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Project for

EUROPEAN DESIGN CODE
FOR QUALITY LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

le carré bleu

feuille internationale d'architecture

7 guidelines

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A. public interest in living environments, architecture and ecological conversion

1. Living environments are particular expressions of culture: they simultaneously involve aesthetic, historical, spiritual, social, economic and productive aspects; they have trans-generational meanings and characteristics.

Quality of architectural design, inclusion of new projects, respect and enhancement of landscapes and urban qualities, reuse of the existing heritage, regeneration of territories and cities are of public interest and a right of citizens.

Every project must contribute to the quality of living environments by enhancing the historical, cultural, urban, environmental and landscape resources of territories. Prioritising the quality of their characters - which affect human and planetary health, social cohesion, development and support spirituality / sociality / security / economy / well-being - involves promoting and supporting projects with the highest resources.

The regulatory apparatuses relating to spatial planning and transformation must be closely coordinated with those relating to the implementation of projects. Therefore, taking into account the diversity of the various contexts, the role of central governments and regional and local administrations must be deepened.

2. Designing architecture and living environments is an intellectual performance.

a. the project aims to provide the best solution to the needs of the client and the intentions expressed in the programme. It involves transformations with positive environmental and social consequences, observance of the DNSH principle (do no significant harm).

b. the project concerns built and unbuilt spaces, with a focus on the latter. Recognises the hybrid nature of contemporary lifestyles, favours shared spaces (co-living / co-housing / co-working /...), ensures maximum inclusion (architecture for all), articulates flexible spatial configurations, suitable for accommodating future activities - and/or responding to new needs - with sustainable modifications.

c. harmony, timing, interactions: energy retrofitting (EU EPBD Directive) and seismic upgrading can use integrated approaches with drastic reduction of time, possible permanence of inhabitants, minimal social distress.

d. quality interventions are favoured by awarding projects following competitions, in any case by transparency in the selection of designers.

e. also by means of actions in primary schools, citizens' awareness, involvement and active participation in the issues of the quality of living environments and their effects on the quality of life are to be increased.

f. the creation of places for meeting and debate between citizens, experts and administrations on issues of the transformation of the city and living environments should be promoted.

g. public administrations must encourage the improvement of environmental, landscape and architectural quality through design competitions, whose results are made public.

h. private entities that seek quality through competitions must benefit from financial or tax concessions.

i. the client's requests to the designer must be explicit, clear and exhaustive

l. the project has a unitary character: it must be developed in all phases by the same designer or with his/her approval. It is in the public interest to ensure conformity between design and realisation

m. every project must contribute to the sustainable development of the city and of the whole of the spaces intended for the life of citizens also with reference to GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) standards and the Regulation to the European Taxonomy Regulation 2020/852 on sustainable activities

3. Every project of transformation or construction must improve the quality of living environments in every sphere of social life: from living spaces to the spaces of work, culture and leisure, education and health.

Environmental, ecological and landscape issues must therefore be taken as the basis for every policy, every programme and every project: in this sense, large-scale perspectives and even trans-generational visions are essential.

Therefore, every country in the European Union must take action through regulations, incentives and de-taxing, also articulating specific codes aimed at the integration and architectural, ecological and environmental quality of projects.

For this reason too, each territory, at progressively larger levels, must be equipped with geospatial models - digital twins - based on unitary computerised bases that report in a simultaneous - periodically updated - form all data (morphology, vegetation, geology, hydrogeology, seismic microzoning, risk conditions, archaeological information, operating constraints, programmes in force or under consideration and soon to be adopted) with simple references to information on population, fauna, vegetation types or other.

These digital models, unified according to the European INSPIRE directive

- can be used immediately and by planners in each State
- allow the development and comparison of alternative transformation scenarios

B. the role of the client

4. The “client” is the natural or legal person who gives a mandate to the “designer” and commissions the company to carry out the work.

The public, private or mixed forms of partnership must be aware of the distinction between the “formal client” and the “real client” (the users and the community as a whole).

In the case of public works, the client is in charge of the project application, the management of the procedural process and has control roles. He/she must never take on the role of designer of physical conformations of living environments.

