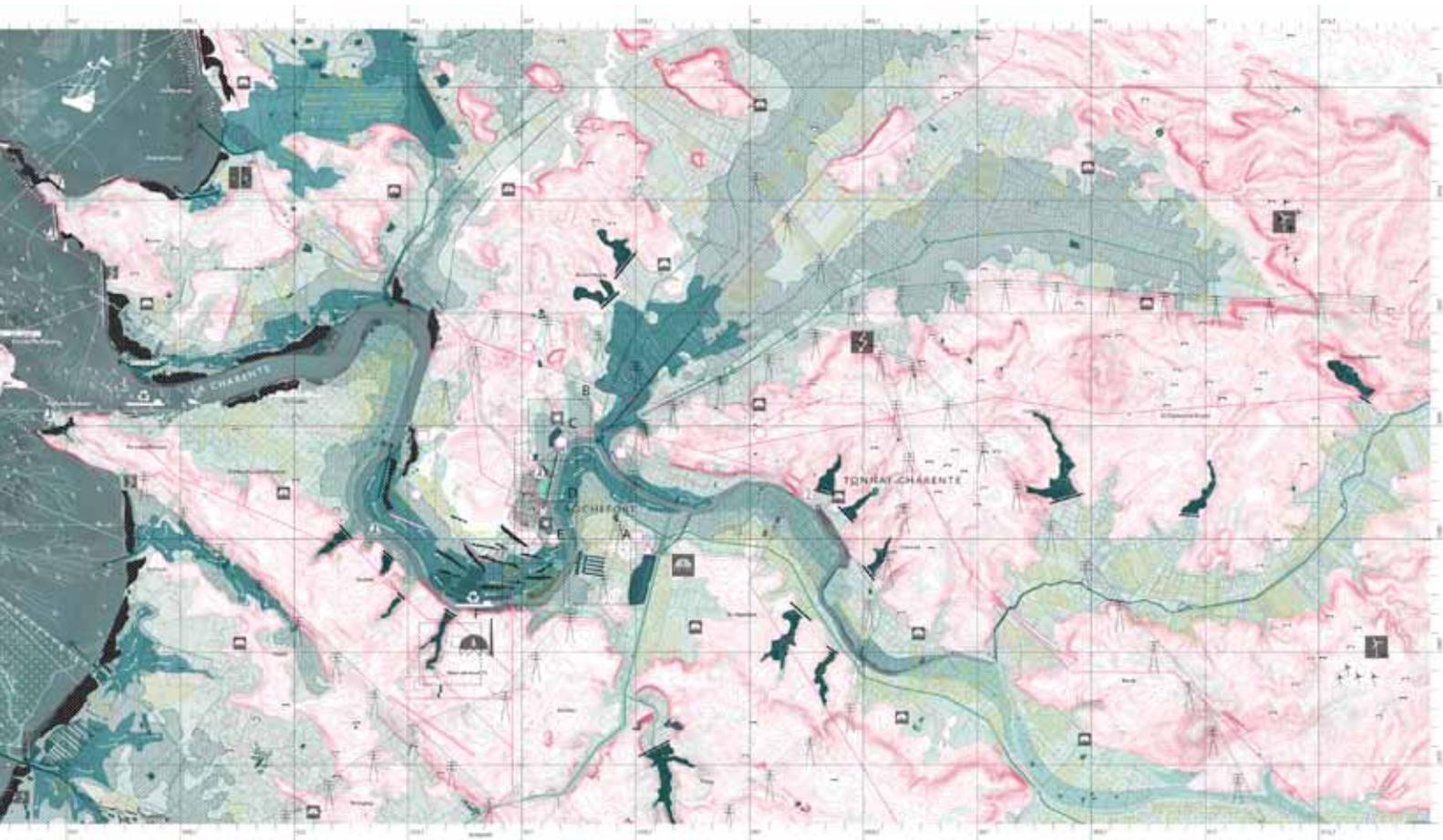
Efforts towards the two goals of substantially reducing our global ecological footprint and fulfilling the desire of urban populations for a greener city should foster the emergence of a new paradigm that profoundly alters methods of construction and spatial transformation, especially as the disappearance of private cars will eventually release large areas of vacant urban space.

The different scales at which urban biodiversity functions (local, neighbourhood, global) obviously need to unite to form the greening of the city to be a consistent process. The idea is to take full account of the diversity of unbuilt space so that it becomes a structural factor in urban morphology and the quality of urban life. Green spaces and buildings, the focus of the work of landscape architects and architects, are at the heart of local ecological engineering, but their integration into a citywide fabric should be equally fundamental.

In parallel, there needs to be serious thinking about urban densification, which has two conflicting aspects. On the one hand, the sustainable city has been defined, notably in Europe, as a dense city in which the expansion of all aspects of the urban fabric is limited. On the other hand, numerous studies conducted over the last 50 years have shown that our western cultures lack tolerance for very dense urban environments, and that highly compact forms of urbanism generate social conflicts. A middle way therefore needs to be found, which directly concerns the place assigned to Nature. This is an invitation to think about new forms of unbuilt spaces, which will lead to new practices and new solidarities. Green corridors, for example, are a way for urban inhabitants to come closer to Nature without excluding all forms of densification.

Phillipe Clergeau,

Professor at the National Museum of Natural History,
Chairman of the Scientific Council of Plante&Cit /
Chairman of the Scientific Council of the BAUM/PUCA
programme



L'escargot, la méduse et le bégonia - Rochefort-Océan - Winner (*L.Goumain, C.Loukkal et B.Barnoud*) European 15



Cultivating the city - Winner in Amiens (*M.Holdrinet, A.Ledu et E.Robin*) European 14

Living cities in two cycles and three movements¹

Raphaël Besson

The launch of the 16th session of EUROPAN dedicated to Living Cities marks the opening of a fruitful period of radical transformation in the relations between cities and the living world. The goal is to move from a principle of imitation – or even predation – of the living world, to a principle of regeneration.

To what end ?

To turn cities into active vehicles of a new symbiotic relationship between living beings, whether human or nonhuman.

Although the living world is not a new player in urban and architectural production, it has taken on an entirely new dimension in this era of major transitions. First with social transitions and the renewed interest in the commons and the challenges of the coproduction of cities. Then the changes brought about by the cognitive and sharing economy, which require a proliferation of the points of contact with social and living activities. However, it is probably the onset of the Anthropocene era and our awareness of the irreversible impact of human activities on the Earth system (climate change, biodiversity loss, destruction of our living environment), which marks a decisive turning point in the ways that cities think about the issue of the living world. Cities, which occupy 20% of the earth's land mass and are home to more than half of its population, have a crucial role to play in the preservation and reproduction of life. However, urbanism for the Anthropocene era has yet to be invented, because a living city is not a city that imitates, captures, exploits or controls the living world. It is a city that creates the conditions for the living world – whether human or nonhuman – to flourish. More precisely, it is a city that reinvents the symbiotic² organisation of relations between all the communities of the living world.

Chronology of living cities in two cycles

The imitation cycle

In the 19th century, the models developed by architects and early planners were significantly influenced by the idea of the living world. Progressive models were inspired by the structure and functions of the human body to organise and divide up the city, which was then conceived as an arrangement of green lungs, residential cells, working machines and flows directly inspired by the circulation of the blood. In a reaction against this model of an anthropomimetic and functionalist city, devotees of the culturalist model like William Morris or Ebenezer Howard would argue for the idea of an organic city, more inspired by nature. Such a city would favour asymmetry and irregularity over the rigidities of chequerboard designs. It would be more anchored in the complexity of architectural, cultural and ecological strata, rather than promising a blank slate and the potential for a new kind of urbanness. This organic vision of the development of cities would be maintained by architects like Antoni Gaudí, Otto Frei or more recently Luc Schuiten, all inspired by the living world.

