The building of Marijin dvor (Marienhof, Maria’s Yard) is one of the most significant examples of the austro-hungarian central-european palace in Sarajevo. The whole neighborhood is officially called Marijin dvor because of this building. It was built in stages between 1885 and 1899 as a residential and commercial two-story house in the form of a closed four-sided block. According to some sources, it was a demonstration building (Musterhaus) of the industrialist August Braun (AB), manufacturer of building materials and products made of brick. Positioned in the city center, it represents also one of the first residential palaces of such dimensions in Sarajevo. Four streets: Kralja Tvrtka, Augusta Brauna, Dolina & Maršala Tita frame the outside area of the largest inner courtyard in the city, commonly called Marindvorsko (Maria’s Yard).

The inner facades are in ruins, many basements are also destroyed and demolished by repeated water leakages. The yard is a beautiful setting which provides a place where one can escape from the often hectic dynamic of the neighborhood. It contains four sky-high plane trees (Platanus) that survived recent war and few worn-out benches. For years, the yard has been used as a hangout place for youth and this caused some friction between ‘guests’ and inhabitants. As a consequence, few years ago the main entrance into the yard was locked.

The goal was to set up a participatory relationship at this specific micro location through different methods: information exchange to workshops, interviews, non-formal meetings, cleaning actions, talks. Moreover, the goal to rediscover and reclaim the hidden commons of Maria’s Yard and initiate citizens participation came out from the common interests of all groups and individuals involved in the process. From the beginning, the process was open, leaving enough space for different individuals to part-take in shaping up the process and suggesting next steps. The budget for the activities was provided by program Cityology (www.gradologija.ba) and Days of Architecture festival (www.daniarhitekture.ba) with the support from residents and activists and volunteers.

Intervention came in several steps. We have first started just hanging out more in the yard. We would have outdoor lunch or a snack or would organize a meeting in the yard. In the next step we have organized a workshop for residents in which we made clear how we are here to try to intervene within this space. We have made contacts with local community (LC – the lowest administrative and political level) Marijin dvor – Crni Vrh and their official representatives, after which with their support, we moved to educational and discursive program through festival Days of Architecture realized in Maria’s Yard. During 5 days of the festival a number of activities was organized and implemented. These included lectures, discussions as well as the more practical exercise whose goal was to directly intervene in the very space of the yard. These interventions included cleaning and removing garbage, cleaning of the basement, recycling actions and fresh interior wall painting in one of the yard entrances.