

**DEBATE 3**

**CREATING URBAN FLUIDITY  
THROUGH A POROUS URBAN FABRIC**

Making the city by creating fluid routes that can accommodate different kinds of mobility is a priority in today’s urban projects. Architects seek to make the urban fabric porous. Buildings, while continuing to play their role in bounding traditional public spaces (streets, squares, etc.), allow cycleways and footpaths to pass through them.

But how do you build these intermediate spaces and give them a public character, while protecting the private dimension and the security of the transit spaces?

## CREATING URBAN FLUIDITY THROUGH A POROUS URBAN FABRIC

**Introduction of Socrates STRATIS, architect Nico-sia (CY), member of the Scientific Committee:** “Welcome again in my back yard!” is the title of an article published in Europan’s implementations catalogue\*\*; in fact, it relates to the issue of urban porosity and what we are trying to do today is to formulate some questions around this theme, as a vehicle from the competition ideas to the process of implementation. The most important thing about the Europan competition is to make us dream. It is a construction of the collective imagination, so the architects are making these images real. In the implementation process, you need to mobilise all sorts of actors who will assist this transition from imagination to implementation. It is a very dynamic process, containing magic that Europan tries to develop. Of course, urban actors are already part of the competition because they are part of the brief, even if the extent of their involvement varies from country to country.

How tolerant are these actors of urban porosity? How much can they accept this coexistence of public and private spaces? How has it been applied in the transition from competition to implementation?

I would like to begin this debate by suggesting how the winning projects have taken this kind of porosity into account. In the sites of **Vienna (AT), Villeurbanne (FR), Montreux (CH), Halle (DE)**, there are enclaves between the infrastructures, where urban development is taking place; we find urban peripheries between urban sprawl and agricultural land in **Cordoba (ES), Isle d’Abeau (FR), Carouge-Bachet (CH)**, and then in **Gembloux (BE)** and **Augustenborg (DK)**, there are sites within urban tissues where there is an issue of reuse; and finally in **Saintes (FR)** – a very rich content for the discussion.

In the process underway in **Vienna E9 (AT)**, there are 15 actors. **Who are these actors and how friendly to urban porosity are they?** And where does Europan stand on this question of urban porosity?

We all know NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) versus WIMBY (Welcome In My Back Yard). NIMBY seems to be winning. There are so many gated communities; segregation is increasing all over the world. I think that Europan has an important role as a WIMBY institution. On this WIMBY side, what Europan tries to do is to promote combined public and private production and it is very important to emphasise this issue. There are many scales of urban porosity and it is becoming a design tool. One could say that porosity is a sort of performance of a site, to accommodate public programs and mobility networks within a zone that relates to a much larger area of the city.

The American sociologist Richard Sennet, who worked on issues of boundaries and borders, described boundaries as “dead ends”, in contrast with borders that are more alive and open to exchange. That is where urban porosity stands. There is an edge, which is active and allows coexistence. It permits interfaces, through which some of these flows and programs penetrate the site, but at the same time it develops a resistance. The project that has a dual role. Perhaps one could use some of the Europan 11 projects as a way of putting things together and seeing how they have implicitly been used.

**There is the ground as an agent that promotes urban porosity, a mobility network, like infrastructures, public transport, cars, bicycle, pedestrian, and also there are all kinds of public activities and services. The architects choose an interface, or they manage many different interfaces, for example by preventing car traffic or including an urban park in the site. These are the limits of the project site; the building blocks and even the housing units, where all these elements are managed through joint public and private production.**



VIENNA E9 (AT) Studio UEK (AT) above: competition below: implementation



VILLEURBANNE E7 (FR) Studio MUOTO architectes above: competition below: urban pre-operational phase

To be a little more specific, let's look at some examples.

First, in **VILLEURBANNE E7 (FR)**, there is a sort of a **park that defines the geometry and penetrates the site and can also act as a landscape field, running through the building blocks**. During the implementation process, there was apparently a big issue about whether this area should be accessible 24 hours a day. In fact, it would seem that its accessibility decreased. This is one big issue to talk about.

Then, there is the **mobility network, the second agent of urban porosity, trans-local connections, a selective infiltration of secondary roads**. In the very large **CORDOBA E8 (ES)** project, the site is accessible to cars.

In other cases such as **ISLE D'ABEAU (FR)**, **VIENNA (AT)** et **MONTREUX E10 (CH)**, car traffic is held on the periphery but not allowed on the site.

Another issue about mobility networks is what kinds of network are welcome and what kinds are not?

**Those that are welcome, of course, are bicycles lanes, pedestrian paths**; highways and railway lines are blocked; So in the **CORDOBA E8 (ES)** there is a big linear park between the site and the highway.

In **CAROUGE-BACHET E9 (CH)**, topography is used to protect the residences from noise, which I found very interesting.

The third agent of urban porosity is the public program, as in **AUGUSTENBORG E10 (DK)** or **GEMBLOUX E10 (BE)**.

The third agent of urban porosity is the public program, as in Augustenborg (DK) or Gembloux (BE). Creating a new centrality by building a new municipal amenity to serve the whole community: how, in the transition from competition to implementation, **a visual porosity has become physical**, as the authors will explain.

In **VIENNA E9 (AT)** and **MONTREUX E10 (CH)**, the projects proposed an extensive public program, which is actually disappearing during the implementation. It is interesting to see how a reduction in the public programs because of market restrictions becomes an issue.



CORDOBA E8 (ES) BC2-arquitectos operational phase



GENEVE E9 (CH) arch. Berry Beuving, Marcel Lok (NL) above: section, plan and typologies



MONTREUX E10 (CH) perspective and master plan arch. Vanessa Giandomat Antonio Monaci, Lapo Ruffi Lorenzo Santini



AUGUSTENBORG E10 (DK) DEVE Architectes model

**How a private development can promote both public and private?** I think that the project in **SAINTEES E10 (FR)** has something to say about that with the way the site is developed.

There are perhaps two major questions to discuss: on the one hand in the design, which is actually a way to win the competition, urban porosity patterns may not always fit in with the everyday practice of the urban actors. The question is

**Can this sort of appropriation – on one hand from the competition to everyday urban practice, and on the other hand the European project – be a good vehicle or platform to encourage a change in everyday practice of the city?**

It is important to see that European implementations, and the new European 11 winning projects, bring a sort of cultural change to users, in order to extend the critical mass of people who want to live within an open city, rather than in enclaves or villages like gated communities. It is true that European still works mostly with public actors; European clients are largely public actors, but it seems that it is something that is decreasing.

**Pascal AMPHOUX, architect and teacher Lausanne (CH), member of the Scientific Committee:**

In this debate, we will not be taking the concept of porosity simply in its literal, formal sense of "pore", which establishes a relation between an interior and exterior. It is not simply a metaphor of architectural limits. Instead, we need to shift this notion towards questions of regulatory invention, citizen participation, ways of making our implementation strategies more porous. The first implementation process presented in the European 10 winning project in Gembloux (BE).

**Simone GOBBO, DEMOGO architectural practice (IT), winner at GEMBLOUX E10 (BE) :**

To present our experience of urban porosity in the project of Gembloux, I will divide my presentation into two phases. First the competition phase: when we started to think about the project, we understood the power of the tissue of that historical city.



**We understood that urban porosity was the real issue of the project. The brief was about a big public building, and we understood that it was important to transform the volume of the program to a different scale, the scale of the city. Porosity for us is about the relation between the scales of the buildings. The fabric of the project area is mineral.**

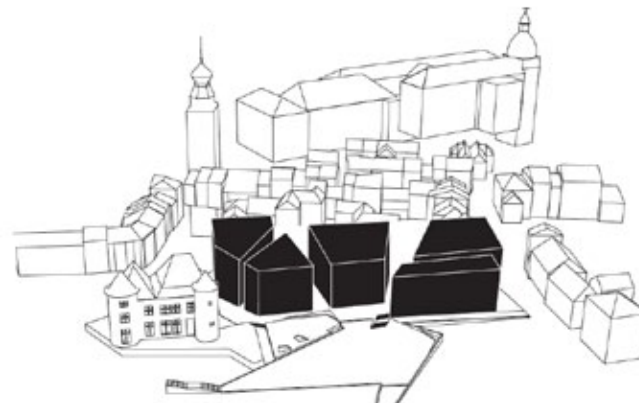
**We worked on empty spaces like in this famous map of Roma. This is an interesting approach to the project, to think about the empty spaces rather than just the buildings.**

The city has three important historical buildings on the site, the Church, the Belfry and the Maison du Bailly, so we could build a relationship with these buildings. During the competition it was important to work within a rule: to use the point of view from the public space. We decide to cut the original volume of the building. In a sketch we showed the story of the evolution of the volume. There is an external place, the square, that is a point of view, and there we try to have a relation between the new project and the volume of the historical buildings. There is in our project a sense of the physical aspect of porosity. It is a philosophy of porosity because material is important for the sensation of the volume of these buildings for the citizens, the inhabitants of Gembloux. We needed a material that with strong light variations. Copper was the right material to produce this variation, to create a resonance between the façade of the new building and the historical fabric of the city.

