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URBAN INCUBATOR: BELGRADE

Savamala – A City Quarter Re-Invents Itself

A Goethe-Institut Project 2011-2013
Conceptualized as a pilot project of South-East European local branches of Goethe-Institut ("Initiative of Excellence")



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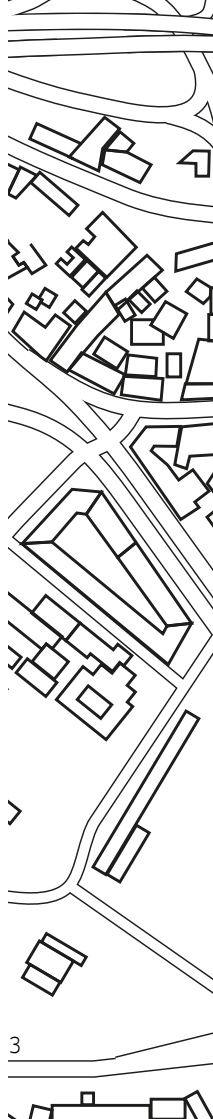
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1.INTRODUCTION

URBAN INCUBATOR: BELGRADE

Savamala – A City Quarter Re-Invents Itself

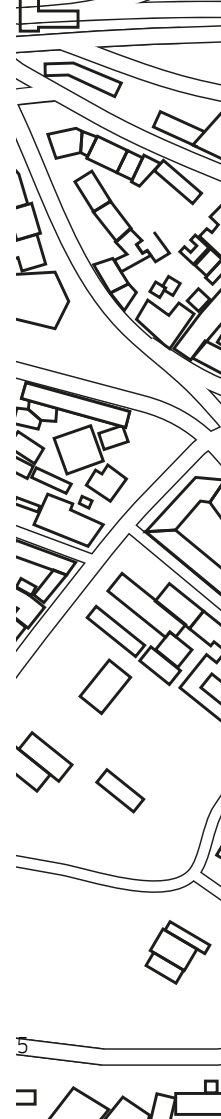
In 2010, the Goethe-Institut Belgrad found itself in an unexpected situation. After being at home in the Stari Grad (Old Town) district of Belgrade for more than three decades, situated in Knez Mihailova, one of Belgrade's finest streets, the Goethe-Institut Belgrad was forced to consider relocating, during a period of reconstruction to its premises, to a new site. A plan was developed to move the Goethe-Institut Belgrad to a temporary pavilion in the Savamala district of Belgrade, another historic yet neglected quarter on the banks of the river Sava, where the City of Belgrade had kindly offered space.

It was the former director of the Goethe-Institut Belgrad, Jutta Gehrig, who first saw the proposed move as an opportunity – to search for a new home for the institute that provides the same comforts and sanctuary as the current premises; to explore the institute's new surroundings, make

friends with the neighbours and try to become a part of a new community, changing habits and daily routines to fit with the new situation; and to change the new environment, positively, through institute's presence.

Further tests later revealed that the institute's Knez Mihailova street premises would not require the reconstruction work that had been anticipated. However, the vision of the Goethe-Institut Belgrad as an incubator of cultural development in Savamala has continued to grow. Fascinated by Savamala and its unrealized potential, the idea persisted that the Goethe-Institut Belgrad should still provisionally and temporarily be physically present in the district, contributing to the development of its new neighbourhood though using its capacity as a cultural engine. Not only would the Goethe-Institut Belgrad adapt to its new environment, it would try to change its new environment for the better.

This idea has become the focus of an initiative – the Urban Incubator: Belgrade – that aims to make Savamala the subject of an attempt at a new kind of development process, in which culture is at the center of regeneration. In this regard, the commission for Belgrade's bid to become the European Capital of Culture 2020, "Belgrade 2020 - the City of Miracles", which gives a long term perspective to the Urban Incubator: Belgrade concept, has been a valuable partner in preparatory discussions about the role the Goethe-Institut Belgrad could play in Savamala. The following report presents the vision that has resulted from this dialogue and the creative process that was first forced upon and then embraced by the Goethe-Institut Belgrad.



Conceptualized by Tim Rieniets, an urban designer and curator working at ETH Zurich, the Urban Incubator: Belgrade has emerged, not as an investors dream, but as a role model for alternative urban development, which is founded on two principles: the conviction that cultural activities can have a transformative and revitalizing effect on decaying inner-city areas such as Savamala; and that areas like Savamala – through their history, ambiance and architecture – are themselves inspirational places for many kinds of cultural activities. The Urban Incubator: Belgrade aims to harness this mutually conducive relationship to shape the urban development of Savamala.

