



public space  
2022

**polis**

**travelling exhibition**

**The European Prize for Urban Public Space is a biennial award organized by the Barcelona Contemporary Culture Centre (CCCB), which, since 2000, has recognised the best projects in terms of creation, transformation and recovery of public spaces, understood as a clear indicator of the democratic health in european cities.**



# in favour of urban public space

Over many centuries, Europe has produced cities that are exemplary in terms of their compactness, diversity, and human scale. One of its great contributions in this regard has unquestionably been its way of understanding and experiencing urban public space.

In European cities, the natural setting for the Prize, public space plays a key role as a collective meeting place imbued with political, economic, and social values, which are inseparable from a physical design that harbours them and makes them possible. Accordingly, in observing the quality of public spaces, the Prize also becomes a project that draws attention to and invites reflection on the quality of life and democratic condition of European cities.

Europe's cities are facing challenges and transformations that are present in urban realities around the world. Hence, the Prize offers a special perspective from our most immediate reality in a more comprehensive debate on the future of cities, which is becoming increasingly important every day in an ever more urbanised world. Thinking about the European city means thinking about particular solutions that are

presently materialising in Europe in response to the worldwide challenge of the urban future.

Today, the climate emergency has transformed global agendas and has become a crucial part of urban thinking. Problems like shortages, rising sea levels, and the pandemic present challenges for cities, for which there are still no clear solutions, and which also have a direct impact on urban design and public spaces. Moreover, increasing inequality and the effects of technological transformations are factors that have a direct impact on urban conditions everywhere. The Prize aims to reflect the centrality of these issues and to serve as an observatory that facilitates possible solutions for a future where cities will play a key role in defining the evolution of human society.

The Prize endorses an open, compact city of universal access, guaranteeing harmonious coexistence of citizens, mixed uses, and sustainable mobility, while also preserving the historical memory of places, and favouring the participation of citizens in the design of its shared spaces.



# the prize



Over eleven editions of the **European Prize for Urban Public Space**, a total of 2,532 works from 35 European countries have been submitted. During this period, 20 prizes and 35 mentions have been awarded by different juries formed by international experts in fields such as architecture, history and theory, urban planning, landscape design, agriculture engineering or anthropology.

The Prize has therefore become a window with privileged perspectives on the transformation of public spaces in Europe and a gauge of the main concerns of European cities. Emerging from the Prize, the online European Archive of Urban Public Space brings together the best 382 works from all the awards.

The Prize has several distinguishing features.

First, it is conceded to both the architect and the branch of public administration (council or political representative) that has taken the political decision to produce the intervention and, frequently, to guarantee its funding as well. Second, is the honorific nature of the Prize. Third, the Prize is not so much concerned, at least not uniquely or as a priority, with large-scale urban planning operations as it is with interventions—great or small—that aim, above all, to improve the lives of citizens. Priority is given, then, to architecture with a social vocation rather than to that with an aesthetic or spectacular accent. This enables us to situate architects who are as yet unknown or just starting to be known, alongside the great names of architecture. Fourth, the Prize is distinctive in its clearly European vocation. While respecting local particularities, it is concerned to pay tribute to the common features of urban planning interventions throughout the geographic space of Europe, and to endorse and make known a certain European identity in the domain of architecture.



# “polis” exhibition

Created in 2014 and based on the accumulated experience of the European Prize for Urban Public Space, the “Polis” exhibition shows the best projects presented for the Prize, thematically grouped in order to offer a broad overview of the democratic quality of Europe’s public spaces. Since then, the exhibition has been shown in Prague, Bilbao, Kiev, Budapest, Brussels, , Mexico City, Sant Petersburg and New York, among others.

In 2023, under the comission of the Spanish Embassy in the US and coinciding with the Spanish presidency of the European Union, the CCCB presents a revised version of “Polis” which, on this special occasion, focuses on the best works of intervention in public space in Spain during the last twenty years. The exhibition is, then, a journey through 25 projects showing the improvement of public spaces in Spanish cities, reflecting on globally shared challenges, and presenting solutions that contribute to more democratic cities. The exhibition is to be opened at Dupont Underground, Washington, on October 2023, after which it can be shown in other American cities.



st. petersburg 2016





# content

The exhibition is organised around four thematic areas showing the different meanings of democratisation of public spaces:

## introductory vestibule

Foam panel, 1.5m x 1.5m with introductory text.  
Showing of introductory video on a screen of 1.5m x 1.5m (low sound).

