



Revival of City Squares in Balkan Cities

CO-PLAN
COALITION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
EXPEDITIO

WORKSHOP: SQUARE PLAY

14th -19th October, 2011, Skopje – Macedonia

Organised by Coalition for Sustainable Development -CSD

The workshop “**SQUARE PLAY**” is the third and final in the series of regional workshops envisaged by the project “Revival of City Squares in the Balkan Cities”.

Revival of City Squares in Balkan Cities, supported by the Swiss Cultural Programme for the Western Balkans and the Foundation Open Society Macedonia, is a regional cooperation project, that brings together partners from both non-governmental and institutional sectors from 3 Balkan countries: Macedonia (Coalition for Sustainable Development – CSD, Skopje), Albania (Co-Plan Institute for Habitat Development and Polis University, Tirana), and Montenegro (Expediatio - Centre for Sustainable Spatial Development, Kotor). Its aim is to contribute to the revival of city squares as viable public places that foster cultural identity and promote diversity through enforcement of public policies and active community participation.

About the workshop

The aim of this workshop is to encourage regional exchange of ideas regarding the discourse on city squares / public spaces and how they can be transformed into vibrant community places that meet community cultural, social and economic needs and foster new perspective and awareness, so that the idea of "city culture" (the way people think about public spaces and conceive them) can be developed. The objective of the workshops is to provoke young people to voice their ideas, aspirations and solutions for open public spaces and city squares and to inspire them to take an active role in future development of urban and cultural policies, both locally and on a wider regional level. The workshop will reflect the *regional dimension*, and stimulate sharing of fresh ideas, so essential for this project.

Background

Skopje, the largest city in the Republic of Macedonia, owes its present form to the process of stratification of differentiated layers developed as a result of its urban transformations. These transformations are products of the historical and morphological processes that shaped and are still shaping the city. Discontinuous and unrelated urban concepts, planning policies and construction practices, implemented, or at least used as theoretical ground for its urban development, have eventually created the image of Skopje as “a city of fragments”, recognised as connected or disconnected city parts, more like cities-in-the city, or cities-next-to-a city. The public spaces and public life in the city of Skopje as a result of such processes are slowly disappearing and the newly proposed ones seem to simulate rather than to stimulate and provoke interaction. Such spaces do not contribute nor enhance city’s qualities, but are empty and unarticulated spaces emerging in the in-between realm producing permanent strangeness questing for an immediate rethinking and action.

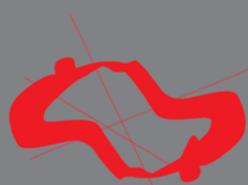


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Why SQUARE-PLAY?

"I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space, someone is watching him, and that is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged."

(The Empty Space — A Book About the Theatre: Deadly, Holy, Rough, Immediate,
Peter Brook)

The idea derived from two significant and quite inspiring words: **Fair-play** and **Screen-play**. The word **Fair-play**, (which means *equitable or impartial treatment*), when applied to the users of public spaces / city squares and their right to use the space, means that no one has the right to deprive or threaten other people from using it freely and without limitation. In other words, the right we ask for ourselves obliges us to respect the rule of *fair play* – that is, the very same right of others to do the same (*conformity to established rules*). The other word, **Screen-play**, (defined as *an outline or synopsis of a possible course of action or events*), is closely connected and relates to the premise that in order to create a place in which many people / as users and actors / will be attracted to spend their time, it is necessary to envision variety of possible ways in which that given space can be used, and based on that, to create a setting (*screen-play*) for its use. This play presupposes interface of many actors and many actions, therefore the screen-play should foresee numerous scenes for different potential "drama" (*a state, situation, or series of events involving interesting or intense interaction of partakers*) that may take place in that space. Reading these two words as such provides us with a framework for a new "play" which we are pleased to call a **SQAURE-PLAY**.

Approach: Space = Stage; Surrounding environment = Scenery; Citizens (users) = Actors; Activities = Drama

Participants: 30 Students and young professionals, including architects, designers, sociologists, from Albania, Montenegro and Macedonia

Precondition to participate in the workshop: Good will, creativity and visions.

Working language: In general, English, but the most important will be the language of good cooperation and understanding.

Expected results

- Real-time action and creative visions how to "give life" to the open public spaces
- In the spirit of "giving and receiving", exchange of ideas, knowledge and practices among the participants (contribution to the platform and the network of young advocates ("*esprit de corp*") in the three Balkan countries to promote the discourse on how city squares/public spaces can be transformed into vibrant community places)
- Inputs to the guidelines intended for the local authorities how to carry out the process of city planning in a participative manner



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Location

The plateau in front of the Department store "MOST"



General information:

- Bridge between the city and the Old Bazaar
- High frequency of people (passers-by)
- Big, empty, unused space
- A space once used as a café / restaurant
- Pavement: travertine, recently renewed and restored

Workshop venue

Café Menada

The plateau in front of the Department store "MOST"

GEM Club

Workshop Coordinators

Natasha Poplavska, Divna Pencik, Sonja Damchevska

Collaborators:

Sasho Ivanovski, Jasna Stefanovska

Guest speakers

Architects, Urban planners, Sociologists, Anthropologists, Culturologists, Artists... (Names of the guest speakers to be confirmed)



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