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The ripple effect

An official state residence, retreat, and protocol center for the Sovereign Republic of Kosova

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Thesis Title / The ripple effect

As a newly accepted country, after numerous rounds and formats of discussions, Kosova leadership unilaterally declared independence from Serbia in 2008, making it the currently one of the youngest European nations. The road ahead to a stable and successful sovereignty although, once thought of as promising, proved to be a difficult one to manage for Kosovar politicians.

The presentation as Kosovars is difficult, since this nation did not exist before and its inhabitants still struggle to define themselves as such, in contrast to their historic ties to either Serbia or Albania. A distinct Kosovar identity has not developed 10 years into statehood, and the odds are, it will take a while before it will.

Trying to find some sort of identity through architectural work for Kosova is one of the ways this diploma thesis seeks to help in this situation. Since the early 2000s, Kosova's Government has been trying to establish an administrative protocol center, which serves as a rather secluded public building to host elites and delegates since the early 2000s. Hosting international delegations and

establishing a representative space to perform protocol procedures has been the main reasoning behind these efforts. For a place such as Kosova, so dependent on international support and recognition, the establishment of a protocol center can be considered an imperative issue.

However, offering superb hospitality so as to establish good relationships with international allies is only half the story. As the youngest country in Europe, which is trying to persuade political and economic support and investment, leaving a good impression is crucial. Moreover, a brand-new country also needs to establish its identity.

This "façade" of any entity, not just architecture is the focal point of judgment when going into anything new. In the development of Kosova as a country, now more than ever it makes sense to develop its "façade" more. The stories of international success achieved by world-renowned artists such as Dua Lipa, and Sisley Khafa, and invincible athletes such as Majlinda Kelmendi show that the young country has what it takes, but needs a better home that represents the good that

is in Kosova and in Kosovars. The country needs a place where it can respectfully and proudly discuss and host its achievements and set-backs, to further progress its future as a country for its citizens and visitors.

The nature of the project furthermore, does not imply a specific architectural typology that comes with a strict set of rules and standards (as for example a designing a hospital, or a school would), thus offering freedom of architectural expression and the opportunity to experiment without design constraints in the form of the building. However, the function itself, the location chosen for it, and the cultural expectation of trying to make something "kitsch" just because it is government-related (like some of Kosova's neighbors infamously have demonstrated) as well as the challenges that come with a politically-charged building have presented more than enough constraints.

The lack of a protocol center in Kosova to this point mainly can be traced to the fact of the lack of independence and state-authority Kosova has had over the past centuries, being under Ottoman then Yugoslav rule. The first

time the issue a protocol center was discussed on a more public level in Kosova was in 2004 (Gazetaexpress.com, 2016), when former Chairman of Kosova Assembly, Nexhat Daci, brought the issue to Assembly and ended up issuing the construction in the first half of 2005. The project ended up being much discussed by public opinion and was stopped, mainly due to the location it was set in, namely the Germia National Park.

Because of its natural heritage and values, this park, and closest spot of nature in the municipality of Prishtina, was declared protected area by the assembly of the municipality of Prishtina in 1987, as a regional national park of 1.126ha (Ammk-rks.net, 2018). Although the construction was stalled, the issue came up several times since, as the case was yet not dismissed or finalized by Kosova prosecution (Sylejmani, 2013).

A more recent public dialogue with regards to the protocol center was initiated by current Chairman of the Kosova Assembly, Kadri Veseli, who is proposing to build the venter in the national reserve park of Blinaja, an area further west of the international



Fig1 / Current State of Protocol Center in Germia Park. Source/ AMMK



Fig2 / Model of Proposed Protocol Center In Blinaja National Park. Source/ KlanKosova



Fig3 / Gërmia National Park. Source/ Kosova kosova.wordpress



Fig4 / Blinaja National Reserve Park. Source/ Arben Llapashtica

airport of Prishtina and closer to the region of mid-Kosova and Drenica. Aside the fact that Blinaja National Park is not close enough to any city or the capital of Prishtina, it would also impose the same, if not a more conflicting process of approval, given that the national reserve park has been closed to public for decades and hosts a number of wild protected animals.

