

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ARCHITECTURAL AWARDS - TWO CASE STUDIES OF EUROPEAN AWARDS

Hybský Michal

MICHAL HYBSKÝ, ING. ARCH.

Faculty of Architecture CTU
Thákurova 9, 166 34, Prague,
Czech Republic

michal.hybsky@fa.cvut.cz

ORCID iD: 0009-0008-9256-6242

PhD candidate researching architectural awards and their impact on discourse in architecture through qualitative analysis methods. Teaching assistant of prof. Ing. arch. P. Melkova, PhD. at the Dept. of building theory, FA CTU. In addition to research activities, he is engaged in architectural practice.

ABSTRACT: Pan-European architectural awards and prizes are influential platforms for the evaluation of architectural quality. The jury is a key element in the evaluation of such awards. The jury's evaluation of values in architecture influences not only the laureates by awarding them prestige, but also the architectural discourse on a wider scale. The awarding of prizes in architecture can be said to be transformative. Through a qualitative analysis of jury verdicts, our work attempts to reveal the current evaluation criteria of European architectural awards through two case studies. Our case studies are the Mies van der Rohe Award - European Prize for Contemporary Architecture and the European Prize for Urban Public Space. We focus our analysis on the written outputs of these platforms: verdicts, statements and essays of the juries on the prizes in question. These data represent a comprehensive set of information on the editions of the awards used. Since one edition from each award would not be a representative sample, we analyze three editions within each award. Thus, one architectural award – one case study, is represented by three editions. Methodologically, we use one of a group of research designs, an established combination of methodological procedures, for our qualitative analyses. In our research, we are talking about the Qualitative Content Analysis. The basic procedure of this research design is a method called Text Segmentation and Coding. Our results of the research so far suggest that evaluation criteria can be identified and described. The results further suggest that differently focused architectural awards have different sets of evaluation criteria.

KEYWORDS: architecture award; Qualitative analysis; Mies van der Rohe Award; European Prize for Urban Public Space

INTRODUCTION

A lot is written every year about architectural awards and prizes. Press releases, popularisation articles, or critical essays. This phenomenon generates professional and public discourse, that is its greatest driving force. It has a transformative potential for the development of architecture, which is the first reason we address the presented topic. The second is that it is scientifically under-researched (Chupin et al., 2022). In examining the evaluation of architecture within awards, we focus on jury decision making. It is the jury that decides on the nominations and winners, using its own criteria for evaluation - and it is the criteria for evaluating architecture in awards that we will attempt to examine. Since we will be analysing the judgement of people, we are moving into the field of architectural humanities research, which implies the use of certain methodologies close to the social sciences (Lucas, 2016). The most comprehensive output of the architectural prizes are the catalogues of the editions containing the verdicts of the juries, the transcripts of the meetings or the essays of the jury members. Thus, we will examine the written media outputs of the award-giving platforms. To do so, we will use qualitative text analysis. Our aim will be to identify the criteria for evaluating architecture in the discourse, and to understand and interpret the phenomenon more gen-

erally. We will investigate the phenomenon through two case studies in an attempt to inductively derive the state of architecture evaluation in contemporary European architectural awards.

METHODOLOGY

When describing the methodology, we will talk about the research design, by which we mean an established combination of methodological procedures. Specifically, we will use qualitative content analysis (QCA). The reasons are following: it focuses on the properties of language as a communication tool, with a focus on the content of the text or its contextual meaning. It aims at gaining knowledge about studied phenomenon and, most importantly, understanding it. On content analysis, M. Heřmanský adds that it relates to the data as if they were "a window into the experience of the participants". Which means that the text conveys insight into the content of the data being analysed in order to understand the meanings they convey (Novotná et al., 2019). These predispositions are suitable for our goal of identifying and describing the evaluation criteria in the award, understanding this phenomenon and interpreting it. QCA exists in a trio of approaches (conventional, directed, summative), from which we select the conventional approach. The latter is used in researches whose purpose is to describe a phenomenon. It is appropriate in cases where the theory on the topic is limited. It does not use assumed categories in coding; these emerge from the data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). The coding scheme is based on a standardized procedure described by Miles & Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The named positions of the conventional QCA approach is suitable for us, as we are trying to do basic research and description of a phenomenon for which there is only limited theoretical foundation. To begin with, it is necessary to define a data collection approach. Since we are working on case studies based on written data, we have chosen purposive sampling. Cases are selected on purpose – based on their suitability to observe the selected phenomenon (e.g. a typical case). The data analysed were created outside our research; this is a non-obtrusive approach (Novotná et al., 2019).