Especially in major urban projects, the developer may use strategic and creative transformation consultants for strategic and creative visions in territorial and urban regeneration, development and social innovation.

The developer uses European and national protocols (assessment of social, environmental, energy, economic,

labour impacts) for the definition, implementation and management of environmental, social, labour, industrial and manufacturing actions, favouring and enhancing local resources.

The developer may envisage tactical urban planning experiences and transitional uses for the definition of final transformations.

5. In order to undertake building construction or land transformation works requiring design and authorisation, the Client identifies two distinct individuals: the person who represents him/her (project owner) and the designer (project leader).

6. The project owner may be supported by independent technical institutions promoted by recognised professional, cultural, business associations.

7. The Client may not entrust the same project simultaneously or successively to different designers without a valid reason. Every modifying or extending project must be proposed, subsequent to its construction, with priority to the author of the initial project.

C. the role of the designer

8. The “designer” is the natural or legal person authorised to exercise the profession of designing buildings and living environments : as such is an entity independent of the client and the contractor.

His or her work is an intellectual work, a product of the intelligence with a creative character: the professional who actually coordinates and signs the project is culturally responsible for it and - if the prerequisites are met - can claim the “copyright”. If the “designer” is a legal person, the professional who actually coordinates and signs the project must be able to demonstrate adequate experience.

9. the project has a unitary character: it must be developed in all phases -including the Works Management- by the same designer or with his approval. Never divided into parts or competences, the project is produced by a group of professionals who solve the various aspects of the intervention in an integrated and coordinated manner.

Each project must be signed by all the professionals who have contributed to it and are responsible for its various aspects

The performance of the “designer” must be insured against possible damage to the client.

10. In order to promote and protect the quality of his services, the “designer” is entitled to fair remuneration considering that his/her service is an intellectual one.

Any clauses that provide for remuneration contingent upon decisions or events beyond the power or will of the client and the “designer” are not valid.

The terms of time granted to the "designer" for the various phases of the project must be reasonable (in the aggregate, in the order of half the execution time) and proportionate to the complexity of the work.

Any changes to the programme during the course of the project shall entail changes to the contract and additional fees.

D. the project programme

11. The client - with the possible contribution of experts - draws up the “project programme” that expresses the needs, constraints and standards to be respected, accompanied by the cognitive documentation of the spatial and a-spatial contexts where the intervention is to take place.

The “project programme” defines needs (of community) and goals of the projects , together with the constraints and requirements of social, urban planning, architectural, functional, technical and economic quality, insertion in the landscape and environmental protection. It also indicates the cognitive analyses to be deepened and the regulatory framework of reference for the specific project.

The client shall indicate the amount of resources available to carry out the project and shall articulate the relative “project programme” together with an economic framework in which the client distinguishes the amount of the works to be contracted from that of the accessory sums with a possible specific chapter for the cognitive analyses to be examined in depth.

The project programme must foresee adequate resources to give high quality to the “unbuilt” spaces, especially if they are publicly or collectively owned.

Bearing in mind that the quality of living environments affects safety, well-being, economy, spirituality and happiness, project programmes adopt similar cost parameters, parameterised to the cost of living indices in the different realities.

It is appropriate to establish (in countries where it does not exist) the professional figure of the “programmer” it is appropriate to establish this figure (like the “designer”, he/she integrates different skills) who expresses the client's needs and objectives in the “project programme”, open to the subsequent evaluation of alternative design solutions. Having to integrate different competences, in public works the “programmer” does not coincide with the project owner.

E. the design assignment

12. The design aims at defining the best response to the client's demand according to the designer's interpretation. For projects that affect the physical character of living environments and use public financing, the procedure of comparing alternatives produced by different designers should be favoured.

The competition is an instrument of the community to achieve quality projects: it must aim to zero costs for those who participate and compensate those who are eligible. Competitions are open to all qualified designers.

Competitions based - even partially - on reduced fees, reimbursements or project time or requiring prerequisites other than professional qualification are prohibited.

In the case of small projects, any direct assignment is subject to participation processes.

