“Negotiate as You Go Along”: Infrastructures for Shared “Hybrid” Territoriality

The article is an investigation about the infrastructural role of European 13 winning projects in enhancing shared “hybrid” territories. Such territories have multi-geographic realities resulting from urban transport network connections and incoming programs while transformed by all sorts of on-site localities. The projects unfold their political virtue by proposing gradual change of relations amongst the projects’ actors, hence influencing how new incoming urban dynamics - inputs - may transform the competition sites into shared “hybrid” territories. The tensions may arise due to potential conflicts between on-site urban actors’ agendas and those of the incoming ones. European projects’ challenge is therefore to become negotiation apparatus in the hands of the urban actors for the adaptability, in first fostering the presence of the domain when there is decreasing about the Welfare State, second, promoting within an increasing segregate third, allowing for new relations among the urban project making where urban growing. In fact, this last objective to share. The European 13 inputs are grouped as big book of big bang: Wien (A), Stavanger (NO), Aarhus (DK), Prague (CZ), Stavanger (NO), Malmö (SE), and Munich (DE).
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The Europan project in changing times: from participation to negotiation

The expression “Negotiate As You Go Along” could draw references from practices back in the 1960s and 1970s, such as that of Cedric Price collaboration with Inter-Action, an alternative theatre collective, to build the Inter-Action Centre, allowing him to investigate the role of architectural practice in changing times with the emergence of mass media, mass consumerism and mass housing. In fact, Price attributed negotiating capacities to architecture by opening up the design process into a collective platform, inviting for participation. According to Tanja Herdt1, he found himself exposed in a rather broadened architecture’s shift in terms of communication, project development and project outcome. Price invested in participatory moments thanks to the adaptable nature of Inter-Action’s infrastructure based on a flexible technical building system. However, the results were rather questionable due to the incompatibility of the high-tech building infrastructure with the low-tech labour contribution intended by the “Inter-Action” collective2.

Going back to Europan 13, the winning teams are investing in participatory moments thanks to the invisible technology of the urban project as well as to the visible one of the architectural object, both being quite decisive for the co-production of shared “hybrid” territories.

“The task at hand involves working in different scales and with a diverse set of mechanisms blending urban planning, programming, operative and recreational landscapes, infrastructure and communication.”
therefore call citizens to find a solution. Second, he refers to a misunderstood concept of citizens’ participation that addresses a specific set of people, since bankers and developers—who are citizens too—have plenty of access to decision making unlike many others; besides, they would not be very happy of sharing power. Third, he refers to agents who, on the name of neutrality, are called to articulate the demand of citizens’ participation without making their own stance explicit. He goes on to state that successful citizenship demands reorganization of institutions to have participation imbedded in their decision making, such as the recent case of Barcelona Municipality.

A multiagency approach to enhance the public: between strategies of infiltration and tactics of revalorization of the existing

in fact, the winning projects under study employ a multiagency approach to cope with such dilemmas and set up negotiating frameworks to initiate sharing within "hybrid territories". The point of departure of the projects depends on the state of things in regards to the competition sites and briefs. In some cases when the incoming global flows of people and activities are dominant, as in the first group of sites of mono-functional uses, the projects are about strategies of infiltration to enhance public and collective uses – winners in Bondy and Wien (fig.10 & 11). In other cases, where there is community life which may be challenged by the

Reading the abovementioned excerpt from Stavanger’s competition brief, quoted by winning team Forus LABing (fig.9), we are witnessing a shift of architectural practice such as the one confronted by Price. The new shift however demands for complex operations and alliances beyond the architecture’s field. By using the concept of “negotiation” we are bringing forward the aspects of participation that are internal to design processes and contain a level of power shift among the project actors. In fact, we aim to surpass pitfalls of the participatory paradigm being used in neutralizing conflict and diminishing the risks of investment by limiting public protest, as Jeremy Till mentions. In fact, we embrace his claim that participation should be about distribution of power in the co-production of the city. Further on, geographer Erik Swyngedow addresses the myths of participation of which we need to be aware of. He first argues that the call for participation is a symptom of democratic dysfunction – institutions do not work and they
Emerging modes of collective practices thanks to synergies between process- and object-oriented approaches