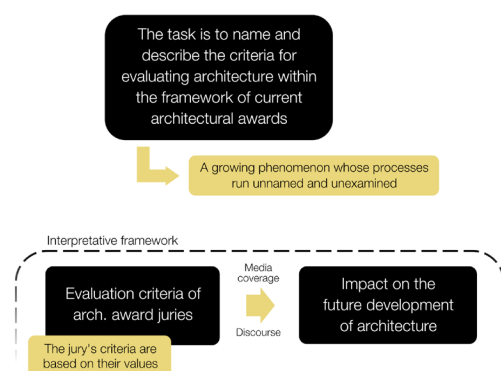


Fig. 1.: Graphical representation of the scope of the research (Source: author).

As part of the data collection process, we set our own

criteria for the sample - meeting certain assumptions and parameters. The basic assumption is the existence of outputs from the jury deliberations: transcript of the meeting / verdict / essay of the jury member on the award in question. Another assumption is that the requested text is of sufficient length. These text files become the source data. The required parameters are: 1. Evaluation of the award by an international jury; 2. European scene (cultural environment); 3. Application of both: a typologically defined and not-defined award; 4. Time frame: an award given up to 10 years back. Our aim was to find two suitable awards = two case studies. By surveying the awards, we were able to compile a data sample that matched the requirements and we will elaborate it in the case studies. These are: The European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award and the European Prize for Urban Public Space. From the numerous editions of these awards, we have selected three editions of each. We selected the most recent editions available (sampled during 2022 and 2023), then the second and third editions chronologically back in time. In both cases, the jury verdicts published in the catalogues were used as data sources; in addition, the Mies Award provides essays by the jury members, and the Prize for Urban Public Space also provides "Jury minutes" - a brief selection of the jury's statements.

study, three editions of a award in question are included. We present each study in a separate subchapter. At the beginning of the subchapter, we provide a basic info for the editions, followed by the conclusions - the interpretive report and the categories with associated codes (evaluation criteria). Because of their extensive length, we do not list the coding books.

CASE STUDY 1 - MIES VAN DER ROHE AWARD

We analysed the editions: 2017, 2019, 2022. For all three of them, we used the jury verdicts and the essays of the jurors (published in the catalogues) as data.

Basic info about the editions:

Edition 2017 - Members of the jury: chairman architect Stephen Bates (UK), architect Gonçalo Byrne (PT), curator Peter Cachola Schmal (DE), architecture historian Pelin Derviş (TR), architect Dominique Jakob (FR), sociologist Juulia Kauste (FI), and architecture historian Małgorzata Omilanowska (PL). The winner is DeFlat Kleiburg in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The designers of the project are studios NL Architects and XVW Architectuur. The evaluation session took place in May 2017 (Blasi and Sala Giralt, 2017).

