

## **INTRODUCTION:**

### **A GLOBAL FORUM for CONTEMPORARY WORLD ARCHITECTURE**

**The WA Community Portal** provides an independent global forum and extensive database **targeting to become the "Home Page"** of architects from **ALL countries** of the world. Contributions from all architects and scholars will have equitable chances to be represented, promoted, reviewed and criticized at this international arena.

The main intention is to provide **a showcase for the contemporary architectural practices in the whole world with special emphasis on the countries that are not sufficiently covered by international media.**

Today a practice can develop in universal terms only if it is acclaimed and discussed globally. We are trying to define such a context for the neglected majority, and the internet provides this opportunity with its speed and easy access for all.

The distinguishing feature of this website is that we expect its content to develop by the contributions of its users. We aim at the formation of an international community of volunteers who will carry this project to the future.

“There is only one time in the history of each planet when its inhabitants first wire up its innumerable parts to make one large Machine. Later that Machine may run faster, but there is only one time when it is born.

You and I are alive at this moment.”

“We Are the Web” by Kevin Kelly, Wired Magazine, August 2005  
<http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/13.08/tech.html>

## **BACKGROUND:**

### **[www.worldarchitecture.org](http://www.worldarchitecture.org)**

The web address was first registered in March 2000 by Cüneyt Budak for the Tepe Architectural Center of which Suha Özkan also was one of the founders. During the following years the site was on-line as a static link directory referring to sources on contemporary architectural practice in each country of the world. With this feature alone, where only 1000 links could be provided, **Encyclopædia Britannica Online** mentioned the World Architecture website among **The Web's Best 10 Architectural Sites during 2002.**

**After the UIA 2005 Istanbul Congress, Suha Özkan, President of the Congress and former Secretary General of the Aga Khan Award decided to initiate an**

**effective activity on the internet to facilitate international communication among architects with the support that can be provided by the globalizing Construction Industries and Services. The work on the new WA Portal started in 2006 and the construction could only be finished in two years.**

## **THE PHILOSOPHY:**

### **SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES GLOBALLY**

The basic premise of this project is to explore alternative perspectives for redefining the scope of "World Architecture" and its priorities independent of the exclusive and restrictive criteria of "Western Architecture". A redefinition of "World Architecture" should not exclude but, to the contrary, completely cover Western Architecture. But not as the absolute reality of architecture.

The world is becoming increasingly aware that common interest has superiority. Shifting away from the concrete presence of the printed media and from the exclusive pretense of the TV or film studio means a decline of the expert hegemony in communications and the defeat of the commodification of knowledge. This also means that we have to be prepared for the many annoying results of this excessive democratization. As the non-expert enters the scene as an active actor, an informal and spontaneous approach begins to reign. In this case, each mission in the Internet has to reinvent both its discursive content and its

singular formatting on this renewed scale of populism vs. elitism.

Being conceived as a universalistic doctrine earlier, the Enlightenment presently should be expected to develop as a trans-cultural conscience. The supremacy of the universal conscience had as its major premise the trans-cultural objectivity. If not imaginable earlier, our expectation is that it can be attained through the reign of "communicative action" "orientated to understanding" in the heterotopias of the Internet. It should be noted that this formulation is antithetical to the relativism of any kind of pluralist prospect.

## **IN SEARCH OF NEW ARCHITECTURES**

Individual Enlightenments might only realize themselves within this transcultural space. The quest for understanding can now globally extend its horizons toward a truly universal conscience that will concretize itself in the individual reformulations attained in the transcultural space of the Internet.

New paradigms for "World Art" and "World Architecture" can only emerge from the new information networks that are inclusive. Presently local architectural practices have available only an established abstract notion of architecture and a closed local community of architects from a similar background to have their work evaluated. Our claim here is that these conditions can be overcome only through a rich dialogue within a transnational community.

If we consider the established paradigm of architecture as a well-defined and well-fortified territory, the Internet provides free territory to form new communities outside its hegemony. What is primarily a "public domain" in the internet might easily turn into a "communal domain", develop away from abstract discourse to an agora for "communicative action", embrace diversity, and reveal contradictions present in the established discourse.

## **A NON-RESTRICTIVE GLOBAL DIRECTORY**

The **World Architecture** website mainly functions as a "Surfer's Digest and Guide", a directory providing links to thousands of websites representing the contemporary architecture from all countries of the world. The editor's surfing and highlighting has been guided by a certain set of explicitly narrated but loosely defined criteria for selection. This may be seen as a biased approach to sampling, but this kind of favoritism is necessary in our case. Otherwise, any selection made according to "objective" criteria such as measures of ranking, rating according to the number of visitors or referent websites, size of content, or design quality turns into an instrument of "affirmation" serving the established paradigm of architecture. A dispute over the definition of "World Architecture" immediately transforms into a critique of "Reality": Which approach may put claim to represent the reality of world's architecture? Actually the reality is to be sought in the contradictory nature of claims in this debate.

## **GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS**

Anyone familiar with architectural websites is familiar to the domination of the prevalent paradigm of architecture throughout the world. You may find excellently designed websites from South America or throughout Asia promoting the same few European architects as representing contemporary architecture. It is true that perfection or high aspirations in architecture may not be a priority in backward conditions. But there is large building activity everywhere, the architecture of which remains deprived

from any public or professional criticisms that are essential for their development.

One outstanding website which exemplifies this exclusive attitude is the archINFORM International Architecture Database -the largest online- (www.archinform.net) that includes over 18,000 built and unrealized projects. The distribution of them to the continents is reported as follows:

Africa [106]  
Antarctica [4]  
Asia [697]  
Australia / Oceania [346]  
Europe [16968]  
North and Central America [2287]  
South America [141]

The majority of the projects outside Europe and North America are historical. Even if we could understand an emphasis given to European examples by a German website, difference in ratios are too high for such an important database claiming to be representative of the international scene. The efforts of the **WA** community will concentrate on reversing this attitude.

### **WA PORTAL WILL TARGET TO:**

- provide a guide **to the contemporary architectural practices in all countries.**
- facilitate access to "THEORY" in architecture for all scholars, students, and enthusiasts;
- stimulate public interest in architecture to overcome the introvert character of architectural discourse and make it a issue of general intellectual culture and gossip;



World **Architecture**  
COMMUNITY

- help responsible architects and interested clients meet each other at a global scale;
- provide an opportunity for **local practices** to become internationally recognized and discussed by prominent scholars
- make the expertise and experience in the **construction sector** of all countries globally available
- enable architects from diverse conditions to confront their ideas and concepts, share their experiences, broaden their knowledge, and learn from their differences
- discuss the role of architecture in **developing conditions** by questioning the established paradigm of architecture
- question issues of modernism, globalization, identity, inequality and development
- use the Internet's potential for transforming educational theory and practice by linking the resources and talents of a global community.