

C2 / 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 A 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 A 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):

15 students (Bachelor and Master) from ENSA Grenoble (ENSAG) - France
10 students (Master and Post Master) from NTU Athens (NTUA)- Greece
5 students (Bachelor) from Polytechnic school of Turin (POLITO)- Italy

Stakeholders involved (number and type):

Collectif Etc (6 people : Maxence Bohn, Lukas Hamilcaro, Cécile Kohen, Théo Mouzard, Gaspard Courgeon, Loraine Devineau, Anthony Martz), Les Tracols (1 people : Diane Bousquet), Orizzontale (2 people : Giuseppe Grant and Nasrin Mohiti Asli), La rivoluzione delle Seppie (2 people : Rita

Adamo and Gerardo Cleto), Zuloark (2 people : Natasa Lekkou and Juan Chacon), Tirilab (1 person : Christina Serifi)

Teachers team:

ENSAG teachers (2 people : Roberta Ghelli, Théa Manola)

NTUA teachers (2 people : Nicholas Anastasopoulos, Panagiotis Papoutsis)

POLITO teachers (1 person : Silvia Lanteri)

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 ;
- 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 took the form of a summer school to which students could apply (send an application: cover letter and CV).

Learning process and activities :

The pedagogical objective of this workshop consisted to activate La Place des Possibles on different scales:

- to participate in the production of tools and actions necessary for the daily life of the place and for the public events that animate it;
- to work on the organization of public events to make the place resonate in the surrounding area: to make it known, to increase its frequentation and, if necessary, to attract new future residents.

The prototypes produced during the previous workshop (May 2022) were used as a starting point for a new reflection, which leads to the reorganization of the central stationary kitchen and the creation of a mobile kitchen, but also to the production of a series of podcasts on the theme of food, posters and signage flags, and the finalization of the fanzine.

Skills pre-needed and acquired :

The workshop was suitable for students from the third year of architecture school to post-masters.

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 activation process is;
- understand and test/experience the co-design process;
- handling tools, basic assemblies in wood and metal construction;
- conducting interviews to collect material and compose narrative results;
- 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 (and equipment) for 65 people : breakfast / lunch / dinner
 1 kitchen crew (4 people)
 12 tables and 15 benches
 1 gite for all students and partners
 3 minivan + 5 cars

Materials and tools requested:

Construction :

- 5 plywood planks
- 10 metal conduct pipes / Metal inox
- Reused wood (rafters and battens).
- Complete woodwork toolset
- Complete metalwork toolset

Presentations :

- Projector and screen
- Printer and paper

People contacted locally:

Jeremy Ruzand
 Anthony, local farmer
 Marlène, local politician
 Monique, local citizen
 Marielle VILLENEUVE et Sylvain FAURE, local bakery
 Mathieu, local farmer

Rebecca, local researcher

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)
10 supervisors

Budget: TOTAL 13190 € (LOGISTIC + MATERIAL without salary)

Workshop program

Sessions and groups :

The workshop week was built around three sessions :

- discussion session : presentations, lectures on targeted themes (work in architectural collectives, outdoor pedagogies, commons places), exchanges on outdoor pedagogy and profession evolution in the different countries (France, Italy, Greece);
- 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. Three public evening events took place in the public space, which encouraged the inhabitants to participate and exchange with the students.

The students were divided into 4 groups are organized according to a production theme:

- the construction of a mobile kitchen;
- the production of a comic of the territory;
- the production of a fanzine
- the activation of the place

One additional group (preparation of meals) required the participation of volunteer students, as well as a rotation.

To ensure transversality between the groups, 3 “meta-groups”, formed by two people from each working group, met once a day to discuss the productions and decide on the final joint restitution event.

Weekly schedule :

Day 1 (29/08/2022) :

- 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 and meta-groups).
- Community management session :
 - Cooking group : shared meals and tidying up
 - Event group : organization of an evening shared event (scenography and choice of location)

Day 2 and 3 (30 and 31/08/2022) :

- Discussion session : Presentation of the reflections and progress in meta-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 :
 - Cooking group : shared meals and tidying up
 - Event group : organization of two evening public events (scenography and choice of location)

Day 4 and 5 (1 and 2/09/2022) :

- Discussion session : Presentation of the reflections and progress in meta-groups
- Co-design and co-production session : progress
 - Construction group: testing and fine-tuning of the micro-architecture
 - Territory group: creation of the territory comic and testing of serigraphy methodology
 - Fanzine group: writing texts and choosing a good format
- Community management session :
 - Cooking group : shared meals and tidying up
 - Event group : organization of a shared event and the opening public event of La Place des Possibles (scenography)

Day 6 (3/09/2022) :

- 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 :
 - Cooking group : shared meals and tidying up
 - Event group : organization of the public restitution event (scenography)

Activities and temporality:

9 AM: shared breakfast

9:30 - 10:30 AM: presentations / discussions in meta-groups

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 a mobile kitchen (2 micro-architectures)
- Territory group: creation of a comic handmade printed (serigraphy method) which reproduces students' reading of the territory through the prism of cooking, following the surveys and meetings with local actors ;
- Fanzine group: creation of a fanzine on architectural care ;
- Event group : realization of 2 ASOC community events and 3 publics events (production of posters, flags and signage)
- Cooking group : realization of 12 menus for the ASOC community.

Productions results:

The productions are presented to the residents of the place and to the inhabitants of the commune. Flags are included in the official signage of La Place des Possibles.

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 experimented with new ways of doing things, tested solutions alongside ASOC supervisors, learned constructive techniques and artistic methods. Students also underlined a sustained rhythm of production, which deprived them of free time during the day to visit the region.

The distances between learners and apprentices were 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). These friendly moments were opportunities to exchange between nationalities and cultures and go beyond the language barrier.

Course assessment and the evaluation criteria

Students expressed their impressions of the week and the results by filling an anonymous questionnaire, insisting on the dimension of international and collective discovery (of professional profiles, creative practices, places and territory).

Critical and reflective feedback for pedagogie

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).

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