



UN-COMMON RIVER

ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK 2015
Summary



1. INTRO

ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK chose to deal in 2015 with the Maritsa River and its role in Plovdiv. This choice was provoked by the fact that Maritsa has been forgotten by Plovdiv. It passes through the city completely un-noticed, the only exception being when water levels rise. In fact we can say that Maritsa constitutes the largest unused public space of Plovdiv.

At the same time Maritsa in Plovdiv constitutes a very special environment. It is included in the Natura 2000 network. Parts of it fall in one of the zones in Plovdiv's Integrated Plan for Urban Development. Last but not least both the Municipality and the Plovdiv 2019 Foundation have publicly expressed their intentions to work on re-integrating Maritsa in Plovdiv.

In this context the festival attempted to attract attention to the river, to show its specific nature, to inform about projects for rivers from other parts of the world, to show the potential of the river space and to experiment with programs, which Maritsa can accommodate. All of that, with the intention of taking to a higher point the level of awareness of both the general public, as well as that of professional and political decision makers.

Under the curatorship of Merve Bedir (Turkey / The Netherlands) the festival developed the topic of UN-COMMON RIVER and suggested that the river has a potential to become a new, non discriminatory social space in Plovdiv. The festival prepared a wide, but still very much theme-related program. It engaged in its events professionals, students, citizens, administrators, politicians and media from both Bulgaria and abroad.

In the following pages we have gathered the major conclusions, which were made during UN-COMMON RIVER. We believe that they are very important for the future development of the relationship river-city in Plovdiv.

This report has been composed by Ljubo Georgiev (director of ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK) and Merve Bedir (curator of UN-COMMON RIVER). We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this event.



2. MAJOR CONCLUSIONS

CURRENT SITUATION

- Most people think of the river as dangerous and dirty but also think that its ecological balance needs to be restored
- Maritsa (also in Plovdiv) has rich flora and fauna. This is one of the strongest and most charismatic characteristics of the river and it should be considered well when making plans for it
- There used to be important public buildings along the river. In the past Maritsa used to have a much greater importance for the city of Plovdiv
- A century ago it was mostly the Turkish who used to use the river. Bulgarians traditionally have no relation with large water objects
- The people of Plovdiv associate themselves more with the hills than with Maritsa
- The river is in a way “avoided” by the city: public transport lines almost do not run along it, there are only few bus stops close to the river, it is difficult to walk along it or get down to it and important public buildings are located far from Maritsa. On the other hand the river banks, on both sides, are flanked with a diversity of functions, which is a good condition for a lively river front
- The river is not perceived as a local space, but as a national infrastructure; this is a condition, which developed mostly after the 50s and was a state project. A crucial importance in this distancing between river and city had the “modernisation ” of the river space, i.e. the river was started being treated as an infrastructure, rather as a part of the city
- The technical study made by the UACEG includes a number of images, showing a possible design of the river bed. Those images are too simplistic and have a potential for causing rather than resolving problems. Furthermore, such a plan leads to a great risk of misinvestment

ADVISED ACTIONS

- The river should be open to the city
- Give as much physical space to the river as possible: expanding the green areas to the sides, reducing the traffic, closing down streets (also on a temporary basis, or through the “shared space” principle), diverting the main traffic to the boulevards further inland (creating also more underpasses under them)
- Acknowledge and stimulate the natural character of the river: creating human-free, inaccessible wild areas (which would host animal life), treating the whole river as a natural reserve, “come to Plovdiv and see a free river”
- Working on the integration of a river into a city goes much more beyond infrastructural interventions. For a project to be successful it needs to provide adequate functions (coordinated with the citizens); it better make use of the ecological qualities, systems and rhythms of the river; it needs to become a project of more than one stakeholder ; etc.
- Ensure programmatic diversity along the river banks: stimulate various activities to stay and develop and avoid a mono-functional situation. Temporary and/or flexible functions should also be considered
- The more a river-space becomes part of a large-scale, government or corporate driven plan, the more citizens become detached from their river and the more the area becomes representative and institutional space rather than a living urban one.
- Include as many interest groups as possible: this should be a widely discussed and sustained project. The river will become valuable for people only if it becomes part of their habits and memories
- It is important to help the establishment of a “river community” in order for the river to become part of the city (just like Marasha or Trakia have their own communities). Part of such communities could be also the schools, kindergartens, hospitals, etc.
- Emphasise on the bridges and in such a way create landmark points along the river. A new bridge on Maritsa has the potential of becoming a new icon for the city
- Maritsa is a suitable and unique environment for practicing sports, though in some occasions the presence of infrastructure would facilitate the use of it
- The river, along with all the natural environment, which it brings along is an ecological good, which can be measured also financially. This will become soon acknowledged and will probably have an impact, in terms of finances too, on the way in which the river gets re-integrated in Plovdiv
- More connections are needed between the river banks and the river bed
- (Temporary) Interventions (such as a beach or a stage) have the potential (technical, social and economic) to exist in the river space. They need dedicated personnel, continued maintenance efforts, good architectural qualities and very good marketing. If all this is provided such spaces have the potential to become a major urban attraction of Plovdiv
- Work on the smaller scale too: at first glance unimportant places like an abandoned petrol station can become useful and attractive one, keeping at the same time their historic charm.

Such a summary is also a good occasion for some self-reflection. The major flaws, at least in our view, of ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK 2015 were:

- the duration of the festival's program was stretched for too long. This tired the audience and exhausted its attention
- the program was too large for our man-power capacity. This resulted in moments of miscommunication or improperly realised elements, despite the fact that the whole team gave its best
- the period, which we had chosen was too busy with events. September, we discovered, is the month with most things happening in Plovdiv. Trying to attract people to a place (the river), to which they normally do not go, in a month full of events at places where they normally go proved to be very difficult
- we underestimated the context, in which the intervention The Beach at Maritsa was being realised. An obvious conclusion is that its intention to provoke a discussion about the future use of the river was widely misunderstood. This was helped by a number of publications in certain media, at a time of a local election campaign. In this sense this intervention was used very inappropriately for political attacks.

