City building strategy Curridabat, Costa Rica

Summary and appraisal of the project by the jury

A project-as-process, the plan for an eastern suburb of San José envisions the city in coexistence with its flora and fauna. The project overlays several networks of interventions. The current parks are rehabilitated and some transformed into new wetlands for flood mitigation. Roads double their function to act as “biocorridors” linking parks and forests particularly for pollinators that bring great benefits for biodiversity. Punctual interventions for meeting points and cultural facilities at the neighborhood level are realized through participatory planning and renovation. Together, the discrete layers reconfigure the habitat of flora, fauna, and human beings as “citizens” of Curridabat.

The jury was impressed with the close coordination between the municipality, community groups, and planners to transform dreams into reality. Though the project has honorable aims, the jury noted that its focus on the design of processes partially overshadows the design of the architectural outcome. Good governance and community participation, in this case, must be complemented by equally ambitious objectives concerning the formal and spatial qualities of the final product. This said, the jury valued the project’s emphasis on governance - or governmentalism, to borrow an expression coined by Michel Foucault – and its socio-spatial implications for urban design.

Acknowledgement prize 2017

Latin America