

Riwaq's Think Net: "Fakkro Ma'ana" 3rd Riwaq Biennale: October 12-16

The concept of the Think Net

One of Riwaq's main objectives for the coming 10-15 years is to rehabilitate, utilize and promote the most significant historic centers in Palestine. During the last decade rural Palestine has witnessed an unprecedented loss of its historic buildings and the negligence, fast decay, and the partial or total destruction of its historic centers.

Realizing that physical intervention is only one component of the difficult and complex process of the social and economic rehabilitations of historic centers in Rural Palestine, Riwaq is seeking the formation of an interdisciplinary team: Riwaq's Think Net.

The main concept of the Think Net is to bring together the intellectual and scientific knowledge and expertise of locals and internationals for issues of spatial concern to Riwaq: social, economic, and physical revitalization of historic centers.

We hope that by bringing together and engaging a diverse interdisciplinary team in a collective thinking process will bring about new visions, resources, possibilities and simple ideas on how to bring meaningful life to these almost run down and deserted historic centers.

2009-2010 theme: the rehabilitation of Birzeit Historic centre: a pilot project

Completed between 1994 and 2003, Riwaq's Register (see www.riwaqregister.org) includes a huge pool of data about 50,320 historic buildings in 422 sites. Knowing that it is extremely difficult to rehabilitate this entire heritage, a list of 50 villages has been identified by Riwaq as a **National Priority**. Rehabilitating those sites will ultimately lead to the protection of almost 50% of the historic buildings in rural Palestinian areas. Riwaq's dream is to protect and rehabilitate those 50 historic centers.

The rehabilitation of 50 historic centers offers a base/an infrastructure for a national cultural pilot project "an experience" that includes a vision for the future development of Palestinian rural spaces based on cultural heritage potentials, including a web of endless connections between those rural spaces forming another territory of spatial investigation; called "Spaces in between" or "Connecting Spaces".

In this context the historic center of Birzeit, a little university town 10 km north of Ramallah and one of the fifty selected significant sites, was chosen as a pilot project for a rehabilitation process. This historic environment is open for investigation and experimentation based on research, an interdisciplinary approach, networking with local

and international expertise and institutions in different sectors, as well as local community involvement.

The rehabilitation of the historic center of Birzeit is seen as a process that will highlight the potentials of cultural heritage development to local communities, government, and institutions. It will provide a model for rural development, which could be followed in other historic areas.

Roles & responsibilities

- 1- Attending 3rd Riwaq's Biennale activities; This includes attending the opening session of the biennale, attending one or/and two days field research, gatherings and meeting at the historic centers of Birzeit as well as presenting initial reflections and thoughts at closing session of 3rd Riwaq Biennale.

Date: 12th October 2009 (opening session)

13th and/or 15th October 2009 (field research, gathering and meetings: thematic group)

16th of October 2009 (closing session)

- 2- To write and develop a reflection paper about spatial, socio-economic and cultural issues in context of Riwaq's work including reflections on personal experience.

Date: from November 2009 to March 2010

- 3- Attend a follow up seminar; this seminar is intended to follow up on thoughts, networks, funding opportunities and projects as well as presenting developed paper written by Think Net members. 50 villages local councils, governmental/nongovernmental institutions and academic institutions will be invited to attend the seminar.

Date: April 2010

We hope that Riwaq's Think Net would become the main source for guidance, thoughts and feedback on vision, strategies and approaches; suggest possible projects of intervention, as well as help Riwaq identify potential funding and networking opportunities.

Levels of engagement

There are two levels of engagement that the Think Net members can be involved in, those are:

- 1- Conceptual and intellectual level of participation.
- 2- Development and implementation of projects.

Think Net members can move between levels of engagement or be in both.

The membership of the Think Net is not static; it's rather dynamic and changing according to the availability, interest, capability of individuals to bring about substantial and quality input and change to the main theme.

Expected outcome

The expected outcome of the whole process will be in the form of the following:

- 1- The documentation of collective thinking process about the spatial, socio-economic and cultural development of spaces (Video, written materials, articles, etc.)
- 2- Publication of a book that documents the whole process and the writings of Think Net team members.

Members of Think Net team

The Think Net team will be composed of both Palestinians (from local and abroad) as well as international intellectuals and professionals. For the potential local Think Net members see table # 1, and for the potential international think net members see table # 2.