

Inclusive/Exclusive Cities

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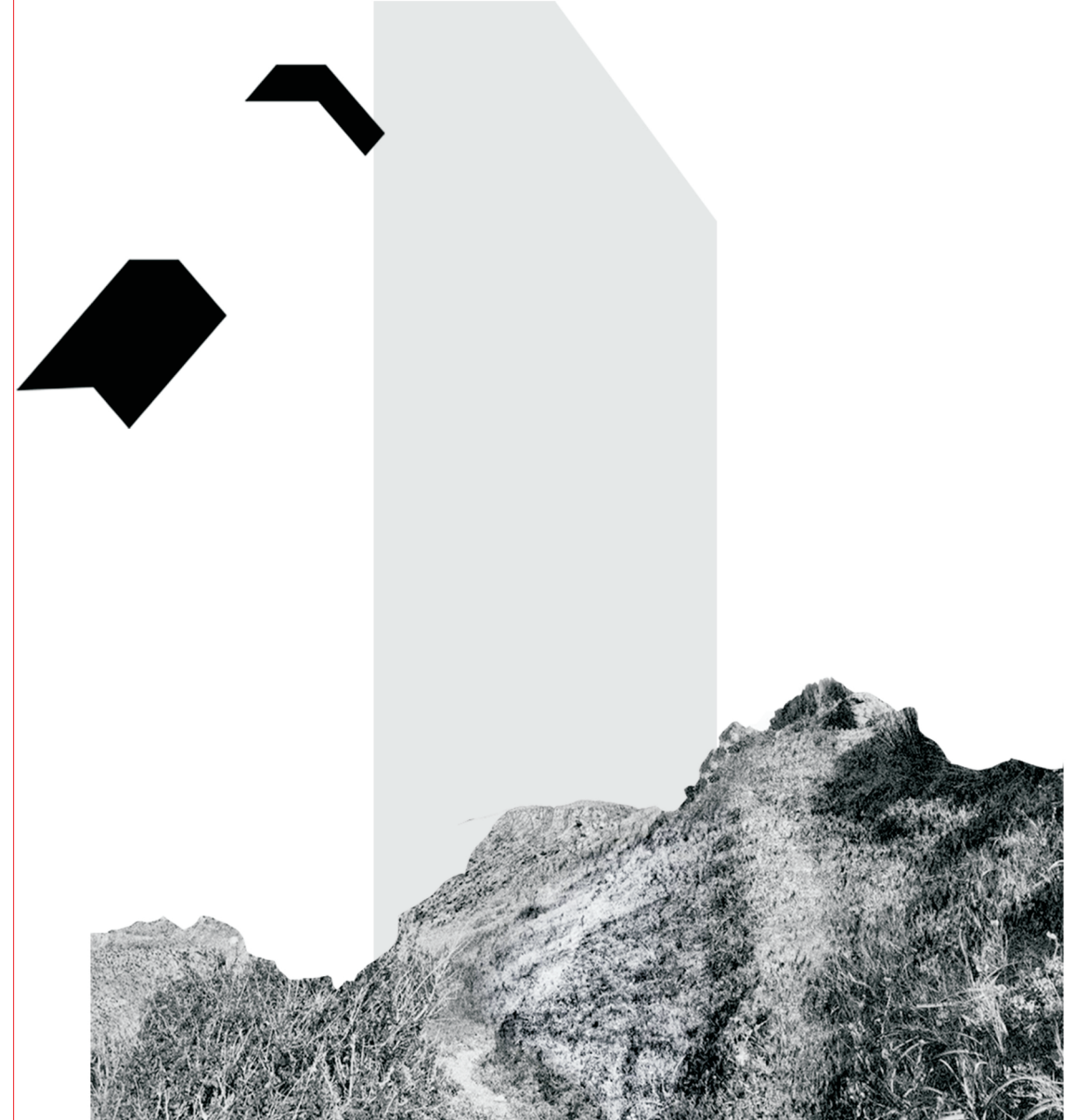
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SINERGI Project

Social Integration through Urban Growth Strategies

The SINERGI Project (Social Integration through Urban Growth Strategies) is a network of twinned cities that provides exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices of partner cities, Universities, civic organizations and social groups enabling better social integration through joint development of urban growth strategies. The project has enriched the sense of identity and mutual understanding between European citizens by bringing upfront problems and issues of urban life that are shared among them but also by sharing common values, history and culture in an open dialog.

The network provided a platform for creative and open debate between local authorities, academics, experts, civil activists and citizens from local communities about the problem of social integration in ever-growing cities. The SINERGI Book Two – “Inclusive/Exclusive Cities” provides the insight and exploration of the knowledge, practices, research and experience in facing the challenges of the contemporary cities. The purpose of this book is to provide a wide frame for the democratic tools that will enable citizens to exercise their right to the city, to provoke decision makers to create innovative policies and, through critical understanding of the relationships between the inclusive/exclusive city and the citizens, to create a better future for our cities.