Even though 1 million euros have already been set aside in the budget, given the experience with the former case in the Germia National park, the outlook on success of this initiative looks grim. While Germia park is a landmark of Prishtina and at least offered a connection to the people, Blinaja, with its forest beauty is not much representative of Kosova, its culture or its people. The park was closed in reserve during Yugoslav rule and used only by high-up heads of the party for hunting deer, wild hogs and the occasional bear. (Behrami and Hasimja, n.d.)

Agreeing with the decisions and initiatives of the local government to take the beginning steps in creating an Official State Residence, Retreat, and Protocol Center; I disagreed with them in the terms of the locations they so far decided upon. Both Gërmia Park and Blinaja National Reserve Park have statures that clearly do not allow for the

building of developmental properties for locals, so why should these rules be broken for the government. The environmental, physical, and overall status quo of the two mentioned parks should be kept as is; one, a green center for the city of Prishtina; and the other, a national protected park reserve for the state.

As a response to the misguided locations, I counter argue the decisions to be developing properties in these areas by bringing forward another similar park in Kosova, one that resembles and partakes in the same advantages as the previous proposals (that of being located on the outskirts of the city, a green-zone, and land that represents Kosova's overwhelming natural beauty). My counter-proposal for developing this much-needed function in Kosova's series of governmental institutions is to construct this building in the very well known and publicly adored Batllava National Park and Lake.

Batllavë is a settlement in the municipality of Besiana, Kosova (also known as Podujeva), north of Prishtina. The village also includes Batllava Lake, used during summer by residents for leisurely activities. The village composes of about 500 homes and about 1600 residence. Batllava Village



Fig5 / Batllava Lake and Park. Source/ Bess Hamiti

also hosts its own primary school, hospital, as well as two independent (small) markets.

These facts favor the construction of the Official State Residence, Retreat, and Protocol Center in the area because as opposed to Blinaja National Reserve (which is rid of civilization), this area of Kosova is already populated and has up-and-coming settlements that might even benefit economically when the constructions of a high-level institution takes place in the areas near it. In the architecture world, we have seen this type of phenomenon take place, for example with the Bilbao effect.

The Bilbao Effect deals with the popular and critical success of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, by Frank Gehry, in which a rundown area of a city in economic decline brought in huge financial growth and prestige (Temel, 2014).

Linking the construction of a protocol center in Batllava Park compared to the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain might be a stretch; but then again, no one predicted the initial phenomenon in Bilbao, Spain that started it all, to occur either. What they do share in common cannot be denied, both locations were critical locations in the state that were ignored but full of potential growth, and both are proposed to create a needed-function with architectural significance.

With Lake Batllava already being valued for its pristine natural landscape and environment, already containing the proper existing infrastructure, and already hosting and present and lively villages, I believe it would make for a great counter-proposition for the building of Kosova's next governmental instituting; the official state residence, retreat, and protocol center.

The project titled, "The Ripple Effect",

lies in the northwestern district of Kosova, more specifically, right on the border of the Prishtina-Podujeva Municipality. There lies Lake Batllava and the park surrounding it. It is technically part of the Podujeva Municipality, but being so close to the border of Prishtina, much of the residence of the capital come to use and love the area.

This relation to Podujeva and Prishtina can benefit the country as a whole, as Podujeva is known as a "sister-city" of Prishtina having many economic relations with one another (workers going to and from), and this project could act as a catalyst for boosting up more economic activities, and therefore boost up both municipalities instead of just the one where the capital city is located; a benefit for the country as a whole.

The challenge I approached was a difficult one to deal with. The political and governmental aspect of the building brought a lot of elements and obstacles to the forefront to overcome.

How to would one go about the creation of a building that gives an identity and statement for a country yearning for exactly that?

How does one design something in the Balkan regions, as a public institution, and not include the elements of kitsch? How does one address and reason to the public and respect the fact that a building will be made off of their finances, but will seldom be open to the general public?

