

## Laudatory Speech Schelling Prize 2020: Lina Ghotmeh

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The French metropolitan debate has been stirred up for some time by a number of young architects. One reason for this is that the dominant planning centralism can no longer be justified in the face of the ecological question, and because of the unresolved housing issue, better solutions for the surrounding area connections are urgently sought. A new urban idea is needed - working as before with cultural projects that are as extravagant as possible, but cover up contradictions and merely reconcile them, does not help. What is needed is an architecture that is capable of thinking in networks. This applies not only to the capital with the planning of "Grand Paris", but also to Marseille, Bordeaux, Paris, Lyon, Rennes and other cities.

- "When you build today, it is vital to understand that you are necessarily always in a system of relationships." This is the credo of architect Lina Ghotmeh, who speaks out in this debate with committed statements, with her buildings and within the context of her teaching. After working with Norman Foster and Jean Nouvel, she taught at the École Spéciale, the most conceptual of the Parisian architecture schools, which was influenced by Paul Virilio. Ghotmeh is a wanderer between Europe and the Middle East. She grew up in Beirut, where she studied at the American University. Her time in Lebanon shortly after the civil war left its mark on her. In her methodology as an architect, she pleads for the most precise possible "archaeology of the future" as the starting point for every project. She understands this to mean first analysing the existing stock in detail, examining it for its - also painful - meanings and then linking them anew with the social and political reality of life on site. Ghotmeh combines this translation work with a strong architectural concept. In the case of the competition for the Estonian National Museum, which she won in 2005 as a 25-year-old architect and then realised as part of the DGT office partnership, she did this by shifting the competition site that had actually been proposed. Today, the new building spans the undulating terrain of the former military airport as a glass bar and, with an almost physical

gesture of architecture, not only exposes the topographical traces of the past, but also documents European history.

In the meantime, Lina Ghotmeh is present in the debate about the future of the city with her own office. This includes her "Réalimenter Massena" project, which is to become part of the ecological transformation of the Paris metropolis as a multifunctional hub. The building sees itself as a teaching example for the linking of housing and office construction, urban biofarm and documentation centre. It resembles a Babylonian-looking wooden tower covered in greenery. But, says Lina Ghotmeh: "Architecture today must not be content with greening the façades." With statements like these, the architect has become a weighty voice in the large-scale project of Mayor Anne Hidalgo, who wants to make Paris a green capital and exemplary for France and Europe under the "Réinventer" label.

*\* „Pour construire, il faut comprendre que si on veut survivre, on a besoin d'être en permanence dans un système de relations“*