The activation movement

The current period of transitions has prompted many architects and urban designers to move beyond a passive, metaphorical and mimetic reading of the living world. The challenge is not to produce a servile imitation of human or natural forms, but to activate and work with the living world in order to design, manage and build the cities of tomorrow. This urban production of life is structured around two main orientations, depending on whether the living beings are human or nonhuman.

The first orientation is the smart city. In this model, the objective is to track the life signs of the city in order to collect, analyse and exploit as much information and data produced by human activity as possible. The idea is that this way of capturing the living world, achieved by the mass use of sensors, will optimise the management and operation of cities. The other model is the collaborative city. Its aim is to create an environment conducive to the flourishing of social and human activity, to envisage a way of managing cities that is more resilient and open to the people who live in them. To this end, the collaborative city develops spaces where urban vitality is intensified by the creation of Third Places, spaces of coproduction, Urban Labs, Living Labs, or temporary pop-up spaces, “unfinished” places that can be adapted to a variety of social situations. While the Smart City and collaborative city models differ in numerous respects,

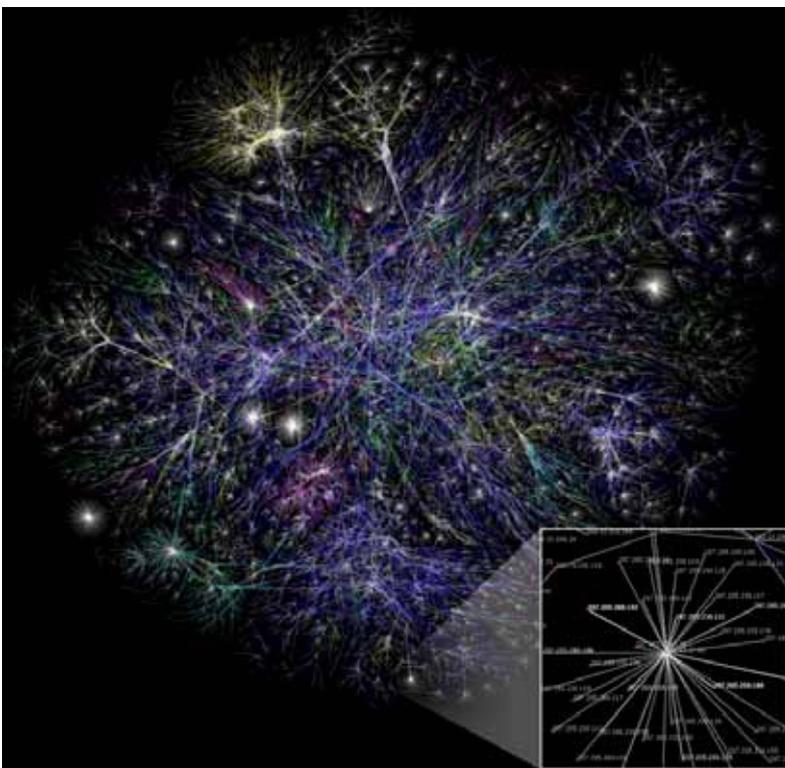
they share the same desire to direct all human energies toward the management and performance of cities. The mobilisation is total: no human activity and no place is excluded from this biopolitics. Every space becomes productive: business zones, urban infrastructures, public social spaces, cultural sites, knowledge centres, landscapes, entertainment and leisure sites, interstitial or vacant spaces. However, this approach carries one major risk, which is that the living world, rather than being allowed to flourish, will be captured, exploited, controlled and standardised, in line with a Foucauldian interpretation of biopolitics³.

Another approach is to recruit the nonhuman living world for the making of cities. Much research has already gone into the conceptualisation of this new approach, through the notions of urban metabolism, urban ecology, circular urbanism, urban biodiversity, urban bio-regions or territorial bio-mimetism. This research is reflected in ideas about effecting a shift from a system based on the predation of nature to a reparative system of caring for the living world. To this end, different approaches propose employing natural ecosystems in the making of cities, drawing inspiration from fundamental principles of the living world. The prospect this raises is a regenerative city able to produce biodiversity, energy and food, to recycle waste, to store carbon and to purify air and water. A city capable of becoming a primary vehicle for the reinvention of symbiotic relations between living beings⁴.

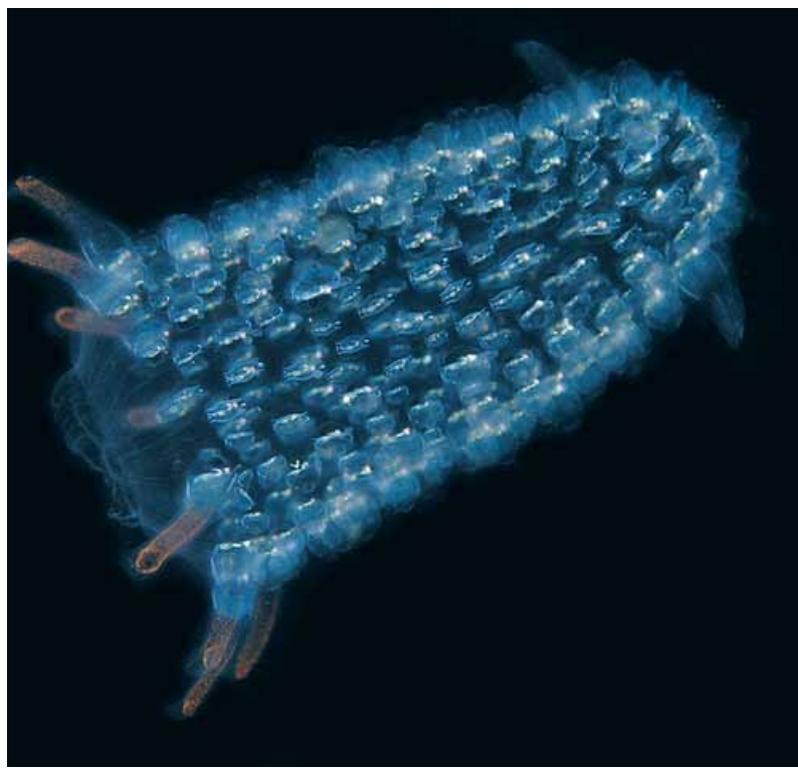
The prospect this raises is a regenerative city able to produce biodiversity, energy and food, to recycle waste, to store carbon and to purify air and water. A city capable of becoming a primary vehicle for the reinvention of symbiotic relations between living beings. relations symbiotiques entre les êtres vivants.



Luc Schuiten, Strasbourg in 2100 (source: Wikipedia)



(1) Analysis of social interactions (source: Wikipedia)



(2) Bioluminescence (source: Wikipedia)

Reinventing a symbiotic relationship with the living world in three movements

Lacking our advanced sciences and technologies, the primitive societies of America, Africa or Australia learned to build a symbiotic relationship between the human and nonhuman worlds in a relation of reciprocity with nature. To understand this phenomenon, many anthropologists have studied totemism, a system in which different rituals and objects were used to maintain a balance between human structures and ecological systems. While primitive societies managed to devise techniques to maintain a symbiotic relationship with the living world, modern societies have proved incapable of doing so. However, in the Anthropocene era, it is becoming urgent to reinvent this reciprocal connection with the living world. This is the whole challenge of the 16th session of EUROSPAN on the theme of living cities, where the task will be to lay down the foundational principles of an urbanism suited to the Anthropocene era. To achieve this, a range of theoretical shifts will be needed.

