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Grensen (NO)

Transform the area into a Living Lab and social interface between the city and campus

Scale

L/S

Team representative: architect/urbanist/ landscaper

Location: Trondheim

Population: Trondheim kommune 201 496 inhab.

Reflection site: 34 ha

Project site: 0.7 ha

Site proposed by: NTNU (Norwegian University of science and technology)

Actors involved: NTNU

Owner(s) of the site: NTNU

Commission after competition:

Commission valued at 500.000 NOK (ex VAT) in 2024/25 for developing the project further through involving users, giving feedback to the zoning plan and revising designs.

NTNU retains the option to increase the commission's size and scope with another NOK 500.000 at a later stage.



INHABITED MILIEU'S CHALLENGES

The European 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 European 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 European, 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.

Draw from the site's historical character. Find the site's potentials in relation to the planned new construction and look for a balance between old and new.

Future-proof for changing needs. How do we keep the site relevant, flexible and a place for continued experimentation and prototyping?



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. The houses of Grensen belong to historical typologies typical to buildings in Scandinavia and this makes the site ideally suited for practice based research projects on everything from energy efficiency to social sustainability. By working intelligently with its built history, Grensen can become a living link between the city's rich past and forward-thinking future.

QUESTIONS TO THE COMPETITORS:

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 programming of university functions under an umbrella of a living lab that can generate knowledge for a better world.

