Developing ICT Tools For Public Participation In Public Spaces Improvement Process - Public Art & Public Space (PAPS) Belgrade Pilot Project results -

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1 INTRODUCTION: PUBLIC ART, PUBLIC SPACE, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1.1 What is Public art?

Since concept of Public art has diverse meanings there is no simple definition of it. But one relation always exists: *Public art occupy Public space and therefore- public art is intended to be physically and freely accessible to the Public.* Other statements include: a) public art is or should be, site specific and relate to the context in which it is sited., b)Public art can be both permanent and temporary, internal and external and large or small scale c) public art can embrace all art forms and its parameters are continually expanding. Traditional definitions of Public art explore its meaning in relation with: art, urban design, landscape and social intervention. At the same time these thematic areas can be perceived as evaluation criteria for public art.

New IC technologies changed the concept of space and made *Virtual space become a Public space*. That certainly widens the possibilities in expressing public art in this new media. With a development of the new IC technologies and so many people using internet, virtual space becomes public space. It opened many possibilities for exploring non/classical forms of art and its communication with public. That includes not only telematic art and wide range of electronic possibilities in image manipulation, form generation, creation of virtual spaces... but also a possibility of space/independent interactive modeling of space and artworks from different participatians.

Public art is widely understood to have many benefits to urban quality: a) in helping to improve the quality of an environment and as a vehicle for involving the community in environmental improvements, b) in helping to create a sense of identity, uniqueness, and civic pride, c) as a way of celebrating place, historical heritage or of highlighting particular characteristics which relate to a specific site.

Traditional concepts of public art imposed to public disappear. Public art today asks for active public participation in order to be accepted and appreciated.

1.2 Public art and Public participation

In countries with long public art tradition (ex. USA, GB,...Percent for Art program)- public art is founded and realized through Public art programs that are mostly organized by City government. Public participation is a crucial element of any Public art program. It can be achieved in a variety of ways - from lectures and workshops that encourage public awareness of the public art program – to the involvement of interested residents in the actual planning, design, installation and maintenance of public art projects.

In order to stimulate and encourage public awareness of public art, the Public Art Programs initiate, or collaborate with other agencies on events and activities designed to provide a greater understanding of public art. These may include: a) conferences, symposia, workshops, artist's lectures, community meetings and public art tours, b) cooperative programs with arts groups, educational institutions and community organizations, c) distribution of promotional and publicity materials, d) Information about the public art program and opportunities for artists and community participation available on a web site, e) Exhibitions of proposals, and related works by selected artists ...

The other way of public participation is direct involvement of community representatives into evaluation process of public art proposals for their community. Community representatives are appointed to serve on artist selection panels or Project Advisory Committees to ensure community input into the planning for each public art project.

When possible, the public art programs identify projects with the potential for involvement of community representatives in the planning, design and installation of public art projects. On occasion, public art program staff may also facilitate creative collaborations between project artists and organizations that represent community stakeholders and who have expressed their interest in a public art collaboration. These organizations might include, but not be limited to, community organizations, educational institutions, arts organizations and non-profit agencies.

But, unfortunately, nothing of this exists in Serbia 2003.

2 SERBIAN CONTEXT AS A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

2.1 Public art in public spaces of Belgrade and Serbia

Public space is not a common word in Serbia. Public art is even less. Political background of our public spaces may be the reason for it. In last 50 years money was spent only for functional necessity or for celebrating history. Therefore there are only few forms of

public art in Belgrade public spaces and they are very traditional in style: traditional monuments/ single sculptures, murals and some graffiti works that can be perceived as a public art. Only some main pedestrian streets were designed to have some aesthetic qualities. There were also some attempts to shape fountains in artistic way but unfortunately they were rare. Some ephemeral structures and temporary projects were realized from time to time but now we they exist only as memories.

Maintenance of public art is even worse problem. What was not obvious to most of citizens was left to die over time. Most of existing sculptures are demolished (though in recent years some are repaired), murals and fountains destroyed by non-maintenance.

