EDITED BY
JELISAVETA PETROVIĆ & VERA BACKOVIĆ

EXPERIENCING POSTSOCIALIST CAPITALISM

URBAN CHANGES AND CHALLENGES IN SERBIA

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Ana Pajvančić – Cizelj – Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, Serbia

Barend Wind – Department of Spatial Planning and Environment, University of Groningen, Netherlands

Ivana Spasić – Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Jelena Božilović – Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia

Jelisaveta Petrović – Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Jorn Koelemaij – Department of Geography, Ghent University, Belgium

Marina Čabrilo – Master's student, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Mladen Nikolić – Master of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Selena Lazić – PhD candidate, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Stefan Janković – Institute for Sociological Research, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

Vera Backović – Department of Sociology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia

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The idea to prepare an edited volume that deals with the socio-spatial transformation of cities in Serbia arose from the dramatic changes to urban space caused by the Belgrade Waterfront megaproject and the bitter reactions to it by ordinary citizens gathered around the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiative. We were further encouraged to implement the project by several excellent undergraduate and Master's theses covering the topic of Belgrade's transformation from various angles, that were presented at the Department of Sociology from 2016 to 2018 at thesis committees in which we participated. The initial idea was to produce a volume of student papers, however, due to the importance of the topic and interest expressed by both the local academic community and the wider public in the topic of urban change, we determined that a greater level of attention should be devoted to this issue. Therefore, in addition to professors and associate professors from the Department of Sociology of the Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy, this volume has also gathered together papers by those researching urban phenomena at other Serbian universities (Novi Sad and Niš), as well as those from Belgium and the Netherlands. Though the initial focus was to be on Belgrade's socio-spatial transformation, this was extended to include two other major Serbian cities – Novi Sad and Niš – which are also experiencing intensive social-spatial changes. The end result is that this volume grew from its original, relatively modest conception, into an international publication that we believe is fitting for a topic of such significance and with such far-reaching consequences.

Our ideas would certainly not have been met with fruition without the institutional support of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade and the "Challenges of New Social Integration in Serbia" project, from which this volume was developed. Particularly indispensable were the head of the project, Professor Mladen Lazić, and Professor Mina Petrović, who headed the sub-project, Territorial Capital in Serbia: Structural and Action Potential of Local Development, as well as other colleagues who accepted the invitation to participate in authoring the study.

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Belgrade, 29 October 2019

INTRODUCTION

Jelisaveta Petrović and Vera Backović

The aim of this volume is to explore current urban developments in Serbia, a former Yugoslav country, three decades after socialism. At the very outset, we should say that as editors of this volume we had a difficult time in settling on an appropriate title for the book. The dilemma emerged from a question that burdens current scholarship on postsocialist cities: *thirty years after socialism does the term "postsocialist city" still adequately describe ongoing urban processes?* Indeed, for some authors "the "post-socialist city" reflects a regrettable lack of forward-looking imagination" (Hirt et al., 2016: 5). Others stress its contested nature that is imposed by a developmental paradigm, as it tends to represent something delayed, atypical, and even abnormal (Ferenčuhova & Gentile, 2017). Therefore, the concept is often deemed inappropriate because it reinforces the "otherness" of non-western societies (Ferenčuhova & Gentile, 2017). The concept has also met with criticism for being obsolete, for referring to a vanishing object, for falling into a territorial trap and for constraining political futures (Muller, 2019: 533; Humphrey, 2002; Hirt, 2013; Ferenčuhova, 2016; Hirt et al., 2017). These drawbacks even prompted Martin Muller to write a farewell to postsocialism (Muller, 2019).

This is, however, not the first time East European scholars thought it was time to say goodbye to postsocialism and consign it to the dustbin of urban studies history. Similar attempts were made at the beginning of the 21st century (Humphrey, 2002), then again when some of the postsocialist states joined the European Union and then once more in the wake of the twentieth anniversary of the events of 1989 (Stenning & Horschelmann, 2008: 312). Despite these claims that the time has come to replace this obsolete concept with something fresh and theoretically and empirically more meaningful, scholars have yet to come up with an alternative concept that is broadly accepted (Hirt et al., 2017: 13)[1]. This is evidenced by the myriad of conceptual alternatives to the term postsocialism proposed

1 Although there have been attempts such as – cities after transformation/transition, cities from the Global East (Muller, 2018).

at the 8th *Cities after Transition* conference held in Belgrade in September 2019[2]. While the following constructs were used as synonyms in the conference papers: post-soviet, post-communist, "former socialist cities" and "cities after socialism", suggested alternatives spanned from territorially marked concepts such as: "cities of Eurasia" and "middle– and south-eastern Europe cities", through geopolitically referenced: "cities of the Global East" and "semi-peripheral" cities, to labels that clearly point to the fact that the process of transformation is over: "cities after transition", and that formerly socialist cities now belong to the global (neoliberal) capitalist system: the "neoliberal postsocialist city". Despite the conference organisers' endeavours to move beyond "postsocialism" and to integrate postsocialist urban scholarship into global urban studies in a novel way, the conference agenda[3] shows that sessions and paper titles containing word "postsocialism" outnumber by far the papers offering alternative concepts, proving what had already been noted by Ferenčuhova and Gentile, that "far from being dead, post-socialism is alive and well in current scholarship" (Ferenčuhova & Gentile, 2017: 5). In other words, "postsocialist" remains the attribute that is commonly ascribed to urban developments in this part of the world. Although we are aware of the conceptual disputes, we decided to use the term postsocialism in this volume for several reasons we deem important. Firstly, despite three decades of intensive change, some socialist and postsocialist legacies remain present – both in material (e.g. urban infrastructure) and ideational forms (e.g. values) – and entangled with contemporary processes influencing socio-spatial reforms, shaping the actions of citizens, economic and political actors (Hirt et al., 2017: 17). The second rationale for retaining the term lies in the intention of this volume to contribute to existing postsocialist scholarship with a specific focus on Serbian experiences. We believe that the choice of an alternative label would make for conceptual confusion and even lead to the disregarding of thirty years of postsocialist urban studies, which have produced an extensive and rich body of theoretical and empirical knowledge on urban transformation in the region (e.g. Stanilov, 2007; Sykora & Stanilov 2014). The last reason is somewhat practical. This concept is still useful (for lack of a better one, at least) and recognized within global urban studies, resonating with an audience that reaches far beyond the community of postsocialist scholars. This means that it continues to successfully communicate how processes such as globalization, neoliberal urbanization and Europeanization reshape the region while acknowledging both the socialist legacy and different postsocialist paths.

2 https://catference2019-belgrade.rs, accessed 01/11/2019.

3 https://catference2019-belgrade.rs/programme, accessed 01/11/2019.