**The implementation phase** was a very difficult phase for us because the Ministry asked for changes to the project. Changes are normal, but to change the program, to re-think and re-design the building while maintaining the spirit of the original idea was difficult. For example they asked us to cut a volume. But how to do this without changing the spirit of the idea? This is the difficult balance between the first phase of the competition and the second, the implementation phase, but it was the only way the project would get built. 'Porosity' was the first aspect for the project and the next was 'reso-



GEMBLoux E10 (BE) arch. DEMOGO (IT)  
above: the site and the reference Rome Nolli plan competition  
below: project competition



nance'. So we decide to cut the fifth building, because it was lateral and didn't have much relation with the view of the project.

The other problem was connection, because for the new program they asked for a physical connection between the buildings, where before there was only a mixing area. Now they wanted every floor to be connected and this was a big problem. If we created a diaphragm between the buildings, it would be hard to achieve the same transparency. The glass in this architecture is not transparent. It is an important aspect.

**We tried to resolve the problem by putting this point inside the project, the flux in the project. When the people move through that space between the buildings they can rebuild our sensation, a connection with a building in the distance. The only function we could put inside that space was a connection function. If we could achieve transparency in the diaphragm, to get to the original idea and the balance of the two fundamental issues of the competition project.**

The last question was about how to make the square more accessible. We designed only one level and a small variation in the square, putting three entrances, three gates, to bring more people into the square and have a concentration of population at that point.

We worked on this question of porosity two years ago and now we are still at the second phase of the implementation, which will start soon.

**Benoit DISPA, Burgermeister of GEMBLoux (BE):**

As burgermeister of the town of Gembloux, I find it very emotional to find myself at his side, after a number of years working together, in the transition from a project that was proposed to us by the European jury in November 2008 to what are now the first stages of construction. I will never fully be able to express my gratitude to the DEMOGO office for their gift to us. I consider this project to be an exceptional gift to the town of Gembloux. Especially as in his presentation, he

was greatly flattering in establishing a link with the city of Rome. This is a very positive vision of things.

The fact that immediately attracted us in the project at its outset was the elements of porosity that you identified. For me, the porosity here is particularly clear in the link between the new building and the local heritage buildings. Ours is a modest town, but we are proud of our heritage, the Church, the Belfry, Château du Bailly. The project achieves a magnificently successful dialogue between this new building and the iconic heritage elements. Another success in terms of porosity is the conversion of the space in front of the building. It is a sort of car park. It is called the part of Epinal, a town we are twinned with, but in reality this park is used as a car park by the town's administrative personnel. The project will convert this car park into a public space, a sort of platform between the town's lower and upper areas, between the interior and exterior of the building.

**The other truly interesting porosity is the link between public and private. This project is entirely financed by Gembloux municipality with the help of the region of Wallonia, but we see it as a fine possible springboard for urban development. In practice, this has actually happened, because in the course of this project private promoters have picked up the baton and designed renovation projects in existing buildings nearby. It is clear that a domino effect is already taking place. The final porosity is the successful alliance between traditional and modern elements. Gembloux is a town with a mediaeval look. The volumes of the project are perfectly matched to this typology, despite its great architectural audacity.**

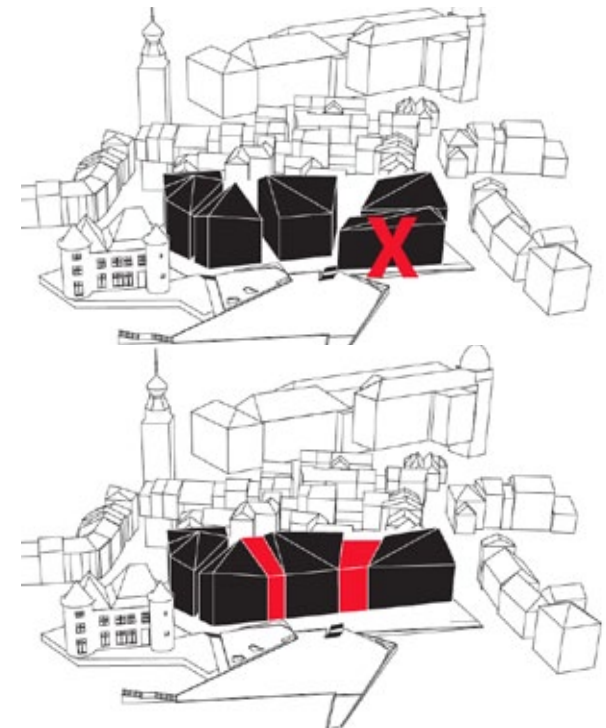
So I am also the client for this project. Between 2008-2009, Simone and her team had a major architectural task in adapting the project, in collaboration with partner offices. As the client, we had our own work in overcoming the obstacles we encountered.

I imagine that the client for European 11 wonder about the obstacles that will arise and that they will need to overcome.

The first obstacle was of a legal nature. Since this was a public project, we are subject to the laws on public contracts. So we had to convince all the relevant authorities that it was possible to sign a design contract with the DEMOGO office, without infringing the law on compulsory competitive tendering. It was therefore accepted by the region of Wallonia that the European competition itself could constitute a competitive tendering process. It was no simple matter. We had to establish particular specifications, but we succeeded. We were therefore able to sign an official contract with the DEMOGO office and its Belgian partners.

The other obstacle was administrative. Our project was part of a programme subsidised by the region of Wallonia, our controlling authority, which had agreed to fund it to the tune of €3 million. To get this funding, the project had to meet a certain number of conditions: an iconic project that would serve as a model (no problem there with the DEMOGO project); a project that met the needs of the administration, hence the need to revise the original program, in terms of spaces, surface area and accessibility. The region also wanted the municipality to consult closely with the public social action centre, since this building was to be a factor in promoting synergy between public institutions. The fourth requirement was related to access for people with reduced mobility (not easy, since the layout of the area is fairly uneven); and finally, there were very strong requirements for the building's energy efficiency, an aspect that had to be tackled in the finalisation phase. These regional requirements had to be incorporated, as well as including the flag of the region of Wallonia on the building in the final phase of the project.

The other obstacle was of course the financial issue, the cost of the project. This is an aspect that is not taken into account in the European competition. But when it comes to implementation, it is an extremely important dimension. Initially, the global budget was €10 million, so ultimately we had to make sure that the project remained within this budget. A word of advice to clients preparing to implement the European project: to control this financial aspect, we used the services of a project coordinator, a company that is now helping us with budget tracking and all the financial aspects. Ultimately, the project is quite close to the original budget, at €12 million, but we slightly expanded the programme with underground car parks.

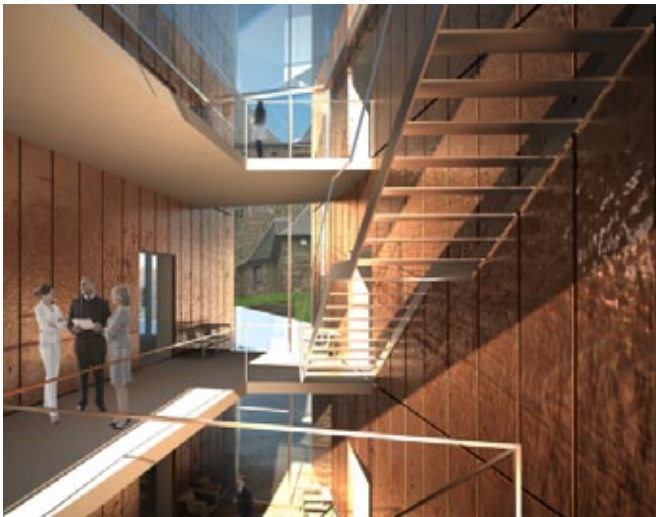


GEMBOUX E10 (BE) arch. DEMOGO (IT)  
above: site modification and completion of the project competition





GEMBLoux E10 (BE) arch. DEMOGO (IT)  
 above: urban project implementation perspectives  
 below: internal connection perspective



There was also a not inconsiderable political obstacle to overcome.