The driving force of this urban and cultural development are the artists, architects, urbanists and activists – from Serbia and other countries – who will be asked to live and work in Savamala. However, the Urban Incubator: Belgrade is not like other artist-in-residence programs. Savamala does not only serve as a workspace or a source of inspiration. Savamala is the project!

For the ever widening circle of participants and stakeholders – such as MIKSER Festival, Cultural Center GRAD, staff and students from the Faculty of Architecture, and other EU and local initiatives, the Goethe-Institut Belgrad offers a welcoming platform and open forum for public debate, integrating and focusing communication about a multifaceted bottom-up development process.

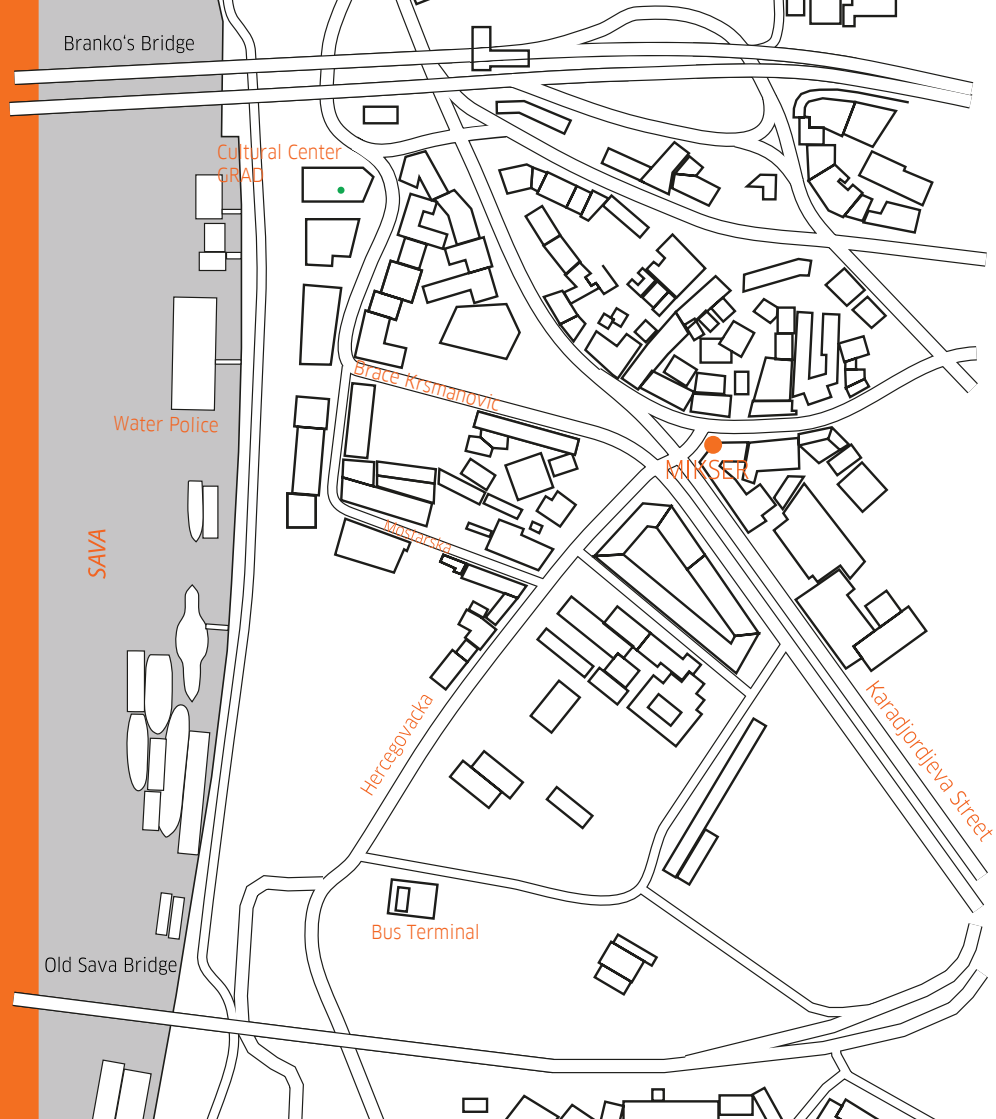
After a period of engagement - and just before the profit maximising logic of retail, real estate development and tourism might take over - the project will come to an end.

The participants will move and the temporarily used spaces will be reintegrated into the normal lifecycle of the city. No traces will be left, just the memories and ideas of a possible future of Savamala.

Graffiti art in Savamala



Map of Savamala



2. SETTING THE STAGE

Why Savamala?