However, although we continue to use the term "postsocialist city", we have decided not to look at it as a transitory, hybrid concept, something in-between but to focus instead on the lived experience and consequences of postsocialist capitalism that has been evolving in the region and significantly affecting the urban condition. Many concepts are used to describe the capitalism that exists in the region, often with negative prefixes such as crony, crass, wild and so forth – stressing the impact of hidden structures, interest groups, informality, familial connections and corruption, or underlining the role of the state – political capitalism, regulatory capitalism etc. We believe, however, mentioned "aberrations" of the western ideal type of capitalism, are just different aspects or manifestations of a distinct type of capitalism that has developed in the region – often called "postsocialist capitalism" (Swine, 2011; Bandelj, 2016). As defined by Bandelj, postsocialist capitalism can be regarded as a moral project with three core features: "a) lack of state autonomy due to close coupling of political and economic roles; b) the embrace of greed and self-interest as legitimate motives for action; and c) persistence and bolstering of informality as *modus operandi*" (Bandelj, 2016: 90–1). Bandelj further explains that these characteristics of postsocialist capitalism do not exist independently of one another but reinforce each other – i.e. informality and self-serving greed undermine state autonomy, while the politicization of the economy is reinforced by informality (Bandelj, 2016: 102). This divergent form of capitalism developed in former socialist countries as a result of accelerated and compounded political and economic transformation that has overlapped with a period of intensive neoliberal globalization. The processes of simultaneous and rapid "privatization, deregulation, democratization, and neoliberal globalization created a specific context for postsocialist transformations, which presented this region with challenges unlike those that accompanied economic and political transformations in other (semi) peripheral states of East Asia, Latin America or China" (Bandelj, 2016: 102–3). Given the specific type of capitalism that has emerged in formerly socialist countries, when we talk about postsocialist cities we are actually referring to *cities of postsocialist capitalism*. This is where the idea for the title of this volume came from. Although we opted to keep the term postsocialist within the volume, in its contextual (the process of transformation is over but the relicts of (post)socialist past still have a certain impact) rather than hybrid / transitional meaning, in the title of the book we decided to introduce the concept of *postsocialist capitalism* to emphasize that the urban changes and challenges in Serbia are observed and interpreted in the wider context of this specific type of capitalism.

By taking postsocialist capitalism as the main contextual framework of urban analysis in this volume, we do not seek to imply that all cities that once belonged to the socialist bloc have the same characteristics, only that they have some common features that make them distinct compared to the cities of the West. We accept the path dependency approach and contextual specificities that influence different outcomes of postsocialist transformation, which stresses that cities that once belonged to the similar regime type, today differ considerably among one another (Rogers 2010; Brenner & Theodore, 2002). We note that postsocialist cities, despite their many similarities and common socio-spatial patterns, do not form a homogenous group and, thus, put regional divergence in focus. Tosics (2005 cf. Hirt et al. 2017: 4) differentiates between three types of postsocialist cities: (1) Central European and Baltic cities, which can be considered frontrunners in the process of capitalist consolidation; (2) Former Soviet cities, which retain a public sector with a significant role; and (3) Former Yugoslav and other Balkan cities, located in weak states with relatively low economic standards (the exception being Slovenian cities). By adhering to these distinctions, we strive to outline the specific trends and contextual aspects of urban transformation in this sub-region.

The semi-peripheral position of Western Balkan societies, characterised by a weak state and civil society coupled with low economic standards, creates complex settings for urban development. This was not, however, the case in the beginning. In comparison to other postsocialist cities, Serbian cities had the better starting position because socialist Yugoslavia had some elements of a market economy and hence higher incomes and higher spending. However, policies adopted since 1987 and the events that followed – armed conflict, economic sanctions and the breakup of the state – devastated the cities of Serbia. As noted by Mina Petrović (2005), during this period the development of these cities was characterised by a sluggish tempo of postsocialist transformation, a slowness to establish public order and developmental elements similar to those in developing countries – especially the significant presence of illegal construction and a barter economy. As a result of this kind of development the *unregulated capitalist city* emerges, subsuming elements of developing world cities (Petrović, 2005: 20, Backović, 2005). At the beginning of the new millennium and after the collapse of the Milošević regime (October 2000), the country experienced some political and economic stabilisation and a growth of foreign investment. However, "complex legal and institutional transformation proved exceptionally difficult as it required the dissolution of informal links between political and economic actors" (Vujović, Petrović, 2006:177). In such circumstances, economic actors have greater

power to shape urban development, while politicians have an opportunity to craft the institutional framework and to decide which projects will receive support but are frequently themselves in the sway of investors. Urban planning experts do not have sufficient autonomy and are trapped between the political and economic actors. Ordinary citizens are not sufficiently engaged at the creative stage of urban development and the shaping of future content in their own communities, instead their activities are restricted to organising in order to prevent the implementation of detrimental or damaging political decisions.

With this form of development over the past three decades in mind, this study will focus on the current state of affairs and the challenges faced by the cities of Serbia. More precisely, contributions in this volume deal with challenges stemming from the socio-spatial transformation of Serbian cities under the influence of intensive process of neoliberal urbanisation, as well as with the reactions of urban actors in the specific context of postsocialist capitalism.

The Structure of the Book

The first part of the book, entitled "Neoliberalized Socio-Spatial Transformations", gives a fine-grained overview of the processes that transform urban spaces in Serbia as induced by neoliberal urbanization. These processes are manifested in various ways but mainly through instances of profit gentrification, urban megaprojects, the rise of socio-spatial inequalities and the commodification of urban cultural practices.

The opening chapter, "Specificity of Gentrification in the Postsocialist City: The Case of the Belgrade Waterfront Project" by Vera Backović, deals with the particular features of gentrification in Belgrade through the show-case example of the Belgrade Waterfront (BW) megaproject. Backović notes that manifestations of gentrification depend on the local context – the inherited socialist socio-spatial structure, the structure of economy, development of the post-industrial city and entrepreneurial urban politics – which is visible in the development of the BW project. This topic is further elaborated upon in the second chapter, "Behind Belgrade Waterfront's Frontline: A Reconstruction of the Early Implementation Phase of a Transnational Real Estate Development Project", where Jorn Koelemaij and Stefan Janković, relying on qualitative methods, analyse the strategies and activities of the main actors involved in developing the BW project. The authors conclude that this project is a part of a global trend of "world city entrepreneurialism" and state-rescaling processes.

Both chapters stress the tremendous socio-spatial changes induced by urban megaprojects, an emblematic manifestation of neoliberal urbanization (Swyngedouw et al., 2002: 548).

The next contribution, "Socio-Spatial Inequalities in the Housing Market: The Outcomes of Belgrade's Socialist and Postsocialist Policy Regime" by Barend Wind, explores how the socialist legacy and the current market context shape housing stratification in Belgrade. The author notes that although tenure inequality is (still) not exaggerated, the housing market in Belgrade does generate inequalities in terms of housing wealth, housing conditions and residential location that coincide with the socio-economic status and birth cohorts (socialist/postsocialist) of household members. A comparison of housing strategies in Belgrade shows that individuals who came of age in the postsocialist period are in a far worse position on the housing market than the parents' ("socialist") generation, thus having to rely on family help (e.g. savings, housing assets, etc.) in order to secure housing for themselves.

The final two contributions in the first part of the book are devoted to exploration of the cultural aspects of current urban developments in Belgrade and Novi Sad. In the chapter, "Symbolic Markers of Belgrade's Transformation: Monuments and Fountains", Ivana Spasić examines new monuments and fountains (statues to Tsar Nicholas II Romanov and Gavrilo Princip, as well as the fountains at Slavija Square and Topličin venac) as spatial markers and/or manifestations of deeper political and social processes. Spasić argues that they represent the dominant political discourse and that their appearance and location are part of ongoing political struggles. These new structures are intended for visitors and for the creation of a tourist-oriented vision of Belgrade, while the local population is neglected and even excluded. Spasić concludes that this physical and aesthetic transformation of urban space is an example of Belgrade's *un*-modernization: *post*-modernization (with an overemphasis on tourism and consumption) and *de*-modernization (the legacy of Serbian/Yugoslav modernism is being replaced with artistic forms from earlier epochs).

