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E17 Norway Jury Report **Grensen**

Content

Europan 17 in Norway

Europan is an innovation process for architecture and urban development, centered around an open competition of ideas for architects, landscape architects, and urban planners under the age of 40. The Europan competition takes place every 2 years with Europan 17 being the 17th edition.

In Europan 17, 51 competition sites from 12 different European countries were launched at the same time connected by the theme Living Cities 2: Care.

For Europan 17 there were 5 sites in Norway:

- Larvik, represented by Larvik municipality.
- Krøgenes, represented by Arendal municipality
- Åkrehamn, represented by Karmøy municipality
- Østmarka, represented by Trondheim municipality
- Grensen, represented by NTNU (Norwegian University of science and technology)

Europan-Norway is a foundation that organizes the Europan process in Norway. The secretariat of Europan Norway is run by Kaleidoscope Nordic.

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The composition of the jury

Ida Winge Andersen
President of the jury. M. Architect, company director, and partner at Rebuilding.

Jacob Kamp
Partner and creative director at 1:1 Landskab .

Eli Grønn
M. of Architecture and Urbanism MNAL, partner and leader for Urbanism and Planning with Dyrvik Architects.

Luis Basabe Montalvo
Founding partner of ARENAS BASABE PALACIOS ARQUITECTOS.

Katariina Haigh
M. Architect, Project Development Director at Asuntosäätiö.

Ilkka Törmä
M. Architect, urban designer and researcher, editor-in-chief at Outlines

Eili Vigestad Berge
Director of sustainability and public relations at Mustad Eiendom.

Substitutes:
Cristian Ştefănescu
Owner of a-works Assistant Professor, Bergen School of Architecture

Merete Gunnes
M.Sc Landscape Architect MNLA and founder of TAG landscape.

The jury procedure

The competition is organized as a tender under the Norwegian rules public procurements as a “Plan-og Designkonkurranse'' Listed on the TED database and according to the Rules for Europan 17.
As stated by the rules for Europan 17, the jury met 2 times per site. The first jury meeting selected a shortlist of a maximum of 25% of submitted entries. The second jury meeting selects the winner(s), runner-ups, and special mentions.

Technical Committee
The secretariat for Europan Norway made up the technical committee. The technical committee prepares the jury process, controls the eligibility of the proposals, and takes notes of the jury discussions.
The Technical committee consisted of Tone Berge, Bjørnar Haveland, and Andrea Pérez Montesdeoca.

The 1st jury round
The purpose of the 1st jury round is to select a shortlist for the second and final round of the jury. The site representative participates as a jury member with one vote. The jury met for a full day per site. The meeting was conducted using the A1 printed boards of the proposals and Miro as a digital exhibition.

The 1st jury round took place the 26.09.2023 in Trondheim.
Attending:
From the jury: Ida Winge Andersen, Jacob Kamp, Eli Grønn, Luis Basabe Montalvo, Katariina Haigh, Ilkka Törmä and Eili Vigestad Berge.
From the technical committee: Tone Berge, Bjørnar Haveland
From the site: Nina Tanche-Nilssen, Inger Snerting

Midpoint dialogue meeting between jury and site representatives
A dialogue meeting was held between jury leader Ida Winge and jury members Eili Vigestad Berge, Ilkka Törmä, and the site representatives at the Europan Forum for cities and juries in Vienna on the 11th of November 2023.

The 2nd jury round
Selection of winner, runner up, special mentions.
Conducted as a physical meeting on the 12th of November 2023, also in Vienna.
In this meeting the site representatives participate as an observer, with the right to make a statement at the start, but without any vote.
Members of the board of Europan Norway can also be present, but just as observers.
The decision of the jury is final and independent.

