2022

European Prize for Urban Public Space

This book presents the results of the 2022 edition of the European Prize for Urban Public Space, which the Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB) created in 2000 as a permanent observatory of European cities in order to bring to the fore the political and cultural importance of the form of cities.

In the twenty years of its history, the Prize has become a mirror of European cities, of the big problems they share, and also of the regional specificities that make them unique, while also offering a good picture of the history and present of Europe drawn from what is reflected in their stones, squares and streets, seafronts and riverbanks, markets, railway stations, libraries, connections with natural resources, and their peripheries. The Prize, then, presents a privileged portrayal of cities that share history, culture and—we trust—a political project, and that remind us that perhaps Europe's main cultural contribution to humanity is its idea of public space, an idea of a densely populated, compact city which puts its trust in a mix of uses and populations to facilitate living together.

Twenty years on, cities are facing enormous challenges, and it is essential to renew the urban agenda. Urban growth has blurred the boundaries of the city, which no longer has a specific form but is rather a process in which industry, services, and global flows of communication, energy, and food converge in a space of multiple mobilities and diverse forms. Today's city is often a hostile place, far from its founding ideals of freedom and equality. The war in Ukraine has wounded primarily urban areas in the very heart of the continent, once again reminding us of the fragility of life in the city. Meanwhile, heatwaves, fires and floods are only the first symptoms of a climate emergency that, according to the United Nations, currently affects three out of every five of the world's cities and is undoubtedly the most serious challenge that must be faced.

Confronted with these challenges, the Prize holds out an optimistic message, one of confidence in the creative and trans-formative power of architecture, and the ability of urban planning to combat climate change, to build bridges in places separated by differences, to create cities that are more accessible and breathable, to foster mixtures instead of ghettos, and to imagine spaces which, as Manuel de Solà-Morales put it, create the awareness that we belong to a diverse and broader community.

Twenty years of history show that the city is a disorderly, unending place and that public space is autonomous and uncon-trollable, and that this is the price to be paid for the different ways of life and the potential for freedom and equality that cities possess. The Prize continues to have faith in cities as an essential space of contemporaneity, an imperfect place where 66 per cent of Europeans live and that must now be rethought as an ecosystem that can make life liveable. Although the city concentrates humanity's gravest problems, it is also able to invent solutions and share them with other cities in a network of widely distributed knowledge like that created by the Prize. This project is the result of the Europe-wide system of interconnections that the CCCB has constructed over the years, together with an alliance of the continent's main architecture institutions and museums, a long list of experts, and jury members who, year after year, chart the way forward. With each edition, the Prize Archive keeps growing as an extraordinary tool in the service of architects and urban planners as it amasses imaginative proposals that solve problems, that are effective, and that make of cities places where a possible future can be imagined.

Judit Carrera

Judit Carrera is the Director of the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB)

It has been a true pleasure to preside over this wonderful jury composed of Eleni Myrivili, Hans Ibelings, Andreas Ruby, Paloma Strelitz and Špela Videčnik, and with the support of Lluís Ortega.

I want to place emphasis on the idea of the diversity of the projects we have received and that have been recognised in this year's award. After much discussion, we agreed that we needed to try to make a joint statement. Thus, what I present now is not my statement but one that comes from all the members of the jury. We believe that, with this diversity of projects that have been presented to us, we must find common ground and discover the issues that unite us rather than those that separate us.

I would like to stress that we spent a lot of time looking at the projects. We studied them carefully, asked questions, spoke, listened, empathised, corrected, argued and became angry. We changed our minds. After yesterday's presentations, we changed our minds; several of us changed our minds. And we renounced individual positions for the common good, because we believe that it is important to send a message of unity. We have been transparent, clear and direct, and have spent hours trying to achieve consensus in the result. We managed to do this and we are happy because this means that there are values we share and do not want to lose, because in the world we live in nothing can be taken for granted, and we are well aware of that.

First, as a jury, we recognise the diversity of the social and economic conditions that exist in this European realm. Europe is not homogenous, as was made very clear in our analysis of all the projects we received. We recognise the challenges that the teams have had to overcome; we admire them and thank them for being present here, in the design process, in the relationships and achievements of projects that are relevant for the public when resources are limited. I appreciate the words of the winner, who has spoken with and about the other participants, as I believe it is important to recognise the work that has been put into all these projects, the individual work and extra time dedicated by the designers, the cities and, frequently, the promotor-designers. And this happens when, in some parts of Europe, public space is not an administrative priority, or when there are parts of Europe where the administration has neither the power nor the will to lead projects for the renovation of public space.

We have realised that, at the European level, public space is not guaranteed by default. There are major differences in climate, culture and history, as well as asymmetries, which means that the jury has had to assess the projects from many points of view while being sensitive to the different realities that cannot be judged from the same perspective. From canals to the new technologies of public space, many of the projects explore new forms in the transition of a city that is moving away from the urban model where the vehicle is a priority. This trend is emerging and it will probably take considerable imagination to visualise a city with fewer vehicles in the near future. We have seen projects that combine socio-economic values in new ways, and projects that have straightforwardly presented initiatives that promote the biodiversity of ecosystems. These last range from urban gardens that need constant maintenance—and I stress constant maintenance because change in this city we imagine needs a lot of maintenance, a lot of care—to even deserted spaces that allow for the appearance of new forms of life in urban space. The urban space of the future is one for humans and for the other creatures that coexist with us, as we are finally starting to recognise. We also want to celebrate variety and the growing number of actors who are participating in urban space decision-making, from grass-roots movements, neighbourhood communities and activists, to local governments that take up the challenge of pushing for the creation and maintenance of more inclusive public spaces.

We recognise the climate change emergency and the importance of creating public spaces that foster intelligent use of natural resources for the common and public good. We have not yet reached the full potential of this, and, in this regard, I'd like to end on a more personal note. I would like to end by saying that those of us who have the privilege of living in conditions of peace and wellbeing have the responsibility to reimagine the European public space of the future with new ideas. I believe we must be more ambitious, because public spaces have the potential to be structural, systemic and shaping, as new skeletons of the city to come. We must be more daring, more generous, and bring more collective and less individual intelligence to the table. The time has come, and we must not fail.

Teresa Galí-Izard

Teresa Galí-Izard is an agricultural engineer and landscape designer. President of the Prize Jury 2022. Intervention during the awards ceremony

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European Prize for Urban Public Space 2022

Projects

Jury reflections on public space

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Catharijnesingel
Utrecht The Netherlands

Author
OKRA landschapsarchitecten

Developer
Utrecht City Council

2020
Engineering Witteveen+Bos
Surface area 42,000 m²

Winner

Previous state

For centuries, Utrecht, a city founded in Roman times, was surrounded by a defensive wall and an exterior canal, the Catharijnesingel. After the demolition of the walls, a park designed by Jan David Zocher (1791–1870) occupied a large part of the area once given over to the former defences. In 1958, the Catharijnesingel was on the verge of disappearing to build a new ring road. Following years of debate, in 1969 it was partially drained to make way for a major traffic artery. This and other urban operations carried out during the 1970s had disastrous consequences for the public space in the city centre. Residents felt neglected as a result of interventions that favoured visitors and vehicle traffic and expressed strong opposition to the disappearance of water in the city through various campaigns in support of restoring the canal.

In a referendum held in 2002, the citizens of Utrecht voted to restore the Catharijnesingel, and a process began in which the city council, residents and landscape architects from OKRA worked on the new design to restore the canal.

Aim of the intervention

The redevelopment of the area around the Utrecht central station, initially planned in the 1980s, is one of the largest and most complex projects in the Netherlands. The goal was to create a better connection between the historic centre and the station, improving habitability and pedestrian connections through public space, while reducing vehicle traffic in the city centre to make room for cyclists and pedestrians. This project included the restoration of the Catharijnesingel, closing the road created in 1969, and recovering the canal as a recreational space for the city's inhabitants. The restoration took place in two phases, the first in 2015 and the second in 2020.

Description

The restoration of the final section of the Catharij-nesingel includes an area roughly 1.1 kilometres long. A total of about 40,000 cubic metres of water has returned to the canal, and its length now reaches almost six kilometres. Working on the course of the Catharijnesingel and the expansion of the Zocherpark, OKRA reorganised the traffic that occupied the site, diverting cars and giving priority to pedestrians. The extended walking path along the canal invites recreational and sports use; visitors can stroll through meadows among works of art, as well as numerous leisure areas and a variety of planted areas, each with its own species.

Recovering access to the water is the key aspect of this project and the reason why visitors will want to return to the Catharijnesingel. Whether engaging in water-based activities or walking along the water's edge where the park is reflected on the surface, the inhabitants of Utrecht can experience the city's historical relationship with the water and the canal in a new space.

A varied grove of trees—poplars, planes, cherry plums and elms—connects this new park with the existing Zocherpark. OKRA paid close attention to biodiversity in their choice of trees, including, for example, flowering trees that attract bees. This variety, while enhancing biodiversity, also ensures different experiences for visitors throughout the seasons.

Plan of the intervention, before and after
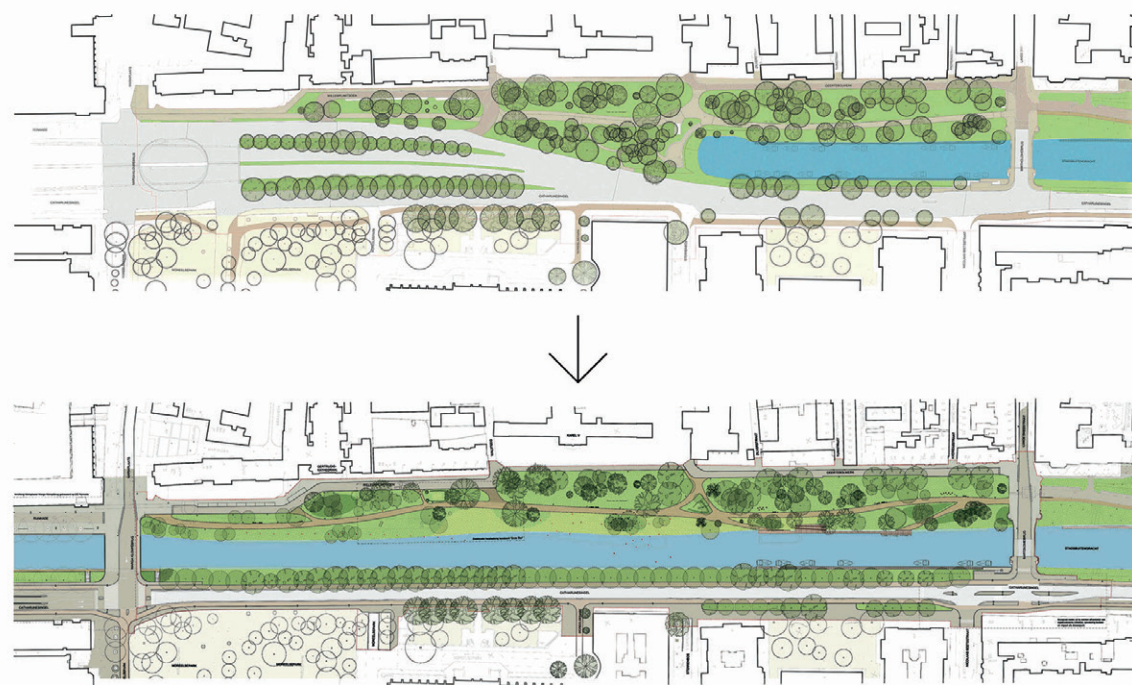
The use of materials—clinker bricks and gravel—creates a visual connection with Utrecht's historic centre. Near the existing dock, a wooden platform can be used as a seating element, a stand or a stage. A lower section added to the existing wooden platform is used by canoers, paddle boarders and other pleasure boat users.

Assessment
The design of the Catharijnesingel follows a model that combines walking paths, the inclusion of nature, climate adaptation and cultural heritage. It is a bold, radical intervention to improve public space, which restores water, nature and the memory of the city's historical heritage, while getting rid of cars and vehicle traffic. Due to its size and impact, the restoration of the Catharijnesingel is an important example of how public spaces in cities can be improved to adapt to the challenges of climate change, while visibly improving the quality of life of city residents.

As a consequence of the global Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen the importance of quality public spaces in cities for daily use toward encouraging small-scale outdoor activities and daily walking, while avoiding overcrowding. All this requires an attractive and safe outdoor space where people can be in contact with nature, while carrying out activities that promote social connections between the city's inhabitants.

The Catharijnesingel adapts to this new situation by providing pedestrian paths and boat routes and enough space for outdoor recreation. The emphasis on the different microbiotopes of the green areas also makes a positive educational contribution to outdoor activities, where the changing face of nature can be contemplated while walking (or sailing) on the Catharijnesingel.

