X-PLOR

DE GENERIC
C·I·T·I·E·S

中国

SHANGHAI

真実

中国

Tri Competition Series

DI GENERIC CITIES

Contents

This challenge is a part of X-Plor tri-competition series titled 'Di-Generic Cities'. Discover the other two briefs here.
Japan - China - United States

Challenge Background

Are generic cities real? Or is just a
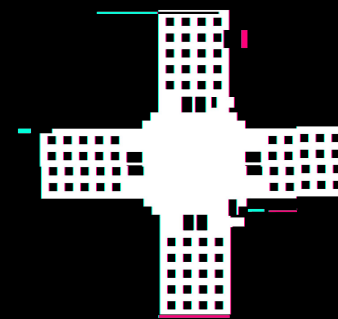philosophy that addresses the changing
worldview of how we see our cities?

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Img 1: A concept of the 'Generic City' - as stated by Rem Koolhaas

Premise

The 21st century is known for the age of globalization. The process of urbanization in cities, the interaction between people and integration among businesses & society are no longer driven just by local forces like climate, culture, geography or its inhabitants. It's also a well-known fact that data-driven technologies are playing a major role in shaping us and the kind of cities we live in today.

These forces of technology, for all the good they are doing to us in so many ways, are also powerfully speeding up the homogenization of culture. This force of technology in the world we live in today has been there for quite some time and now seems to be unstoppable.

In the past, cities have always been seen as an incubator for creative ideas and human evolution. However, with our technological evolution, **the question this brief seeks upon is retaining this distinct identity of a city as an incubator of creative ideas in the next century.**

Img 1: Present day Hong Kong - photo visual by Zaki Abdelmounim

Challenge Background:

Technology & Today

Technologies that we use today, have strengthened our connection with each other as a human being which resulted in reducing time & space. It has also allowed us to have a virtual presence anywhere in the world at any time. This sounds wonderful until we realize that this has resulted, in some ways, making us feel like we are less where we really are. In other ways it makes all places seem more or less the same.

When we try to connect with someone for any purpose, we can immediately connect whether we are on a vacation or at work. Today, we are more bonded to our interest groups for collaborative development, which is possible from any geographical location because of the virtual networks and our handheld devices.

What does it mean? :
Every place is so generic that it feels like just a node or a network to connect, and so do we as a person act like a node or a network.

"People can inhabit anything. And they can be miserable in anything and ecstatic in anything. More and more I think that architecture has nothing to do with it. Of course, that's both liberating and alarming.

But the generic city, the general urban condition, is happening everywhere, and just the fact that it occurs in such enormous quantities must mean that it's habitable. Architecture can't do anything that the culture doesn't. We all complain that we are confronted by urban environments that are completely similar. We say we want to create beauty, identity, quality, singularity. And yet, maybe in truth, these cities that we have are desired. Maybe their very characterless ness provides the best context for living." —**Rem Koolhaas** *for an* <u>*interview in Wired, July 1996*</u>

Globalization and the city

The urban setup we live in today is a result of the multi-layered evolution that our cities have gone through. If we take the example of cities of western countries, urban areas were known for issues, crisis or challenges in the past. The urban crisis was a given, cities were deemed harsh, dirty and dangerous. On the contrary, the Asian cities that now loom so large were large, but they did not loom. These Asian cities had very little to do with the global economy and they were technologically backward. The major cities on the world stage were European and American for the most part, and many of them were known for the mess that they had in the cities.

Today we might have come over these issues, Asian cities like Shanghai, Tokyo or Mumbai are known for their presence in the global economy, cities from the west are setting examples for others to follow. But this has also generated a plethora of urban issues for which we seek a new solution today. The word Urban crisis might not be there but has taken a new shape. Pedestrianization, climate change, traffic congestion are some of the many issues for which we seek the solution today. These common issues in almost all the mega-cities, in turn started generating universal solutions.

In this race of making the world a better place for ourselves, we have shaped the cities what we see today, that is what we promote, that is what we as an activist, architect, designer, planner, filmmaker or any other stakeholders of the city seek. This race, in turn, has given birth to a "Generic city" that we see in Megacities, be it, New York, Tokyo, Mumbai, or Shanghai.

