

BUILDING BEYOND BORDERS
FALL SYMPOSIUM 2020



PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1ST FALL SYMPOSIUM, NOVEMBER 9-10, 2020
REFLECTING ON THE DYNAMISMS OF INTERCULTURAL COLLABORATION IN BUILD PROJECTS



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Several universities have developed educational programs (master and postgraduate programs) in which students learn to design for and even build in a context that is beyond their own cultural and social context. Examples are European universities that set up design studios and design & build projects in African or Asian countries, or Schools of Architecture that realize projects in remote rural areas or in informal settlements in their own country. Also many architectural practices have been designing for and building in contexts that are far beyond the socio-cultural background of their designers.

Most of these universities and architectural practices see this as an opportunity to exchange expertise among different cultures and try to realize these projects in a strongly participatory way with local stakeholders. Students get to know different visions on reality, learn to build with local materials and building techniques, ... and try to integrate it in their projects. Architects expand or change their role from designer for a specific client to manager of a building community, coordinator of participatory workshops, developer or producer of new building materials, ...

Schools of Architecture and architectural practices consider this 'building beyond borders', not just beyond geographical borders, but more importantly beyond cultural, social, intellectual, professional, ... borders.

Yet what building beyond borders means for those at the other side of the border remains quite often implicit. What is building beyond borders for them? How do they experience a project in their community on which students or architects from another socio-cultural context work? What are the keys to reassure equivalence in the collaboration in such intercultural building projects? Are all stakeholders aware of all the borders that are crossed? What is the impact of such projects and of crossing these borders on both sides of the borders?

With this first Fall Symposium Building Beyond Borders we would like to initiate a broad conversation on this topic, by reflecting on the dynamisms of cross-border collaboration in build projects, especially in contexts with a risk of imbalance between the different stakeholders.

We invited dr. Antoni Folkers (NL) and dr. Victoria Heilman (TZ) as keynote speakers to highlight different perspectives on the topic of dynamisms in building beyond borders.

Academics, practitioners, students, NGO's, community members, ... contributed to this conversation, through an active contribution by means of a presentation or lecture or by attending the symposium and participating in the discussions.

Welcoming and practical information

DAY 1

KEYNOTE LECTURE 1

Practical lessons from traditional and modern African architecture - building beyond borders (Folkers Antoni)

PLENARY PRESENTATION SESSION

Approaches for cross-border build projects

Conversations with a practitioner - Reflections on built projects in South Africa from a community engagement perspective (Perold Rudolf, Delpont Hermie & Venter Anita)

10 designers, a Ministry of Education & a primary school – Approaches for cross-border build projects (Oonyu Jeremiah)

Placemaking across borders – learning-by-building as a tool to interact with communities – lessons learned from a European training program (Pollak Stefan, Gillet François, Teixeira Tânia, Couvreur Lucile, Sundman Anna, Battistella Alessio, Cory-Wright Jonatan, Artis Amélie)

Living heritage – UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Strategies for Conservation (Van Stigt Jurriaan, Kufirin Tea)

Lunch

PARALLEL PRESENTATION SESSION

Academic opportunities in cross-border build projects

Urban layering and social perception of cities – A collaborative summer workshop in Vauxhall street, Colombo (De Wandeler Koen)

Process analysis of a bamboo community project and center in Camburi, Brasil (Mouton Sven, Allacker Karen, Ghavami Khosrow, Verschure Han)

Students for Energy in Africa – A story of energy engineering and co-development for sustainable energy deployment in Africa (Deferme Wim)

Coffee break

PARALLEL DISCUSSION SESSION

Platforms in/for cross-border build projects

Anza-start: our journey from a workshop to a magazine (Masha Comfort, Senyonyi John Paul, Badaru Comfort)

Workshop African Commons Lab – Exploring Commons-based International Cooperation (Sillen Daan)

PLENARY PRESENTATION SESSION

Architectural practice opportunities in cross-border build projects

Learning by doing – Good painters copy, big painters steel (Van Stigt Jurriaan)

Out of comfort zone – Keeping it modern @Uganda Museum – Developing a conservation management plan for the Uganda National Museum (Adengo Doreen, Eppich Rand, Van Der Lans Berend, Perzyna Iga, Ssebunya Joseph)

Tourist Training Center in Quinoa, Peru – Social Enterprise by Social Empowerment (Djojoadhinigrat Kria)

Welcoming and practical information **DAY 2**

KEYNOTE LECTURE 2

Tanzania Women Architects for Humanity - building beyond borders within your country
(Heilman Victoria)

PLENARY PRESENTATION SESSION

Drivers and pitfalls of cross-border build projects

Reflecting with the end-users of the women's house in Ouled Merzoug (Van Breen Hannah, Beirinckx Tinne, Silvertand John)

Sustainability values in Maasai's building culture (Ayubu Godfrey, Janssens Bart, Van Cleempoel Koen, Kombe Wilbard J.)