For visitors to Belgrade the first impression of Savamala is one of a uniquely situated, yet severely neglected, city quarter. Located south of the historic Kalemegdan Fortress on the South bank of the river Sava, Savamala occupies one of the most beautiful and strategically important areas of the city. But inexplicably, Savamala bears the conspicuous insignia of decay. Splendid but neglected architectural remnants of a great historical past stand adjacent to old warehouses, decaying residential buildings and jerrybuilt workshops.

This situation is even more surprising given that Savamala is one of the oldest parts of the city, constructed close to the walls of the Kalemegdan Fortress. The area gets its name from its location – which is open to the river – and from the term mahala, a Balkan word for neighbourhood or quarter, which dates back to the period of Ottoman rule. Savamala was developed for its trading potential and during the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it grew to become the major trading center in Belgrade. The city modernized rapidly and Savamala, particularly the Karadjordjeva Road, became the site for major building projects, considered to be of great cultural and historical significance. In the course of the twentieth century, following its promising development, Savamala fell largely into a state of disrepair. The Karadjordjeva Road was poorly maintained, buildings were abandoned and the area repeatedly fell victim to major floods.

Today, Savamala is in an ambiguous state – a peripheral place right in the heart of the city, known for noise, pollution, prostitution and illegal housing. The riverfront, once a busy landing, is now used as a cemetery for abandoned hulks – a place of mysterious industrial romanticism. Savamala also hosts major city infrastructure that would not be expected to be found in the center of a city: A bus terminal and parking lot, a main traffic artery used by heavy trucks, and the head quarters of the water police.

Historic Facades





Karadjordjeva Street



Savamala 1930



Karadjordjeva Street

For some years now, however, Belgrade has been rediscovering the almost forgotten history and beauty of Savamala: An underdeveloped quarter, close to the city center, well connected, and – thanks to the riverside – of high potential for real estate development. Savamala holds untapped potential for the future development of the city, a prospect that has excited the imaginations of planners and decision-makers alike. Experts are currently working on new master plans and the municipality intends to clean up all traces of the recent past. This includes the beautification of public spaces, the dismantling of illegal structures, and scrapping the disused hulks that litter the river bank – with the exception of one historic paddlesteamer, which, it is proposed, will be reincarnated as a museum boat.

However, due to unsolved ownership issues and the financial crises, this promising future is still a distant prospect. A waste of time and a waste of space, one might bemoan. But at the same time, this delay in development creates space for an open and thorough debate, saving Savamala from the precipitous transformation that too many other parts of the city have experienced following the collapse of the social-

ist regime. Instead, Savamala could become an example of publicly debated and truly sustainable urban development.

Here and there, the first signs of redevelopment are visible: A number of small-scale activities – both legal and illegal – have found fertile ground in Savamala, bringing new life to the area. However, these projects have not been initiated by the city or by real estate developers, but instead by subcultural entrepreneurs. In 2009 the European Center for Culture and Debate, known as KC GRAD, opened its doors on Braće Krsmanović street: For the first time a disused warehouse in the Belgrade Municipality of Savski Venac, in which Savamala is located, has been transformed into a public space. Recently, a second warehouse has been refurbished and will serve as a permanent cultural center. In May 2012, the popular MIKSER will organize a one-week festival at Savamala, turning the quarter into a bustling place of cultural activities.

What might seem not more than minor or ephemeral activities are just a foretaste of a possible future. It is not only cultural entrepreneurs that are recognizing Savamala's potential as a creative quarter. The municipality envisions

Savamala as the rising star of Belgrade's creative industries, as does "Belgrade 2020" - the City of Miracles", which has identified Savamala as a key area in the city's bid to become European Capital of Culture 2020.

This is the background against which the current involvement of the Goethe-Institut Belgrad took its point of departure: In 2010, the results of a building regulations study indicated that the Goethe-Institut Belgrad's premises in Knez Mihailova street required reconstruction work and that for the period of reconstruction the Institute would have to relocate temporarily to other premises. What initially seemed to be a major inconvenience was quickly turned into a creative opportunity: the Goethe-Institut Belgrad made plans to move to a temporary pavilion elsewhere in the city, where, during the period of reconstruction, it would act as a cultural incubator. Based on this idea, the City of Belgrade offered the Goethe-Institut Belgrad a building plot in the most suitable area: Savamala. Opening a new Goethe-Institut Belgrad pavilion there would have been a strong and perhaps catalytic gesture towards the desired yet undefined future of Savamala as a creative quarter.