In order to find out how we came to these conclusions, please read the detailed explanation of each of the festival's events underneath.

The statements and conclusions in this summary reflect solely the position of ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK and the participants in the festival when it comes to specific events. It cannot be assumed that it expresses the opinion of the organisations, which have supported the festival.



3. STATS

The festival saw about 15 000 people attending its various events. When distributed by types of events, visitors went to:

- Interventions - over 10 000
- Talks - 320
- Exhibitions - 4 200
- Events - 560
- Kids - 50

For the 2015 edition we worked with about:

- 20 local organisations (various NGOs in the field of ecological preservation, sports, history; Municipalities; municipal entities; architecture groups)
- 25 national organisations (ministries, specialised media, foreign embassies)
- 5 international organisations (funds and content partners)

More details at <http://edno.bg/one-architecture-week-2015/partnyori>

There were 60 events within the festival, many of which involved multiple participants. The total number of authors who contributed to UN-COMMON RIVER exceeded 100. About:

- 40 of them were from Bulgaria
- 60 participants from 24 countries joined the program.

More details about the elements of the program of ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK 2016:

http://issuu.com/edno_magazine/docs/book_onearchitectureweek2015_webver/5?e=2713596/15080194



4. COVERAGE

UN-COMMON RIVER managed to achieve a wide media coverage, locally, nationally and in couple of instances also internationally. The event was discussed in:

- 36 radio and TV participations
- 472 online articles
- 36 paper publications
- 439 social media appearances

An overall amateur video of the festival (in Bulgarian, created by Alma Mater TV):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koGN7SZujnI>

Videos with participants and guests of the festival can be seen at:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B37toAQs0fvMMXRkV01oNkN0SEU&usp=sharing>

Aerial footage has been kindly provided by SkyViewU Plovdiv <http://skyviewu.com>:

<https://drive.google.com/folderview?id=0B37toAQs0fvMRkJSc2RMMGM&usp=sharing>

Pictures of the festival (credit Lina Krivoshieva / The Plovdiv Project in case you use them):

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B37toAQs0fvMX21wa3BkZC1NQjA>

The festival managed to fulfil one of its major tasks, to attract the attention of citizens, media and politicians to the Maritsa River. This happened not only on the local level, but also on a national and in some cases even international level. Even further, “common”, the main term, which the festival used, started appearing much more often in the vocabulary of the Plovdiv media and politicians.



5. CONTENT

ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK exists since 2008 and its program content has been growing ever since. The festival's program is structured in modules, which are repeated each year. In 2015 the festival registered the largest content since its creation.

There were:

- 8 Exhibitions
- 18 Events: tours, screenings, workshops
- 18 Talks: lectures, debates, presentations
- 9 Interventions
- 8 Programs for kids

The pages below describe the activities, which took place, as well as the conclusions or results, which were achieved.



5.1. Exhibitions

UN-COMMON RIVER

The main exhibition of the festival lasted for 10 days and aimed at making visible the many sides, which the topic has. It consisted of:

- a research on the current physical conditions and social practices around Maritsa. The research was led by the festival's curator and director and was carried out by students of Architecture, Urbanism and Landscape Architecture from 3 different Bulgarian universities. It came to a number of conclusions. For example that the river is in a way "avoided" by the city: public transport lines almost do not run along it, there are only few bus stops close to the river and important public buildings are located far from Maritsa. On the other hand the river banks, on both sides, are flanked with a diversity of functions, which is a good condition for a lively river front. In line with this, it was discovered that real-estate prices are similar on both sides of the river, Karshiaka offering in fact the most expensive property along Maritsa in Plovdiv. It was also discovered that certain areas along the river (most notably Stolipinovo) do not appear at all on the real-estate market. Students found out that there is a higher concentration of taller buildings along the northern banks of Maritsa. The research also discovered that it is difficult to walk along the river: the pavements are often broken, there are almost no benches, the street lighting is insufficient and bridges are often obstacles, which create a major discontinuity. The materials of this research are available upon request.
- the students also organised an anonymous inquiry, in which 160 participants took part (most of whom aged 18-34). In this enquiry most of the participants stated that they associate Maritsa with nature, that they see it as one of the symbols of Plovdiv. At the same time most people think of the river as dangerous and dirty but also think that its ecological balance needs to be restored. Full enquiry results (in Bulgarian) available at:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-pdo4CVePfyNm42Z0ZWS1dPODg/view?usp=sharing>
- a gathering of unrealised projects for the banks of the Maritsa River, which showed that in the 70s and the 80s there was an intention to construct major public buildings along the river. Only some of the proposed projects (the Rowing Channel, the

Novotel and the Water Hall) were realised, while some of the major ones (a Courthouse, an Opera House and an office centre) were never began

