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reSITE 2018: The Creative Paradox of Housing

While some blame creativity as being a factor of rising the cost of living in attractive cities, thinkers, architects, municipal leaders and developers who spoke at reSITE 2018 ACCOMMODATE in Prague have unanimously called for creative solutions to the housing challenge.

“You can’t talk about housing in isolation, housing needs to have a love affair with planning,” said Ricky Burdett. *“We need creative planners,”* was heard from development and the investment side.

Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto considers that the schools, and art pieces, act as acupuncture in developing cities, touching a nerve that tweaks the whole body. *“You can’t buy creativity, you can only nurture it,”* was the observation of Amsterdam’s Night Mayor Mirik Milan, while Michel Rojkind insisted on the social reconstruction that needs to be involved in every space we design and build. *“We have to design spaces for other things to happen,”* might those other things be inclusiveness and affordability. Today’s most inspiring examples of experimenting with new living concepts were presented by MINI Living, WeLive and the civic platform URBZ.



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How and where do we want to live — and how will we afford it? Nearly 1200 visitors registered for reSITE 2018: ACCOMMODATE on June 14—15 in Prague, where a global lineup of speakers explored the future of cities and housing. Architects Jeanne Gang, Sou Fujimoto, and Michel Rojkind offered new visions for living together in public space; WeWork, MINI, and Design Haus Liberty presented bold plans for co-living, and dozens of architects, mayors, planners, and investors debated how to solve the global housing crisis. LSE Cities director Ricky Burdett’s opening keynote framed the challenge succinctly: *“Inequality is baked into the design of cities.”* What we need, he said, is *“convergence — living in the areas where everyone has the same opportunities, not opportunities based on postal code.”*

Is housing in the 21st century a commodity, a luxury, and a service, or a right? OMA/AMO partner Reinier de Graaf provocatively mapped rising inequality against the failure of 20th century housing projects: *“Social housing either gets demolished or so expensive that in either case, it’s no longer social housing.”* Co-living advocates argued for sharing what we have in the face of increasing unaffordability: *“MINI is blurring the boundaries between public and private. You have the opportunity to share with your neighbor at any scale,”* said MINI Living creative director Oke Hauser.

Sou Fujimoto sees a city as a society where you don’t have to force everybody to do something, but provide the spaces and choices. *“The schools, and art pieces, act as acupuncture in developing cities: they touch a nerve that tweaks the whole body.”*

Other speakers argued for reframing the question from what we can afford to what we can build. *“Architecture is the perfect mechanism to create relationships between people and their environment,”* said Studio Gang Founder Jeanne Gang, highlighting her firm’s work in high-rise living.

“Is architecture enough?” asked Rojkind Arquitectos’ founder Michel Rojkind. *“It’s not only about designing the spaces but also the social reconstruction.”*

An approach that is very well understood in the Albanian capital. For its Mayor Erion Veliaj, a demographic tsunami of 25-30,000 people moving to Tirana per year is an opportunity the city wants to accommodate. *“Maintaining the economic diversity is worth the price of subsidizing units and offering soft loans,”* he explained the state policy of supporting rents for struggling families and students, during his talk show with the managing director of Citylab Rob Bole. He says that politicians shouldn’t think about the next election but about the next generation. *“Children are the drivers for the most radical change,”* he added.

Discoveries and encounters at reSITE

For the first time, reSITE hosted lively and popular discussions on its intimate Live Mic Stage. Sou Fujimoto, Jeanne Gang, Ricky Burdett, Dara



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Huang, Michel Rojkind, and other speakers shared “what I’ve learned” with visitors asking about what happens behind the scenes of their work.

reSITE also hosted the premiere of the drone documentary **Elevation**. The directorial debut by Dezeen founder Marcus Fairs is an eye-opening odyssey into the future of living and urban design once drones will become as ubiquitous as the Internet. Fairs noted in his commentary that “*architects should collaborate with software engineers just as they do with structural engineers.*”

The event has again fulfilled its mission to bridge the gaps, and create long-lasting connections and relationships, by organizing social and fun events, such as the annual party in the Renaissance courtyard of Bokovka, a fun Run with Michel Rojkind, and meetups at Manifesto, the new cultural and food pop-up space powered by reSITE.

A bunch of workshops and discussions, open to the public, were curated and hosted by the team and partners of the Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project.

Memorable Quotes

Convergence is about guaranteeing that everyone has the same economic and social chances.