How does one create such a building of architectural importance and physical greatness, in an environment so delicate to the natural elements?

How does one watch out for all these questions, and still be able to be innovative and incorporate new elements and tools of design?

These were the questions I attempted to answer with the result of my architectural design.



Fig6 / Kosova in relation to the world. Source/ authot

Administration Level Podujeva vs Prishtina

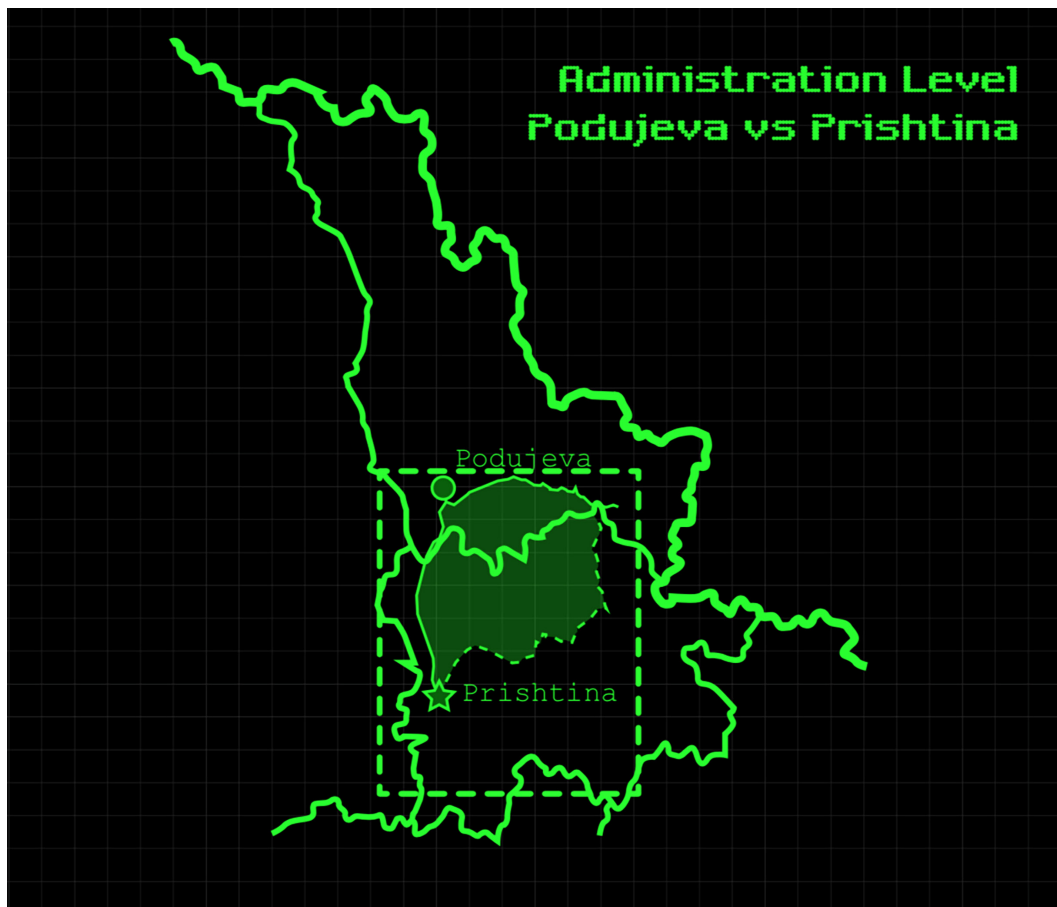


Fig7 / Municipalities of Prishtina and Podujeva. Source / author

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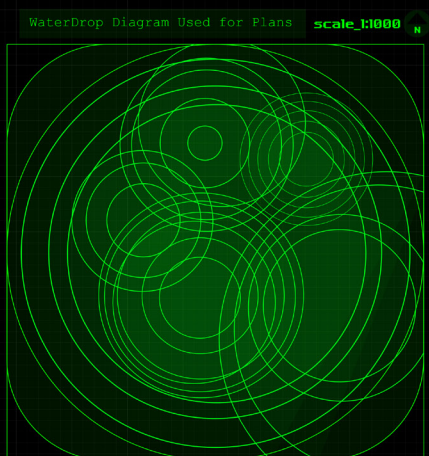
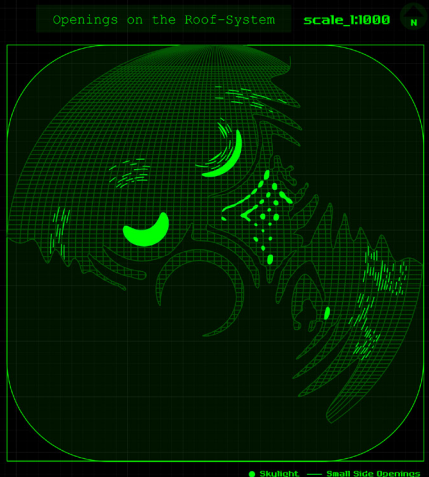
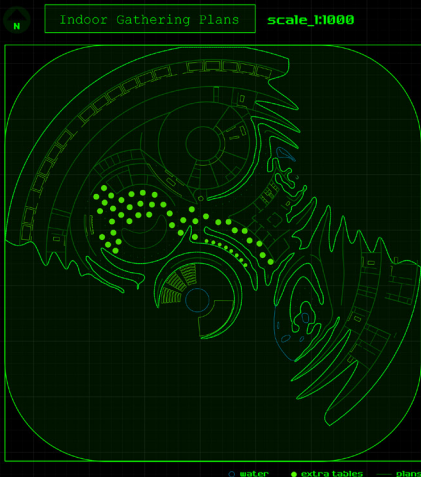
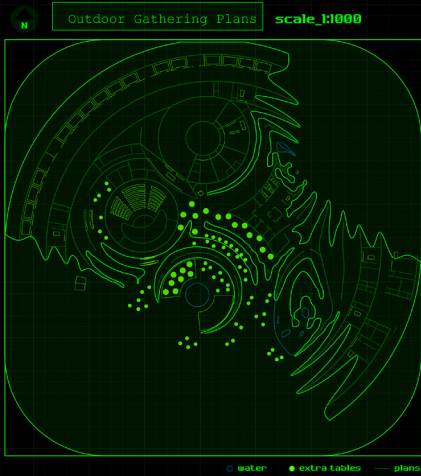
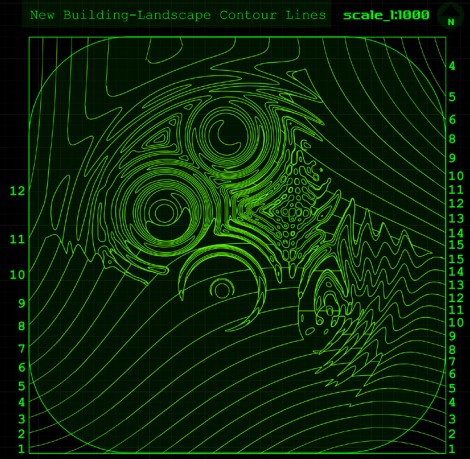
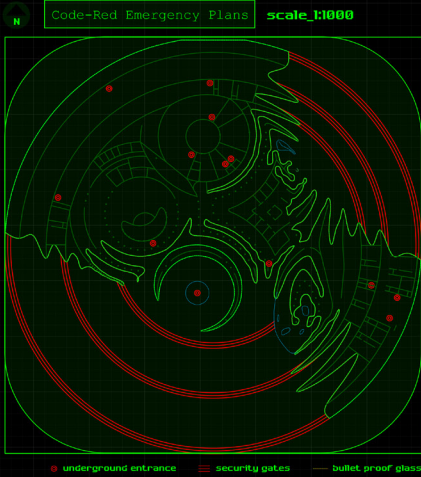
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EAST FACADE