- a collection of historical pictures, which showed that once the river had a much greater importance in the life of the citizens of Plovdiv. The river was used for trade, for leisure, for sports and for family gatherings. Not only this. The river used to be in the “mental map” of the Plovdiv citizens and it gradually disappeared from there. A crucial importance in this distancing had the “modernisation ” of the river space, i.e. the river was started being seen as an infrastructure, rather as a part of the city.
- a study on the correction of the river banks, which made clear that the historic (unregulated) river bed had been much wider and that there used to be important public buildings along the Maritsa, some of which still existing
- a collection of old drawings and texts about the bridges, which used to exist across Maritsa, as well the rivers feeding into it
- a sampling of contemporary projects and studies on river integration from various parts of the world. They showed that working on the integration of a river into a city goes much more beyond infrastructural interventions. For a project to be successful it needs to provide adequate functions (coordinated with the citizens); it better make use of the ecological qualities, systems and rhythms of the river; it needs to become a project of more than one stakeholder ; etc.
- a selection of texts and books, describing the “life” along rivers in various countries
- an illustration of the importance and the role of rivers in other cities: the Rhine in North-Western Europe, the Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq, the Mississippi in the US, etc.
- a short film describing the role of Maritsa as a deadly border between Greece and Turkey
- a compilation of stories (audio and video) about Maritsa in Plovdiv
- the RIVER EXPEDITION: On Plovdiv Day, we organised a river expedition, where we walked along the river as far as we were able to go, and collected plants, stones, materials,... along the river. We tried to talk and share knowledge both about the scientific aspects to these ‘things’ as well as the stories and meanings people attach to them. These were made into the RIVER LIBRARY in the exhibition.
- An installation allowed visitors of the exhibition, to dive into the river, and see what is under the water. This active video installation was inspired from the fact that the river isn’t used by most people (except the Roma community and the fishermen).
- RIVER TALKS (explained further in this document) were planned to be part of the exhibition as well, but due to time constraints, we haven’t realised this.

TO EUROPE AND BACK

Was an exhibition, which showed graduation projects of Bulgarian students, finishing universities abroad, but choosing for their final project a topic, related to Bulgaria. The exhibition was authored and coordinated by Mariya Barbudova. It consisted of 14 projects and 22 models, from 4 cities across Europe. The exhibition was put together at the Kosmos Cinema, lasted for 10 days and was one of the most visited exhibitions of the festival. Currently arrangements are made to show the exhibition also in Sofia, in the beginning of 2016. The exhibition made clear the interest, which many Bulgarian-born graduating architects have in the urban development of their home country.

TRAKIYA BEFORE AND AFTER

Showed a study of the change, which the Plovdiv's suburb Trakiya has gone through in the 40 years since its construction. The study was based on the work, collected in the "Everyday Trakiya" study by Megan Leuneburg

(<http://meganlueneburg.com/category/everyday-trakiya/>). It also constituted an introduction to next year's topic of citizen participation in the creation of the urban environment. The exhibitions was hosted at the Trakiya Local Municipality and lasted for 15 days.

MADRID PLAYA

Showed a number of photographs by the Spanish photographer Roberto Villalon Vara. His attention had fallen on the way ordinary people use the recently finished park along Madrid's river. The exhibitions was hosted in the City Art Gallery and lasted for 10 days.

IRISH HISTORIC TOWNS ATLAS

Exhibited the historic relationship, which three different Irish towns have with their rivers. The exhibitions was hosted in the City Art Gallery and lasted for 10 days.

POLSKA ARCHITECTURE

Showed examples of contemporary Polish architecture. The exhibitions was hosted at the EDNO gallery space and lasted for 10 days. It was later exhibited in the Polish Institute in Sofia.

ADATA

Was an exhibition by the photographer Yana Lozeva. She had captured moments of the island's life with the intention of conveying the particular atmosphere present there. The exhibitions was hosted at the Rubber Gallery and lasted for 20 days.

STREET EXHIBITION

Showed highlights from the festival on vinyl panels, places on the main pedestrian street in Plovdiv. This exhibition helped the festival's message reach to a very large audience.



5.2. Events

URBAN PLANNING MASTERCLASS (workshop by invitation only)

This event was aimed at creating a fruitful environment of high professional capacity, in which specific urban plans for the Maritsa river to be discussed. Participants in the workshop were gathered through invitations. They included Rita Justesen (head of Architecture at By&Havn, Copenhagen's municipal development agency), Jandirk Hoekstra (advisor to the province of Noord Holland on the subject of spatial planning), Veselina Troeva (head of the National Centre for Territorial Development), Belin Mollov (head of a large urban planning agency and former deputy-minister), Victor Buzev (chief architect of Varna) and Martin Hristov (head of the Chamber of Architects in Varna), and was moderated by Ljubo Georgiev (director of the festival) and Jason Hilgefort (partner L+CC). We will continue our efforts to involve the Municipality in events like this.

In the course of half a day the workshop discussed possible new (and alternative) steps for the development of Maritsa's banks. The discussion was based on the intentions stated by the Plovdiv Municipality of working on the river banks, stated here:

<http://projects.plovdiv.bg/maritsa/>

Based on their experience the participants in this masterclass proposed the following measures:

- to give as much physical space to the river as possible: expanding the green areas to the sides, reducing the traffic, closing down streets (also on a temporary basis, or through the "shared space" principle), diverting the main traffic to the boulevards further inland (creating also more underpasses under them)
- to treat the space as one: there should be no "water space" and "infrastructure space" along it, but one single river space
- to make not only an infrastructural, but also a programmatic plan
- to ensure programmatic diversity along the river banks: stimulating various activities to stay and develop and avoid a mono-functional situation; temporary and/or flexible functions should also be considered
- to look at the current functions along the river and develop an action plan from there

- to provide for a safe condition in case of high waters
- to develop different flood-plains, which can accommodate different levels of flooding: such flood-plains would allow different uses of the river bed
- to even consider a drastic modifications of the embankment walls, allowing the river to become wider again and facilitating the contact between the city and nature
- to create more connections between the embankments and the river bed, which for most of the year is in state to be accessed
- to acknowledge and stimulate the natural character of the river: creating human-free, inaccessible wild areas (which would host animal life), treating the whole river as a natural reserve, “come to Plovdiv and see a free river”
- to include as many interest groups as possible: this should be a widely discussed and sustained project

The rendering proposed on the Municipal website

(http://www.plovdiv.bg/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Hydraulics_Marica_PDF.rar) was considered by the participants as too simplistic and having a potential for causing more problems than it would resolve. It was said that if the project gets realised in such a form it has a great risk of leading to a misinvestment. It was further said that restoring a natural cycle is extremely expensive.