Cross border urban design for local people (Djokic Vladan, Bobic Aleksandar, Rakonjac Ivana)
Motivational misalignment: managing the competing drivers of trans-national design-build in rural South Africa (Brown James, Russell Peter)

Lunch

PARALLEL DISCUSSION SESSION

Stakeholders in cross-border build projects: roles and learning opportunities

Practice of cross-border "socially engaged" architecture & development – Women's House of Ouled Merzoug, Morocco (Hailu YegletU Biniam)

PARALLEL DISCUSSION SESSION

Impact of enabling structures on nature and process of cross-border build projects

Fifty years of experience in international cooperation - lessons learned (Verschure Han)

Coffee break

PLENARY DISCUSSION SESSION

Impact of cross-border build projects on communities

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Discussion on the impact on communities based on the input from all contributions

Conclusive reflections and future initiatives

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CROSS-BORDER URBAN DESIGN FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

ABSTRACT: In the context of intercultural and cross-border cooperation, this study presents the implementation of the project of redesigning the Square of Orthodoxy (Trg Pravoslavlja) in Derventa, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Methodologically speaking, this study is divided into two parts: the first refers to the strategy of the design approach in view of actualizing the unity of differences through public urban space, and the second part that refers to the specific limitations of designers working in another country. The reflections and arguments in this study are based on dialectics and are epistemologically informed by the intersections of architecture, theology, art, and politics. The study examines the understanding of the past and the present in order to answer the question What could this be?

The study examines the limitations and opportunities in the process of realization of this project with the main emphasis on the following: first, the relationship between different stakeholders (local municipality, local church, local engineers and the design team from Belgrade, Serbia); second, understanding and interpretation of the local urban culture, ethnic and religious interactions in post-war Bosnia between Serbs, Bosnians and Croats, and third, understanding religious and local customs and traditions. Consequently, the basic idea in planning the Square of Orthodoxy in Derventa is guided by the collective memory of the place in terms of reminiscences of the past, when it was a place of encounters and community, as well as by the appreciation of the place, the need for religious service of Serbian Orthodox Church, and the acceptance and implementation of contemporary design practices in the regulation of public spaces.

KEYWORDS:

IDENTITY,
PUBLIC SPACE,
URBAN DESIGN,
CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION,
REGULATED PROFESSION

1. INTRODUCTION

The term “cross-border” indicates the existence of a difference, specifically, political and legal differences. In essence, it concerns different generic identities of the nation, i.e. different political and legal systems, regardless of whether these are similar ethnic, religious or cultural identities. “Cross-border cooperation” is a phenomenon of postmodern Western society. The essence of this view relies on the concept of theoretical humanism, where on one abstract and theoretical level, One that consists of Two is presupposed. This metaphysical approach manifests itself in practice as a confirmation of a formal division based on differences. Namely, the cooperation of Two different ones should indicate on a theoretical level that this concerns a kind of universality of people, their lives and needs. However, on a practical level, the strategy of universality formulated in this way manifests itself as a specific division and confirmation of a particular difference that stands as an objective impossibility - a legal impossibility versus the requirement for actual cooperation. Basically, it is an imitation of the movement of thought, knowledge and practice through different territories, following the example of the nomadic concept, with an attempt to treat borders as lines on a theoretical level.

Ever since Anaximander's definition of Apeiron [1] (apeiron – the unlimited, perion - border), in the history of Western thought the philosophical problem of “border” has (implicitly) figured as a topic for all prominent thinkers. In the era of German idealism, this issue came to the fore of philosophical discourse; first in Kant's Critique of Pure Reason – as a problem of the possibility of knowledge in general, and then (even more explicitly) in Hegel's critique of that Critique – as a primarily logical problem [2]. In contemporary philosophy, however, this problem has once again gone to the background; but, although not many professional philosophers explicitly deal with it today, it is still not entirely overcome [3, 4].