1. Going beyond the anthropomimetic city and building with the living world

For their design and planning, cities have often been inspired by human functions or broad metaphors from different professional disciplines: the engineer in the intelligent city, the artist and creator in the creative city, the craftsman and maker in the collaborative city. However, achieving living cities means going beyond this anthropocentric prism, and notably the ethnocentric logic of sustainable development, which places the economic, the social and ecological on the same plane. Consonant with the ideas of ecosophy or biomimeticism, it seems essential to re-situate human organisations as intrinsic components of the Earth system.

This transition from an anthropocentric to a bio-inspired approach has several consequences for the design of tomorrow's cities. First, it means no longer seeing citydwellers as extraterrestrials poised on the summit of the ecosphere, but placing them back at the heart of nature. To do this, processes to reintegrate nature into the city are not enough. What is needed is more to build cities by nature and with the living world, in order to make bio-architectures and biomaterials out of biological organisms, to create bioluminescent infrastructures from living organisms, to develop architectures founded on principles of matter self-generation. Architectures capable of filtering air, of developing biodiversity and evolving by adaptation to practices and timescales. And ultimately, to create cities designed as natural ecosystems, inspired by the major principles of the living world.

2. Re-embedding ecosystems and measuring externalities

In the 19th and 20th centuries, architects and urban planners, researchers, engineers and economists specialising in the city were self-invented as autonomous beings. They gradually separated from social and natural ecosystems to found disciplines hermetically sealed from other forms of knowledge: knowledge about human practices, experiential knowledge, the know-how and knowledge constructed over almost 4 billion years and based on the observation of life on Earth. This process of disembedding and separation from knowledge about the city generated an urbanism that was disconnected from the living world and the Earth system. The consequence of this was biodiversity loss, the uncontrolled consumption of natural resources, deterioration to the living environment, the production of greenhouse gas emissions, the destruction of social bonds and communities, or the privatisation of the commons. In consequence, there is a major need to re-embed urban ecosystems into social and natural ecosystems. And the possibilities for re-embedding are multiple: architecture embedded in the Earth, economics, research and technology embedded in society, the city in nature, art in everyday life, etc.

These multilevel re-embedding processes would seem to be a necessary, but not sufficient condition for re-establishing a symbiotic link between living beings. In order for the prospect of a major re-embedding to become more than a utopia and to be embodied in the day-to-day management and production of cities, it would seem essential to measure the externalities produced by all the communities of the living world. Beginning with human activities which, like pollenisation by bees, perform a major function in the vitality of urban ecosystems: production and dissemination of social data or data about mobility, energy and the environment, upcycling of vacant or degraded spaces, creation of shared infrastructures or urban services, development and intensification of the social capital of cities, design of creative atmospheres and stimulation of innovation processes, etc. As for the externalities produced by natural ecosystems, their value incomparably surpasses those created by human activities. Indeed, the externalities produced by nature are essential to the reproduction of the living world. And these services provided by nature, which some people call "ecosystemic services" are considerable: contributions to the cooling of cities and resistance to heat islands, reduction in atmospheric pollution, creation of spaces that are fertile, nourishing and conducive to biodiversity, recycling of waste, creation of a natural and landscape heritage, etc.

We can understand here the absolute necessity for our urban societies to rebuild a relationship of reciprocity with the living world. And therefore to value the externalities and eco-systemic services provided by the living world, in order to re-incorporate them into the accounting systems and business models of cities.

3. Organising the city by “Third Spaces”

A living city is a city that operates in similar ways to ecological processes and ecosystemic models. In this respect, Third Space becomes the new strategic place for the organisation of the city. This Third or Intermediate Space can take multiple forms: interstices, margins, ecotones, ecological transition zones, Third Places, vacant spaces and other interface zones with “biological depths”. Nonetheless, a Third Space on its own is not enough for the governance of a living city. This Third Space must be supported by a Third Actor, capable of acting as an intermediary between a variety of sectoral policies, cultures, knowledge types, territories and living systems. A Third Actor capable of oiling the wheels of dialogue between clients, project managers and operators, and reducing the gap between architecture and urbanism on the one hand, and civil society and natural ecosystems on the other. A Third Actor capable of assuming the role of testing and regulating tensions of all kinds. An actor whose functions are not dissimilar from the activities of collectives of architects and geo-artists, and the intermediary figures represented by Michel Crozier’s influential outsider or Jacques Rancière’s ignorant schoolmaster.

Conclusion

The theme of living cities proposed for the 16th session of European invites us to make radical changes in how we see the living world and the production of cities. What needs to be established is an urban production of the living world, a production that mobilises and regenerates the living world in all its dimensions: the activities of urban residents, children, birds, bees, mushrooms, bacteria, microorganisms, etc. The resulting changes for urban and architectural thought are significant, since the aim is to go beyond the binary opposites that have historically structured the construction of cities: culture/nature, city/country, city/region, centre/periphery, human/nonhuman, mineral/vegetal, structural/vacant, economic/social, technological/social, open/closed, public/private, science/knowledge. Beyond this, the inanity of certain commonplaces needs to be challenged. Notably that cities have no choice but to exploit the living world and that they cannot be thought of as active contributors to its production and regeneration; that urban and architectural sciences are primarily the product of the objective thought of scientists unconnected with social

and natural life and that knowledge about the city is not organically linked to the continuous production of the living world; that monumentality is intrinsically mineral in nature and that unbuilt natural spaces cannot become structural spaces; that the large-scale architectural act is irreducible to a tactical micro-urbanism, inspired by an organic and metabolic vision of the development of cities; that the living world is not a central subject of regimes of urban planning and regulation. All inverted concepts that stand in the way of any desire to build living cities in two cycles and three movements.

1 The content of this article owes much to numerous discussions with Damien Ollivry, head of Biomimicry Iberia and the Parallèle agency.

2 In biology, the term describes a close and sustainable relationship between two organisms. Here, we suggest a relationship of association, where everyone finds mutual benefit.

3 Foucault, M., 2004, Naissance de la biopolitique, Cours au collège de France 1978-1979, Hautes études, Gallimard-Seuil.

4 In particular, let us mention the following principles: life develops from the bottom up, life needs an inside and an outside, life creates from mistakes, life recycles everything, life is competitive on a cooperation basis.



Further reading

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(3) Gilles Clément, Le Jardin des Orpins et des Graminées (Estuaire, St-Nazaire)

One theme, cities and ideas: Life in all its forms, planning for living cities

Emmanuel Redoutey

From Productive Cities to Living Cities, a natural kindship

A new theme does not drive out the old – it includes and expands upon it.

Europam is a laboratory of urban and architectural ideas, processes and solutions, guided by a common theme defined at European level. The Europam themes always focus on a contemporary issue of urban and architectural thought or are premonitory in their content. They follow and echo each other. From one session to the next, it is not a question of turning the page and opening a new chapter: the sequence of themes is more like a palimpsest, in which the earlier themes persist and are hybridised without being completely erased.

This is the case for the transition from the Productive Cities of Europam 14 and 15 to the Living Cities of Europam 16. It is neither a step to the side nor a step forward. It is the sign of a more fundamental transition: Living Cities subtly encompasses ecological, cultural and economic motifs.

The theme is a call to reconsider the living world and living things in project approaches that recognise a vulnerability, accentuated by human activities, which characterises the milieu that they inhabit and constantly transform. In this context, it is possible to put together many pairings of terms that relate to the fact and to the intention: fragility and strength, vulnerability and resilience, depletion and resourcing, pollution and reparation, artificialisation and renaturing, degradation and regeneration, segregation and mingling, sectorisation and coproduction, finiteness and frugality... All of these notions demand a constant renewal of the ways that reproduce and give life to the city and its milieu. They situate the project as a responsible act of transformation and transition, poles apart from controversial and grandiose one-off projects bedecked with hypothetical environmental goals.