INTERIOR PLAN

scale 1:500

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EAST FACADE

SOUTH FACADE

SOUTH FACADE

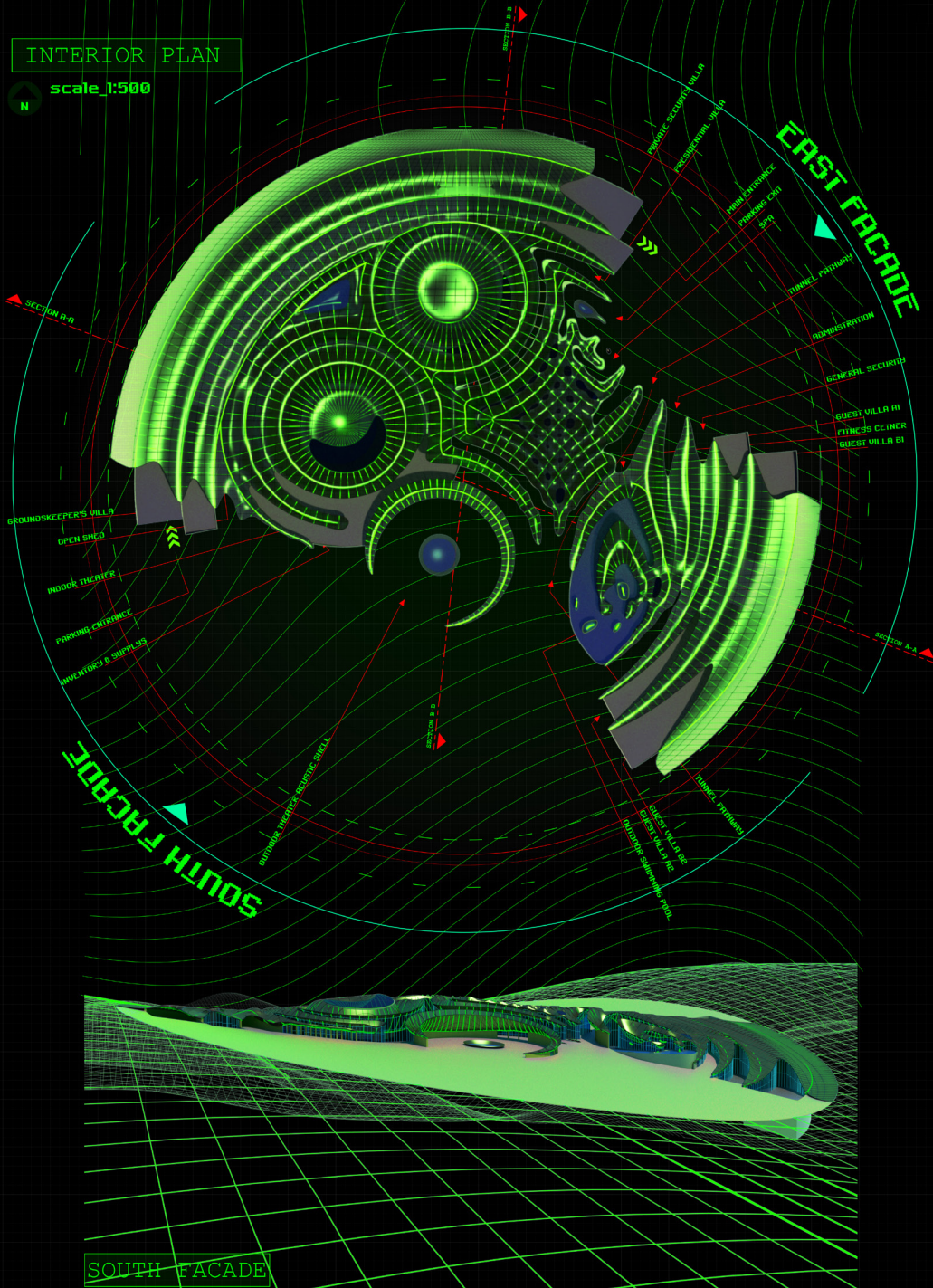


Fig9 / Source / author

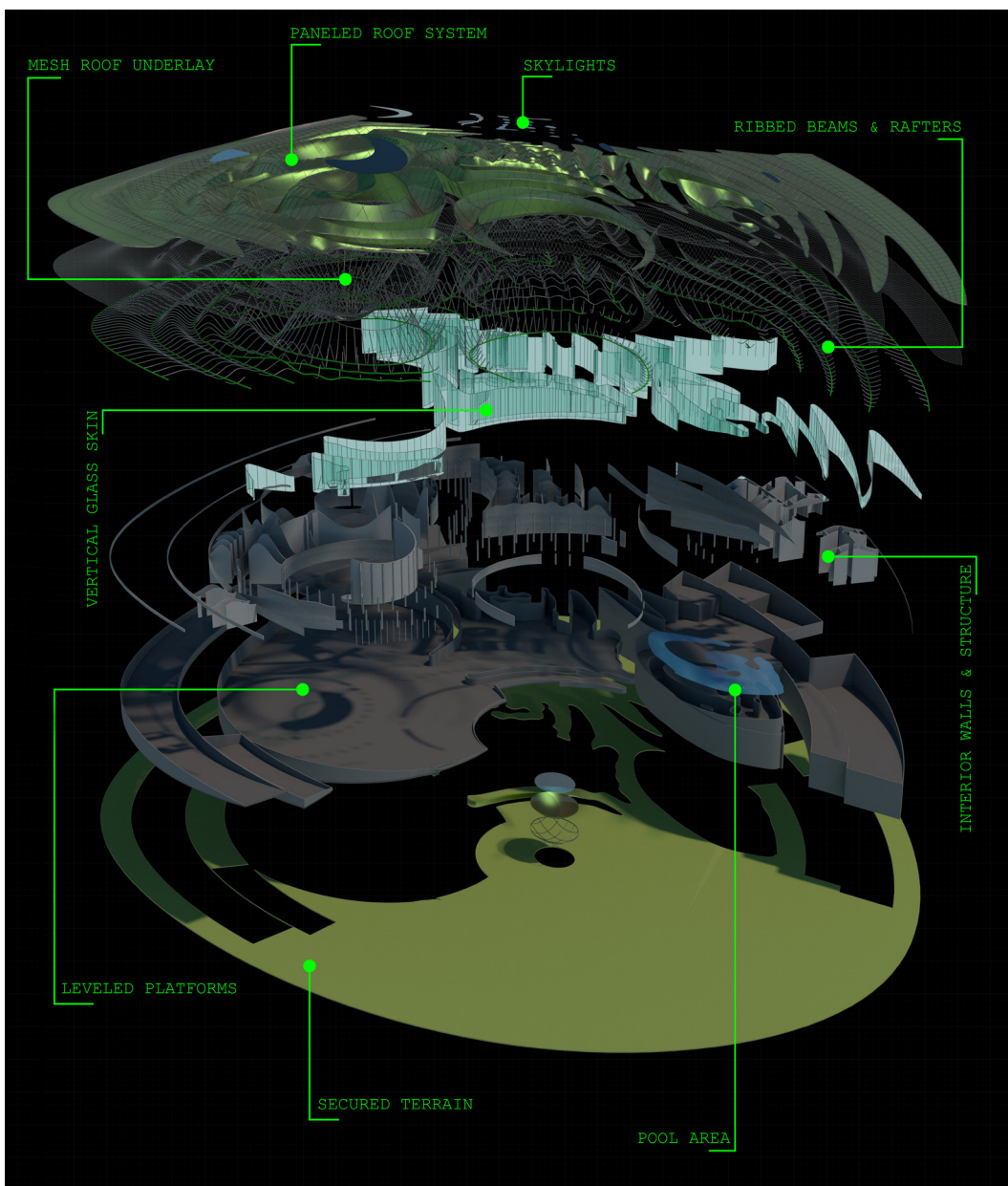


Fig10 / Source / author