**When you are working in the public sector, you have more than one master to answer to. There are a range of public bodies that have to be convinced of the advantages of the project at different stages. We gradually achieved this. This is hugely satisfying, since in the end the final version of the project was approved almost unanimously. This is despite the fact that local elections were looming, not a great time to obtain spontaneous acceptance of project of this size. This is unquestionable evidence of the project's quality.**

Il y avait encore un obstacle majeur à franchir : la peur. Pour vous dire la vérité, on avait peur. Depuis le début, le projet avait beau être enthousiasmant, on avait beau être séduits par son originalité, par son audace architecturale, par les éléments de porosité qu'il introduisait, il n'empêche qu'on avait franchement la trouille. Faut bien dire que Gembloux est une petite commune de 25 000 habitants. Ce projet représente l'un des plus importants qu'elle ait eu à porter depuis qu'elle existe dans sa configuration administrative actuelle. C'est un projet coûteux. C'est un projet emblématique : l'Hôtel de Ville. On n'avait pas droit à l'erreur. À tout cela s'ajoutait la peur de l'inconnu. Dès que les lauréats ont été connus et que le bureau DEMOGO nous a été présenté, on avait beau trouver très sympathiques, nous nous sommes permis de vérifier sur Internet quelles étaient leurs réalisations, ce qu'ils avaient comme bagage, comme expérience.

Finally, there was a last major obstacle to overcome: fear. Quite frankly, we were frightened. Whatever the enthusiasm about the project from the start, however attractive its originality, its architectural boldness, the elements of porosity it introduced, we were still dead scared. After all, Gembloux is a small town of 25,000 people. This project represents one of the biggest it has had to carry through since its existence in its current administrative form. It is a costly project. It is an iconic project: the Town Hall. There was no room for error.

On top of this was the fear of the unknown. As soon as we knew who the winners were and were introduced to the Demogo team, we may have liked them, but we nevertheless went online to see what they had done, what baggage they had, what experience.

**There was also the obstacle of the culture differences. Also, this was a very striking project, perhaps even somewhat polemical. For example, the material – copper – which may be an obvious choice from an Italian perspective, but in Wallonia, people are more attached to brick, stone... It created problems, debates, polemics, but ultimately we recognised that it was a fundamental element, the soul of the project. We agreed to take the risk of sticking with the architectural boldness of the idea.**

And finally, anecdotally, the last difficulty, the project was very angular. The interior spaces bore no relation to the traditional image of a functional building, it gave rise to the odd sarcastic and critical comment. So we had to overcome our own prejudices, and finally I must say that what convinced us was the quality of the European process. I met European Belgium for the first time in 2008, I knew nothing about European, this approach to the urban development of European cities. My line of work is completely different from yours. I got to know it gradually through my contacts with the local structure and participation in the sites forum in Paris, and then the cities and juries conference in Graz. All this convinced me about the quality of your research, the quality of the work you do. I did my best to pass this conviction on, in order to get as many people as possible on my side. I think that I succeeded. There are still a few steps remaining. We should get planning consent by the end of June.

**The public enquiry will then begin. We will present the project to the public, so that local people, not just the different administrative bodies, can become familiar with it. We hope that the population will like it, though we are**

**aware that there is a certain level of conservatism. It may be that the project has sufficient intrinsic merit to be accepted. And then, we are now in the tendering phase, which has already begun. By the end of July 2012, we should have approved the project. We are therefore at an entirely practical stage. Soon we will be able to show not just computer generated images, but photos of a completed project.**

Once we have overcome all the obstacles, the fear, we will be able to express our gratitude towards the architects from Demogo and the European structure. Because you have helped all of us understand our town better. You have brought a different perspective. The project is entirely different from what we originally imagined, but it is much better and it teaches us a great deal about ourselves.

**Pascal AMPHOUX:** So I will move to Matthieu Wotling, who is presenting the Saintes project, and he will be followed by Frédéric Mahaut, the site representatives, who will illustrate the ongoing process in a different way.

**Matthieu WOTLING, architect MWAB architectural Paris (FR), winner at SAINTES E10 (FR):** The process of the Connex[Cité] project on the Saint-Louis site in Saintes will be presented in three main parts. The context, the site and the issues; then the competition, in which this theme of porosity, the fluidity of spaces and the urban fabric; and finally the current phase of diagnosis. This is the framework agreement, the project management role that we are currently defining with the client.

Saintes is a town of 26,000 people, 60,000 including the urban area. It is situated around 100 km north of Bordeaux and its town centre is cradled in a loop of the river Charente. The project site is located in the town centre. The project site area is 4.2 ha, the wider study site 11 ha. This site corresponds to the promontory of the mediaeval citadel of Saintes (now lost) which dominated the city's defensive system. A hospital developed here through a succession of buildings, extensions and additional layers.

Its relocation in 2011 left an empty site at the heart of the town, giving the population and tourists the opportunity to reclaim a fairly exceptional historic location. The project site is located on a genuine promontory relative to the historic town centre and the Charente and directly opposite Saint-Pierre Cathedral.

**The town's strategy through the European competition was to develop several objectives. The first was to introduce diversity, in a break from the monofunctionality of the hospital, with the aim of creating a mixed programme of housing, services and shops, but also strong cultural amenities, including the architecture and heritage interpretation centre – an urban design centre associated with the housing centre – and also a centre for community bodies along with an architectural centre for exhibitions and conferences. This desire for a programmatic mix was at the very heart of the project.**

The second important objective was to improve accessibility by new public linking spaces, from St Pierre Cathedral, with the Governor's house and its well preserved and renovated chapel at the centre, and Sainte-Eutrope Basilica, one of the important stages on the Camino pilgrimage route.

As regards this notion of greater mobility and porosity, the creation of tourist pedestrian paths and a re-establishment of continuity and porosity between the surrounding districts and the project, was a fundamental priority on this site. Another goal was to plan the role of the car and parking around the site. From a programmatic perspective, this required the inclusion of 500 parking spaces, with the possibility of underground parking, overhead parking and parking silos, depending on the design.

**When we began thinking about this competition, we asked ourselves three main questions. First: how to combine a fluid street network, the powerful impact of cars on the site, with the extension and protection of the green travel network, in particular through the porosity of the built fabric?**



SAINTES E10 (FR) MWBA architectes (FR)  
above: the area overlooking the river  
below: the project competition, model and perspective





**Second question, the connection with the existing fabric? How to recreate continuity between the town's new and existing fabric?**

**Third point: what new uses would we introduce to the site?**

In the implementation process, we are currently at the stage of a framework agreement for the project management role. The triggering factor for us was the European 10 competition, with around a hundred projects submitted. I worked on this project by creating the MWAB office with my partner Anne-Lise Bideaud. The project was submitted in June 2009, and there were three winning teams in the competition, the others being architects from Bordeaux and TICA, an architectural office in Nantes. We took part in the formulation of a new set of specifications, an urban competition set up by Saintes municipality and European France. This brought us into line with the law on French public contracts. It was an extremely important stage, not just a regulatory requirement, because it allows us to refine our ideas about the site. We formed a full project management team, by joining forces with a landscape architect, Agathe Turmel, a group of Bordeaux-based economists and a roads and infrastructures office that we regularly worked with in the Paris area.

In the third stage, which we have just begun and which I will describe later, the client strengthened its team with a project coordination group consisting of Finances Consult for the whole financial and budgetary element, lawyers for the regulatory aspects and the application of future urban rules, AM Environnement for the sustainable development strategy, and Trécler for consultation. Public consultation is standard urban policy in Saintes, beginning 3-4 years ago for the Saintes project.

For the European competition, our approach was to start with the specificities of the place. We sought to identify exploitable traces of pre-existing qualities. At our first site visit, we were struck by the contrast between the compact urban fabric and the public spaces around the town's major monuments. So we felt that it was essential to identify this type of relation on the Saint-Louis site, which aims to accommodate a very dense 30,000 m<sup>2</sup> programme. The urban forms we proposed in the competition phase mutually strengthened

the open public spaces and the dense programme spaces. This results from the meshing of the different scales of public space.

The two aspirations of this competition project: first, to restore a convergence onto the old mediaeval citadel; and second to establish a dialogue and strong relationship between contemporary architecture and historical heritage.

