What were the big themes, the criteria used in making your selection on this question of innovation?

**Socrates Stratis:** I tried to understand innovation not in the sense of an object but in the sense of an activity. It is often a somewhat absolute motion, but I tried to take it in a relative sense. Innovation is a word I find slightly difficult to pin down, precisely because of this notion of absoluteness it contains. So I tried to use it in relation to the future of Europan. This means working on old projects in order to use them to create a vision of the future.

For example, I tried to find innovative elements in the political posture of the architectural project. A good number of projects have tried to widen the scope of the architect's action, which I believe is essential. From another perspective, I looked for innovation in the sense of creating a vision of the future.

I've been working on this approach and, in fact, the projects that proposed very different levels of action. What is interesting here is that they are different by context.

For example, in the project in Dreieck, Germany, I chose one of the most relevant levels, the new building.

**Promotor – Kleines Dreieck (D) – E8**

"Is it possible for Europan to operate on a territorial scale beyond space making? This project puts the seed for cross-border projects, which are so necessary in a unified Europe. This project proposes a densification of data, a sort of an archiving that improves social accessibility. It is an AGENCY project, a sort of an "avant projet de définition.""
What were the big themes, the criteria used in making your selection on this question of innovation?

Socrates Stratis: I tried to understand innovation not in the sense of an object but in the sense of an activity. It is often a somewhat abstract concept, but I tried to take it in a relative sense. Innovation is a word I find slightly difficult to pin down, precisely because of this notion of absoluteness it contains. So I tried to use it in relation to the future of Europe. This means working on old projects in order to use them to create a vision of the future.

For example, I tried to find innovative elements in the political posture of the architectural project. A good number of projects have tried to widen the scope of the architect's action, which I believe is essential. From another perspective, I looked for innovation in the sense of connecting widespread territorial issues with micro-local issues. I tried to find projects that have worked on this approach and, in fact, there were projects that proposed very different methods of action. What is interesting here in Heraklion is that the projects are not simply projects by comparison with others. For example, is it possible for Europen to enter into a debate before the architectural project as we understand it? A few projects have worked on this question, like "Promotor", "Kleines Dreieck", Germany, or "Europan 8", for example.

In the exercise I was given to select 10 projects, I chose ones that are really complex on different levels, projects that propose something new but for different reasons. As regards the territorial and local scales, "Anti-Potemkin Corridor", Villetaneuse, France, or "Europan 5", began to show how territorial factors are present on the site in any project. This is essential in realising that territorial dynamics play an important role in activating public space. It is important, for the future of Europen, to think about the way that this "trans-local" factor, this "glocal" dynamic, could be a more explicit priority. I would put in this category the projects "Bringing the town closer", Bordeaux, France, or "The vacant room", Delémont, Switzerland, for their adaptable and sustainable responses.

Another important point is to see how projects put forward ideas that reject the tendency to gentrification. This is a debate, since Europen has been accused, on certain sites, of being a vehicle for a process of gentrification. So there are projects that have tackled this question in one way or another, like "Accumulation and interminglings", Aubervilliers, France, or "Situations 2003", Graz, Austria, or "Ever young" on Goten, Netherlands, or "Trans-local" in Zaanstad, The Netherlands.

Might it be said that a good innovation in terms of architecture is a project that is accepted by the locals?

S.S.: It is a question that is linked with what I said previously. There is a tendency to understand the project unilaterally: we begin with whether the project is innovative or not. But if we change this approach and start from the principle that a project works on several registers, some of which are innovative, i.e., bringing something new compared with what is already there, for example by de-stabilising and re-defining the relations between people, including inhabitants, then we can put forward the idea that the project can be innovative whilst working on continuity with things.

