

C1 / INTENSIVE WORKSHOP "Place des Possibles" - FRANCE

Presentation of the workshop

General issues:

Today, the architectural community is faced with multiple challenges of a democratic, economic and ecological nature. For some (Atelier Georges, Rollet, et al., 2018), it is time to imagine new modes of territorial planning based on the synergy between the actors involved. In this sense, the development of tools and devices specific to this type of situation is multiplying, including the creation of 'territorial commons', as a response to the current context of redefinition of the place of institutional powers in the territorial fabric. A multitude of 'territorial commons' have emerged over the last ten years in Europe, centrally involving civil society: they show the richness of an original process, based on social links and horizontality, and bear witness to another way of doing architecture (Encore Heureux et al., 2018) and raise the question of the place of the professions involved in the making of space, particularly architects. These 'commons' are certainly visible in dense urban territories (and it is also in this context that they are studied by architectural and urban research), but they are also present in rural territories.

Based on the hypothesis that these situations of territorial fabrication will be multiplied in the years and decades to come and that architects will have to position themselves clearly within this "alternative fabrication" of territories (which is often done without them), this Architecture School Of Commons (ASOC) first workshop aimed to involve students in the creation of a "common" place, the Place des Possibles, in Saint-Laurent-en-Royans, in France.

Context and territory:

Since 2016, in the rural mountain area of Royans Vercors, the association Les Tracols has been managing La Place des Possibles, a former weaving factory that is currently being renovated: there are services in the fields of training, digital inclusion, and solidarity economy, and the ecological transition. The architectural collective Etc, expert in the co-construction of architectural and urban projects, has been accompanying them since 2019 in the definition of the programme and the spatial transformation. At the time of the development of the Architecture School Of Commons (ASOC) project, 9 associations were occupying and sharing the spaces of La Place des Possibles, but without having a common project. ASOC therefore wanted to come in to enhance collective approaches, responding to common needs and encouraging the activation of the space.

Students involved (number and level of education):

40 students (3rd year of bachelor) from ENSA Grenoble.

Stakeholders involved (number and type):

Collectif Etc (7 people : Maxence Bohn, Lukas Hamilcaro, Cécile Kohen, Théo Mouzard, Léo Hudson, Gaspard Courgeon, Lorraine Devineau), Les Tracols (2 people : Jean Philippe Stevenin et Raphael Shin), Orizzontale (1 person : Giuseppe Grant), La rivoluzione delle Seppie (1 people : Gerardo Cleto), Zuloark (1 person : Natasa Lekkou).

Teachers team:

ENSA Grenoble teachers (3 people : Sébastien Fabiani, Roberta Ghelli, Théa Manola).

Pedagogical structure of the workshop

Pedagogical targets :

ASOC project in France wanted :

- to question the "alternative" fabrication of territories and architecture ;
- to make students discover projects of "common" places ;
- to approach the notions of transformation/reversibility of the built environment, and of mutualisation of uses ;
- to discover tools and methods of experimentation to make the architectural project differently and more specifically understand and test/experience the co-design process;
- to test, use and assembly materials from reuse ;
- handling tools, basic assemblies in wood and metal construction;
- to talk about the diversification of the profession and value the experience of collective projects ;
- to make students live a collective experience in situ and work with local actors.

This workshop responded to several of the major transversal themes of the pedagogical ENSAG programme (participatory, democratic and socio-spatial justice issues; socio-ecological transitions, intervention in the existing) and to the semester focus (organization of architecture and intervention in the existing). It was integrated in the ENSAG curriculum and ensured a pedagogical continuity on these transversal themes from the Bachelor to the Master (according to ASOC project temporality 2021-2024). ENSAG Students choosed this workshop among three curricular options (experimental weeks organized each year in may).

Learning process and activities :

The pedagogical objective of this workshop consisted in prefiguring and constructing light, reversible and ephemeral micro-architectures at scale 1. These installations would allow testing uses and construction techniques and will serve as a tool for fine-tuning the perennial project of La Place des Possibles. They would also be used to experiment with low-tech construction techniques that favor local material resources (materials and components) and immaterial resources (know-how and operating methods). At the same time, the workshop would make it possible to start work on identifying the actors and resources of the nearby territory, as well as the production of a document for reflection and feedback (fanzine) and a global video.