In the closing chapter in this section, "Struggling with the Title: Capital of Culture at the Superperiphery of Europe", through the case study of Novi Sad Ana Pajvančić-Cizelj shows how postsocialist cities, which were not among the "winners" of postsocialist transformation, have accepted the strategy of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) title as a tool for rebranding the city and attracting investment and tourists. The author studies the economic and cultural consequences of assigning Novi Sad the title of the 2021 European Capital of Culture and shows that in

the superperipheral Balkan context the ECoC project produces numerous, intertwined and mutually reinforcing struggles in both the economic (material) and cultural (discursive) spheres. In the case of Novi Sad, neoliberal urban strategies dictate which cultural elements will be presented and how, what will have priority and, on the other hand, what will be suppressed and hidden. The most pressing urban problems either remain the stagnant or even become aggravated by the ECoC title, thus opening the question whether creativity-led urban development can lead to the *reproduction* of super-peripherality.

The second part of the book, "Urban (Re)actions: Awakening of Urban Movements", focuses on the role of various urban actors and their confrontational strategies in the context of aggressive investor-led urbanization, a captured state and a weak civil society, burdened with corruption, informality and an evident lack of protection for urban public goods. The accent is on urban grassroots initiatives, bottom-up struggles and the creative practices of the "losers" in neoliberal urbanism.

In the chapter, "Right to the City: Urban Movements and Initiatives as the Pulse of Civil Society in Serbia", Jelena Božilović provides a close-grained overview of urban actors (movements and initiatives) primarily located in the city of Niš but also in other Serbian cities, striving to protect public urban goods framed as the right to the city. This exploration reveals a context characterised by the captured state, stabilitocracy, deep systemic fractures, injustice and corruption, that result from the proliferation of particularistic interests by political and economic elites, typical of postsocialist capitalism and the urban consequences thereof. In this landscape, urban movements represent usually isolated cases of rebellion "from below" which, if integrated, could surpass the borders of the local/urban setting and have a more profound societal and political impact. Urban movements seem to be the most vigorous part of civil society in Serbia, which is otherwise usually perceived as weak and passive.

In a case study focused on the urban initiative Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own, Jelisaveta Petrović ("The Transformative Power of Urban Movements on the European Periphery: The Case of the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own Initiative") explores whether this urban movement can be regarded as the manifestation of a new phase of civil society development in Serbia. Although urban movements are probably the most important counterforce against the negative effects of the postsocialist model of capitalism in urban settings, the research findings suggest that, since the local fundraising capacities are not sufficient to support urban movement activities in full, these movements still depend (although not directly) on the support of domestic and foreign donors and are thus compelled to

adhere to the logic of the NGO sector (typical of the earlier phases of civil society development in the region). Therefore, although they are the most progressive part of civil society, urban movements still struggle to become independent and to earn the trust and support of ordinary citizens.

In the next chapter, "The Participants in the Protest Against Illegal Demolitions in Belgrade's Savamala Quarter", Mladen Nikolić provides a close-up snapshot of the participants of the one of the protests against the Belgrade Waterfront megaproject, organized by the Initiative Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own. Research conducted in the "course of the action", shows that the protesters are mostly highly educated young people from urban areas (mostly from the city centre and surrounding municipalities) from middle-class backgrounds, who oppose decline of democratic institutions, highhanded behaviour by the authorities and corruptive practices, formulated through the protest slogan "Whose city? Our city!", as a part of the struggle for the right to the city.

In her chapter, "The Role of the Civil Sector in the Urban Transformation of the Savamala Neighbourhood", Selena Lazić explores the role of civil society actors in the urban transformation of the Belgrade's neighbourhood Savamala. Being of interest for various players (civil society actors, foreign investors and those in power at the local and national levels), this neighbourhood has undergone a compounded process of socio-spatial transformation. In the first phase (2012–2015), the urban transformation of the area was a bottom-up, culture-driven process, led by creative entrepreneurs, civil society organizations and art collectives (pioneer gentrification) who reused abandoned spaces mostly for artistic and socially responsible projects. However, after 2015 the urban renewal of this part of the city was at first gradually and then forcefully taken over by the Belgrade Waterfront (BW) project, thus becoming a show-case example of profitable gentrification.

In the final chapter, "Brushing over Urban Space: Between the Struggle for the Right to the City and the Reproduction of the Neoliberal Model through the Example of Belgrade Murals and Graffiti", Marina Čabrilo investigates different meanings ascribed to the practice of drawing in urban spaces. More precisely, the author questions whether the motivation for street art in Belgrade stems primarily from the struggle for the "right to the city" or if it is more influenced by a neoliberal matrix of production in urban spaces? The study shows that urban street art and graffiti practices are influenced by both of these processes and that, in certain cases, street artists use money earned by doing "on demand" art to sustain their voluntary practices framed as protection of their right to the city.

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PART I
NEOLIBERALIZED SOCIO-SPATIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

THE SPECIFICITY OF GENTRIFICATION IN THE POSTSOCIALIST CITY: THE CASE OF THE BELGRADE WATERFRONT PROJECT[4]

Vera Backović

Abstract: Gentrification is a general pattern of urban core transformation with significant variations depending on local contexts. It changes built structures or their functions but also the categories of people for whom these structures are intended. There are two basic approaches to the study of gentrification. First, the production-side approach focuses on restructuring the urban economy and emerging spaces suitable for gentrification. Second, the consumption or demand-side approach deals with the actions and choices of those who create or use gentrified spaces. One can recognize three types of gentrification according to the actors involved – these are: pioneer, profitable and state-led gentrification.

The analysis of gentrification in postsocialist cities is a good occasion to explore the impact of the local context. The key analytical question is what types of gentrification exist and to what extent. In general, the majority of actors on both the production and the demand side are mostly foreigners, while the role of the public sector is different when compared with developed (capitalist) countries. Comparing Belgrade to other postsocialist cities one can see to what extent gentrification is influenced by the postindustrial economic development (advanced services and symbolic economy), and by foreign investments, also what influence the demand for gentrified space.

Keywords: postsocialist city, pioneer gentrification, profitable gentrification, state-led gentrification, Belgrade

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Introduction

Gentrification is a visible transformation of contemporary cities, but it is manifested differently depending on the given socio-spatial context. One could define gentrification as a process where the physical structure of residential buildings is changed or their use is changed to residential (in the event that the buildings previously served a different purpose), primarily in the central-most locations of cities. This process is followed by changes to the social categories of people for whom these new or refurbished buildings are intended. One can understand gentrification as spatial reflection of key socioeconomic processes in the contemporary city – i.e. postfordism and postmodernism – the effects of which are powerful.

There are two main approaches explaining this process. The production-side approach deals with structural changes (restructuring of the urban economy, circulation of capital), which creates the space and frees up properties suitable for gentrification[1]. The consumption-side approach deals with demand – the actions (choices) of actors who make or use gentrified spaces[2]. As ideal types one can distinguish pioneer, profitable and state-led gentrification/mediated gentrification. In pioneer gentrification the actors are mainly artists, who renovate space for work and living, thus gentrifying the neighbourhood. In the case of profitable gentrification, investors and construction firms build residential buildings, which are intended for representatives of the (new) middle class (service and/or creative class). Meanwhile, state-led gentrification is initiated by national or local governments as part of entrepreneurial governing strategies. State-led gentrification is one of the strategies of the entrepreneurial city in which urban policy accepts the gentrification practices and thus the process starts in less developed cities. In the entrepreneurial city there is partnership between the public and private sector (firms and investors), and in city planning the branding of space and the advertising of the city as a commodity take on a more important role (Harvi, 2005). Therefore,

1 Smith (Smith 1979, 1987, 1996) highlighted the importance of the capital accumulation process through the urban real estate market. Suburbanization and deindustrialization of the urban core led to a reduction in the value of land in the centre of the city and created a gap between its potential and actual value. This rental gap is being closed by the new logic of the housing market formed in the process of gentrification.