Public awareness and public education on public art does not exist neither do the institutions that would promote it. There is no Public art program or strategy on National or Municipality level.

But there are some lovely public and semi-public spaces in Belgrade that waits to be rediscovered. There are some ordinary public spaces that can be improved. There are some historical and natural treasures that can be emphasized. There is a great potential for public art in Belgrade and Serbia. But people have to realize its importance for the quality of urban life and embrace it. *People have to participate in the process of making peoples places*.

2.2 Public participation in urban planning process in Serbia

Unfortunately, public participation in urban planning process in Serbia is in general on a very low level. Traditional ways of involving public in planning process are public presentations of strategic documents and urban and regional plans usually in final phases of their production. And the public response is very scarce and sporadic. It is higher on more detailed plans and lowers on strategic levels. This attitude can be observed as a consequence of our political and socio-economic past (and a slow process of urbanization (rural background of majority of population, lack of sense of belonging to a place...)

Therefore one of main efforts that has to be done in future will be to get stronger public awareness and participation in urban planning process and production of space. This cannot be overcome overnight. It is a process that goes along with political and economical changes in our society. People should be animated not only to participate in big, strategic plans that have low level of certainty to be realized. Modest, incremental strategy should be implemented: people should be able to see results of their participation as soon as possible to get more awareness and confidence that their participation is meaningful. S*mall but visible public art projects that improve public spaces are good chance for it*.

2.3 Educational reform process in Serbia

One of the main national development strategies considers educational reform. It started on basic levels but will be continued on academic level as well. Serbia is one of the countries that signed Bologna declaration and is reforming its academic institutions according to general principles of B. Declaration: System of easily readable and comparable degrees, System essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate, Establishment of a system of credits as a means of promoting student mobility, Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance, Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programs of study, training and research.

In this sense strong divisions among faculties at the University of Belgrade and some integrated interdisciplinary programs will occur. Being interdisciplinary by definition - *public art is certainly one of the fields that should be explored through this way of collaborative institutional work*.

2.4 Social, economical and political context of Serbia as a framework for action

Uncertainty is the only certain thing in Serbian everyday life. Due to unstable political situation, poor national economy and numerous problems of transition (unemployment, insecurity, restructuring of institutions and economy...) it is unrealistic to expect big public funding in public art.

Though some temporary projects were supported in recent years, permanent projects will probably have to wait for better days. Meanwhile, something could and should be done to gain more public attention on the field that can inevitably improve quality of urban life. Instead of sitting and waiting for better days to come - Public art and Public space (PAPS) project was established with an aim to prepare basis for stronger integration of public art in civic realm by working on human potentials and knowledge in a context of educational, social and economical reform in Serbia. According to this its task is to *explore potentials for public art in public spaces of Belgrade and Serbia as well as to educate students, practitioners, institutions and public in the field of public art*.

3 PUBLIC ART & PUBLIC SPACE (PAPS) - International Multidisciplinary Project

3.1 Motive

Contemporary public art and urban design practice is most often fragmented between different professions using public only as the audience. However, there are new approaches and practices for designing cities that *consider various scales* (the planning scale, the infrastructure scale and the scale of the single project in public art and urban design) and *include different design professionals* (artists, architects, planners, urban designers, landscape architects...) *who collaborate during overall design process*. This, both old and new, public art and urban design approach is characterized by comprehensive and complex collaboration of different design disciplines which work together on equal basis on projects that aims to enhance the quality of urban environment.

Aiming to initiate this approach in Belgrade context we organized the workshop that took place in November 2002. Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade and New York City Percent for Art program organized it. Several eminent professionals from

New York, Philadelphia and Belgrade took part in it. One of the most important results of this workshop is the framework of Public art and Public design (PAPS) project.

3.2 Theme

PAPS project explores possibilities for redefinition of public spaces use and design. Therefore it promotes interdisciplinary work of different professions and their strong collaboration with the local community on different projects in the civic realm. Through active participation domestic and foreign experts that work together with students of University of Belgrade on different small projects - it tends to explore important themes in development of city of Belgrade such as: connection of the city center with river, revitalization of specific central areas, etc.