13. The way competitions are organised must respect the following principles:

a. mention of all organisational provisions in the notice (reimbursement of expenses to all participants in two-stage competitions; juries composed of a maximum of 5 members, the majority of whom must be external to the commissioning administration, all with qualifications and experience appropriate to what is to be judged).

b. transparency of the procedures for selecting participants and choosing the winner.

c. in the case of two-phase competitions, the first phase must be limited to essential and minimum elements; the second phase includes public illustration of the projects by the designer and discussion with the Jury.

d. justification of the Jury's choices by detailed reports.

e. exhibition of the projects.

f. all subsequent stages, including the Supervision of Works, are entrusted to the winner of the competition.

g. provision of an appeal procedure for competition participants or interested citizens.

h. if an operation is abandoned after a competition, the winner must be compensated.

14. For works below the EU threshold (as it stands at € 5,225,000.00), the roles of the “designer” and the contractor must always be distinct.

Competitions are allowed in which the “designer” participates together with the enterprise engaged to carry out the operation for a lump sum as per the amount indicated in the Notice.

Once the economic rebate is eliminated, this type of competition responds to the need for quality and speed of intervention and - unlike design-only competitions - allows the identification of industrial components and products, thus supporting research and innovation.

The Jury assesses: quality of projects, technological features and selected products, certifications, “green building site” methods. Given the collective interest in the rapid disposition of the work - it also assesses the commitment to significant reductions in execution time and operating and maintenance costs.

In these cases the “designer” (Single Project leader) is the Director of Works on behalf of the “client”, and is therefore in direct relation with the Single Project owner.

15. Any project elaboration may be produced, circulated and examined on digital media only
Projects - accompanied by three-dimensional, perspective, photomontages or other representations - in digital format compatible with geospatial models if present - must clearly show the insertion in the context and the relationship with surrounding elements at different scales.
The results of this process must be easily accessible to the public.

F. authorisations

16. The activity of the “designer” goes through three phases: a. conception / b. design / c. executive project.
The contents of the three phases can be specified with the following principles in mind:
- **a. conception** makes explicit the relationships between the area of intervention and its contexts; it contains graphic schemes and congruence checks with data and constraints, the project programme, available resources.
 - **b. design** defines and fully represents the project and accompanies it with a “report” that demonstrates the fulfilment of the programme and all technical issues (structural, energy, safety, acoustics, lighting, etc.) and that makes explicit how the project deals with environmental issues (also in their reflections on a broad scale), relations with the landscape (that identifies the involved community), relations with the material and immaterial pre-existences that identify the place where it intervenes.
 - **c. executive project** develops details and execution instructions. In order to reduce the overall time - if the definition in phase b. allows it or is supplemented by what is necessary - in private and public lump-sum paid projects, this phase may coordinate with the construction site schedule: the contractor, project owner and project leader can start work before the detailed choices are fully defined.

Once the participation process (in phase “a. conception”) has been completed and phase “b. project” has been completed, the project leader and the project owner certify that the project complies with the applicable regulations. The client submits the project to the involved Bodies, which may express reasoned refusal or specific executive recommendations that the Municipality attaches to the construction authorisation.

Territorial Authorities assess the project in relation to “Environment / Landscapes / Contexts” taking as possible reference the 8 criteria (governance / functionality / environment / economy / diversity / context / genius loci / beauty) of the “Davos Baukultur Alliance 2023”.

During the construction phase the project leader - in agreement with the project owner and the Contractor - may make changes that do not alter the time and cost of the project, to be recorded on the “As-Built” before acceptance.

G. role of the contractor and rapidity in the processes

17. Each company has specific organisational, managerial and technological capabilities to implement projects with choices aimed at business objectives that must follow and can enhance the client's objectives.

Its collaboration and cooperation with the project leader and the project owner, also in innovative forms, is an essential prerequisite for quality results with benefits for the community, both present and future.

The “time” issue is substantial: the time gap between the emergence of a need, its transformation into a project programme, the choice of the solution to be adopted, the development of the design and implementation phases, and its full utilisation must be reduced.

The authorities concerned check the relevance of the “crossing times” (the intervals between the end of one phase and the start of the next) of the procedural phases on the total duration.

In particular, the elaboration time of the “b. project” phase - definition in virtual reality of the project - and the realisation time must have a congruous relationship with each other.