However, further building inspections have proven the existing Goethe-Institut Belgrad premises to be safe, relieving the necessity for the Institute to relocate from Knez Mihailova street. Although relocation to a temporary pavilion is no longer necessary, the idea of using the cultural capacity of the Goethe-Institut Belgrad to contribute to the sustainable development of Savamala has remained - and is attracting increasing attention.





Soho, London



Langstrasse, Zurich



Brick Lane, London

Creative Quarters

Savamala is undoubtedly a unique city quarter, deeply rooted in the historic, economic and topographic idiosyncrasies of Belgrade. But, in the context of contemporary urban discourse, the idea of turning Savamala into a so called creative quarter is by no means an unusual one. Today the term creative quarter is a buzzword in policy, planning and cultural industries alike. Of course, every city wants to be creative (which would want to be an 'uncreative city?'). But it is even better to be more creative, more innovative, and more genuine than other cities. Many cities today put great effort into improving their image, attracting foreign direct investment, and creating new jobs in the creative industries.

Today, the creative industries – including arts, design, theater, media and game design – are widely believed to be one of the most important economic pillars of cities and regions in the 21st century. Particularly under the influence of American economist Richard Florida, the creative industries have become one of the most popular currents in the field of contemporary urban policy and planning. To prosper

amongst the international economic competition, Florida and others argue, a city must attract the “creative class” – the labor force propelling the creative industry.

Under the term creative class Florida includes a wide range of professions: Not only artists, designers, musicians and others who are creative in a purely artistic sense, but the entire labor force involved in creative working processes. As diverse as this creative class may be, according to Florida these people have one thing in common: They share a strong affinity to a modern urban lifestyle; to nightlife, culture and shopping, to lively streets and cosy squares. Consequently, if a city wants to beat the national and international economic competition, it must attract the creative class by providing them with their desired urban living conditions.

What has made Florida's theory so popular in cities all over the world is its detachedness from the local urban conditions. You don't need to have a long tradition in cultural and creative production to establish creative industries; you don't need to be Paris, New York or Berlin to be hip. You just have to create urban conditions that are able to attract

the creative class, which in turn will drive the creative industries. This is why cities all over the world are trying to establish the right urban conditions and to designate creative quarters - from New York to Singapore, from Sao Paulo to Helsinki. And, perhaps, Belgrade.

Urban Pioneers

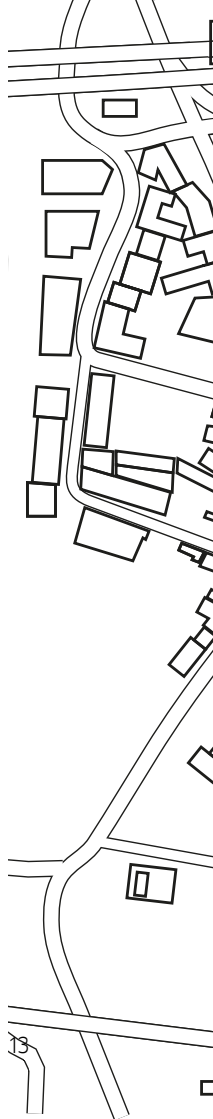
In a world where many cities have suffered from deindustrialization, unemployment and decay, the rise of the creative industries has offered a new path of economic and urban redevelopment. Nevertheless, the way the situation is approached remains in the tradition of modernist planning: It is the role of experts - the policy-makers, engineers, architects and planners - to create suitable urban conditions for the creative workforce. However, taking a closer look at places around the world that are famous for being creative quarters, this top-down approach seems to be questionable. Why anticipate urban space for people who, by definition, are expected to be creative? Why try to implement a model from the outside if most naturally occurring creative quarters have grown from the inside?

It is not architects and planners, but creative people, often without knowing it, that are the "real" experts of urban development. Many decaying city quarters that have suffered from deindustrialization in recent decades have unexpectedly turned into breeding grounds for creative milieus, sub-cultural activities and alternative lifestyles. Soho (London), Williamsburg (New York), Berlin Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg (Berlin), Schanzenviertel (Hamburg) and Langstrasse (Zurich), to name just a few popular examples, were transformed from

ignored and socially deprived places into the most colorful and vibrant city quarters, attracting attention far beyond their own limits. The success of these quarters was based on many small scale investments and strong personal engagement, rather than public planning or real estate investment.

Low rent, inspiring ambience and spatial and social niches to practice alternative lifestyles are often the local qualities that attract the first wave of young creative professionals. This group represents just a small fraction of Richard Florida's creative class. And in contrast to his theory, these young creative professionals are not only consumers with a strong affinity to urban life. They are, at the same time, able to invest in their urban environments. They may not have much financial capital, but what they do have is a lot of "creative capital" to invest into studios and galleries, clubs and bars, startup firms and alternative retail. And they invest a lot of time in the use of public spaces, gastronomy and leisure. In this way creative workers both lay the foundations for new urban economies and create attractive and vibrant urban spaces.