Sketches from the masterclass are available upon request.

FUNDING URBANISM (workshop with subscription)

This workshop was led by Levente Polyak, a Rome and Budapest based urban researcher, and it focused on alternative ways of funding and maintaining public buildings and spaces. In Plovdiv the group looked into possible new futures for the Kosmos Cinema building.

Participants in this workshop were people with various backgrounds, including the Kosmos Cinema Collective, a group of young people from Plovdiv who are currently taking care of the building.

The group created a list of advantages of the building:

- well visible and reachable location
- known location
- emotional value to the local community
- proximity to other cultural institutions
- the architectural value of the building (Bulgarian Modernism), which might lead to it being listed
- diversity of spaces
- the future renovation of the building might function as an educational project
- a flat roof, which can be used as a roof-top terrace

as well as some of its disadvantages:

- lack of parking facilities
- heating the space is a challenge, maintenance costs are high in general
- the hall might be too big, hence its management would be quite challenging
- urgent need of repair

- lack of a vision for the development
- slow communication and cooperation with the local administration
- proximity to the neighbours (noise)

One of the major conclusions was that in order for the building to develop both as significant, but also independent cultural space it needs to combine profit with non-profit functions. The group made a list of possible functions, which the space can be used for:

- exhibitions
- co-working
- conferences and corporate events
- team-building events
- performance (theatre, music, dance)
- big events
- in- and out-doors market
- cafe
- educational space
- rehearsal, production and/or performance space
- decor

Participants also devised an action plan, which includes the following steps:

- make a long-term agreement with the Municipality
- develop a vision for the space, including a business plan and a fundraising structure
- create a partnership network
- organise a legal framework
- organise a governing/management structure
- assess the conditions of the building
- devise a communication plan
- elaborate an architectural project according to the chosen function

A more detailed presentation of the workshop can be viewed here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B37toAQs0fvMZFc0R3dHTUxIYXM>

A GREEN AVENUE (workshop with subscription)

This workshop was led by Vassil Kaykov, project leader at the Paris-based Wilmotte Associe. The participants included students from various disciplines, both from Bulgaria and abroad. The aim of the workshop was to investigate possible new uses of the river space, seen from a designer's perspective. As the name suggests the workshop sees Maritsa as a "green avenue" in the city.

One of the major observation, which came from the workshop was the very distinct character of each of the three bridges, which cross the river in its central part. The participants advice to emphasise on those characters in case work gets done on those bridges.

The participants further propose various interventions in and around the river bed, which purpose is to increase the interaction between the citizens and the river: floating platforms, gardens, urban furniture are some of those.

A more detailed presentation of the workshop can be viewed here:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B37toAQs0fvMVDZXaC1qWVVS0E>

A BRIDGE (workshop with subscription)

This workshop was inspired by the current plans of the Plovdiv Municipality to build a new bridge across Maritsa. The aim of the workshop, organised by the Plovdiv Chamber and Union of Architects was to show bring a variety of ideas about a new bridge “at the table”, in order to stimulate higher awareness on the subject. The workshop lasted for 4 days, it resulted in 11 projects and the results were exhibited along the main pedestrian street of Plovdiv.

One of the main conclusions, which can be made from this workshop is that a new bridge on Maritsa has the potential of becoming a new icon for the city. For more information see:

<http://plener.kab-plovdiv.com>

THE IDEAL COMPETITION (open workshop)

After 1989 Bulgaria has been trying to catch up with other European societies in many aspects, one of which has been the organisation, running and realisation of architectural competitions. There is a number of issues, which tend to get repeated in each competition, which has been organised in Bulgaria after 1989. Namely the lack of clear rules and laws, which regulate competitions; the fear, which local authorities have of the unclear final result; corruption when it comes to the final decision; budgeting tricks which lead the project to specific subcontractors and sometimes even political figures.

This workshop aimed to make an analysis of the situation in Bulgaria regarding the organisation, running and realisation of architectural competitions, as well as to gather the opinions of different stakeholders. The first part of the workshops consisted of the presentation of examples of past competitions, while the second one was a role play, in which the participants (more than 30) divided themselves into two teams: Municipality/State and Architect/Urbanist.

The idea was for the participants to analyse past architectural competitions in Bulgaria and to identify the areas, which need special attention:

- a two-stage competition (and a phased evaluation) would provide a better control over the results and will allow more time efficiency on behalf of the architects
- payed participation: a competition open to chosen architects and offices, which have proven their high standards
- timing: there are busy and calm periods through the year in the schedule of an architect and competition timetables should make use of that
- qualifications: participants need to be able to demonstrate a certain standard
- certain participation restrictions: experience, realised projects, etc.
- separating architectural competitions from the “engineering” tendering procedures
- stimulating international participation and facilitating the work of foreign architect in Bulgaria
- securing the authorship rights of the proposals

RIVER TALKS (research)

As a preparation for the festival we organised three public discussions around topics, related to the river. In three different evenings we talked about Nature, Belonging and the History of public spaces of the river. The talks were a very informal discussion about each of those topics and their purpose was to source opinions from ordinary citizens about the functioning of the river and the possible ways of its re-integration in the life of Plovdiv. These are the main conclusions that we drew from the talks:

Nature

Should we leave nature as it is, what is the correct attitude towards a natural habitat in an urban condition, is it possible to combine urban development with nature protection?