This poses a question for the cities of the next century or rather centuries.

What will make a city special?
Will stakeholders of the city will ever be able to build special places in the next century?
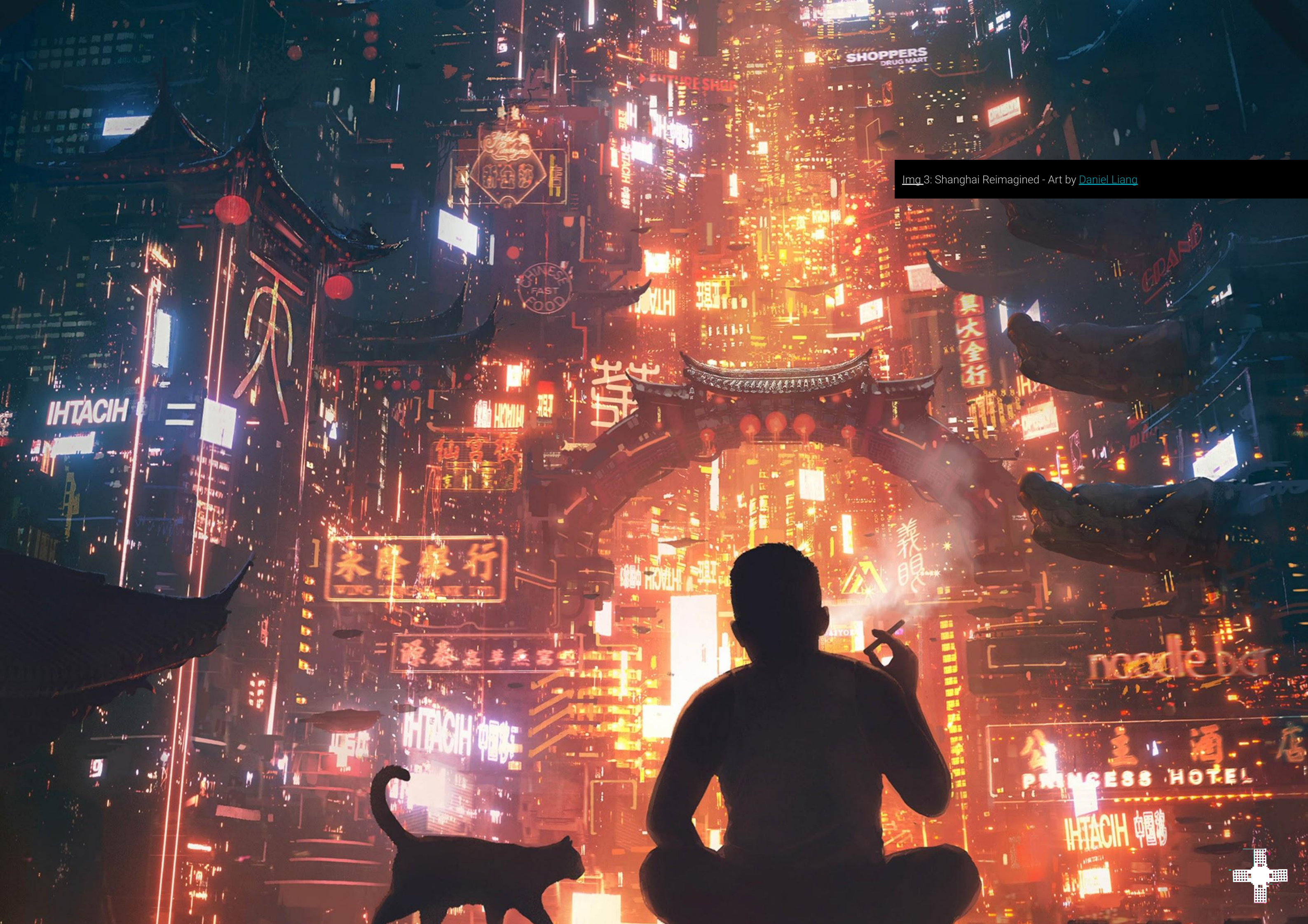
YOUR
UTOPIA
IS
DYSTOPIA
MY

Cities of 21st centuries are racing with each other to make a utopian society. They are setting up examples for each other to be followed by each other. This race is the process in which we are building a "Generic city" driven by wealth and technology.

