

EFAP Manifesto

Bordeaux, 13 October 2008

"Architecture cannot save the world but it can be a good example" Alvar Aalto

The European city is a place of social, economic, cultural and political exchange par excellence and has a cultural value shared by all countries in, and the great majority of citizens of, Europe. The European city continues to be at the heart of European identity and culture.

The European city, at its best, achieves the broad social mix and respect for diversity that is an essential condition to guarantee the wealth and the perpetuity of these exchanges. Our cities all have the potential to offer our fellow citizens a decent, high quality environment, adapted to their resources, to their ways of life and to their needs.

European cities are the pride of their inhabitants, and when not, need to become so. The citizen must be both the main actor and the main beneficiary; so that cities become more economically successful and sustainable, and so that they continue to be an essential component of our cultural wealth.

Yet this collective urban heritage, which knows how to create patrimony and economic wealth, is under threat and needs both support and reinvigoration. Europe needs high quality architecture and urban design to protect the wealth and quality of life of both today's and tomorrow's cities.

Challenges

Urban life in Europe, while thriving, is also under pressure from:

- Climate change; will mean less comfortable living conditions, exaggerated by the urban heat island effect
- Rising sea levels and the danger of flooding as well, conversely, by drought and shortage of fresh water
- Pollution and environmental damage which remain constant threats to the quality of life in cities
- The growing population of cities and the decline in their livability as they sprawl outward.
- Immigration into cities; which while strengthening and invigorating culture, commerce and the quality of exchange also creates social strains and tension.
- The aging infrastructure of cities; which can struggle to cope with the demand for transport and services from both population and businesses

Proposals

We need to rebuild cities to reconcile rather than divide. They must be able to adapt and respond to the aspirations of our time and those of future generations. Cities must create the conditions for solidarity, sustainability and beauty.

Solidarity within cities

Cities need to be increasingly self-contained and provide more of their citizens' needs from their own resources and keep their overall needs in balance.

- The development of neighbourhoods that integrate all the functions necessary for a good life should be encouraged: the European city of tomorrow should be accessible to all and offer employment, housing, leisure and community facilities within walking distance, and by maintaining a human scale.

- Employment, shops, services and housing should be interconnected by appropriate public transport systems and by easy circulation providing satisfactory access between the city and its suburbs.

- Control of land development is essential to achieve these objectives.

Sustainable cities: respecting the environment and providing for future generations

- The compact city is preferred to protect natural resources and limit urban sprawl.

- The existing natural spaces between urbanized zones must be protected and the quality of public and interstitial spaces must be improved.

- Housing must become more sustainable and provide for new ways of life.

- Urban ecology should be encouraged by favouring short cycles of materials, water and energy

- Innovation in the use of materials, resource management and architectural design must be encouraged and creativity supported.

- The conservation of the social link and rehabilitation operations of neighbourhoods and existing buildings rather than their systematic destruction is necessary for the creation of sustainable cities in line with the Leipzig Charter.

Beautiful and convivial cities

Architects and urban designers should promote an architecture that combines audacity with the art of everyday living.

Architects, public bodies, professionals and private individuals responsible for architecture, expect architectural and urban quality and culture to be essential concerns within any debate on the development and cohesion of European territories and call for all European organization charged with then future of cities to use the advice, knowledge and enthusiasm of the architectural and design professions to improve and sustain the future of the European city.