In the literature dealing with architecture, the problem of border has not been explicitly examined. The purpose of this paper is to clarify the meaning of borders in cross-border cooperation in the design process. In this context, the notion of border refers to defining spatial enclosure, but also to a set of social parameters that affect architecture. If it were necessary, at least in principle, to define

the position in relation to the above philosophical views - then the spirit of this work would be more in line with Hegel's approach rather than Kant's. For, the border that is the subject of this study is the changeable, the relative, diffuse, belonging to the domain of the possible (not necessary), in Hegel's terms - the dialectical.

The subject of this study is the state of the design and realization of the Square of Orthodoxy in Derventa (Bosnia and Herzegovina) (Fig. 1), according to the ideas of the architects Vladan Djokic (Arch.), Aleksandar Bobic (MLArch.), and Ivana Rakonjac (Arch.) from Belgrade (Serbia). Both cities, Derventa and Belgrade, belonged to one political and legal system from 1918 to 1992, first to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, then to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929), and after World War II to socialist Yugoslavia. This practically means that in the period from 1918 to 1992, there was a single legal and political system in which all that belonged to it could be included in accordance with the legal system. After the breakup of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, specifically after the Dayton Peace Agreement (USA) from 1995 until today, these two cities have belonged to different legal systems of different states, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia. Thus, even though they have more or less identical or similar cultural, social, academic, economic, and other characteristics, and more or less identical or similar professional approaches, methodologies and standards, these two different legal systems of two different states nevertheless divide this unity into two. In fact, it is a dialectical division, specifically, antagonism that occurs when something (an architect) from one state appears in the other state.

For the purpose of this study, it is interesting to point out the peculiarity that arises from the relationship between the state and religious communities. Namely, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there are three dominant religious communities (Islamic and two Christian - Orthodox and Catholic), which are the precondition for the emergence of three different ethnic identity groups - Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. These three dominant religious and ethnic groups have marked and continue to mark the cultural identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina throughout history, including the last war that resulted in the division by emphasizing the differences. Derventa has not evaded this peculiarity, and is now a predominantly Serbian city that belongs to the

Figure 1: Square of Orthodoxy (Trg Pravoslavlja). [5]



Bosnian entity of Republika Srpska. In any case, everyday life implies the demand for pluralism of differences and life with differences. The study of the Square of Orthodoxy in Derвента is placed in the context of the latter.

2. METHODS

The basic methodological framework of this study is a descriptive approach to reading and understanding the context of cross-border work of architects on the task of designing the town square in Derвента. In this context, this study is divided into two parts: the first refers to the strategy of the design approach in view of actualizing the unity of differences through public urban space, and the second part that refers to the specific limitations of architects working in another country. The case study presents the main determinants and important reasons (theological, identity-related, universal ones, etc.) that influenced the design strategy. A special aspect of the study includes specific requirements, conditions and approvals that did not come from the client (Municipality

of Derвента), but from the dominant stakeholder and user of public space, sort of a co-client - the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Consequently, reflections and arguments in this study are based on dialectics and are epistemologically informed by the intersections of architecture, theology, art, and politics. The study examines the understanding of the past and the present in order to answer the question What could this be?, despite current local or regional impossibilities, and for the purpose of common urban everyday life of the local population. In this context, the starting point, methodologically speaking, was the ontological principle according to which everything emerges within something, within a fragment or as a fragment of the totality of the interior. Accordingly, the study dialectically included antagonisms arising from the status of an architect working abroad, or the emphasis on one identity in the public space of the town. In the first case, the problem of participation of an architect from abroad in the project implementation was examined. In the second, the possibility of

interpreting a specific identity through abstraction for the purpose of generating the universality of public urban space was discussed.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Derventa is a town with more than 10 thousand inhabitants that has been continuously inhabited for five centuries. It is located in Bosanska Posavina in the north of Bosnia and Herzegovina within the entity Republika Srpska. The morphology of the terrain is hilly with a concentration of public facilities on the hill. The construction of the Orthodox Church "Assumption of the Most Holy Mother of God" rounded off a series of religious temples of all three dominant communities (Fig. 2). This series of religious buildings is accompanied by administrative, cultural and commercial facilities within the pedestrian zone. The Square of Orthodoxy project was supposed to define a platform for public use of the town square, with occasional religious use of the capacities for several thousand believers, while providing space for the church store, public toilets and access to the church crypt and refectory.

