

## Courage should be on Europ(I)an's agenda

**Architects, clients, European winners and other people present at the first gathering of Europlan on January 25, 2016 were very clear: there was unanimous support for Europlan as an important means to give young architects a profile. Continuation of the Dutch participation in Europlan Europe adds greatly to the renewal of the Dutch design culture in a European context. Europlan Netherlands can once more become a leading organization to accomplish this, in collaboration with established practices, former winners and new partners - provided a number of things change.**



*Ruben Lentz and Janne Verstappen, Bloc:  
"We see a strong new role for architects who respond with intelligence spatially."*



*Pim Köther, winner Europlan #1: "Thanks to Europlan, we started an office.(..) Renewal of Europlan means: an open start, a focus on a form of realization and more of a study."*

### Designers

Europlan has traditionally stood for quality and for architectural influence on relevant social questions. Young architects with a distinct profile can get in the picture with Europlan. In this competition they are offered a chance to connect theory, technical and design skills to the problems of the future. Europlan is a vital tool in bringing the right people together in a time where technological innovation seems to be decisive factor in architectural design. All previous Europlan winners – from Europlan 1 in 1988 until Europlan 12 in 2013 –, present at the gathering on January 25, agree on this: it marked the start of their professional career and often their office. Even if their design wasn't executed, the international Europlan gatherings meant the build up of a network with clients and other partners. The innovative power of Europlan lies in forms of coalitions with innovators and producers. That's the core and that's where its strength lies, provided it's expanded with new parties and more knowledge is shared.

### Partners

Europlan is not only an architect's issue - it's also about clients. Public commissioners of the past are however no longer the evident partners of today as they lack both mandate and means. New partners must be found that are inclined to participate based on new project definitions and matching ideas on the concept of realization. Tradition building practice does not necessarily lead to innovation, yet clients are still in need of new solutions. The partners present at the gathering on January 25th, amongst them Waternet, AMC, Heijmans and BLOC, promoted a new, leading role for architects that know how to smartly navigate new spatial possibilities. The power of design defines new topics, or: they need the input of architects to imagine the implications of new technological possibilities. They are prepared to invest in research by design and search for a dialogue with

architects to undertake this adventure together – in full awareness that in European design is leading. These new partners are not keen on dozens of plans, they prefer a limited amount of proposals that really deal with their questions. As such they see a renewed European as a two-phase competition with a theoretical angle in the first round. Clients are prepared to invest in research but to a lesser amount than in the second round (when they know what they're investing in). In the second phase they don't mind to commit themselves more clearly (financing can then become part of the question, the financial feasibility of a commission, certainly in the second phase). Like this, the two-year period of European - that is problematic to most partners - can be used more effectively. Moreover, they remind us of the big investments made by young architects, even though the chance of a prize or a commission is remote. That's simply no longer justifiable.



*Maarten Claassen, Waternet: "Clients do not know what the solutions are either. It's about the power of design, imagination. That's the added value. Debate about building patronage and architecture is important."*



*Floris Alkemade, Chief Government Architect: "Perhaps European should put the enthusiasm and courage of architects on the agenda again. A two-phased competition structure is a very good idea. The first phase examines what the research question is."*

### **Assignments**

Architects can influence critical spatial and social issues in the Netherlands and in Europe. Good assignments for European are assignments that examine the problems of the future. Like sustainable refurbishment of the existing housing stock (anticipating a time when energy bills might be higher the rent), possibilities for creating circular economies, energy transition (the Dutch province of Groningen does not only have an earthquake problem, but also a gas exploration problem), new building types in which healthcare, energy, food, building innovation and ICT are integrated, interaction with nature, water and climate (what is the degree of acceptance of for instance flooding, and what contribution can design bring to this issue?). New, important issues pose a challenge to those who have the imagination and to those who have the money and power to achieve something.

### **Think and Act**

Problems can be better solved if the available expertise and experience, both within and outside the European network of European, are better exploited. The power is in the network, which should be expanded with new disciplines. The exchange of expertise should be increased whilst ensuring that the dialogue does not become too abstract so that clients can no longer identify with it. It is therefore also about the formulation and examination of the theoretical challenges inherent in the European formula.

Renewal of the European formula means: an open beginning, so that theory and practice can be linked through a thorough examination of the assignments. The realisation is not always paramount in the usual sense of the word. Other forms of 'realisation' are conceivable, such as a study model, a seat at the negotiating table, a master plan or a follow-up assignment.

## Focus

After the people present outlined all of the above Chief Government architect Floris Alkemade concluded his comments on the proceedings that all agree on the difficult position of young architects today. They are confronted with a huge inflation in terms of design itself, but at the same time don't take the time to fundamentally question the profession of architecture. What can architects offer to clients are also searching for new directions? The rules of the game are changing all the time. A focus on conceptualization is a solution.

