Interview with Hubert Klumpner

The Press Office of the Global Campus of Human Rights interviewed Hubert Klumpner about their joint initiative called Studio Mobil Sarajevo/Venice co-organised with our institution regarding architecture and human rights.
Could you tell us more about your experience in Venice related to the diverse Biennale of Architecture?

We are looking back on the history at the Venice Architecture Biennale, which goes back many years, from setting up an exhibition on our architecture school at the Arsenale in 1991, as students to winning the Golden Lion in 2012, or to the Urban-Think Tank exhibition 2016 representing Sarajevo the first time in Venice. The most important experience of the Biennale is not necessarily the exhibitions but building the networks and direct contacts amongst all of us during the unique celebration of the Venice Biennale, art, film, and architecture. Engaging with the world but also with Venice, the city, and the water, in 1991, Steven Holl made a seminal design for the new Biennale Cinema in Lido floating over the water, or Enrique Miralles presented his Design for the Venice Architecture School. Our collaboration with the Global Campus of Human Rights provides a perfect frame for the 'laboratory of the future' theme by Leslie Lokko, the Biennale Director. Or in a more universal sense. We cannot limit the discussion of architecture, art, or film to national pavilions. This order does not make sense anymore in a universal view of Earth. Over the years, collateral events have proven the living laboratories of the Biennale.

Could you now tell us about the event you are organizing with the Global Campus of Human Rights at the same time as the Biennale and the traditional Festa della Sensa?

The question is, what can architecture do? Our event is less an exhibition than more a performance. The 'Studio Mobile' is a dialog lab, an ephemeral platform during the pre-opening week, with a utilitarian idea to capture the physical presence of all the people who are here to visit and participate in these national presentations. Furthermore, there is a political dimension to that. We invite people to learn architecture and human rights and to join us for a workshop, meetings, film screenings, and documentation. The performance comes in the spirit of artistic interaction with the media and, in a straightforward sense, with the physical presence engaging with people. We are not an exhibition but a live event, three days and nights continuously. We need more public places of dialogue because we have to design the architecture and shape the places between the land and the sea. At this moment, Italy has called for a state of emergency because of a rise in migrant numbers; this makes our presence even more important as the 'laboratory of the future' and as a sort of link to the south-eastern European campus in Sarajevo, where we are working and where we are going with our Studio Mobile after our experience in Venice.

Please explain your views about the common ground between architecture, human rights, and cities, including Venice.

23 years ago, Massimiliano Fuksas put the topic on Less Aesthetics, more Ethics made a case for architecture beyond building looking already indirectly on human rights, having a significant influence on the profession of architect, but we can and have to do a lot more.

Human rights are a commitment of many countries in the United Nations. And this Universal Declaration of Human Rights has diverse economic, social, and cultural indications or 'soft laws', but they are really not binding the realities of most people on the ground and on the professional level. After assessing the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals that replaced them, and the Agenda 2030, we see that things could be faster and take much time. We want to highlight Sustainable Development Goal 1, 'Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements', translating it into the situation of Venice. One thing we see immediately: like every city in the world, there's a lack of housing. There is a massive impact on tourists and migration. Water, the atmosphere, and the environmental qualities are significant challenges. And, being here at the global campus of human rights, it's also a question of education. Moreover, we will discuss concrete, practical, and metaphorical projects here in our platform.

And they have to do a lot with Design and with architecture and how we can scale them up and also think of these political indications of this commitment where we are still too far or very far away to reach them.
Could you give a message to the students, professors, alumni, staff and partners of the global campus for human rights?

What does architecture have to do with human rights? Everything! Civil society still has to engage with the principles and talk about them in school at the university where we work, and on the streets in our cities. We need to know better that they exist and how to participate so that our profession can help implement the goals. Take the discussion on climate change; it is less about saving the planet than the fact that we have realized we are eliminating ourselves. Human rights principles are an urgent reminder that we need to respect each other and Earth. For this a revolution of our consciousness is necessary; we need to reimagine our presence as humans, then the question is less about the physical architecture of things but about how we put our world together and how we see it. We invited everybody here to the Global Campus for Human Rights to participate in our open platform to do something about bringing architecture, human and environmental rights together on the edge between the sea and the land in front of San Nicolò.

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