



PRESS RELEASE

January 12, 2012

Architect Winy Maas (MVRDV) challenges the European Parliament

“Everybody loves Europe, so why do we build nothingness, the non-city”? How architecture and urbanism can strengthen Europe was the core issue of a meeting at the European Parliament, organized by the Urban Intergroup and the European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP) under the auspices of the Danish EU Presidency.

Winy Maas challenged the European Parliament to give existence to architecture as a key for sustainable development and attractiveness in EU metropolises. A large group of Members of Parliament, policy makers, representatives of the European Commission and Directors in charge of architecture from the member states, were embarked on a tour through Europe by Winy Maas. He presented examples of innovative urban development, among which his research in the framework of the Grand Paris project, that triggered a lot of reactions.

“The rules and regulations should follow the plans” said Maas, showing that it is possible to adapt the regulations and the laws to new stakes. Yvette Masson Zanussi reacted that this issue is the core of the EFAP activities, launching a European observatory (‘Underconstructions’) mapping concrete tools and their possible links with EU policies on such issues.

The President of the Intergroup, Jan Olbrycht, underlined that indeed the issue is not “if” but “how” architectural policies are very important for the development and the implementation of the European Union’s aims set out in the EU 2020 strategy. He said that architects should anticipate the future needs of society rather than respond to present needs. They are playing a crucial role in the impact of regulations and policies and the way they can be adapted. They must design a vision on the future and inspire the public and decision makers.

Architectural quality was stressed as an important driver for success by the planner/engineer Jaap Wiedenhoff (ARUP). “Design is business” agreed developer Frédérique Monjanel (VINCI).

Joost Van Iersel, representing the EESC, underlined that we need to re-invent the way we deal with the European metropolitan areas, investing in quality, using the potential of the creative industries. He referred to the 2020 objectives in that respect.



EFAP President Rob Docter stated that especially in this time of crisis and extreme budget cuts it is a successful strategy to invest in quality (against trivialisation), as a driver of true sustainable development in all aspects, social, cultural, economic and ecological.

Maas: "Europe is remarkable: it has an overwhelming amount of various cultures, cities, landscapes, and heritage. Europe stands for talented designers, green awareness, and a strong desire for beauty, quality of life, fashion and innovation. How to strengthen that? What kind of architectural and urban projects can support that? What criteria do we need to develop? What organization can do that? And how to do it in such a way that it attracts the attention of all Europeans, if not outsiders?"

In this spirit, a new generation of inspired urban development could create a "galaxy" of projects spread over Europe, as Maas stated. This constitutes the new project "EU Galaxy" that the EFAP is willing to set in the perspective of the next programs of the European Commission, as a resource of knowledge and inspiration with regards to urban regulations.

Gianni Carbonaro, representing the European Investment Bank (EIB), explained the role of the JESSICA program in such projects. JESSICA can be a strong tool for financing new ambitious projects. Jan Olbrycht was wondering if Architecture and urbanism can strengthen EU, how the European Commission programs could strengthen architecture and urbanism. Yvette Masson Zanussi asked how to make allowance for architecture in all relevant policies? Stephen Duffy, (DG REGIO) and Vladimir Suchà, (DGEAC) acknowledged that architecture is a key factor in challenging the problems of the contemporary city, because of its cross cutting nature. Suchà even added that the EFAP proposal on an EU event is welcome. Suchà also stressed also the importance of the cultural and creative industries, of architecture for better and creative cities.

The representative of Ireland, Martin Colreavy, reminded that his country has had great profit from the EFAP. On behalf of the directors of architecture of the member states he suggested to explore the possibility of benefits for architecture in the points 7 and 9 of the ERDF program under the upcoming Irish EU Presidency.

In his closing remarks Jan Olbrycht said that this conference showed an inspiring balance between pragmatism, reality and innovation, and was looking forward to continue the dialogue with the European Forum for Architecture Policies.

More information :

www.efap-fepa.eu

www.urban-intergroup.eu



THE DANISH
PRESIDENCY OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION
2012



With the support of the Culture Programme of the European Union. This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.