Lluís Ortega (LO)   During your presentation to the competition jury, you discussed the phenomenon of car removal in Europe, specifically mentioning that it is occurring in Utrecht and that advances in this regard are indeed possible. Could you elaborate on this? We noticed that car removal was a common theme in many of the projects in this cycle of the prize, with various cities implementing different approaches. What are the outcomes of these removals? Are there any opportunities or challenges associated with them?

Wim Voight (WV)   It's important to create car-free cities because as cities become more densely populated, it becomes increasingly difficult to accommodate cars. Compared to travelling by bike or public transport, cars require a lot more space, which becomes a major issue in cities where space is limited. As designers we believe that this is not just a traffic-engineering issue but also a social one that requires a shift in mentality. For instance, in Amsterdam people are asking why car owners are given priority to use the street space, even if they pay for it, while those who don't have cars may also want to use the space, but for other purposes, such as for a playground, a vegetable garden or a tiny forest. This raises questions about the fairness of space allocation, and whether the needs of car owners should take precedence over the needs of others. Creating car-free cities is therefore not only a practical solution but also a social one that requires a change in mindset. The outcomes of car removals are varied and depend on the specific approach taken. However, some of the benefits include reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality,

promoting active transport and creating more liveable and attractive urban spaces. On the other hand, challenges associated with car removals may include resistance from car owners and concerns about the impact on businesses and the economy.

LO   Do you believe that these approaches are scalable? It is important to recognise that mobility models differ between small and large cities, and the removal of cars is a complex issue. Can you elaborate on the question of scalability?

WV   From my perspective, we must address the issue of cars in our living environment, as they are highly space-consuming. Over the past few years, I have learned that the debate surrounding cars is not only about traffic-engineering concepts such as traffic flow and management, but it is more crucially about the mindset and the social value attached to public space and the goals we want to achieve.

The success of the approach is not limited to the size of the city or the availability of public transport. It is about making choices that prioritise green public spaces over traffic space. Even small cities in the Netherlands have been open to this concept and have expressed their interest in reducing traffic by 30 per cent and designing all public spaces to be green unless otherwise impossible.

Across Europe there is a growing interest in reducing cars, and this approach involves slowing down traffic to make it safer, reduce accidents and encourage different types of traffic. The last twenty years have seen different lanes dedicated to cars, bikes and buses, resulting in fragmented public spaces. However, by bringing all traffic back

Wim Voogt in conversation
with **Lluís Ortega**

into one single lane, we can free up a lot of space for other purposes.

The aim of my subject is not just to make spaces 100 per cent car-free, but to shift towards a fundamentally different approach to mobility. As public space designers, we must not merely challenge traffic engineers or debate their rules, we must win the battle by engaging in a social discussion about the value and significance of public space and what people believe is important.

LO   **During your presentation, you made a relevant point about considering public space as infrastructure. You highlighted how it is not only a space for socialisation but also a crucial part of infrastructure. You presented a historical development of this kind of infrastructure, starting with the fence and walls, then the railway track and canal, and, eventually, the highway. Now, we see it returning as a canal. It was a fascinating micro-history of public space as infrastructure, and greatly appreciated. You also touched on the notion of social inclusion in your proposal for the canal, emphasising the importance of accessibility by showcasing the wooden decks that allow people to access the water. What is your vision for the definition of public infrastructure in cities? While you've already discussed the idea of collapsing different velocities into one velocity, which itself involves the notion of inclusion, I believe there are other aspects to consider. Could you please elaborate?**

WV   As a team, we agree that a street or square is not just a single element, but a vital part of a

larger urban system. When designing a public space, it is crucial to consider its relationship with the larger network. While analysing the size, dimensions and functions of the space is important, we also add layers to our approach to reflect the perspectives of climate adaptiveness, nature-inclusive cities and social integration, which is a relatively new concept. We have been incorporating these ideas over the last two decades, but we believe that designing climate-adapted streets and spaces requires a systemic approach, not just a focus on individual spaces. Our goal is not only to remove cars and bring back water, but to conduct a historical analysis of the walls and military systems, as well as the ancient part of Europe that we have expanded, and integrate them into the larger context. Our office strives to make our designs as comprehensive as possible.

Regarding the meaning of public space infrastructure, we believe that some infrastructures may be intended to connect different parts of the city but ultimately segregates them. This is not limited to pedestrian networks, but it also affects social connections between neighbourhoods, climate and water. For us, the definition of connection is not only about mobility for cars, buses or bikes; it has a broader meaning that encompasses all aspects of the city.

LO   **You mentioned in your talk at CCCB a shift away from the conventional park as a compositional device with a fixed centre for visuals, perspectives and spatial depth, suggesting instead a more ecological and systemic park with multiple layers. I am curious to hear more about this new type of park that includes new sensibilities, mindsets, technologies**

and techniques to incorporate natural systems, ecological needs, climate activities and social inclusiveness. How can this new approach expand the traditional notion of a park, which has historically catered only to human experiences and perspectives, to include and prioritise these other systems?**

WV   Spatial quality and perspective are of course important, but the goal is to create a space that maximises added value within the constraints of limited available space, underground structures and programme requirements. Designing a park of 150 hectares that includes elements such as a bit of forest requires a totally different approach than designing a park where the programme requirements can easily be accommodated within the available public space, such as in the historic city centre where spaces are limited and many people have different opinions on how to use them. Our role as designers is to help the client make good choices about where to put certain functions in a city. It is important to consider the narrative and historical context of a park when making these choices. For instance, in the Catharijnesingel, which is an extension of a historical park, we might want to accommodate fifty boats to turn around in the canal, but we cannot position them in certain areas because of the heritage value. Ultimately, the new approach to park design is about creating a space that prioritises natural systems, ecological needs, climate activities and social inclusiveness, while still meeting programme requirements and accommodating the constraints of the available space.

LO   **What is your perspective on the idea of value in design and its potential implications, particularly with regard to the proposal for the canal? How do**

you navigate situations where adding value leads to gentrification or other unbalanced outcomes, and what experiences have you had in addressing these issues? Many cities face this challenge of proposing changes that enhance certain conditions, yet may unintentionally exclude certain communities. How do you strive to maintain social inclusivity and diversity in your designs despite the potential risks associated with adding value to an area?**

WV   These are very important questions and ones that we grapple with frequently. While I place a lot of emphasis on social inclusivity in my designs, I acknowledge that increasing the value of an area can sometimes lead to higher prices and the exclusion of certain groups. The economic implications of this are complex and not easily solved. What I can say is that designing public spaces for everyone, and not just a select few, is essential. It's important that people feel welcome and comfortable in these spaces.

In terms of adding value to an area, particularly in inner cities, there is a larger societal shift taking place. Ten years ago, inner cities were primarily places for commerce, but now they are transforming into places to be. It's important to keep this in mind when designing public spaces. In Utrecht, for example, even if the design is not great, the quality of the city is still high because of its strong universities, beautiful landscape and affluent population. In contrast, a city like Rotterdam has to work harder to create a liveable environment because of its industrial nature. As a designer, it's crucial to consider all these factors and strive to create inclusive designs that benefit everyone.

LO   **When considering the notion of balanced value in urban design, it becomes clear**

that this is not just a single-point problem, but rather a holistic urban issue. Your project, particularly the canal, has a longitudinal design, but it also has cross-sectional effects that impact the city on multiple scales and depths. Can you discuss how you envision this project's impact on the perpendicular conditions of the canal, and how it will transform the surrounding urban settings? Also, how can you expand the influence of your design beyond its immediate geography or geometry, and what is its impact on the city as a whole? What is your experience with this trans-scalar phenomenon, and how do you plan to enhance the value and impact of your design at multiple scales and depths?

WV   When redesigning a space, it is essential to consider how it can impact a much larger area. In the case of Utrecht, there is a contrast between the historic city centre, with its rich cultural heritage and friendly atmosphere, and the largest train station and second-largest shopping mall in the Netherlands. This disconnect stems from an economic perspective where developers prioritise attracting people to pause and spend time in Utrecht, leading to the construction of unattractive office towers and a shopping mall. Over the last fifty years, the development around the station has become disconnected from the rest of the city. By removing a car lane and reintroducing water to the canal, we aim to create a new identity for the city. People can identify with the canal and park, and it will bring back the unique historical charm of Utrecht, making it distinct from other Dutch cities.

The canal and park will serve two groups of people: those who live in Utrecht and are proud

of its history, culture and identity; and those who visit the station area and stumble upon the park. The park will provide them with a place to relax, making their visit more pleasant. In a world where everything seems the same, we need to create unique identities that make our cities different. Our design can serve as a model for other cities, and they can replicate our approach, but not the design.

For seven years I have been working in Hengelo, where people were depressed about the state of their city. They lacked employment opportunities, and there were no good redesign options available. However, by changing the narrative over time, we instilled a sense of pride in the people by celebrating their city's unique features. For example, we utilised the city's water system in the design and integrated it into the city. Although the water system was not functional anymore, the city had a strong fabric from its industrialised past and intelligent people, such as top engineers from the university, who worked there. Moreover, the city took a different approach to redevelopment after being bombed by the Germans during the Second World War. We were much more into art and had different ideas about how to design a house's facade, which made our city unique.

I therefore want to celebrate these unique aspects and incorporate them into the new design of the city centre. It will help define the specific identity of the city, install a sense of pride in people, and make the city stand out from others.

LO   One topic I would like to discuss with you is the concept of time in your work, as it is evident that you are cognisant of the historical roots of the canal and its surrounding area. How do you perceive

your proposal operating within a timeline, with various dynamics rooted in history, identity, memory and appropriation? Specifically, beyond the historical aspect of the canal, what strategies do you employ to plant the roots for its future? Can you elaborate on how you envision the canal's future and what steps you are taking to ensure that it thrives in the long term?

WV   The most significant factor isn't along the canal, but perpendicular to it. The east side has the historical city centre, and the west side has the new city. Ultimately, both sides of the railway tracks are home to thousands of residents. Over the next fifty years, they'll improve and add more passages perpendicular to the canal. We're studying the best places for these lines to fit and how they can be integrated into the urban fabric, as well as how they relate to the number of bridges over the canal.

For example, on the outside of the canal, there's a car park that covers six or seven hectares which in the future will be transformed into parks. We're already working on designs for this space, and it could span eight hundred metres in length. Currently, there's an eight-hundred-metre gap between the two bridges. As the city continues to grow, we'll want to reduce the size of the pedestrian network and add another access point somewhere in the middle. The Inktpot building, the largest brick building in the Netherlands, is located in the middle. It's a very significant building, and we were considering positioning the bridge in the middle. However, historical analysis suggested that doing so would create an imbalance between the two sides. This shows that the city's growth will present us with new challenges.

We learned from the car lane that the connections perpendicular to it were a nightmare. So, our goal is to make the best passages between

east and west, but not make them too formal or significant. The canal line and green ring around the city are more important, and while most people will pass through in a different way, it's important to maintain a hierarchy of structures.

LO   Although your proposal for the canal integrates the lifespan of existing systems, the timing of political decision-making of a transformation of this scale often does not align with the timeline of a project. What is your take on this challenge and what viable strategies do you suggest for designers working on similar projects?

WV   I must say that we were fortunate to be the designers of this project, as it had been a topic of discussion for the past fifty years. The idea of reviving the canal had been in circulation for a while, and we were able to learn from the previous attempts at its transformation before executing our own. We were able to apply this knowledge and create a successful final piece. However, we are aware that there will be future phases of development to come. What is your specific question in regard to this topic?

LO   As a designer, how do you manage the social context and planning tools required for your project to succeed, especially when there are urgent issues that need to be addressed? Given that the tools at your disposal have a limited lifespan and the project's development has a much longer timeline, how do you strategise to ensure that your interventions and operations will survive you?

WV   I have two answers to your question. First, it is essential to reframe the assignment by discussing the client's requests and highlighting

the potential benefits of a given reconstruction. As designers, we have a greater awareness of what could be the main potential for a transformation that addresses different types of uses, nature inclusiveness or climate adaptation. Therefore, before designing, it is wise to have a conversation about the meaning of the design and its political implications, as this can help in reframing the assignment to achieve a better outcome.

Second, as designers, we always study history. Although we joke that we are like the guy in the office who analyses the whole planet first and then the plot, we take a holistic approach by studying everything. This enables us to look both backwards and forwards in time. For example, if we are constructing something now, we are mindful that it may need to be adjusted ten years from now if the client's requirements change. This is the key difference between architects and landscape architects. We don't need to prove everything immediately. We are content to influence decisions and propose solutions that can be implemented later. Therefore, when a client says they are ready to design a bridge, we can say: 'I have already thought about this, so let's do it this way.'

LO   As an expert in public space, what is your diagnosis of the future of public space in Europe? What urgencies, emergencies and opportunities do you see in your work, as well as in the work of your colleagues? The Observatory of the CCCB has been collecting, observing and analysing public space for the past twenty years, and we always value the opinions of experts in shaping its future. While you noted that public space cannot

be directly extrapolated from one place to another, what particularities do you see in the European field that distinguish it from other areas in the world? Overall, what are your thoughts on the most urgent and open opportunities for European public space in the future?

