

T2. COMPETITION PROJECT PROGRAM

T.2.1 / Context of the competition

The Competition for preparation of preliminary urban and architectural development design for arrangement of the Kale Hill in Skopje constitutes an integral part of the project *Kale – Cultural Fortress*, organized by the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, with the goal of encouraging the revitalization and spatial arrangement of the Kale Hill into an attractive and vibrant city attraction with various cultural, educational and recreational functions.

T.2.2/ Current state

Two important cultural monuments dominate the Kale Hill: The mediaeval fortress – Kale and the Museum of Contemporary Art in (<https://msu.mk/>). The exceptional historic and contemporary significance of these two imposing structures for the City of Skopje have been largely diminished due to many years of neglect of the broader location of the Kale Hill. The uncultivated and barely accessible areas of greenery and waste, poorly approachable lighting infrastructure, as well as the many temporary substandard structures divide the Kale Hill into multiple functionally incompatible, isolated and secluded spatial fragments.

Feeling the detrimental consequences of this situation regarding the availability to the public on one hand, while being aware of the enormous potential of this space in possible support and expansion of the diversity and attractiveness of our programs on the other hand, the team of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, by announcing this competition for preliminary design proposals, encourages bold and innovative, but at the same time simple and feasible ideas and concepts for cultivating the Kale Hill into “cultural fortress” and the public interest.

Within the general competition framework, the proposals should also consider and emphasize the natural advantages of the location and its contents from the aspect of proximity to the central city area; the vibrant morphology of the terrain and in that sense its recreational capacities; topographic diversity with multiple places that provide wonderful views of the city panorama and the landscape of the Skopje valley.

The second, equally important component of the project proposals, refers to the Kale Hill, as unique public space integrated with dynamic cultural content, for which the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje is the primary program platform, including organization of artistic, sculptural, architectural, performance, multimedia, residential, educational seminars and workshops and other types of interdisciplinary or community projects and public events.

T.2.3/ Location

On a strategically significant location within the Skopje Valley, at the intersection of the natural corridor of the course of river Vardar and the northwest – southeast axis, along which there are several hills (along this line the Skopje aqueduct and several roads have been constructed), rises the highest hill in Skopje – Gradishte. At its most

southern point, not by accident, materials remains of long-term historic settlements and use of this space has been found, that date back to the Neolith period. Best preserved and most remarkable in the space are, naturally, the remains of the medieval Skopje fortress – Kale, which is the primary reason why this toponym is often used as the name of the entire area of the hill.

The constitution and experience of the Kale space is under simultaneous influence of multiple contradictory phenomena that jointly share and contribute on multiple levels to the formation of its dynamic identity. For example, from the aspect of the landscape, Kale can be concurrently experienced as spacious and deserted rocky island whose figure rises dramatically over the city panorama, but also as a mild picturesque slope where the houses of the oldest Skopje neighborhoods are gently dispersed. On morphological plan, the space is one of the largest, but also one of the least developed city territories; however, the history of the location is both longer and richer in content than the other city areas that form the urban archipelago of Skopje. In terms of culture, Kale constitutes a kind of spatial and temporal interval that merges the old and the new, i.e. the historic and the modern city and the way of life in them, but at the same time it constitutes the space where they mutually cancel each other out. For all these reasons, Kale holds a significant place in the historic development of the city and it is a location with exceptional natural, landscape, historic, monumental and cultural qualities.

- **Broader location (L1) and project location (L2)**

For the needs of this Competition, the boundaries of the Kale Hill are defined as follows: the location *French Cemetery* constitutes the boundary of the location on the north side, *Samoilova Street* on the east side, northern wall of the Skopje fortress *Kale* on the south side, and *Lazar Lichenovski Street* on the west side. These boundaries of the location define the “**project location**” (L2).

One of the design requirements of this competition is for the participants to also research the city area in the immediate proximity to the project location (L2), for the purpose of developing and suggesting a concept(s) for possible ways of connections – from the landscaping, program, physical point of view, etc. To that end, in order to encourage as diverse solutions as possible in relation to the manners of possibly establishing good connections between the “project location” (L2) and the surrounding city area, **the boundaries of the “broader location” (L1) should be defined independently by the competition participants**, depending on their conceptual ideas.

- **Specific location (L3)**

In the very center of the Kale Hill, symbolically rising over its highest topographic point, lies the iconic architectural figure of the building of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje. Just as the Kale, the building of the Museum is equally contradictory. On one hand, its clean and rationalized spatial relations does not deny the idyllic character of the landscape (thus the structure and the nature, i.e. the architecture and the location perfectly compliment and supplement each other), but on the other hand, there is a certain degree of seclusion and exclusion between the Museum and the city, which is more than just physical. The image, however, of the deserted “mound” over which a lone white structure hovers is an exceptionally

powerful representation that, as finished and final, is so overwhelmingly branded into the visual imagination of Skopje's citizens, that makes the space remarkably unsuitable and delicate for any picturesque architectural considerations.

In the context of all the above mentioned, as one of the project requirements of this competition, the participants are obliged to study the immediate area around the building of the Museum and to develop and suggest concept/s for "populating" the surrounding with few temporary, pavilion structures, intended to house some of the contents of the Museum of Contemporary Art.