We cannot underestimate the extent to which, nowadays our cities feel the same. It is because the people in them are more the same than they once were. These cities can be anywhere yet it may give you a sense of being nowhere. Today nowhere is virtually any place, every place that is the world of technology, accessible to all of us. Now every place is, to a greater or lesser extent, a product of its time.

Design Challenge

Does architecture yet again has the potential to make our cities di-generic? Can we save our cities from the destined?

This challenge is a part of X-Plor tri-competition series titled 'Di-Generic Cities'. Discover the other two briefs here.
Japan - China - United States
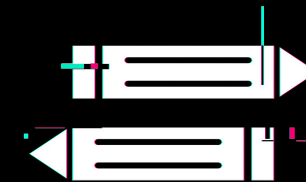
Img 4: Evolution of modern day cities (1/3)

The Design Challenge:

Outline

If skylines around the world are looking too much the same, Is this because the new and important buildings are done by the big names (designers) from far away and not by the locals or the opposite is true? In the age where the information is easy to consume, what role does starchitecture play, or what role does local architecture play?

Not only skyscrapers but, museums, civic center's, concert halls, bridges, libraries, opera houses all give cities part of their identity as well. Many of these buildings that succeed best and make places feel special may not be designed by local architects either, but by architects who were hired because it was thought that they could bring more imagination and a sense of freshness to the problem.

Which brings us to so many questions that are the starting point of untangling this issue:

- How can we reclaim our cities to act differently from each other in the next centuries?
- What does the architectural design need to have or provide to disengage and distinguish itself from the evolving technology?
- Can architecture be more than an object or an icon? If so, how?
- What kind of urban programs do we consider to be useful to its inhabitant and what do they seek from the city?
- Can architecture again become a node or intersection for people? If so, how?
- What kind of space possesses a question that you are in a special place for all age groups where they can interact with each other?
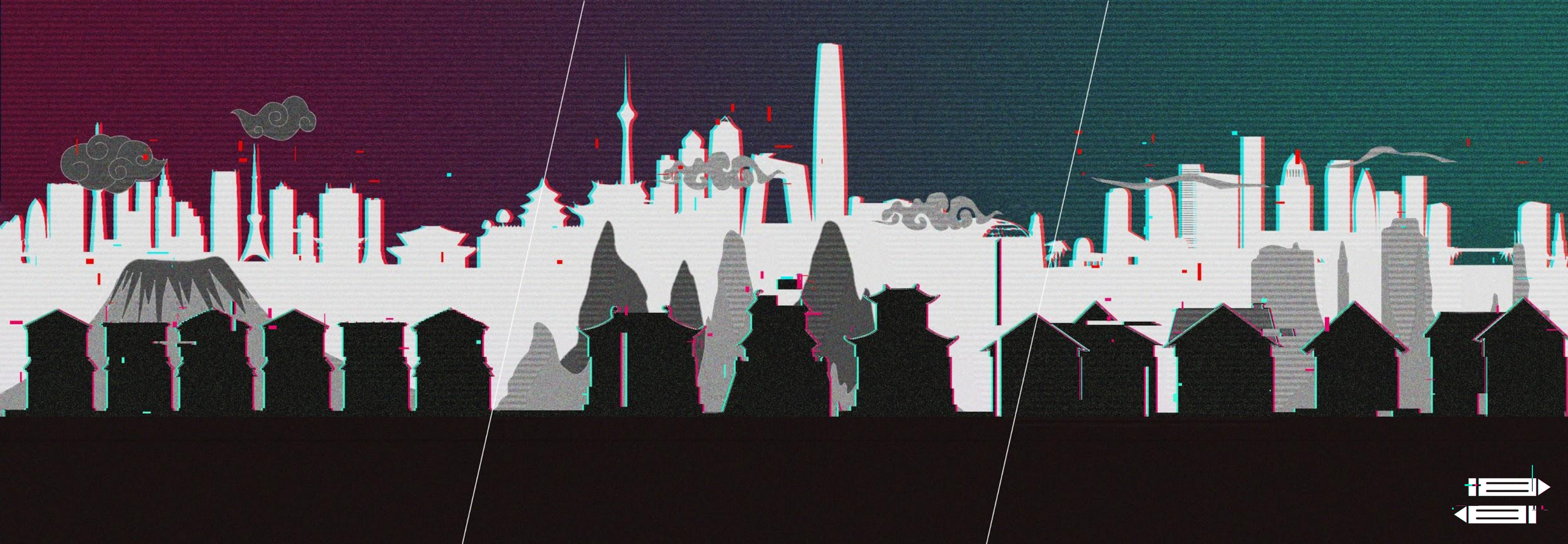
Img 5: Evolution of modern day cities (2/3)