Skills pre-needed and acquired :

The workshop was suitable for students attending the third year of architecture school.

Basic knowledge pre-needed :

- Notions of construction (basic assemblies, knowledge of materials);
- Notions of research (creation of an interview grid, management of an interview and restitution, reflexive distance and theoretical references);
- Notions of formatting a graphic document;
- Notions of co-design of the project and group work (organization of tasks, pooling, collaboration in the realization of results).

Knowledge acquired :

- understand what a prefiguration process is;
- understand the co-design and support of associative actors in their projects;
- questioning the diversification of the profession of architect and its evolution;
- promote the meeting between students and collectives of architects and create opportunities for experimentation with their action systems (architectural permanence, co-construction of projects, collective work).

Evaluation criteria :

Continuous assessment throughout the week and the final report.

Workshop logistic

Resources needed:

1 collective kitchen for 60 people (and equipment) : breakfast / lunch / dinner
1 kitchen crew (3 people)
10 tables and 15 benches
1 gite for all students / 1 gite for partners
12 cars

Materials and tools requested:

25 plywood planks
10 metal conduct pipes
Reused wood (rafters and battens).
Complete woodwork toolset
Complete metalwork toolset
Projector and screen
Printer and paper

People contacted:

Laurence Dubois
Mathieu Donnet
Mathieu Lesieur
Coline Waz
Chloé & Antoine - collectif Feu de camp
Georges Pain
Mairie de Saint Laurent en Royans

Needs in terms of space and number of supervisors:

1 workshop place
2 offices for 15 people
1 collective kitchen
1 quiet place for presentation and talks
1 exterior place (workshop and meals)
8 supervisors

Budget:

TOTAL 11340 € (LOGISTIC + MATERIAL without salary)

Workshop program

Sessions and groups :

The workshop week was built around three sessions :

- discussion session : presentations, lectures on targeted themes (reuse, work in architectural groups), exchanges on outdoor pedagogy with the students;
- co-design and co-production session : in groups, according to targeted topics, to produce tools and supports for the users of La Place des Possibles and local actors;
- community management session : collective preparation of shared meals and evening events, cleaning of the premises, tidying up.

Each session was a source of individual and collective learning, theoretical, technical and social, on co-construction, profession and community life, resource management, organization and group logistics. The convivial and more informal moments were opportunities for social learning, exchange and confrontation between students and stakeholders. Two evening events took place in the public space, which encouraged the inhabitants to participate and exchange with the students.

The students were divided into 7 groups are organized according to a production theme:

- the construction of 5 mobile modules;
- the production of a sensitive map of the territory;
- the production of a fanzine

Two additional groups (preparation of meals and production of a video) were transversal and required the participation of volunteer students, as well as a rotation.

Weekly schedule :

Day 1 (16/05/2022) :

- Discussion session : Launching of the workshop (presentation, theoretical input, visit of La Place des Possibles and meeting of the actors).
- Co-design and co-production session : distribution of topics and constitution of groups (construction, territory, fanzine).
- Community management session : shared meals and tidying up

Day 2 and 3 (17 and 18/05/2022) :

- Discussion session : Presentation of the reflections and progress of the working groups
- Co-design and co-production session : appropriation of the topics
 - Construction group: programme appropriation and initial reflections
 - Territory group: surveys and meetings with local actors (interviews)
 - Fanzine group: reading and writing texts
- Community management session : shared meals and tidying up

Day 4 and 5 (19 and 20/05/2022) :

- Discussion session : Presentation of the reflections and progress of the working groups
- Co-design and co-production session : progress
 - Construction group: testing and fine-tuning of 5 mobile micro-architectures
 - Territory group: sound recording of interviews and development of a methodology for the creation of a sensitive map
 - Fanzine group: writing texts and choosing a good format
- Community management session : shared meals and tidying up, organization of two public evening events

Day 6 (21/05/2022) :

- Discussion session : Presentation of the reflections and progress of the working groups
- Co-design and co-production session : Finalizing the devices (micro-architectures, sensitive map, fanzine and video) and public presentation.
- Community management session : shared meals and tidying up

Activities and temporality:

