



WP 4 Energy Supply

Elaboration of technical documentation in Rakvere

Results of the architectural competition and their further development in Rakvere

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Background to the architectural competition

Rakvere City Government announced an idea competition in the beginning of 2010 in order to alter the Seminari Street into a Linear Park and reconstructing the façades of the dwelling buildings adjacent to the area. Both architectural and landscape architectural aspects were combined in the idea competition. The task included designing the street area into landscape architectural environment as well as the idea for reconstruction of dwelling houses. Solutions where the components of both tasks are resolved in a way where they compliment each other, forming an integral environment were expected. Architectural solutions for the renewal of the façades of the typical dwelling houses originating from Soviet era were expected and the façades were expected to be resolved according to the contemporary requirements. Also, landscape architectural solutions were expected in order to alter the area of Seminari Street into an attractive urban landscape and connecting corridor between the heart of the city and the forest situated in the southern part of the town.

Both architects and landscape architects participated in the competition, since the architectural and landscape architectural tasks were integrated in the idea competition.

The goal of arranging the idea competition was to consider as many solutions as possible and to find amongst them a potential idea solution that would provide continuous high level of public urban architecture in Rakvere.





Historical background and present situation of the pilot area

The urban space of Seminari

Seminari Street is an interesting street and claimed to be a “mystery of urban architecture”. The street is planned in the 20’s of the last century but the classicistic building ending the street space in the south is built decades before that. The street is built in a boastful way that was originally planned to be a boulevard but due to the circumstances those aspirations never became true. Today the street is bordered by the houses originating from different times and having different architectural styles and sizes.

Seminari Street is situated in a most densely populated area in Rakvere. The reason for that is that typical apartment buildings were built around the area during Soviet period. Ordinary, the apartment houses were built mainly on the outskirts of the town, separately from the core of the city. However, this was not the case in Rakvere, where such houses were erected in the very centre or near the centre of the town, in between the existing housing stock. On one hand those standard-looking giant houses destroy the general town image. Nevertheless, on the other hand, it actually has a strong positive side. This keeps the city from diffusing as well as its citizens in the centre of the town and around it. That in its turn results in keeping the human activity in the centre of the town and that is also directly reflected in the town itself. The most active pedestrian areas in town are Laada and Seminari Street together with the Promenade and Central Square.

Although at first Seminari street was planned to be a boulevard, the present situation does not allow those plans to be fulfilled. The underground routes of communication are so tangled there, so that without any major reorganization, there is no possibility for such a boulevard. Therefore, an idea came along to search some alternatives for a classic boulevard. Moreover, a new creative approach would enable the creation of new spatial quality, expand existing activity options and turn more attention to pedestrians that are most important in this area at the moment as well as most probably in the future.

The street is quite wide and there are two lines for cars in both driving directions. On both sides of the roads there are sidewalks of medium width. Between the two roads, there is a green patch without any specific furbishing along the road. That long green patch is mostly used for walking dogs and has therefore become a kind of “mind-field”. A large part of the street space is meant for cars but the four-line street that was planned during the time the city was hastily developing, is actually clearly over-dimensioned when taking into account the actual developing of the town since the car traffic has never been too active in this area. At the same time pedestrians used it even more actively. Therefore, Seminari Street is obviously underutilized at the moment. All in all, regardless of its pomposity, the street looks quite empty, lonely and desolated.

As far as traffic is concerned, Seminari Street is lacking importance, since it is not a transit road or a highway. In principle, it is a channel street of a block that is used for getting to the houses located in that very block. The street does not start anywhere and it does not end anywhere. It would be more reasonable to alter the spatial proportions between the motor vehicles and pedestrians, reduce the speed of the cars and plan the methods for cooling down the traffic as such leaving only a minimum degree of traffic guaranteeing the access to the houses.



The conditions of the architectural competition stressed that the relative importance of greenery should be increased providing different activity options for different target and age groups. The wish was to have an environment with an attractive urban character for active time spending and of interest for the citizens that live around the block as well as for those coming from other parts of the town - for those people that use this area as a recreational corridor (from City Square to Town Forest on the southern side) as well as for those who take a walk through this area.

The dwelling houses of the pilot area

Around the Seminari Street, a lot of typical apartment buildings originating from Soviet era are situated. Located in the middle of the town, for everybody to see, they directly influence the general impression of the town. The houses have poor heatproof and a non-characteristic appearance. Due to the low heat efficiency, sooner or later most of them will be reconstructed. When refurbishing the houses, it is reasonable to look at all the important aspects of such activity, which means that besides the technical and economical side, attention should also be paid on the general appearances of the houses. However, if the decision over the architectural appearances will solely be left on the housing association that does not have enough knowledge on that matter, only price will be the determiner when choosing between different options. Nevertheless, apart from the price tag, the appearances and emotional value are very important as far as a home is concerned. Therefore, it is likely that when a housing association is being able to choose among interesting and original architectural solutions, the probability that solutions that will be implemented in reality, will also be nice to look at, will certainly increase significantly. Also, the houses should form an integral environment.

The aim of the architectural competition for the reconstruction of the façades of the multi-apartment buildings was to find the best way for saving energy and change the area into more friendly, personal, caring, cozy and more dignified area, making the houses and the public space more attractive.