Brief

Every city needs to be a place in which the basic idea of the urban fabric of streets and public places and decent architecture forms the foundation. But if that is all we have, and if we lose our desire for great and special buildings that break out of all of this then we have failed our cities just as much. The "Generic city" is not only the place with identical glass towers and freeways and malls. It is also the place that stops caring about things that are different and no longer builds buildings that break the rules and makes us feel that we are in a place that is like no place else. And that, the feeling of being in a special place, is one of the greatest gifts that any city can give us.

Can an architectural building in one of the "Generic cities" make the urban space/architecture special?

Img 6: Evolution of modern day cities (3/3)

The Design Challenge:
Objectives

Your outcome can be a combination of any one, two or all three forces that exist in a city.

Function: A function-driven outcome to make people understand that function matters in a technology-driven society.

OR

Local Forces: A combination of multiple local forces, like climate, people, culture, geography, etc.

OR

Global Forces: A unique unmatched style which breaks the boundary of architecture and design that we know today.

Shanghai

Background of the city, functions and site for the Di-Generic City challenge.

中国

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Img 07: A cityscape of Shanghai

Shanghai, China

Shanghai is one of the largest city in China by population, and **the second most populous city in the world,** with a population of 24.18 million as of 2017. It is a global financial centre and transport hub, with the world's busiest container port. With the rich and vast hinterlands of the Yangtze River Valley, Shanghai quickly emerged as a booming international trading port. Engagement into the global economy triggered Shanghai's geographical advantages as a port city, which greatly strengthened its import and export function. Geographers who have studied the growth of Shanghai over the past four decades tend to sum up the pace of change with one word: **Unprecedented**. Shanghai has become a **cornerstone of globalization of China.** It sprung to the level of a global city between 1990 to 2000 - through unparalleled industrialization, transportation, and commerce, which today almost every world city aspires to achieve.