WV   From my perspective, I believe there is an opportunity to dream bigger for the future of European public space. In light of challenges such as car mobility, climate adaptation, nature inclusiveness, denser cities and social inequality, we need to think beyond temporary solutions like the superblocks in Barcelona and start considering larger, more ambitious master plans. While we have some idea of how the European city might look a century from now, we need to create a shared vision for the future and consider what the right solutions are for our cities. As an office, we started with redesigning public space and moved on to larger urban developments. However, the questions remain: Who has the vision for what the city should be in fifty or a hundred years, and how can we achieve it?

It's important to consider both top-down and bottom-up approaches in our practice. While we often reach our goals through bottom-up processes, there is also a need for top-down direction to help us define our aims and objectives. When it comes to the scale of spaces, temporary solutions like the superblocks in Barcelona are useful in showing the potential value of these interventions. However, we need to think about the long-term impact of such initiatives and consider more ambitious projects such as replanting hundreds of thousands of trees in our cities. Ultimately, it's not just about the design of public space, but also the definition of the project and its

overarching aim. It would be interesting to have more conversations about these issues and work together to create a shared vision for the future of public space in Europe.

LO   As a practitioner and in discussions with colleagues, I constantly confront new topics that are becoming more prominent, such as health, wellbeing and energy. Previously, mobility, connectivity and other issues were more prevalent. Now, these new missions and topics are at the forefront of every discussion. How can we contribute to creating a different model of wellbeing or addressing health issues and lifestyle changes?

WV   Over the next decade, we will design a new city where we promise residents that they will have significantly fewer health issues than in other places because we will design it with a health-focused perspective. This approach could result in significant savings in healthcare costs. Instead of spending our money on repairing or healing people who are sick, we could prevent these illnesses by investing in public space. However, it feels like what we are designing is often limited in relation to these major issues, such as healthcare, densifying cities and climate emergencies. For example, in the Netherlands they are discussing a new rule for pedestrian streets that requires 30 per cent shade during the summer months, which is an excellent rule. However, it's almost impossible to plant enough trees to achieve this because of space limitations, both above and below ground. We need to find innovative solutions to make these kinds of goals a reality. One of our colleagues worked on a project in Singapore that was incredibly innovative and successful, and we should consider implementing similar projects in our cities. To achieve these ambitions, we need more debate and

discussion, and we must be willing to let go of some things to make space for new priorities and requirements.

LO   Thank you very much. It has been a pleasure having this conversation with you.

FLOW
Brussels Belgium

Gardens of Sporta pils
Riga Latvia

Hage
Lund Sweden

Saint-Sernin Square
Toulouse France

Finalists

Public presentation of the five finalists

The city of Brussels, Europe's capital with almost 200,000 inhabitants, is located very close to the Senne River and the Brussels-Charleroi and Brussels-Scheldt canals, at the intersection of major international maritime trade routes. Despite the city's ties to water, for decades Brussels has been lacking in outdoor swimming facilities. Given this situation, since 2015 the Pool is cool collective has advocated the reintroduction of open-air swimming in Brussels. In 2021 they opened FLOW, a temporary project that represents the first new outdoor public pool built in the city in forty years

The project was built on a triangular site next to the canal embankment and the Pierre Marchant Bridge in a no man's land that none of the various city authorities—from the road administration to the port and the environmental agency—identified as falling under their purview. The space is in a neighbourhood under transformation, in a former industrial area with an enormous potential, which, in coming years, will be turned into a mixed residential and commercial area along the canal. It is a unique piece of land that can be accessed from different heights, either from the ground or from the adjacent bridge that has been closed to vehicle traffic for years. The site also includes a pedestrian and bicycle path, a public space used for gathering and enjoying the views over the city.

FLOW
Brussels Belgium
Finalist

Authors

Pool is cool
Decoratelier Jozef Wouters

2021
Collaborators Paul Steinbrück, Mathias Claes, Jozef Wouters, Menno Vandevelde
Surface area 500 m²

Aim of the intervention

Pool is cool, together with the studio Decoratelier Josef Wouters, set out to create the FLOW project as a prototype and a model for more permanent solutions, with the aim of convincing the authorities to invest in the creation of more water-based recreational spaces for the citizens of Brussels. FLOW addresses the urgent need for outdoor swimming spaces in the city and offers a safe place to cool off in the summer in a place where high temperatures are expected to become more frequent.

Decoratelier Jozef Wouters, with offices near the pool site, proposed this project as a participatory effort that would offer training and temporary work for more than fifty young people from the neighbourhood, in an area with serious unemployment problems. Young people not only contributed their work, but also their opinions in debates about access to public space, making the project a point for young people to come together to discuss the needs of the community's residents and Brussels' citizens.

Description

The design is based on a modular system relying on reused metal frames and reclaimed or sustainable wood. The facilities include a 17 × 7-metre outdoor swimming pool, shallow enough to be suitable for children, changing rooms and showers. Terraces surrounding the pool on different levels allow visitors to relax without invading the swimmers' privacy. Additionally, the roofs can also serve as platforms or bleachers for cultural activities, and the decorative elements created by local artists give the space the feeling of being part of a water-filled dream.

In keeping with the social purpose of the project, the structure was designed to be built by many hands: a few identical wooden pieces are repeated so that their manufacture and use can be easily learned and passed on by inexperienced builders while also allowing for their disassembly and reuse in the future.

Assessment

The pool was a response to the challenge of creating a place rooted in a fragile social context that would serve as a magnet for the entire region as the only public outdoor pool. To that end, FLOW hosts cultural programming and family activities (swimming lessons, sessions for women) in a radically inclusive leisure space in a very diverse Brussels neighbourhood. For questions of development and management, Pool is cool joined forces with organisations from different fields: architecture, social work, communication and culture. Local youth were employed to handle the pool's everyday operations to create a feeling of shared responsibility and help the project become rooted in the neighbourhood.

During its first summer, FLOW's reception far exceeded expectations in serving as an inclusive public space shared by different audiences of all ages. People not only showed up to swim and splash, but also to attend fitness classes, films, concerts, debates and performances, or simply to read a book in the sun.

A secondary objective, which was also successfully achieved, was to stoke a public debate on the need to introduce outdoor swimming areas in the city. The project earned a very positive reception in the press and among the administration, it highlighted the need to build more public places for swimming, and it demonstrated the initiative's potential to reduce social inequalities and reinforce the social fabric in an urban environment.

Pool is cool also offers a solution to a problem that is increasingly present in cities: the need to handle high temperatures in summer and find solutions that are equitable and accessible to all citizens, especially those with more complex financial and housing situations.
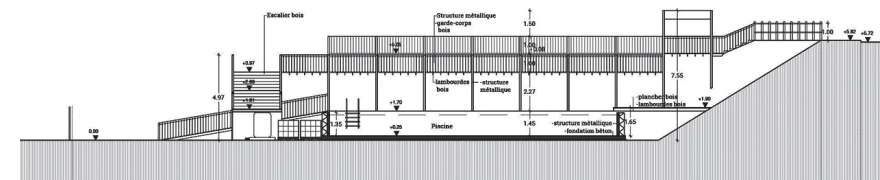
Longitudinal section
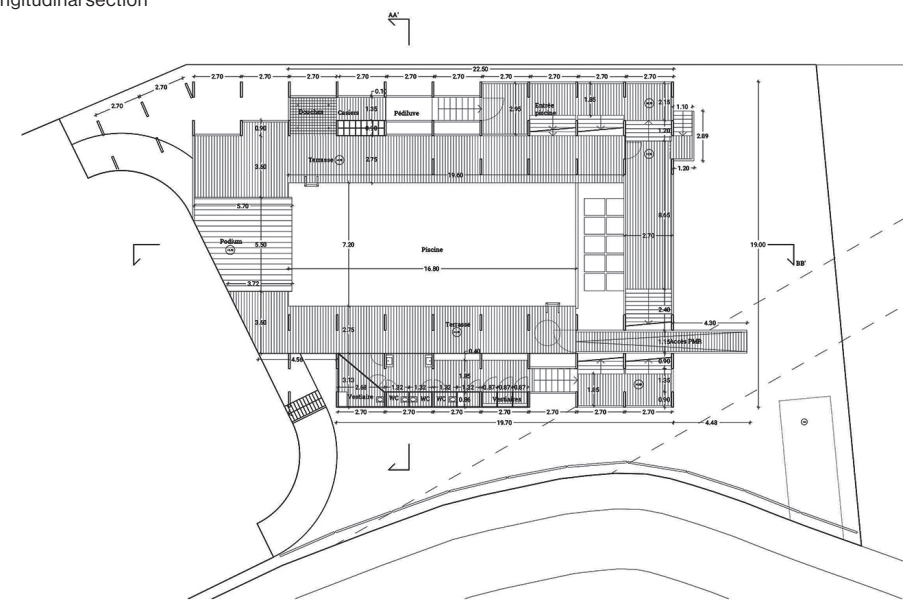
Floor plan +1

Pool is cool
Decoratelier Jozef Wouters

Previous state

The project takes its name from the building that previously stood on the two-hectare site: the *Sporta pils* (sports hall). Built in 1970, the sports hall housed various activities over the years, including a shopping centre on the first floor. The building was demolished in 2008, leaving the land open for future urban plans that were never carried out. Nature took over the enormous empty space.

From the demolition until 2020, the plot was closed to Riga's residents but was often occupied by drug users or by groups of drinking teenagers, who would hide among the trees and bushes that had grown up on the plot. Additionally, the lot was used as a dumpsite, where people disposed of all kinds of rubbish, from dog faeces to broken televisions.

Gardens of Sporta pils
Riga Latvia
Finalist

Author and developer
Artilērijas dārzi

2021
Surface area 20,000 m²

34

Aim of the intervention

The project to turn a deteriorated site into a lush garden aimed to demonstrate that all citizens have the right and the possibility to improve their environment and how some actions can generate collective wellbeing. The idea was not just to install a group of planters, but to build community in a neighbourhood where people had scant ties to one another, despite living in close proximity. The objective of the project was to create a sense of belonging and a place that could serve as a platform for social transformation—a place that would promote a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle founded on care and commitment among citizens. The Sporta pils community garden is the first urban gardening project in Riga, and it has served as a model for new types of urban landscapes and the activation of a more conscious, outgoing and creative citizenry. The project began on the initiative of one neighbourhood resident but was ultimately made possible by more than 200 people. Its future success or failure still depends on continued participation and commitment from the community.

Description

The initiative began at a meeting held in September 2020, attended by more than 100 people. Over the following two weekends, more than 200 volunteers and local business owners cleaned and cleared the plot. A public education programme on sustainable gardening then began, coordinated over the internet, to raise €6,000 for water and electricity installations through a crowdfunding effort. The project was so successful that it raised €15,000 and garnered support from residents and the city council.

The materials for the planters (pallets and their straps) and the soil were donated by local companies. The planters were arranged in such a way so as to leave an open meadow for public use and a recreational area in the centre. The members of the community now tend to the 140 planters, and each member has a small plot of 12.5 square meters where they can install three to eight raised planters, pots and garden furniture. In total, more than 650 planters occupy the site, including shared areas that are cared for by the community.

Assessment

This project has set a new precedent in Latvia, showing that a garden can become a platform for promoting open community living, tolerance and solidarity. Moreover, the garden was envisioned as a place for mutual support between the community members who share in its care, thus strengthening ties and offering a solution to the problem of isolation affecting some people in the neighbourhood. The Riga City Council has now recognised the social and collective importance of Sporta pils gardens. Although the council was not the originator of the intervention, it now supports the project and has invited people to think of new ways to promote urban gardens among the city's residents. Thus, this initiative and the community it has formed have fuelled a knowledge exchange with other similar projects aimed at revitalising other neighbourhoods in Riga. The Gardens of Sporta pils have earned well-deserved notoriety and currently receive more than 4,000 visitors every summer.

The community that has grown up around this project, entirely self-managed, has proven its strength by acting as an irreplaceable support system during the pandemic and the current war in Ukraine. Despite this complex situation, the Sporta pils community continues to care for the garden, while collecting donations for Ukrainians and welcoming those seeking refuge in Riga.