2 Ley (Ley, 1980, 1986, 1996) emphasized the importance of cultural values, consumption practises and specific lifestyles of the new middle class or creative class/artists (Florida, 2002, Ley, 1996). Ley pointed out that changes to the value system – such as women's self-realization, alternative forms of family organisation, the postponement of marriage and parenthood – motivated people to live in the city centre thus creating demand for gentrified space (Ley, 1986, 1996).

gentrification unites several important dimensions of urban transformation: restructuring of the economy, new models of city administration and city planning, along with changes in social structure that stem from economic restructuring. Thus, the increase of service and creative classes affects the diversification of social values and lifestyles which are visible in the urban space.

In this chapter, following the geography of gentrification[3] (Lees, 2000), we will show the specificities of this process in postsocialist cities[4] and in Belgrade. The variations of the gentrification phenomenon fall firmly under the influence of socio-economic conditions such as the characteristics of the urban economy (industrial and postindustrial development); the characteristics of the housing market and the role of its key actors: state/local authorities; the private sector/investors and construction firms; creative and service fractions of the middle class. In the analysis of gentrification, one also needs to include the established socio-spatial structure during the socialist urban development.

The Socio-Spatial Transformation of European Postsocialist Cities

The new use of core spaces in the cities of the most developed capitalist countries emerged with the closing of the rental gap that arose as a consequence of suburbanization during the industrial phase of development and the subsequent deindustrialization that attracted new investment and initiated gentrification of previously abandoned or derelict sites. The question of demand is the other side of this process, i.e. are there the actors who will realize this process on their own, or will instigate private sector actors to become involved. Initiation of the process (pioneer gentrification) is connected with a diversification of lifestyles, the mobility of the population and the availability of space (i.e. a dynamic real estate market).

In postsocialist cities one finds possibility for the initiation of the gentrification process in under-urbanized central city areas inherited from the socialist period. Urbanism and the spatial economy of socialist cities were

3 To examine gentrification in various contexts it is necessary to appreciate the socio-economic and historical conditions which cause the modifications of the phenomenon. Following that analytical logic, the so-called geography of gentrification has been constituted (Lees, 2000).

4 In this analysis, the concept of postsocialist city is used due to a significant influence of socio-spatial structure formed during the socialism on the process of gentrification.

based on the redistributive power of the party elite whose primary aim was to invest in industrial development. Thus, the socialist city was marked by the prevalence of industry and housing over other functions, especially the commercial. Development of the tertiary sector and infrastructure, excluding infrastructure indispensable for direct industrial development, were not seen as productive activities (Enyedi, 1996). The social (i.e. state) ownership of a city's resources and the non-market economy resulted in ineffective use of space and insufficient development of urban services. Thus, under-urbanization as a key characteristic of socialist urbanization has two aspects: quantitative – a lower degree of urbanization in comparison to achieved industrial development; and qualitative – undeveloped infrastructure (both communal and commercial) (Szeleny, 1996).

The socialist city created a different socio-spatial structure compared to the capitalist city, both in the urban centre and the periphery. The process of suburbanization did not take place in the same way as in capitalist cities, where members of middle and higher classes moved to the suburbs, which offered them a higher quality of life. Contrary to that, in socialism cities were expanded by migration from rural areas[5]. The infrastructural development of suburbia was on a considerably lower level in comparison with more central locations. Thus, the periphery remained even more under-urbanized (Petrović, 2009). The centre of the socialist city[6] remained a desirable place to live and its "emptying" by the higher classes did not occur. In addition, due to urban and housing policies, the neighbourhoods of these cities were more class heterogeneous.

Socialism constrained the pluralization of lifestyles (generally through consumption) and the spatial mobility of the population[7] via established housing policy[8]. The residential mobility of all social classes in capitalist societies is considerably greater (compared with socialist societies) and results in the harmonization of income possibilities and housing characteristics, which is connected not only to the main phases of lifecycles (marriage, birth of children, departure of grown up children from the household) but also to changes in career path (Petrovic, 2004: 304).

5 For example, the basic architectural-urban design of the settlement on the outskirts of Belgrade is a mix of legal, semi-illegal and illegal family housing construction (Vujović, 1990:114). The increase in the population of Belgrade was not accompanied by an adequate development of communal and social infrastructure. On the periphery of the city there is lack of sanitation infrastructure, inadequate public transport connections, as well as an underdeveloped network of facilities such as kindergartens, primary schools, healthcare provision, etc. (Vujović, 1990).

6 Examples include Prague, Budapest, Belgrade and Zagreb.

7 This does not refer to the rural-urban migration that was characteristic for this period but rather to poor mobility when finding a job and solving the housing issue.

8 The principle of housing policies was to provide moderate housing to each household, thus solving their housing problem for a lifetime.

The dominance of heavy industry and the neglect of the production of consumer goods were systemic constraints that hampered the transformation of socialist societies and cities[9] well into their postindustrial phase. During the 1990s, postsocialist countries fell under the simultaneous influence of several processes: their transformation towards a capitalist system, which changes the entire structure of society[10]; their transition from industrial to postindustrial economies; and complex (economic, political and cultural) globalization based on technological information revolution. Thus, the postsocialist city reflects changes towards the market-based, postindustrial city on the one hand, and changes to governance from a dominant state command model towards entrepreneurial and potentially cooperative models of governing, on the other (Harvi, 2005). Under socialism only a small number of actors could influence urban policy and urban development, which primarily depended on state planning and the distribution of funds from a central budget. The fall of socialism enabled the constitution of other actors who became able to influence the tempo and direction of a city's development. Thus, urban development came to be influenced by political actors (the state and local authorities), economic actors, urban planning experts and the general population. There is also the increasing influence of external / supra-national actors such as supra-national institutions and international companies (Tosics, 2005; Vujović, 2004). These actors form very complex mutual relationships resulting in changeable coalitions, which direct the priorities of city development (Stoker, 2005; Basan, 2001). The most significant change relates to the fact that foreign capital starts to exert a great influence on the urban economy and urban space.[11]

Important changes on the city level are the decrease of state control over land and housing stock, privatization and restitution of housing/buildings[12], and the decentralization of decision-making processes. However, the transmission of power from state to other actors (the private sector and local authorities) and their participation in city development, without an institutional framework to direct them, has left a lot of space for violation of

9 State/social property and planned investments did not take into account the value of land and profit, so that socialist society produced a different city.

10 The most important changes are: in the economy – the introduction of private property and the market and the privatization of state property; in the political system – the introduction of political pluralism and declarative decentralization of decision-making processes.

11 At the beginning of the process of postsocialist transformation, the property/real estate market became the most internationalized area of the local economy (Sykora, 1993).