The Linguatheque - This is an architectural programme where languages, scriptures and vocal dictionaries are stored in accessible repository where people even without connected generations can trace/learn about their origins. The repository can be human or digital origin.
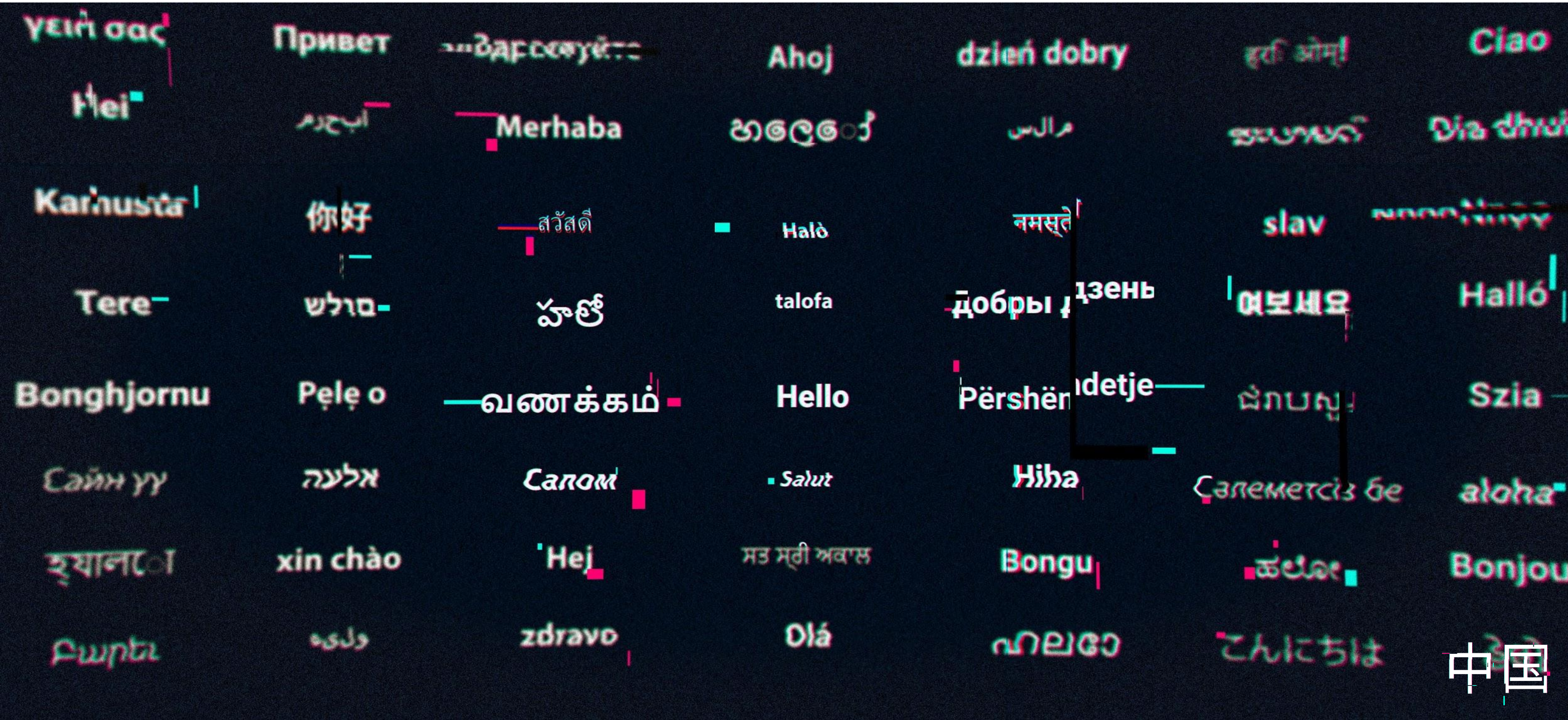
Programme - 'The Linguatheque'

Until recently, the story of English was broadly similar to that of other global languages: it spread through a combination of conquest, trade, and colonization. But then, at some point between the end of the second world war and the start of the new Millenium, English made a jump in primacy as a "global language". One straightforward way to trace the growing influence of English is in the way its vocabulary has infiltrated so many other languages. For a millennium or more, English was a great importer of words, absorbing vocabulary from Latin, Greek, French, Hindi, Nahuatl, and many others. And now everything we see around us is in English (Internet, Mobiles, Everything). As many as half of the world's 7,000 languages are expected to be extinct by the end of this century. **Can architecture help conserve this new threat of generalization through language by preserving knowledge systems that got us this far and are fundamental to our identities?**

CHONGMING ISLAND

CHANGXING ISLAND

HENGSHA ISLAND

200M

10 Acres

200M

SHANGHAI

中国

Site - Changxing Island, Shanghai

The river **Yangtze** has been an important factor in shaping Chinese culture and society. Language simultaneously plays an essential role in communicating these ideas and philosophies like a river. No matter how globalized Shanghai may get tomorrow, the contribution of the river and language have been pivotal in crowning it as one of the megacities of the world. The Linguatheque finds its place right at the intersection of these ideas. The Changxing Island which connects Mainland Shanghai and Chongming Island is predicted to be the next micro city to keep up with the demands of the infrastructure of Shanghai. The Linguatheque, is the biggest bastion of similar identities of the world which are under constant threat of globalization - while giving its people a chance to discover their roots.