Plan of the intervention
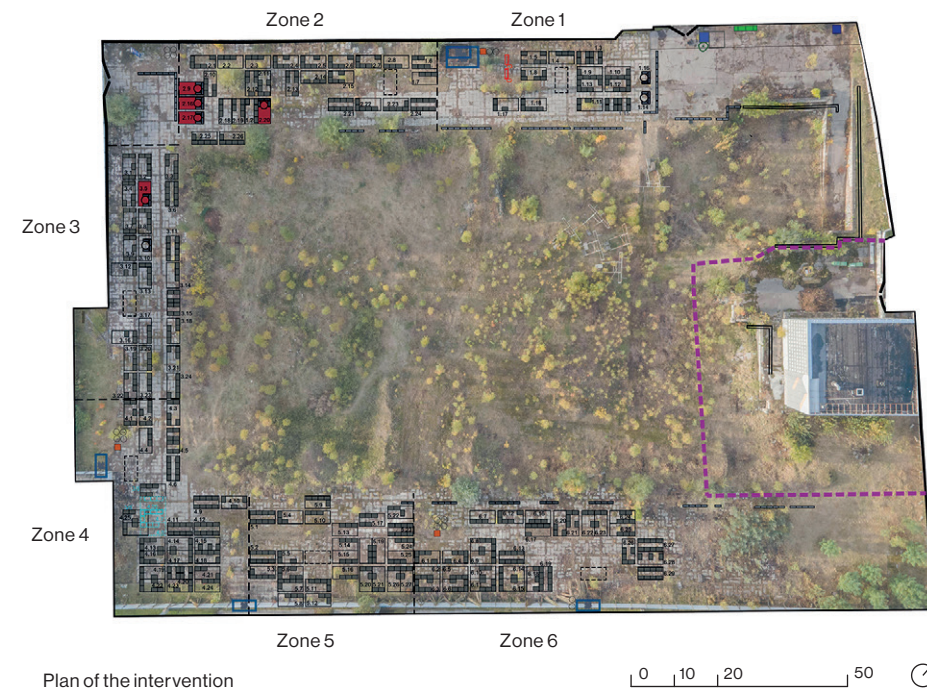
Lund, located in the province of Skåne, is one of the oldest cities in Sweden. The presence of the University of Lund, the largest university in Scandinavia, and the Ideon Science Park has earned it the nickname 'The City of Ideas' and a position of prominence in contemporary Sweden. However, for decades there has been a limited expansion of the urban fabric. Surrounded by some of the most fertile farmland in the country and thirteen nature reserves, the city's location is exceptional. Now, with the creation of a new science park, Lund is preparing for major urban development on its outskirts over the next thirty years. The Lund Cathedral's board, which owns the land for this new urban development, made the decision to develop it on its own, in keeping with a long-term vision, instead of handing the property over to a developer. With no experience in a project of this kind, the Cathedral created the Råängen programme, which, through a series of commissions to architecture firms, is meant to serve as a space for discussion and debate about how to build this new space in the city.

Hage
Lund Sweden
Finalist

Author
Price & Myers
Brendeland & Kristoffersen
Architects

Developer
Lund Cathedral

2021
Collaborators Geir Brendeland, Olav Kristoffersen, Thomas Skinnemoen /
Structure: Tim Lucas, Ian Shepherd
Surface area 1,600 m²

40

Aim of the intervention

Hage is the first project to be built as part of the Råängen programme. The radical nature of the project comes from the fact that, with Hage, the urbanisation process begins with the creation of public space, as opposed to residential or service buildings as is common practice. The intervention is a public space that organises a section of the city that has not yet been built. Designed to very high-quality standards, the aim was to create a space for all citizens that can serve as a forum for public debates, events and workshops. In the long term, it will constitute a meditative urban space at the heart of a new neighbourhood. Hage is a project open to everyone that attempts to build a new community by starting with its most intangible aspect: the social space.

Description

Designed as an enclosed garden for people to meet, talk, play and exchange ideas, it is bounded on three sides by a simple 2.2-metre-high brick wall. The fourth side is open but protected by a steel 43.2 × 7.2-metre canopy structure that

shelters a long wooden table and two ample benches. The stones that serve as supports for the benches come from a nearby quarry, and the 48,000 bricks in the walls were salvaged from the recently demolished Björnekulla jam factory.

Working with a local construction company Proswede, the London-based structural engineers Price & Myers devised a simple construction system for the canopy using 20,000 rivets. Instead of using standard welds, a more handcrafted


approach was chosen to reflect the collaboration between architects and engineers: simplicity and integrity in the materials. The construction of the pergola was also intended as an echo of the riveted iron roof of Lund Cathedral, thus creating a conceptual and physical thematic connection between the two buildings, separated by a distance of five kilometres.
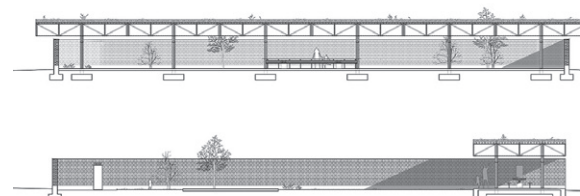

Sections
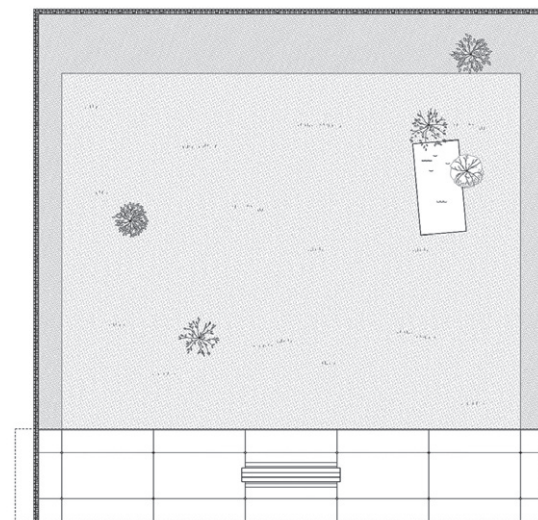
Assessment

Although it is currently a solitary object in the landscape, as a new neighbourhood is progressively built up around it, Hage will become an open space within the urban fabric. The first houses to be built adjacent to it—the Casa Torre and the Casa Esquina by the Catalan firm Flores & Prats Arquitectes—will enter into a direct dialogue with the Hage project. The public spaces of these buildings, which include a community kitchen, will have views over Hage and will offer an ample group of community spaces for all residents and visitors to enjoy. The garden is also expected to grow, and each year the children in the new neighbourhood will be able to celebrate their birthday parties there, creating a memory bank of family rituals with the garden as the setting. Thus, Hage achieves its goal of building a community as the starting point for a new urban space, promoting the creation of connections and collective memory that will lend meaning to the future neighbourhood, setting aside criteria more commonly associated with real estate development.

Until 2025, when the first residents will settle in Råängen, the Lund Cathedral's board will test out how Hage can be used and invite local groups and members of the community to inhabit the space and develop ideas to define its character and future uses. The theme for the programme of activities through 2022 is 'Play and investigate'. Hage received the Lund Architecture Award in 2021.

Plan of the intervention   0 2 5   10
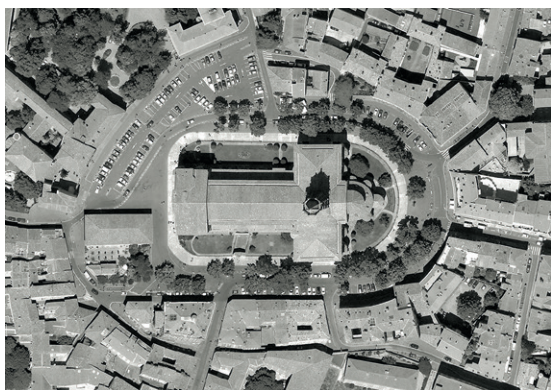
The impressive Basilica of Saint-Sernin, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a masterpiece and one of the largest and best-preserved Romanesque churches in Europe. A good way to fully appreciate a medieval church is to walk around its exterior. Yet, the monument's surroundings were not a welcoming place for visitors or for the residents of the dense historic centre of Toulouse. A car park for 175 cars occupied most of the space, with vehicles, traffic signs and all the associated noises and smells. The garden at the foot of the bell tower was inaccessible, and only 10 per cent of the square was dedicated to green space.

In addition to the basilica, other civic institutions surrounding the site include the Musée Saint-Raymond, the Hôtel du Barry, the Lycée Général Saint-Sernin, the Bourse du Travail and the headquarters of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT). These assets made it even more necessary to intervene in the public sphere to reconnect these buildings and create a pleasant place to visit, work and live.

Saint-Sernin Square
Toulouse France
Finalist

Author
BAU (Joan Busquets, Pieter-Jan Versluys), MDP (Michel Desvigne), LEA, EGIS

Developer
Toulouse Métropole

2020
Surface area 18,260 m²

Aim of the intervention

The objective of the intervention was to improve the environment around this historic complex and stimulate new uses. That translated into the creation of a quiet space in the urban centre, without noise, pollution and congestion. Safety was improved, while citizens gained a new space for leisure and rest.

The redevelopment of the space also offered the opportunity to create new public gardens in a neighbourhood with few green spaces. These new gardens reinforced the existing landscape structures including the gardens of the Lycée Général Saint-Sernin and the nineteenth-century garden around the apse of the basilica, which was enlarged and opened to the public.

Description

The project recovers the pedestrian space and reinforces a unified image of the square. A natural stone pavement offers coherence to the whole, but the layout and finish vary in order to tell the story of the site and to adapt to the different atmospheres. A circular stone fountain has a cooling effect and serves as a meeting point in the city.
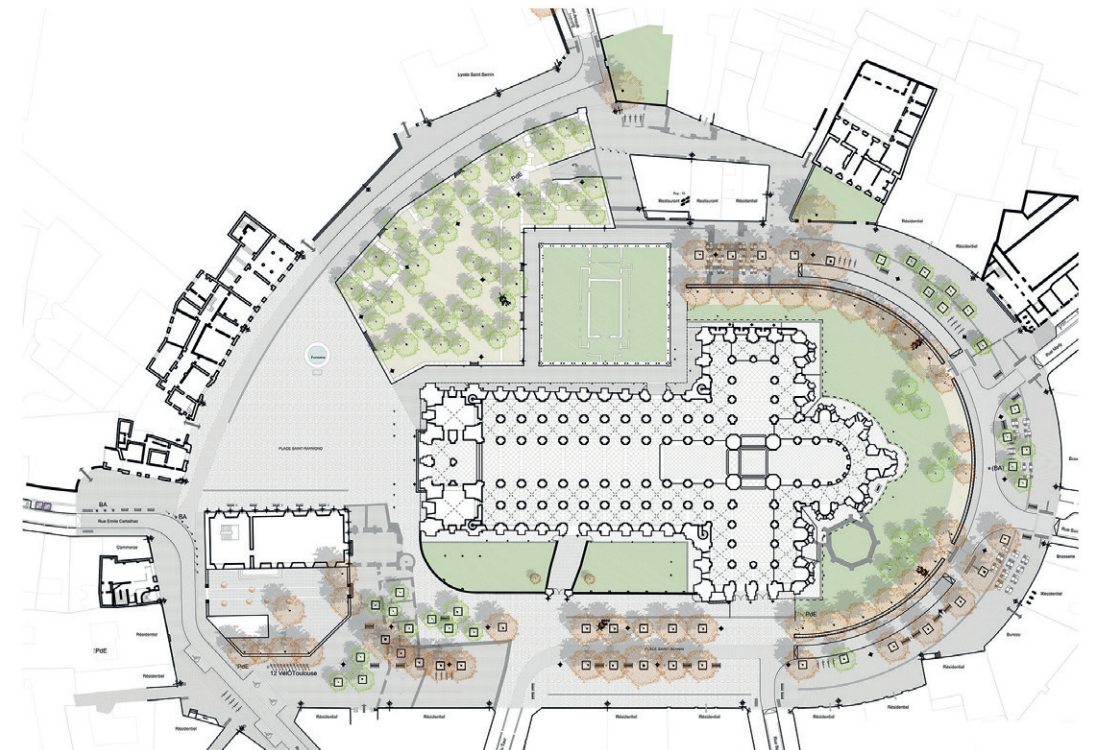
The project has completely transformed the 18,260 m² public space that surrounds the basilica, but at the same time the different characters and atmospheres from the square's past have been maintained. A raised 'garden' occupies the site of the former Palais Abbatial, and the newly planted trees recreate the missing third facade of the basilica's basement. The gravel surface can be used for informal games of pétanque in the shade

of the trees, and the nineteenth-century garden that surrounds the apse has been expanded, redesigned and opened to the public to turn it into a quiet public garden for residents' use.

Assessment

The new Saint-Sernin Square in Toulouse recaptures the prominence of this unique public space, with great heritage value, in the historic centre of the city. The elimination of vehicle traffic and the recovery of trees and gardens to organise the new public space offers an important example of creating less polluted urban spaces that can contribute to mitigating the effects of climate change and improving urban quality of life. Over time, the lush green of the trees will further enhance this new space. The combination of the simplicity of the proposal, the use of the materials characteristic of the surroundings, and the recognition of the exceptional heritage value of the site make this a unique project that has succeeded in reactivating a space that was once taken over by vehicles, recovering it for use by the city's residents.