However, the success of these urban pioneers has often sealed their own fate: Tourists flock to to see "authentic" places; marketing experts reproduce images and myths; and better-off residents have moved into refurbished dwellings and newly built loft apartments in search of the urban lifestyle. As a result, the local qualities that once attracted young creative professionals to naturally occurring creative quarters are diminishing. Rents are rising, niche and free spaces are disappearing, and what was once alternative is incrementally being replaced by the mainstream.





Kastanienalle, Berlin Prenzlauer Berg



Re-used building in Christiania, Copenhagen



Informally used public space in Berlin Prenzlauer Berg

Creative quarters seem to have a self-destructive tendency: The more successful they are, the more likely they will lose their basis of existence. Consequently, the young and creative professionals who were once the driving force of urban valorization and public life are disappearing. Creative workers must either keep up with an area's economic development and adapt to the changing lifestyle or they are simply forced to leave the area in search of more viable alternatives.

In recent years, the process of gentrification has increasingly caused intense debate and conflict between the different stakeholders involved. Public and private players are accused of using the creative milieu for their own political and economic benefits, while destroying these urban environments and forcing creative workers to relocate. Some of these struggles have attracted international media attention: Christiania – a quasi-autonomous community in Copenhagen – was closed at the instigation of the conservative government and has caused ongoing debates; the

Gängeviertel in Hamburg – a small artists community – which was sold by the municipality to a Dutch investor, has had to be repurchased after the artists launched a national media campaign; in Madrid, the red-light district Maravillas has gained international attention after being actively gentrified and branded as TriBall (a play on words that refers to local places and to New York's famous Tribeca creative quarter).

Savamala, still awaiting development, is a perfect case to learn from international experiences and develop its own solutions. Not as another creative quarter on the world map of the creative industry, but as a role model of integrated and site specific urban development – development that makes use of existing creative potential rather than being directed by architects and planners; that empowers locally attached actors rather than attracting a globally mobile work force; that traces the particularities of Savamala, rather than emulating the international mainstream.

17. - 27. 11. 2011.



Tommaso
Bonaventura

The Men
who would be
Mao

grey



3. THE PROJECT

Urban Incubator: Belgrade

The Urban Incubator: Belgrade is founded on two principles: the conviction that cultural activities – and the social, economic and symbolic value they create – can have a transformative and revitalizing impact on depressed inner-city neighbourhoods such as Savamala; and that neighbourhoods like Savamala – through their history, ambiance and architecture – are themselves inspirational places for many kinds of cultural activities. The Urban Incubator: Belgrade will attempt to make use of this mutually constitutive relationship, between city and culture, in order to generate both high-quality cultural production and the sustainable urban development of Savamala.

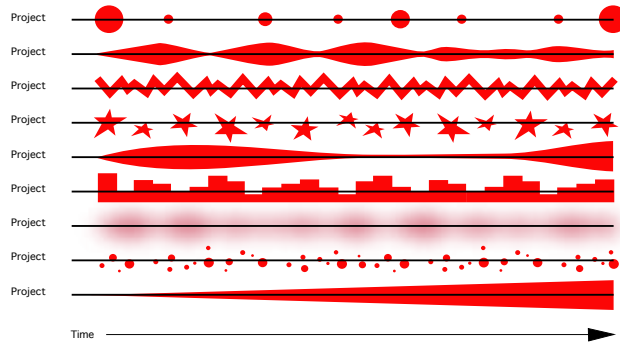
As the driving force of the Urban Incubator: Belgrade, artists, architects, urbanists and activists – local, regional or international – would be asked to participate in the project, taking up residence, living and working, in Savamala for a period of time. However, the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will not be like other artist-in-residence programs. Savamala will not only serve as a workspace or source of inspiration. Savamala is the project! The participants will be asked to invent site-specific projects, considering the social, economic, ecologic or aesthetic aspects of the quarter. These projects may range from architectural design to performative art, from economic entrepreneurship to social work, and from intuitive action to critical reflection. As different as these projects may be, they all share the same space and the same objective: Savamala.

Urban Incubator: Belgrade is not like a festival, making the

quarter the backdrop for a cultural spectacle, transforming it for just a few days. Instead, the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will take its time to settle. It will take on the pace of the neighbourhood and go with the rhythms of daily life and the change of seasons. It will become an indistinguishable part of Savamala and thus blur the traditional dichotomy between cultural and daily practice: The neighbourhood will be both the object of cultural intervention and the space of its representation. The participants – living and working in the neighbourhood – are authors and inhabitants at the same time. And the audience – usually members of a highly educated and mobile scene – will mingle with members of the local community and passersby. In short: what used to be distinguished spheres of culture will be fused into a joint process producing mutual benefits.