- the river should be in condition which is close to its natural environment
- in principle, the river should be open to the city
- it is good for the dynamics of the water, if the river flow gets delayed in the city part
- create some education programs for children and to organize green roads
- the river is a type of green corridor
- create a park, if there is a park, there will be no rubbish

Belonging

What are we allowed to do along the river, who allows it, which areas are accessible to us, who owns the space?

- the people of Plovdiv are associated more with the hills than with Maritsa
- the river is not perceived as a local space, but as a national infrastructure; this is a condition, which developed mostly after the 50s and was a state project
- the river will become valuable for people only if it becomes part of their habits and memories
- actually there's no suitable place to observe the river
- in many foreign examples they have a direct contact with the river and various seeing spots; we can observe the existence of this kind of places on the old photos of Maritsa, but not nowadays anymore
- there is no local community that cares or is interested in the river
- we can notice that the northern side of the coast is much more cultivated, there is also a little park
- in the present times, the river is detached from the city; today are missing more objects and places for inclusion
- people think that Maritsa is a dirty and dangerous place; it remains a marginal space
- many of the people in Plovdiv associate themselves with a neighbourhood, but none says "I'm from the river."
- we should rely on a good organization and something stable where people can enjoy the river; a permanent stage for example is something useful and joyful.

(History of) Public space: what did people do along the river, what could they do there the future?

- the river was used for entertainment and leisure, today people from Plovdiv are shying away from it
- there used to be important public buildings along the river

- it was mostly the Turkish who used to use the river; traditionally Bulgarians have no relation with large water objects
- the character of the neighbourhoods around the river was much better defined and they used to be in rivalry

RIVER MANAGEMENT (workshop)

This meeting brought together professionals from various organisations, who deal with Maritsa. There were representatives of various NGO's, state regulatory boards, local municipalities and hydro-engineers. This varied group discussed the current state of the river and the challenges, which its management faces. The gathering was a very rare one and is one of the few times that such a varied group has met to discuss the subject.

FACULTY IN STOLIPINOVO (workshop)

"Faculty" is a series of 4 hour gatherings in 4 days, organised by the Dutch-based artist Jeanne van Heeswijk. In those events she focuses on socially sensitive topics and organises actions, which are meant to explore the context to the socially 'problematic' condition. .

In the case of Plovdiv we asked Jeanne to focus on Stolipinovo. Helped by a group of some Bulgarian students and recent graduates, and assisted by a local NGO, she gathered a group of young Roma boys. With them she developed a song, which expresses their personal frustrations about their position in society. The boys performed the song in 4 consecutive days, each time moving closer to the city centre.

What was clear from this event was the eagerness, with which the Roma boys want to engage with the world outside of Stolipinovo. Not only do they lack options for such a contact, but they also fall victims of stereotypes, both within the Roma community, as well as within the wider Bulgarian society.

The project is destined to be continued by the Bulgarian students, with the intention of creating more moments for interaction between people in and out of Stolipinovo.

GUIDED TOURS OF THE MAIN EXHIBITION (tour)

In order to increase the dissemination of the information, included in our main exhibition, we organised two guided tours of the show. One was led by the festival's curator, Merve Bedir, the other by some of the authors, who had contributed to the exhibition. The tours proved highly informative and created a rare contact between our guests and audience.

OLD RIVER MAP & STORIES FROM MARITSA (tour)

With this tour we showed our audience the important public spaces and buildings, which ones defined the banks of Maritsa. The tour was led by Mimo Raichev, one of the most experienced local historians. He conveyed not only facts about the former relationship river-city, but also numerous personal stories and myths. This indicated to our audience that in the past Maritsa used to have a much greater importance for the city of Plovdiv.

BIRD WATCHING (tour)

With the help of our partners from Green Balkans the festival's visitors were able to discover that Maritsa, even in its urban condition, is home to numerous birds and other animals (such as bats and otters). Not only this. It turns out that birds find a safe-haven in the city and sometimes there are more birds to be seen in the city rather than outside of it.

FILM PROGRAM (screenings)

The film program consisted of various films, which treat the topics such as the connection river-city, communities, sports, etc.

SPORTS PROGRAM (activity)

The sports program was developed together with our partners from BG Be Active, organisers of the Move Week throughout Bulgaria. Together with them we staged a number of sport activities along the river. Those activities covered various sports and targeted different age groups. The demonstrated that Maritsa is a suitable and unique environment for practicing sports, though in some occasions the presence of infrastructure would facilitate the use of it.

MARITSA'S FLUID CONDITION (research)

This research was initiated by Merve Bedir (the festival's curator) and Marina Otero (curator of the 2016 Oslo Architecture Triennale) and relates to the topic of "belonging", which will be central to the next edition of the Triennale. Merve and Marina researched (also by paying a visit to the Bulgarian-Turkish border) the conditions, in which refugees travel towards Europe. They focused on the social and spatial relations, which accompany their journeys, as well as the "sense of belonging" which develops between the refugees and the spaces, which they go through. The research will hopefully contribute to the formation of the Triennale's program.



5.3. Talks

PETER VEENSTRA (forum)

Presented the work of his office (Lola Landscape Architecture) and in general the conditions, in which landscape architects work in The Netherlands. He focused on Lola's recently released book "Dutch Dikes" and described in more detail some of Lola's projects, which have dealt with river and water fronts. Peter engaged in a short conversation with the audience after his lecture.

JANDRIK HOEKSTRA (forum)

Spoke about the larger planning infrastructure of The Netherlands, the way the country deals with water and the various ways in which planners like him work in this complex and ever dynamic environment.