Plan of the intervention

Selected works

Exhibition of the 2022 Prize at the CCCB

Baden Switzerland
Thermal fountains in Baden
and Ennetbaden

Two natural springs are turned into facilities for recovering a thermal baths area as public space in the city.

Author
Bagni Popolari Association

Developers
City of Baden, local community, Municipality of Ennetbaden

Selected work / 2021 / Surface area 100 m²

54

Brussels Belgium
Gare Maritime

Authors
Jan de Moffarts, OMGEVING, Sweco | Boydens Engineering, NEY & Partners, Bureau Bouwtechnieck, Neutelings Riedijk Architects

This restoration of the maritime station reopens it to the public with a series of wooden pavilions and multi-use spaces organised as an interior city.

Developer
Nextensa

Selected work / 2020 / Surface area 45,000 m²

55

Bucharest Romania
substandardPLUS

Author
Atelier Ad Hoc Arhitectura

Developer
**Romanian Order
of Architects**

This project is a support facility for homeless people, with mechanisms that will avoid segregation by negotiating between the street and the space of reception and shelter.

Selected work / 2019 /
Surface area 32 m²

56

Esplugues de Llobregat Spain
Cycling and pedestrian connection path

Author
Batlleiroig

Developer
**AMB (Barcelona
Metropolitan Area)**

The new cycling and pedestrian connection, together with a landscape project, rewilds the space around infrastructure and, eliminating a barrier that has been present for the last sixty years, equip a new space for meeting and association.

Selected work / 2018 /
Surface area 8,293 m²

57

Girona Spain
Girona's Shores

A series of projects and initiatives recover, develop, and manage Girona's neglected peri-urban spaces, to transform them into green infrastructure.

Author
Martí Franch Batllori
Developer
Girona City Council

**Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area** 600,000 m²

Ljubljana Slovenia
Kiosk Outsider

A small urban kiosk, designed by Jože Plečnik, is recovered as an appealing space and stimulus for self-organised public programmes, thus demonstrating the power of good architecture and design when bringing together cultural initiatives around them, and becoming part of the collective imaginary.

Author and developer
Outsider Magazine
(Nina & Matevž Granda)

**Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area** 2 m²

Ljubljana Slovenia
Krater

This project, a model for the temporary reuse of an abandoned site of 4,000 m², becomes an urban laboratory for coexistence with nature.

Authors

Prostorož, Trajna, Društvo za permakulturo Slovenije, Agrodivizija, Abandoned Plants Sanctuary, Rok Oblak, John Buscarino

Developers

PiNA – Cultural Education Association, Ministry of Justice

Selected work / 2021 / Surface area 2,000 m²

Łódź Poland
Anna Gardens in the Fuzja development

This project recovers space resulting from the demolition of disused elements of an industrial site in order to favour refurbishment of others of great architectural value.

Author

Medusa Group

Developer

ECHO Investment

Selected work / 2021 / Surface area 3,600 m²

London United Kingdom
Ruskin Square

Authors
muf architecture/art,
J & L Gibbons

Developer
Croydon Gateway
Limited Partnership

This project reflects the challenges and opportunities of public space by integrating programmatic and landscaping needs, as well as showing an ability to serve the social diversity of the place.

**Selected work / 2018 /
Surface area** 4,250 m²

62

Lviv Ukraine
Reconstruction of Koliivshchyny Square

Authors
Urban Ideas, RUTHENIA

Developer
Department of Historic
Environment Protection
of Lviv City Council

The restoration of this square has produced both a space for memory and an everyday meeting place.

**Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area** 650 m²

63

Olot Spain
Exchanging Rooms: Can Sau, Conill and Carme Squares

This project brings new life to the urban fabric by means of an intervention that creates a civic space of a playful nature, with a touch of theatre.

Author
unparelld'arquitectes

Developers
**Olot City Council,
L'Artiga Coop,
Olot School of Art**

**Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area** 650 m²

Paris France
Parc Clichy-Batignolles – Martin Luther King

A new park in a neighbourhood that has grown around an old railway station platform brings new life to the public sphere through an exemplary deployment of several ecosystems, the use of water, and a range of facilities for activities and sports.

Author
Osty et associés

Developer
**Department of Green
Spaces and the
Environment of the City
of Paris**

**Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area** 100,000 m²

Paris France
University of Law Paris I,
Modernisation of the Lourcine barracks

The new area shows the potential of any quality
public space project for providing a meeting place
by constructing a new urban landscape.

Authors
**ChartierDalix,
D&H Paysages**

Developer
Epaurif

**Selected work / 2019 /
Surface area** 9,710 m²

66

Rybnik Poland
Local Activity Centre

This space, which activates and gives visibility to
the surrounding community consisting mostly of
single-family homes, provides support for many
activities and also equips a zone that is eligible for
community takeover.

Author
**Marlena Wolnik –
MWArchitekci**

Developer
Rybnik City Council

**Selected work / 2019 /
Surface area** 450 m²

67

Sallent de Llobregat Spain
Renaturalisation of Llobregat River through Sallent

Authors

**Álvaro Alcázar del Águila,
Roser Garcia Llidó,
Eduard Llargués Asensio,
Sergio Sangalli Borrego,
Roger Sauquet Llonch**

Developer

**Sallent de Llobregat
City Council**

Rewilding an industrial zone in Sallent recovers the river and its relationship with the town.

Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area 6,550 m²

68

Shkodër Albania
Albanian Carpet

This project restores for pedestrians the water-front of Lake Shkodra, in the first phase of an ambitious plan for rewilding and encouraging new appreciation of this lakeshore area.

Author

**Casanova + Hernandez
Architects**

Developer

Albanian Development Fund

Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area 20,000 m²

69

Tallinn Estonia
Fahle Gallery Street

The project of recovery of a space between factories as a new covered passageway for breathing new life into an abandoned industrial zone includes interior vegetation to achieve an urban microclimate that welcomes citizens.

Author
Kino Maastikuarhitektid

Developer
Fausto Capital

Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area 2,775 m²

70

Tilburg The Netherlands
Spoorpark

Authors
KruitKok landschapsarchitecten, Blom&Moors, Timmermans Architecture

Developers
Spoorpark Foundation including the nine citizens' initiators, Municipality of Tilburg

A new urban park resulting from interaction between the community of Tilburg and a multi-disciplinary team becomes an example of civic participation in defining a large-scale public space.

Selected work / 2019 /
Surface area 94,000 m²

71

Warsaw Poland
Bakalarska Marketplace

This project allows more than 500 small business-people of over twenty nationalities to consolidate their activity and avert their disappearance by means of a design that enhances spatial organisation and strengthens the area's character as a marketplace.

Author
Aleksandra Wasilkowska

Developer
Spółka Nasz Rynek

Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area 20,688 m²

72

Zurich Switzerland
WolkenWerk

Author
mavo Landschaften

Developers
Leutschenbach AG,
Nyffenegger Immobilien AG

This project, a model for the temporary reuse of an abandoned site of 4,000 m², becomes an urban laboratory for coexistence with nature.

Selected work / 2021 /
Surface area 18,000 m²

73

Teresa Galí-Izard
Zurich Switzerland

Eleni Myrivili
Athens Greece

Paloma Strelitz
London United Kingdom

Hans Ibelings
Rotterdam The Netherlands

Andreas Ruby
Berlin Germany

Špela Videčnik
Ljubljana Slovenia

Jury reflections
on public space

Deliberation of the Jury at the CCCB

In Europe, there's probably not much left to be constructed, but maybe there's a lot to be deconstructed or reconstructed in a different way. Public space, as we've known it so far, still does not give us the quality of life we want. It hasn't reached its full potential. It's time to think about what's different. In this sense, the winning project in this year's award is a good example. Apart from future environmental conditions, this work responds to a clearly hybrid infrastructural option of historical restoration and environmental concerns. It is climatic inventiveness, and part of a greater system that gives it the dimension and ambition that make it worthy of the prize.

As I see it, now is a good time to reconsider another dimension of public space, building on the experience of the last few decades, and introduce the idea of a system, network or infrastructure as well as the transitory vertical dimension of the sun/atmosphere. Only if they are thought of like this will these spaces be able to respond effectively to the environmental conditions the future holds. And only in this way will we be able to respond coherently to heavy storms, floods and raging torrents of water, and to the high temperatures that affect all the living beings with which we share these spaces.

Climate
In this year's award of the European Prize for Urban Public Space, we wanted to contrast the projects presented against a Gaussen diagram which shows monthly temperatures and rainfall, thus making it possible to visualise the climate patterns of the given locations throughout the year. The diagram presents precipitation values as double average temperature values. In this way, when the lines

cross, temperature and consequently evapotranspiration is much higher than precipitation. Under these conditions, it is considered to be a period of drought. At such times, plants limit their photosynthesis processes as they close their stomata so as not to lose water from their tissues, and people also probably change their habits, as they protect themselves from direct sunlight and cut down on their vital activity.

What are the implications of this for the design and planning of public space? Are public spaces in rainy or cold climates different from those in warm or windy climates? Do they respond to climate extremes or do their design patterns reflect other parameters? Are these spaces able to create microclimates and atmospheric conditions, or to capture and release heat? Could public space be described as a climatic condition?

Geology
It would also have been interesting to have a geological map to provide information on the geomorphological conditions where each public space is located. The climate and geological features anchor the interventions in their locations. Spaces that are planned and celebrated are not constructed in a void, but rather are part of a larger system that includes the surface and the atmosphere where vertical and horizontal flows and exchanges (rainfall, evaporation, winds, radiations) take place. Are the often invisible and ignored subterranean characteristics of urban public space relevant? Knowing about the geological conditions means being aware of the underground hydrology, the capacity of soils to accumulate water and support infrastructure and living structures, and also their capacity for transmitting often polluting particles from aquifers that occupy

areas greater than that of the city itself. In order to properly understand the projects that are presented, it is necessary to appreciate them in a wider context, which includes the geographical and ecological context.

Society, culture, and history
It is essential to know about the social, cultural and historical contexts if public space projects are to be adequately understood. This is especially true in Europe, where projects cannot be seen in isolation from the circumstances of the cities that are found in different countries. The construction of public space is not a linear, constant or equidistant process, as each project is the result of its own circumstances and is evaluated at the moment of its conception. It is interesting to question whether the European Prize for Urban Public Space is itself a contradiction, as there is a Central Europe, an Eastern Europe and a Southern Europe, each with its particular cultural, historical and economic circumstances. Moreover, there are major differences between cities: some are growing old, with emptying neighbourhoods; others are under pressure from tourism; and still others are planning growth or densification, and all of them have been subject to different circumstances throughout their history.

Entrants often don't frame their intervention in this context, and this is why it is crucial that the juries represent all voices and contexts in their evaluation. The context is the path that leads to the final state of public space, which is as relevant as the project itself.

Temporality
We often assess public space through images, without ever having set foot in it, so it is also the task of the jury to imagine the space in circumstances that are not as ideal as those presented. For we all know that in public space there is a time for everything. The space itself probably cannot resolve the tensions and conflicts of the human condition, but it can recognise them. In these spaces there are people who stay overnight, robberies, accidents, lonely people, etcetera. They are also subject to wear and tear, and

undergo maintenance. They're cleaned periodically and depend on a budget that allows them to survive over time. Depending on the intensity of their maintenance, we can see to a greater or lesser extent the traces of their use: accumulations of paper, chewing gum, broken glass, cans and vomit, which are the intrinsic consequence of the way they are used and which is closely linked with the socio-cultural and historical context I have mentioned.

Should public space be an entity that, in itself, can accommodate and respond to any of the circumstances described? Should it be an infrastructure that accommodates innumerable situations of all kinds? Should it be designed at all?

System
Can public space have a more systemic role that understands its function as infrastructure in the city as a whole? In some cities, for example, certain public spaces are configured as such as a result of adaptation of disused infrastructure (removal of walls and citadels) or of the opening up and expansion of excessively dense urban fabric. If the aim is to rethink public space as a space that generates controlled microclimatic conditions today, what criteria should be adopted? It is evident that we have reasons for thinking about public spaces not as isolated, independent units, but as wholly interconnected. They can't always fulfil all functions, but it's clear that a systemic approach allowing us to see the performative potential of these spaces at a higher level than what we presently manage would make a lot of sense. Can we think about public space more metabolically in all its complexity? We probably can. Can we adapt it to new ways of living? Do cities really need to accommodate new ways of living? What are the extremes, the highs and the lows?

My conclusion is that it is always necessary to look further, even if no one asks. We need to look further up and further down because every one of our actions on this planet is inserted into a greater pre-existing system, and the more we keep it in mind, the more intelligent, the more interconnected and the more powerful our interventions will be.

Teresa Galí-Izard

On a map in an atlas it is often difficult to find the name of a hamlet. But it can be even harder to see the wide-spaced big letters spelling the name of a region. Similarly, it may require careful attention to appreciate small changes in how people utilise public spaces, but even more effort to see the bigger transformations.

