

Europe Lost and Found

Brief description

Europe Lost and Found (ELF) is an **interdisciplinary and multinationally based research on the future of Europe's new and transforming borders and territories.**

Contemporary Europe - is viewed as a cycle of continuously reshaping social, political, economic and urban conditions and communication processes.

The project, which runs from 2006 to 2009, has three thematic phases, each involving an expedition, an exhibition and a publication.

<http://www.europelostandfound.net>

Significant features

The core subject of the project is **the continent of immigration**, its depopulation and aging, and the need to redefine states, sovereignties and citizenships. The concept of the nation state is challenged, and alternative definitions sought for populations and cultures in flux. These exist within the apparent contradictions of homogeneous and multiple identities (of individuals and communities), capital's fluidity and labour's containment, and the liberation and restriction of citizens under sovereignty. Clearly, Europe cannot subsist by itself, and is already being redefined by 'the others' in its quest for self-identity. In such contexts, ELF suggests that Europe's future is most apparent in the contemporary Western Balkans.

ELF will evolve in the following major thematic phases: **'Balkanisation'** (2006 - 2007), **'Europeanisation'** (2007 - 2008) and **'Mapping the Future'** (2008 - 2009). Each phase leads into the next one, posing a new set of questions and strategies for subsequent research and products; and each involves an **expedition**, an **exhibition** and a **publication**.

This process-oriented project reflects the transformative realities of contemporary social, political, economic and urban landscapes, and avoids the inflexibility of predetermined goals and issues common to many cultural projects.

The first two phases begin with an expedition, followed by documentation, research, and the production of issues and their contents; the phases then end with exhibitions, publications and other products. The final phase, by reflecting on the previous ones, constructs comparative influences on the potential futures of two territorial concepts. This phase also works toward the visualisation of information about the movements of different subjects, and creates dynamic mappings of the **transforming borders and territories** of social, political, economic and urban landscapes, with an emphasis on **movements against definitive structures**.

Ultimately, **expedition** – both as a tool and an experience – is the key element of ELF. Besides being a form of **movement** through different borders and territories – a navigational guide for 'intercultural communications' – it also forms a **network of broader and specific views** on the movements of economic, political and cultural geographies, and offers theoretical and practical exchanges between different individuals and groups who are working on these issues.

For example, the **Lost Highway Expedition** (30 July - 24 August 2006) started out by plotting a route along a European road once built to unite Yugoslavia (nowadays called Corridor X; formerly known as the Highway of Brotherhood and Unity). The expedition's aim is not in any way to reconstruct the Highway nor to critique the economic ambitions and political dimensions of the roads that exist there now; instead, it is to make a third and non-

physical infrastructure which links different thoughts and cultures, highlighting the **importance of shared meanings** rather than hierarchically constructed and exclusionary values which incite conflicts between places or within societies.

Project description

How it all started

Europe Lost and Found (ELF) was conceived in autumn 2004 in the course of a month-long expedition through ten **cities in the Western Balkans** by the artist/architects KyongPark and Marjetica Potrc. While exploring new urban phenomena in these cities, Park and Potrc collected preliminary research material and established contact with individual initiatives and various institutions in each city. The ideas behind the project were worked out more fully in cooperation with Azra Aksamija, Katherine Carl, Ana Dzokic, Ivan Kucina, Marc Neelen and Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss.

The concept of the Lost Highway Expedition emerged within the School of Missing Studies network. The first ELF event, it took place in August 2006 and involved nine Western Balkan cities and over 200 artists, architects, theoreticians, writers, etc.

Trans-border cooperation issues

This project is principally based on and based in trans-border cooperation. The project would have been impossible without such cooperation, as it provided not only the means of the project's realisation but the actual subject of its research.

A fluid system

ELF is a society itself, not merely a project. It is a temporary, self-organised experimental society in a stateless condition, constantly moving and transforming.