For the audience, the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will allow for a new urban experience in Savamala – an experience that turns negative stereotypes into positive awareness of ignored value and unexpected potential. It will show glimpses of the possible future development of Savamala and sow the seeds of new initiatives. For the experts, in turn, the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will create an example of alternative urban development, hitherto unknown in Serbia, which is at the center of debate in international discourse. The most important goal, however, is to launch Savamala as a regenerative cultural process and share ways of sustainable urban development.

Cultural projects: timeline



Cultural projects effecting public space in Savamala



4. NEXT STEPS

2012: Laying the Ground

In order to lay the ground for the Urban Incubator: Belgrade, careful preparation is necessary. First, as a fact-finding mission, following the urbanistic approach discussed above, the spatial, social and economic conditions of Savamala will be re-investigated and previous research and planning of the site re-evaluated. Appropriate spaces will be identified, necessary permission obtained and potential participants involved. A broader information and communication process will be instigated in order to introduce more transparency, invite civil society participation, gain attention from the prospective audience, and lay the ground for participatory decision-making.

In this context, the Goethe-Institut Belgrad will act as a mediator, relying on the support of a number of important partners to realise our goals. At the center of this network of partners is the City of Belgrade, with which the Goethe-Institut Belgrad aims to work closely to realise the Urban Incubator: Belgrade. The Commission for Belgrade's bid to

become European Capital of Culture 2020, which has been attempting to integrate the Urban Incubator: Belgrade into the bid program, is also an important prospective partner. The Commission's expansive network within the national and international cultural scene will help to put the Urban Incubator: Belgrade in the international spotlight. At the most local level, KC GRAD, the first cultural pioneer in Savamala, aims to join forces with Goethe-Institut Belgrad to support the Urban Incubator: Belgrade. Its local experience and credibility it will make it an indispensable partner to land the Urban Incubator: Belgrade in Savamala.

Encouraged by the support of these and many other partners, the Goethe-Institut Belgrad will, in 2012, launch a programme of discussions and workshops to bring together all the relevant stakeholders. In addition, an online platform – a website and Facebook page – for public communication and information exchange will be created. The online components will be utilized to promote the project to a wider audience and establish an inclusive participatory process to feed the Urban Incubator: Belgrade with fresh ideas.

November 14/15th, 2011: Savamala conference, Goethe-Institut Belgrad

From right: Tim Rieniets (ETH Zurich), Aleksandar Peković (Belgrade 2020), Matthias Müller-Wieferig (Goethe-Institut Belgrad)



In parallel with establishing public dialogue, efforts to generate new information will be undertaken. Students from the ETH Zurich Faculty of Architecture and the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Belgrade will investigate Savamala in a joint research project. Taking on the idea of “urban mining”, students will dig the physical, social and mental space of Savamala. They will collect artefacts, ideas and memories, carefully composing them in a multifaceted portrait of the neighbourhood; a place that for decades has been associated with the same faceless and rather ugly appearance that we see today. The results of this project will be exhibited and used as an information source for the further development of the Urban Incubator: Belgrade.

2013: Bringing the Urban Incubator to Life

In 2013 the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will begin to occupy a number of spaces in Savamala: vacant apartments, empty shops, and underused yards – any space that is available and suitable for temporary living and/or working. These spaces will form a cluster of cultural production – discreet and inconspicuous at the beginning, but as projects develop they will turn into trigger points of urban change. As such they will actively contribute to the visible and tangible improvement of the urban environment.

A central space in Savamala, designed with the principles of a light structure that accord with the ideas of the creative interventions that will be made in Savamala, would be operated by the Goethe-Institut Belgrad, hosting exhibitions,

Vacant space under Brankov Bridge





workshops, public debate and discourse. This space will focus and connect activities carried out by project participants and/or members of the local community, raising the visibility of the project to the public and establishing a new focus point in Savamala where participants and inhabitants can meet and visitors can access information about the project.

In the course of the year, the different projects will take individual shape and paths of development. Each project will have its own intensity and rhythm. However, at certain dates, all projects will increase their activities, culminating in joint festivities. At these moments the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will come to the fore, inviting everybody to celebrate Savamala.