12 As restitution returns whole buildings to their previous owners, it contributes to the gentrification process. In the case of privatization of apartments, the existence of several owners or/and different statuses of ownership in the same building less stimulate gentrification.

the public interest, and the domination of private interest.[13] Thus, because of the weakening of the state as a central authority and the arbitrariness of city authorities in applying the principles of governing an urban system in accordance with market conditions, a chaotic model of city development has been established (Stanilov, 2007; Petrović, 2009). Equally important are the rule of law and local autonomy in deciding on investment projects, since local authorities should also have the ability to absorb the negative effects of wider political changes. Privatization of the public sector is not a sufficient reform measure in postsocialist cities, it is also necessary to create a public sector that assumes a regulatory function and the function of social protection (Petrović, 2009). Thus, the entrepreneurial strategies of postsocialist cities are reduced to client-centred coordination and negotiation, while the non-transparency of the political elite's decision-making process channels the influence of private capital through corruptive rather than partnership strategies[14] (Petrović, 2009: 65).

The aforementioned structural changes in postsocialist societies are manifested at several levels: on the global level postsocialist cities are involved in the network of European cities. Postsocialist capitals are the first points of "entry" by foreign companies to these countries[15]. They evolve as places for the relocation of leading European/global industrial, commercial and service chains (Petrović, 2009: 57). The deindustrialization of postsocialist cities is the result of collapse of industry rather than its transformation into the service economy and industry of culture. On the city level, how property and space are used has changed. Sykora analyses changes to the use of urban space[16] through the theory of rent[17] and the functional gap. The activities present in the central city zones under socialist urban economy have quickly been replaced by more profitable

13 Local authorities remain under the strong influence of national authorities because in many cases the national political elite is not ready to allow decentralization and transfer management of economic resources to local governments (Petrović, 2009).

14 As *Burazer* political capitalism is being established, favouring economic actors close to the political elite and from which the political elite has economic gain, it creates monopolistic markets and blocks economic and spatial development (Trigilia according to Petrović, 2009).

15 Capital cities of postsocialist countries occupy a semi-periphery position (Backović, 2005). There is a polarization between the capital and other urban settlements at the state level (Musil, 1993).

16 There are several ways: 1. The use of empty and deserted buildings; 2. The replacement of less efficient industrial or commercial activity with some more efficient activity; 3. Converting apartments into office space; 4. Rehabilitation of old apartments into luxurious ones; 5. Constructing new buildings on unused land (Sykora, 1993:290).

17 The rent gap plays an important role in the urban renewal process for it attracts a great number of construction firms which buy real estate at low prices, invest in its renovation and then sell it on at higher prices (Sykora, 1993; Smith, 1987).

activities, which brought about a considerable commercialisation of space (Sykora, 1993, 1998). The growth of business and service activities demanded new commercial space in postsocialist cities. However, without residential functions in revitalized and converted spaces, these adaptations cannot be understood as gentrification.

In Prague's central zone a great number of apartments were returned to their owners[18], thus stimulating investment by foreign construction firms because the new owners could not afford to pay for renovation (Sykora, 2006). There are some parts of neighbourhoods in Prague which we can speak of as gentrified.[19] The realised revitalisation of housing units, which contains aspects of gentrification and commercialisation, influenced a change in the population of the neighbourhood. Thus, the number of inhabitants of two central Prague districts, 1 and 2 (the city's historical core and Vinohrady)[20], decreased by almost a fifth between 1991 and 2001, which is a direct consequence of the decreasing number and increasing size of residential buildings[21], while the social status of inhabitants has increased[22] (Sykora, 2006).

In Budapest, the process of suburbanization was intensified when the new upper middle class left the city centre, which continues to be inhabited by lower status groups. In the meantime, there has been an increase in the number of members of the new middle class whose residential preference is the city centre and an urban lifestyle. The increased number of international investors and corporate construction firms have integrated the city into global capitalism. It is especially significant that residents are willing to invest in the renovation of apartments acquired during privatization. Kovacs et al. (2013) conclude that urban regeneration and improvements in devastated Budapest districts were realized without major problems and obstacles, as the process was not accompanied by massive displacement or social tensions among the population, due to the size of the ownership sector but also due to the social responsibility of local authorities[23]. A Western model of gentrification was realized in smaller areas – SEM IX and Rev 8 (Kovacs et al., 2013).

18 In some central parts as much as three quarters of all buildings (Sykora, 2006).

19 The neighbourhood is inhabited by both new residents (gentrificators) and old; there are new and old buildings, those that have been renovated and those that have not (Sykora, 2006).

20 The main gentrified district in Prague.

21 In the process of gentrification smaller and more modest flats are often expanded or joined together, thus becoming larger, more luxurious apartments.

22 The number of inhabitants with university degree increased especially in Prague's districts 1, 2 and 6 (districts with private villas, traditionally inhabited by the higher class).

23 This model could be named "localized gentrification", due to interventions by local authorities and the aspect of keeping the process under control by the public sector (Kovacs et al., 2013).

In postsocialist cities pioneer gentrification grows at a slow pace, but Pixova perceives an increase of alternative use of space in Prague (Pixova, 2012). Alternative activities are related to the rise of a new middle class (young artists, creative experts, members of sub-cultures, students, academics and activists). Pixova notes that they have the same characteristics identified by Lay (1996): special needs and a taste for the consumption of culture, lifestyle, and also in preferences for urban space. Some of the members of the new middle class in Prague has become an important actor in creating new alternative trends and spatial patterns, as well as establishing new alternative spaces – art galleries and exhibition spaces have opened in formerly industrial zones.[24] This use of space can be brought in a certain relation with the pioneer gentrification – different lifestyles and a new aesthetic – although it is important to emphasize that these spaces do not contain a residential function.

Also, one of the specificities of gentrification in postsocialist cities is the non-investing into neighbourhoods of the working class already in the middle-class neighbourhoods. One invests into neighbourhoods according to their social rather than physical characteristics (Sykora, 2006). Undoubtedly, gentrification will continue to expand, but if it is not about large spatial transformations[25], the inherited heterogeneity of the neighbourhood will to some extent be retained.

The Presence of the Phenomenon of Gentrification in Belgrade

The uniqueness of postsocialist transformation in Serbia has influenced the socio-spatial development of Belgrade and how the process of gentrification in it is manifested. Initially, during the period of so-called blocked transformation (from 1989 to 2000), the process of social transformation began and was intensified after political changes in 2000 (Lazić, 2005, 2011). After political stabilization the inflow of foreign investment and the arrival of international firms began. Belgrade[26] attracted the larg-

24 At the same time, several alternative grassroots community projects were also realized in Prague. These centres served for socializing and non-commercial culture, despite multiple challenges imposed by the local authorities (Pixova, 2012:102).

25 Such as the Belgrade Waterfront project.

26 The city, especially New Belgrade, attracts investors due to its location, the vicinity of the old city centre, relatively good infrastructure, with enough free space, without unresolved property-legal relations. In central parts of the city one can identify an accelerated commercialization of space: the opening of stores of world brands, branches of banks, restaurants and cafes in prestigious urban locations (Backović, 2010).

est number of domestic and foreign investors in Serbia. The economy gradually began to grow and the rate of GDP growth increased (2000: 7.8%, 2001: 5.0%, 2002: 7.1%, 2003: 4.4%, 2004: 9.0%)[27]. The structure of the economy gradually changed, so about 60 percent of the national product comes from the tertiary sector. Trade and similar activities account for about a third of total GDP and industry no longer dominates as was the case before (SRGB, 2008: 14). GDP growth in this period is due to the growth of economic activity in the service sector. However, the trend of inflows of investments, economic restructuring and growth has stalled under the influence of the global economic crisis.[28] Although economic reforms after 2000 led to certain increases in production, living standard and poverty reduction, trends in employment decline and increase in unemployment[29], which were characteristic of the 1990s, are still visible.