**We therefore pursued three guiding threads: the first was to create landscape and heritage interconnections, to link in the contemporary architecture through a strong cultural programme, to establish a visual and physical connection through the green network and the link with the historical buildings. The second important element was the work on interlinking the squares, urban and social interconnection. We wanted to emphasise that space is the town's primary amenity.**

**It is not a building, but really the element on which a certain number of uses that give the town life can be developed. The third important factor is the idea of continuity with the town, by creating a district that combines innovation and local specificity.**

The concept of Connex[Cité], in very simple terms, meant using the convergence of viewpoints, perspectives, networks and atmosphere on the Saint-Louis site to fashion the public space, which itself will generate built forms. What we see here in the foreground is a building that gave rise to long discussion with the client and the other teams. It is a building which we wanted to maintain continuity with the public space.

With regard to the principles for planning and structuring the project around the public space, we worked on the east-west axis on fluidity, efficiency and strong connections between the major public spaces: Place du 11 novembre at the entrance to the site, the pedestrian mall linking Place du Belvédère. By contrast, on the north-south axis, we find the concept of



SAINTES E10 (FR) MWBA architectes (FR)  
above: competition master plan

below: the master plan after the pre-operational phase





porosity and intensity of public space through a built fabric that is much denser on a secondary green network scale; Place du Belvédère is the new major public space, which is in close relation with the rocky spur and opens up to the landscape. Cours Reverseau, which is currently seen as a road, but which we want to convert to an urban boulevard to match the new Place du 11 novembre, the pedestrian mall, the Governor's House, and connect the major public spaces together. Other, secondary elements contribute to the porosity of the urban layout, smaller elements which affect the issue of programming, with play areas and rest areas. Finally, in the eco-neighbourhood, there is a whole network of alleyways around a pedestrian street that opens onto the cathedral. Car access is totally restricted over this whole part.

**From a sustainable development perspective, in the competition face we tried to work on 7 significant aspects: the idea of a district that is accessible to everyone; an energy-efficient district with concentrated housing density; controlling and pooling waste; reusing and saving water, in particular in the landscape arrangements; economy of resources, with all the stone recovered from the demolished site being reused; finally, building quality.**

For the urban competition between the winning teams, the client did an enormous amount of work on specifying the programme. In parallel, our project management teams were reinforced to meet the new requirements. We were asked to change the project, to submit a typologically more detailed programmatic proposal, to create a methodological proposal for the next phase, i.e. the framework agreement and the first operational estimate for the project. The big change in the project at the second competition phase was to work on density to protect the major public spaces, establish a balance between high density – financial balance – and major public spaces. The second important element was to express the relationship with the historical heritage of the Belvedere through a multifunctional public space that would accommodate day-to-day events and above all exceptional events, rather than fixed architectural components. We also use this



SAINTES E10 (FR) MWBA architectes (FR)  
above: master plan, pre-operational phase

below: perspectives street, place and district housing



competitive tender phase to improve certain aspects of the competition project, four example retaining Place du 11 novembre as an essential interface, a market place.

The challenge for us was to succeed in keeping a variety of different urban scales and maintaining the balance of the project, whilst being more radical and unemphatic. We achieved plainness by avoiding the use of multiple materials.

**From a programmatic point of view, it was about the prophecy of a project, which really encompasses programmes that will enliven public space. So one of the major elements that emerged in the urban tender phase was the addition of a hotel in front of the viewpoint, and a crèche that exploits the porosity of the eco-neighbourhood. We decided to dedicate the Saint-Louis site to possession spaces. The whole street network is moved to cours Reverseau with three big car parks attached to apartment housing. So there was a genuine shift from single to multiple use: tourism, day-to-day work, neighbourhood life and city life.**

We wanted to create public spaces with a private feel, by means of a porous fabric that is also there in certain parts of the old town. This privacy in the landscaped public spaces made it possible for us to take them to the boundaries of the private housing space.

What is the direction of this new process we began after we won the urban tender? Three important stages to come: an in-depth diagnosis on the operational feasibility of the project, planning constraints, specifying the programme, testing three scenarios, testing the strategic choices and obviously consultation.

Second stage: an urban scoping study, urban, architectural and environmental specifications, and again the start of the consultation process with public meetings.

And finally, the architectural feasibility stage: identifying the operational sector, matching and targeting possible areas of innovation and experiment, through to the architectural sketch.

**Frédéric MAHAUD, Deputy-Mayor in charge of urban planning, representative of the site of SAINTES (FR):**

The town of Saintes has a history with Europan, since in 1993 it was the town that benefited from the experience of Europan and the architectural office of T. Babled, A. Nouvet, M. Reynaud, which was chosen to build the “Arc-de-Triomphe” block, already on the themes of social mix, porosity and building the city on the city. So fifteen years later, when the town became the owner of the Saint-Louis site, which had been a hospital for more than 400 years, we naturally thought of entering the Europan 10 competition. This idea of calling on young architects via a competition of ideas was an opportunity for Saintes municipality to imagine reconstruction, densification and urban renewal right at the heart of the town. The population has high hopes for this 4 hectare site, in an ideal location dominating the whole town.

**The Europan competition process gave us an opportunity to clarify our ideas for the development of the specifications, before devising the reconstruction of this district. How to increase density? How to organise? How to approach a functional mix? How to manage the public spaces? How to create a social mix? With significant input, our ambition is to be able to create 350 new dwellings in Saintes. We need to study the relations between the new inhabitants, the use of the sites and the sharing of all these public spaces. The generic theme of Europan 10, “Inventing urbanity” suited us well in this respect. That is why the town of Saintes entered the competition.**

The population has been widely consulted since the town took ownership of this site in 2008. We opened it to the public the following year, after making it secure. Today, it is part of the town centre and, temporarily, equipped with lighting and public spaces. Every summer, we open the governor’s house in order to show inhabitants and tourists how we are going about developing the site.

For three years now, we have been showing the different stages, the evolution of the project: the tendering process; the presentation of the 3 teams and now the selected team. We show how this district will be urbanised, how we are going to organise the space. It is a very complicated space, because this is a protected area, with significant heritage and environmental components. In September 2012, therefore, we are going to begin archaeological excavations, since this is a Gallo-Roman town. There are high hopes about potential discoveries.

What connections are envisaged between the development of this site and the rest of the town? How will it work? How will urban transport be tackled? How will pedestrian access be facilitated? So we decided to restrict car access. In these processes, we are supported by a local association which contributes to the development of the town and its heritage, “L’Atelier du patrimoine”, which uses educational tours to explain this entire urban approach: new mobility, new way of life, new sustainable development in a town more than 2000 years old.

**Pascal AMPHOUX:**

**In terms of the approach of the projects to porosity, there are differences between them. Forms of visual determination, views, govern an architectural form in Gembloux; and at Saintes, perhaps a more urban form with a strategy that we find in many Europan 11 projects, a strategy that uses squares to introduce urban porosity. But also the inclusion of the modern in the existing fabric, and questions of programme adjustment, which have been very well described. As has the question of connecting scales and involving local people through consultation.**

**Simone GOBBO:** There is a common ground where the two projects work. It is the same issue of working with different scales. The other project works on a big scale with a complex strategy. For us it was different, we worked with the architec-



SAINTES E10 (FR) MWBA architectes (FR)  
process participation of the inhabitants



tonic idea of the project. But there is common ground. This is the most important point beyond the different process and the complexity of the projects. It is important to try constantly to achieve a new balance in the process. Every city has different possibilities, different histories, and different questions. It is important to devise new approaches. This is an important question of modernity, management of architecture. I think that we are not really ready for that form of project management. The process is as important as the project.

**Matthieu WOTLING:** What I find really interesting in the work on Gembloux, and which is also present in our Saintes project, is

**connecting modern architecture with heritage, which is crucial. We work on the same themes, on these axes and openings to the town. How do you relate a resolutely modern architecture to the presence of a strong historical fabric on the site? In Gembloux, there is a real emphasis on a contemporary object, a new material presence, which really stand out from the urban fabric. Whereas in our approach, we wanted to enjoy ourselves with a certain architectural emphasis and, as design followed design, we traded in our architects' dreams for urban planning goals. We finally moved towards the idea of continuity with the existing fabric.**

On the Saintes site, there is the strong material presence of stone which we wanted to apply in a modern fashion, whilst nevertheless maintaining continuity. I think that this is a really interesting scale, when you find yourself wearing both the architect's and the urban designer's cap. There is strategy, but there is really a relationship to architecture which must be in place from the start for it to mean anything.