2014: Looking Back /Looking Forward

After a period of engagement – and just before the profit maximising logic of retail, real estate development and tourism might take over – the project will come to an end. The participants will move and the temporarily used spaces will again become available to be reintegrated into the normal lifecycle of the city. No traces will be left, just the memories and ideas of a possible future of Savamala. To make these memories and ideas productive, the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will conclude with a public conference, inviting locals, experts and decision-makers to sketch out a common vision for future urban development.

After Belgrade

The idea for the Urban Incubator: Belgrade was born in Belgrade and out of the necessity of relocating the Goethe-Institut Belgrad to other premises. However, Belgrade is not the only place where cultural production could be an appropriate means to revitalize depressed inner-city neighbourhoods. Likewise, many other cities which have suffered from deindustrialization, economic crises or demographic change are waiting for new paths of urban development. Against this background the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will be conceived as a role model for other cities.

In anticipation of this possibility, the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will be designed to make knowledge-transfer as efficient as possible: The project's development will be monitored and evaluated, and the participants of the Belgrade case-study will be asked – if necessary – to exchange their personal experiences with participants at future venues. In a final publication, the Urban Incubator: Belgrade will be documented and made accessible to a broader public.

5. AT A GLANCE

Our Goals

Contributing to the sustainable and socially integrated development of Savamala
Fusing urban development, cultural production and media-tion into an applied project
Involving local/international experts, decision-makers and the local community
Creating an example for Belgrade and beyond
Developing and transferring know-how to other cities and regions

The Role of the Goethe-Institut Belgrad

Concept development
Organizing research, workshops, lectures and debates
Cooperation with the City of Belgrade
Inviting international participants to live and work in Savamala
Supporting participants in Belgrade
Fundraising
Public relations
Documentation

Possible Project Results

Public events
Exhibitions
Publications
Website

A preliminary Schedule

2011

Summer	First concept draft
November	Conference with local experts and stakeholders

2012

Spring	Students project (ETH Zurich / Faculty of Architecture Belgrade)
Summer	Acquisition of spaces for temporary use
Autumn	Call for projects / Invitation to participate
Autumn	International conference
Winter	Workshop with participants

2013

Spring	Start of the Urban incubator / Vernissage
Summer/	
Autumn	Various events and programs
Winter	End of the Urban Incubator / Finissage

2014

Spring	Public Conference
Summer	Documentation and evaluation



6. APPENDIX: REFERENCE PROJECTS

Project Row Houses, Houston

Project Row Houses is a neighbourhood-based nonprofit art and cultural organization in Houston's Northern Third Ward, one of the city's oldest African-American communities. The project, initiated in 1993, is founded on the principle that art – and the community it creates – can be the foundation for revitalizing depressed inner-city neighbourhoods. The prerequisite to turn this vision into reality was a one and a half block site containing twenty-two vacant houses. Project Row Houses has established programmes that encompass arts and culture, neighbourhood revitalization, low-income housing, education, historic preservation, and community service. Today, the project has grown to 40 properties, including artist exhibition and residency spaces, houses for young mothers, office space, a community gallery, low-income residential and commercial spaces, and a park¹.

Project Row Houses



The Dorchester Project, Chicago

The Dorchester Project transforms abandoned buildings in neglected areas of Chicago's urban landscape into informal cultural spaces. Located on Dorchester Avenue, Chicago, these spaces are conceived for public use, where performances, lectures and other events take place. The director of the project, artist and cultural planner Theaster Gates, has combined a former candy store, a single-family house and a duplex across the street into a site of artistic activity and community transformation in a neighbourhood that has suffered years of neglect. Gates accumulated a diverse range of materials for the project, including the University of Chicago's Lantern Slide Archive – a collection of 6,000 images – and 14,000 used books from a bookstore that had closed down. As part of a hybrid art movement, the Dorchester Project is a strategy for sustainable urban development, using the resources of the neighbourhood².

Dorchester Avenue



Prinzessinnengärten (Princess gardens), Berlin

Prinzessinnengärten was launched as a pilot project in the summer of 2009 at Moritzplatz in Berlin's Kreuzberg district, a site which had been a wasteland for over half a century, hidden in the shadows of the Berlin Wall. Inspired by urban agriculture in Cuba and other developing countries, activists and neighbours started to clear the site and built transportable organic vegetable plots. Prinzessinnengärten is not primarily about cultivating vegetables but rather about cultivating urban space and community life. Prinzessinnengärten is a place where neighbours gather and adults can pass on knowledge to children. And it is a place of astonishing beauty and silence in the middle of the city³.