As in the case of Zagreb/Croatia (Čaldarović & Šarinić, 2008; Sviržić Gotovac, 2010), in Belgrade/Serbia institutional framework has not adequately kept pace with changes on the ground and, therefore, private sector actors came to dominate the city's urban spatial development (Vujović & Petrović, 2006; Petovar, 2006). The interests of investors became entrenched as the dominant factor in urban planning, regardless to the consequences for the surrounding areas regarding the quality of housing and living conditions in the neighbourhood and in the city as a whole. The practice came to be known as investor urbanism and denotes the adjustment and subordination of the city's space to the interests of investors, that is, those interested in building in or reconstructing a certain urban area (Petovar, 2006: 76).

Although the process of commercialisation of space and the construction of new residential buildings is taking place, gentrification in Belgrade has not been explored sufficiently, with the exception of Todorić and Ratkaj (2011) and Krstić (2015). The analysis in this paper is focused on prerequisites for the emergence of the phenomenon that have been identified in other, primarily postsocialist, cities. In spite of structural

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27 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Republic of Serbia 1995–2017. (ESA 2010) http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/Public/PageView.aspx?pKey=61, accessed 15/12/2017.

28 In 2009, GDP receded by –3.1%; the rates were barely positive in 2010, 2011 and 2013 (0.6%, 1.4% and 2.6%, and negative growth rates were again recorded in 2012 and 2014 (-1.0% and –1.8%). In the last three years, there has been a gradual economic recovery with positive growth rates (2017, 1,9%). GDP of the Republic of Serbia 1995–2017. (ESA 2010) http://webrzs.stat.gov.rs/WebSite/Public/PageView.aspx?pKey=61, accessed 22/03/2018.

29 The unemployment rate in Serbia is among the highest in the region and is significantly higher than the unemployment rate in the EU27. Only Greece (23.6%) and Spain (19.6%) (Eurostat) had higher unemployment rates than Serbia in 2016.

changes, the centre of Belgrade did not cease to be the most desired living location. During the socialist period, the city centre was a prestigious residential location[30], in addition to the pre-war elite settlements of Dedinje, Topčidersko brdo, Senjak and Kotež Neimar. These were inhabited by the elite, the political, military and police leadership, as well as the intellectual elite, artists and scientists (Vujović, 1990). The postsocialist transformation did not instigate changes to these developmental trends and served merely to intensify them. The 2002 census (Appendix 1) shows that the highest concentration of the highly educated is in communities in the city centre.[31] Data from the last census (2011) show an even higher concentration of the highly educated, especially in the municipalities of Stari grad and Vračar, in which every second resident has a higher education or university diploma. The data show that there was no change in the socio-spatial structure, the centre of the city was and remains a desirable location. Also, Western-style suburbanization as seen in some postsocialist cities (Budapest), did not occur in Belgrade.

Construction of residential buildings is not concentrated in central areas[32], where the number of higher middle-class inhabitants continues to increase. This indirectly means that members of this class choose to move to the centre, and not necessarily to new residential buildings. This kind of mobility cannot be considered to be gentrification. Also, if a single residential building is built and there is no spatial transformation of the neighbourhood this also cannot be seen as gentrification.

Analysing the demand-side (actors), we can identify that foreign actors have not yet become a significant demand generator. This due to low rates of foreign investment and the small number of local people em-

30 Based on the 1991 census data, it is possible to analyse the socio-spatial structure that was established during the socialist period. The central city locations are distinguished by a concentration of highly educated people, especially the municipalities of Vračar and Savski venac. Certain neighbourhoods, here designated by the name of their community centres (mesna zajednica – MZ), exhibit an unusually high proportion of those with higher education attainment: MZ Zapadni Vračar with 30.39%, Fourth of July with 29.56%, MZ Trg Republike, 29.58% and Obilićev venac with 29.89%.

31 Vračar (MZ Cvetni trg, 37.57%), Savski venac (MZ Četvrti juli, 39.58%), Stari grad (MZ Moša Pijade, Obilićev venac and Čukur česma with just over 35%) and Palilula (MZ Tašmajdan, 36%) (Backović, 2010).

32 According to the data on housing construction in Belgrade, among central city municipalities, Stari grad has the lowest rate of housing construction (1.1 in 2009), while this parameter is much higher in Savski venac (4.8) and Vračar (8.2). New housing production is concentrated in New Belgrade, Voždovac and Zvezdara so these municipalities have a construction rate higher than the city average (Todorić & Ratkaj, 2011: 68).

ployed by foreign firms. In Belgrade[33] only 6.1% of employees are employed by foreign companies, only one fifth of which are classified as experts (20.6%). Although the structure of economic activities indicates an increasing share of services and a decrease in the activities of the primary and secondary sectors, the city's low GDP and the structure of economic activity (Radonjić, 2012) show the underdevelopment of the post-industrial economy and, therefore, the creative and service class. Consequently, the number of potential demand creators for gentrification is rather low compared with other postsocialist cities.

The analysis of the real estate market in Belgrade shows that, on one hand, the high price of newly built apartments[34] in better city locations make this type of housing affordable only to members of the elites. In mid-2000, when the political and economic situation stabilized, some investment was initiated into mid-range residential buildings in the form of gated communities (Oasis and Panorama in Dedinje – by local investors City Real Estate and Meridin Balkans, respectively). Subsequently, larger residential complexes were built away from the city centre, partly funded by foreign capital: Belville in New Belgrade (2000 units) and Oasis Golf Course in Surčin (6000 units) (Hirt & Petrović, 2011). The realization of such large-scale projects caused an increase in demand. The expected residents of Bellville and the Oasis Golf Course were foreigners as embassies and banks were interested in renting housing facilities for their employees in buildings with controlled access (Hirt & Petrović, 2011). However, the worsening economic situation then caused this demand to decline[35],

33 The structure of GDP by activity in 2016 for the Belgrade region was as follows: Agriculture, forestry and fishing (1.8%); Mining; manufacturing industry; supply of electricity, gas and steam and water supply and waste water management (16.8%); State administration, defence and compulsory social security; education and health and social protection (10.8%); Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities and administrative and support service activities (10.1%); Financial and insurance activities (6.3%); Construction (5.4%); Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles; transport and storage and accommodation and food services (24.2%); Real estate (with imputed rent) (10.1%); Information and communication (11.8%) and Art, entertainment and recreation; other service activities; the activity of the household as an employer and the activity of extraterritorial organizations and bodies (2.8%) (Source: Working document Regional Gross Domestic Product, Regions and areas of the Republic of Serbia, 2016, RZS).

34 Average selling price in euros per square metre of apartment space in new-builds: Voždovac (1500–1700); Vračar (2300–2500); Zvezdara (1650–1850); Zemun (1200–1400); New Belgrade (2300–2600); Palilula (1700–1900); Stari grad (3000–3300); Čukarica (2000–2300) and Savski venac (2300–2700). Source: Colliers Overview of the real estate market, 2011.

35 Even five years after construction was completed in Belville, not all apartments had been sold.

so in the forthcoming period smaller complexes are again planned (Colliers data for 2013). On the other hand, the average price of housing (per square metre) in central city locations remains rather high and thus cannot encourage pioneer ventures of space conversions or adaptations that would lead to the concentration of artists (i.e. pioneer gentrification).