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The network organized two seminars and two workshops as a platform for creative and open debate between local authorities, academics, experts, civil activists and citizens from local communities about the problem of social integration in ever-growing cities. The SINERGI Project Book One, “The Projects for an Inclusive City” and Book Two, “Inclusive/Exclusive Cities” are the result of the work and research within the SINERGI project. The purpose of the books is to provoke decision-makers and citizens to challenge their perception of the city and, through critical understanding of mutual cooperation and shared values, to create a sustainable and lasting network of cities and active citizens.



CITTA' DI TORINO



LISBOA
CÂMARA MUNICIPAL

Inclusive Exclusive Cities

Edited by
Ognen Marina
Alessandro Armando

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Authors

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Credits

Ognen Marina
Alessandro Armando

Inclusive/Exclusive Cities

Cities are complex systems of elaborated spatial and social relations. The challenges of the contemporary urban transformation have surpassed its economic aspect and emerge as a social, environmental, spatial and identity crisis sometimes having devastating effect on the social fabric of local communities and cities. The pressure of the financial crisis and outdated concepts and strategies of urban growth have caused the policies and politics of the urban growth and cities management to become exclusively matter of city administration, decision-makers and politicians. The questions of democracy and broader social inclusion in the scope of urban growth is mainly discussed and raised in the domain of the urban activism, within the academic debate or in marginalized and excluded groups of civic society. However, it reveals not only different ideas and tools how to provide the urban growth but also the tremendous difference in vision of the future of cities and urban imaginaries.

This condition has a direct implications on the process of cities development but also of governance and confinements of democratic potentialities in designing urban space that are only released with the broader inclusivity. Consequently, the emerging resistance to imposed spatial order made apparent the role of social and spatial inclusion in democratization processes and social relations in a society framed by its differences. Completely opposite to inclusive, transparent, participative planning for diversity, the process of creation of exclusive projects and spaces in cities encourages divisive tendencies and damages future prospects for open, connected and socially sustainable cities and societies. In spite of everything, these trends across the world provoked reawakening of public sphere and demonstrated that urban space is central to democratization processes. We can recognize strongest reactions in emerging every-day spatial practices with increased movement across newly marked social and cultural barriers and switching the border zone into contact zone. In this dazzling blend of financial crisis, challenged concepts of urbanity, dysfunctional policies and citizenship in crisis we can go through the social and economic contradictions and failures of the cities by innovating the urban policies and practices, aiming to enable a more inclusive, effective and socially responsible approach.

In order to understand the potential for joint effort for construction of better cities this book aims to develop a platform of knowledge and promote an informative debate about concepts, approaches and tools that are coherent with the complex nature of the cities and societies, but comprehensible and simple enough to be useful for institutions and citizens that are affected by the processes that are shaping cities. The questions that could be addressed and topics are: 1. Where and how could we identify and analyse the issues of social inclusion/exclusion in a transformation troubled cities and what can we learn from good and bad practices of social inclusion and/or exclusion? 2. Is there a new complexity of the relationship between cities and society, uncertainties, and questions to be addressed? What are the new approaches, tools and practices that will enhance democratization of urban development through better inclusiveness? 3. To what extent could urban disciplines be engaged with urban progress in terms of theory,

practice and education in an era with new social networks, new political policies, new digital tools and new forms of art and culture? 4. How cities can encourage urban inclusion at a time of intense social and cultural transformations, especially through design and urban planning? Moreover, to what extent are urban plans able to facilitate communication between citizens and institutions, society and the form of the cities?

The contributions to this volume show different perspectives and positions about inclusiveness, both in spatial urban practices and in the strategies of city governance. Thus, the answers to the previous questions cannot be reduced to a coherent set of statements. Nevertheless, some addresses seems to emerge from the debate.

Regarding the first and primary question – the issue of inclusion/exclusion– the main contradiction is to conceal the “right to the city” and the inclusiveness of the process with the effectiveness of the plan (Cabral). On the one hand the inclusive strategies lead in many cases to read the city as a fragmented entity and promote local development actions (as in the case of the “mosaic structure” in Bakalcev et al., whether the “micro-urbanism in Velevska et al.). On the other hand, the need to propose collective frames for urban space development and for unifying consensus should ask for a more institutional and general *top-down* discipline, which cannot avoid various forms of exclusion (Frassoldati). This kind of contradiction could reflect somehow different approaches, according to what François Lyotard called the two opposite models of society as a “functional whole” or “divided in two” (*The Postmodern Condition*, 1979). In the first approach, the balance within the urban system should start from the bottom, at the local level: since the equilibrium is possible, its composition will be incremental – but then it will unlikely extend to the entire system, being the effects stuck at a very small scale. Instead, the second approach considers conflict as an inevitable factor, thus it admits that the institutional conditions can limit conflicts, also through top-down interventions and accepting some forms of exclusion (from benefits, from decision-making involvement, etc.).

