

The rules of the game: context before concept.**Comparative assessment of urban interventions in In-Between-Cities****Abstract**

There is little known about the definition of urban projects, their functionality regarding specific urban settings and their adequate size and design approach. Each city, regardless of its position in the network of cities, has its mores and its languages, has its rules. Those determine the game for successful urban interventions.

As they should question the social set of a place and challenge its rules of the game, a careful cultural assessment of the situations previously to design decisions becomes a new foundation for design briefs, stressing the origin and allowing hybrid forms. Urban interventions are not only a goal on their own behalf, but also they act as strategic advices in the perspective of a future vision. Therefore they have to be in symbiosis with the existing society and respect their rules.

The paper explores strategies for urban projects identifying key dimensions of program assessment. Furthermore it examines the relationship between the cultural profile of the Swiss city Mendrisio and the character of two recent urban interventions. The determination of their relative impact on this very context suggests that the accurate definition of the context (design maturity) is what makes urban projects more successful.