Regarding the conditions perceived as necessary for pioneer gentrification, it is important to note some additional facts. First, although the economic position of professionals in Serbia in the period after 2000 had improved relative to the 1990s, for most of them the increase was insufficient for housing to become a matter of choice.[36] Additionally, privatization of the housing system also did not increase housing mobility, since the high incidence of homeownership does not contribute to frequent change of housing (Petrović, 2004). Second, although there are some examples of urban space conversion in Belgrade (Beton Hala, KPGT, BIGZ, KC Grad, projects in Savamala, Ciglana etc.) – with devastated (industrial) areas revitalised primarily to offer alternative cultural scenes or create cultural centres – without a new residential function this does not categorise them as examples of pioneer gentrification. Although these projects certainly have influenced the creation of alternative cultural spaces and contributed to a diversification of lifestyles and the related broadening of how urban space is used.[37]

The Belgrade Waterfront Project: An Example of Profitable Gentrification

This part of the paper will analyse the Belgrade Waterfront Project (BWP) as an example of profitable gentrification that is radically transforming the centre of the city. The BWP is located in the Savamala district[38], which is a very attractive location in the city and, therefore, vari-

36 In addition, the living standards deteriorated in 2012 compared to 2003, so the deterioration of the economic position is visible for all classes in Serbia, except the highest (Cvejić, 2012: 149; Manić, 2013: 24). Lower middle economic position (38.4%) dominate the categories of professional, self-employed, lower management and freelance professional with higher education (Manić, 2013: 23). In Belgrade, the economic position of this class is higher, 36.4% have a middle and 24.2% have higher middle economic position, but that is also insufficient to create new residential choices (regarding location, type or quality of housing). The illustrated data show that there are structural limitations for the initiation of gentrification.

37 In Western cities, the trend of "returning to the city centre" is based on alternative lifestyles, so analysis of gentrification should not ignore this very important dimension.

38 For more about the historical development of the Sava riverbank and plans for its reconstruction see Dajč (2012) and Kadijević & Kovačević (2016).

ous ideas and plans for its renewal and revitalisation had been developed earlier but none of them came to be realized.[39] Recently, the area has also been revitalised by an infusion of cultural content. The initiative was neither made by individuals as a result of their autonomous actions or involved the adaptation of residential buildings, which are the peculiarities of the pioneer phase of gentrification in Western cities. The revitalization process was reduced to the opening of cultural centres, entertainment spaces (cafes, bars, clubs) and places used by the civic sector for their activities (in culture, education, etc.) with the support of local authorities[40] and the private sector (small-scale entrepreneurs).[41] The transformation of the abandoned Nolit warehouse into the Magacin Cultural Centre[42] (initiated in 2007 by the Belgrade Youth Centre, an official institution of the city) can be taken as the beginning of this revitalisation cycle. Following this, many other facilities were opened: The Grad European Centre for Culture and Debate[43] (2009), the multifunctional Mikser House (2012), Nova Iskra (2012), etc. A series of activities were organized[44]as part of the Urban Incubator project in Belgrade[45], initiated by the Goethe Institute, as was the Savamala Civic District.[46] From 2012 to 2016 the Mikser Festival was held in Savamala[47]. The opening of new facilities and the organization of various programmes and activities drew attention to Savamala, which, among other things, became a tourist attraction. In local and foreign media, this part of the city gradually took on a new image as a place of creativity, culture, nightlife and entertainment (see more in the chapter by Selena Lazić in this volume).

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39 As Savamala is located in a central location, almost all General Urban Plans (GUP 1923, GUP 1950, GUP 1972, GP 2003 (amendments 2005, 2007, 2009, 2014) and GUP 2016) dealt with this area in detail (Cvetinović, Maričić & Bolay, 2016).

40 More about the role of local authorities, primarily the Municipality of Savski Venac, and foreign funds in Jocić, Budović & Winkler, 2017. As the authors point out, there was no official plan for the revitalization of Savamala, while the idea was created in 2006 (Jocić, Budović & Winkler, 2017: 129).

41 The private sector invested in activities relating to art, culture and entertainment.

42 The space is intended for exhibitions, lectures and other cultural content.

43 KC Grad was opened in an old warehouse building from 1884, representing an example of the conversion of the industrial into cultural space, while preserving the authenticity of the space. Workshops, conferences, concerts, exhibitions, film screenings, literary evenings, etc. are held here. This project was initiated and realized through partnership between the Municipality of Savski venac and Felix Meritis – an independent European centre for art, culture and science (Amsterdam, Netherlands). http://www.gradbeograd.eu/partneri.php, accessed 10/03/2018.

44 More about the Urban Incubator Project in Cvetinovic, Kucina & Bolay, 2013.

45 http://www.goethe.de/ins/cs/bel/prj/uic/sav/enindex.htm, accessed 09/03/2018.

46 More in Cvetinovic, Kucina & Bolay, 2013.

47 In 2017 the Mikser Festival returned to the grain silos of the former "Žitomlin" mill in Lower Dorćol, the location where it originally began.

These processes do exhibit certain characteristics of "pioneering" urban revitalisation, primarily due to the fact that they were not guided by strategic plans and projects, although they were carried out with the support of local authorities. With time, the shift from this kind of transformation to profitable gentrification happened with the initiation of the Belgrade Waterfront Project (BWP)[48].

The construction of the Belgrade Waterfront complex began on 27 September 2016, with the laying of a foundation stone for a tall tower, which is a symbol of the project and has ambitions to become a new symbol of the city.[49] The event was attended by the highest national and local level representatives (the Prime Minister and the Mayor of Belgrade) and the owner of Eagle Hills (investor). Although the city authorities were initially involved, national level politicians soon took over the realisation of the project.

The investor's official website[50] announces the construction of more than 6,000 luxurious apartments; 24 centres with business premises; the new Belgrade Tower; eight hotels; a new 1.8km-long riverside promenade; the BW Gallery, a new shopping district which is planned to become the main destination in the region for shopping, entertainment and vacations; the Belgrade Park and accompanying cultural and artistic centres.[51]

The signing of the agreement between the investor and the Serbian state was preceded by the adjusting the institutional framework to allow the implementation of the proposed project. The national government declared BWP to be a project of national significance, which was the starting point for changing urban planning regulations and city planning documents. From May 2014 to April 2015[52], urban planning regulations were

48 The BWP was presented by the investor, Eagle Hills, in January 2014. The project relates to the right bank of the Sava River, covering an area of about 100 hectares between Belgrade Fair and Branko's Bridge and between the Sava River and Savska Street. The value of this investment project is estimated at around EUR 2.8 billion for the construction of over 1.5 million square metres of housing, business and commercial space and space for cultural, artistic and sporting events: http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1276219, accessed 10/03/2018.

49 It was declared that the 160m tower would be named the Belgrade Tower: http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/ci/story/5/Економија/2051831/Постављен+камен+темељац+за+"Београд+на+води".html, accessed 10/03/2018.

50 https://www.eaglehills.com/sr/our-developments/serbia/belgrade-waterfront/master-plan, accessed 28/04/2018.

51 It is not specified which content will be included therein.

52 The Agreement was signed on 26 April 2015 between representatives of the state, the city and international private capital – Eagle Hills (the company's headquarters are in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates). The contract was signed by the director of Eagle Hills, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure, Zorana Mihajlović, and the Director of the BW company, Aleksandar Trifunović: http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr /story/13/

changed so as to fit the investor's proposal. In July 2014, amendments to the Master plan of Belgrade (MPB) were proposed, stating the need to review the following: the rules for the implementation of the proposed plan (the obligation to hold a tender and seek expert opinion for individual locations)[53]; permission to build high-rise buildings throughout the city; and repurposing land in the area of the Sava Amphitheatre[54], especially the relocation of rail traffic (IDGPB2021, 2014: 2).[55] By adopting amendments to the MPB 2021, regulations related to protection of the panoramic view of the old city were also abolished.