The second question is about the “new complexity” of the European (and world) cities: the structural conditions of urban systems (real estate market, connectivity, economic balance, political orders...) continue to change rapidly in the last years. This complexity can whether reflect dramatically into a parallel transformation of physical space (as evidently in Skopje as in Guangzhou) or it can be almost indifferent to the material urban development, which falls into a sleepy decline (such as in Turin, Zagreb and partly in Lisbon). The processes of exchange affecting the urban collective life – both the symbolic exchanges and the technical, economic, bureaucratic ones – acquired new topologies, becoming more dynamic and dislocated. The scholars are trying to describe and map this phenomenon: the new urban complexity produces innovation and opportunities for democratic development, but it also generates unpredicted forms of opacity. The real estate market gains power in combining information at the global level, while the planning instruments and the urban policies are stuck into a local perspective, being subjected to unrestrained conditions. The institutional

plans regulating land use, density, infrastructures into long-term actions and public contracts still reflect a set of urban paradigms, which are going to disappear rapidly. In the meanwhile, the cities continue to transform even without the help of public plans. In this divergence between the institutional capacity of regulation and the autonomous raising of unexpected forces, the innovation in planning instruments is urgent. Some experiences of local negotiation (as in Lisbon) or some proposals for re-thinking the planning process as a “rhizomatic nesting” or as a predictive and diverting tree have been presented and discussed during the SINERGI project, finding here some punctual proposal (Mantziaras, Frassoldati, Pensa et al.).

The third question is an interdisciplinary topic. Urban studies and technical knowledge about architecture, infrastructure, planning have never in many decades been so openly challenged as much as today. The social dimension of reality, mainly in its aspect of a global network, shows more and more its power on the material space of cities: the “total mobilization” (as the philosopher Maurizio Ferraris recently called it) affects habits, collective values, fluxes, borders, capital assets and geopolitical orders. The scale of the city becomes the sphere where new intersections among disciplines are experimented and where the challenges of humanities, engineering, economics are tackled and natural sciences can build new forms of alliance – as Panos Mantziaras recalls in his article, quoting Bernardo Secchi. Academics, professionals, public administrators have to renegotiate the limits of their competences: designers with planners, urban sociologists with economists, management engineers with political scientists, etc. The disciplines traditionally in charge of the technical aspects of urban transformation should rewrite their skills and move them into the socio-political dimension of the process, and vice versa. The disciplines focused on the development of the XXI century city can turn into a network of *sociotechnical* sciences.

The fourth and last question is about the discipline of architecture, in its most general sense: the architecture of the city in its spatial and temporal extension, from design to planning. It is the question regarding the possibility of achieving a new kind of urban projects, for both our present and future cities. A project of the city, taken as a public action of governance, can integrate many different dimensions of urban transformation: social interaction and public debate about values, symbols, etc., the technical and bureaucratic management, the economic and financial aspects of the process. The innovation of urban projects should move from the traditional tools towards a more flexible and self-generative set of instruments, preserving their value of public and institutional objects. To this extent, urban plans can promote social inclusion by broadening the implications of a process, and by developing their capacity of predicting deviations in the future. Design and urban planning can enlarge our societies, but only by integrating good promises with measurable effects. In other words, it is necessary for designers and planners to accept and consider plans and projects both as means for imagining a better future, and as instruments of power.

Authors

Alessandro Armando

Alessandro Armando, architect, is an Assistant Professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture and Design (DAD), at Politecnico di Torino. He received his PhD in architecture and building design in 2005 and he has worked as a project consultant for the Urban Center Metropolitan in Torino for nine years (2005-2014). His present research focuses on design theory and urban design. Among his publications, he wrote *La soglia dell'arte. Peter Eisenman, Robert Smithson e il problema dell'autore dopo le nuove avanguardie* (2009) and *Watersheds. A Narrative of Urban Recycle* (2014) with Michele Bonino and Francesca Frassoldati.

Ognen Marina

He is Associate Professor at Faculty of Architecture, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. His main field of interest is in dynamic 3D city models and novel structures in architecture. He is partner in many scientific research projects developing digital tools for spatial analysis of urban development and author of several publications related to analysis, assessment and modelling of urban development and structures in architecture. He was co-author of the Macedonian Pavillion at 14th International Architecture Exhibition la Biennale di Venezia.

Panos Mantziaras

Graduate architect-engineer at the National Technical University of Athens. Master's of Architecture University of Pennsylvania. Doctor in urban design and planning, University of Paris 8. Tenure assistant professor at the Ecole d'architecture Paris-Malaquais. Taught also at the Schools of architecture of Lyon, Clermont-Ferrand and La Villette. Lectured extensively in Europe, the USA and Japan. From 2011 to 2015 he was Head of the Office for architectural, urban and landscape research of the French Ministry of Culture. As of this position he monitored and oriented research in the French architecture schools. He initiated the research programs *Ignis mutat res: l'architecture, la ville et le paysage au prisme de l'énergie* (2011-2015) and *La grande ville 24 heures chrono* (2012-2013) aiming at triggering new research on energy and resource management by the design disciplines (architecture, planning, landscape architecture)