The next step then – and this is the role and contribution of European – is to move from this conceptual framework to situated project processes, in order to test concrete, sometimes entirely novel solutions with the European cities and teams, solutions that combine architecture, landscape, ecology and sociology, and are sensitive to the contingencies of a site and its habitats, both human and nonhuman.

From Productive Cities to Living Cities, a natural kinship

Several contributions from the previous session in France already offer a foretaste of the Living Cities theme. They can be summed up in a few questions: how can circular economies and recycling (materials, energies, resources, waste, etc.) influence the ways we do things and develop a vision of the project as an ecosystem of resources and public or private actors? How to work in an uncertain world and build the idea of a progressive and progressist city that offers space for the transitory, for adaptation and for the unpredictable, for less rigid modes of urban development? How does the landscape and architecture project help to shape policies of resilience with the potential to cope with climate change and natural risks? How to go beyond the well-meaning view of nature as something to be protected or included, and instead implement solutions founded on nature as active, living and productive, able to repair abused environments, to inspire more organic modes of development?

In other words, Productive Cities put its finger on the primacy of thinking in terms of urban metabolism, which is one centre of gravity of the theme of Living Cities. Combining the recycling, production and conversion of energy and waste, the European 15 results placed the emphasis on the city as an ecological laboratory,

just as it was seen as a social laboratory at the turn of the 20th century, at the origins of urban sociology and social ecology. The challenge is to implement situated processes of construction and interpolation between flows and resources that are both visible and invisible, both ecological and social resources, and directly influence the urban and architectural project, combining urban quality, ecological responsibility and social well-being.

The role of the municipalities in the European process

The 20 French municipalities involved in the two previous sessions can attest to the freedom and proliferation of ideas that European brings with it. In this process, the clients and their partners find “time out” from crisis management to think differently and leave room for collective creativity, based on discussion, debate and criticism, in response to an ever richer spectrum of proposals presented for each individual site. This time is needed to establish governance and equip local authorities to move to implementation in the post-competition phase.

Each session thus takes the form of a time of collective learning between site representatives, European teams, the jury, and the French and European experts. It is not a case of the client municipalities on one side, with a total grasp of the question, and the teams of designers on the other side, tasked with delivering a spectrum of turnkey responses. It is also in the jury sessions, the national and European forums, at the time of the site visits and the meetings with the European teams, that the municipalities themselves contribute to the creativity of a session, in the ways that they formulate and reformulate the original question, and through the experiments that they set up following the competition, supported by the inventiveness of the European teams.

Living Cities resonates with the concerns for extensive territorial diversity

Climate disorder, the management of natural, energy and food resources, the erosion of traditional economic models, democratic and civil demands: the rising force of these phenomena marks a paradigm shift, from an urbanism of transmutation to an urbanism of multiple transitions. Cities small and large, with their own resources and means, are in the forefront of these transitions, which today we know to be vital to the planet and to all living species.



Implementation European 12 in Marseille, Workshop plan d'Aou, Jeu Arki-Nopoly par Arki-Lab(B.M.Hermansen, J.W. Frisk, R.W. Frisk, S.S.Duong)



Implementation European 12 in Fosses, Workshop (M.Rabin, A.C Bouric, V.Prié)

European is valuable in that it explores these crosscutting questions within the framework of concrete situations proposed by local authorities and their partners, by offering solutions to their problem embedded in a specific context. The expression of their concerns through a site is thus fundamental.

Living Cities also takes on its full meaning in the context of an inclusive process and in the interplay of human interactions that characterise project processes, at a time of growing social and territorial inequalities, characterised by the challenges of regenerating small and mid-sized towns, and rural or so-called peripheral territories. Living Cities thus addresses all territories in transformation, whether marked by excess (of density, of infrastructures, or pollution...) or by shortage (of attractiveness, of liveliness, of financial resources...).

From environmental preoccupation to the paradigm of the living world

It should be noted that the question of the living world and metabolisms raised by the European 16 theme, although covered by an abundant scientific literature, is rarely tackled head-on in the field of urban and architectural production.

For urban clients, it appears between the lines in urban planning documents and regulatory procedures, in the section on requirements and obligations. In the upstream phase of urban projects, we sometimes find rhetorical references to environmental policies running through many planning documents (positive energy or zero carbon territories, Nature in the City approaches, biodiversity plans), all lacking visibility for citizens and sometimes difficult to implement in planning operations. In the downstream phase, there is the compulsory implementation of the environmental impact study, a technical document that operates through measurement and evaluation, correction and compensation.

As an alternative to this rhetoric of goals and impacts, and its parade of regulations and standards, the European 16 theme opens up a space of inventiveness to develop strategies that go beyond a simple statement of well-meaning objectives and technical engineering practices cobbled to the project. The aim is to explore project approaches that reverse this relationship, by restoring the heuristic and political dimension of the living world in all its states. The theme is thus a response to the current concerns of municipalities (what to do) and presents a challenge to the design teams, when urbanism and architecture call for an alliance between social sciences and natural sciences.

Emmanuel Roudetey
Architect and urban designer at "Agence Emmanuel
Redoutey U&P", European France Expert

What does “living” meaning in Living Cities ?

Sonia Lavadinho

This is not a simple question, and the answer is not obvious.

We all think we can easily tell the difference between what is alive and what isn't, but you only have to play the 20 questions “animal, vegetable, mineral game” for a few minutes, trying to guess the nature of something unknown, to realise that this fundamental question, “Is it alive?” actually raises many questions and immediately highlights the somewhat blurred boundaries of our definition of Life.

Nevertheless, let us try to answer the question, in 5 messages that will be more or less messages in a bottle: invitations to broaden the problem with new questions rather than conclusions that attempt to delimit the contours of something that is by definition too complex and too slippery to be grasped by words alone. Because ultimately, Life is simple: you have to experience it to really know what it is. Any attempt to fully define it will never be anything more than an approximation.

First message in a bottle: for a municipality, really knowing how to live is learning to manage the process of urban maturation

One fundamental thing distinguishes life from the rest of the inanimate world. At some point, every living thing dies. And generally, living things know how to die with a certain panache, embracing their metamorphosis to another state of matter and energy. You only have to look at a butterfly chrysalis, the corolla of a wilting flower or the lined hand of your grandmother as she closes her eyes for the last time, to perceive the hidden beauty of this fragile moment, the death of something that just a second before was so alive. Between life and death, the change is radical. Clear cut. Black and white rather than grey. One is alive, then one is not. Becoming aware of our own finiteness enables us to exchange the false sense of eternity for a historicity that needs to be accepted in the short time we have. To be alive is therefore to be aware of this time that passes, and to be able to adjust to a temporality that is linked with the interval of the days of our existence, by definition limited and bounded by a circle of history which, like any story, has a beginning, a middle and an end. Learning to live with one's time thus literally, without wordplay, implies a certain knowledge of how to live: how to be born, how to grow, how to age, how to die. Being able to manage the transitions between these different stages is up key to a well filled life, a well-lived life, as the saying goes.

What does this mean for the Living City? The Living City too must learn to manage a process of maturation that is far from always linear, and which demands acceptance of the fact that there are different phases in urban life. This relationship to passing time must therefore remain flexible and ever-changing, a relationship of contemporaneity, in the original sense of the term: being able to live with one's time at every moment.

Yet many cities remain stuck in different stages of urban maturation, their leaders unable to find the right tempo to grasp the opportunities that would enable them to move on to the next level of maturation. Other cities, by contrast, are able to seize the zeitgeist and imitate their peers in what they do best. And then there are those cities that are always in motion, always slightly ahead of their time. One foot already in the future, they also – benevolently but without rigidity – keep one foot in the past. Anchored thus in their present, these cities that are best able to hybridise their multiple temporalities are also those that manage to dance most elegantly with Life.