To encourage collective practices—the main ingredient of shared “hybrid territories”—we may need to rely on new ways of negotiation, initiated thanks to synergies between object- and process-oriented approaches. We may then avoid what Swyngedow mentions in regards to the never-ending processes usually employed by urbanists as well as to the authoritarian object placing by architects, unaware of its political implications. Amongst the E13 winning projects, we can see a diversity of approaches that employ new relations between processes and objects to achieve sharing within “hybrid territories”, by departing either from an object placing or a process initiating and suggesting exchanges among them during design processes.

In some cases the architectural object gets a central role in defining the space of collective practices, either through its uniqueness or its repetition—The False Mirror, winner in Trondheim (fig.18). In other cases it gets a symbolic value of the community’s presence along territorial figures such as rivers—Insécable distance, winner in Vernon— or seacoasts—Espoo—, opening up new kinds of sharing. The winning project in Molfetta, Hold the Line, employs a sort of stripped down urban Inter-Action centre to accommodate a community’s everydayness along a public waterfront. In the case of the runner-up project in Trondheim, More Trondheim! (fig.19), we see existing industrial buildings as shelters for public activities. In the same project, the reorganization to medium size plots becomes another way to ensure the presence of city-scale activities, keeping out big box interventions. In the case of Wien the winning project, Publicquartier, reestablishes the role...
of public space as the enactment of any city centre by proposing the gradual demolition of a city block by the train station, adjacent to a dominating shopping mall. Publicquartier initiates creative synergies between public and collective by strategically locating a “habitat” to negotiate the district’s urban future.

Process initiating by the project teams may get a playful mode. This is the case of Bondy’s Count, winner in Bondy, where a game-like negotiation takes place, during which the city should gain infiltration into the competition site by gradually acquiring left-over spaces as well as “left-over times” from the big box operational everydayness. The community would initially emerge by the ephemeral activities and on a second “game round”, by a reorganization of the ground inviting big box actors to address the intermediate scale and the introduction of a diversity of activities. To empower a structured negotiation process, a special mention on the same site, Les nouvelles dynamiques, offers a well-devised methodology to infiltrate public and community activities within the site, encouraging the big box urbanism to adapt. The team offers a “precedence catalogue”, very handy to support controversial dialogues (evidence based urbanism). In Stavanger, the winning project, Forus LABing, encourages the development of a networked collectivity guided by a complex strategy of management and design into visualizing transformative processes for urban futures of the actual mono-functional fossil industry area. “Innovation Palaces” is the name of the “habitat” for negotiation processes. The ground gets “super-surface” characteristics to maximize flexibility, where plug-in towers increase the critical mass of inhabitants to yield new communities.

**Negotiation thresholds for gradual increase of sharing in co-producing the adaptable city**

“Negotiate as You Go Along the Process of Making the Europan Project” is a notification to all actors for the gradual increase of sharing of project making. Their passage through many negotiation thresholds would alter their initial agendas towards a common final outcome. Such approach seems to be frequent among the winning teams, which have delivered complex packages of proposals, full of negotiating moments. Negotiation is ready to take place when the project teams revalorize the existing site’s assets – Monster Planning in Lund –, and redefine the competition brief’s priorities – Forus LABing in Stavanger. Negotiation is imminent when they propose roadmaps to the project actors for assisted itineraries through processes with uncertain outcome – Les nouvelles dynamiques, special mention in Bondy- or when they make visible the complex networks of relations and powers of the actors at stake – Bondy’s Count, winner in Bondy.

“Negotiate as You Go Along” is an urge to rethink the technology of architectural practice and its contribution in the urban project operating in complex “hybrid” territories. Issues of communication, project development and outcome are indeed at the heart of architectural practice’s shift. Europan is a pertinent platform to study the tendencies of change but also of reappearance of approaches. Addressing the challenge of participation through the concept of negotiation has shown that the Europan 13 projects could operate as platforms to change relations among divergent urban actors in creating shared “hybrid” territories.