2019 Edition - Members of the jury: chairwoman architect Dorte Mandrup (DK), architect George Arbid (LB),

Architectural Award - Case Study	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
EU Mies van der Rohe Award	/	x	/	x	/	x	/	x	/	/	x
European Prize for Urban Public Space	x	/	x	/	x	/	x	/	/	/	x

Explanatory notes	
/	data does not exist or was not found
x	data exist for the given edition
x	the data exist, were obtained and used in the study

Tab. 1.: Case studies - editions of the awards collected. (Source: author)

RESULTS

Using QCA in a conventional approach, we analysed two case studies, one study = one award. We used the analytical software QDA Miner Lite. Within each

curator Angelika Fitz (AT), publicist Ștefan Ghenciulescu (RO), architect Kamiel Klaasse (NL), architect Maria Langarita (ES) and journalist Frank McDonald (IE). The winner was the Transformation of 530 dwellings - Grand Parc in Bordeaux, France. The project was de-

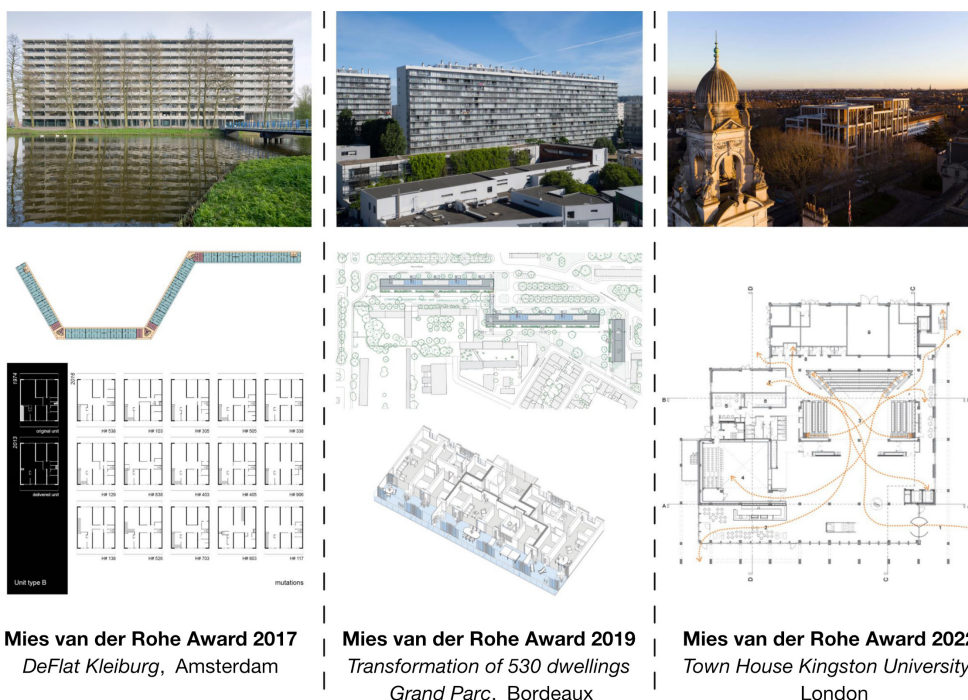


Fig. 2.: Winners of The European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award 2017, 2019, 2022. (Source: photos - Marcel van der Burg, Philippe Ruault, Ed Reeve; schemes - NL Architects, Lacaton & Vassal Architects, Grafton Architects)

signed by Lacaton & Vassal Architects, Frédéric Druot Architecture and Christophe Hutin Architecture. The evaluation session took place in April 2019 (Blasi and Sala Giral, 2019).

Edition 2022 - Members of the jury: chairwoman architect Tatiana Bilbao (MX), journalist Francesca Ferguson (UK), architect Mia Hägg (SE), architecture critic Triin Ojari (EE), architect Georg Pendl (AT), cultural manager Spiros Pengas (GR) and architect Marcel Smets (BE). The winner is Town House - Kingston University, London, UK. The author of the building is the studio Grafton Architects. The evaluation session took place in April 2022 (Blasi and Sala Giral, 2022).

