

Introduction: The City of All the Senses

Didier Rebois

EUROPAN

Plan Construction et Architecture (P. Nord)

92055 Paris - La Défense Cedex 04

France

Launched under the theme "at home in the city, urbanising residential areas", the third session of EUROPAN, like the previous two, takes the form of simultaneous competitions for architectural ideas open to young European architects under the age of 40. EUROPAN 3 brings together 10 organising countries: Austria, Belgium, Spain, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, each running competitions in their own country followed by building projects on the same theme and with the same game rules.

Open to young architects from all over Europe and to professionals belonging to EUROPAN networks (owners, representatives of government and local government departments, researchers etc.), EUROPAN 3 was launched in Prague in February 1993. A vast meeting-place for information and debate in numerous thematic workshops, architectural conferences and visits, it enabled the 950 participants to familiarise themselves with the theme and the sites proposed for the third session. The choice of Prague was of particular symbolic and cultural value. Together with the organising countries, EUROPAN has other associate countries, of which, as a sign of recent changes in Europe, a large number are in Central Europe: Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania, the Czech and Slovak Republics and Slovenia. The history and architectural and urban heritage of Prague is European; after a long period of isolation, it has to find its specific place amongst the great capital cities of Europe. The problematics of EUROPAN - how to improve the quality of urban life and private life in historical or modern residential areas - is central to this in the thoughts of the professionals on the development of the city.

This issue of Architecture and Behaviour publishes the main contributions of the researchers and professionals invited to debate, in Prague, with the young architects on the sensitive quality which city spaces at the frontier between the private sphere of housing and public space can acquire. Sociologists, geographers, historians, architects, town planners and artists contributed different points of view and threw light on the new places of exchanges in the contemporary metropolis. In the era of telecommunications, where it is possible to communicate via telematic networks with anywhere from anywhere else and, therefore, to abolish distances and to scorn spatial proximities in order to organise new exchanges, one sees, paradoxically, an increased desire for other direct relationships which contribute something more than the immateriality of the media. That demand for a model of possible activities in the city, involving touch, smell and taste, invites us to think again about the spaces in the rationalist town planning of the '70s and '80s and to make the city the space for face to face meetings. One of the stakes of encouraging

relations in that urbanity is to enable multiple and unprecedented connections between housing and the city and the new spaces of sociability.

It is around the idea of "the city of all the senses", which would encourage the exchange and give a renewed sensitive dimension to the space, that we have arranged for the speeches given by the experts in Prague to be published, either in the form of articles by authors taking part on one aspect of the theme or in the form of summary articles of the points of view of the contributors written up by the workshop leaders. This issue is, therefore, a contribution to a debate which appears strategic on the way of thinking and designing the framework for new urban practices in European towns.