Despite all attempts to analyse and understand what people are doing in public spaces, it remains largely inscrutable what is going on at any moment in one particular place, let alone at every moment in every street, square and park of a whole city. The city is a complex human ecosystem, which, as Egyptian Hassan Fathy put it in 1974 during an architectural conference in Persepolis, Iran, 'is not the stone and bricks of which its buildings are made. It is a million of acts that go into its making and the millions of acts that go on within it at every moment.'[1] And of those acts, many play out in public space.

In the same year that Fathy formulated this view, Georges Perec made a fascinating attempt to describe in detail what a fraction of those millions of fleeting acts could entail, by attentively noting what was taking place in and around Place Saint-Sulpice in Paris during three consecutive days in October 1974.

His *Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien*, translated into English as *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, sums up things that are happening in public space which would otherwise go unnoticed, such as people walking by, the passengers in every passing bus, the dogs that are being walked, pigeons taking flight, cars driving by and, also, Paul Virilio on his way to a cinema.[2] Aside from this exceptional architect/philosopher cameo, Perec deliberately refrained from writing anything about what the Place Saint-Sulpice

and Paris are famous for. Instead he focused on everyday life, and tried to capture what he would later call the 'infra-ordinary', all the things that are so normal that they normally fail to register. If Perec was alive today and repeated his attempt to exhaust the Place Saint-Sulpice, I wonder what he might have to say about mobile phones.

Smartphones have become a nearly indispensable part of today's transactional life, and it is an almost uncontested truism that 'everyone is always staring at their screens'. Yet the reality is more nuanced. Yes, around 90 per cent of Europeans have a mobile phone, and the average time people spend on them is somewhere between two and four hours per day (depending on the survey one wishes to rely on). And yes, there are certainly instances where a lot of people are indeed looking at their phone, such as in the bus, train or metro, or in a doctor's waiting room. But, strikingly, not so much in urban public space. The images of the finalists and the winner of the last edition of the European Prize for Urban Public Space show only a few people with a phone in their hand, and even less who are actually looking at it.

Take for instance this edition's winner: OKRA's Catharijnesingel in Utrecht. Almost all of the images submitted for this project show multiple people doing something in public space, but usually without phones. In the photos of FLOW, a project by Jozef Wouters and Pool is cool, the only outdoor public swimming pool in Brussels is devoid of phones—which is unsurprising in this wet context, although there are some people reading paper books, which aren't water-resistant either. The Hage courtyard in Lund by Brendeland & Kristoffersen: even on the pictures with lots of people there are no phones. The Garden of Sporta Pils in Riga, an initiative of Artilērijas dārzi: the same.

In the images of the spaces around the Basilica of Saint Sernin in Toulouse, designed by Joan Busquets and Pieter-Jan Versluys of BAU and Michel Desvigne, even the high school students during a break appear more interested in the people they are with than their phones.

Obviously, these pictures are just a snapshot of fractions of seconds in the lives of a very small number of public spaces, yet the near absence of phones, and of screens, is remarkable. It can be interpreted as a reassuring refutation of the easy assumption that everyone is spending (or wasting) most of their lives solipsistically navigating social media. Yet the striking absence of phones in these images of people in public spaces highlights that not everything that is important is always prominently present. Smartphones are undeniably game-changers in how humans interact and navigate a constantly evolving and expanding public domain. But in public space these game-changing effects are largely hidden, rendered invisible in an infra-ordinary part of the spectrum.

Europeans spend on average 10 to 15 per cent of a day on their smartphones. A 2019 survey by Danish roof window and skylight company Velux revealed that overall Europeans (and North Americans) spend 90 per cent of their lives indoors. On a predominantly urban continent like Europe, the remaining 10 per cent of time must be mostly spent in urban public space. Based on the near absence of phones in the photos of public spaces, it seems that the 10 to 15 per cent of screen time does not overlap a lot with the 10 per cent of time spent outdoors.

In presentations of its survey Velux mentions that the quality of indoor air is five times worse than that of fresh air, which though

perhaps a sweeping generalisation brings us to the large letters on the map, which spell out 'global warming', a phenomenon that Timothy Morton has defined as a 'hyperobject', which is too large to see in its entirety but manifests itself in a multitude of aspects, such as the consecutive scorching heatwaves which all European organisms, including humans, had to endure in the summer of 2022. If the infra-ordinary is too small to see, the hyperobject of climate change is situated in the ultra-ordinary, hidden behind the ever-changing weather.

The 2022 heatwaves in Europe were the umpteenth wake-up call to acknowledge the undeniable urgency to do something about the equally undeniable planetary climate crisis. One way to limit excessive heat accumulation in cities would be to increase the city's albedo by painting everything white. Another and likely more popular approach with a comparable but lesser effect, and probably nicer-looking results, would be the radical 'greening' of the city, by adding as much vegetation as possible, particularly trees for shade, and making as many permeable surfaces as possible.

This would constitute a major shift in Europe from the modern concept of public space, which emerged during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, even if the term wasn't used until the late twentieth century. When the European Prize for Urban Public Space was inaugurated in 2000, this modern idea of public space, as a site for encounter between humans, still had currency.

The idea of modern public space can be traced back to, for instance, the transformation of Paris in the nineteenth century. In her impressive book *Dividing Paris: Urban Renewal and Social Inequality, 1852–1870*, Esther da

Costa Meyer describes how, during the years that Baron Haussmann was in charge in Paris, the construction of parks, green squares and tree-lined boulevards was conceptualised as a large-scale urban infrastructure, which included not only vegetation but also ponds, waterfalls and fountains, and a variety of street furniture such as benches, lamp-posts, omnibus-stop signs, fences and kiosks.[3]

An important purpose of the then new urban spaces was enabling urban leisure and social interaction in response to the rise of urban working and middle classes, even if it did not mean that they were always indiscriminately inviting to everyone (which is hinted at in da Costa Meyer's subtitle). The presence of trees, shrubs, plants, flowers, ponds, fountains and waterfalls in these novel urban spaces was in essence a form of vegetal and hydrological decoration, to create pleasant 'natural' backdrops for the millions of social acts that can take place in them at any moment.

The majority of public spaces that have been submitted since 2000 to the European Prize for Urban Public Space are still descendants of similar ways of thinking. Even if ecological themes have moved increasingly to the forefront, most of the water and vegetation is added because it is deemed nice, but not necessary. New urban spaces are unavoidably going to be fundamentally different. They are no longer first and foremost social spaces, but need to become sites of a response to rising temperatures. Streets and squares and parks are key to keeping the city cool enough to remain liveable, while bearing in mind that it is a misconception to believe that cities can 'fight' climate change in any way. (It is the same twisted thinking as saying that you can battle

cancer by being brave and optimistic.) At most, we can hope for the best and prepare for the worst. Hoping for the best means that public space can continue to function as a social space. Preparing for the worst means a total 'ecologisation' of the urban environment, to make it part of an infra-structure that helps to limit the impact of climate change as much as possible.

Vegetation and water are no longer just design tools to furnish public spaces for humans. They are essentials to ensure that urban spaces won't exacerbate planetary warming. The heatwaves that are part and parcel of planetary warming have shown that if public spaces do not offer shade, they cannot exist as sites of social interaction, simply because they get too hot. This new reality is latently present in many of the more recent submissions for this public space prize, and obviously there is a strong awareness about climate change among designers. Although it is not yet the prevailing trend, it is safe to predict that in the coming years, in more and more public spaces, the social dimension will be subordinated to climatic and ecological priorities.

With this, a new social dimension may arise, an ecologically driven interspecies form of sociality. Public space has the potential to become—to use a term of Andrés Jaque—a 'more-than-human' urban space, infused with a new, post-human democratic ethos: as a place for all organisms.

1   Laleh Bakhtiar (ed.), *Towards a Quality of Life: The Role of Industrialization in the Architecture and Urban Planning of Developing Countries: Report of the Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Architects, Persepolis, Iran, 1974* (Tehran: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 1976), 305.

2   Georges Perec, 'Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien', *Cause commune*, no. 1 (1975): 59–108.

3   Esther da Costa Meyer, *Dividing Paris: Urban Renewal and Social Inequality, 1852–1870* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).

The future of cities and specifically their ability to build resilience to climate change—in sustainable and equitable ways—is critical to me and my work.

The overwhelming majority of cities worldwide are already facing extreme climate-related events. But there are solutions: design applications, materials and technologies that can help cities adapt. However, most efficient and effective, indeed critical, for climate-proofing are healthy urban ecosystems. And yet, despite the proven benefits that nature-positive cities have for their city dwellers (regarding their health, their sanity and wellbeing, their economy and security), and even though Nature-based Solutions (NbS) are significantly cheaper than traditional 'grey' urban infrastructure, less than 0.3 per cent of current spending on urban infra-structure is going to NbS.[1]

Especially when it comes to rising temperatures and heatwaves, urban nature is the most resource-efficient way to save lives.

Extreme heat is the deadliest of all extreme weather phenomena. But it is overlooked because heat does not come with the drama of roofs sent flying and streets turned into rivers. Heat destroys silently. Until very recently there's been little awareness of the dangers that come with rising heat. We are slowly getting the message, as Europe, which is heating up twice as fast as the other continents, keeps facing extreme weather events, from devastating floods to deadly heat-waves.[2] In a recent survey of the EU Mission for Adaptation to Climate Change, over 300 European regions and communities responded that their first concern regarding the physical impacts of climate change is rising heat and heatwaves. To date we've done little to prepare our cities for a very hot present and an even hotter future.

And there is little escape from extreme heat. With the world heating up by only 1.3°C from pre-industrial times, we are already dealing with temperatures that the human body is *not made for and cannot adapt to*, temperatures our modern cities and most of our infrastructure are not made for. Urban surfaces and structures absorb and store heat; cars and air conditioners add even more. This is a deadly mix, creating what we call the 'urban heat island effect'.

The list of the health effects of heatwaves is long and includes significant mental health problems. Heat can disrupt sleep and lead to fatigue, which increases workplace accidents and lowers productivity. Heat empties out our public spaces as people hide indoors, killing the vibrancy of our urban summers, the community, creativity and commerce. Heatwaves also increase violence in communities and lower the ability of children to learn. And, of course, not all are impacted equally. Populations most in danger include the poor, the energy poor and housing poor, people with pre-existing conditions, young children, pregnant women, people over 60, and those with jobs involving physical activity.

Biodiversity and our food systems are also vulnerable to rising heat. Heatwaves have been baking farmers' crops, reducing yields and inhibiting pollination. Around the world farm workers start working at daybreak or harvest in the middle of the night.

We are clearly not going to be able to air-condition our way out of this. We need to cool our cities fast, and that involves a real paradigm shift in the way we design and build our public spaces with this as our primary aim.

It felt very opportune when I was asked to join the jury for the CCCB's European Prize

for Urban Public Space. As a jury member I was able to immerse myself in and assess the current state of the art and existing trends in the use of urban public space all over Europe. I could also contribute through the award in making a statement about the types of public space the future of Europe needs and deserves.

It was an incredible journey, a deep dive into Europe's past, present and future in the most urban of settings: the public space! A total of 324 places: squares, streets and parks, ports and beaches, structures that provide access to wetlands and their wildlife, monuments and museums, public art and community spaces, urban gardens and remediated industrial landscapes. The jury met in June, and we debated passionately over our choices, bringing to the table different views, values, politics, beliefs and aesthetics. In building the shortlist we argued about democracy and transparency, accessibility and social equity; about sustainable water management, surface permeability and tree canopy, migration and indigeneity, connectivity and biodiversity. All are at stake in the public space. It was just an award, but it felt like we were deciding the future of Europe.

The process worked. I felt proud of our selection of the five finalists. I found it an inspiring, balanced and well-thought-through statement. The finalists included: a new European square typology with undomesticated nature at its centre surrounded by a public space designed and created by a grassroots initiative in Riga, Latvia; a slow space that allows for community time and imagination to settle, resisting fast-track development in Lund, Sweden; a long-awaited public swimming pool in Brussels, Belgium, built by local youth; and, a public space carefully designed with trees, reclaiming from cars the surroundings of the old Cathedral in Toulouse, France. And finally, the winner: the restoration of a historic canal in Utrecht, Netherlands. The Catharijnesingel, after popular demand, removed all vehicular traffic and a large motorway, bringing back water to rewild a new public space for the city, accessible to all.

This prize for me represents a much-needed climate design shift towards water and verdant shade that activates urban space. Future European urban public spaces will have to be cool and cooling! We are still designing according to the ideals of a carbon modernity— that is, the myth of unlimited resources and the extensive use of fossil fuels for all urban functions. We must reject designs of mineralised dry spaces, drenched by the sun, uninviting and soon uninhabitable. The future of public space design must radically introduce nature, trees and water into our cityscapes.