Interpretive report:

We were able to uncover a number of phenomena in the discourse that recorded how the juries approached the evaluation of architecture in the surveyed awards. The most important phenomena of evaluation, abstracted into evaluation criteria, were given their codes. Key criteria emerge in the discourse, which will be discussed in the individual subchapters. To begin, we offer a few observations on the data analysed. Award verdicts, being the most common output from jury evaluations, are highly descriptive in nature of the text; the content of descriptive codes dominates. Juror essays, written for the editions in question, are more interpretive, allowing for a greater range of interpretations of content. Generalizing the analysis, the more data we had from the evaluation processes, the better the saturation of categories and the "sharpening" of the phenomena discovered. Next, we will proceed according to the categories created.

Message of evaluation: the category represents introspective reflections and opinions directed at the award itself, its social role, its legacy and the values represented. In terms of the characteristics of the architecture itself it is auxiliary, but because of its strong influence on the selection of the laureates, it is a separate criterion. The most highlighted phenomenon of this category is the jury's discussions on the meaning and significance of contemporary awarding. In doing so, they often draw conclusions that can be interpreted as an application of the hermeneutic cycle (Fay, 2002) to this social phenomenon. In this application, the jurors respond to past architecture awards, to competitions that have been held, and to the qualities and values of existing architecture - thus acknowledging they are being influenced by current discourse. This can be illustrated, for example, by an excerpt from the text of the 2017 edition's jury chairman Stephen Bates: "The EU Mies Award had never been won by a housing project - until now. It had never been won by a re-use project - until now." (Blasi and Sala Giral, 2017) He was referring to the prize winner DeFlat Kleiburg, selected by a jury he was part of.

Abstract qualities of architecture: the first category representing directly the qualities or values of the evaluated architecture. It refers to qualities that are not immediately belonging to the built matrix, but to qualities that can be described as "meta-criteria", i.e. criteria that represent social values materialized in concrete manifestations of architecture. A very common phenomenon in the Mies Award is the positive critique of reinterpretation or continuity with the architectural culture of the region, a phenomenon we have called referentiality. However, referentiality also includes associations to general phenomena such as archetypality. Furthermore, the interest in working with existing building substance is noticeable in the evaluation. This is evidenced by Angelika Fitz's statement in her essay for the 2019 edition: "Conserving resources and taking a creative approach to the existing fabric is possible both in a context of dilapidated brick buildings and modernist concrete prefabs, as the projects of the EU Mies Award demonstrate." (Blasi

and Sala Giral, 2019) In other words, preserving and transforming is preferable to demolishing and building anew - one of the underpinning ideas of sustainability in construction, is spreading among architects thanks to the work of studios such as Lacaton & Vassal. They won the edition with the Transformation of 530 dwellings - Grand Parc in Bordeaux. In general, many of the criteria evaluated in this category fall under the growing phenomenon of social relevance in architecture.

Physical qualities of architecture: the previous abstract category implies the existence of physical qualities of architecture, these actually appear in the discourse. These are qualities that are explicit properties of the built matter. Jurors evaluate these concrete manifestations based on personal preferences, experience, and more widely accepted spatial assumptions. For example, we encounter praise for the versatility of buildings, their physical adaptability to change, and their ability to accommodate the various needs of life. On this theme, 2022 edition juror Mia Hägg writes: "When architects don't have the opportunity to work directly with a building's future occupants, however, they can create spaces that are adaptable for a variety of users." (Blasi and Sala Giral, 2022) The opinion is dedicated to the finalist of the prize, the 85 housing units in Cornella by the Peris + Toral studio. This criterion can be included in a broader group of spatial qualities that the juries evaluate very often. Spatial qualities include the layout, volume and proportional relationships of spaces and masses in a wide variety of situations. Evaluating proportion and composition is one of the most classic ways of looking at architecture. Despite centuries of architectural development, this age-old standard is still alive.

Criticism: Although it would be possible to consider the entire evaluation of architecture as constructive criticism, for our purpose we use the category of criticism in focused meaning - to classify negatively evaluated phenomena when they occur. Worth mentioning is the often represented criterion of fashionable character, as negatively evaluated subordination to style. The topic is addressed by Ștefan Ghenciuțescu in the 2019 edition: "Style as a set of fixed features and norms is becoming less and less relevant for architectural discussion and it certainly did not play any role in the jury's decisions." (Blasi and Sala Giral, 2019) The evaluation responds to the contemporary digital mainstream, the self-serving "instagram-ness" of architecture in the sense of submission to contemporary visual trends.