João Cabral

Architect (Escola Superior de Belas Artes, Lisbon), Honours Diploma Urban and Regional Development Planning (Architectural Association, London), PhD (Urban and Regional Studies, University of Sussex, U.K.) is associate professor at the Faculty of Architecture (FA), University of Lisbon and researcher at CIAUD – Research Centre for Architecture, Urbanism and Design. At FA he is currently President of the Department of Arts,

Humanities and Social Sciences and Coordinator of the Social Sciences and Territory Group. Is Coordinator of the “Colégio de Especialidade de Urbanismo” at the “Ordem dos Arquitectos” and President of the General Assembly of Ad Urbem (Associação para o Desenvolvimento do Direito do Urbanismo e da Construção). Research interests and teaching activities range from urban planning, policies and methodologies to regional development, territorial governance and spatial planning systems. He has been involved in research projects on governance and policies in urban regions in Europe and in South and North America, comparing and evaluating spatial planning practices and urban regulation systems.

Francesca Frassoldati

Until December 2015, Francesca Frassoldati was Associate Professor at the South China University of Technology (Guangzhou). From 2009 to 2012, she collaborated on the EU-funded project Revitalization of Traditional Industrial Areas. In 2013, she coordinated the exhibition *Watersheds. The narrative of the recycle process in a waterborne urban space*, presented at the 2013 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture (Shenzhen). Her latest article is ‘Rural-urban edge: a review of spatial planning representation and policy discourse in the Pearl River Delta’, which was written with D. Qi and included in the volume *Urban China’s Rural Fringe* (Ashgate). She is currently Visiting Professor at Politecnico di Torino.

Chiara Lucchini

Architect, Ph.D. and adjunct professor of urban design and urban planning In Politecnico di Torino. She completed her education between Turin, Barcelona and Venice: here she obtained her Ph.D. in Public Policies at the IUAV School of Doctorates on april 2013, with a work on the spatial consequences of the Detroit city urban crisis. Since 2007 she is a member of Urban Center Metropolitano Torino, where she currently works as Regional Development manager.

Isabel Raposo

Architect-urbanist, associate professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Lisbon, since 2002. In the 80’s, for seven years she worked in Mozambique at the National Institute of Physical Planning. She participated in and coordinated several research projects in Portugal and Portuguese-speaking African countries bearing on: self-produced neighbourhoods and the Right to the City; rural and peri-urban urbanisation, planning and transformation of popular housing; urban poverty reduction; rehabilitation of historic urban centres. She has published several articles and books, and guided several PhD students on these issues in Lusophone cities (Lisbon, Luanda, Maputo, Moatize, Belo Horizonte).

Leonardo Ramondetti

He is an architect of the Polytechnic of Turin. He completed his masters’ degree in December 2014 with the thesis *Chelas, Lisboa. Five Exploration* (Architettura Costruzione Città, Politecnico di Torino, A.A. 2014/2015, supervisor: Angelo Sampieri, thesis with right of publication). In June he took

part of the *XVIII Conferenza Nazionale SIU (Italian Urbanists Society), Italia '45 – '45, Radici, Condizioni, Prospettive*, in the *Atelier 9 Beni collettivi e protagonismo sociale*. He is now collaborating in the research, *Territori nella Crisi. Il riattrezzarsi di architettura e urbanistica a fronte del mutare delle logiche economiche e istituzionali* (Politecnico di Torino e l'Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne), led by Prof. Cristina Bianchetti; and he is also an assistant in the *Atelier of Urban Design* led by Prof. Angelo Sampieri and Prof. Silvia Crivello at Polytechnic of Turin.

Aleksandra Đukić

Assoc. Prof. Dr Aleksandra Đukić graduated at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture, where she also obtained MSc and PhD degree in architecture and urbanism. She completed the course “Urban Economic Development” in Israel as a scholar of MASHAV. Dr Đukić has also published articles and chapters in international and national journals and books focusing on the problems of identity of urban pattern, quality of public space and climate change. She is the author of the book *UrbanLab Belgrade the capital of culture 2020*. Her research interests are historical, cultural and physical aspects of urban environment, urban morphology and transformations. She won two rewards for the best paper at the world congress in urbanism (Warsaw and Tokyo) and dozens rewards for urban plans and projects at International and national exhibitions and architectural competitions.

Eva Vaništa Lazarević

Full professor of Faculty of Architecture University of Belgrade, Dr Eva Vaništa Lazarević (1961.) graduated architecture at Zagreb Faculty of Architecture (1983.) and finished her post graduated studies in Split and Dubrovnik concerning Protection of cultural Heritage. She spent three years in Paris, France (1986.-1989.). She received her M.Sc at Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb (1990.) and obtained her PhD degree in topic of urban renewal at Belgrade Faculty of Architecture in 1997. She reached today's academic position at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade at 2008. She is also a practicing architect in her own design bureau in Belgrade: *Atelier Eva Vaništa Lazarević* (www.evavanistalazarevic.com).