RITA JUSTESEN (forum)

Talked about the experience of Copenhagen in revitalising abandoned urban areas, especially focusing on the city's waterfront. She showed examples of involving various actors in this process, as well as the specific attitude used to work along Copenhagen's waters.

CLEMENT BLANCHET (forum)

Clement, a French architect with a wide international experience, had researched in advance the urban condition of Plovdiv and came to the festival with an extremely contextualised speech. In it he spoke about design projects from his own practice, which are relevant to the relationship between Plovdiv and Maritsa. He further elaborated on thoughts about the importance of history in an urban context, continuously referring to Plovdiv's condition.

MASON WHITE (forum)

Presented the work of his Canadian bureau, "Lateral office". In his practise he had engaged in various projects, where water had played an important role. Often in extreme climatic or social conditions.

JAN EDLER (forum)

Talked about the work of Realities United, the Berlin-based design office, which he co-founded. Jan focused especially on the projects, which involved rivers, while the main focus fell on the Flusbad proposal for the part of the course of the Spree river in Berlin. Jan's lecture was informative also in the part, in which it highlighted the controversies, which this daring project caused. His lecture provoked a number of questions from the audience of the Forum.

ADAM GEBRIAN (presentation)

Discussed his activist role in the Czech Republic. He talked about how being in an architect is not enough to change the world, in which we live and how he undertook many initiatives, all of which have been aimed at raising awareness about the quality and importance of public space. Adam talked in a very open, but also engaging manner about the challenges that architecture and urban design in Prague and other cities face. With his lecture he stimulated the festival's audience to take an active and responsible approach towards the city.

MARINA OTERO VERZIER (presentation)

Delivered a lecture about the main issues, which will be discussed at the next Oslo Architecture Triennial, of which she is head-curator. Marina addressed the influences, which recent migration is causing to the way Norwegian cities work. She pointed out the changes, which this is bringing to the use of public space, as well as the way buildings are designed and used in Norway. After the presentation Marina engaged in a talk with the audience. On the day after her lecture Marina travelled to the Bulgarian-Turkish border, where she spent some time in contact with migrants who were planning to head to the Nordic countries.

ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK 2016 (presentation)

The topic of the next year's festival was introduced by its curators, the Bucharest-based office studioBasar. The two founders of the studio presented their experience in working with mass-housing socialist neighborhoods in Romania.

A NEW LIBRARY FOR VARNA (presentation)

The presentation was made by Victor Buzev, chief architect of Varna. It was aimed at advertising the newly opened competition for a new public library in the city.

AN ACTIVE SOCIETY (debate)

This debate aimed at bringing together different groups, which engage in activism regarding the urban environment. The participants included Save Sofia, Ideas Factory and Grupa grad. The event was moderated by Hristo Stankushev from the curator team of ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK 2014. The speakers talked about their own practices and joined a debate about the relationship between activism and authority in the urban environment. A general mistrust towards local and national politicians was shared between the participants.

THE RIVER GARDEN (debate)

This discussion involved participants from a few countries: Bulgaria, Turkey and The Netherlands. The focus of the debate fell on practices, which try to bring urban agriculture

and people together. Participants shared their experiences from various contexts and talked about good and bad practices in forming urban gardens. The festival's own garden along Maritsa was also discussed. The conclusions of the debate went beyond the already known benefits of urban agriculture (biodiversity, improved living environment, increased social interaction, etc.). All speakers agreed that attracting and maintaining a consistent and functional group of active participants remains one of the biggest challenges to such initiatives. Convincing the authorities about the benefits of urban agriculture was identified as one of the other big challenges.

RIVER ECONOMY (debate)

In this debate was discussed the already classical antagonism ecologic preservation vs. economic growth. This topic is important in the context of the intentions of the Plovdiv Municipality to invest in the development of the Maritsa river. Participants in the debate were Yulia Grigorova from WWF and Vassil Zlatev from the Bauersachs Foundation. Many examples from the fields of economics theory, international legal practices and real-life cases were presented. It became obvious that in the current legal framework of the EU the idea that economic growth must happen at the expense of nature is becoming less relevant. The notion of ecological goods and services was introduced. The river, along with all the natural environment, which it brings along is one such service. It was said that this fact will become increasingly acknowledged and this will probably have an impact, in terms of finances too, on the way in which the river gets re-integrated in the Plovdiv.

BALKAN SYNDROME? (debate)

In this discussion was discussed the question whether there is a common, Balkan, attitude towards rivers in an urban environment. Cases of a few cities from the region were presented: Skopje, Tirana, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sarajevo. Speakers from each of those cities (Ljubica Slavkovic from Belgrade, Armina Pilav from Sarajevo, Claudiu Forgaci from Bucharest, Elvan Dajko from Tirana and Oliver Ilievski from Skopje) showed projects, research and initiatives, which dealt with the relationship river-city. A common feature was discovered indeed. The more a river-space becomes part of a large-scale, government or corporate driven plan, the more citizens become detached from their river and the more the area becomes representative and institutional space rather than a living urban one.

CAPITAL OF CULTURE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (debate)

This debate was meant to compare the ambitions, which the two European Capitals of Culture in 2019 have about the impact that this title will have on their urban spaces. Participants in the debate were Rossella Tarantino from Matera and Valery Kyorlinski from Plovdiv, moderated by Philipp Dietachmair. We will continue our efforts to involve the Municipality in events like this.

In the debate the two representatives re-stated the principles in both candidacies, that much of the budget is going to be spent on developing human capital, rather than infrastructure. In this sense it can be said that no major changes of the urban environment of the two cities will take place in direct relation to the 2019 events.