It was important that the participants would take an integral approach towards entire buildings into account when proposing their designs. That included reconstruction of all technical systems in order to achieve the actual and maximum cost efficiency and technically smart solutions were expected at the competition. Esthetical and technical sides were meant to be balanced in the entries enabling thus the reconstruction of buildings according to the minimum requirements of energy efficiency valid on reconstructed buildings. The participants were also reminded about the purchasing power of the people living in the houses - very exclusive and expensive solutions were not reasonable to be proposed. Importance was also laid on achieving the distinctiveness and individuality of the houses. The participants were encouraged to pay attention to the aspects like convenience and broadening the possibilities of different activities - e.g. giving more lightness to the rooms, enlarging balconies and living rooms of the apartments. They were also encouraged to be courageous and grandiose in their designs since the idea competition (the first of its kind in Estonia) was also an opportunity to broaden the conceptions by showing that the possibilities for renovating such houses is much more numerous than just a mere covering of walls with insulation materials.



There were eight different types of dwelling buildings included in the competition, eighteen houses all together:

Type 1: Panel-building with limestone gravel coating;

Type 2: Four or three-storeyed, silicate brick buildings, without balconies

Type 3: Redbricked, 5-storeyed typical buildings, corner-type, local series, so called Masso House, i.e. built by the design of architect Miia Masso

The idea competition of the Seminari area and dwelling buildings

The competition results and Jury work

The competition was declared on the 30th of March in 2010 by Rakvere City Government and was an international one. The competition ended on the 15th of June 2010.

The idea competition gathered 14 entries (ROHELINE KONSTRUKTOR, PORGAND, NASCA, WAVE, LIINID, FRAKTAL, AED, ELEMENTAALNE, LINNA-METSA, MEEL, BARUTO, FAKE FOREST, MURAL SPACE ja LEGO). All the works were looked through by the Jury in the first round. The Jury decided that although all the works corresponded to the competition conditions, seven entries (MURAL SPACE, MEEL, AED, FRAKTAL, WAVE, PORGAND, LEGO) were decided to be left out from the next rounds. Those were either unclearly compiled or hardly readable, did not fit into the urban space of Rakvere, were not realistic or did not have an original idea.

In the next round, the Jury looked through 7 entries and left out one more work - an entry marked with a word NASCA.

As the final decision, the Jury found all the works to be on high level but after a long and profound discussion, the Jury found it impossible to give out the first prize. Instead, 2 entries were to be announced as the winners of the competition. Those two entries were very equal, however, very different from each other. According to the Jury, although the two entries were clearly different from the rest of the entries, neither of them did not correspond entirely to the goal that was set up by the competition that was to get an integral solution to the residential buildings and urban space and that would also be strong and integrally attractive both in architectural as well as landscape architectural aspects.

The winners of the competition were therefore the entries LINNA METSA and ELEMENTAALNE dividing the second and third place. The Jury made a proposal to Rakvere City Government to continue negotiations with both winners and ask them to develop their works further based on the comments of the Jury.

The comments about the winning entries were as follows:

Elementaalne

Strong conception, intellectually teasing and attractive work. Most intriguing work that would bring along the biggest alterations. Spaces of different nature are well discerned and brought out accordingly. Spaces with tension have different nature. Very strong side of the work is the traffic scheme that is a clear and specific idea of the whole conception. Since the work has a schematic nature, especially as far as the residential buildings are concerned, it needs to be specified and developed further, e.g. the use of water is questionable since natural water resource is absent in the area.



Linna Metsa

The work is simple, yet with a clear and very sustainable approach. It is easily realized and does not demand large investments. The conception of verdancy that plays with thickness is clear and suits the general concept very well. Moving towards the forest, the verdancy of the area becomes thicker while the area that is left towards the city center has more activities planned. Existing infrastructure is considered when planning the verdancy. The solution enables building in stages. The traffic is one-sided, directing the traffic out of the city. The transport solution needs to be worked upon since the present design may enable very fast movement. The façade solutions are functionally effective, however, it is questionable to use tin-material on some houses. The Jury sees a potential in the work and the attractiveness of the work should therefore be developed further.

The winners of the competition were announced on the 15th of July 2010.

Further work and development of the results of the architectural competition and the current situation

The architects of both winning entries made a team and started to work on the designs in order to deliver the results that would correspond to the aims of the project, suit the urban space and be attractive for both the City Government as well as the residents of the dwelling buildings of the pilot area.

As far as the residential buildings are concerned, it was of course of utmost importance that the designs to be developed were attractive for the residents since they were to be convinced to implement the results of the competition. For that Rakvere City Government employed a person whose task was to communicate the idea of reconstruction, the importance of it as well as introduce the possibilities for financing offered by KredEx in Estonia to the residents of the dwelling houses.

The team of architects, the City Architect of Rakvere and the communication specialist employed by the project have been working together with the housing associations and their residents. This cooperation has resulted in the rough plans for the 18 houses of the pilot area. Moreover, 4 houses out of 18 houses of the pilot area have positively responded to the communication work and have decided to go on with the actual reconstruction works of the houses with the help of financing schemes of KredEx.

Since the work with the residential buildings and residents and the communication has taken a lot more time than expected, the delivery of the rough plan of the so called Linear Park that is the surrounding area of the residential buildings, has been somewhat delayed. That will, however, be delivered before the end of the project.

While the investments for housing stock are the responsibility of the housing associations, the development and investments regarding the surrounding urban space, so called Linear Park, is to taken care of the local municipality.