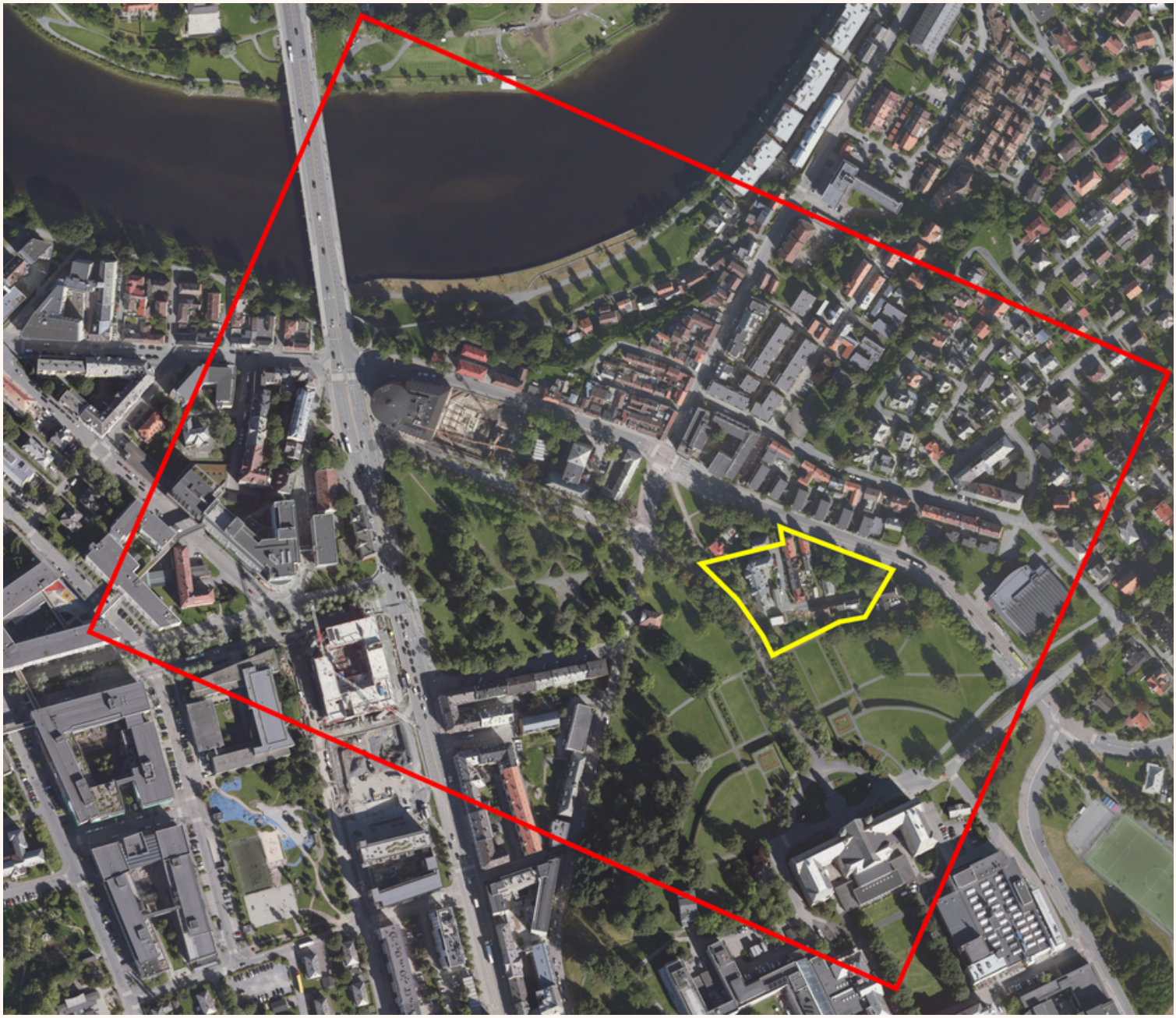
Attending:
From the jury: Ida Winge Andersen, Jacob Kamp, Eli Grønn, Luis Basabe Montalvo, Katariina Haigh, Ilkka Törmä and Eili Vigestad Berge.
From the secretariat: Tone Berge, Bjørnar Haveland, Andrea Perez Montesdeoca.
From the site: Inger Snerting and Nils Jørgen Moltubakk.

Matrix of submitted entries

	Jurymeeting 1	Code	Project Name	Project Feedback
01	Shortlisted	XJ587	Grensen 2030: Circularity Apparatus	Winner: 12 000 EUR prize
02	Shortlisted	FS378	In Between Lab	Runner-Up: 6 000 EUR prize
03	Shortlisted	UN402	The Gatehouse	Special Mention
04		XJ120	Circular shift	The project did not make it to the shortlist. The jury wants to give credit for taking a clear stance on circular principles, emphasizing experimentation and the potential use of reusable materials for construction. The visualization of the new building lacks conviction, though the location of the entrance is deemed favorable. The project's interaction with the street is commendable, and the landscaping and terracing at the back show promise, although they are described as more of a concept than a finished product. The project establishes a strong relationship with the main road and effectively utilizes both sides of the site. The entire building is viewed as a "living lab," highlighting its experimental nature.
05		OB873	Ubregrenset	The project did not make it to the shortlist. The jury wants to give credit for its inspiring drawings which evoke the characteristics of a meticulously planned city. Rooted in a landscape strategy, the design demonstrates a keen understanding of its contextual surroundings. Additionally, the project's potential to serve as a living lab further underscores its thoughtful and innovative approach to functionality within its broader context. The project's scale is well-resolved, but it fails to challenge its own grid concept due to its theoretical nature. The jury also raises concerns regarding the treatment of existing buildings.
06		OZ340	Without borders	The project did not make it to the shortlist. The jury acknowledges the strategic approach to incorporating elements on different scales, including public spaces and various typologies with different programs. The jury wants also to give credit to the project's boldness and bravery, the decision to place the new large building inside the area is seen as positive, potentially making it a significant place. Criticism is directed towards the lack of a clear statement and architectural proposals, suggesting a deficiency in conveying a strong architectural vision.
07		ZO824	Canned Heat	The project did not make it to the shortlist. The jury wants to give credit for its uniqueness, featuring established pillars/trees that serve various purposes. They provide shade underneath, and one can ascend them. Access to the second floor of these structures is possible. They don't obstruct sunlight, and the design enhances rather than disrupts the area. However, the project fails to deal with the complexity of the task.