Urban planning qualities: refers to criteria for evaluating scale beyond the building itself and its interface. If we follow the logic of the previous categories, it focuses both on the physical relationships of buildings/spaces and the abstract values reflected in the urban design. Since the Mies Award is primarily an architectural award, not an urban design award, the urban solution is often viewed through the prism of the assessed building (or using more general themes of urban planning). When looking at the urban planning through the prism of the assessed building, we discovered the criterion of acupuncture of the place. This metaphorically refers to the initiation of positive change by a new building with an effect on the whole site. A site with a low quality of development, or one that has been damaged in the past. The criterion is well described in the 2022 edition by Marcel Smets: "A closer look at this panorama of shortlisted interventions clearly shows how meaningful buildings never really stand on their own. Because of their community-oriented program, their public significance, or their inspiring urbanistic aura, they successfully succeed in upgrading the entire neighbourhood." (Blasi and Sala Giral, 2022) Contextuality, a common urban planning value, has repeatedly become part of assessment, indirectly implied in the quote.

Process-oriented qualities: their content is not the actual matter of the architecture or the projection of an abstract principle into the design. In the case of process-oriented and programmatic qualities, we are talking about present and past events, the conscious activity of people, and also the function of the architecture in question. These phenomena are the evaluation criteria if they result in architectural design or, if they allow the building to survive and thrive. Projects that were the result of successful collaborations often enjoyed the jury's favour. This is well illustrated by Kamiel Klaasse's thought from the 2019 proceedings: "The role of the client in this project is vital. It takes two to tango, of course. This courageous commissioner managed to flip the typical aversion of risk into embracement of risk. What joy!" (Blasi and Sala Giral, 2019) That is the way he evaluated the Congress Centre Plasencia by SelgasCano. The collaboration between the architect, the investor, the municipality and the local residents is clearly yielding quality results. This criterion, which we have called the power of co-operation, thematically includes a positive assessment of the ability to compromise.

test Enric Batlle (ES), curator Peter Cachola Schmal (DE), architect Matevž Čelik (SI), architecture historian Hans Ibelings (NL), sociologist Juulia Kauste (FI), architecture critic Ewa P. Porebska (PL), curator Francis Rambert (FR), theoretician Dietmar Steiner (AT) and architecture critic Ellis Woodman (UK). The laureates were ex aequo: 1. Recovery of the irrigation system of the orchards in Caldes de Montbui, Spain. Designed by Cíclica and CAVAA. 2. Dialogue Centre "Przełomy" in Solidarność Square in Szczecin, Poland. The author of the project is KWK Promes studio. The evaluation session took place in April 2016 (CCCB, 2016).

2018 Edition - Members of the jury: chairwoman architect Olga Tarrasó (ES), curator Peter Cachola Schmal (DE), architect Matevž Čelik (SI), architecture historian Hans Ibelings (NL), curator Katharina Ritter (AT), architecture critic Ewa P. Porebska (PL), curator Francis Rambert (FR) and architecture critic Ellis Woodman (UK). The winner was the Renovation of Skanderbeg Square in Tirana, Albania. The realization was carried out by the studios 51N4E, Anri Sala, Plant en Houtgoed and iRI. The evaluation session took place in April 2018