Gabriela Maksymiuk

She is a landscape architect and an urban planner. She works as an assistant professor at the Department of Landscape Architecture, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Poland. Her research interests focus on application and management of green infrastructure in urban areas, and also on environmental bases for urban design and spatial planning. She also conducts research related to the smart city concept, and more specifically, linked with social implications of the new media and ICT innovative solutions in urban public spaces. Contact: gabriela_maksymiuk@sggw.pl

Kinga Kimic

Landscape architect, designer, is an assistant professor at the Department of Landscape Architecture, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, Poland. Her

present research focuses on design and programming of urban public spaces and urban greenery (squares, parks, promenades and boulevards, open spaces of residential areas, post-industrial areas, etc.), with a special interest on social aspects and new media in public spaces. Contact: kinga_kimic@sggw.pl

Divna Pencic

Assistant Professor at the University SS Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Urbanism. She has a degree in Architecture, an Msc. in Architecture and Urbanism, and PhD in Technical Sciences – Architecture. She is teaching courses on urban planning and design, and sustainable urban development, and her present research area is sustainable urban planning working on topics such as urban public space, sustainable neighborhoods, light pollution, citizen inclusion etc. She is also active in the Coalition for Sustainable Development-CSD, NGO from Skopje.

Snezhana Domazetovska

Student at the Faculty of Architecture at Sts. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. She has accomplished professional traineeship in the field of urban planning in Finland. She has participated in and lead workshops on the subject of: green urban spaces, urban space and memory, bicycle urbanism, inclusive planning, children and the city etc. Her wish is to connect the profession and the citizens' activism in the creation of a better city. She is part of "NaTochak" (cycling advocacy group) and she's taken part in many civic initiatives for protection of the public space in Skopje.

Stefanka Hadji Pecova,

Professor at the University St. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Food, retired. She has a B.Sc degree and MSc. in Landscape Architecture and Environmental Protection at the Faculty of Forestry at the University in Belgrade and PhD in Landscape Architecture at the University St. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje. She taught courses on landscape planning and protection. The main researches and activities were focused on landscapes in the framework of spatial and comprehensive planning, nature protection and environment. She was the team leader of several projects and national plans, regional expert for the PEEN, member of National Committees, member of the IFLA, IALE, BENA, ISHS, legal representative of the UCM in the LE:NOTRE MUNDUS (2009-2015). She was editor in chief of the professional journals "Environment" and "Hortus".

Frosina Stojanovska

She has a degree as Master of Architecture, with master thesis "New urban block – Self-sufficient urban block". Currently she is working as architecture professional in architecture and design biro in Skopje. Farther more, she is associate at the University SS Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Urbanism, teaching courses dealing with urban planning and design, and sustainable urban development.

Jovan Ivanovski

Works as Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Architecture - Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, teaching Architectural Design courses. He holds a Diploma in architecture from the Faculty of Architecture in Skopje and a Master of Architecture from Dessau Institute of Architecture. His main research interest is the process of post-socialist transition of Balkan cities and their architecture. He practiced architecture at offices in Germany and Switzerland. He is a co-founder and member of Studio for Contemporary Architecture Skopje (SCArS) within which he participated on numerous architectural competitions of local and international character, gaining several awards. At the 2014 Venice Biennale of Architecture he was a curator of the Macedonian pavilion.

Vladimir Deskov

Works as a teaching assistant at the School of Architecture and design at the University American College Skopje. His research interest is concentrated on the city of Skopje and its architecture, as well as the way city changes under the influence of the economic, political and social transformations of the society and their impact on architecture. As a cofounder and member of architectural group Studio for Contemporary Architecture Skopje – SCArS, he took part and won a number of awards at international and local architectural competitions. In 2008 and 2014 Venice biennale of architecture, he was one of the authors that represent Macedonia. Currently he is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Architecture in Zagreb.

Ana Ivanovska Deskova

Works as Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Architecture - Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, teaching History of architecture courses. Her research interest is mainly focused on the modern architecture, especially the post-earthquake period in the city of Skopje. She is a co-founder and member of Studio for Contemporary Architecture Skopje (SCArS), within which she participated on numerous architectural competitions of local and international character, gaining several awards. In 2008 and 2014 Venice biennale of architecture, she was one of the authors that represented Republic of Macedonia.

Jelena Djekić

Architect, graduated in architecture from the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture University of Nis, Serbia. She is PhD student at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture University of Nis. Her main field of interest is the quality of life in post-socialist cities. She works as teaching assistant at the Chair of town and spatial planning. Jelena Djekić is a member of Serbian Chamber of Engineering and she participated in the development of a large number of spatial and town planning documents.

Milena Dinić Branković

Architect, is an Assistant at the University of Nis, Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture. She obtained her MSc in 2008 and her PhD in 2015, both

in the field of urban planning. Her research mainly focuses on urban design and city centres. She is the author of the book "Mixed-use development in city centre reconstruction". Milena Dinić Branković is a Fellow of The Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP) in the year 2010, which is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State.