A major line of discussion became citizen involvement. Both representatives stated that the two cities will be seeking continuous contact with the citizens not only when things need to be advertised, but much more beforehand, when programs need to be made real. Rossella Tarantino gave more detailed examples of the level of involvement in Matera, where much of decisions about the programming for 2019 have been taken with active citizen participation.

ON COMMON(S) & COMMONING (debate)

This event was focused on practices which aim at community creation and development. Participants from various countries (Egypt, Bulgaria, Japan, The Netherlands and Spain) took part in a discussion about their own motivations, local context and both good and bad experience in bringing people together. This discussion was relevant in the frame of the festival's ambition to present Maritsa as a common space, open and suitable for everyone.

MARITSA'S CITIES (debate)

This talk included representatives from some of the major cities along Maritsa: Pazardzhik, Svilengrad and Alexandroupolis. Unfortunately a representative from Edirne was not able to come, while even though invited, there was no representative of the Plovdiv Municipality. The debate seemed useful to all the participants for various reasons. On the one hand they exchanged experience about how the river gets treated in their city, while on the other they discovered myths and realities about the river, which they had not expected. **A** common conclusion was that the river has in most of the cities lost its value as a common space and as a place, which people associate themselves with.



5.4. Interventions

THE BEACH

The beach with a bar and two pools was the largest intervention of this year's festival. It occupied the southern bank of Maritsa, between the Gerdzhika and the Fair Bridges and lasted for two months, august and september. This intervention did not prove as successful as hoped and there seemed to be considerable misunderstandings about it on behalf of some citizens and media of Plovdiv. So a clarification is needed.

The Beach, was created, organised and executed without any financial help on behalf of the Municipality. Both its content and its realisation is independant from the local government, and this is valid for all interventions. Presenting the Beach as a municipal project, as it happened on few occasions during its existence is quite untrue. The festival's interventions happen thanks to the support of private individuals, companies, foreign embassies or foreign funds. No taxpayers' money is involved in their realisation.

Furthermore it is important to say WHY does ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK create such interventions. The festival aims at contributing to areas important for Plovdiv. The choice of areas relates to the officially announced urban development plans of the Municipality. The aim of the interventions, which ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK creates is to test models for those areas before the large municipal investment plans are realised. In short, the festival wants to be a testing ground for urban development before public money goes into this development.

In that sense, all the festival's interventions, including the Beach are not meant to be a ready, final, definite proposal. On the contrary. They are meant to be a test, a discussion, a proposal. And once seen and experienced by the citizens, the local administration and the politicians they can serve as a basis for further decision making about the area in question.

In the case of the Beach the intervention proved highly controversial. Some ridiculed the very existence of a beach on Maritsa, others disliked the aesthetics of it, many people took notice

of the Beach but without forming a clear opinion about it, while there was also a group of people who loved it. In most of its days the Beach under-performed, but there were also occasions when it was attracted many people. Those instances happened mostly at times when there was dedicated programming for the area, which is an important factor to be considered when thinking of such functions along the river.

The organisation of the space also left things to be desired. Separating the bar from the beach and pools proved to be a less successful choice. This choice was made consciously though, since the river banks (where the bar was located) are municipal property and all fees and regulations regarding the placing of a bar there were clear and achievable. The river bed on the other hand is state property and the procedure for installing a bar on it was not clear. This is an important consideration to be made if one decides to continue such an initiative.

One of the main challenges of the Beach were the mosquitos. Their presence, even after spraying, had put off many people from coming to the river. This is something that needs to be seriously addressed when thinking of functions along the river.

It is important to notice that the realisation of the whole intervention did not harm any animals or destroy any substantial vegetations. The most radical act performed was trimming the grass, three times. The substances used to clean the pool water were all river-friendly and not chemicals were used whatsoever. Not only this, but having people down in the river bed did not litter the area more. On the contrary, the rubbish collected before the opening was more than the one collected after the closure. All this can makes us think that with a proper organisation such an initiative can exist in the river space without this provoking any negative effects to the natural environment.

A conclusion can be drawn that such an intervention has the potential (technical, social and economic) to exist in the river space. It needs dedicated personnel, continued maintenance efforts, improved architectural qualities and very good marketing. If all this is provided the space has the potential to become a major urban attraction of Plovdiv.

The festival remains open to further questions about this, and all other initiatives.

STAGE AT MARITSA

The Stage at Maritsa was designed as the main venue for many of the events of the festival's program. Kutonotuk, the US architects behind the Stage design, thought of it not only as an event space, but aimed at creating a "city living room" along the river. The Stage was made out of dismountable elements and it functioned as a temporary space in the river bed. This venue existed for almost a month and became the location for holding various debates, lectures, workshops, meetings, film screenings and parties. The Stage proved to be a very successful intervention and according to us it makes a lot of sense to continue this initiative every year until 2019, and possibly even after.

VORTEX

This installation was designed by the Polish architecture studio Centrala. It addressed a major drawback of the river space in Plovdiv. Namely, access to the river bed. In the

preparation work for the festival we discovered that in the best case there is a staircase every 500 metres, but there are also numerous locations where no stair is available whatsoever. Vortex, which was the name of Centrala's proposal, addressed this issue by designing a structure, which lets you go up and down the river banks in a playful manner. The structure appears to be used often and in this sense has been a good provocation about the issue of the access of people to the river bed.

OPEN CALL

The Open call was an attempt to involve citizens in the transformation of urban space. Launched in spring 2015 it asked people (anyone) to submit ideas about an intervention along Maritsa. There were a financial and legal limits to what was possible and the festival committed itself to help with the realisation of the most popular idea. Despite the wide local and national media coverage there were only 6 proposals submitted, which was much lower than expected. All 6 proposals were discussed with the festival's team and a re-worked version of them all was put for public voting. More than 1200 people voted, which on its turn was a surprisingly high number. This made us conclude that people tend to express much easier an opinion, rather than make a proposal. This is an important fact to consider when organising citizen participation initiatives in Plovdiv.

