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Step by step towards a better life in Belgrade city quarter Savamala

The „Urban Incubator: Belgrade“ project aims at re-vitalizing the Savamala quarter

Within the Urban Incubator: Belgrade project, the residents of Crnogorska 5 in Belgrade´s Savamala quarter will find support for a refurbishing project until summer 2013: their derelict 150 sqm basement space - under the condition that they get actively involved in the renovation process.

The apartment owners of Crnogorska Street No. 5 in Belgrade´s city quarter Savamala would like to reuse their derelict basement space and run-down inner court yard for a playground, a fitness studio, a wellness oasis or a community space. In the coming months, their visions will become true - thanks to students and postgraduates from Belgrade´s Faculty of Architecture who participate in the “School of Urban Practices” which is only one of ten initiatives of the Goethe-Institut project “Urban Incubator”.

Residents of Crnogorska st. 5 will enjoy a cost free restructuring project until summer 2013 for their community spaces if they agree to personally engage in the work for the 150 square metre basement and 100 sqm inner court yard.

“We started with an opinion poll asking the residents about their visions for a community space. The next step would be a model and sketch to be followed by the adequate main building project, and then we would again ask the residents for their feedback. Once this project phase is completed we, together with the residents, will apply for the necessary means for the project realization,” explains Ivan Kucina, professor at the Faculty of Architecture and project leader of the “School of Urban Practices”.

For the last three years, residents of Crnogorska st. 5 have tried hard to step by step improve living conditions in their five story apartment block. Now, within the “Urban Incubator: Belgrade” project, they see a chance to raise public awareness about the derelict Savamala city quarter as such.

“Although our multi-party apartment block is only 50 meters from the Sava river bank, however, our children on bikes or mothers with their prams face huge safety risks on their way down there. Pedestrian walks are much too narrow and buses and heavy trucks thunder down the road. Noise pollution is unbearable. Therefore, many residents literally flee from Savamala because they feel like being treated only as second rate citizens,” we learn from Aleksandar Gezović, President of the Residents´ Association of Crnogorska st. 5.

It is a 40 sqm ground floor space which Savski Venac, the Savamala municipality, have given to the project “School of Urban Practices” rental free which will be the workshop space for the community

project between architects and residents. The "Urban Incubator: Belgrade" project will be finished by November 2013 which is when the residents of Crnogorska st. 5 will feel concrete improvement of their quarter which has been neglected so long. For Ivan Kucina it is especially important that it is the citizens themselves who can actively shape their quarter and participate in its re-development.

"This model of city development not only offers many advantages to the citizens but also for us, the architects. We would like to mobilize the residents and enable them, together with our expert advice, to improve their quality of life and to initiate changes of their city by themselves. Additionally, this kind of project helps for us architects to reflect our own approaches and for our students to learn on the job", says Kucina.

In the coming months, the "Spanish House" in Braće-Krsmanovića st. 2 will be at the center of considerable change in Savamala which, together with local and international architects, artists, journalists and other experts will contribute to.

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