**Frédéric MAHAUD:** Most of the Saintes site was a hospital for a little more than 400 years, and that is one of the questions we tackled when we drew up Saintes municipality's specifications for the European 10 competition.

Should we retain any medical function? The municipal team's decision was to say, the hospital has moved, now this site needs to look to the future for its development. How do you develop a 2000-year-old town with a new architectural theme, new materials? How do you rebuild the town on the town, as is starting with a blank slate? We will retain certain architectural components such as the Governor's House, and the hospital Chapel, as reminders.

As regards the timescale, it is a factor that is currently being studied in the local urban plan, as is the custom in France, but there are currently no regulations. So we are working, and that is the aim of the current studies being done with the project coordination team, in parallel with the work we are doing with Matthieu Wotling. How will this district be divided in terms of layout? What street systems will it have? The grid will be presented, but how will it be applied? How can we break it up into blocks? And all this is being done in collaboration with all the government departments, the different official bodies, such as France's national historical buildings architect, who is very involved in this process, since there are heritage and historical factors to be protected, but must not prevent the regeneration of the town.

**Socrates STRATIS:** How can we relate these two former winning European projects to the European 11 projects?

**Josep FERRANDO, Marc NADAL, David RECIO (ES), winners in Cerdanyola del Valles (ES):**

**I would like to start by quoting Jorge Oteiza, a great 20th-century Spanish sculptor who describes places of porosity as a "void", but a void that gives structure, an active void. Precisely because the places that result from what we build generate mass. That is why he calls them "active voids" because they are capable of constructing what occurs around them. And the projects we have seen expressed this, this point of view, the construction of porosity. As a way of constructing porosity, they think about the void, how it is constructed.**



CERDANYOLA DEL VALLES E11 (ES) "Blat"  
arch. Josep Ferrando, Marc Nadal, David Recio (ES)  
above: site on large scale

below: winning project



When we began the competition there was an existing master plan where the blocks are continuous, following the road that we see in white, which means that all the voids were inside the blocks, forming a semi-private space. So we just did the opposite. The aim is to have as few footprints as possible. This emptiness is related to the urban scale.

**Thibault BARBIER, Laetitia LAFONT (FR), winners in SAVENAY (FR):** We clearly see in the two processes presented that the question of porosity has much to do with public spaces, and therefore with public commissions. At the same time, this notion entails a fairly strong framework, a colour given to the private landscape, in particular the most residential part. I wanted to know where you stand and what tools you are thinking of using for this aspect of managing the private landscape.

**Matthieu WOTLING:** That is a very good question about the notion of public/private boundaries, because we are trying to find solutions to create public spaces at an intimate scale, at least for the housing component. From the operational perspective, we would like a private organisation to be responsible for the public spaces, and at the same time for the whole operation. For example, the alleyways and small squares directly connected with private space would be looked after by this private body. In this way, the entire operation could be handled globally, with a really refined treatment of the boundary between public space and private landscape space. We have a number of ideas on porosity, which we include in our project.

**When we talk about porosity, we are talking about limits. About moving those limits, changing them or at least making them slightly more blurred. There is a physical link that is going to be created between an old district and new developments. However, this nevertheless raises questions of architecture and typology. The porosity between public and private space creates new intermediate spaces that are neither public nor private, rather interfaces, new**

**places to design and imagine. Which is not necessarily very much the case now, and this is how our project becomes porous, through these new types of spaces. And for us, porosity is also a question of pooling efforts, in particular financial efforts. For example, when you design a bridge, you don't only design an infrastructure, but also a public space.**

These are all the little financial tricks you need to find nowadays. We don't know them, but we have tried to work on this. Afterwards, we had to establish game rules, precisely because we had to give this porosity, this limit, a project framework. We established invariants on certain key elements at different scales, while maintaining openness and flexibility with regard to factors we didn't know about, such as land ownership.

Porosity is also present in the play of invariants and variables.

**Pascal AMPHOUX:**

**I think that the question of linking scales is fundamental here. Architectural porosity is dominant in Gembloux whereas in Saintes it is more urban porosity, but what gives your project their quality is connecting the two. In the Savenay project, you have a complex approach, where you try to tackle things at several levels simultaneously, with a very rich system for handling boundaries in the relation between public and private, inside and outside, urban and mars-land, housing and transport infrastructures**

**Anna BUCHWALD (DE), Janna HOHN (DE), Josh YATES (GB), runners-up in WITTSTOCK (DE) :** In your initial introduction on the process in Saintes, you talk about those links between the scale of public space/private space, introducing the spaces at the small scale of the block or the garden. space, introducing the spaces at the small scale of the block or the garden.

**In Wittstock, we have a strong situation, not so much to do with physical porosity we are talking about but much more about creating small spaces for small groups and how those groups are related to bigger spaces and to the block, like a garden based on individual family, individual dwelling.**

And this relationship between spaces, from one scale to the next is something I would like to hear more about in Saintes, in the residential site. Maybe we could talk about how it might relate to a different way of living. When you want to create those intermediate scales, small neighbourhood clusters, the client and the municipality need to think about the fact that people may live differently there.

**Matthieu WOTLING:** You are right, the porosity of boundaries is truly fundamental for these scales. It is a process that has to do with applying at the scale of the town. What can be done in Saintes may not be possible in another town. Also, the fact that the project location has a viewpoint makes it an even more intimate element in relation to the town. All the boundary scales have been included, it is a medium-sized town, the site is protected. **The public scale has been tackled in such a way that we feel in an intermediate space, without going through semiprivate space, but that these spaces are already perceived as an antechamber to the private spaces. The question of boundaries is a real issue here.** How are we going to be able to set regulatory guidelines to close off either side of these boundaries, without having 3 m high hedges, for people to be able to live together. So that is the fourth stage starting from the current stage.

Thinking about the landscape elements that will govern approaches to living together and sharing these spaces. What we finally wanted to introduce in this residential neighbourhood was public elements that can be perceived as meeting places at neighbourhood rather than town scale. This is an old theme in the architecture and urban planning world: how to help people live together without needing to protect them from each other?



**Giovanni AURINO, Danilo CAPASSO, Bruna VENDEMMIA, Anna SIRICA (IT), winners in SAMBREVILLE (BE):** In our project, we were imagining a space, a sort of courtyard that would be a kind of interpolation between public space and private space. We have this long riverside park, close to the Sambre. The project site is close to the street. The two different elements of the project could meet each other in the central spaces of the block. We have interpreted the porosity also. In your presentation you told us about the three levels of porosity.

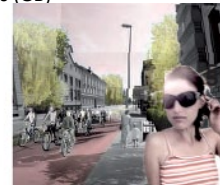
**How can the different level of communication and mobility interact in these common spaces? How can the public programme or the buildings have different aspects meeting these spaces? But when we met the city council, they asked: "who will manage the different spaces and how will we know which space belongs to whom?" This is an open question and reveals that our cities are still more in NIMBY than WIMBY mode. Asking how to separate our own spaces? How can we break this kind of way of thinking?**

**Ulrike POEVERLEIN, head of European Deutschland:** In the Wittstock project, there are different kinds of porosity. In Saintes there are these courtyard houses, which are private of course and an urban fabric, which is inherited and protected and in a way works traditionally like that. It is an example that fits the existing urban fabric. On a different scale, the site in Wittstock is a bit complex, with 2 or 3 sites; there are three briefs in one, different tasks to think about. There is also the park area near the railway station, which demands a different kind of porosity, a flow through public space. So the openness completes the movement of mobility, makes it easier to use the public spaces in the city. It has been dealt in a very delicate way, in its different dimensions, within one city. They do not necessarily have a lot to do with each other. For the jury it was really convincing to see how all these kinds of accessibility were dealt with. The landscape here is the thing that carries the project. A delicate approach to the landscape on its different levels, defining different kinds of spaces: some



above: SAMBREVILLE E11 (BE) "Ville + Sambre + Ville"  
arch. Giovanni Aurino, Danilo Capasso, Bruna Vendemmia, Anna Sirica (IT)

below: WITTSTOCK E11 (DE) "Bahnrud"  
arch. Anna Buchwald, Janna Hohn (DE), Josh Yates (GB)



more public; others more private. It is probably different from all the other sites we've seen where things seem clearer, more unidirectional.