Prinzessinnengärten



¹ www.projectrowhouses.org

² <http://dorchesterprojects.tumblr.com/>; <http://theastergates.com>

³ <http://prinzessinnengarten.net/>

Create your own Wedding Space / RGB Farbraum, Berlin

The Berlin based housing cooperative Degewo is the owner of large-scale social housing developments built in the 1970's, much of which suffers from structural problems and demographic transformation. This problem also affects public space, which is underused. Many shops also stand vacant. To turn the problem into an opportunity, Degewo has launched a competition among creative start-up firms. Degewo asked for new, economically viable, ideas that would bring the vacant shops back into use and contribute to the quality of adjacent public spaces. The winning projects were granted one-year rent-free use of the shops. One of the winning projects is RGB color space, a bar and boutique that sells fashion and design items according to a regularly changing color code. It is an entrepreneurial experiment and an attraction for the surrounding area.

RGB Farbraum



NEMONA, Berlin

NEMONA is a local network initiative for sustainable urban and economic development with a thematic focus on fashion production in Berlin's Neukölln district. The basic idea of this network initiative is to generate mutual economic benefits by bringing together two groups that live in the same neighbourhood but never meet: Young fashion designers in search for cheap production facilities and Turkish women with tailoring skills that struggle to access the official labor market. NEMONA has established a platform where these two groups can work together. The result is a win-win situation that not only helps both parties to make a living, but is also strengthening community ties and helping these groups to stay in an increasingly expensive quarter of the city. NEMONA has opened a shop that is both a window to display locally produced fashion and for the project itself⁴.

Nemona



Holding Patterns, New York

"Holding Patterns" is the winning entry of a design competition launched by the New York museum MoMA PS1. The task was to conceive a temporary design for the museum's courtyard. "Holding Patterns", conceived by the New York based design firm Interboro Partners, is a new take on recycling and a way of establishing a new sense of community through urban design: The firm talked to as many neighbours of the project site as possible; A nearby taxi company, senior citizens' and day care centers, high schools, settlement houses, a local YMCA, library, and a greenmarket (among others). The question they asked was: Is there something you need that we could use for our project and then donate to you once the project is over? The result was an eclectic collection of objects – including benches, mirrors, ping-pong tables, and flood lights: A diverse and unique programme that a design firm could never conceive of alone and strengthens ties among neighbours⁵.

Holding Patterns



⁴ <http://www.nemona.de>
⁵ www.interboropartners.net

Universität der Nachbarschaften (Neighbourhood University), Hamburg

The Neighbourhood University is an initiative of the Harbor City University, Hamburg, created for the International Building Exhibition (IBA). The Neighbourhood University is situated in Hamburg's Wilhelmsburg district – a socially underprivileged quarter – in the premises of a former health care center. It was reconstructed by architecture students and is used as a platform for all kinds of initiatives, connecting local and external participants, artists and inhabitants, experts and layman. In this way, the Neighbourhood University aims to contribute to the sustainable and integrated transformation of the area⁶.

Neighbourhood University (Hamburg)



⁶ <http://udn.hcu-hamburg.de/wordpress/>

⁷ www.2-3strassen.eu/

2 – 3 Strassen (2 – 3 streets), Dortmund, Duisburg, Mülheim a.d. Ruhr

78 people from places all over the world were invited to live, rent-free, for one year in the European Capital of Culture RUHR.2010. They moved into empty apartments on three very ordinary streets in Dortmund, Duisburg and Mülheim an der Ruhr. They came to change themselves and, together with their neighbours, to change the streets into which they had moved. The pivotal activity of the project was the joint writing of a book. But the main focus was not just writing, nor was it intended to develop artists' districts or events. Rather, 2-3 Streets was an attempt to affect society as a whole. Both readers and non-readers became authors, consumers became producers, and courtyards, gardens and apartments became venues for ideas and exchange. 887 people joined in the writing of the book, telling the story of life in these three streets over 3,000 pages. They wrote about life as it is today. The project has now finished, however more than half of the 78 people invited to participate will not be returning to their previous homes in 2011. They will remain in their new streets in order to continue to change life in the neighbourhood in cooperation with their neighbours⁷.



Book produced by participants and inhabitants

Next Hamburg, Hamburg

Next Hamburg is an independent, citizen-based think tank for the future of the city. The goal of Next Hamburg is to enable the creativity and dedication of the largest possible number of citizens to contribute to urban development processes. An Internet platform, which represents the major conceptual component of the project, is used to collect proposals from the community. Popular proposals are taken on by the Next Hamburg project team to be professionally developed. Next Hamburg is an initiative for the urban development of Hamburg that has the potential to be transferred to any other city⁸.

Next Hamburg



⁸ <http://www.nexthamburg.de>

Graffiti art in Savamala



IMPRINT

URBAN INCUBATOR: BELGRADE
Savamala - A City Quarter Re-Invents Itself

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