3.3 Methodology

Opposite to linear process of designing public spaces through hierarchy of design disciplines - interdisciplinary public art and urban design process respects the skills of professionals from complementary design disciplines working together to initiate projects for the city. Therefore hierarchy of disciplines disappears.

"This method of working is both old and new: it follows in the footsteps of the beaux-arts tradition and the United State's WPA method for civic design. In United States, public art is often used to energize urban design – to comment on sites in order to help one see and experience them in new ways. Artists often collaborate on infrastructure for utilitarian purposes, and work with architects, landscape architects, urban designers and engineers to execute their projects. There is also tradition in the United States of community participation on projects in the civic realm. Design professionals ask the general public how they use or experience a place, what their memories and sensibilities are about and urban space, and what they would like to see there. This communication informs the designer's perspective and helps him/her design a new site, or redesign an old site without destroying the traditions and histories associated there." (Cohen Ch, Bressi T., Pinto J.)

This tradition was used as the base for PAPS work.

3.4 Goals

First general objective of PaPs is *establishing new procedures in public art and public space design process* in Serbia and Montenegro. This means (a) *collaborative interdisciplinary work* of public artists, urban designers, planners, landscape architects, engineers... that *work along with local citizens, local groups and referent governmental levels on projects in the civic realm.*

Besides the *affirmation of interdisciplinary approach* - this project has another but certainly not less important goal: *academic education of a new generation of design professionals* who'll accept this collaborative approach and apply it their future professional practice. This was an excellent basis for collaboration between Faculties of architecture, fine arts, applied arts, landscape design, performing arts, etc. that happened for the first time in the history of University of Belgrade.

Finally, since public art has scarce tradition in Serbia, there is a need to gain public attention and *more intensive public participation* thorough local initiatives and public institutions through *developing public knowledge and awareness about their role in public space design process.*

3.5 Objectives

Objectives of Public art Public space project are:

- Integration of art in process of urban planning and urban design with a purpose to establish new framework for evaluation and improvement of public spaces in Beograd and Serbia

- Public participation: activate and involve local community and City government into urban design process

- Identification, evaluation and improvement of public spaces in Belgrade.

- Establishing a searchable database of public spaces in Belgrade (input for future action).

- Activation of spaces with cultural, historical an representative potentials

- Education of new generation of professionals
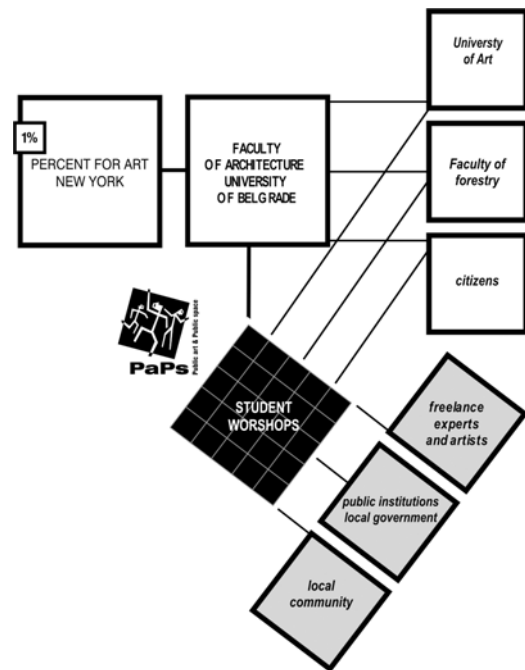
tab. 1: Public art Public space (PAPS) organization scheme

3.6 Project Organization

PAPS project is founded and organized by Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade and was coordinated by New York City Percent for Art program. The project gathered large number of participants from different levels: academic (students and teachers from several

faculties of Belgrade University and University of Art)), governmental (Ministries, City of Belgrade, municipality), public institution (cultural institutions, public communal enterprises,...), local community groups and freelance experts from different fields of work.