These should be green public spaces, created with or seriously engaging local communities, to ensure ownership, stewardship and sustainability. They should be green spaces that provide mental and physical health, fun and the possibility of interactions. They are critical for our Climate Era because they are also conducive to community creation and social cohesion, absolutely crucial characteristics when building resilience to (compounding) crises.

In conclusion, nature-based solutions together with community engagement are the most crucial, resource-efficient and sustainable solutions when it comes to building resilient, vibrant and future-proof cities. This I believe should be a strong new mandate for the European Prize for Urban Public Space in our new Climate Era.

1   https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/01/climate-change-cities-nature-based-solutions-wef23/ (accessed 26 January 2023).

2   https://public.wmo.int/en/media/press-release/temperatures-europe-increase-more-twice-global-average (accessed 27 January 2023).

It is curious that often you understand the value of something precisely when you realise that you could also lose it. Take a loved one, the average temperature of the planet—or public space. It's tempting to think of public space as a universal given of the city, especially the European city, which loves to see itself to be its mother. But public space is an endangered species that is contested by all kinds of forces.

There is the real estate economy that does not know what to do with public space because you can't rent or sell it. Hence it has to commercialise it to give it a purpose. It makes you understand that one of the defining aspects of public space is to provide space without a purpose so that we can appropriate it for all kinds of transient activities. But this can only happen as long as no one in particular owns it, and that makes public space a threat to capitalism.

There is the digital economy that tries to make us believe that we need social media in order to encounter other people, make friends and have meaningful social interaction—as if public space hadn't been doing that since time immemorial. Public space has always been the genuine social medium of our urban condition, without however crippling our psychology through algorithmically dosed hormone rewards designed to make us addicted to using the digital infrastructure of the 'metaverse', sponsoring its primary function as the global advertising economy with our attention and our privacy as the currency.

Probably one of the most sobering ways to rediscover the value of public space is to treat yourself to leaving your smartphone at home one day and roaming the world hands-free for a change. Pick a day when you feel good, because digital cold turkey may trigger the unsettling epiphany of a world that you largely ignored because you had your eyes on the screen. Sitting in the metro with empty hands, you actually become aware of the person sitting next to you and may end up talking to them. Biding your time at the bus station, you remember what you used to do as a child on the way to school—looking up at the sky to watch the clouds transforming. And with nothing to distract you on the bus ride, you find yourself gazing through the windows, surprised to see an interesting neighbourhood in your city that you have never noticed before. Perhaps each time we kill time, we also kill space, if George Berkeley was right with his famous dictum *esse est percipi*, to be is to be perceived. To perceive public space harbours the unique potential of making us aware of ourselves and the people around us, because in public space we can sense that as individuals we are part of a collective and that there is such a thing as society, and that we can engage with one another through democratic discourse. For even if the latter is formally enacted in political institutions, it is clearly born in the space we share like the oxygen we breathe.

Feasting on the unique qualities of public space may turn out increasingly uncertain, however, as climate change is challenging its very usability. All across Europe, and not only in the south, summers are tending to be longer, drier and hotter. For centuries public spaces in European cities have been mostly materialised in ground covers of natural stone with few to no trees for shade. Exposed to the sun without protection, they tend to collect the energy of the sun and radiate it back into the air that surrounds us. Even today, as the majority of entries of the last cycle of this prize confirm, public space in Europe is still predominantly conceived as a mineral

environment. With temperatures rising up to 35°C and sometimes 40°C during summer months in many European cities, we need to reconceptualise the material definition and climatic performance of public space to keep temperature and humidity at comfortable levels. From now on a public space can no longer simply be the proverbial marble expanse with occasional benches dotted around. Future public spaces should include, wherever possible, porous ground covers to allow the natural water cycle to occur. It should integrate fountains, ponds, canals and rivers to create microclimates that use the evaporative cooling effect of surface water. And to ensure that outdoor areas do not get overheated and thereby unusable, open spaces need to be generously shaded either by trees or removable textile covers like those already used today to shade streets in Andalusian cities. Climate change will thus not only affect newly built public space, but also, and significantly, necessitate a redesign of our historical public spaces. The entire typological vocabulary of European public space is bound to transform, calling for a new alliance between climate preservation and heritage preservation. The whole logic, materiality and functionality of public space will need to change if we want to continue enjoying outdoor public space.

The mission that lies ahead of us amounts to nothing less than the reinvention of public space in the age of global climate change. It is a mission that could provide the whole of Europe with a common project. Many in the West only realised with the EU's eastward enlargement in the 2000s the highly idiosyncratic culture of public space that Eastern European countries had produced in the decades after the Second World War and continue to produce today. Whether the

EU project can be successful in the long term will also depend on whether we can forge an inclusive identity that embraces, rather than minimises, the cultural differences of its members. And a truly European culture of public space could create an environment of empathy in which public space blossoms again—from an endangered species to a spatial incubator of the socio-ecological transformation that represents the inescapable challenge of the twenty-first century.

Through my work across design, architecture and cities, I've been motivated by how we can promote people's agency to shape positive societal and environmental change—and in doing so create a world more reflective of our needs, dreams and ideas.

One of the UN's key Sustainable Development Goals is to 'make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.' In Europe, where 75 per cent of the population now lives in cities, we face significant challenges—from socio-economic inequalities to the urgency of climate change. In the face of such seemingly intractable challenges, the principle of civic agency can feel out of reach and overwhelming—but it is precisely our cities and communities that hold the huge potential for meaningful progress.

Creating more sustainable and inclusive cities is an overlapping agenda: what's good for the climate and the environment is also positive for people. From reducing the urban heat island effect to equitable urban growth, the development of more sustainable urban space is a doubly productive mission.

The good news from the 2022 European Prize for Urban Public Space is that many of the submissions to this competition already reflect these aims. As a judge of the prize, I was encouraged to see impactful projects being delivered by a broad range of civic actors—from community activists to city governments. From urban gardens to new canals, these examples demonstrate that now is the time for us to take greater agency in responding to our collective urban challenges. Selecting from an array of impressive projects, the following exemplars—the winner and two finalists—are compelling in showing the scope

to shape positive social and environmental change across varied urban contexts and every spatial scale.

City leadership: Developing new green and blue infrastructure
In Utrecht, the transformation of a former ten-lane motorway into the six-kilometre Catharijnesingel canal and urban park represents a paradigm shift in how we can approach public space in the context of climate change. This city-led project promotes public health, civic enjoyment, biodiversity and climate adaptation, and demonstrates an ambitious, integrated approach to sustainable urban placemaking.

In the 1970s a historic canal in this part of Utrecht was partially drained to construct a motorway, a step that invariably aroused civic resistance, with people continuously fighting to preserve the city's waterways and restore the canal. The recently completed transformation is the result of a 2002 referendum in which citizens voted to reinstate the canal, triggering a complex restoration process that was led and has now been fully realised by the city council.

This vital new 'green and blue' infrastructure has been designed by OKRA landscape architects, who reinstated a rewilded canal combining a waterway that encircles the city centre with grasslands, meadows and routes for walking, cycling, sailing and leisure. Through reducing pollution by removing car traffic and making the city greener, better connected for pedestrians and cyclists, and more biodiverse, Utrecht's restoration of the Catharijnesingel responds to twin objectives—positive environmental impact and quality of life. It showcases the effectiveness of sustained 'people power' and

what engaged local government can achieve in making a city more aligned with citizens' aspirations, and in responding to the challenge of urban growth by enhancing environmental quality at a significant scale.

Collective action: Shifting the status quo in public space

Pool is cool is a civic group that advocates for the introduction of outdoor swimming in Brussels—one of Europe's only major cities not to have open-air pools for public use. Since 2016, this non-profit organisation has used research, debate and installations to promote its campaign. Then, in 2021, in collaboration with architect Jozef Wouters, they created FLOW, an outdoor public pool—the first to be built in Brussels in forty years.

FLOW is located by the edge of a canal, in a former industrial area awaiting longer-term development. The project's design is purposefully theatrical, with decks and elevated terraces framing the pool itself as well as views of the city. Children splash, people of all ages and backgrounds swim, and others relax on the terraces or watch film screenings and talks. This pool, which is managed by the community, is a new public space that offers social connection and wellness and becomes a valuable oasis during increasingly hot summers.

FLOW had been conceived as a prototype, planned to last up to five years. The aim is to convince city authorities to invest in permanent outdoor swimming spaces. This approach illustrates the power of temporary interventions, both in demonstrating social need and in building the case for longer-term strategic projects. From local residents to the wider public, press and government, many different stakeholders have been invited to build, run and use this

space. Their approach to public participation means that diverse groups are also engaged in the long-term campaign to introduce outdoor swimming to the city.

There is positive evidence that this project, combined with ongoing advocacy, has been an effective catalyst for achieving permanent change. Plans are now underway for three major outdoor swimming projects in Brussels: a rooftop swimming complex in Anderlecht, a giant open-air swimming pool and public beach alongside the Brussels canal, and a large natural swimming pool in Neerpede. Pool is cool demonstrates how collective action on a focused small-scale project supported by targeted campaigning and coalition-building can shift the status quo, cascading wider interest and generating new permanent opportunities for inclusive public spaces.

Grassroots initiatives: Sustainable growth at every scale

In 2020 Renāte Lagzdiņa initiated a project in her Riga neighbourhood to transform a two-acre derelict urban plot, close to her home, into a new community garden. She shared her idea and gained support through a series of local meetings. Over the course of a few weekends, she and a group of volunteers began to work together to clear the site and lay the groundwork for the future garden. The result is a new green space that combines a perimeter of 150 productive allotments with a central wild meadow to support a range of community and cultural events.

The Gardens of Sporta Pils is Riga's first community gardening project and reflects the power of a committed group of local residents collaborating to create positive change in their

area. Such grassroots initiatives typically present challenges of limited resources—this team managed to raise €15,000 through a crowdfunding campaign, but the project also shows that deep financial resources are not the only available route to developing new public spaces.

Through a shared vision, meaningful local engagement and follow-up community guardianship, this urban garden shows the power of grassroots initiatives to create more sustainable public spaces. A project like this is powerful because it challenges the received view that urban developments are by necessity long, expensive and 'can only be done by others'. In this context, the residents are the agents of change: identifying a local opportunity, developing a vision and taking collective action to translate their idea—to foster local connections, wellbeing and a more sustainable neighbourhood—into reality.

Shaping positive societal and environmental change

From parks to productive gardens, urban forests to waterways, green and blue infrastructure is increasingly vital in creating sustainable public spaces. There are exemplary projects at every scale, and part of the value of the European Prize for Urban Public Space is the opportunity it provides to share and celebrate some of the strongest of these. And for me, beyond celebrating what has already been achieved, the essential power of this prize is its forward-looking provocation to all of us—as shared stakeholders. It prompts us to see that much more is not just needed, but possible to effect, through our ideas, impetus and action to create positive change in our neighbourhoods, communities and cities.

I believe that all kinds of spaces should be designed with beauty and a sensitivity to existing features, to enhance its unique character and identity and with a focus on creating functionality. In addition, public space should incorporate nature and biodiversity, create a sense of place and belonging, promote the use of local materials, street art and vernacular elements, and be accessible to everyone. It should also foster social interactions and encourage walking and cycling. It should be adaptable, timeless and age well. Design should be a collaborative process that involves not only the designers but also biodiversity experts and input from the community, and that reflects the needs of different user groups, such as children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

Climate change

As designers it is important for us to consider the impact of climate change on the design of architecture and public spaces. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events and rising temperatures have significant implications for the liveability and resilience of our cities. In this context, the design of public spaces should prioritise the integration of green and water elements, which have the ability to mitigate the effects of climate change while also providing numerous social, environmental and economic benefits. With the increasing awareness of the importance of climate change adaptation, there is an opportunity to incorporate these elements in the design of new public spaces and to retrofit existing ones. As part of the 2022 jury for the CCCB's European Prize for Urban Public Space, I was pleased to see that many of the submitted proposals featured excellent examples of creating green corridors, managing stormwater runoff and taking care to reduce the urban heat island effect, while also providing opportunities for community engagement and education.

Additionally, some projects also considered the integration of green and water elements not only in the design of new public spaces but also in the retrofitting of existing urban patterns. The use of greenery, the planting of large trees, rainwater harvesting systems and the careful choice of paving that helps manage stormwater runoff all reduce urban heat island effects and improve air quality.

Community initiatives

The jury also appreciated that in many submitted projects communities and activists play a significant role in shaping the public space in their cities and towns. Through their efforts they have been able to reclaim and repurpose underutilised or abandoned spaces, creating new opportunities for social interaction and community-building.

One of the most notable examples of this is the emergence of community gardens, swimming pools and other sports interventions and urban farming initiatives. These projects have transformed underutilised or abandoned lots into vibrant green spaces, providing a place not only for growing food but also for community gathering, education and social interaction.

