

The Skopje Project - Building the "World City".

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In the morning of July 26, 1963, Skopje was struck by an earthquake that left more than 80% of buildings in ruins. This unfortunate event was followed by unprecedented effort by UN to reconstruct the city. Skopje was considered an international symbol of solidarity as it was rebuilt with the aid of almost 90 countries, demonstrating the ability of the international community led by the UN for a large endeavor of constructing the future city.

This project was initiated by Ernest Weissmann, a Croatian born pioneer of Modernism, member of CIAM and vice-director of at the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Weissman saw the opportunity in the Skopje project to create the role model "world city" through which the humanity will demonstrate the capacity of creation of wellbeing through collaborative effort. The idea of the "world city" has been brought to his attention during his work at the Le Corbusier's office in Paris on the avant-garde proposal for the League of Nations in 1926.

Following this idea, world architects were invited in Skopje, demonstrating the potential of Tanges' Metabolist architecture, Bakema's Open Society and Doxiadis's Ekistics to design and reconstruct cities and societies with humanistic ideas and concepts that are inherent to architecture and urban design. The paper explores the contexts and networks of political and institutional actors that enabled such an ambitious international project, mapping the theories and concepts that were fundamental to the main project proposals and provides better understanding of the capacity of contemporary architecture to exercise and work with concepts of solidarity, just society and urban reconstruction.