Table 1 presents initial Public art Public space (PAPS) organizational scheme. Though academic and cultural institutions made the initial steps, the idea is to turn this scheme upside down. Our aim is to do all that is necessary to gain strong public participation in public art and urban design process, make local community initiate projects and work thorough local government on different projects in the civic realm. In this way, professionals will no longer be leaders that impose their visions of public space treating public only as the audience but will become public service in a way that they'll have to produce kind of space that people need, appreciate and accept.

3.7   PAPS 2003 pilot project

PAPS 2003 pilot project was exploring possibilities of using public art to bring citizens of Belgrade to the river Sava. It was focused on central historical core of Belgrade. It was realized through 3 stages of work: initiation, conceptualization-design and realization. Each of these stages had results in a form of projects that were presented to public institutions and local citizens with and idea to gain their active participation in working process. Several lectures on public space and public art were organized for the same purpose.

- initiation: initial workshop was held at the Faculty of Architecture as a presentation of interdisciplinary work; On a second level identification of public spaces in chosen area and analysis of its potentials for public art was done by students of Faculty of Architecture. *Presentation: Catalogue of public spaces in central core, Presentation of PAPS for public*

- conceptualization and design: 10 workshops were organized as interdisciplinary teams of students who worked together with interdisciplinary team of mentors on developing design solutions for chosen sites. *Presentation: Catalog of project presentation: digital simulation of public art interventions in space. Presentation of PAPS for public*

- realization: Design projects were modified due to chosen path to the river and budget. Different forms of public art was presented to public: video and sculptural installations, lightening, coloring the trees, artistically greening of streets, street theatre, projections, music, fashion shows, street car graffiti, musical performance in streetcar...

All workshops had simultaneous presentations that energized path to the river. Several thousand people took part in procession that connected all workshops. *Presentation took place on July 12th 2003. titled "Step to the river Sava" and was highly accepted by citizens.*

3.8   Experiences in using ICT in PaPs 2003 project

Use of ICT tools was indispensable in realization of this project. It was used in two ways and:

- For *public presentation* at different levels of work process. For the purpose of getting public attention and awareness, several procedures were done that enhanced the quality of presentation: 3d modeling of subject area, digital manipulation of real space, digital simulation of lighting and photo montage of public art projects in real space...

- For *on-line work:* internet was used as an organizational tool with a purpose to *accelerate communication* and *enable work* with experts from abroad. Documentation data bases were formed that could be shared among users. Project database was formed for evaluating design projects and enable improvement of students work. Finally, project realization database was formed for further presentation and exchange of experiences.

These two main areas of using ICT in PAPS 2003 project formed the basis for our plans for future work in this field. But what is even more important is that ICT are recognized as very important part of PAPS future work. In the context of economical poverty and political uncertainty for realization of public art in real space - important part of PAPS work in future will be based on developing a platform for on-line work on different projects in virtual space. Some possibilities and fields for integrating ICT with PAPS model for Public art project will be presented in next chapter.

4   DEVELOPING ICT TOOLS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SPACES IMPROVEMENT PROCESS: PAPS MODEL

4.1   ICT in Serbia

Period of 10 years of Serbian isolation from international organizations and lows provided specific environment for spontaneous development of the IC technologies. On one hand there was an economic decline that caused national poverty and excluded most of nation from changes of everyday life that Internet and ICT brought to developed countries. Therefore widespread of Internet is on the low level in Serbia comparing to USA and EU but we can expect that this situation will change in time that comes.

On the other hand during this period our market was occupied with no tax paid-inexpensive- low quality- computer hardware and extremely cheep pirate software. Therefore lot of our citizens was able to by commuter and work with newest software's. This led to present situation when we have certain number of companies well equipped for dealing with digital information a *large number of mostly young academic individuals highly educated in field of IT.*

This brought us to exploration of the possibilities to use this knowledge of young academic people for PAPS future work.

4.2   PAPS model for Public art project

Public art project is based on 4 project phases - fields of work that can be implemented in various environments. (tab.2)

documentation: identification and documentation on public spaces. analysis of their potentials for artistic improvement

design: ideas conceptualization and project design

evaluation : selection of project that reaches certain criteria

realization: chosen project is produced in public space.

