

## The adaptable city 2 / european 13 theme T3 / Object versus project (process)

*from the call "The adaptable city 2 / european 13 theme"*  
EUROPAN Federation

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### Introduction

European needs to adapt to the changing conditions in the production of urban and architectural environments and encourage new ways of designing and producing spaces. With the support of the Scientific Council, and on the basis of 42 contributions by experts from every European country on the possible theme for the 13th session, European is proposing to extend the theme of "the adaptable city" by taking account of three main changes in the conditions of production of European cities.

The first change is less Welfare State and more self-organization. One of the issues that professionals now face is that we cannot expect the Welfare State to continue in the same way as it has for the last 40 years. European is one of its "children", making the public dynamic the main urban driving force, with a very dominant role for municipalities.

So although they are still our main partners, providing sites and content for the competition, we now need to look for a wider range of clients. Sites should no longer be sponsored entirely by municipalities, but perhaps in partnership with private entrepreneurs, with participatory groups wanting to build for themselves, perhaps with action groups employing new forms of activity in urban planning and architecture, to change and adapt the city.

The second change lies in the idea that we live in a paradoxical society which has more than it needs, sufficient material

resources, but uses them very badly. Therefore, not only for ethical and moral reasons, but also for reasons of fairness, society needs to move towards a culture of sharing, because what we have needs to be better used in the future. The reasons are therefore economic, but at the same time, of course, we need to make our societies more cohesive, and sharing public space, for example, is a significant way of achieving this.

The third theme is about the object versus the project (process). In the future, in a sustainable, resilient city, architects need to be more responsible in what they do, they need to produce their projects over time and they need to become responsible for the "maintenance" of their projects, their adaptability to the needs of new users. This means that they are not just responsible for the object itself, but also for the process through which the project evolves, and the question of adaptation to uses will increasingly be the architect's responsibility.

These three themes – self-organization, sharing and the project (process) – are the themes that European is proposing in this session as the "problematic context" for the choice and content of the sites and as a basis of ideas for the competitors. Through this broadening of the theme of the adaptable city, European is seeking to contribute to the incorporation of these changes into professional practices.

### The adaptable city

It is proposed for European 13 to continue with the generic theme of "the adaptable

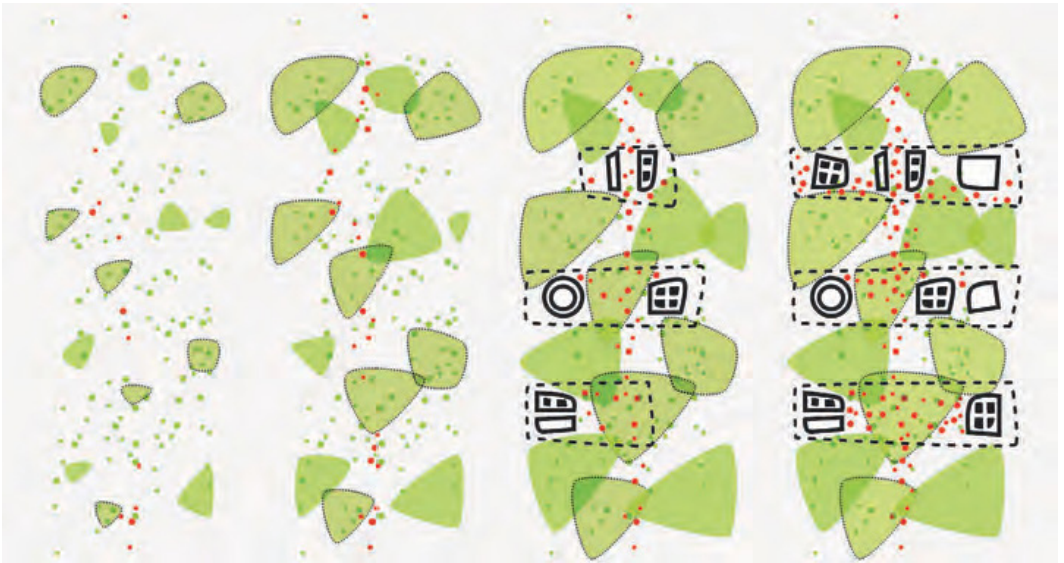


Fig1 / E12 winner project - Saclay (fr) / lieu(x) de négociation(s)  
source / E13 official call

city”: adaption to the need for more sustainable development but adaption also to the context of an economic crisis that the majority of European cities are currently undergoing.

Three generic concepts structure this overall theme:

Resilience as a challenge / to be able to extend or find again the identity of the city’s structural elements (built or landscaped) in a context of significant changes.

Social adaptability as a goal / reconciling the coherence of these structures with the evolving uses and practices.

Economy as a method / managing urban transformations in different contexts of actors and means, yet with limited resources and in the era of the “post-oil city”

**T3 / Object versus project (process)**

With communication tools and social networks in the rising, our culture grows less object-based; and this phenomena affects architecture and urban planning.

Many young architects are emerging through the implementation of projects presenting less physical objects, yet where the scope of the projects is as important as the objects involved. The objects can already partly exist and the project is about managing the existing, dealing with social constructions, developing a context and raising the question of “urban planning with less or without growth”.

**a / Contexts and not only sites**

The project can become one additional “layer” over a context, without a clear

predefined outline for the intervention on the ground - a context that may also be social, cultural or economic and not only physical.

**b / Programmatic innovation**

An open question may lead to an unexpected answer. There may be room for programmatic innovation, even redefining the relationship between programme and physical support - both the question and the answer may only be about reprogramming the existing.

**c / New implementation process**

Focusing on the project in its level of appropriation rather than on the object may imply redefining the implementation process.

**d / Innovative representation**

How can we describe a social context or a question of identity? What can we give as information to stimulate the research of opportunity areas? And unusual shapes of representation may arise in this context because a classical render of the project may not be very adapted to describe this kind of projects/processes.