Where are architects essential? If we combine living and working or health care, what would that look like? Or living with temporary facilities (such as refugee accommodation)? How should we deal with the issue of loneliness that comes with an ageing society, and how can we solve that through the design of housing or neighbourhoods? It is important for architects to research such questions and think about how to answer them and to think about the future. The crisis years were marked by a modest role for architects. Sustainability and green issues topped the agenda, while the power of built solutions receded into the background. Perhaps Europlan should put the enthusiasm and courage of architects on the agenda again, says Alkemade. A two-phased structure is a good idea, when the first phase examines the questions. Architects could even propose their own sites and demonstrate what they could add. Europlan builds a bridge between young professionals and the harsh reality of practice. Realization from unexpected quarters: that's important for Europlan.



*Liesbeth van der Pol, former President of Europlan Nederland : "Europlan in its current form could not innovate in terms of clients or commissions.(..) Europlan is a vital tool in bringing the right people together. What form should a renewed Europlan take?"*

## **Participants to the first gathering of Europlan**

**Floris Alkemade** Dutch Chief Government Architect / **Thijs Asselbergs** ATA Architects, Professor of Architectural Engineering at the Technical University of Delft, Board Member Europlan / **Stef Bogaerds** Town Planner, Atelier ZZ, Architectuur Lokaal / **Maarten Claassen** Strategic Advisor & Process Manager Waternet / **Freek Dech** Economist, Dechnology / **Charlotte ten Dijke** TANGRAM, Winner Europlan #1 / **Peter Dordregter** Dordregter Advies, former Treasurer/Secretary Europlan Europe, former Vice President Europlan Nederland, former Director of the Association of Dutch Municipalities / **Agnes Evers** former Legal Expert BNA / **Cilly Jansen** Architectural Historian, Director of Architectuur Lokaal / **Hanneke Kijne** Landscape Architect HOSPER NL Landscape Architecture and Urban Design, Member of the Jury Europlan #11 / **Jan-Richard Kikkert** Architectenbureau K2, Winner Europlan #6 / **Margot de Jager**, Architectuur Lokaal / **Ira Koers** Bureau Ira Koers, Winner Europlan #4 / **Maarten Kloos** former Board Member Europlan Nederland, former Director ARCAM / **Indira van 't Klooster** Architectural Historian, Chief Editor A10 New European Architecture, Coordinator Europlan, sr. project manager Architectuur Lokaal / **Vincent Kompier**, Town Planner, Project Leader Atelier ZZ, Architectuur Lokaal, textoor / **Pim Köther** kenk architecten, Winner Europlan #1 / **Rik Lambers** MVRDV Architects / **Ruben Lentz** Bloc / **Chris Luth** Architect, Independent Curator, Winner Europlan #8 / **Lot Locher** Product & Services Developer Amsterdam Rainproof / **Madeleine Maaskant** Architect, Director Amsterdam Academy of Architecture, Winner Europlan #4 / **Lars Mosman** Manager Area Development Heijmans / **Arjan Oosterman** Chief Editor Volume / **Liesbeth van**

**der Pol** DOK Architects, Supervisor Schiphol, former President of European Nederland, former Dutch Chief Government Architect / **Jan Post** Institute Service Leadership, former president of Board of Philips / **Thérèse van Schie** President Europlan, Independent Management Consulting Professional / **Emile Spek** Property Director Academisch Medisch Centrum Amsterdam, former Board Member European Nederland / **Ügür Sütçü** Architect, Bekkering Adams Architects / **Henk van der Veen** Director Archiprix / **Janne Verstappen** bloc/ **Petar Zaklanovic** Basic City, Winner European #12 / **Julietta Zanders** Architect, Professional Experience Programme PEP

## **Background**

*European Netherlands, founded in 1988, fell behind in a changed environment after 27 years. The board of the European Netherlands Foundation decided on a change of course. To provide Europlan with a kick-off for future plans, the foundation organized a reunion with former winners and asked Elisabeth Keller & Chris Luth to do research into opportunities for innovation. Subsequently, Architectuur Lokaal (ANBI Public Benefit Organisation, NGO) was asked to examine the feasibility of continuation of the European design competition for talented young architects, from an updated vision in a contemporary context, within the European network. Through the newly founded independent foundation Europlan, Architectuur Lokaal has helped Europlan to give an impulse to reshape European Netherlands. From January 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, Europlan has transferred all activities and heritage to Europlan. The main focal points of Europlan are: Profiling of up and coming design talent in the context of current issues in the Netherlands and Europe, possibilities for realization of contemporary projects in the broadest sense, in which innovative and inclusive solutions can be put into practice, focus on the ideal format for design competitions with contemporary partners and contemporary views on realization, in order to provide broad opportunities for development of talent in a European context. Initial discussions with new partners were promising. On January 25<sup>th</sup> 2016, Europlan organized a public meeting to discuss the principles of a new start for European Netherlands.*

## **More information?**

Sent an [e-mail](#) to Foundation [Europlan](#)

*Foto's: Ringel Goslinga*