## four similar sections:

Screening of the section video  
Foam panels, 1.5m high and 0.75m wide for each of the 5 or 6 projects

## inclusion

## sustainability

## memory

## participation

## final part

Screening of the project “shared spaces”  
Selection of books on public space and urban issues  
Credits



prague 2022



# sections

## **inclusion**

Some urban transformations demonstrate their democratic vocation by redistributing wealth and opportunities to the bottom of the social pyramid. They seek to leave no one behind by putting the most vulnerable at the center and correcting discrimination based on factors such as income level, age, physical abilities, origin, identity or gender. Sometimes, this is achieved by providing universal access to basic resources, green spaces or fundamental locations. Other times, by facilitating daily care, guaranteeing the right to mobility or housing, removing architectural barriers or reversing spatial segregation. In short, combating rising inequalities and understanding that social cohesion is a necessary condition for the proper functioning of any city.

## **sustainability**

Also imbued with a democratic spirit are the urban transformations that seek to improve the legacy that next generations will receive. They try to avoid putting them into debt with expenses that will not benefit them, wasting energy resources or materials that they will need, or damaging the environment where they will live. They achieve this by increasing urban vegetation, installing renewable generation systems, closing the water cycle or implementing mobility solutions that reduce consumption and emissions. Also by promoting a mixed and compact city model, which is the most sensible and efficient way to combat emergencies such as global warming, loss of biodiversity, territorial depredation and the multiple forms of pollution that threaten public health.

## **memory**

Another way to democratize the city is to understand it as a palimpsest where our ancestors have left valuable legacies that can be extremely useful to the urban dwellers of the present and the future. Memory allows us to draw the best lessons from the past so that each generation does not have to start from scratch and can progress from an advanced starting point. This

is the aim of interventions dedicated to healing the wounds inflicted on historic fabrics, to discovering unforgivable oblivion within them or to activating their pre-existence with new uses and meanings without undermining their cultural and heritage values. In short, those that avoid the tabula rasa and prioritize the reform, recycling, reuse or rehabilitation of what is already built rather than its demolition, replacement or the development of a new construction.

## **participation**

And, of course, interventions that start from a bottom-up organization with the purpose of sharing collective decision making are also democratic. When properly articulated, they are capable of overcoming anti-democratic impositions such as technocracy, clientelism, NIMBY (not in my backyard) populism or abuse of power. They are thus able to respond much better to the real needs of their beneficiaries, while fostering a participatory culture based on rigorous reflection, polyphonic debate, transparency and accountability. Perhaps they even succeed in turning the indifferent or the selfish into responsible, critical, conscientious, involved and empowered citizens.

## **shared spaces**

Screening of the project "Shared Spaces", a collection of brief interviews about public space with experts from different disciplines and backgrounds.