Figure 2: The religious context of the city Derventa: three closed religious identities. [6]



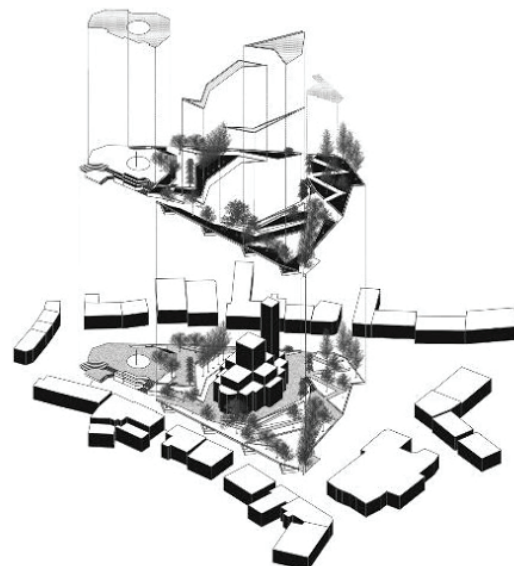
3.1 Design Process

The Square of Orthodoxy is situated in the centre of Derventa in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the past, before the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was a park there with a bistro and a terrace. It was a meeting place, for enjoying the beautiful park ensemble. After the war, the park was treated as a town square and the site has undergone a number of changes: on the perimeter of the square, on the west side, a pedestrian street was created; a monument was built on the top of the location, and in the central part of the square, the Serbian Orthodox Church - one of the highest in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After these interventions, Derventa municipality has decided to redesign the square. The main limitations and problems of the square

were: large level difference, devastated greenery except the plane trees, lack of accessibility for people with disabilities, devastated urban furniture and facilities, impossibility of public use and public events, impossibility of using it for religious ceremonies, etc. The main requirements for the redesign were: maintaining an existing pedestrian street, wall parapets, triangular geometry of the square, ensuring accessibility for all users, building playgrounds for children, revitalization and reconstruction of greenery, lighting design, construction of the central plateau around the church, construction of public toilets and ecclesiastical shops, application of the principles of ecological design, etc.

The basic idea in planning the Square of Orthodoxy in Derventa is guided by the collective memory of the place in terms of reminiscences of the past. The Square was a place of encounters and community, as well as the appreciation of the place, the need for religious service of Serbian Orthodox Church and the acceptance and implementation of contemporary design practices in the regulation of public spaces. In this sense, the Square is treated as a public space accessible to everyone, with characteristics of a park. The main goal of the project was to preserve the inherited (traditional) values of the space and modern trends in lifestyle development (Fig. 3).

Figure 3: Architectural composition. (V. Djokić, A. Bobić, I. Rakonjac)



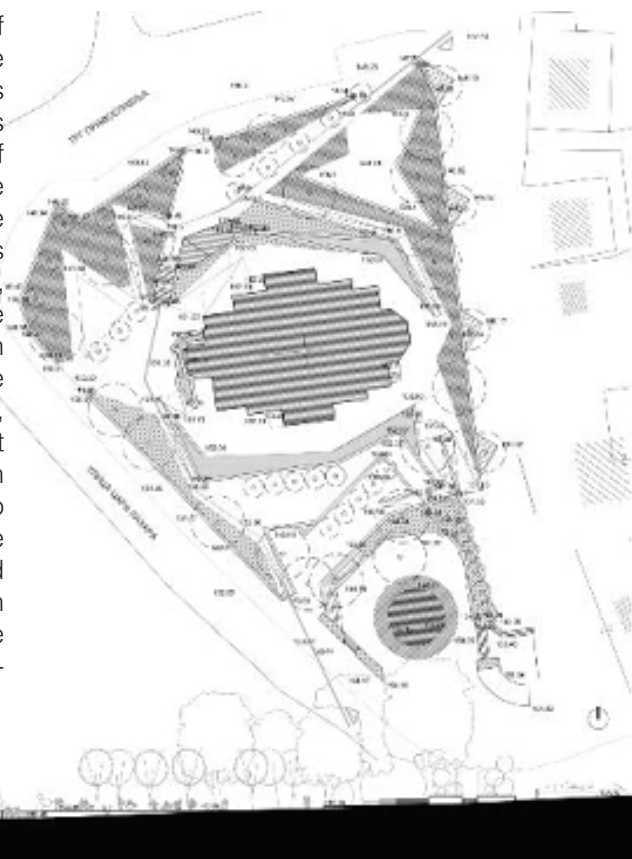
The main artistic inspiration comes from the Byzantine fresco painting, characteristic of the medieval Serbian Orthodox Church. By reinterpreting abstract geometric surfaces on the frescoes through Cubism, an abstract pattern of the square has been formed, suitable for further functional and artistic solutions, but also for universal reading. Starting from the primordial identity “image” of the Serbian Orthodox Church personified by frescoes, and abstracting it further in interpretation through Cubism, an abstract geometry has emerged that eludes identity reading for the sake of universality. In this way, aspirations of the dominant identity-based community of Orthodox Christians and Serbs represented through the Serbian Orthodox community were satisfied on a theoretical level, while on a practical level, universal readings and interpretations beyond a specific identity and for the sake of people were satisfied. The architects persisted in assuming that abstraction provides an opportunity for a manifestation of the unity of differences, as opposed to emphasizing and territorializing differences. The essence of this assumption relies on the thesis that difference limits difference as such. This strategic architectural decision was crucial for the further design process.