Petar Mitković

Full Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, University of Nis. He is the head of the Department of Town and Spatial Planning. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade (1977) and acquired his PhD degree in the field of architecture and town planning (1989). He participated in several national scientific projects. He is the author of three books and a number of scientific papers published in scientific monographs and international scientific journals and proceedings of scientific conferences. He participated in architectonic exhibitions and competitions for which he received awards.

Milica Igić

Architect, graduated in architecture from the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture University of Nis, Serbia. She is PhD student at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture University of Nis. Her main field of interest is the quality of life in rural areas. She works as teaching assistant at the Chair of town and spatial planning.

Stefano Pensa

He is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Politecnico di Torino and an independent consultant for the Urban Center of Turin. Since 2010 he carries out its research activity at SiTI, Higher Institute on Territorial Systems for Innovation of Turin. His research focuses on geovisualisation tools as a support for spatial planning and decision-making processes, with application in several national and international projects. His expertise ranges from data management and modeling to GIS technologies, including Web GIS applications. He actively participates to a number of COST Actions and he is the author of several national and international publications.

Elena Masala

She is a postdoctoral researcher at SiTI – Higher Institute on Territorial Systems for Innovation of Turin. Since 2003, she is carrying out her activity in the research field of 3D modelling and geo-visualisation. Her work aims at supporting spatial planning and decision-making processes by means of visual communication systems in spatial data exploration and virtual environments. She collaborates at several national and international projects. She is author of both national and international publications issued in books and journals and presented in several conferences.

Francesca Abastante

She is currently research fellow at the Politecnico di Torino and research collaborator at SiTI (Higher Institute on Territorial Systems for Innovation).

Her present research focuses on studies related to Multi-criteria Decision Analysis and decision processes in territorial projects with particular attention to the environmental and social sustainability policies. She is currently a research member of the European project DIMMER (District Information Modelling and Management for Energy Reduction). She is involved in the "Housing Program" of the Compagnia di San Paolo (programmahousing.it) focusing on social and energy sustainability aspects with the aim of answering to the growing housing demand.

Stefano Fraire

Urban planner, graduated in 2011 at Politecnico di Torino in Territorial and environmental planning. Since 2012 works as a researcher and consultant on projects focusing on landscape planning, energy planning and environmental assessment. From 2014 he is a Research fellow at SiTI (Higher Institute on Territorial System for Innovation) working on energy planning at local level: study of the instrument of "Energy Annex to Municipal Building Regulations" in Turin Province and preparation of "Guidelines" for municipalities regarding the adoption of energy saving measures. Now he's also collaborating at other projects of the institute about transportation and environmental aspects.

Riccardo Gagliarducci

He has graduated in Architecture at Politecnico di Torino with a honors thesis about digital tools for architecture design. He worked as freelance mainly for construction companies and architectural studios providing visualization and programming services. Since 2010 he's external professor at the Accademia Albertina delle Belle Arti in Turin, teaching digital modeling for bachelor and master courses. He is also external professor at the Politecnico di Torino, teaching visualization in Virtual Design. In 2012 he co-founded Brixel, a digital agency providing state of the art tailor made digital tools.

Cristina Marietta

She is an Architect graduated at Politecnico di Torino. Researcher in SiTI (Higher Institute on Territorial System for Innovation) since 2006, she has been working on urban and territorial issues, specifically on the Intermediate city, urban renewal and public space quality. Recently, she has been working on impact assessment and Decision Support Systems.

Camila M. Zyngier

Architect and Urbanist, completed her master's degree in 2012 at NPGAU-UFMG, Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Since 2012 he has worked as a researcher in projects focusing on parameterization and communication norms that shape cityscapes. From 2010 she took teaching positions in graduation course of Architecture and Urbanism in UFMG as part of the Scholarship Program CAPES / REUNI and since 2012 she teaches at Instituto Metodista Izabela Hendrix. She develops a PhD thesis at NPGAU- UFMG focusing on the

identification of possible tools and processes that can contribute to sharing urban codes that determine and shape the current urban landscape in Brazil.

Marija Mano Velevski

She works as Assistant Professor at the Institute of Architectural Design at the Faculty of Architecture, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. The focus of her work refers on learning architecture by combining design practice and architecture theory. She is co-author of the book "Conversations".

Slobodan Velevski

He works as Assistant Professor at the Institute of Urbanism at the Faculty of Architecture, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. His main field of interest is in urban design and urban theory, focusing on their relevance into the realm of today contemporary urban context. He is co-author of the book "Conversations".

Minas Bakalchev

He is an architect and professor at the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Architecture, Skopje, BArch at Faculty of Architecture, Skopje, MSc at Faculty of Architecture, University in Beograd, PhD on technical science University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje. He was co-curator of Macedonian national pavilion on Venice Biennale 2006, and got mentioned for the project city of possible worlds, with Mitko Hadzi Pulja under the acronym MBMHP work together on architectural projects, workshops, exhibitions. Their work was acknowledged by many city and national awards. He believes that architecture can change the world in a way the world changes us.