If an innovative project can be accepted by the inhabitants, that's fine, but it depends which part of the project is explained to help the other part of the project. Projects are made up of interactions; they are systems. A European scale project is a genuine means of action in the political arena. If the question is whether or not a town's urban culture can accept the project, that's also very relative. For example, the inhabitants of Amsterdam differ from one to another in their heterogeneity in the culture of urban populations which is
1.1 INNOVATIVE WINNING IDEAS? - European 10 conference Graz [A] 4/5 nov 2009 | 29

Integral part of the contemporary metropolitan city. Everything depends which inhabitant we are talking about.

How would you describe Europan? Is it a laboratory, a sounding board, a way of testing hypotheses?

S.S.: It's a bit of all of them. First of all, it is an acculturation, a system of communication between different actors. Europan is important because it is a platform that is linked to the actors on the urban scene. In every Europan project, there are engineers, mayors, developers, who are exposed to common questions. These projects are tools, a means of discussion about change, ways of putting future possibilities into images, into space. It is very important to be able to create a shared platform to talk about the future. For example, there is an acculturation of the mayors. In France, I had the opportunity to meet some. They really have a very important and interesting viewpoint on the way cities are transformed, the role of infrastructures, the way in which projects are set up.

This could contribute to the work of Europan. Europan is also a laboratory, also a reference. Bernard Reichen once said that Europan has become a showcase for projects corresponding to different needs. For example, if someone wants to work on the location of infrastructures, they can go and study Europan 4, 5, 6 and 9, to see how these subjects have been worked on. It is an educational dimension that I consider fundamental. In architecture school, in a project workshop, Europan projects are used in precisely that way. Young third-year Cypriot students, aged 21-22, whose culture is suburban rather than urban, use Europan as a level of reference to explore other urban conditions, other European cities through the projects. Personally, as a former Europan winner 13 years ago, who did my thesis on Europan, everything I think is linked with Europan. At the same time, they are informed and add things on issues, for example on the notion of urban quality, which have become workshop subjects in these kinds of architecture schools where I teach. It has been suggested that the notion of urban quality depends on four characteristics: accessibility, sharing, transgression of boundaries and mobility/polarity. These characteristics are Europan references. Students use them for their work on the city in Cyprus.

How would you summarise your position on innovation?

S.S.: What interests me, which doesn’t necessarily set me apart from the other members of the Scientific Committee, is really the technologi cality of the project in Bruno Latour's sense; or rather how a project technology can be constructed at the urban-architectural scale as well as in terms of resources, the environment, the people, the skills.

Accumulation and interminglings – Aubervilliers (FR), E4

"Architecture should not be a tool for solving problems, because if the problem is solved, the neuralgic situation disappears as well. Exactly in its literal meaning, the dissolution of an urban hot spot produces a generic, indifferent situation. The issue of refusal tendencies of gentrification gives a great importance to this project: how to protect the conditions of the suburbs against the cold sophistication."

Situationism 2003 – Graz (A), E7

"Designing a process rather than an object instead of changing suburban condition this project inscribes in putting emphasis on suburban conditions by up scaling a D.I.Y. culture for making new suburbs. Emphasizing a bottom-up development through a reinvestigation of the everydayness of suburbs."

Weak density – Saintes (F), E3

"This project introduces to Europan the notion of density and at the same time a diversification in living. The architectural project becomes a driving force for transformation of industrial fringes and get an iconic value."

The vacant room – Delemont (CH), E9

"Reshuffling the characteristics of natural and manmade spaces yielding new "types" of experiences and inhabitation of in-between conditions. What is new here is that it is the "gene" of each space that is injected with natural and manmade characteristics with a variable hybrid outcome."

Forever young – Seftenberg (D), E7

"This case is quite exciting since there is a twinning process in realisation between winner and runner up project. They are complementary in time and both innovative about the Shrinking Cities Case. The winning project proposes an alternative direction to building new residents and bringing new people: to use the site to boost the quality of the everyday life of the existing people. That is done in a sort of a kitchen garden repertoire."

Afgeleid – Zaanstad (NL), E2

"This project introduces issues of density and at the same time a diversification in living. The architectural project becomes a driving force for transformation of industrial fringes and get an iconic value."