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On the importance of the design process

Giving space

How do we do it? **Together**

The first thing a client has when he knocks on an architect's door with a dream, an ambition or a wish, is a question. The first contact between client and designer is above all a stimulus and an occasion for intense collaboration. Being an architect's client is not so much a matter of customer involvement as of a partnership centred on the individual character of the client and the designer. They want to work together on a project that does not yet exist. The client looks to the designer to imagine and create for him or her something that is not yet there: a collaboration between client and designer requiring a risk commitment on both sides. The client does not yet know exactly what he wants, but he does have aspirations. He thinks in terms of questions and not of ready-made answers.
The designer searches for an answer that offers more than the customer expects or can imagine. The future is yet to be 'made'. There are no ready-made solutions, just a common challenge with new questions and new answers, which must lead to a real, feasible project. These are mainly open questions and wishes with their own benefits and limitations.

The client should be in search of a precise formulation of his commission where particular needs can give rise to a number of open questions such as:
- Is a house a place to set life in stone, or a place for change?
- Is there a connection between the place where you are building and the landscape you occupy? Is the land you use also of added value to the community? Is the client prepared to integrate into the urban environment and how can this be done in an intelligent and subtle way?
- Is a commercial building a specific workplace or a space where running of a business can be optimised?
- Is a government building a recognisable place for the public or is it a political statement? And what is its connection with its surroundings, with urban life, how do you get there and how do you leave it?
- Is architecture nostalgia, continuity or (multi)culture?
- Is the sustainability of a project sometimes transience or true durability?

The designer as partner is looking for motivation for the design that is both specific and universal:
- Is a construction project more than a three-dimensional rendition of square metres, functions and wishes?
- What added value can the designer offer in terms of space and use, culture and tradition, ecology and economics? Should account be taken of the public, as well as of the construction costs, energy consumption, operating costs, ecological use of materials and even location?
- When you produce a building, its surroundings should also be the better for it (design wise, but also functionally, culturally…). Only then can we speak of a high quality building. So how do we define the commission?
- Is construction consumption or sustainable investment?
- Why make something new if it already exists?

At the start of a project nobody has an answer to all these questions – fortunately, otherwise designers would operate like supermarkets with off-the-peg solutions in square-metre sizes.
If a project is genuinely to offer added value, each design process must be a process leading to a result that offers more socio-culturally than the reasons and ideas that lay at its basis.
This is why architecture is not about the known but about the unknown, about things that are not yet visible – because they can be brought together in a design process.
BURO II & ARCHI+I makes this approach the core concept of every commission, leading to the satisfaction of a well-constructed project. Thus, the client is far more than a customer. He is a 'partner in crime' in the intention of leaving both society and client the better for it.

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