Message of evaluation	Abstract qualities of architecture	Physical qualities of architecture	Criticism	Urban planning qualities	Process-oriented qualities
The role of award	Referentiality	Versatility - descriptive code	Fashionable character	Contextuality	The power of cooperation - descriptive code
The work conveys a message	Proud ordinariness	Innovativeness - descriptive code	Generosity	Community character	Affordability
Revealing current problems	Quality of life	Communicativeness		The return of life to the city	Viability thanks to the programme
Speculation	Social relevance - descriptive code	Beauty		"Acupuncture of the place" - interpretive code	Accelerator of change
Popularization of culture and architecture	Care for architecture - descriptive code	Spatial qualities			Creativity driven by limitations
	"Not to demolish, to renovate"	Architecturally superior project			The power of cooperation - interpretive code
	"Memory of place"	Rationality			
	Environmental sustainability	Phenomenological evaluation			
	Social sustainability	Durability			
	Inclusivity	Versatility - interpretive code			
	Transformative depth	Innovativeness - interpretive code			
	Social relevance - interpretive code				
	Visionary thinking				
	The power of concept - interpretive code				
	Democratic character				
	Care for architecture - interpretive code				
	Holistic work				
	Authenticity - interpretive code				

Tab. 2.: Categories of Case Study 1: Mies van der Rohe Award (Source: author)

CASE STUDY 2 - EUROPEAN PRIZE FOR URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

We analysed the editions: 2016, 2018, 2022. For all three editions, we used the jury verdicts and a "Jury minutes" (published in the catalogues) as data. Basic info about the editions:

Edition 2016 - Members of the jury: chairman archi-

(CCCB, 2018).

Edition 2022 - Members of the jury: chairwoman landscape architect Teresa Galí-Izard (CH), historian Hans Ibelings (NL), anthropologist Eleni Myrivili (GR), architecture critic Andreas Ruby (CH), cultural manager Paloma Strelitz (UK) and architect Špela Videčnik (SI). The winner is the Restoration of the Catharijnesingel



Fig. 3.: Winners of the European Prize for Urban Public Space 2016, 2018, 2022. (Source: photos - Adrià Goula, Juliusz Sokolowski, Filip Dujardin, Stijn Poels-tra; schemes - Cíclica and CAVAA, KWK Promes, 51N4E, OKRA Landscapsarchitecten)

Canal in Utrecht, The Netherlands. The author of the realization is the studio OKRA Landschapsarchitecten. The evaluation session took place in July 2022, the public presentation of the finalists and the selection of the laureate in November 2022 (CCCB, 2022).

Interpretive report:

In the second case study, we were also able to identify phenomena in the discourse despite slightly different data. The award verdicts, also represented in this study, confirmed their style as descriptive. The short selections of jury quotations ("jury minutes" or "jury deliberations"), are varied - both descriptive and interpretive - but their content overlap with the verdicts is quite large. The categories that we developed for the first study could also be adapted, with some modifications, to a typological prize for urban public space. The key criteria of the processed study started to emerge in the same way, as well as key criteria overall, relevant for the whole sample.

Message of evaluation: It was confirmed that the juries are mindful of the impact and significance of the awards. The moral dimension of the evaluation itself was strongly felt. The juries consciously worked with the message and prestige of the award. In doing so, they indirectly confirmed the participation of architectural awards in the economy of prestige according to the theories of J. F. English (English, 2011). The assertion of values in the message of the prize is evident in the editorial by Teresa Galí-Izard, chairwoman of the 2022 jury: "We renounced individual positions for the common good, because we believe that it is important to send a message of unity." (CCCB, 2022) The revealing of current problems also appears in the discourse, whether in the position of describing the problem or in the position of trying to offer a solution. The problems named come from a wide range of fields, which means that they could be broadly branched by coding. There would be a great diversification of content, diverging from our research problem, so we group the topic under one code. In general, after analysing the two studies, we can say that discussions over the role of awards, the legacy of award-winning works and the uncovering of contemporary issues play an important role in the evaluation of architecture in European awards.

