

# From roundabout to urban agora – COBE and BRUT to design the entrance to the European Union



Image: COBE and BRUT

Press release, 8 December 2017

**Danish architects COBE and Belgian architects BRUT reveal the winning design for Place Schuman in Brussels, Belgium. Located in the heart of the European Quarter, in between the main institutions of the European Union, Place Schuman constitutes the entrance to the EU. The project transforms a heavily trafficked roundabout into an urban space and meeting point. Inspired by the shape of the European Parliaments' hemicycle, a reflective roof covering an urban agora unites all citizens and institutions of the EU and transforms the European Quarter from a city for cars into a city for people.**

Danish architects COBE and Belgian architects BRUT have won the international competition to design Place Schuman in Brussels, Belgium. The competition was launched in December 2015 by the Brussels Government. An independent jury of experts, presided by Brussels Chief Architect Kristiaan Borret, made its choice, confirmed yesterday by Minister-President of the Brussels Region Rudi Vervoort and Brussels Minister of Mobility Pascal Smet.

## **From roundabout to urban agora**

Today, Place Schuman is a heavily trafficked roundabout in the heart of Brussels. Surrounded by the main institutions of the European Union, including the European Council and the European Commission, Place Schuman constitutes the entrance to the EU. In the future, it will be transformed into an urban space and meeting point for the entire EU. The project consists of an agora covered with an iconic roof structure reflecting the square and the people below. A funnel shaped opening in the roof frames the surrounding institutions of the European Union on the square. Surrounding the agora, a large pedestrian area with a continuous pavement will connect Place Schuman to the neighbouring Cinquantenaire Park and the bridge of Rue de la Loi over Chaussée d'Etterbeek.

Dan Stubbergaard, Founder and Creative Director of COBE says:

“A parliament is usually closed-off to the public, but Place Schuman will be permanently accessible, embracing democracy and knowledge sharing. Here, all citizens of the EU will be united under one roof. The roof reflects the square and the people below, creating a meeting place between nationalities, cultures, languages and genders. The agora underneath the roof will be designed as concentric circles, inspired by the European Parliaments’ hemicycle. The circles continue in the surrounding pavement, emphasizing Place Schuman as the center of European democracy.”

Pascal Smet, Brussels Minister of Mobility, says:

“Place Schuman shows the change this city is making. We are going from a city for cars to a city for people! Schuman will become a real urban square where residents and visitors can meet. Finally this emblematic spot is given the quality and look it deserves. It is now up to the architects to elaborate their projects together with the residents and the European institutions.”

Kristiaan Borret, Brussels Chief Architect, elaborates:

“The winning project as proposed by COBE / BRUT shows a fine craftsmanship as it combines the overall complexity of this mission within a consistent and ambitious project. The new Place Schuman will become a pleasant and at the same time welcoming area. A federating project, just as Europe itself.”

Additional studies for the design will be carried out by COBE and BRUT with a view to submitting a permit by the end of 2018 and starting the works in 2019.

#### **For further information, please contact**

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#### **Illustrations**

Illustrations attached. They can be used freely in connection with the mentioning of COBE and BRUT. Image credit: COBE and BRUT.

#### **About Place Schuman**

Location: Brussels, Belgium

Client: Bruxelles Mobilité

Architects: COBE and BRUT

Engineers: ARA, UTIL, Buro MOVE

Program: New urban square and pedestrian zone

Size: 34.000 m<sup>2</sup>

Status: 1st prize in competition in 2017, construction start 2019

Images: COBE and BRUT

## **About COBE**

COBE is an architecture company founded in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2006 by architect Dan Stubbergaard. COBE has established itself as a practice with a great understanding of architecture as a social engine, taking its starting point in each location's particular potential and insisting on creating increased value for the users. Its most significant projects include Nørreport Station, Denmark's busiest train hub, Denmark's new rock-music museum, Ragnarock, the development of Nordhavn (North Harbour) in Copenhagen, the biggest urban development project in Scandinavia, and a new conference building for Adidas at its headquarters in Germany.

[www.cobe.dk](http://www.cobe.dk)

## **About BRUT**

BRUT is an office specializing in improving our everyday surroundings with a wide range of expertise both in the field of research, design and implementation. As a design office we specialize in projects of architecture, urban design and public space. The company was founded in 2008 and is run by two business partners, Gunther Slagmeulder, who is responsible for the architecture projects, and Francis De Wolf, who deals with the urban design projects. Most of our projects are situated in Belgium, but we use our company seat in Denmark to collaborate with Danish architects on ambitious projects. Another significant project of ours, Currently under construction, is a residential and mix-use tower in the Nieuw Zuid neighborhood in Antwerp.

[www.brut-web.be](http://www.brut-web.be)