Site Area: 40,000 sqm (~10 Acres)
Max Ground coverage: 40%
**Coordinates:** 31°19'03.3"N 121° 46'56.3"E
Location: Changxing Island
No restrictions of building codes are applicable on this challenge.

Competition Details

Find essential details of the competition
here, along with submission guidelines and
Tri-series overview

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'Di-Generic Cities'. Discover the other two briefs here.
Japan - China - United States
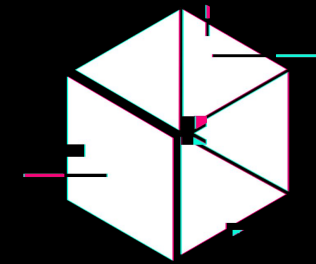
Eligibility & Submission

Who are eligible to participate?

1. Architects
2. Designers
3. Filmmakers/screenwriters
4. Theorists
5. Illustrators
6. Game designers
7. Concept designers
8. 3D Visual Artists

Or any creative who can visualize, narrate and frame how their design thinking will stand out in a world expected to become generic. Participants have to be over the age of 18 to enter this contest. **There is no limit of team members and participants can make groups with as many individuals as they wish.** We endorse **collaborative teams** with various roles and contributions in decoding Di-generic cities. Only one set of physical certificate (Engraved in wood) and Winner's trophy will be issued in the name of the team - to only one contact person's address. There will be printable E-Certificates issued on demand to winning and shortlisted teams.

What you need to submit:

• A maximum 3 nos. – **5640px x 8640px** boards in portrait digital format (JPEG) (4 Boards / per di-generic challenge).
The images are expected to be less technical and more speculative with visual ideas.

Apart from the above submission boards, participants can submit any number of visual renderings / artworks / illustrations which they feel can reinforce their presentations better.
This has to be without textual information.

• Mixed media allowed
ex. Photography, film, 3d, illustration etc.

• Answer 8 FAQ questions in the discussion section as given on the 'Additional Resources folder'

This folder contains: CAD Drawing file of Site and FAQ Questions.
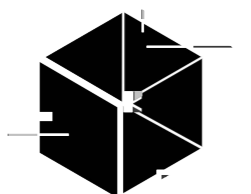
Schedule & Guidelines

Minimum requisites for a complete submission:

• 4 Presentation Boards (Compulsory)
• Containing: 4-5 3D Views - A small description of their project.
• Cover image of size 2000 x 1000 px or larger in aspect ratio 2:1.
• Tags and FAQ Questions.
• Non-Compulsory - Views, illustration, images, sketches (if any) can be added to support the entry in the form of additional images.

+ Use exploded views to discuss multi-levelled conceptual models better.
+ Ensure that the final sheets which are submitted do not include your name or any other mark of identification.
+ Mention sheet number on the corner of every sheet.
+ Plagiarism of any idea / form / design / image will be disqualified with a notice.

Registration page here: http://competitions.uni.xyz

Submission Deadline: September 28, 2019
Submission closes this day.

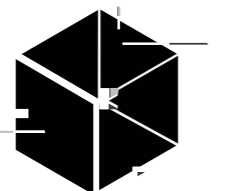**Public Voting begins: September 29, 2019**
Submitted entries are open for voting.

**Public Voting ends: October 29, 2019**
Voting ends on this date.

Result Announcement: November 07, 2019
Result day!

DI GENERIC
C·I·T·I·E·S
日本
T O K Y O

DI GENERIC
C·I·T·I·E·S
中国
S H A N G H A I

DI GENERIC
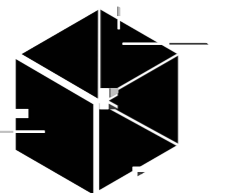C·I·T·I·E·S
LA
L O S A N G E L E S

This challenge is a part of X-Plor tri-competition series titled 'Di-Generic Cities'. X-plor is an exploratory ideas arm of Uni, where participants are exposed to challenges with an entirely new subject / premise in terms of design thinking. X-Plor competitions allow participants learn - analyze - solve, beyond traditional problems and invite fresh design ingenuity to solve them. Click on the above competition cards to discover the other two exciting challenges.
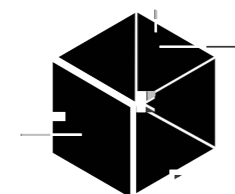
Rewards

Grants of up to a total of **30,000$** can be won on this challenge. Learn more about the full conditions on the competition page here.