ELF does not have an executive office or a centre. It operates by means of a highly committed network of temporary 'attractors' which initiate and realise their own ideas and programmes at its various 'nodes'. In a post-ideological age, ELF is an emergent system seeking intelligence through the swarming of a massive collaboration of self-determinant entities. It wants to know about our future, which lies between the uniformity of incorporated Europeanisation and the Balkanising capacity of self-organisation. It also wants to know how urban landscapes evolve as the chosen spaces for cultural, ethnic and religious conflicts and resolutions. ELF believes that the grim prospect of an unstable future for Europe might also bring the change needed to build a free and civil society. ELF's quest for such a society begins with its expeditions which act like a moving city, permeating the inflexible lines of old borders and forming destined networks of new territories. In ELF, **there is no distinction between the project and its subjects.**

Role of partners

Centrala - Foundation for Future Cities is an international, interdisciplinary non-profit organisation that is run by artists and curators and is registered in the Netherlands. Europe Lost and Found is the initiating project of the foundation. Other independent projects will develop, including a 'back office' for financial management and reports, fundraising and organisational developments. Conforming with the principle of self-organisation, its structure will remain networked-based and involve outsourcing, and will operate with the smallest possible administration, empowering the capacity and responsibility of its nodes.

Board: KyongPark (New York and Ljubljana/Belgrade), Ana Dzokic (Rotterdam/Belgrade) and Marc Neelen (Rotterdam).

Members: Azra Aksamija (Boston/Sarajevo), Katherine Carl (New York), Ivan Kucina (Belgrade), Marjetica Potrc (Ljubljana), Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss (New York /Novi Sad).

School of Missing Studies (SMS) is the initiator and organiser of the Lost Highway Expedition, which is the first event of Europe Lost and Found. SMS is an experimental and fluid collective which scouts for knowledge about cities that are marked by or are undergoing abrupt transitions. A number of Centrala members are also active in the School of Missing Studies.

The **Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (SMFA) – Division for International Cultural Relations has been involved in ELF since its inception and has sponsored the development of both the project and Lost Highway Expedition. Recognising parallels between ELF and its own policy aims, the ministry has officially promoted the project to state-level, affiliating it with the foreign ministries of other EU countries, Western Balkan states and the EuroMed Association.

In order to sponsor a major conference on the Western Balkans in summer 2007, the ministry will strengthen collaboration by planning and realising the **Find Europe Expedition**. The foreign ministries of the aforementioned states will be invited to become participants and sponsors. A second major conference, ‘What is Europe?’, will be promoted at the end of that expedition.

The network organisations involved in realising ELF do so within their respective local contexts, using their specific knowledge and commitment. Their contribution, involvement and critical reflection are vital to the implementation and development of the project.

Funding

The start-up was aided by some relatively modest funding from SMFA. The School of Missing Studies also received a grant from the Trust for Mutual Understanding (New York) to have ten US participants in the first event, the Lost Highway Expedition. Other than this, participation in the initial expedition has been financed mainly by those taking part in it and by its network of realisation partners.

ELF depends on the different self-initiatives of its members to self-fund, programme and manage different venues that they themselves create. For the project’s future development, the partners are seeking funding for activities in a more coordinated way. They believe that this constitutes a powerful combination of coordinated and individual action.

Main challenges

- Critical and constructive understanding of the theory of Balkanisation, by examining the cultural and urban landscapes of the Western Balkans that have emerged since the recent political and economic changes.
- Exploring the potential influence of the periphery on core territories, and of subjugated cultures on dominant ones, learning especially from the current transition of the Western Balkans towards the future development of Europe and the construction of a European identity.

- Re-orienting the idea of the EU as a universal concept, globally and locally, and freeing it from its current foundation in territories and borders.
- Finding an operational balance between the world's dialectical concepts, especially between Balkanisation and Europeanisation, globalism and localism.
- Constructing decentralised, fragmented, self-organising and temporary network-based societies.

Tips: what to avoid

Given the opportunity of setting up the project again, the project partners would avoid having a formal network of institutions and collaborators. It became evident that an informal community of highly involved and interested people could generate the project better, in terms of the working methods needed and the project's working platform (website and archive). It has taken a massive effort to reach this point – but now this forms part of the core motivation for developing the project further.

Main players

Centrala Foundation for Future Cities - initiator

http://schoolofmissingstudies.net/	School of Missing Studies
http://www.mzz.gov.si	Slovenian Ministry for Foreign Affairs
http://kuda.org/	Kuda.org
http://www.projekt-relations.de/en/explore/missing_identity/	Missing Identity
http://www.mi2.hr/	Mama
http://www.mg-lj.si/	Moderna galerija
	Platforma 9.81
http://www.prelomkolektiv.org/	Prelom kolektiv
http://www.presstoexit.org.mk/	Press to exit
	Projektor
http://www.pro.ba/	SCCA/pro.ba
http://www.skuc.org/	SKUC
http://www.rex.b92.net/	Rex, B92 cultural centre
http://www.1-60insurgentspace.org/	1.60 Insurgent Space

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