Mitko Hadzi Pulja

He is an architect and professor at the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Architecture, Skopje, BArch at the Faculty of Architecture, Skopje, MSc at the Faculty of Architecture, University in Beograd, PhD on technical sciences at the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje. He was co-curator of Macedonian national pavilion on Venice Biennale 2006, and received Mention for the project "City of possible worlds", with Minas Bakalchev.

Sasa Tasic

He is an architect and assistant Professor at the University Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Faculty of Architecture, Skopje, BArch at the Faculty of Architecture, Skopje, MSc on technical sciences at University Ss Cyril and Methodius, Skopje. He was a participant on the Macedonian national pavilion on Venice Biennale 2006, and received Mention for the project "City of possible worlds" with Minas Bakalčev and Mitko Hadzi Pulja under the acronym METAMAK COLECTIVE working together on architectural projects, workshops and exhibitions.

Violeta Bakalčev

She obtained her MSc in the field of Architecture and Design at the University "American College Skopje", School of Architecture & Design, Skopje, Macedonia. She is currently holding the position of Assistant Professor at University "American College Skopje" where she teaches subjects related to architectural design. She has worked on a number of projects and research in Macedonia and in the neighbouring countries. Her research interest is concentrated on the different aspects of the modern residential projects and their role as a reference level for the research of the permanence and variability of the spatial program basis of the modernity.

Goran Mickovski

Assistant Professor at Faculty of Architecture, University "Ss Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. Holds a PhD degree in Architecture and Urbanism obtained from Faculty of Architecture at University of Belgrade. Main fields of his interest are industrial heritage, transformation of production space and sustainable urban development. He is continually active in architectural design with several public objects build in recent years like, green markets in Probistip and Makedonska Kamenica and shopping mall in Orenburg, Russia. He participated as author of the Macedonian exhibition at the Venice Architectural Biennale in 2014.

Aleksandar Radevski

Assistant Professor at the Institute for Architectural Design at the University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" - Faculty of Architecture in Skopje where he got his Diploma, Master and PhD. He is an author of numerous architectural buildings including the "Stobi" Winery awarded Best Architectural Building in Macedonia in 2010 by the Association of Architects of Macedonia. He curated the Macedonian exhibition at the Venice Architectural Biennale in 2012 and participated as author of the exhibition in 2010 and 2014. As a part of the Metamak Architectural Collective he co-authored the exhibition "Personal Manual for Making Architecture" in New York 2011.

Bojan Karanakov

Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University "Ss. Cyril & Methodius" in Skopje. He is a JFDP alumnus and holds a PhD in Architecture and Urbanism. Main fields of his professional interest are graphic communication and computer applications in architecture. His research, numerous publications and exhibitions cover a vast number of topics related to urban transformation, accessibility, sustainable urban development, computer applications in architecture, visual communication etc. He is an active promoter of the implementation of new techniques and technologies in the design process. He participated at the Venice Architectural Biennale in 2014 as author of the Macedonian exhibition.

Ana Mrđa

Graduated in 2007 and earned her doctorate in 2015 at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. She won many urban and architectural competitions (30 prizes, 3 realizations) and collaborated with various

architectural offices. She works as a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Urban Planning, Spatial Planning and Landscape Architecture. She has published several scientific and professional papers and participated in conferences in Croatia and abroad. In 2012 she participated in academic exchange at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece, and in 2014 at the Technical University of Madrid, Spain. As a member of the Zagreb Society of Architects she organizes the Architecture and Tourism project.

Tihomir Jukic

He is professor of Urban Planning at the Faculty of Architecture, University in Zagreb. He has a PhD in Architecture and Urban Planning and a Technical Diploma in Architecture and Urban Planning. Prof. Jukic teaches courses of urban planning and city transformation at graduate and postgraduate studies at the University of Zagreb. He is especially dedicated to the theme of the city and its impact area. Either independently or in a team, he led or participated in the preparing of over 30 professional projects urban plans, landscape design and architectural projects. He is a member of the Academy of Engineering of Croatia, Croatian Architects Chamber.

Maria Manuela Ferreira Mendes

PhD in Social Sciences from the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon (ICS-UL) and Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Lisbon (FAUL). She is a researcher at the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology of the University Institute of Lisbon (CIES-IUL) since 2008, where it has developed research in the areas of ethnicity, Roma studies, immigration, social exclusion, local development, relocation and disqualified territories. It is also associate member of the Research Centre for Architecture, Urbanism and Design (CIAUD) of FAUL and Sociology Institute of Oporto Faculty of Arts (ISFLUP). Among the most recent publications is to highlight the books: National Study on the Roma Communities (co-authored with Olga Magano and Pedro Candeias, 2014); Portuguese Gypsies: Looks Plural and New Challenges in a Society in Transition (co-authored with Olga Magano, 2013), Identities, Racism and Discrimination: Roma in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon (2012), City of districts (co-authored, 2012), and Immigration, identity and discrimination: Russian and Ukrainian immigrants in the metropolitan area of Lisbon (2010).