Judging Criteria

The entries will be judged by an international jury of the competition - To be announced:
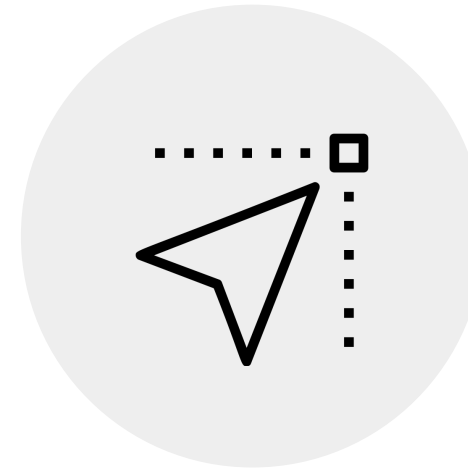
Interpretation

How uniquely your pre-design phase interpretes Generic cities and finding a new place for architecture in it.

Concept/Idea

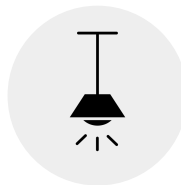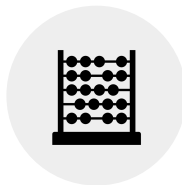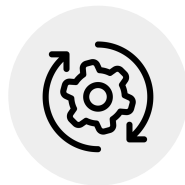Quality of thought and design concept in pre-design phase.
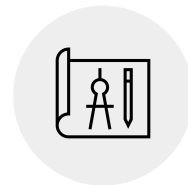
Interpretation

The fundamental to a good entry is a good presentation. This can be hand rendered or digital.

Design Output

The final architectural outcome springing systematically from the concept & interpretation.

The judging panel can also add other criterions based on their internal discussions - which will be in line with the problem statement. Participants are advised to fulfil above given criterions first in their design.
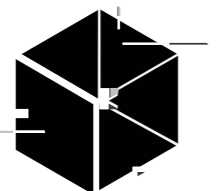
Evaluation

Di-Generic City
Tokyo

Di-Generic City
Shanghai

Di-Generic City
Los Angeles

Tokyo	Shanghai	Los Angeles
Outcomes Score / 10	Outcomes Score / 10	Outcomes Score / 10
Presentation Score / 10	Presentation Score / 10	Presentation Score / 10
Concept Score / 10	Concept Score / 10	Concept Score / 10
Interpretation Score / 10	Interpretation Score / 10	Interpretation Score / 10

Synonymous ↔ (between Concept stages)
Synonymous ↔ (between Interpretation stages)

Average score / **10**
Top Scorer is the Winner of
Di-Generic City **Tokyo**

Average score / **10**
Top Scorer is the Winner of
Di-Generic City **Shanghai**

Average score / **10**
Top Scorer is the Winner of
Di-Generic City **Los Angeles**

Total Score / **30**
Any team scores maximum in total irrespective of entering one, two or all challenges.

Di-Generic Cities Champion

About

X-PLOR

X-plor is an exploratory ideas arm of **Uni**, where participants are exposed to challenges with an entirely new subject / premise in terms of design. **X-Plor** competitions allow participants learn simultaneously, beyond traditional problems and invite fresh design ingenuity to solve them. The primary theory associated with these problems are supplied with the problem statement. The design outcomes are judged by the combinations of logics applied in resonance to proven + speculative ideas that stand most innovative amongst all.
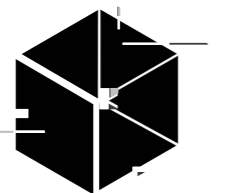
Queries: support@uni.xyz
Discover other edition competitions: http://competitions.uni.xyz
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/unidesigntogether/
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/uni.xyz/
Discover FAQ's about this competition on our help forum here: http://help.uni.xyz/