The second idea in planning the Square of Orthodoxy in Derвента is guided by the collective memory of the place in terms of reminiscences of the past, when it was a place of encounters and community, as well as the appreciation of the place, the need for religious service of the Serbian Orthodox Church, and the acceptance and implementation of modern design practices in the regulation of public spaces. In this sense, the Square is treated as a public space accessible to everyone, with characteristics of a park. Design process took into account the low-budget of the project. The careful selection of materials and, especially, selection of greenery, made sure that the costs of maintenance, use and exploitation are as low as possible. The design process also included consultations with representatives of the Serbian Orthodox Church that owns the site, and with representatives of the municipality, which was the investor. The project envisages extensive greenery, a large area with permeable and semi-

permeable surfaces, automatic watering and irrigation of greenery, etc.

As a result of the design process, the Square with a total area of 4000 m² was created, of which more than 40% is covered in green surfaces and more than 60% in permeable surfaces. The project respected the urban context, urban fabric and all requirements of the client. The problem of large deleveling of the Square (more than 7 m) is solved by cascading (Fig. 4). Access to the Square has been provided through an opening of diagonal access to the NE side from the town direction, access to the SE side in the amphitheatre direction, and access to the SW side from the monument direction, while the existing accesses to the W and N have been retained. All plateaus and cascades are connected through internal connections with the central plateau around the church. The central plateau around the church is designed in a way so that the religious ceremonies can be carried out easily. By cascading of the terrain and raising the height of the plateau around it, the “pedestal” for

Figure 4: Site plan and cascades. (V. Djokić, A. Bobić, I. Rakonjac)

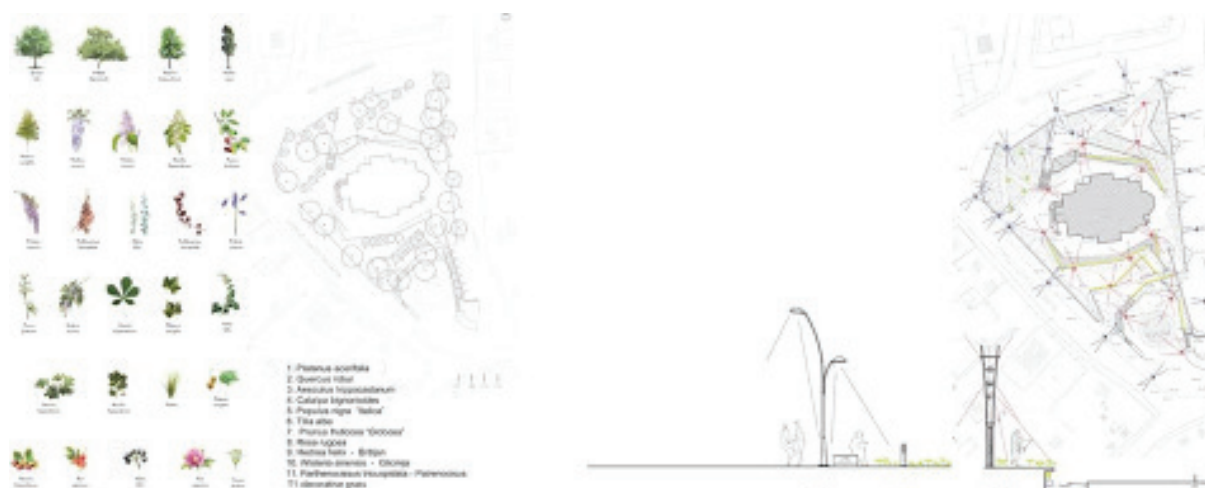


the church has been created. Next to the northern basement entrance to the church, the space for the ecclesiastical shop and public toilets was created.