Ricky Burdett, LSE Cities, London, UK

There is a fundamental similarity between nature and the messy city. Structurally, Tokyo and nature are the same.

Sou Fujimoto, Sou Fujimoto Architects, Tokyo, JP

If architecture is hardware, who is designing the software? If we design spaces for “others things to happen,” they will.

Michel Rojkind, Rojkind Arquitectos, Mexico City, MX

What we should be building in addition to homes are spaces for social interactions to happen. We need to re-introduce the notion of interacting and being empathetic towards others.

Jeanne Gang, Studio Gang, Chicago, US

MINI is blurring the boundaries between public and private. You have the opportunity to share with your neighbor at any scale.

Oke Hauser, MINI Living, Munich, DE

How do you define a home? A place one lives permanently is an antiquated definition.

Dara Huang, Design Haus Liberty, London, UK

Is building more tech into our houses moving us towards connection or isolation?

Martin Barry, reSITE, Prague, US/CZ



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What does Prague want to be in 2020? We need creative planners to give us a vision. Developers should not be replacing the creative planners.
Petr Palička, Penta Real Estate, Prague, CZ

Always assess if your project is engaging community.
Elizabeth Streb, Streb Extreme Action, New York, US

We need to change – not how we think about CITIES but about METROPOLITAN AREAS.
Paulo Carvalho, City of Lisbon, PT

Crisis and disasters can be triggers for positive change and new solutions.
Marcus Fairs, Dezeen, London, UK

Small is sexy! We need more small apartments.
Darrick Borowski, WeLive, New York, US

People expect to be involved. And as designers we need to close the loop and make sure city governments are open to this engagement.
Dan Hill, Arup, London, UK

Social housing either gets demolished or so expensive that in either case, it's no longer social housing.
Reinier de Graaf, OMA, Rotterdam, NL

There are 25-30,000 people moving to Tirana per year. We turn this demographic tsunami into an opportunity. People spend 30% of their income to raise a car. 20% to raise a child.
Erion Veliaj, Mayor of Tirana, AL

The question of home is how you bring your identity to a space and make it flexible and shareable.
Guta Moura Guedes, Experimentadesign, Lisbon, PT

Assimilate is forcing something to fit into a space, accommodate is the user and the space fitting each other.
Rahul Srivastava, Matias Echanove, URBZ, Mumbai, IN

Nightlife participates in the development of neighborhoods. And it is the first to be a victim of their success.
You can't buy creativity, you can only nurture it.
Mirik Milan, Night Mayor, Amsterdam, NL

Audience Break-down

1120 guests registered for the conference (1450 including the annual party) attended by 54 percent of women and 46 percent of men – a result



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of the promotion Women Make Cities aiming to attract female designers and city makers. While 90 % of the visitors were from Europe, the remaining 10 % included guests from as far as Japan, Puerto Rico, US, Mexico, India, Hong Kong and Australia. 37 countries were represented in total.

What's Next

reSITE and the City of Lisbon made a surprise announcement at the event. The City has offered reSITE a 3-year commitment to collaborate on a major global summit for cities, and to identify and build pilot projects in the areas of student housing, cooperative housing, mobility and next generation office and creative space. reSITE is currently responding to the request and plans an announcement with full details in September.

WHAT: reSITE 2018

POWERED BY: reSITE

VENUE: Forum Karlín, Prague 8, Czech Republic

WHEN: June 14-15, 2018

PROGRAM: <https://www.resite.org/events/reSITE-2018>

PREMIUM PARTNER: Penta Real Estate

MAIN MEDIA PARTNERS: Citylab, Designboom, Dezeen, E15, Monocle

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High-resolution photographs are available upon request.

About reSITE

reSITE is a non-profit platform supporting the understanding and synergies of architecture, urbanism, politics, culture and economics. It presents the ideas and projects of internationally renowned experts to professionals and to the wider public, through events, media and consultancy. For the past six years, reSITE became a leading voice in Europe in the field of rethinking urban planning, architecture and urban development, attracting political leaders of inspirational cities to its Prague's flagship event. Being a bottom-up start-up, reSITE connects leaders across disciplines and brings a multitude of side events, debates, film screenings, exhibitions and bike rides for the general public. reSITE was founded in 2011 by Martin Barry, landscape architect, originally from New York. reSITE's guest curator is Greg Lindsay. Recently, reSITE has opened Manifesto Market, a pop-up space on an unused plot of land in the center of Prague.