These project phases coincide with different time sequences and allows realization of separated phases as separate integral projects. These results can be: documentation, project or realized databases, project presentation...

Public art project allows realization in different space concepts.

Different participants can participate in different stages of work: students, professionals, public and institutions... and can have different impact on project. They can *use it as a data source or educational tool or they can take an active participation in it*.

4.3 Possibilities for use of ICT in PAPS model for Public art project

Experiences of using ICT in PAPS 2003 pilot project showed that there are many things yet to be explored. Specific social, economical and political context in our country and uncertainties in funding of Public art projects in presence and future brought us to idea of further developing possibilities of use ICT in PAPS for the purpose of *getting stronger public participation in public spaces improvement process*. Earlier presented model of Public art project was used as a basis for that work.

Model is presented on tab. 2. The main idea is to *use human potential and motivation and develop different forms of possible public participation* and to use advantages of new ICT (internet, web, ...) for gaining wider public participation. Therefore model is structured through space concept, time sequences, different project phases and fields of using ICT according to people *motivation*.
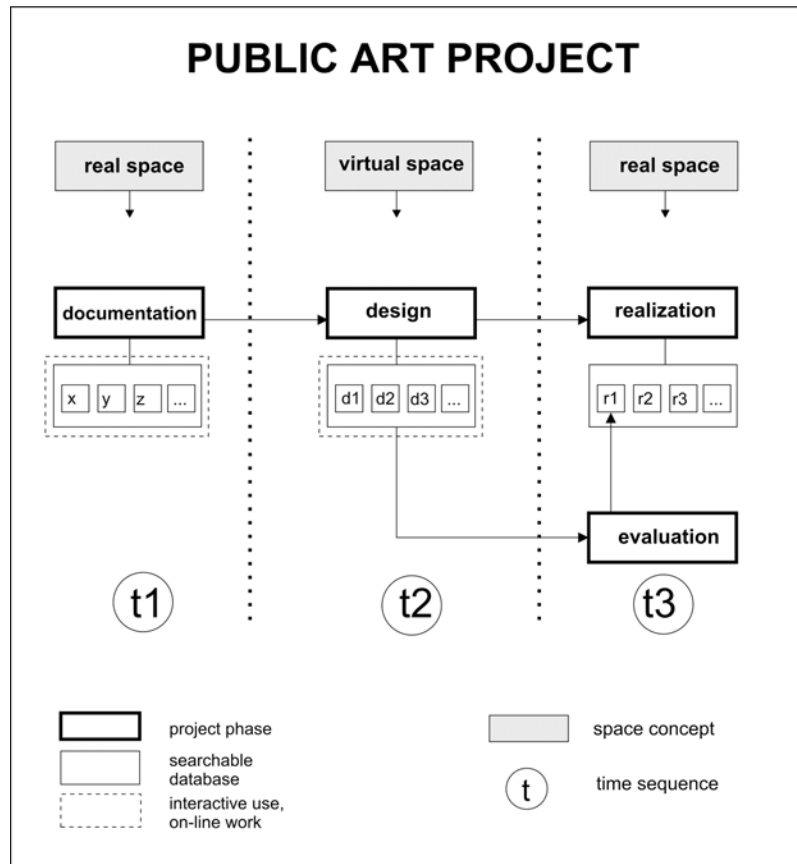
1) Project phases are, as previously presented in general model: documentation, design, evaluation and realization. *Each project phase can be developed as a separate sub project.* This is important because it allows independent work and upgrading of each phase due to growth of knowledge on particular subject.

ttab 2: Possibilities for ICT in Public art project

2) Expected user groups are: students and mentors, professionals, general public and institutions. Each project phase can have differentiated accessibility to different user groups. Each user group can also participate and contribute in both user and formation phases of project. Using *Internet* allows possible participation of a large population of Serbian high-educated emigrants throughout the world that can have strong motivation to contribute to the project. Also it makes possible for foreign students and professionals to participate in project or use databases.