**Didier REBOIS, General Secretary European Europe:** It should not be forgotten that the concept of porosity is entirely tied in with its opposite or complement, the concept of boundaries. Without defining the notion of the boundary, we can't create porosity. That is what is interesting in terms of modern space, which was a completely open space where boundaries had to be recreated. We also encountered a question of scales, the urban scale which differs from the block scale, but as in Savenay for example, the idea of slabs in the landscape. We encounter a scale which provides a certain critical building mass with a boundary in relation to the open spaces. The great quality of the Gembloux project, or example, is that it has a potential global form which is redivided to create this porosity, but it starts with a boundaried global volume which is then fractured. The project defines the boundaries between public space and town hall, between garden and square, etc.

The second fundamental thing that clients need to be able to manage these the gradual breaking down between inside and outside, or least reversals of meaning and values. In the last 4 or five European sessions, we have increasingly seen projects moving towards fragmentation in the sense of urban porosity, fluidity, and with this idea of a city that people can move around by infiltrating the interior. However, it goes very much against the grain – as has been said about residents being very loth to accept foreigners into their local living space – that "home interiors" should become semipublic or public spaces.

We have a well-known example in Paris, Portzamparc's open block between the National Library and the périphérique orbital road. He designed a whole system of porosities, secondary routes running through the blocks, but when it was completed in the whole block was closed for "security" reasons. Is not so much a question of porosity as of security. Urban porosity also has to be considered in terms of security.

You have to provide reassurance about how different types of people will be able to use this porosity. Otherwise, it will remain a pious wish. It will become very hard to design projects of this type.

We have seen many European projects which aspired to these intermediate spaces and its openness, become shut off. The obstacles essentially came from the local residents, who were very fearful of this openness. You have to find systems, arrangements. In certain cities, such places work like parks, open in daytime and closed at night, based on different patterns of use, driven by ideas about security that may be only psychological, but may reflect real problems. So it is important to recognise this cultural phenomenon and also this new characteristic of projects. At the same time, if we want to build them, they need to include this principle of protection, opening/closing and ways of appropriating these spaces.

**Pascal AMPHOUX** : You are right to point out that these questions can only be approached in terms of paradox: to open is to close and to close is to open. I liked in what has been said about the relation between public and private, that you talked about the Internet, the semipublic, the semiprivate.

**It is clear that what is needed is intermediate situations to manage the paradox between the need to give residents security, even though imaginary. That is more the responsibility of politicians and clients, whereas we designers have a more ethical responsibility to defend public space in the strong sense of the term: public space which offers a certain social control and requires some things to remain open.**

This gives us an opportunity to hear more from the municipalities. What ideas do you want to promote through European? What are your responses to the projects you have in your hands? How can you accept this kind of paradox while contributing to innovation in the handling of these relations?

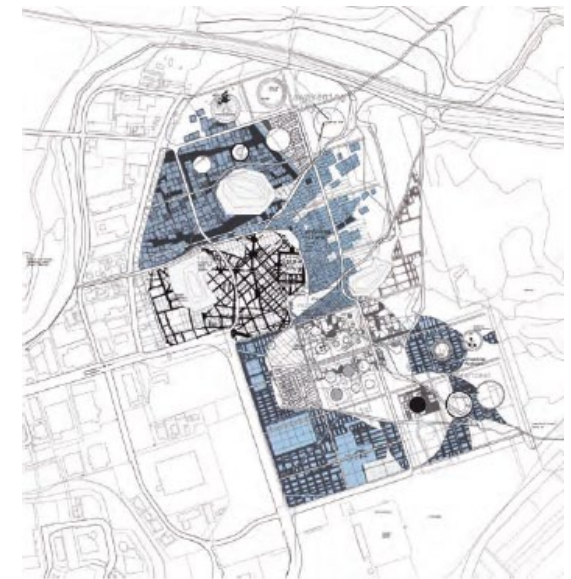
**Renate PREßLEIN-LEHLE, municipal councillor, representative of the site of INGOLSTADT (DE):** I think that the notion of opening spaces up is only meaningful when it allows people to interact with each other.

**People tend to feel more comfortable in the private sphere and in anonymity. The intimacy of their private gardens and the anonymity of large spaces. We all behave differently in these two spaces, but we need one as much of the other. And it is a very important subject, that we discussed at length in Ingolstadt. Everyone needs private space, somewhere to withdraw. Around these private spaces, we could define an intermediate space, semipublic space, which we find, for example, in neighbourhood relations where people feel secure. Then there is the next type of space, which is not yet a big, anonymous public square, but the space of our district, where we encounter familiar faces and not groups of unknown tourists. Finally, the last space is city space, where people can meet and greet each other or maintain complete anonymity.**

This in my opinion is what defines a successful urban plan, the ability to differentiate and respect this system of public and private spaces which residents can identify and which are self-regulating. When I enter an unknown neighbourhood, I need to be able to identify a private courtyard, which will automatically make me turn back. People feel comfortable in a framework where public spaces are consistent and designed by people who respect these principles. The dimensions and proportions of a courtyard, for example, when well-designed, prevent strangers from coming in, sitting down at your table and sharing your coffee. In Ingolstadt, we try using a differentiated system to arrange public spaces within residential areas. In terms of urban planning, we have included many semi-public spaces, because they challenge the population on the notion of ownership. Does this space belong to the municipality or the condominium?



INGOLSTADT E11 (DE) "Dreaming/Awaking"  
arch. Lydia Ramakers, Katrin Rheingans, Nora Wildermann (DE)  
above: site view  
below: runner-up project



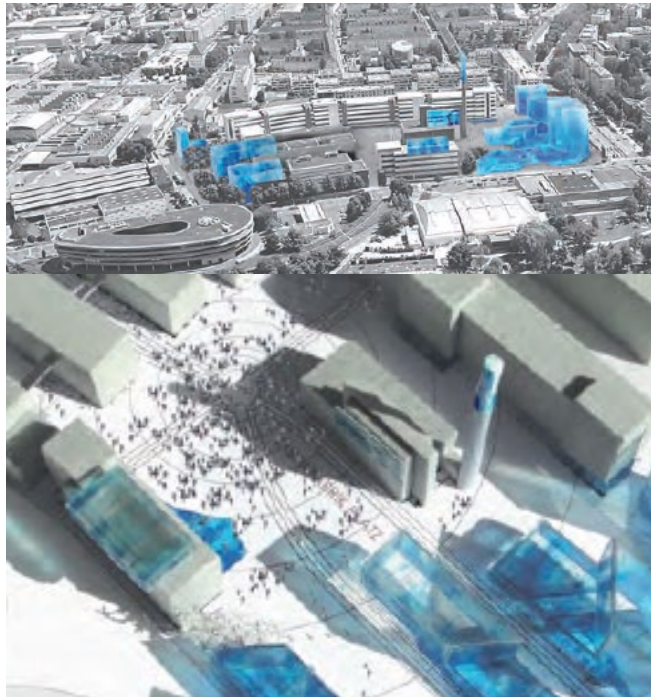


It is precisely in spaces of this kind that neighbourly relations develop, because people feel responsible for the place they are in. It is very important, because this is where the notion of removing barriers appears in urban planning. It is about removing barriers in urban space, which demands a great deal of thought about planning: where to position the green areas, where to place the network of streets and paths, how to proportion the space between buildings.

**Dieter ALBRECHT, Department of urban planning, Representative of the site of LINZ (AT):** Field studies have shown that these systems of public space reflect national cultures. In Italy, the notion of public space in the streets is very different from what we find in Germany or in Austria. It is a cultural norm that is hard to change – variations in the perception of public space are very important. Undeniably, public spaces are necessary, but they need to be designed perfectly for their specific use. In the projects presented so far, I can only congratulate the designers and mayors for having managed to apply in practice a theoretical concept that suits the local population. The implementation conditions are certainly different in each case, and greatly depend on the local population. These urban planning theories are easy to apply in big cities. Indeed, such semi-public spaces become limited, even non-existent, because public space often ends directly in private space.

**Stéphane BOIS, Director, Syndicat Mixte Métropole Nantes Saint-Nazaire, representative of the site of SAVENAY (FR):** The issue of the inhabitants and their acceptance of the projects is very important. Projects, whether architectural or urban, have a very long lifespan, in the design phase, but also in the implementation phase. You are designing for 30, 40 or 50 years.