Matrix of submitted entries

	Jurymeeting 1	Code	Project Name	Project Feedback
08		QP304	Inclusiensen	The project did not make it to the shortlist. The proposed project introduces a glass structure at the back, contributing to a contemporary aesthetic. However, its lack of detailed description and visualization raises concerns about accessibility and clarity. The incorporation of an intermediate glass building appears promising, yet the project's disregard for the heights in the program poses a potential drawback.
09		DB258	Voroscopia	The project did not make it to the shortlist. The jury wants to give credit for a really good text that supports the project so precisely. The introduction of a new type of housing and the design of common areas are seen as positive and exploratory as well as the effective use of areas for public spaces. The jury acknowledges the project's philosophical nature, however, the architectural language is more rhetorical than practical, leaning more towards a graphic task than a true architectural challenge.
10		PR281	Building between the lines	The project did not make it to the shortlist. The jury wants to give the proposal credit for demonstrating a strong understanding and effective handling of various scales in design. The jury also acknowledges the smart features in the plan that contribute to the overall quality of the design and the good thought put into the financial aspects and the project's different phases. The jury raises concerns regarding unrealistic new round buildings aesthetics but most lack innovation and outdoor space design.
11		UQ007	The portal	The project did not make it to the shortlist. The jury wants to give credit for how the proposal tries to solve the eastern part of the site, with a building that addresses one of the challenging areas on the site. The jury also acknowledges the feasibility, effective use of space and clear conceptualization of the proposal. However, the project lacks comprehensive consideration of the surrounding environment and a holistic approach to outdoor spaces.
12		SR357	Border town	The project did not make it to the shortlist. The jury wants to give credit for a strong conceptual approach with a strategic transformation of buildings for university relevance. The jury acknowledges the good facade design towards the main road, creating an iconic expression. The project succeeds in borrowing characteristics from existing buildings to contribute to the city's identity resulting in interesting urban aesthetics, rich in formal response. The project's weaknesses are evident in its failure to address sustainability themes and the lack of of coherence in the overall project design.



Revitalise and adapt a cluster of historic wooden houses to become a living lab for the university and a social interface between the campus and the city.

Propose a concept and a process for transforming Grensen into an extroverted, social and accessible urban environment so that the area can function as a social interface between the city and the university.

Do this through innovative architectural interventions and thoughtful programing of university functions under an umbrella of a living lab that can generate knowledge for a better world.

Summary of the task

The Europan 17 site Grensen is strategically located between The Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and Norway's 3rd largest city, Trondheim. NTNU is planning a major restructuring of its campus and these upcoming changes will elevate Grensen to a strategic position as a campus access point from the city as well as embedding it firmly between new university buildings.

NTNU enters Europan 17 for ideas on how to make Grensen a living lab for CARE: experimental architectural approaches to working with built heritage through innovative adaptation and thoughtful programming. The site and its historical wooden buildings have the potential to become a platform through which the campus can open up to the city, mixing uses and adding diversity and liveliness to the area.

NTNU acquired the site with future development in mind, but challenges arose after the existing buildings were listed as historically significant. A period of uncertainty followed, with the listed buildings being rented out or used as temporary accommodation for visiting researchers. Half of the houses have fallen into disrepair from neglect and are currently uninhabitable. There was no coherent plan for Grensen and seemingly no hope for the quietly decaying buildings. Now entering into Europan, the site has a chance to come alive as a meaningful link between the university and the city.

The university sits on a hill overlooking Grensen. This physical removal of the campus from city life has created challenges for students and faculty, who have pitched ideas for potential on-site programs.