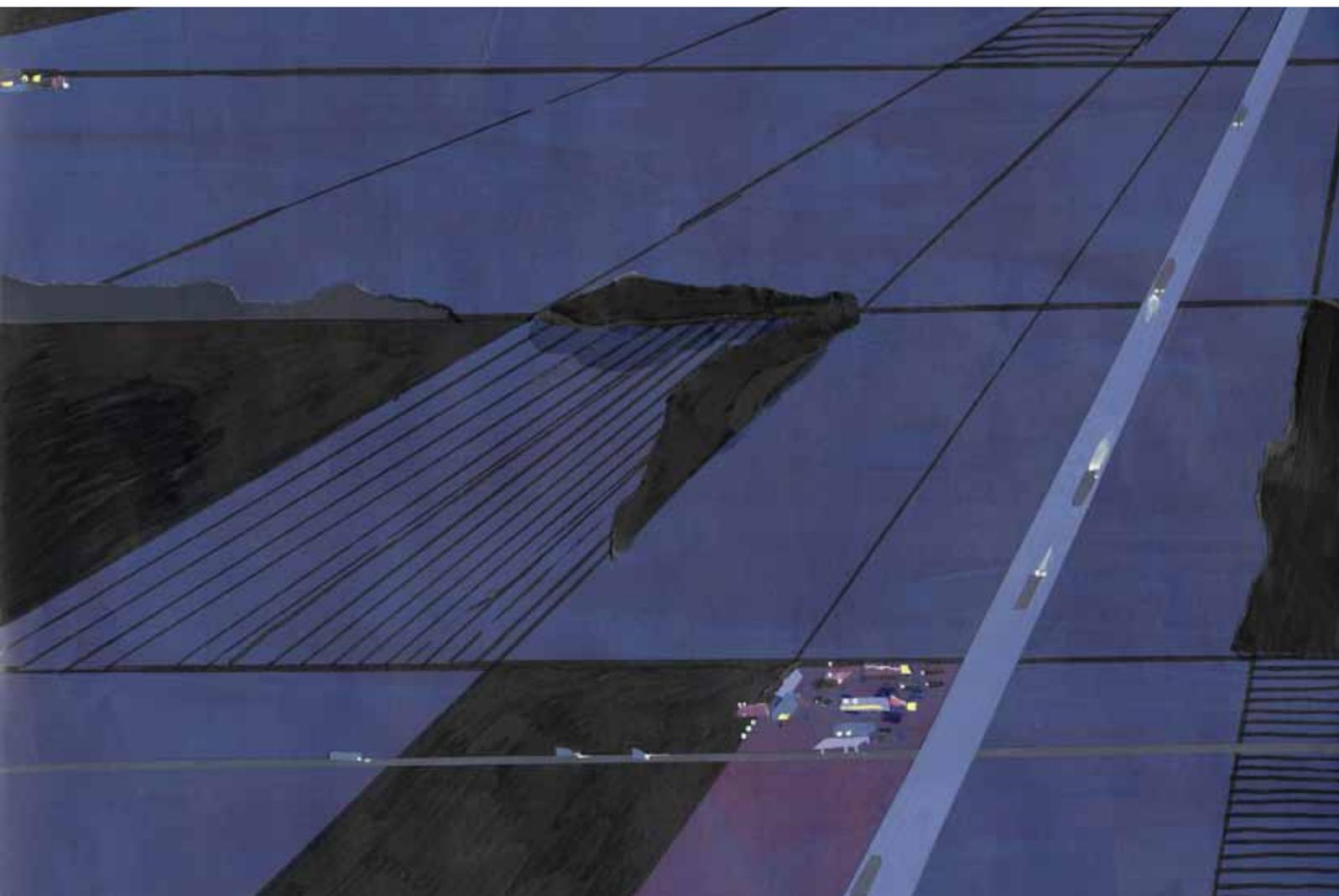
Second message: let the field lie fallow so that urban creativity can grow

One of the most creative ways to benefit from passing time is to implement – intentionally and resolutely – an urban policy of letting certain parts of the city lie fallow. In this way, any city can gain from proactively deciding which will be the next fragments of its urban body that need to be deactivated, allowed to rest, so that something different can emerge from them at some time in the future. Here, it is all about sowing. A wide variety of seeds, a broad spectrum. And waiting. And making others wait, those who would like to jump on this fragment of city and quickly turn it into something else. Being able to say “no: we'll wait a little longer”. And waiting. As long as it takes. Though not forgetting to water. Informally, like someone who is not bothered, like the rain that falls as it wills, in other words randomly. In other words democratically. And then see what grows. Spontaneously. As spontaneously as possible. Then lend a hand to whatever grows, so that it grows better and faster. While still respecting the timeframe of something that needs to flourish first underground, rather than the next electoral cycle or the next distribution of dividends to investors. Investing in fallowness is a long-term art that requires strong shoulders and a land policy worthy of the name. But a city is only Living if it manages its own timetable.

And how are we going to plough this fallow fragment during this wilfully chosen time of repose? Because of course, repose is a misnomer. More a standing back. A gaining of height. Acquiring space to experiment. Allowing a small step to the side. Trying what has never been tried before. Leaving to others – explorers, farmers, makers, children, tramps, artists – the temporary enjoyment of this land and the task of organising themselves to make it... what they want. Take a deep breath, and let go. One year, five years, ten years. Time will tell. There are times when The city of the future could emerge from the magic hat of the generous city...



Rouen, On the move - Rouen/St-Sever - Runner-up (*F.Fanciotti, Ni.Lee, H.Maffre, J.Schuster*) European 12



De la ville à la campagne - Pays de Dreux - Special prize (*Dinh-Luan Pham, R.Colin, L.le Marc'hadour*) European 15

Third message in a bottle: the human body embodied in the city... making the city with the body in motion

Being alive is also and above all to occupy a space. Existing entails a literal process of embodiment, literally. To live is to be embodied. My identity is defined by my corporeality, occupying that precise space that coincides with the space that my body occupies, where previously was only air, trees, earth. This territory of the Self is mobile: it moves with me and constantly occupies new spaces, but it is always the same body, simply transplanted elsewhere. The city is a product of the human imagination, and therefore a profoundly animal way of seeing the world. The city may look immobile, but it is not. Everything that happens there in fact takes place through mobility. The criterion of mobility is at the heart of the very definition of urban space, a space of flows through which humans move constantly from one place to another. A plant, whose very essence is linked with an existence whose coordinates are fixed from the start, would not understand it in the same way. If humans had emerged within the plant realm rather than the animal realm, you can bet that our cities would be very different from the hypermobile cities that they have become today.

A Living City therefore always contains – for better and for worse – the seed of this potential for mobility that it needs constantly to enact. It is this capacity to move in space as it grows that lends the city all its elegance as a living thing. However, it needs to learn to be much more elastic in its spatial demands: to expand sometimes, sure, but also to contract, to become more compact, more frugal in the way that its metabolism consumes square metres. The most radical way to become more frugal in its relationship to space would be to shift paradigms: no longer to inhabit only space, but to inhabit space-time. To change our unit of measurement: shifting from linear metres or square metres, to square metres per hour, per minute, per second. To inhabit space is fine. To inhabit the full time of our lives is better.

If we want to think better about the city that we want, we need to bring the question of time to the forefront, rather than just the question of space. What do we want to do with our 168 hours a week? What do we want to do with our 4000 weekends, the time capital we possess at birth and has already melted away by the time we are finally free to decide for ourselves how we are going to use this free time? What do we want to do with the 7 years we spend in travel in the course of a life? Conceiving every inhabited space as a space temporally intense with uses exponentially multiplies the capacity of every human being to enjoy what the

city has to offer. By better reconciling the space-times of all those who inhabit it by means of programmes that are able to hybridise a mix of uses and dynamics of proximity, the Living City in fact paradoxically increases its capacity to expand, yet without leaving a larger ecological footprint on the earth. Space-time, a new spatial planning tool? In any case, it's worth thinking about it for a moment as an elegant way to solve the complex equation of urban sprawl, a method that is even surprising in its simplicity, in the same way as is Einstein's eponymous equation.

