

SPEECH OF ASTRID SANSON, CHAIRPERSON OF THE JURY THAT ADJUDICATED THE ENTRIES FOR THE DUTCH EUROPEAN 11 SITES ON THE OCCASION OF THE AWARD CEREMONY ON 14 DECEMBER 2011

Good afternoon to all of you,

I am happy to be here, as the chairperson of the European 11 jury. It was nice, and also very intensive to adjudicate. Intensive because there were many entries - 275 to be exact - divided over the six Dutch sites in Eindhoven, Deventer, Leeuwarden, Almere, Amsterdam en Capelle aan den IJssel.

Before I go on I would like to mention the other jury members:

Floor Arons - architect Arons en Gelauff architects (winner European 4 Amsterdam);
Kristiaan Borret (Belgian) - city architect Antwerp;
Helena Casanova (Spanish) - architect Cassanova +Hernandez architects (winner European 6 Groningen and E7 Den Haag);
Joost Glissenaar - architect (winner European 5 Amsterdam);
Hanneke Kijne - landschape architect HOSPER NL landscape architecture and urban design;
Marien de Langen - governing director Stadgenoot in Amsterdam;
Han Meyer - professor urban design Delft University of Technology.;
Matthew Turner (British) - architect and free lance journalist;
Karen van Vliet - urban designer BGSV bureau voor stedenbouw.

It's a long list, but it's good to know who were the ones that adjudicated the entries.

First I am going to tell you how we did that.
After that I will go further into the six sites and I'll give an overall vision on the entries.

How did we work

The adjudication itself took place in two steps. The first step, leading to a selection of entries for the Oslo Forum, took place on the site.
The second adjudication took place in Oslo, after the forum there.

About the selection on the sites.

We met on 4 October in Eindhoven to start the job. The next day we travelled through the country, visiting one place after the other. On 7 October we finished our job in Capelle aan den IJssel.

Everywhere we came the procedure was the same. The site representatives presented the brief for the site like they did half a year earlier for the participating architects. And after that we visited the site, to get an idea of the atmosphere, to feel and to smell it.

Loaded with that information we adjudicated the entries for the concerning site.

First an individual round was made, after which all entries were discussed and the decision was taken which plans had to be dropped.

After that a second individual round was made in which the jury members marked the entries they wanted either to keep in or to drop. In the final plenary round the decision was made which plans would be sent to the Oslo Forum.

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In Oslo the selected plans from all European 11 countries were collected. Sites representatives and jury members left for Oslo, where the Forum took place on 4 and 5 November. Similar sites were gathered in working groups, where site representatives and jury members discussed the several kinds of solutions that were proposed.

After the forum the jury for the Dutch sites came together on the sixth of November in the Oslo School of Architecture, and the finale - choosing the winners, runners-up and special mentions - took place.

And then I was allowed reveal the names of the people behind the entries.

And all jury members had to keep their mouth shut until today.

We will be happy soon to be able to talk about it freely.

Now about the sites and the entries.

As I said, we started in Eindhoven, where the European assignment was clear and had a detailed programme of requirements. Its theme is one that will remain pressing for years to come: making existing buildings suitable for reuse. Seen in this light, the jury was rather disappointed by the harvest of entries. It encountered few interesting new concepts for sustainability, while this assignment, more than any other, so obviously called for this. The jury encountered hardly any attractive ideas about how students live, although all the participants themselves are young designers who may be considered "hands-on" experts and who themselves were students not so long ago.

After having finished the adjudication for the Eindhoven site we travelled to Deventer to the Deventer Havenkwartier.

The European assignment in Deventer raised a topical set of challenges. Designers will more and more frequently be confronted with briefs not intended for a complete transformation, but rather ones requiring modest and measured interventions that enhance those already present in an area. From the entries it appears that, for many designers, this was not as simple as it seems. Many participants did not know what to do with the informal and experimental character of the Deventer Havenkwartier area. There were also a number that tried to compensate for conceptual shortcomings with overpowering visual images. Others resorted to adding more to the programme of requirements than requested.

The evening of that day we went on to Leeuwarden, where we started the morning of 6 October.

