> Hélène Maupas

Cities calling for...

> About the author

Hélène Maupas studied architecture at the National School of Architecture in Versailles. From 2010 to 2014 she worked as an architect and project advisor in an architectural firm. After completing an advanced masters degree in Real Estate and Urban Management at Essec Business School, she worked in an urban planning office. Since 2015, she has worked for the project management consultancy, Algoé and was part of the support team working on Reinvent Paris.

While cities and territories are searching for ideas and means to confront worldwide and local challenges, Paris has launched an open call and its impact is, at the very least, unpredictable. The 'Call for Innovative Urban Projects to Reinvent Paris' (Appel à Projets Urbains Innovants, Réinventer Paris) is a generic, open approach to governing and planning in light of the societal challenges facing the city. Facing the growing shift between institutional urban fabric and emerging urban practices, the city of Paris has chosen to experiment with an unusual tool. The guideline of the call for projects is 'urban innovation' as a way towards sustainability. It is not only about architecture, but deals with the whole city environment. To succeed, it has to gather and evolve a larger scope than the traditional and conventional real estate players. It encourages every citizen and city-maker to express and commit themselves so that urban innovation will go beyond barriers. Reinvent Paris and the call for projects stimulates the debate. The procedure is meant to be improved through a process of transposition. transformation and implementation. It also offers opportunities of inclusive urban practices to cities and territories that I discuss below through the laureate project of the site Ordener.

> CALL-FOR-FRAMEWORKS

The Call for (urban) projects procedure is a legal innovation the city has worked on. A call for projects is an 'exception' of the French law. Urban planning, including architectural competitions, is strongly controlled by the French code of public procurement. These regulations provide a rigorous framework at every stage of the public procedure where formal participation is applied at an advanced stage of the planning procedure. To promote urban innovation and to engage individuals into the process, the city of Paris has needed to pursue a softer approach, less restrictive and more inclusive.

> Transpose & Transform

The procedure of call for projects is a clever translation of an existing planning procedure, commonly used for private property sales by the public administration. It is not so obvious to understand how the city of Paris and its partners were allowed to use public assets for a call for projects. Misunderstood at its beginning, it is important to remember that Reinvent Paris is not an architectural competition, even though architecture is one of its purposes. It is important to understand that the assets of French local authorities are divided into two categories - public domain and private properties . The second one concerns our procedure. Private properties submitted to Reinvent Paris are not part of the public domain - consequently their sales are not subjected to French competitive procedures. This juridical latitude has allowed the city of Paris to transform and adapt its approach. Thanks to this, Paris and its partners have been able to

propose an unconventional wide range of sites with spectacular locations, patrimonial issues and even plots that were unsellable under normal procedures.

The call for projects is rather a framework to reach defined objectives than a direct command where means are already defined. Mastering the call for framework has not happened all at once. Reinvent Paris is not the first trial within Paris or within other French territories. For example, a call for co-housing was launched in 2014, aiming at promoting innovative housing, social mix and new lifestyles . Through this call, the city of Paris ensured real political support for the alternative movement and inclusive process of co-housing. The city of Paris engaged in an urban policy by signing a 'Charte pour l'habitat participatif" and took action with the call for co-housing. In the same way, Reinvent Paris is a commitment toward the future metropolis. By defining the object of the call for projects as 'land property sales' and its objectives as 'reinvent Paris through urban innovation', the city managed to widen a tiny window into a bright open door, remarkable in its purpose - urban innovation; by its size - 23 sites; and by its appeal with 815 demonstrations of interest in stage 1 of the process.

> Implement and improve

Other calls have been used more or less quietly in different French public authorities. Experienced as a tool for sustainable cities, regional governments have themselves entered into partnership approaches, shaking up conventional practices (MAUPAS, 2014). The City technical engineering services have been improved to handle the whole process. Project management has been tested out and implemented - breaking with the conventional "silo" organization of public structures. The City has deployed a temporary, transversal and multi-disciplinary task force, reinforced by external expertise and external project management assistance (LABASSE et al., 2016). At the same time, communication strategy has been rethought to transform the call for into a node where alternative movements can be linked together. A numerical platform "MEET UP" and its physical counterparts were specially organized to promote and spread the call. Virtual and physical events have been an opportunity for individuals to meet. This improvement of public communication has assured a very wide diffusion through innovative, social, architectural, environmental and real estate spheres. Call for Innovative Urban Projects stimulates an energizing dynamic and reveals the innovative Nebula (D'ORAZIO, 2012).

As cities face growing social and environmental challenges, Call for projects appears as a framework aiming to develop ecosystems and enhance initiatives. It reinforces sustainable planning practices, shifting from a conventional unilateral approach. Call for framework enables local governments to implement a place for inclusive processes and multilateral actions. Call for projects is a shape-shifting framework (MAUPAS, 2014) undertaken by cities and regions. It is flexible enough to absorb new urban processes and durable enough to be replicated and transformed. Implemented as an urban planning tool, it offers opportunities to enhance alternative urban options.