The open call was an experiment, which proved successful. The final result was chosen with 460 votes and was built during ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK. It is now being used daily by the people who walk along the river.

URBAN GARDENING

This was the first intervention, which the festival initiated, already in July. Its aim was to propose alternative practices for the unused green spaces along Maritsa. In a patch of land sized 5x20m we planted various kinds of herbs and spices. Its purpose was to increase biodiversity and the aesthetics of the green space. In this, the garden mostly succeeded. But another very important ambition of this intervention was to create a community along the river. The reason for that is that there are very few people who associate themselves with the river space and the idea was to create functions around the river, such as this garden, which would serve as a catalyser of such a community. Unfortunately in this attempt the Urban gardening intervention failed. Only during the first few gatherings there was a considerable amount of people (about 25). All of them came from various parts of the city. At the subsequent events though, organised for maintaining the garden, only a handful of people turned up. This makes us conclude that participants in such an intervention need to be sought in the people living around the river, or that such a garden needs to be related to an institution (a kindergarten, an office building or a school) located along the river.

THE RIVER IN THE CITY

This initiative was created by the Plovdiv's Cosmos Cinema Collective, a group of young people, many of whom architects, who have taken up the cause to bring back to life the Cosmos Cinema. This was the only intervention, which did not happen along the river. Its purpose was rather to bring the river to the people. The Collective created three different installations at different spots in the city. Each installation reminded the passers by of the river, which crosses Plovdiv.

ANIMAL ARCHITECTURE

This was an intervention by Clemens Bauder from Austria. It consisted of a number of shelters for the animals, which inhabit the river space, also in the city limits. The need for such an intervention was caused by the issue that there is little awareness of the fact that there are numerous animals, which live in or around Maritsa, even within the city. By inviting people to create homes for those animals we aimed at increasing the level of awareness about this phenomenon. One important conclusion from this intervention was the acknowledgement of the rich flora and fauna of Maritsa. All participants agreed that this is one of the strongest and most charismatic characteristics of the river and that in case plans are made to re-integrate Maritsa in urban life, this should happen considering the wilderness of the space as one of its main advantages.

OPEN SCHOOL

This event had a number of goals to achieve. On the one hand it was meant to result in installations, which have the power to attract people to the river. On the other it involved design and architecture students in real-life tasks, with a realised result. And on the third it connected Bulgarian and international students with craftsmen from the Roma neighbourhood of Stolipinovo. The Open school was a positive step forward in all three aspects. The realised installations are used daily, the students had a good practice and the connection between the Roma and the foreigners went very smoothly, only to prove that prejudices can be sometimes overcome quite easily.

For further information about the outcome:

<http://www.maritsaspectacular.com/#!/5/c21a1>

UNCOMMON SHADOWS

The intervention transformed an abandoned petrol station on the northern banks of the river into an interactive theatre space. The Canadian collective Mere Phantoms worked with local people to create paper cuts of buildings, to arrange them in the petrol station and to turn the whole space into a performance with light and shadows. The intervention showed that even such small and at first glance unimportant places like the petrol station can become useful and attractive one, keeping at the same time their historic charm.



5.5. Kids

The children program of ONE ARCHITECTURE WEEK aims at directing the attention of the young ones towards the river. Within a number of workshops and events the kids got to know the river and its inhabitants, to create a houses for the animals living there, to draw river landscapes and most importantly to learn while having fun.

The aim of the children module is to show to the kids how important is nature for their city, as well as to show how special the Maritsa River is and how many opportunities it offers for play and learning. The selected activities gave the kids practical abilities and theoretical knowledge and undoubtedly provoked their curiosity and imagination regarding the urban environment and its relation to nature.

BIKE LESSONS

In line with its motto to make biking popular, as part of a healthy and rich way of life, the Plovdiv biking club Kriva Spitsa organised a free course for mountain biking. The young bikers tested their abilities in a competition environment, stimulated by motivating instructors.

YOGA FOR KIDS

Doing yoga with kids along the river is great fun. The plays, the dances, the songs, the poses and the storytelling helped kids to learn new things and to explore movement, sight, hearing and communication with others. Kids were encourage to both listen to each other, as well as to express themselves freely.

GET TO KNOW THE RIVER AND ITS INHABITANTS

The kids learned how do birds live along the river through books and binoculars. While creating and playing they learned from the mentors from Green Balkans about the added value of the river environment and about how do various species inhabit it.

UNCOMMON SHADOWS

Amongst the highlights of the children program was the workshop led by the Canadian collective Mere Phantoms, which together with kids, created a theatrical decor. Armed with

paper, pencils, glue and scissors the youngsters created their own paper models of buildings, which were then included in a light and shadows show. The result was an impressive visual experience.

ANIMAL ARCHITECTURE

The workshop led by the Austrian Clemens Bauder had also a children's edition. With a lot of care and imagination kids created very unusual insect hotels. They also learned that Maritsa is home for many creatures, which often cannot be encountered easily, but still have a crucial importance to nature's life cycle.

THE RIVER AS A COMPANION

This workshop was organised by the EcoCommunity Foundation and acquainted children with various materials around the theme of "rivers and waters". For the slightly older enthusiast there was a quiz with prizes. The younger kids had the chance to draw river and swamp animals or landscapes on t-shirts and bags, which they kept at the end.

6. PARTNERS

UN-COMMON RIVER was supported by the following organisations



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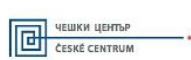
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