3) There are two main fields of using ICT in this model. It can be used for:

- Creation of on-line searchable databases on different project phases: documentation database (x, y y...), design database, realization database. This will allow knowledge share on different levels among different institutions, experts... and be used for further study or evaluation.

- Creation of a combined platform that use ICT for the development of interacitive use and on-line work on different project phases. Documentation phase can be developed not only by students but also by general public or local citizens. They can contribute by different documents and memories and suggestions that can further be used as a basis for public art proposals. On the other hand public participation can be gained also by their involvment in design and evaluation phase. This also stands for public institutions and proffesionals.

4) By *structuring project both through space and time* different levels of implementation are possible: it is possible to develop both documentation and work on theoretical basis of evaluation of public art and also to design public art projects in virtual space without necessity of producing it in real space.

5) By using a *concept of virtual, Internet space as a public space* different possibilities emerge:

- to use documentation on real space and use virtual space (3d modeling, image manipulation...) for simulation of implementation of public art in virutal space . Projects of this kind can form design database and wait for the time when money will be spend on evaluated and chosen public art project in real space.

- to use documentation on real space, create virtual space (3d modeling, image manipulation...) as a respond to it and than develop new forms of public art that refers to vrtual public space as a medium. This will be overlap design and realiyation space though it is possible to evaluate and then choose vrtual public art project that will be presented on Web.

5   CONCLUSION: BENEFITS OF USING ICT TOOLS FOR PAPS PUBLIC ART PROJECT

Contemporary IC technologies are widely used in public service domain in developed countries. Since Public art is not institutionalized in Serbia and it is difficult to predict bigger investments in this field of public spaces improvement are due to many reasons: system o planning and managing urban space is inert and should be reformed as well, professionals are not educated in the field of public art and it will take time and effort to change that, general public is not aware of benefits of quality public art and possibilities to take a part in process of space improvement, and most of all economic decline that will put forward investments in basic infrastructure before investments in public art....

Therefore we see the realization of ICT *using model for public art project* as a possibility to gain numerous *benefits in various fields*:

- It can be used as *a basis for institutionalization and formation of Public art program* on municipality level. It can be directly linked with governmental ICT system or can be formed as a part of it.

- It can contribute to general public participation in urban planning especially in public spaces improvement process by developing different modes of public participation in each of project phases*: public can use data from documentation, design or produced project database or can actively participate in formation of each project*.

- It can be used for *establishing experts, professional network* in the field o Public art on both national and international level

- It can *enforce sense of belonging to place* by forming a network of ex- citizens that take active part in new, virtual reconstruction of city public spaces.

- It can serve as and *educational platform for national and international exchange of knowledge* through: 1. - creation of a combined platform that use ICT , for the development of shared courses and on-line work, with a purpose to maximize the exchange of educational experiences. 2. - creation of an on-line searchable database that allows a improvement of knowledge about experiences in Public Art in the diverse cities/regions and under the influence of the different Institutions

- Support in *creating new forms of Public Art* while conceptualizing *internet virtual space as a public space*

- *Formation of databases* that can help urban space improvement process when budget occurs but that can also serve as educational tool for general public as well as institutions and active professionals.

- *Possibility to check out and discuss public art projects* (by their simulation in virtual space) with experts and general public- before there are actually produced in real space

Using ICT in Public art and Public space (PAPS) project can help us to prepare basis for stronger integration of public art in civic realm by working on human potentials and knowledge in a context of educational, social and economical reform in Serbia. According to this, potentials for public art in public spaces of Belgrade and Serbia will be explored as well as the educational process in two main fields: *education of institutions, active professionals and general public and education of future professionals/ students*. This can lead us to development of academic educational program in the field of public art that would be based on using ICT as a framework for action. *Use of ICT would help managing communication, knowledge exchange and on-line work on different levels*: between students and professors from different faculties in Belgrade university, between students and professionals from country and abroad and in context of international academic exchange - communication, knowledge exchange and on-line work on common public art projects.

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