Visions have included a meeting spot for visiting researchers, faculty and neighbors, a space to showcase and communicate ongoing research and in general, serve as a social interface between the university and the city. The university can feel like an isolated island and increasing concerns for the mental health of university students and staff make the task of connecting NTNU and the city through Grensen all the more critical.

Grensen is not just a mere revitalization project. NTNU's mission statement is creating new knowledge for a better world and the site's unique situation and proximity to campus makes it an ideal place for experimentation. Can the site bring the university down from its hill and become a living lab where research and prototyping can happen in a real-life setting?

The site poses needs that the university's faculties are uniquely positioned to answer. NTNU is at the forefront of research on architectural preservation, sustainable building practices and technology for building energy efficiency. By working intelligently with its built history, Grensen can become a living link between the city's rich past and forward-thinking future.

General remarks

The brief asks to formulate a comprehensive concept and process for the transformation of Grensen. While the task is concise, it opens up for considerable interpretation of what a living lab can be, and what programming is best suited for the site and more importantly its historic buildings. At the core of the assignment is the challenge to balance heritage preservation and transformation matched with the right usage. The result is a demanding task that is both architectural and highly strategic.

Considering the brief's emphasis on concept and process, the jury favoured proposals that presented a decisive, systemic approach to Grensen's transformation and established integrity with its heritage features. Furthermore, these projects demonstrated adaptability in various directions. Instead of rigidly adhering to specific forms, successful proposals displayed openness to reworking within the concept. They can be executed in stages.

After the competition, users will be involved. As the programme for the site was not fixed in the competition brief, the jury concluded that successful proposals must demonstrate ample scope to accommodate various functions in the scheme. There must be the possibility to connect either the existing buildings or the proposed new buildings to larger units. The best proposals had the potential to be living labs, testing conservation methods, experimentation in new buildings, combining these two and exploring social programming of various types of spaces.

The jury also appreciated proposals with robust urban qualities. That includes how essential spaces in the proposals connect with the main university building and lawn, how Grensen presents the university to the street, and how the proposal utilises the movement through the site.

While many proposals highlighted the transformative impact of new buildings on Grensen, a few advocated for a radical reconfiguration of existing buildings, thus challenging the paradigms of building conservation. Two of these are among the top projects: the In-between lab and the Gatehouse. The first sketches out a light-touch approach to connect and extend the old buildings, while the latter proposes knocking down walls to unite and enlarge the buildings. The jury saw the In-between lab as a structurally easier and more adaptable concept and therefore as a more flexible starting point for the post-competition process.

The winner, the Circularity apparatus, provides the most flexible process to develop the site gradually. It is less architectural than the other top projects: the Circularity apparatus is a more strategic proposal and can easily be developed in phases. It represents an urban framework that can be divided into various renovation, transformation and infill projects. Should the university require a larger interior space, the Circularity apparatus can be reworked to accommodate it as a new building, without losing its urban qualities. After all, that might prove easier than forcing such space in to the old buildings, which are inherently different. The Circularity apparatus can be combined with elements of the other awarded projects, in particular the elements of working on the shielded in-betweens. The project provides a solid basis to facilitate the programming of the site and developing a scheme for the future living lab.

Winner Winner Winner Winner Winne

Winner

XJ587 - Grensen 2030: Circularity Apparatus

This project stands out among all the proposals because it is a spatial strategy on how to transform Grensen into the living lab the brief demands, rather than being a proposal and a design for one or more set buildings.

This is the future, where buildings are shaped by what is at hand through reuse, either direct or through up-cycling. So the suggested buildings in the proposal are to be seen more as ‘placeholders’ or symbols than actual architectural designs..
The neighbourhood in Grensen becomes a true laboratory for finding new, experimental and sustainable solutions, on all scales. It could be for the whole building, but also for testing materials or specific solutions within a building

The proposal builds on a strong respect for the existing, but also an open-minded wish to look at the existing with fresh eyes – and succeeds in doing both by keeping with the logic of the lay-out of the city-spaces and the scale of the existing buildings, but not being afraid to be very bold when it comes to how new buildings might look.

The streets and squares of the proposed site appear as humanely sized spaces, gaps, between the old and new building volumes. A great variety of different types and sizes of city-spaces comes out of this approach. Especially the transitional zone towards Christian Frederiks Gate is solved really well as a series of small urban ‘niches’ which invites people in to go exploring in the dense new neighborhood behind.

The proposal gives the strongest answer to what a living lab can be by providing a simple structure where a diverse range of experimental projects and processes can be implemented by different university actors. The project provides a degree of flexibility that will allow the living lab to become a truly participatory process between students, researchers and university departments. Some buildings can be experimental design-build projects by students, some objects of research on energy efficiency, while others can be developed in more conventional ways if desired.