In Leeuwarden the participants were confronted with questions that asked for a solution on all levels: landscape, urban and architectural. It was consequently an assignment that was ideally suited to multi-disciplinary teams. Nevertheless the jury had the impression that they failed to enter in large numbers. The emphasis was frequently either on architecture, or urban design or the landscape. One pitfall was also the requirement of a possible phased development. Many entries promptly presented a final-outcome solution and had no good strategy for a gradual realisation. The jury is aware, however, that phased planning, given the infrastructure and all the water here, is a difficult assignment. With hindsight perhaps it would have been better if the assignment had asked more specifically for a landscape-based framework and an elaboration for the first phase. Unfortunately

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the jury encountered hardly any plans that adopted a critical attitude towards the present Dutch “VINEX” house building programme.

Next on the programme, that very same day, was Almere.

The “double” assignment for Almere apparently confused quite a few participants. Some thought that the pavilion, which was intended to function as a striking beacon for a new residential area, should also serve as a prototype for the housing in the study area. The assignment, however, was about a distinguishable, iconic pavilion that can be disassembled at a later stage to start a new life elsewhere as a detached home. And the first requirement for the study area was a landscape design. Although the pavilion should be considered as giving the architects the opportunity of demonstrating their wealth of ideas and design skills, the jury failed to find an icon among the submissions that was really spectacular, or one that passed substantive critique.

The last day of our tour started early in the morning of 7 October in Almere. We drove to Amsterdam South East.

The European assignment for the Amstel III office area in Amsterdam is problematic, but also explicitly topical. Helping to improve and activate an existing office area that – due to ever-increasing vacancies – no longer functions properly, will become more pressing in many places in the coming years. It also involves new responsibilities for architects and urban designers. Ever more frequently their contribution will no longer entail defining a well-rounded, final outcome, but in supervising what can sometimes be a lengthy transformation process. The design always plays a central role, but then primarily as a means of communication, as a way of visualising a development strategy – without this immediately leading to a discussion about the ultimate form. This altered the nature of the assignment and therefore also the designer’s tasks and the set of instruments to represent development strategies. According to the jury this will need to play a greater role in architecture study programmes.

We actually finished the tour in Capelle aan den IJssel, where we arrived in the afternoon.

The theme of the assignment in Capelle aan den IJssel – the restructuring of an existing, post-war residential area – has, for years, received a lot of attention. Yet most of the participants had difficulty managing this. Chiefly architecturally, many of the entries were not up to the mark. This is also reflected in the award of the prizes: there was a convincing winner, but then the jury had to conclude that none of the other entries qualified for the second prize. Possibly the designers had difficulty with the description of the assignment. In it the high scale level comes off rather badly, while many problems (such as the flow of traffic) can only be solved in a wider context. Also the assignment did not specifically raise the significance of the transformation of the study and intervention areas for the surrounding area. Moreover, the assignment seems to ignore the present economic situation, whereby large-scale developments are increasingly under debate. A more obvious assignment for this site might have been a flexible urban strategy, with an elaboration for the first phase.

I now told you about the way in which the adjudication took place.
I also shortly told you about the sites and the entries.

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Before we pass to the announcement of the winners I keep you in suspense for a moment. It almost seems to be a broadcast programme: "and the winner is..." followed by a long silence.

Well, my silence comprises the following remarks.

To adjudicate the entries together with people having very different backgrounds was enormously interesting. It made a sharper and wider judging possible. I would like to go further into two observations of the jury

The first one is that the briefs fulfilled intrinsically the new task we face nowadays. We cannot be engaged anymore with master plans, blueprints that show what an area will look like in fifteen years. Without actual contribution of the stakeholders it's impossible to define programmes for offices and housing.

So we'll have to engage ourselves in formulating strategies to develop further the tasks that are still on our table.

Therefore the jury was surprised to find that many of the entries showed a final vision. More attention for strategies, with input from a multi-disciplinary co-operation is very necessary.

Paying more attention for this case in educational programmes would be a good thing, according to the jury.

The second observation concerns the analyses of the architect teams mostly were very good. However, at the moment the analyses were given shape into "architecture" things often went wrong. We wondered as a jury if this was a result of lack of time, or if people really lack architectural skills. If this last thing is the case, it really needs attention, because we cannot live and work in analyses!!

In spite of these two marginal notes, I would like to thank everyone for all the time and effort that was put both in the briefs and the entries.

We, as the jury, took a lot of pleasure in our task, we are convinced of the results, our job is over. Now it's both up to the quality of the clients and the quality and craftsmanship of the architects.

Thank you.