Abstract qualities of space: By adjustment (architecture → space), we can classify evaluation criteria into analogous categories. Criteria referring to "physically absent" social values had a strong influence in the evaluation. These criteria appeared in a smaller spectrum, which we do not interpret as that they were unimportant. On the contrary, we interpret the smaller dispersion of criteria as greater consistency in the jury's evaluation. Environmental sustainability had an important role in the evaluation of the award in all editions, as did social sustainability. The jury clearly declares this in its statement on the 2022 edition: "We have seen projects combining ecological and social value in new ways, and we have particularly welcomed those initiatives that encourage biodiverse, ranging from productive planting to the cultivation of wilderness within public space." (CCCB, 2022) We can

say that these two criteria played a major role in the study. Inclusivity emerged as a significant sub-theme of social sustainability, in its manifestations of humanism. On the other hand, a strong cultural criterion also emerged, dealing with the interpretation of the story of place, uncovering layers of time. We have called it memory of place.

Physical qualities of space: by the same modification of the category we can work with the physical aspects of space. The evaluation criteria of sites for public life proved to be stimulating - there were manifestations that were not common in the first study. Surprisingly, the juries often evaluated roughness positively, in the sense of crudeness and rawness. So reads the 2018 verdict: "[The project] combines the exceptionality of an internationally recognised site with everyday uses, without domesticating the wild feel of the site which was closed for years. In sum it successfully integrates the rawness of industrial infrastructure with fairly untamed vegetation." (CCCB, 2018) This is how the jury evaluates the Zollverein Park in Essen. We interpret this criterion to be the counterpart of the self-serving formality, mostly negatively evaluated. Roughness can also be positively perceived due to its association with low-budget activist-funded projects. In general, physicality in this study is of lower importance to the abstract criteria from the previous subsection.

Urban qualities: as an integral part of the evaluation of public space, this category was stronger than the previous one. This phenomenon can be interpreted this way: the physical substance of the materials and small-scale architecture of the public space itself is being overridden by the urban planning significance and impact. A strong phenomenon in the evaluation was the well-known community character, especially in the sense of creating conditions for the coexistence of locals through design. This sentiment is echoed in the verdict of the 2018 edition, in the evaluation of the Poblenou Superblock in Barcelona: "[The project] is based on the idea that the street is not just infrastructure for mobility but a place of social interaction." (CCCB, 2018) Furthermore, the return of life to the city, a complex phenomenon addressing the problem of urban hollowing out and the growth of suburbs, emerged as an important criterion. It includes returning of spaces to the people at the expense of individual transport. They are linked by a desire to intensify urban life and slow the exploitation of cities into open countryside. This phenomenon thus combines environmental and social assessment parameters.

Process-oriented qualities: had a specific place in the evaluation of the urban public space award. It is evident that the juries had a particular regard for the circumstances of the creation of the work, the story of its builders and the commitment of its operators. In the first study, this consideration was present time to time, but in the second it was present in every edition. Based on the importance of the criterion - power of cooperation - in the context of the public space prize, we consider relevant to return to it. For example, in the verdict on the winner of the 2016 edition, which was the Recovery of the irrigation system of the or-

Message of evaluation	Abstract qualities of architecture	Physical qualities of architecture	Urban planning qualities	Process-oriented qualities
The work conveys a message	Environmental sustainability	Rationality	Permeability	The power of cooperation - descriptive code
User satisfaction	Social sustainability	Innovativeness - descriptive code	Community character	Recycling, reorganization
Revealing current problems	"Memory of place"	Versatility - interpretive code	The return of life to the city	Viability thanks to the programme
	Layering of themes	Roughness	Contextuality	Accelerator of change
	Inclusivity	Adaptation and mitigation	"Acupuncture of the place" - interpretive code	Creativity driven by limitations
	Quality of life	Theatricality		Altruism
	Holistic work	Informality		
	The power of concept - interpretive code	Beauty		
	Transformative depth	Detailedness		
	Social relevance - interpretive code	Communicativeness		
	Visionary thinking	Post-pandemic design		
		Phenomenological evaluation		
		Equilibrium		

Tab. 3.: Categories of Case Study 2: European Prize for Urban Public Space (Source: author)