**This question of the acceptance of porosity needs to develop over time. It is not simply about a specific moment, a design that corresponds to the moment of inauguration, when the ribbon is cut... You need to think about afterwards. It is a question that is in all of our minds, clients, investors, designers.**



above: LINZ E11 (DK) "LINZERTUS"  
arch. Julio De La Fuente, Natalia Gutiérrez (ES)  
below: SAVENAY E11 (FR), site view



**That is what interested us in the three winning submissions we had for European 11, that capacity to be part of a process and to include elements that change with time that can be adapted.**

This is a real challenge. Our town must have a model of evolution towards natural spaces, because they will become increasingly rare. The trend will be more towards a process of "reuse" of the city, so this question of the changing city and its adaptation over time to the needs of citizens, but also its adaptation to seasonal time. People use urban space differently in summer, when this issue of security that you refer to is less crucial than in winter, when it is cold, foggy and night falls at 5 pm. There are certainly cultural differences between Germany, Austria, France and Italy, but there are also sociological differences in culture between residents of a single neighbourhood.

**Julio DE LA FUENTE, Natalia GUTIÉRREZ (ES), runners-up in LINZ (AT):** There are several types of locations, urban locations and peripheral locations. In our case in Linz it is an urban location. There are a lot of projects in European that are isolated urban areas. Their porosity is a very useful device to relink them with others areas. In Linz, we have a new residential quarter, an industrial area and a green area with a park. We have a ground floor layer, to which we add several layers, to connect with the city. These are physical layers, visual layers like in Gembloux. So it is the addition of these different layers that creates porosity and new urban structure. We also wanted to create an urban atmosphere in this location. We are more comfortable talking about urban atmosphere; we know how it works in terms of security or of uses that we proposed.

**Helmut RESCH, architect, Head of Urban Planning, representative of the municipality of SELB (DE):** The project depends on different, variable conditions: location, can size, local specificities and attitudes. Let us take the example of Selb, where we have observed the habits of residence in their choice of routes. Adding roads would be pointless. They would not be used, as residents have acquired the

habit of using a single route and would refuse to change it. I believe that it is the local habits that the competition entrants cannot, initially, be familiar with. However, it is not necessary to stipulate this in the initial call for tenders. Local specificities can be discussed with the winners in workshops. Moreover, we design streets and roads for people, citizens, not on a drawing board as in the past. However, to implement more complex and modern road systems, it is essential to include local people in the process. But this does not mean that we should abandon projects if they do not correspond to what local people want. Sometimes you have to argue your case and explain the advantages of the changes. On the other hand, we shouldn't fall into the trap of imposing ideas when they are not accepted. The crucial factor is not so much public space, but the way it is bounded. Are the project proposals really applicable, or are there other solutions? Choosing alternatives is a way of responding to new demands in public space and inventing new ways of moving around. In my view, this kind of process is interdisciplinary, simultaneously urban, architectural, social, behavioural and cultural. That is why it is not necessary for all these factors to be included in the competition. It is an evolving process.

**Pascal AMPHOUX:** Your contribution takes us from public space in the spatial sense of the term, to public space in the media sense, in terms of public debate, politics. It is no longer about involving people afterwards, presenting them with a fait accompli, but involving local people or organisations in the project process. This also relates to the issue of joint projects and establishing the rules of the game. It is about implementing the transition from the formal design of public space to a public involvement that goes beyond mere participation, yet without neglecting the presence and role of the designer.

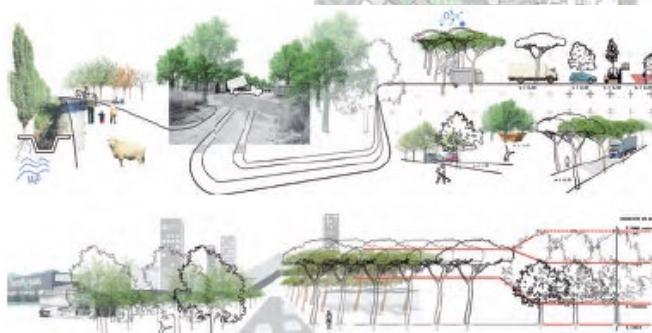
**Maria Mercedes FERNANDEZ URCEY, Architect at the Directorate General of Housing of the Basque Government, representative of the sites of GETARIA + SESTAO (ES):** When someone presents the European projects, they formulate ideas on the sites with a concrete set of issues, and try to foresee all the unforeseeables that may emerge in the implementation process. But in reality what happens when we present sites is the opposite, it is because we think that new ideas may emerge from the process, but we can never foresee all the unforeseeables.



above: SELB E11 (DE), site view  
below: GETARIA E11 (ES), site view



below: ALCORCÓN E11 (ES) "Arbolopolis"  
Diego Jimenez Lopez, Gonzalo Roldan Alvarez, Juana Sanchez Gomez (ES)



**We have to deal with all sorts of unpredictable events, such as a change of team in the municipality. I think that the essential factor in the success of a project is educating the public, the local authority, new companies. It is precisely this process of encountering new companies and the public in general, this transmission – not just of the practical idea, of the formal project, but also the thinking behind the project, because that is where the value really lies. The formal presentation is the second phase, and I think that it is part of the evolution of the project.**

It is this discussion that can change the formal content whilst maintaining the original value. As long as the original idea is maintained, I believe that this is the primary value of these projects..

**Diego JIMENEZ LOPEZ, Gonzalo ROLDAN ALVAREZ, Juana SANCHEZ GOMEZ, winners in ALCORCÓN**

**(ES):** The remarks of the Basque Government representative are very much to the point, because the most significant problem lies in the dialogue that takes place. What are the views of European and the technical committee? I would like to hear and know whether you are satisfied with the balance at European with regard to implementation processes. That is our main subject today: the process. I would like to know is the competition is consistent with the implementations, where you are satisfied with the analyses in this respect?

**Pascal AMPHOUX:**

**The type of meeting we have is an effort to try to improve these processes by involving all the stakeholders. This varies from country to country, with different behaviour and potential, but the idea and the role of European in this postcompetition phase is to help, to assist, to support, whilst giving the municipalities all the**



freedom they need to manage their projects, whilst also ensuring that the European themes are followed or maintained, and sometimes applied in an experimental and innovative way. That is an important point.

**Laura HIETAKORPI, Saana KARALA, Jenni POUTANEN (FI), winners in PORVOO (FI):** In our proposal the structure contains villages that allows the people to feel secure. This is also linked to the topic of traditions of living. I found those examples **in our own history, in mediaeval times, the scales were very small and public and private spaces were easily linked. We have tried to interpret these historical references in a modern way.**

**Vincent ARNE (FR), Aude MERMIER (FR), winners in ROMAINMÔTIER (CH):** One of the fairly tough questions we were faced with was a site geographically quite bounded by streets, roads and railways. The village is small, with a population of around 900. The scale is highly rural rather than urban. **The question that arose in terms of porosity was how to ensure that the graft took.** We tried to resolve this question of a successful graft by distributing the public programs and services between the existing fabric and our new fabric, to trigger a sort of deliberate adoption in the use and connection with the new and existing fabric. The brief was to design a volume of around 600 dwellings virtually from nothing. This meant that pooling uses was a significant challenge. In formal terms, we focused on large object typologies, farms, distributed as what we might call catalysts, which will oblige the villagers to pass through the eco-neighbourhood and residents of the eco-neighbourhood to come into the village.

**Thibault BARBIER, Laetitia LAFONT (FR), winners in SAVENAY (FR):** This issue of creating value is important. **In all the submissions, there is this concept of porosity, of work on public space, but rarely anything about the value of these areas.**



above: ROMAINMÔTIER E11 (CH) "Lisières construites/Métropole jardinée"  
arch. Vincent Arne, Aude Mermier (FR)



below: SAVENAY E11 (FR) "Mesures ligériennes"  
arch. Thibault Barbier, Laetitia Lafont (FR)

They are approached from a physical perspective, but not necessarily in their economic dimension, or the meaning to be given to these spaces. In our project, our response is to begin with seedbeds which become spaces that bring porosity into the district, and it is a private-sector actor who suddenly gives meaning to a landscape, so that residents understand that they are in a cultural space, which has economic value for them and makes sense. So it is important, when we talk about landscape, not to neglect this question of value, of the meaning it brings.

**Isabelle MOULIN, General Secretary European France:** There are many sites characterised by division brought about by infrastructures, in some cases, large enclaves are released. We know that European encourages close collaboration between local politicians and officials and the teams. There is the idea of a laboratory, of experiment. When we are asked whether European accepts the ideas or checks whether the ideas are applied, it must be said that ideas change too, and the way they are applied is up to the municipalities. However, **it is clear that European encourages the idea of experiment, so that there is this permanent aspiration to something better. I find that politicians and clients are very satisfied with this, because they can be deprived of this experimental dimension in more traditional procedures.**

For example, what we see today is European plans coming together to debate, to discuss and share, which is exceptional in itself. Another good thing with European is that an Italian team is working in Belgium.

Indeed, Belgium is made up of European cultures, Spanish, Italian, etc. **Today, at a point in the history of Europe when we are just constructing a future, I find that exceptional.**

**All these shared histories, that's what European is, the history of an exchange.**

**Diego JIMENEZ LOPEZ, Gonzalo ROLDAN ALVAREZ, Juana SANCHEZ GOMEZ (ES), winners in AL-CORCON (ES):** I would like to talk about two concepts that we could link together in order to implement our projects. The first is the concept of critical mass, mentioned by the Basque Country representative, and the other is the concept of the cultural connection or difference in the vision or interpretation of projects, highlighted by the German representative. Every culture experiences this idea of connection and, in this sense, I would like to relate it to the idea of production and of democracy.

**The implementation of European projects depends greatly on their beginnings, when the projects are launched. For us as architects to be slightly more open when the projects are launched, so that when a plot is presented, in addition to the political compromise that already exists more firmly than the existing compromise on the development of the land, there should be a compromise of continuity which has nothing to do with a new government coming in and changing former policies. I would like us to focus much more on this process of continuity, and that this first phase should involve the other stakeholders, those listed at the beginning of this debate, all the people involved, whether private or public, and that these stakeholders should be kept informed about the sites and the incorporation of those sites into the project, four example in relation to our work.**

However, the project could progress via agreements between the private companies, the industrial companies, and those with strong connections with public space. And in such a way that this relationship is possible, because their use is semi-public. So if they were all informed about the project from the launch phase, they would be more ready to be involved in the participatory process.

From another perspective, this would also facilitate implementation, since people would feel concerned from the start. We therefore rely on a mediating figure, which we believe should be European, to implement this agreement between private and public, and we think that this is necessary today, insofar as the public sector, at least in Spain, no longer has the economic or even political strength that it previously claimed.

**Pascal AMPHOUX:** What we are talking about here it is the role of mediation, and the need to devise different procedures in the European countries. I find your project a model of what I have seen in the session, in this major role of a sort of plant covering across a whole territory. It is an approach that involves reversing the image of the territory, to bring in different actors. It is also interesting in relation to a theme which we have not greatly explored, the theme of value creation. Creation of economic but non-commercial value, at least not in the first stage. This is perhaps another form of porosity between the commercial and non-commercial, which also seems to reflect current realities. You in Spain are perhaps pioneers in the critical transition in which we find ourselves.

**Pierre SAUVEUR, President, European Belgium:** European works with clients who are often exceptional, but the exceptional covers both less and more. So I have dealt with people who were exceptional in the more and sometimes exceptional in the less, and you can never tell in advance! In our internal European meetings, we discussed numerous issues. We analysed the processes from one country to another, and also things change over time: countries where things used to work and no longer do. You talked about something that happens in every country, the fact that when political office changes, it somehow turns out that the new mayor, or the new council chief has their own plans, and will generally drop their predecessor's projects. That's human nature, and it won't change. It is clear that this problem of political change is a huge obstacle. Our problem lies in the fact that our municipalities do not build. Setting aside the town of Gembloux, where the political conditions were special, we can't build with the municipalities because municipalities in Belgium do very little building. You might object that there is social housing. We have tried at the highest level, we have signed agreements, framework agreements, we work with a person who is responsible for the project, who does what they can,

both feet in the mud. And we do what we can, and I assure you we do a lot. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. There is no recipe. There is goodwill, hard work. I know that my colleagues in the other national structures are constantly focused on implementation, live almost for nothing else. This is what I often tell European winners when they come to me and say: "We submitted our project three years ago, and it still hasn't started."

**Carmen IMBERNON, head of European Spain:**

**The challenge of European is to generate ideas, whether those we are discussing in this debate on porosity, or ideas about another theme relating to the city and European territory. We try to involve municipal leaders in projects that go a bit further than operational urban planning competitions, in the sense that they can include issues that affect the municipality, the autonomous community, private owners, in other words a combination of interests and objectives which, in retrospect, are more difficult to manage.**

The Basque Government representative explained that they presented a site in the competition, because they want to resolve a problem that involves a large number of interests. When one of the interests, for example private-sector companies, withdraws from the project, it obviously becomes much more difficult to develop. But should we stop working to achieve it, or should we stubbornly go on in the awareness that our role as intermediaries will encounter obstacles? We do not lose sight of the objective of working with and in municipalities in different ways. What happens is that in these very ambitious projects, the timeframes are very long and a lot of things can occur which make the project harder to implement.

**Frédéric MAHAUD, representative of the site of SAINTES (FR):** It should be remembered that European is a competition of ideas. When municipalities approach European, it is to see new ideas and methods of urbanisation.



I am not an urban design professional, I am a politician. Sometimes we want to see our town develop, we have our own idea, our own conception of that development. But the European competition gives us an opportunity to see what is happening elsewhere. For us, as elected officials, it is not initially an operational competition, and it is only in a subsequent phase that the competition of ideas can lead to the establishment of an appropriate regulatory framework, competitive tendering, within each territorial structure. Our principle each time, i.e. twice, since we are one of the few European municipalities that has completed a project and wishes to do it on the second project. For European 3, in 1993, it took us almost 10 years to build 64 dwellings, but in fact it was a truly innovative idea for redesigning a historic block and reintroducing a dynamic habitat, appreciated by local people. It took 5 years to get control of the land for the competition project. That tells you how complex a project is. To take a dynamic, a very strong political will to pursue a competition of ideas, to look for young, innovative experiences, which reflect local desires, to regenerate town centres, to combat urban sprawl. That was the real theme of the two examples in Saintes. To see how an old town could be inspired by new urban practices. Afterwards, things need to be clear. The public commission will be carried through if it adheres fully to the idea and results of the competition, without belonging to the competition jury. That too is a challenge! That is how we have experienced it up to now. It's about redesigning the city of tomorrow, seeing how the different hierarchies fit together. Is that the task of the municipality? Is how it works up to the private sector? And then the whole theme of residentialisation, which we are also tackling through fast changing social programs.

**Ulrike POEVERLEIN, European Allemagne:** European is a competition for ideas but it is also a competition for implementation. I speak for the German secretariat. We always try for sites where there is a possibility of implementation. We always prefer a site where there is a chance of implementation, over a site that just wants an idea. This is something we will continue to work on, definitely.

**Pascal AMPHOUX:**

**Yes, but in Saintes they build on the basis of**

**ideas, not on the basis of preset regulations. The 64 dwellings in Saintes are more than a small number, they have been published in journals and are cited in architecture schools. That impact has been huge! And it is the client who built this project, with all its impact, who is telling us that European must initially be a competition of ideas, with an aspiration to implement. This is the paradox that we have to live with.**

It remains an unusual type of competition, which plays a singular role both for the competitors, with the focus on young architects and on themes, and for clients.

In conclusion, I would like to identify three ideas that emerge from this long debate:

Firstly: porosity is not a value in itself. It is not NIMBY becoming WIMBY, but NIMBY and WIMBY at the same time!

Secondly: things change. The notion of porosity needs to evolve and allow change over time, in order to maintain a degree of permanence in a project situation.

Third: paradox. This notion of porosity needs to be approached as a paradox. Porosity as a quality of living skin is a paradox between inside and outside, between the inert and the living. In this respect, the metaphor works quite well.

From this notion, I obtained two principles, one relating to the design and the other to implementation and the client's role.

On the design side, there are orders of porosity:

- the architectural scale, in the treatment of the ground, the thresholds, boundaries, facades... All the issue of the relation between public and private, intimate and semipublic... and all these paradoxical relations to be established between physical closure and visual or aural openness, physical openings but closures of another order, and all the paradoxes that can be generated by spatial and architectural configurations...
- the urban scale, everything relating to physical continuity, traffic movement, sequences of public space, sequences of public spaces in physical traffic networks, but spaces which have different characters and scales.
- This latter notion demands a focus on connecting scales.

The porous is what connects one scale with another. A scale becomes an opening or a closure on another scale, both in space and in time.

With regard to implementation issues, I would encourage clients to consider the word etymologically with reference to making processes porous, in other words seeing the pore as what makes it possible to establish a boundary between interior and exterior, thus constituting life. When the pores are closed, living beings die.

So there is a sort of citizen porosity. I am thinking about our discussions on involving stakeholders. All sorts of things to explore regarding a hybridisation of these forms of involvement relative to today's participatory structures, which tend to be somewhat conventional, and very often tokenistic.