9 AM: shared breakfast
 9:30 - 10:30 AM: presentations / discussions
 10.30 AM - 1 PM: group work
 1-2.30 PM: shared lunch
 2.30 - 5.30 PM: group work
 5.30 - 6.30 PM: free time
 6.30 - 7.30 PM: presentations / discussions
 7.30 - 9 PM: shared dinner

Expected results

Tools and actions developed:

- Construction group: creation of 5 micro-architectures (presentation and display, storage, kitchen, seating) ;
- Territory group: creation of a sensitive and interactive map (250 cm x 250 cm on a wooden base), which reproduces students' reading of the territory through the prism of reuse, following the surveys and meetings with local actors ;
- Fanzine group: creation of a fanzine prototype ;
- Video group : one student from each group also participated all week long in the composition and editing of a final video that tells the story of the workshop (travels, working days, achievements and atmosphere of the place and of the week).
- Cooking and care group : a group made of 5 students (1 person from each working group) and a stakeholder was composed each day to cook lunch and dinner for the ASOC community.

Productions results :

Micro-architectures are used on a daily basis during associative activities; the sensitive map is borrowed by associations outside the third place during a local festival on re-use. The video is widely distributed in the network of schools of architecture to present an example of a realizable outdoor pedagogy experience with students.

Acquisition of a critical and reflexive look at the practice carried out:

The open-ended atmosphere of the place, which is very rare in academic institutions, encouraged the participants of A school of commons to learn "differently". Students in particular said that they feel free to improvise, to try out solutions and make mistakes, to look at others and join in with their initiative, to find "their own corner" to think alone or to meet in a group, to experience collective life and to take a position within the community that inhabits the place.

The distances between learners and apprentices reduced as the week progressed, marking a change in roles and postures. The preparation of shared meals, tidying up, cleaning the space, and the collective organization of convivial and festive events were particularly appreciated moments, which allow students to ask questions and engage in informal conversations with the actors (including the architects of the collectives).

Course assessment and the evaluation criteria

The students posted documents of their achievements (constructions, sensitive map, fanzine) on the shared drive of ENSAG. Students expressed their impressions of the week and the results by filling an anonymous questionnaire, insisting on the dimension of collective discovery (of professional profiles, creative practices, places and territory).

Critical and reflective feedback for pedagogy

What can go wrong / points of vigilance:

Construction :

- Ensure the security of work sites and protective tools
- Ensure the presence of a coordinator at workstations with portable tools

Territorial surveys :

- Contact local actors well in advance to check their availability

Community life :

- Evaluate the budget to ensure decent meals for the group
- Coordinate between organizers to avoid misunderstandings about the productions and topics discussed, the agenda for the week and to distribute tasks well (coordination of content and discussions, coordination of group work, coordination of the community on site).

Bibliography

Festa D., 2016, « Les communs urbains. L'invention du commun », Tracés. Revue de Sciences humaines [En ligne], #16 | 2016.

Atelier Georges, Rollot M. et al., 2018, L'Hypothèse Collaborative, Marseille : Éditions Hyperville.

Gatta Federica & Cécile Léonardi & Pierre-Olivier Garcia & Anne D’Orazio & Théa Manola & Josselin Tallec & Silvère Tribout, « De nouvelles formes de partenariat public-privé ?. Un appel à projet innovant à Grenoble », Métropolitiques, 2 février 2023. URL : <https://metropolitiques.eu/Denouvelles-formes-de-partenariat-public-priv.html>.

Encore Heureux, Bordage, F., Clément, G., et al., 2018, Lieux infinis. Construire des bâtiments ou des lieux ?, Paris : B42

Collectif Etc, Paquot T., 2016, Le Détour de France : une école buissonnière, Marseille : Éditions Hyperville.

Institut d’Aménagement et d’Urbanisme d’Ile-de-France, 2018, L’urbanisme transitoire.

Paquot, T., Masson, Y., Stathopoulos, M., 2012, Alter Architecture Manifesto, Paris : Eterotopia Infolio.

Pinot G. et Redoutey E., 2021, “Démarches de programmation architecturale?. De l’usage à l’ouvrage”, Le Moniteur.

Zetlaoui-Léger J., “La programmation architecturale et urbaine. Émergence et évolutions d’une fonction ”, Les Cahiers de la recherche architecturale et urbaine, 24/25 | 2009, 143-158.