

Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss + Kai Vöckler

»Western Balkan Urbanism«

A network of architects, planners and urbanists in South Eastern Europe

An initiative of Archis Interventions.

Archis Interventions, the not for profit branch of Archis (also known for its magazine Volume), has set itself on a course to provide cities in need with clues and concepts to revive the public domain, to re-energize its urban spirit and to revitalize its trust in dialogue as the essence of civic life.

The activities of Archis Interventions spring from the Archis RSVP Events, a series of international events of which the format is predominantly determined by the participants. Local partners always play a crucial role in developing the event. The kinds of activities and or projects that emanate from the events depend on the local circumstances, needs and initiatives. Archis Interventions plays an active facilitating role in these projects and initiatives.

We offer

- new formats to stimulate productive dialogue
- exchange of knowledge
- exchange of best practices (through the Archis network)
- participation in and access to international urban discourse
- initiatives and advise on new practice and project development

The need of a network of urbanists

In the Balkan region are existing different networks, but not a sustainable network for independently working architects, planners and urbanists.

Existing networks:

_ NALAS (Network of Local Authorities in Southeast Europe)

_Lost Highway Exhibition (artist / architectural network)

_Europe Lost and Found (artist / architectural network)

_School of Missing Studies (artist / architectural network)

The creating of a sustainable urban environment as well as maintaining architectural values cannot be done only by the local administration and international aid organisations – actually the local civil society has to be involved. Independently working initiatives and associations of architects, planners and urbanists play a crucial role by mediating between the private and the public. The specific urbanistic focus goes beyond purely political or artistic approaches by developing sustainable concepts and supporting the local authorities with new concepts for the future urban development. Actually in the moment the most local initiatives are isolated and under pressure because of the uncertainty of the situation.

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Archis Interventions

- enables the exchange of best practices and the transfer of knowledge through the international Archis network
- integrates local urban initiatives into the international urban discourse through its magazine Volume
- offers new communicative formats to stimulate productive dialogue
- strengthens local civil society by supporting urban initiatives
- engages public awareness of crucial problems of urban development such as migration, legalization of informal settlements, the need of a public space
- provides new strategies of planning
- positions the spatial disciplines such as architecture and city planning in an internationalized political and economic framework as a political project

A network of architects, planners and urbanists in the Western Balkans

Together with local NGOs, architects, planners, sociologists, artists, economists and other professionals who are engaged in the process of improvement of the urban environment in its political and social dimension Archis Interventions intends to establish a network in the Balkan region to exchange knowledge and best practices, to integrate the discussed issues into the international debate and to support local initiatives to strengthen the civil society. Archis Interventions will become a 'catalyst' between local initiatives and associations of planners, architects, artists and other urbanists within a country and between the same of neighbouring countries.

Phase I: Contact with potential partners, knowledge exchange and conceptual framework

In a first step Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss and Kai Vöckler will contact and meet in 2008 several local initiatives and associations. Asked for a meeting and an exchange of thoughts about the potentials of a network are:

kuda.org / center for architecture / Novi Sad
rex b92 cultural centre / nebojsa milikic / Belgrade
expeditio / kotor / Montenegro
platforma 9.81 / Zagreb
Archis Interventions / Florina Jerliu / Prishtina
Co-Plan / Dritan Shutina / Tirana

Further contacts in Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Skopje and other locations will be made in the upcoming months. Furthermore, representatives of the local universities will be contacted and involved into the project.

Phase II : Web platform/Conference, »Action Plan« and guidelines for an »Urban Task Force«

Based on the experiences of the different initiatives and associations can we assemble typical development, qualification strategies for post-conflict and/or transformation situations which are then transferable to similar urban situations?

A virtual information and communication platform will be installed by Archis Interventions to document the different approaches, but also to use this a working platform to develop through a discussion and a working process a coherent strategy concept (»Action Plan«), which will be discussed throughout the Archis network. A blog installed allows also other interested organisations and person to react on the developed concepts. The platform will be used in the future to connect also other groups throughout the region to participate.

The web platform will be used as a working space to analyse the specificities of the urban development in South Eastern Europe and to develop strategies checked for their relevance also in other situations. This will be an important contribution to the international discourse, which lacks theoretical reflection of planning strategies in this specific situations. An »Action Plan« will be developed - a summary of the new planning strategies with regard to its different locales where it has to be contextualized. The workshop enables to share experiences and to form this into a common strategy.

Optional is an international conference which will discuss the most crucial topics of urban development in a post-conflict and/or transformation situation. The conference will be accompanied by a workshop which focus is the developed »Action Plan«. A personal meeting of the different protagonists would help to built personal relations and to exchange personal experiences.

These initial activities will lead to form a sustainable organization, which can intervene as a »Urban Task Force«. Guidelines for an organisation as such will be worked out.

Result

- The different urbanistic approaches will be documented and brought to a conceptual framework including new planning strategies.
- Out of this an »Action Plan« will be developed, which forms the different approaches to a coherent strategy concept.
- The results will be an important contribution to the international discourse and discussed throughout the Archis network.
- By the inclusion into an international discourse and the exchange of best practices local urban initiatives will be strengthened.
- The established network as part of the Archis network will help urban initiatives to get more public awareness locally.
- Together with the web platform a sustainable organisation with a information, communication and work platform will be established, that can be extended and will form in the future an »Urban Task Force«.

About us

Archis Interventions is part of the Archis Foundation - a cultural think tank devoted to the process of real time spatial and cultural reflexivity.

Archis Publishers: is publishing Volume Magazine, a project by Archis, AMO (Rem Koolhaas' Office for Metropolitan Architecture) and C-Lab, the architectural laboratory of Columbia University.

Archis Interventions: organizes international events that initiate interdisciplinary debate on spatial and cultural issues. It advises (governmental) social and cultural organizations and private companies on a variety of urban and spatial issues and intervenes in deadlocked situations.

See also www.archis.org

Archis Foundation is directed by Lilet Breddels, an art historian with a range of experience in managing international cultural and editorial projects.

Arjen Oosterman is editor of Volume Magazine. Oosterman is an architectural historian, writer and critic holding several teaching positions at architectural universities.

Social historian, Christian Ernsten is one of the editors of Volume and co organizer of the RSVP events.

Niloufar Tajeri is an architect dealing with marketing and public relations.

Edwin Gardner is architect and webeditor of www.archis.org

Urbanist and publicist, Kai Vöckler is heading the Berlin office of Archis Interventions and is project manager for the Balkan region. As such Vöckler is the counterpart for Archis Interventions Prishtina. Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss collaborates with Archis Interventions (Kai Vöckler) in establishing a network of local initiatives and associations in the Western Balkan. Thilo Fuchs is architect and web designer. He is member of Archis Interventions/Berlin and will be responsible for the web platform.