Fourth message in a bottle: to be alive is to find the right scale of expression

Whether overstimulated by the hallucinatory speed of a dynamic of continuous growth that usually escapes them, or conversely depressed by the slow stagnation in which they gradually sink into oblivion, cities often have problems in finding the right scale at which to express their personality as a truly living organism. A very fine book by Geoffrey West appropriately titled *Scale* gives a masterly demonstration of the architectures of the choices that living organisms – cities and big companies – adopt in order to grow. The question of the optimum scale at which to inhabit a body, whether biological, urban or organisational, is amazingly similar. In any case, they can all learn more from each other than one might imagine about the universal laws that govern growth, which are directly correlated with the rhythm of Life. And the rhythm of Life, in fact, even its duration, is determined by this question of the scale of the organism, in so far as its size is capable of accommodating the fractal structure of the geometry of the networks that supply the organism with energy and eliminate its waste. The operation of scale and metabolism is closely linked, and economies of scale play a role in how energy efficient and organism is – no surprise there – but also in how long it lives – perhaps more of a surprise.

Architects, urban designers, landscape architects or elected officials would be well advised to familiarise themselves with the work of this pioneering physicist and the science of the complexity of living things and draw inspiration from it in their ways of producing the city. It is only by playing on all the different scales, sometimes telescopic, sometimes microscopic, offered by the geometry of fractals, that the city can express itself in all its complexity as a Living organism. As it happens, Euclid is of no help to us in imagining the Living City of the 21st century. When you draw up specifications for the transformation of the city, don't hesitate to challenge the exclusive use of approaches based on Euclidean geometry, and reject any approach to the city that is confined to the standard professions that have traditionally built it over recent centuries:

engineering, architecture, urban design, landscape. We call here for new kinds of specifications that are finally fully consonant with 21st-century needs in daring to recognise the inherent complexity of the Living City, in an appeal to its specialists – biologists, physicists, anthropologists, psychologists, artists – precisely all those who specialise in the functioning of the Living World. Only in this way, by building truly multidisciplinary teams, will we be able to prepare for the challenge that awaits in the next 30 years: because with climate change, the equation that we need to solve has only two solutions – cities that are Living, or cities that are not.

Fifth message in a bottle: to be alive is to interact

It goes without saying, but it's all the better said: there is no life without interaction. One might even go so far as to say that to be alive is to interact. We make our interactions the central forces of our lives. It is the spectrum of our interactions with everything around us, living or inanimate, that defines our World and allows us to picture its contours. We experience life and assign meaning to it very largely on the basis of our actions, and those actions in their turn are always attached to emotions. The constant feedback loops between emotions and actions are generated by our continual interactions with our surroundings, and shape our vision of the world and our way of being in the world, literally. Learning to walk, for example, which might seem to be the most universal experience that human beings share, is anything but generic. Every child learns to walk in a way that is unique, specific to the context on which it relies to interact with the world in attempting bipedalism in the early months of life. A chair, a table? A stool, a cushion? Mummy's knees? Daddy's arms? Their smiles, their encouragements? All these holds, or affordances, as Gibson would say, form the foundations that underpin our Dasein, our presence in the world as a biped learning to stay balanced (or rather in constant dynamic disequilibrium) on two feet. So every one of the 7 billion human beings on earth at this moment walks differently from every other human being, although in appearance everyone seems simply to put one foot in front of the other.

If you're a city, it's the same. You only live by and for your interactions. You only learn by imitating your peers. Your peers are not the same as you. On the contrary, they are different from you, in their infinite diversity. There are more than a million cities in the world. Much fewer than the 7 billion humans, but nonetheless enough to be very different from you. Only just over 4000 cities have more than a hundred thousand inhabitants. The very large majority of cities

are therefore small, contrary to received wisdom. So don't restrict the entries in your address book to the big metropolises alone. Look for inspiration to all these living organisms whose name you don't even yet know, and which nevertheless enrich the urban ecosystem with all their diversity, and learn to form relationships of course with those that are bigger and richer than you, but also with those that are smaller and quieter than you. It is precisely by encountering their way of finding different solutions to the same problems that you face that you will learn the most. It is all these interactions with others than yourselves that define your world and help you to better refine – interaction by interaction, day by day – who you are.

My urban palaeoanthropologist colleagues believe that what defined the first proto-cities as cities was not their size or their urban form, but the intensity of the interactions that they managed to develop with their surroundings. In a word, at the beginning there was no such thing as a city, only cities. Several. In interaction. It is their relational constellations that enabled them to make the very first universes of urban life.

So you are only a Living City insofar as you maintain dynamic and synergistic relations with other cities, larger or smaller, nearby or more distant. Equally important are your relations with your hinterlands – or Zwischenstadts, to employ the neologism beloved of Thomas Sieverts. As are your relations with other landscapes, radically different from your own: countryside, forests, mountains, rivers, seas. It is in the richness of these interactional contrasts with everything that surrounds you that you become the city that you are. And as with human beings, I have only one piece of advice to give: choose your company carefully, because in the end you become the sum of the five other territories that you tend to spend the most time with. So take a good look at what they are, the territories that you choose as models to imitate. Look for the best. Not just those close to you, or those that you admire because they lead the pack with all lights blazing. No, choose the ones that fail as much as you, but have demonstrated their capacity to bounce back. Those that have managed to form relationships with other urban organisms devised by human beings, but also with Nature in the round.

Territories that are ready to tackle the climatic, social and economic challenges of our time, because they are not only resilient, but anti-fragile, to employ the term favoured by Nassim Taleb. According to this mathematician, author of *Black Swan* and a specialist on uncertainty, chaos and disorder, anti-fragility is a property that complex and living systems show when they have the capacity to become stronger when exposed to stress factors, shocks, errors, failures... and emerge better than before. The resilient absorbs shocks and remains the same. The anti-fragile become stronger the more unstable the environment is. Just like human beings who can only walk by accepting perpetual disequilibrium, I would like to see all Living Cities adopt anti-fragility as their mode of interaction with the World. It is only in this way that they will be able to be enriched by the increasingly unstable and uncertain texture of their future conditions, to achieve their maximum potential while respecting the complexity of the interactions that they experience with this Living World to which they genuinely belong.

Sonia Lavadinho

Urban anthropologist and founder of Bfluid, an appraisal and forward research practice specialising in territorial development

Beyond urban naturalism: detour through the clearings of Detroit

David Malaud

"In tribute to Quentin Mourier"

Our cities, having passed through the great wringer of green-washing, are in the process of being naturalised. Forest-city¹, permaculture city, urban mangrove, and canopies of all kinds...

In recent years, analogies from the plant and agrarian worlds have been exploited in all variations to rethink inhabited milieux as productive ecosystems or living metabolisms.

When not used purely to green the image of real estate operations, these biomimetic metaphors accompany the invention of more ecological modes of inhabiting. Nonetheless, by modelling systems of natural organisation on human societies, the vision of these "bio-machines" conceal questions that are crucial in the construction of our territories, such as the conflicts associated with land divisions, economic and political mechanisms of production, the cultural dimension of uses. Detroit, often described as the laboratory of a new kind of large-scale agrarian garden city, can elucidate our attempts to move beyond this naturalistic discourse on the city.