Activists have also been instrumental in advocating for the creation and preservation of public spaces, often opposing plans for private development that would lead to the loss of this space. Through their efforts they have been able to mobilise the community and influence government and municipal decisions to this end.

Some projects serve as great examples for how communities and activists can change public spaces through the use of temporary interventions, such as pop-up swimming pools, small parks and street closures, which can quickly and cheaply transform underutilised spaces into lively, vibrant places. These interventions test new ideas and designs, and can prompt useful feedback from the community before changes are made permanent.

East and West

As an architect born in a socialist country, I have noticed significant differences between East and West in the traces from the past that are still visible.

Public space in Europe has been shaped by different historical, cultural and political contexts, leading to distinct approaches to the development and use of public space. Eastern Europe has in the recent past placed a greater emphasis on functionality and economic development, while Western Europe has traditionally placed a greater emphasis on design and aesthetics. However, in recent years there has been a growing awareness of the importance of public space in both regions and efforts are being made to create and preserve accessible, inclusive and well-designed public spaces that serve the needs of the community.

In Eastern Europe, public space was heavily controlled and regulated by the state during the socialist era, with the primary focus being functionality and utility. Everything belonged to everyone, so, if policy decided, large areas could be transformed into squares devoted to revolution. Public spaces were often used for political and ideological purposes, such as military parades and political gatherings. With the transition to capitalism, the focus on public space shifted from functionality to economic development. Governments and municipalities began to see public space as a means to attract investment and boost economic growth. This led to the development of large-scale private projects, such as shopping centres and gated communities, which were often built at the expense of existing public spaces. I believe that especially in the cities of Eastern Europe communities and activists play a significant role in transforming abandoned lots into something new and accessible to everyone.

Learning from great masters

Finally, since I come from Ljubljana, a city where architect Jože Plečnik made significant contributions to the design of bridges and public spaces, I cannot conclude without mentioning his interventions. Even if many of them were small and modest, they created an amazing effect. His work, heavily influenced by classical architecture, has had a lasting impact on the city and continues to be appreciated to this day. Furthermore, his designs can still inspire contemporary European public space design and I could not prevent myself from evaluating the CCCB award proposals with his work in mind.

One of the key elements of Plečnik's designs is his emphasis on functionality and accessibility. His bridges were not only aesthetically pleasing but also practical and easily accessible to the public. Another important aspect is his use of classical architectural elements in a modern context that creates a sense of grandeur and elegance, something very important when designing new public spaces within historical European cities. Plečnik's designs also placed a strong emphasis on the relationship between people and nature. His Tivoli Park design and river refurbishment projects, for example, incorporated greenery, gardens and water features to create a sense of harmony between the built and natural environment.

We can learn from the great masters in the fields of bridge and public space design and transform contemporary European public spaces through small interventions to create functionality and accessibility, employ classical architectural elements in a modern context, and integrate nature into urban spaces in order to create beautiful, functional and sustainable public spaces that are enjoyed by all.

To conclude
Overall, designing European public space in light of climate change and regional differences requires a holistic approach that takes into account the unique challenges and opportunities presented by each region, as well as the needs of different communities.

We should take into account the effects of climate change on each region: in northern Europe, for example, more green spaces and water management systems; in southern Europe, on the other hand, the focus should be on designing spaces that provide shade and cooling, such as parks with mature trees and bodies of water. It is necessary to consider the impact of public space design on the environment. This includes using sustainable materials, promoting energy efficiency and designing spaces that encourage active transportation.

By considering these factors and involving local communities in the design process, we can create public spaces that are not only functional and beautiful but also sustainable and inclusive.

Jury

Teresa Galí-Izard. Zurich (Switzerland). President of the Jury. Agricultural engineer and landscape designer. Programme director of the Master of Sciences in Landscape Architecture at ETH Zürich.

Hans Ibelings. Montreal (Canada). Architecture critic and historian. Editor and publisher of *The Architecture Observer* and assistant professor of the Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design at Toronto University.

Eleni Myrivili. Athens (Greece). Anthropologist and expert in heat resilience. Senior advisor and senior fellow at the Atlantic Council's Arsht-Rockefeller Resilience Center where she leads the Policy Work Group of the Center's Extreme Heat Resilience Alliance.

Andreas Ruby. Basel (Switzerland). Architecture critic, curator, teacher and publisher. Co-founder of the architecture publishing house Ruby Press.

Paloma Strelitz. London (United Kingdom). Strategist and creative director with a focus on cities, culture and technology. Head of Product & Creative Director of Patch.

Špela Videčnik. Ljubljana (Slovenia). Architect. Founder of the OFIS arhitekti office.

Board of experts

Martin Braathen. Oslo (Norway). Architect and Senior Curator of Architecture at the National Museum in Oslo.

Luisa Bravo. Bologna (Italy). Urban designer, public space activist and social entrepreneur. Founder of the non-profit organisation City Space Architecture and founder and editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Public Space.*

Konrad Buhagiar. Valletta (Malta). Architect and executive director of AP Valletta and chief editor behind AP's *A Printed Thing* and *Founding Myths of Architecture* publications.

Gonçalo Byrne. Lisbon (Portugal). Architect.

Adrià Carbonell. Stockholm (Sweden). Architect and researcher. Lecturer at the KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and co-founder of Aside.

Matevž Čelik. Ljubljana (Slovenia). Architect, writer, editor, researcher and cultural manager. Founder of the Future Architecture platform.

Rodrigo Coelho. Porto (Portugal). Architect. Assistant professor at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto.

Daniela Colafranceschi. Catanzaro (Italy). Architect. Full Professor of Landscape Architecture at the Mediterranea University of Reggio Calabria. Member of the executive board of UNISCAPE and the executive board of IASLA.

Sofie De Caigny. Antwerp (Belgium). Director of the Flanders Architecture Institute and lecturer at the University of Antwerp in Architecture Critique at the Faculty of Design Sciences. Coordinator of the Heritage Department of the Flanders Architecture Institute.

Pelin Derviş. Istanbul (Turkey). Researcher, editor, writer and exhibition curator.

Dumitrița Efremov. Chişinău (Moldova). Architect and member of the Moldovan Committee of ICOMOS.

Vladimir Frolov. Saint Petersburg (Russia). Art and architecture critic, historian and curator. Lecturer in the Russian Academy of Arts in the Department of History and Theory of Art.

Žaklina Gligorijević. Belgrade (Serbia). Architect and urban planner. Active member of the Belgrade Association of Architects, Urban Planners, ISOCARP, and Architects' Council of Europe (ACE). Currently senior urban consultant in EU and World Bank projects in Serbia.

Christina Gräwe. Berlin (Germany). Curator and journalist. Lecturer at the Institute for Architectural History, Technical University of Berlin. Editor of the *German Architecture Annual*, organiser of the DAM Preis and chairwoman of architekturbild e.v. Partner of kuratorenwerkstatt Förster Gräwe Winkelmann.

Petra Griefing. Leuven (Belgium). Architect. Director of Stad en Architectuur.

Tinatin Gurgenidze. Berlin (Germany). Architect, researcher and curator. Member of the founder team of the Tbilisi Architecture Biennial.

Valeri Gyurov. Sofia (Bulgaria). Architect, urban designer and artist. Founder of the GIFTED Sofia culture hub, co-founder of Transformatori, co-founder of Bulgaria's first digital production laboratory, Smart Fab Lab, and co-founder of SOCMUS.

Timo Hämäläinen. Helsinki (Finland). Urban geographer, policy consultant and analyst at Nordic Urban. Author of the blog *From Rurban to Urban.*

Konstantinos Ioannidis. Stavanger (Norway). Architect and editor. Co-founder of the Oslo-based Aaiko Arkitekter studio.

Juulia Kauste. Helsinki (Finland). Sociologist and art historian.

Sabine Knierbein. Vienna (Austria). Professor for Urban Culture and Public Space, European Urban Studies. Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space, Faculty of Architecture and Planning, TU Wien, and founding member of the AESOP Thematic Group for Public Spaces and Urban Cultures.

Piotr Lewicki. Kraków (Poland). Architect. Co-owner of the Biuro Projektów Lewicki Łatak studio.

Maja Lozanoska. Skopje (North Macedonia). Economist. Co-founder of MELEEM Skopje – Association for Urban Cultural Development and Space Actualization based in Skopje.

Katharina Matzig. Berlin (Germany). Architect and journalist. Online editor for www.baunetz.de in Berlin. Member of the jury of Häuser des Jahres.

Mateja Medvedič. Ljubljana (Slovenia). Architect, art critic and director, curator and stage designer. Architecture editor for the Slovenian-Australian webzine *Sloveniana* of the portal thezaurus.com.

Laida Memba Ikuga. Sant Cugat del Vallès (Spain). Architect. Member of GAMUC. Co-director of Patrimonio Guinea.

Dan Merta. Prague (Czech Republic). Art curator. Director of the Jaroslav Fragner Gallery. Art curator of the Artscape Norway project.

Ludovica Molo. Lugano (Switzerland). Architect. Director of i2a Istituto Internazionale di Architettura. Central president of FAS (Federation of Swiss Architects) and partner in the studio We Architects.

Henrieta Moravčíková. Bratislava (Slovakia). Architect and architecture historian. Professor of Architecture History at the Faculty of Architecture Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava, and Head of the Department of Architecture at the Institute of History, Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Maroje Mrduljaš. Zagreb (Croatia). Architecture critic. Editor-in-chief of *Oris* magazine and lecturer at the Faculty of Architecture, Zagreb.

Shane O'Toole. Kilkenny (Ireland). Architect. Founder of DoCoMoMo Ireland. Member of the International Committee of Architecture Critics (CICA) and adjunct associate professor of Architecture at UCD.

Sarhat Petrosyan. Yerevan (Armenia). Architect and urban planner. Founder of the design office SP2 | Design & Planning.

Sille Pihlak. Tallinn (Estonia). Architect and researcher. Co-founder of the algorithmic timber architecture research group in the Estonian Academy of Arts. Co-founder of the experimental research-led office, PART (Practice for Architecture, Research and Theory).

Levente Polyak. Budapest (Hungary). Urban planner and sociologist. Member of KÉK (Budapest), board member of Wonderland (Vienna) and editor of *Cooperative City* magazine. Member of the Eutropian Research & Action organisation.

Ewa P. Porębska. Warsaw (Poland). Architect and architecture critic. Editor-in-chief of the *Architektura-murator* architectural magazine. Member of the boards of the Museum of Architecture in Wrocław and the Polish Council of Architecture.

Julija Reklaitė. Vilnius (Lithuania). Architect and culture manager. Director of Rupert, centre for art, residencies and education, based in Vilnius. Co-founder of the public organisation Architektūros fondas.

Guido Robazza. Portsmouth (United Kingdom). Architect. Senior Lecturer at the Portsmouth School of Architecture and coordinator of an Urban Living Lab.

Helen Rix Runting. Stockholm (Sweden). Urban designer and architectural theorist. Founding partner at Secretary.

Axel Simon. Zurich (Switzerland). Architecture critic and editor. Design assistant at ETH Zürich.

Marianne Skjulhaug. Trondheim (Norway). Architect. Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Design at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). Vice-President at Europan Norge and a board member for Stiftelsen Asplan.

Socrates Stratis. Nicosia (Cyprus). Architect and urban planner. Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture of the University of Cyprus. He is one of the main founders of the critical urban practice agency AA & U, Cyprus.

Hans Teerds. Ouderkerk aan de Amstel (Netherlands). Architect and urban designer. Senior lecturer at the Chair of the History and Theory of Urban Design in the Department of Architecture at ETH-Zürich. Member of the editorial board of architectural journal *OASE.*

Ed Wall. London (United Kingdom). Landscape architect and urban designer. Academic Lead of Landscape Architecture and Urbanism and co-director of the Advanced Urban research group at the University of Greenwich and visiting professor at Politecnico di Milano. Founder of the design research practice Project Studio.

Timur Zolotoev. Moscow (Russia). Editor-in-chief of the English edition of *Strelka Mag.*

public space

publicspace.org

The online European Archive of Urban Public Space, which emerged from the Prize, brings together the best 382 works from all the editions.

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This book presents the winner, the finalists and selected projects from the 2022 edition of the European Prize for Urban Public Space, along with a collection of reflections and thoughts from the jury.

The European Prize for Urban Public Space is a biennial award organized by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB). Since 2000, it has recognized the best projects in terms of the creation, transformation and recovery of public spaces, which are understood as clear indicators of the democratic health in European cities.

In the eleven editions of the Prize, a total of 2,532 works from 35 European countries have been submitted, and the award has thus become a window offering a privileged perspective on the transformation of public spaces in Europe and a gauge of the main concerns of European cities.

With contributions by Teresa Galí-Izard, Hans Ibelings, Eleni Myrivili, Andreas Ruby, Paloma Strelitz and Špela Videčnik.

CCCB Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona