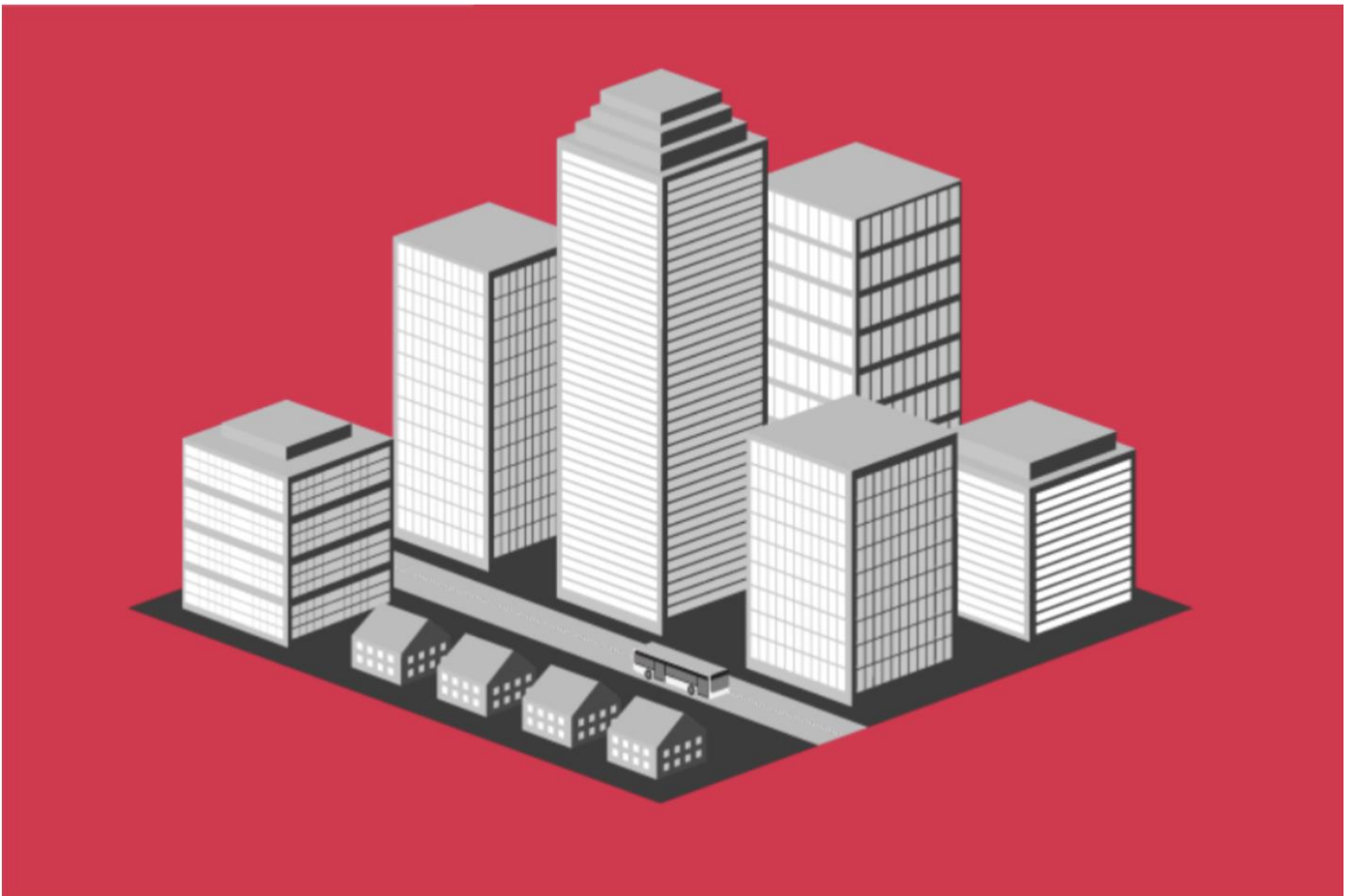


EUROPAN: THE MOST DISCREET CITY PLANNING COMPETITION (BUT THE SMARTEST ONE)

By [Sibylle Vincendon](#) – May 9th, 2019 at 18:29



Every week, a story of cities, villages and urban issues. Today, a documentary produced for the 30 years anniversary of a consultation gathering architects and local representatives around sites with specific problems. Besides, it is at European level.

In times where the main issue is the one of [competitions “re inventing” Paris](#), the Seine River, Paris’ undergrounds, the Grand Paris conurbation, and other variations visible in France, we can recall that for thirty years, [Europan consultation has also reinvented the way to build the city](#). With a more virtuous model, it rather relies on thoughts than finances.

In the calls for “*re inventing*”, it is, indeed, the proposals of investors that are selected, of course, they are paired up with an architectural project presumed to develop the site’s potential. But if the local authority, presiding the jury, is going to examine the implementation suggested by the investor, it will also have a look at the cost this person is proposing for the purchase of the land.

Launching pad

With Europan, the investment aspect disappears. What the local authorities are looking for, when turning towards this system, is first to find a solution for a place that is, in general, not that simple. [This device concerns around twenty European countries](#) providing, at the same time, the teams of architects, urban planners, landscape architects that are registering to the competition, the sites that are to develop and the juries. The review on the teams' proposals is not only the local representatives to make.

The consultation occurs every two years, accompanied, each time, by a theme which avoids profusion of ideas that would go in every direction. Living in the city, Productive Cities, European urbanity, At home in the city, Injecting urban rhythms, Resonance between territories and ways of life, correspond to some of these themes.

This is not a brain juice competition: most of the time, local authorities collaborate with the winning teams to build, even though changes and adaptations could occur afterwards. Europan, being reserved to professional below the age of forty years old, is a tremendous launching pad.

Modernity of solutions

The European dimension is real. We can quite measure it in the [documentary produced by the organization for its 30 years anniversary](#). Entitled *En devenir* (in the making), the movie of Maurice Cheng and Olivier Mitterrand followed four unusual situations in Amiens (gigantic weaving industry left aside), Marseille (Plan d'Aou neighbourhood), Sainte (old city centre with alleys and small houses in escheat) and Vienna in Austria (a site to build between highway, railroad and high-voltage wire). The European factor played a role in the choice of the winning teams: Spanish were chosen in Vienna, and Danish in Marseille.

But what is striking in these four examples, is the modernity of solutions. In Amiens, the winning team proposed, in 2017, a phytoremediation park for the contaminated soils. In Marseille, in 2014, the team designed a new cut of the property plan, recommended the dissociation of the ground and built properties and simpler judicial systems to enlarge or shorten the size of the plot, depending on the needs. In short, solutions that barely starts spreading in practice or in the law. But mostly, answers that meet, at the same time, the environment and the social aspect.

In *En devenir*, Alain Maugard, Europan France President, sums up: "Europan is a formidable place where we can win a competition and fail answering to the question, and even say: "the question was asked in the wrong way, and if it were but in a better way, there, this should be the answer." There are not so many places where you can do this."

Since 1988, Europan rallied 20,370 teams which have considered 530 sites in 23 countries. France selected 170 projects.

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