Romantic and picturesque: denaturalising our gaze

Everyone these days has a picture in their head of the ghostly landscapes of the ruins of Motor City, the crumbling factories where pioneering plants extend their rhizospheres, beginning their slow decontamination of the earth, close-up shots of deserted streets where gutted wooden villas steadily decay while native and invasive tree species fight over inheritance rights. Images of ruins have this power to stop history and human time to let us roam in the infinite cycles of natural time. In reality, apart from a few places where these romantic photographs have been taken, the depopulated landscape of Detroit looks more like a picturesque rural landscape sprinkled with street art. Few abandoned houses have not been burned or stripped. Apart from those that have been converted into horticultural fields or forestry operations, most of the brownfield plots have been maintained and now form a grassy carpet that runs through the blocks and offers the occasional glimpse of a pheasant.

To understand Detroit, however, like any other evolving human milieu, one must begin by forgetting about these romantic and picturesque images and denaturalise the way we look at things. Regularly mown by the inhabitants with the encouragement of city hall, these green spaces in fact say nothing of their human past. Nor have they been restored to the state of nature. They are fragments of neutralised ground, reduced to the minimal existence of a grassy biotope, waiting for the next phase.

Resilience and resistance: human capital

When the green carpet had become sufficiently large, the occasional condominium was built, evidence of one of the numerous attempts to relaunch the real estate market in Motor City. In the last few years, after a long decline lasting almost 70 years, which culminated in bankruptcy in 2013, the city finally has seemed to be really taking off again. Land prices are finally rising, a sign of the urban system's capacity for "resilience".² Like a forest that finally succeeds in recapturing its territory, in the near future the city may well return to its former shape. Except that the city is not a simple botanical ecosystem engaged in a constant struggle with potential hazards, drawing on its strategies of reproduction.

The ruin and renewal of Detroit are not natural phenomena.³ There, the economic and social crises that are undermining our European regions are exacerbated by extremes of racial and social segregation. For decades, the flight of the city's white

population into the suburbs, combined with industrial relocation policies, made Detroit the biggest poor city in the US, but also its biggest black city, with African-Americans accounting for 84% of its population. Deprived of their right to the city, and abandoned by public institutions and authorities, the inhabitants had to rely on the only capital remaining to them, human capital. Sometimes supported by humanist activists, they pursued their efforts to build anchor points to keep their communities alive. Most of the "farms" created are primarily ways to bring food security to a city where gas stations had become the only stores. They quickly became gathering places for scattered communities to share moments of togetherness. Within the unifying framework of a natural process, Detroit's resilience in fact reflects the combination of two interdependent socio-economic mechanisms: the return of the market – a massive influx of external capital gambling on land prices that can only rise – and the stories of individual and community resistance that gave the ruin a different image by building upon human capital.

Green corridors and clearings: common land

It is probably the presence of this social capital that explains the relative success of the most recent renewal plan, the "Detroit Strategic Framework Plan", which was implemented in 2012. After a series of ambitious plans that sought in vain to restore the lost image of the big city, in 2010 the city decided on a change of approach. The Detroit Future Cities collaborative process took the gamble of recognising reality and drawing on the initiatives of the city's inhabitants and communities. Detroit Collaborative Design Center (DCDC) coordinated two years of field studies to look for solutions in which the aim was no longer to return to the past, but to build a future based on the potential of vacant space.

The principle of the framework plan is to adopt a variety of strategies of densification, while sometimes pursuing de-densification in certain depopulated neighbourhoods. The main objective was to improve the management of public utilities, which fail when they are underused, and to restore land values in the preserved neighbourhoods. The framework plan thus proposes a new morphology for the city, in which large "green and blue infrastructures" now run through the extensive residential layer. These incisions of landscape into the urban fabric recall Frederick Law Olmsted's systems of parks, except that they are no longer based on physical and hydrological geography, but on the socio-economic geography of degrowth. The programmes are also different, focusing not only on leisure and recreation, but also on food production and rainwater management. Together, they create



Urban clearing:
 Model of the Detroit Cultivator urban prototype, designed around the Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, in Detroit, Michigan. The urban renewal project combines agricultural production, cultural activities, business incubation and ecological management to build a neo-rural landscape that is economically and ecologically sustainable. (Source: Akoaki, architecture & design, Anya Sirota and Jean Louis Farges)



Human capital and common land:
 Photograph of urban farmers at Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, Detroit, Michigan. (Source: Akoaki, architecture & design, Anya Sirota and Jean Louis Farges)

a new large-scale morphology, a city-park or city-landscape in which land is shared between human beings and nature.

However, this landscape-focused interpretation tends to separate natural space from human space, whereas the two are profoundly interdependent. The concept, now excessively prosaic, of the “green corridor” or “green infrastructure”, reduces these spaces to an ecological functionalism – their positive health effects – and ignores the complexity of the places that link them together. It evokes the natural time of reproductive migrations and water or biomass cycles, but says nothing about the human time that inhabits and shapes these spaces.

The farming projects that punctuate the new green corridors of Detroit in fact follow very disparate trajectories, from the forestry operation financed by a millionaire philanthropist who plants trees on brownfield plots to beautify the local neighbourhoods, and in the process has acquired an immense land portfolio for next to nothing, to the small allotment cultivated by squatters turned market gardeners, or the urban neo-farmers – educated young people looking for an alternative lifestyle and attracted by the spirit of Detroit – and finally down to the activists pursuing self-determination for the city’s African-American population, for whom appropriation of the abandoned land is above all a political act. The Detroit Cultivator project, an alliance between an urban farm and a design studio, is probably the project that comes closest to our European concerns. Located in a district previously known for its vibrant musical scene, the new agricultural functions do not erase the past but are conceived as part of a quest to reactivate the memory of the neighbourhood, all combined with a smart land policy that protects these new common spaces from gentrification through a community land organisation.

In any case, these places of hospitality created by human labour in a city that had become hostile are much more than simple links in a network of green corridors. They are better described as clearings. It is in these spaces claimed from the forest that the first systems of sedentary settlement seem to have appeared, establishing a human space in the order of nature⁴. These primitive agricultural agoras provide a more accurate model for the design of the nature-city, not only as a living ecosystem but as a polis, a common human milieu.

David Malaud

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1 Braungart M., McDonough W. (2009[2002]) — *Cradle to cradle: Re making the way we make things*. Vintage « Imaginer un bâtiment comme un arbre et une ville comme une forêt »

2 “The capacity of a living system (ecosystem, biome, population, biosphere) to return to the structures and functions of its default state after a disturbance”

3 Flaminia Paddeu, « Faire face à la crise économique à Detroit : les pratiques alternatives au service d'une résilience urbaine ? », *L'Information géographique* 2012/4 (Vol. 76), p. 119-139.

4 Henry Dicks, « Penser le nouveau paradigme de l'hydrologie urbaine : biomimétisme, éco phénoménologie, et gestion intégrée », *La Houille Blanche*, n° 5, 2015, p. 92-98. “The emergence of humanity, as well as its development over time, thus seems intimately linked with the existence and the expansion of these “clearings”, as already suggested by Vico in *La science nouvelle* [1725/1993 Vico G. (1993[1725]) — *La science nouvelle*. Gallimard], and to a certain degree also by Heidegger [Heidegger M. (1976) — *La fin de la philosophie et la tâche de la pensée*. Questions III et IV. Gallimard. 281-306], who uses the “clearing” as an image of the specifically human opening up to the being of things, i.e. our unique capacity to understand things “as this” or “as that”.

"Third Freehold", a resource for the regeneration of old centres The example of Cité Vauban in Briançon (05)

Marrion Serre et Gabriele Salvia

These ideas were developed as part of the first session of the POPSU-Territoires small town research programme.

