Educating for a Democratic Practice of Architecture

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Educating for a Democratic Practice of Architecture

This contribution will discuss an educational project for the city of Skopje, North Macedonia, by two European schools of architecture, as a shared ambition to develop educational methods for a more democratic practice of architecture. Conquered by the Ottoman Empire, inscribed within a kingdom after World War I, within a socialist republic after World War II, and currently tense between global economic interests and regional political power struggles, Skopje also bears the scars of a massive earthquake and copes with ethnic and religious tensions fueled by the rise of divisive and dissociative political initiatives.

It is against this background that special attention has been given in the studios to three aspects that define built environments in which all citizens can thrive together. Firstly, citizens should be able to find meaning in and convey meaning to the spaces they use and inhabit. Secondly, they should be able to appropriate those spaces, by being able to project their hopes and feelings onto them. Finally, they should be able to integrate with others based on their ability to imagine and project visions of possible futures for the city in which they all live.
Following these three lines of investigation the studios offers exercises on a conceptual, contextual and disciplinary level. The contribution will discuss in detail the pedagogical structure by means of which these topic and levels of analysis are addressed. Building upon their analyses developed within this framework, the students are encouraged to envision possible futures for more meaningful, appropriable and integrating built environments. The contribution includes material of resulting graduation projects that illustrate how the city of Skopje and the many tensions that define it, are fertile grounds for the exploration, examination and discovery of architecture as a democratic practice.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

  **Jorge Mejía** graduated as an architect in Colombia, and received a PhD from TU Delft, where he is an Assistant Professor of Architecture within the section Methods and Matter. Together with Dirk van den Heuvel he leads the Delft/Rotterdam-based research group Architecture Culture and Modernity, and initiated the PhD programme Architecture and Democracy. Jorge Mejía is working group leader within the EU Cost network *Writing Urban Places*.

  **Klaske Havik** is Professor Methods of Analysis and Imagination at the Faculty of Architecture, TU Delft. In *Urban Literacy. Reading and Writing Architecture* (2014), she relates the experience, use and imagination of architecture and urban space to literary language. Her publications include the book *Architectural Positions, Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (2009, co-edited with T. Avermaete and H. Teerds). Havik is editor of the *Writingplace Journal for Architecture & Literature*, and Action Chair of the EU Cost network *Writing Urban Places*.

  **Slobodan Velevski** is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. Together with Marija Mano Velevska he co-leads master studio in architectural-urbanism entitled *Patterns of Growth*. In 2018 they co-curated the exhibition Freeingspace, representing Republic of Macedonia at the 16th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice, entitled Freespace. Slobodan Velevksi is working group leader within the EU Cost network *Writing Urban Places*.

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and interdisciplinary research network focuses on the study of mid-sized European cities, with similar ambitions.