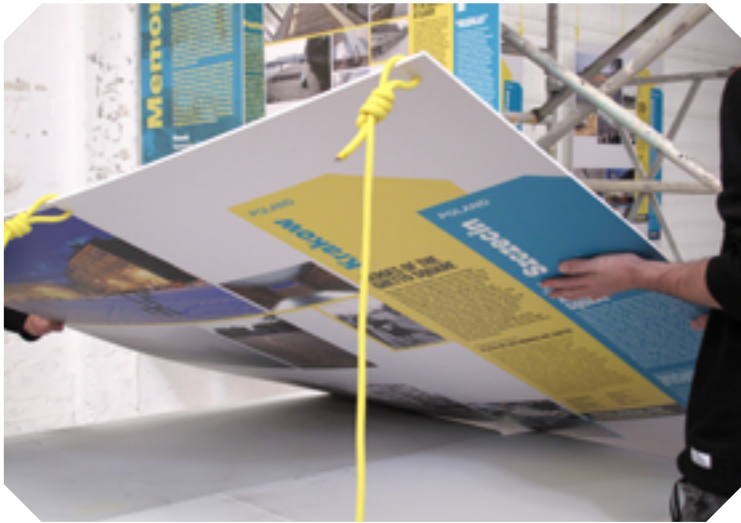
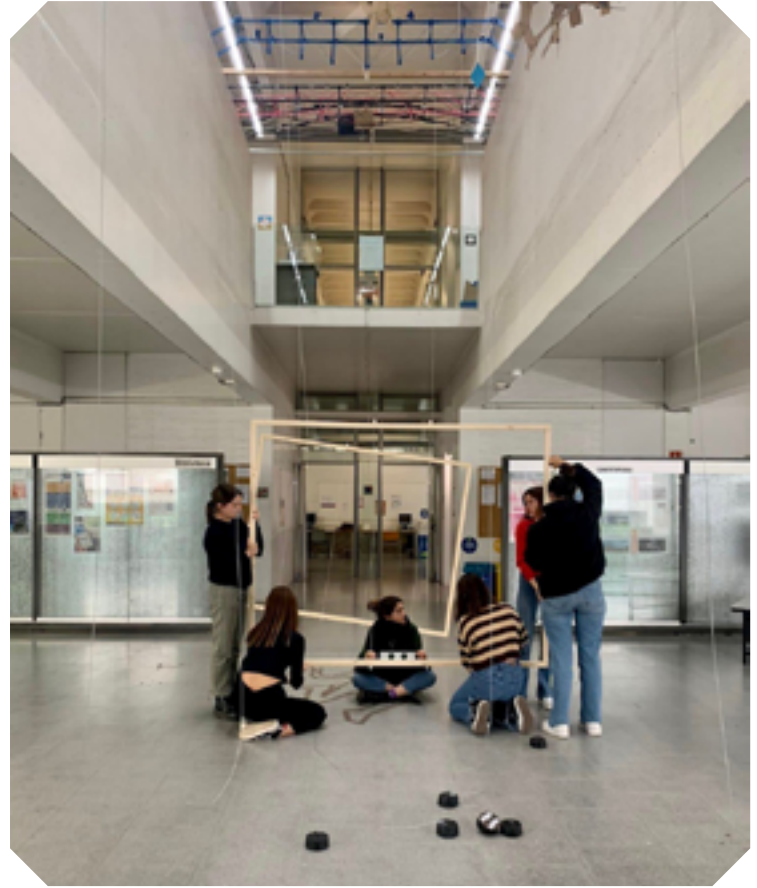
Among the 50 distinguished interviewees are:

Richard Sennett  
Judith Butler  
Saskia Sassen  
Ira Katznelson  
Ash Amin  
Luc Boltanski  
Dipesh Chakrabarty  
Nancy Fraser  
Zygmunt Bauman  
and Teju Cole



# assembly elements

- x1 foam panel of 1.5m x 1.5m for the Introduction.
- x25 foam panels of 1.5 x 0.75m for the 24 projects and the credits.
- x8 triangles of the logo in 3D made of foam. The measure for the long side of the triangle is 1.5m.
- Wiring to hang the triangles from the ceiling. x4 arrows for the logo at the entrance and x4 arrows for each of the sections.
- x9 projections. x1 for the Introduction and x2 for each of the sections.
- x1 large screen TV for "Shared Spaces"
- x5 poufs or sofas
- x1 table for books
- General lightning





# past exhibitions

new york 2014



new york 2014



prague 2022



# past exhibitions

**bilbao 2021**



**kiev 2019**



**barcelona 2014**





# past exhibitions

brussels 2017



budapest 2018



barcelona 2014



**The Centre de Cultura Contemporània  
Barcelona is a multidisciplinary cultural  
centre working in areas related with the key  
challenges faced by contemporary society.**

**Among its main concerns are cities, as  
physical structures but also, and essentially,  
as basic political and cultural entities.**

**CCCB** Centre de Cultura  
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de Barcelona



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