To encourage as diverse ideas as possible while choosing the proper places/locations where these pavilions would be located, **the boundaries of the "specific location" (L3) should be defined independently** by the competition participants, depending on their project conceptual ideas.

T.2.4 /Design task

The Design task of the competition is quite challenging: development of preliminary urban and architectural development design whose basic purpose is to encourage transformation of the space in an urban area with new program, spatial and landscape qualities. The participants in the competition are required to recognize and present the values and potentials of the location, as well as to identify the opportunities and ways in which it could attract new users, new 'residents'.

- **Broader location (L1)**

Within the Broader location (L1), the proposed urban and architectural development design is expected to answer several questions, specifically:

What would be the boundaries of the broader location and why? What effect would the urban territory that those boundaries define have on the future development of the project location (L2)? How would one access the project location from the broader location? What are the necessary roads and how are they shaped? Which pedestrian, bicycle and transport connections could be expanded from the broader location (L1) to the project location (L2), passing through, by or around the city textures (Old Bazaar, Podkale, Dukjandzik...)? What types of communication connections are possible?

- **Project location (L2)**

Within the Project location (L2), the proposed urban and architectural development design is expected to answer several questions, specifically:

Who would want to stay at the location and how could one do that? What does the location offer from the aspect of landscape, from the aspect of open public space, and what as a culturally coded landscape? What special identity could this location offer to attract its future visitors? What thematic specificity could be offered by intensifying certain contents and what would they be?

Are there ways to program the location so that it provides a different perspective of the city and how would such programs operate on this specific location? How could the public life be drawn to this location, parallel with the long-term processes of transforming the location into cultural space? In the meantime, which (specific) current spaces could be adjusted for public use?

Is there any possibility for the location to be transformed into content-wise attractive natural island that would profit from its location within the city, but would also be protected from the “speed” and “noise” generated by the central city area? What would be the optimal period of time to spend in this place – in the course of a day, in the course of a week, in the course of a year?

Should this natural island still be seen as an introvert landscape enclave or there are ways to overcome the current obstacles – transport, physical, social, cultural...? Is a combination of both possible – both isolated and integrated space? Which inter – configurations are possible? What would be the possible course of action for possible transformation of the habits regarding the mobility of the visitors in relation to the transformation of the public landscape?

What new uses could be introduced into the space to utilize its various potentials? How could the new uses supplement the current (planned and spontaneous) uses and, instead of cancelling each other out, how could they contribute to the establishment of the new identity of the space? How could these integrate and exploit the continuous transformations in the following five to ten years?

Is it possible to propose different scenarios for time periods, to show how this (re)shaping takes place, which actors it involves and what types of space does it produce? How is it possible to overcome the inactivity of the space? Is it possible to imagine Kale transformed into a “self-sufficient” urban entity, benefitting from its excellent connections with the city center, but offering all the natural, landscape and cultural functions of the city within its boundaries?

The program suggestions should apply to the project location (L2) and offer one or more possible scenarios inspired by the competition requirement to transform the project location (L2) into a driver of urban changes.

- **Specific location (L3)**

In the segment for the specific location (L3), the competition participants are required to study the immediate area of the specific location (L3), to recognize its values and qualities and to develop and propose concept/s for “populating” the space with a few (optimally between 2 and 3) temporary constructions of the type pavilion, intended to house some of the contents of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, as well as new contents that should transform the specific location (L3) in a manner that would add multiple new purposes.

The pavilions should represent new points of public interest within the specific location. In addition to accepting “museum” contents, the pavilions should be open to other possibilities, i.e. enriched or transformed into other – temporary uses. The visitors should be able to stay in them for a while, be informed about something, obtain certain service, be a part of an event, meet and communicate with the other

visitors to the Museum or the place, but to also be able to briefly shelter from the elements, rest, etc.

The basic design challenge should be the appropriate convergence of the new structure into the context, by identifying the right location of the pavilions in the landscape (topography, access, vistas, connections with the Museum...), setting the relation of the structure of the construction with its purpose (program), determining the relation of the structure of the construction with natural light, determining the relation of the structure of the construction with the use of the material and the capability to create a certain atmosphere.

The program, spatial, formal and material particularities of the pavilions should be adjusted to the regularities of the project and specific location (one should strive to achieve harmonious relation both with the nature and the building of the Museum), should be easily accessible from the current pedestrian and traffic routes, the form and structure of the pavilions should constitute a coherent whole, the pavilions should have internal space, the solution should ensure “soft” transition between the internal and external space, etc.

Within the specific location (L3), the proposed urban architectural project is expected to answer several questions, specifically:

Which thematic contents of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, current or future, could be taken into the individual constructions of pavilion type? Could these contents function separately from the Museum? Is it acceptable for some of these pavilions to accept contents that are not necessarily related with the operations of the Museum? What would be the optimal size of the pavilions and the optimal time to stay in them? What connection should they make with their immediate natural location? What should be the connection of the pavilions with the original building? Should the architecture of the pavilions attempt to establish a relation with the architecture of the Museum building or one should not insist on such relations due to the different measures? What materials and what construction techniques should be used to implement the construction of the pavilions?