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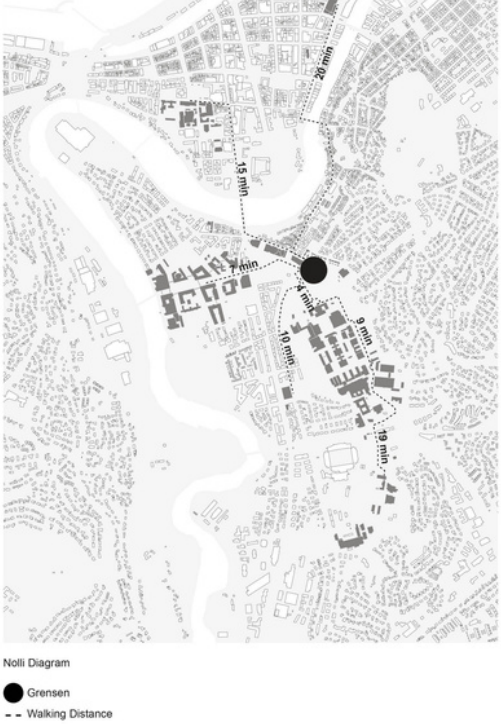
Runner-up Runner-up Runner-up Runner-up

Runner-Up
FS378 - In Between Lab

In-between lab draws attention to a characteristic Trondheim typology: the roofed inner courtyards and shielded outer-inner spaces. The illustrations envision a light, beautiful structure barely touching the old wooden houses. While fully respecting the fragile historic environment, the new construction serves a dual purpose, creating a second skin to insulate and protect while simultaneously creating new flexible spaces.

The structure can be read as a greenhouse, but also something more, something new. The contrast between the new and the old is captivating and together with the name In-between lab it raises the idea of a structure, capable of solving energy and climatic challenges, preservation together with adaptation, along with spatial and programmatic considerations. The interpretation goes beyond a mere glasshouse, offering an innovative approach and should be further researched.



Nolli Diagram

Grensen

Walking Distance

In-between lab must also be commended for being one of the few projects that show genuine care for the biodiversity of the site. By placing a larger structure in between the existing buildings in Grensen, they allow for the triangle lot to be left as is, only placing a carefully crafted ramp in between the trees. This “in-between” attitude is present in all the different scales of the project and represents one of the clearest architectural interpretations of the E17 theme of Care.

The project shows an adaptive approach and can easily be combined with the winning proposal. It allows for phased implementation and the testing of new ideas. The proposal goes beyond filling the gaps between existing buildings; the team ingeniously employs the structure to introduce larger indoor spaces and define distinct outdoor areas. Its strong connection to the university park enhances the site's welcoming atmosphere, while the corner plot remains a green escape with minimal interventions, ensuring accessibility while preserving its natural charm. The jury commends the team for its light-touch approach, inviting nature, people and history in.

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Special Mention

UN402 - The Gatehouse: The Open Border

The project must be commended for deceptively beautiful illustrations and a radical approach to the transformation of the existing buildings. The Gateway transforms Grensen into one large university building and a covered street that is intended to bring people through and shelter them from the harsh environment. The L-shape is a clever strategic move, that makes the ‘university corridor’ the proposal’s central and connecting element, and generates strong relationships with the context. While it occupies and gives an active role to the back side of the oldest buildings facing the university, it manages to become part of the heterogeneous urban front facing the street.

Nevertheless, the jury found less convincing how the proposal intervenes in the historic buildings, in a way that is pretty unrealistic and would presumably demand a complete reconstruction. There are not only technical but also many philosophical challenges in making such a complete makeover to listed buildings. Although the project claims to work on their existing matter, in reality it ends up erasing a lot of their uniqueness and heterogeneity. In a way it shies away from the 'dirt' of the existing fabric, as the visualisations of the project reveal. But in cleaning it up it seems to be sacrificing much of its valuable genius loci. Its doubtlessly remarkable technical radicality seems to lead precisely to the production of a standard.

The way in which ‘the Gateway’ connects everything together as one large building also challenges some main aspects of the task, such as upgrading Grensen to an inviting urban environment, and allowing for research and experimentation on existing buildings. The proposal, while one of the boldest, risks making Grensen into a large standard university building, and does not give space to the kind of research, experimentation and circularity that the program asks for. A more gentle approach to conserving the existing buildings would have added value to this proposal. It would have given the possibility of using Grensen as a learning laboratory of how to use old valuable buildings as a core of something new.

Regardless of the numerous challenges of the proposal, the jury highly appreciates the project addressing and exploring a typology that is typical to Trondheim; the roofed in-betweens.

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