> LEARNING FROM ORDENER

For a year, Paris has become an inspiring and important test bed. The City and its public partners submitted 23 land and real estate properties to the call. For the City of Paris, innovation has to be deployed in the diversity of the city, dealing with local situations and regulations. Urban innovation should not come out of nowhere. The city sees taking urban context into account as a necessary condition (LABASSE et al., 2016) to reproduce, duplicate and transform experimentation into new urban practices. The Laureate Project on the Ordener site synthesizes new trends and offers strong material to learn from. The project is named Tranches de vie meaning Stages of life. Through reflexions on co-housing, the project team managed to pursue a larger dynamic and sorted out a complex and substantial project. Full of constraints and unattractive for normal planning procedures, the Ordener site seems to have succeeded in reinventing itself.

> Inclusive and city-open programming

With 1800m², "Ordener" is one of the smallest plots in the call, but nevertheless it has severe constraints. The City of Paris had been willing to cede the plot for years, without any success. Besides the urban regulations applying to the plot, the City had expected a programme to include a creche with 40 places and 25 residential units of housing . The laureate team met these demands through a programme of co-housing. It developed social housing diversity (renting social housing, accessing social housing, property housing); new uses and lifestyles with Do It Yourself spaces, cooperative coffee shop and a multi-purpose room, and placed circular economy practices at the centre of its processes. The plot is characterized by a singular urban pattern, which added a

further level of complexity. It is elongated and its narrower part (barely 8metres wide) is next to its one-public-access-point and is closed off by the neighbouring gable end. Technical issues added a final level of constraints. Its soil was polluted by past industrial activities and required specific remedial action. The laureate design managed to open the plot to the public and transform this dead-end into a promenade. The nursery was located at the bottom of the plot - commercial activities at the entrance, inviting people to come in. The urban connection starts from the ground and continues over the roof. Inhabitant' roof gardens and original views are shared with the neighbourhood. Inclusive and creative architectural design and city-open programming enabled the team to go beyond the urbanistic constraints. The whole site reflects a project based on shared social, environmental and civic values. The call for framework has created a place where inter-connected thinking and collective ways of working are possible.

> Emerging players and partnership

The Laureate team is multi-disciplinary and involves a complete range of real estate players. In regard to this association, three relevant elements are signposts for new urban practice in participatory architecture and urban planning. The first one results from Paris' previous call. One unselected group from Paris' call for co-housing projects is part of the laureate team. This phenomenon reveals the learning process of the call. It is not only about professional practice evolution, but also about individual training and citizenship action. The group of future inhabitants gathers seventeen families, organized into a legal entity. It is integrated into the whole process, including the urban and architectural programming. Individuals and citizens are no longer restricted users but become active participants. To manage this transformation, the group of inhabitants was advised by two professional co-housing assistants. The development of this emerging practice is the second relevant point. A specific field of engineering is emerging so that non-professional and conventional actors can develop a shared language based on shared values. Participative housing is no longer distinct from conventional housing. Both practices converge in an inclusive and creative partnership. The third relevant point is the commitment of traditional real estate players. Co-housing is a learning process for all. In 2011, Union Sociale pour l'Habitat (USH) edited Le livre Blanc de l'habitat participatif inviting social operators to learn from these experiments Putting these insights into practice in the Ordener project, operators, constructors and facilities managers have started an open-ended discourse. Participation is applied at an early stage of the process. New collaborative partnerships and co-design have replaced classical schemes of real estate production (Maupas, 2014).

The laureate project reveals that the co-housing movement is mature enough to be completely inclusive, involving conventional real estate actors as well as local citizens. Re-appropriated by the team, co-housing processes have been enlarged to the whole range of city environmental issues, meeting the purpose of the call for urban innovation. Reinvent Paris has created a melting-pot where co-housing processes, participatory urban reflections and realistic real estate issues come together as a singular project. This achievement brings about a critical condition of success, where individuals and real estate players need to acquire knowledge and learn from shared experience. These would constitute a spatial culture (Heussler M., Jenni P. and Kurath S., 2015) where individuals appear as emerging and wise players of the urban fabric.

Reinvent Paris and its predecessors will hopefully encourage cities and regions to pursue their trials on inclusive urban policies. The Call for framework appears to be a powerful instrument at their disposal. It seems flexible and durable enough to be a melting-pot where ideas and initiatives can flourish. It is a dynamic tool and a learning process. Its demands adaptability and agility from local governance and flexibility from all the players. To ensure inclusiveness and active participation, the call for projects must go along with adapted communications, education and technical support. These key points must not only apply to submitters but also to cities and regions. The Call for framework may lead to unpredictable inclusive urbanism, which would reinforce the social dimension in urban concerns and make it more sustainable.

Some powerful trends are emerging but questions remain.

Is the call for innovative urban projects a gauge of quality and durability?

Will projects actually be realised accordingly to the laureate team designs or will significant changes emerge before project implementation?

What will become of the enormous work and reflexion of all the unsuccessful proposals?

Is the call positive or a waste of time and money? Some people are unhappy with the call and its approach as they do not think that private companies should be involved in public spaces or contribute to public amenities.

Are individual and private financial investments worth it?

As individual and professional expectations are high, so is controversy. While Paris and its surrounding areas are throwing themselves into a new Call for projects (March 2016 - Reinvent the Seine,) we can hope that the call-for-framework will be improved further. On the one hand, this experience hopefully reminds Parisians and all citizens more generally that they can be part of the development of their own territory. On the other hand, it prays for adaptability and creativity among the conventional real estate players. From the operator to the architect and local governments, it seems that urban innovation can really only be tackled through participatory and inclusive processes. That it is what cities are calling for.

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