Urban planning is usually defined as a method of projecting land occupancy and defining the resources to meet land needs. In France, it is used to divide land into zones and plots assigned to different functions, in particular through land regulation tools such as the Local Urbanism Plans (PLU). However, on the ground, observation shows that many pieces of land lie outside this mode of urbanisation and constitute a collection of fragments of space with no specific status: in this article it will be referred to as "third freehold". The use of the term "third" reveals unresolved situations of in-between land: land tenure that is part public and part private, part controlled and part permissive, part abandoned and part used.

These situations, which lie outside standard urban definitions, clearly show that historical planning methods are no longer capable of tackling the social, ecological, economic and architectural challenges that territories face today. That is why the 16th session of the EUROPAN competition, "Living Cities", is an opportunity to challenge established systems and to renew the modes of urban production, by experimenting with other forms of project making.

To contribute to these ideas, we propose to explore the potentialities of “third freehold” as a resource space with the capacity to foster inclusive and regenerative project dynamics. To do this, we will focus more specifically on the example of “third freehold” in old urban centres in decline, which provide a particularly suitable framework for different ways of promoting urban vivacity.

“Third Freehold”, a blind spot in planning or a potential margin for productive action ?

In recent years, rural areas have also experienced the effects of metropolitanisation. As Henri Lefebvre showed in the 1960s, a combined phenomenon of explosion and implosion is taking place, reducing the boundaries between urban and rural: suburbs continue to expand at the same time as old urban centres decline and become depopulated.

The town of Briançon (pop. 12,054), located in the Hautes-Alpes region, is a typical example. When its military role ended in 2009, the municipality primarily realigned its economy towards tourism and shifted the focus of the urban structure towards new service, retail and residential areas. In parallel with these dynamics, the old centre – encircled by Vauban’s fortifications (UNESCO Heritage site) – underwent two opposing processes: museification and abandonment.

Like many historical sites, Cité Vauban is undergoing a process of museification which on the one hand emphasises its heritage qualities, but is also profoundly altering the nature of its occupancy. More and more dwellings that were previously inhabited throughout the year are being sold as second homes or rented as airbnb accommodation and local shops are gradually being replaced by seasonal activities.

Museification also reinforces a panoply of rules designed to protect historical legacy. In the case of Cité Vauban, the 1987 Protection and Enhancement Plan offers little leeway for experimentation and for adapting the urban fabric to contemporary lifestyles. Moreover, complying with the rules in any restoration work entails significantly higher costs, and can prevent households adapting their home or simply repairing damaged roofs or walls.

As a result, museification can make these areas less attractive to permanent residents and drive a phenomenon of abandonment. However, the process of abandonment is also linked with specific land tenure conditions encountered in old urban centres, such as unresolved joint ownership and inheritance, unsold properties, fragile co-ownership arrangements

where lack of household resources prevent renovation work, properties that remain unclaimed after the death of their owners, older people who own buildings but occupy only a small part of them, disused public buildings.

These situations of indeterminate tenure make old town centres less attractive, since they convey an image of abandonment and deterioration. However, these states of indeterminacy are also a resource: they offer real potential for devising and testing new programmes, new modes of governance, new architectural forms and, in fact, new ways of producing the urban fabric.

Towards different, inclusive and regenerative forms of project making

Alongside the processes of museification and neglect described above, the old centre of Briançon is also the locus of a number of experimental projects that show the potential for innovation in this kind of “third freehold” space. The example ¹ on which we will focus more specifically is the conversion of the former library, which is currently vacant, into a third community space.

This project is the product of a series of citizen workshops ² in which residents expressed their sadness and sense of abandonment at the relocation of the library and more generally of public services to the town’s new focal points. In addition, these workshops showed the need to recreate places of sharing and culture, whether for young people, working adults or older populations. In response to this demand, the municipality went along with a number of ideas for the creation of a community third space. Designed as a place of shared learning resources, this third space is home to an annex to the municipal media library, a community games library, a local radio station, a fab lab and two voluntary organisations involved in awareness raising and action on heritage and upcycling. ³ Through this partnership, the third space aims to provide a place where local actors of all kinds have the opportunity to offer a multiplicity of activities ⁴.



Citizen workshops, 70 participants, May 2019



1



2



3



5



4

- Second home shut down in off-season(1)
- Derelict building unsold after 10 years (2)
- Jointly owned building at imminent risk (3)
- View of the old library (4)
- Third space project codesign workshop (bibliothèque)(5)

Through this process, the third space of the library has become a place for trying out new programmes, themselves based on the idea of a third way. This recurrent “third” reveals two aspects of the process of renewal of urban production: it generates problematic situations of in-between space, like “third freehold”, and then deals with them by reinventing these in-between situations based on new models, in this case the model of the third space. Indeed, the great strength of the third space concept is that it creates the possibility of hybridisation between programmes (e.g. culture and work), alternative modes of governance (between the private, voluntary and public sectors), inclusive design processes (a combination of bottom-up and top-down), diversity and pooling of uses to reach the widest possible audience (in this case local people and tourists). This experimental project shows the need to move towards different forms of project making, which employ interstitial spaces and offer hybrid models, in other words inclusive and regenerative third ways. As Raphaël Besson explains, Third Space can thus become one of the strategic loci for the regeneration of cities. He even goes further, emphasising the central role that “third actors” play in the emergence of such places, in particular as intermediaries in the process. In this project, it is we who play that role in fostering the emergent capacity of research-architects, also a “third” role, halfway between research and professional practice.

These new professional roles also contribute to renewing the modes of urban production, since they offer a new forms of project making that can – as is the case here – combine project design, user participation, fundraising and programme definition, and the associated models of governance.

Openings: third freehold, a field of action to explore

While this experiment shows the potential of in-between situations to generate motivation and creativity, it nevertheless leaves many unanswered questions around the regeneration of old urban centres. In particular, there is a whole field to be explored and tested:

- *A capacity for action on private property. How to deal with privately owned vacant properties, how to support owners in renovating their properties, what forms of governance to apply (cooperative, community land structures, shared housing)?*

- *A capacity for architectural transformation. How to find a balance between protecting architectural heritage and fostering contemporary architectural creativity in order to adapt old fabric to modern ways of life?*

- *A capacity to raise the profile of environmental and ecological qualities. Through their architecture, based on the use of local materials, the compactness of the urban fabric, the proximity of homes and activities, could they not become the eco-neighbourhoods of tomorrow?*

To provide answers to these questions, “third freehold” could prove a fruitful avenue to explore for projects in this 16th session of the EUROSPAN competition, for the renewal of the methods of urban production and the associated forms of project making. Approached as a potential raw material and a basis for a cycle of transformation, “third freehold” could thus help to regenerate practices and ways of living in old urban centres, but also in other places that are going through a period of decline.

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Founders of the Tiers Lab architecture, urban design and research workshop

1 A shared housing project in a former infirmary undertaken by a collective of local residents; a coliving project for digital nomads in the former governor’s palace undertaken by a young couple; a project to revitalise former shops by turning them into premises for artists, undertaken by the municipality.

2 These citizen workshops were organised as part of a POPSU-Territoires action-research project (2019-2020).

3 Partners: La Ruche media library, Au Coin du Jeu games library, Radio Fréquence Mistral, Association Club du Vieux Manoir, Centre Permanent d’Initiatives en Ecologie Haute Durance

4 The project is supported by the CGET (winner of the AMI Tiers Lieux), la Banque des Territoires and la Fondation Orange.

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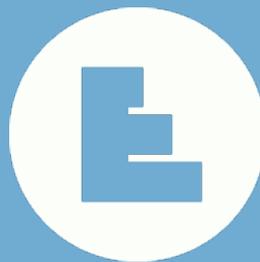
The competition launch
April 2021

Results announcement
December 2021

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