The composition of greenery supports the existing one and particularly plane trees (*genius loci*). Landscape design and lighting design support and highlight the bold sense of the space, the horizontal lines of the Square (cascades) and vertical lines of the church (Fig. 5). The project used the gravel surface and concrete paving stone, wooden benches and tartan surface for the children playground.

Since 2015, citizens of Derвента have been using the Square mostly for everyday children's play, socializing, and as a place for an active break. Several major public events were held there so far, including the celebration of the New Year's Eve with the participation of thousands of citizens. Also, the Square is often used for religious ceremonies and celebrations. Although the Square is owned by the Serbian Orthodox Church, it is freely used every day by all citizens of Derвента indiscriminately. Advanced concept of planting design created conditions necessary for an increased growth of vegetation. To date, no technical and technological usage problems have been noticed or the occurrence of destruction and devastation of the urban furniture. Although it is a short period for a complete evaluation, it can be assumed that this Square will continue its life at the same spot where the former park, before the civil and religious war, stopped its existence.

Figure 5: Greenery and Lighting concept. (V. Djokić, A. Bobić, I. Rakonjac)



3.2 Design Management

Nowadays, especially in the capitalist world, it is not possible to work or provide services without certificates for specific jobs - a license held in accordance with national legislation. One of the main problems in project management in cross-border cooperation is the impossibility of providing architectural services directly. This problem has been basically solved in the EU, but it is still necessary to harmonize projects with national regulations. Thus, it is possible to freely disseminate ideas, but in the process of adapting the project to local regulations, as well as elaborating the project for implementation, formal participation of architects from another country is not possible. Specifically, the elaboration and operationalization of the design is entrusted to a local (domicile) licensed architect with or without supervision of the architect, while formal responsibility for the built work is borne solely by the local licensed architect. Consequently, the architect is treated as a foreigner, which does not apply to his work. The free flow of knowledge and skills is controlled and limited on two levels: (1) suspension of the universality of knowledge and skills, i.e. the needs and requirements, and (2) reduction of the universality of people to those who possess citizenship and have specific knowledge and skills specifically determined and verifiable by the state (a license).

The case study of the Square of Orthodoxy in Derвента practically indicates the impossibility of non-domicile architects to participate in the elaboration and operationalization of the project documentation for the construction of this square. Thus, it turned out that due to administrative constraints, cross-border cooperation could

Figure 5: Orthodox Christmas Eve (photo: N. Kulaga, n.d.)



Figure 6: Concept and operationalization of the project.
[6]



not be fully achieved in the formal sense. Lack of architects' formal supervision over further implementation of their work suspended their potential formal influence. Hence, elaboration of the design was left to the professional integrity and ethics of the local licensed architects from Derventa. This problem has been avoided by goodwill of local architects who, without any legal obligation, granted the architects a status of informal consultants. Thus, beyond the state control and with a great amount of integrity and ethics of local architects, further operationalization of the project has been continued through informal cooperation with the architects (Fig. 6). This points to the fact that knowledge and skills, as well as the needs and standards, have to do with people, and people are universal beings regardless of the differences among them.

The Square of Orthodoxy has been designed as an open public space accessible to everyone, regardless of racial, national, ethnic, educational, cultural, and other differences. The requirements and interests of the local community relating

to quality, rationality and efficiency represent a universal basis regardless of the country or town in question. However, in the context of providing architectural services, predominantly in the stage of preparation of technical documentation for the implementation, requirements and interests of the local community are determined by national legislation. Copyright protection of architectural works of foreign architects is respected to the extent permitted by local regulations.

4. CONCLUSION

Cross-border cooperation is one of the ways to deepen ties and relations, and to transfer knowledge and skills one-way and/or two-way. This study descriptively points out the theoretical advantages and practical weaknesses of cross-border cooperation. The case study shows how important it is to read and understand local contexts as fragments or parts of fragments of the history of the human situation. Without denying or cancelling identity-based differences, using a careful concept makes it possible to find and recognize universality through abstract and conceptual motifs and templates. The conclusion is that only universality of abstraction enables pluralism of differences, provided that the principle, according to which difference limits difference in the same way as freedom limits freedom, is respected. Also, a particular regulation of the service sector, whether through a national or multilateral aspect, limits to some extent the flow of ideas, especially their operationalization. This case study showed the possibility of overcoming this situation thanks to trust, integrity and ethics of professionals through informal cooperation, for now, and for the sake of the real purpose of urban design in terms of the demands of the local population above all. Thus, despite the alienation of architecture due to the current normative paradigm, cross-border cooperation is based on trust, integrity and ethics of professionals.

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