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Editorial

Urban policies and an integrated approach

The Architects' Council of Europe conference held on 10 April on the topic of "Designing for the Future: The Market and Quality of Life" highlighted a number of fundamental points. The economic table drawn up by American political scientist Richard Parker refers to problems caused by globalisation and accelerated growth. Another issue raised is a Europe suffering from a shortfall in public interest. Methods do exist that would enable us to achieve a balance between the economy, competitiveness and sustainable development, but when will we achieve a true political consensus? When it comes down to it, who is going to build our cities? Promoters? Local authorities? Citizens? This is all about creating platforms to enable dialogue and discussion for the allocation of funding and sharing out this funding among the authorities. In the opinion of Mateu Turo Calvet, this approach needs to be a part of European policy. With his significant role in the overall management of initiatives undertaken by the European Investment Bank, he studies the economic viability of certain projects and their long-term funding. While he laments the fact that, generally speaking, architects do not take into consideration the term "cost" (going over budget is still a prickly topic for them), he does disapprove of striving for low prices to the detriment of architectural quality.

Europe can boast of its diversity of languages and cultures, the enormous potential for development in its cities, but only sustainable cities will be competitive in the future. Slovenia's experience shows us that the heritage of a long tradition of sustainable development coupled with joint funding from banks has brought about a positive impact on improvements in construction. But the revitalisation of cities – not only with successful new buildings – also involves transport and public management. This important issue currently facing society – social cohesion, the safety of property and people and environmental issues – is championed by Charles Picqué, Minister-President for the Brussels-Capital region, who dreams of an overall strategy including both development and social planning. He believes that the separation of these issues should be avoided at all costs. How can work carried out by different parties be made consistent? European Deputy Jean-Marie Beaupuy would like to see the EU make a number of changes to practices prevalent in Europe. A longstanding campaigner against urban creep, he would like to encourage the emergence of initiatives working for everyone's interests – not too costly or polluting, acceptable for human quality of life and "shared" among all the parties concerned. European regulations governing European regional policy oversees whether or not projects seeking to benefit from European funding actually practice this integrated approach. But such practices are not yet mandatory. There is an awful lot yet to be done in this regard.

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