Chiara Massimino

She received master degree in Architecture in July 2015 from Politecnico di Torino, Italy. During bachelor studies she worked at "The gate – Local development public agency" that leads urban regeneration projects in Porta Palazzo, Torino. During master studies, besides at Politecnico di Torino, she studied six months at Chalmers University of Technology, Göteborg, Sweden with Erasmus Program, and six months at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, where she conducted part of research work for her master thesis entitled *Skopje. A city of fragments. Explorations, interpretations, scenarios*, work completed at Politecnico di Torino in July 2015.

Edoardo Bruno

He is an Architect with a Master Degree in “Architecture and Construction” acquired in 2012 at the Polytechnic of Turin. His thesis focused on the redevelopment of the V Pavillion signed by the Engineer Riccardo Morandi in 1959, and was selected as finalist for the Italian Archiprix 2013.

He has founded in 2009, with 4 associated architects, the 2MIXarchistudio based in Turin. Now he is attending the PhD Program on “Architecture History and Project” at the Polytechnic of Turin in collaboration with the South China University of Technology and within the activities of the South China Torino Collaboration Lab. The topics he is exploring are concerning the relationship between the urban planning practices and their physical performances within the contemporary Chinese cities expansion.

Leonora Grcheva

She is an architect and urban planner with a PhD in urbanism from the IUAV University of Venice. In the past years, she has worked as a consultant for the UN-Habitat Urban Planning and Design Lab in Nairobi, working urban planning and policy on-demand for local governments globally. She has worked on projects in Macedonia, Kenya, Ghana, Somalia, Haiti, Myanmar, South Africa. She is currently starting a job as a Research Associate in City Leadership at the UCL STEaPP Department in London. Her research interests include strategies for improvement of local urban governance, sustainable planning in developing countries and city-wide planning for informality.

Michele Vianello

He is a research fellow at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of the University of Westminster. He has a background as an urban planner and designer and earned his PhD in urbanism from IUAV University of Venice.

His current research interests cover urban social movements and collective actions influencing planning policies, as well as bottom up collection of data and data ownership as means of mobilisation in urban conflicts. He has been consulting for international organisation and working with planning advocacy NGOs in Kenya and Macedonia.

Frank Eckardt

He is an urban sociologist working on subjects of cultural diversity and social inequalities in cities. He holds a PhD in political studies and is professor for urban studies and social research at the Bauhaus-University Weimar, Germany.

Ivana Sidzimovska

She is a visual artist and an urban researcher concerned with hegemonic representations and narrations and subjective stories and experiences of the urban, which the artist examines, recounts and re-stages. Since 2012 she is a PhD Candidate in Arts at the Bauhaus University Weimar.

Zsófia Hannemann-Tamás

She lives in Aachen and works currently at the Language Centre, Sprachenakademie of Aachen University of Applied Sciences. She is a PhD

candidate of the Faculty of Education and Psychology at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, Hungary. She holds a master's degree of European Studies from RWTH Aachen University in Aachen, Germany, as well as a master's degree of German Philology with minor in Culture Management from Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Her research interests involve developing intercultural and communicative competences, internationalization of higher education, and teacher training.

Vladimir B. Ladinski

Associate Professor of Architecture at the School of Architecture and Design, University American College Skopje and a Principal Architect at Council Housing, Design and Technical Services, Gateshead Council, UK. He has interdisciplinary education spanning architecture, engineering, urban and regional planning, leadership and management, and teaching from universities and institutes in the Republic of Macedonia, Slovenia and the UK. His professional and research experience and interests are in the areas of architectural design of residential, educational and public buildings, sustainable design, design for dementia, workplace design, design quality and conservation.

Elizabeta B. Mukaetova-Ladinska

Senior Lecturer in Old Age Psychiatry and Honorary Consultant in Old Age Psychiatry (Liaison Old Age Psychiatry), Institute of Neuroscience, Newcastle University, UK. She has a PhD in Psychiatry from the University of Cambridge where she also completed higher specialist training in Old Age Psychiatry and postdoctoral fellowships. Her research and clinical interests are the molecular pathology of dementia, ageing and neurodevelopmental disorders, and clinical phenomenology of mental health problems in acutely medically ill. She is an author of over 120 peer-reviewed papers and 18 book chapters.

Davide Vero

He is an architect and a Ph.D. candidate from the Politecnico di Torino. He received his Master's Degree in Architecture from the Politecnico di Torino in 2013 with a thesis on informal settlements, with particular attention to Villa 15 in Buenos Aires. During his studies he carried out research at the Universidad de Buenos Aires and at the Tsinghua University of Beijing. He has been working in several architectural firms based in Turin, Milan and Paris. His research has always been marked by attention to the city and its transformations, closely related to urban history and architecture.

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