On 3 June 2014, the Government of the Republic of Serbia took a decision to pass the Spatial Plan for the Special Purpose Area and Development of Part of Belgrade Coastal Area – the Riverside Area of the River Sava for the Project "Belgrade Waterfront". The process that enabled the implementation of the project was completed on 8 April 2015, when the National Assembly passed a *Lex Specialis* on the BWP, known as the Law on Determining the Public Interest and Special Expropriation Procedures and Issuing the Building Permit for the Project "Belgrade Waterfront".[56] It is of particular note that Article 2 of this Law determines that the construction of the BW business-residential complex is in the public interest.

The realisation of the BWP led to a displacement of population and the relocation of existing content from Savamala. In April 2016, 234 families[57] were displaced, the Miksalište[58] refugee centre was evicted and more than 1,000 square metres of office space in Hercegovacka Street, Mostarska Street and Braća Krsmanović Street were violently torn down. Some clubs moved to Skadarmala.[59] In May 2017 Mikser House closed its doors, explaining that their rent had been continuously increased by the owner of the property.[60]

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ekonomija/1900785/potpisan-ugovor-za-beograd-na-vodi-vredan-35-milijardi-evra.html, accessed 11/03/2018.

53 Namely, if the Government of the Republic of Serbia determines that one location is important for the Republic of Serbia, a tender for that location tender is not obligatory.

54 The height and number of storeys defined by regulations on the height of buildings can be increased through the creation of a Detailed Regulation Plan.

55 In September the Belgrade City Assembly adopted amendments to the MPB.

56 http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/lat/pdf/zakoni/2015/547–15%20lat.pdf., accessed 11/03/2018.

57 https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/timotijevici-i-bez-vode-brane-svoju-kucu/, accessed 23/02/2018.

58 https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/beograd-izbeglice-miksaliste/27699370.html, accessed 23/02/2018.

59 In March 2016, some bars and clubs from Savamala "Kenozoik", the former "Peron" and "Dvorištance" continue to work in the area of the former brewery.

60 http://house.mikser.rs/dovidenja-savamala/, accessed 22/02/2018.

Once it had been made public, the proposed plan for the BWP was sharply criticised by industry professionals and Belgrade residents. The Initial Board for Architecture and Urban Planning of the Department of Visual Arts and Music of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) submitted remarks to the Republic Agency for Spatial Planning[61] (October 2014). The Academy of Architecture of Serbia[62] (AAS) adopted a Declaration on BWP[63] (March 2015) and a debate was held on the topic: Under the Surface of the BWP (October 2014). The negative consequences of the project and criticism of various aspects of the project are related to: changing the institutional framework, socio-economic and architectural-urban impact and infrastructural problems.

From a legal standpoint, the *Lex Specialis* adopted is considered harmful, unconstitutional and contrary to the fundamental principles of International law. The BWP lacks sufficient facilities for public use, although it is claimed that its construction is in the public interest. In fact, the plan contains primarily commercial content, intended for sale.[64]

The in their adopted declaration the AAS pointed to violation and alteration of urban plans and call for the immediate suspension of the project. The MPB was amended under pressure from the executive branches of the national and Belgrade governments. A clause stipulating that the central part of the Sava Amphitheatre be reserved predominantly for structures with a public function with a limited number of storeys was removed. Riverside areas are not protected as a common good.[65] In the remarks made by the SANU, it is alleged that cooperation with domestic experts is lacking and that the institutions are reduced to the role of the executors – to create conditions that will suit the investor's plans.

Critics also highlighted the fact that the project's implementation will jeopardize the symbolic image of the city, with significant consequences for the infrastructure of that area and its surroundings. The ASS Declaration criticizes the idea of creating a new image of Belgrade by building the Belgrade Tower. It asks who ordered and profiled this new identity. In addition, the style and quality of architecture proposed by the project

61 Remarks and suggestions on the Draft of the Special Purpose Area Spatial Plan for Regulation of the Coastal part of the City of Belgrade – riverside area of the river Sava for the project "Belgrade Waterfront" (Remarks and Suggestions).

62 An independent professional-artistic association of distinguished creators in the field of architecture, urbanism, history and architecture theory.

63 http://aas.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Declaration-AAS-o-Beograd-na-vodi-05.-mart-2015.pdf, accessed 09/01/2018.

64 http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/drustvo/pravo_danas/advokati_projekat_quotbeograd_na_vodiquot_neustavan_.1118.html?news_id=299519, accessed 10/01/2018.

65 http://aas.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Declaration-AAS-o-Beograd-na-vodi-05.-mart-2015.pdf, accessed 09/01/2018.

is commonplace elsewhere in the world, and offers no unique or local identity.[66] The comments of the SANU also paid attention to the issue of identity by pointing that the planned buildings are in conflict with the basic topographic and morphological characteristics of the area, since they completely block most of the vistas of the city and almost all the prominent places that make up the historical identity of Belgrade. The proposed height of the new tower is also considerably above the angle of Terazije, Slavija, the Boulevard of King Aleksandar and Vračar plateau. Thus, visually Belgrade will be completely cut off from its waterfront and turned into a hinterland behind gigantic structures.[67]

As the centre of the city already struggles with infrastructural problems, especially traffic problems, the question is how existing capacity will endure the additional pressure. The BWP is projected to accommodate 14,000 residents and over 12,000 employees.[68]

The price of housing in the BWP has also come under criticism. The lowest price announced per square metre is 2,500 euros, while the price of the cheapest apartment is 156,000 euros.[69] The announced prices indicate that the housing space will undoubtedly be available only to members of the elite and foreigners. In the remarks of the SANU, it is pointed out that it is not clear how the number of housing units was calculated, nor for whom this category of apartments is intended (in other words, what is the benefit for the city or the Republic of Serbia?).[70]

In addition, it is alleged that existing small– and medium-sized shops will be compromised by the construction of a large mall. There is also a remark that the complex does not contain enough green spaces or squares. The BWP does not pay enough attention to public spaces, parks and other green areas, which are extremely important contents and purposes.[71]

In addition to the opinions of experts, ordinary people have also expressed criticism and dissatisfaction with the proposed project. In particular, the initiative *Ne davimo Beograd* (Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own)[72] has

66 http://aas.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Declaration-AAS-o-Beograd-na-vodi-05.-mart-2015.pdf, accessed 09/01/2018.

67 The highest structures in Belgrade on the waterfront will reach an altitude of 175m above sea level (75 + 100) while the Terazije plateau is at 117m, Slavija at 119m, and Crveni krst is at 157m. Remarks and Suggestions, p. 16.

68 Remarks and Suggestions, pp. 8–9.

69 https://www.b92.net/biz/vesti/srbija.php?yyyy=2016&mm=09&dd=21&nav_id=1179096, accessed 09/01/2018.

70 Remarks and Suggestions, p. 13.

71 Remarks and Suggestions, p. 14.

72 This Initiative was created by a civil society organization called the Ministry of Spatial Planning, which has since 2011 dealt with the urban transformation of Belgrade and other cities in Serbia and advocates responsible use of public property: https://issuu.com/ministarstvoprostora/docs, accessed 12/02/2018.

followed the whole process of the BWP.[73] The greatest public reaction was caused by the events in Savamala on the night between 24 and 25 April 2016, when a group of masked people used earthmoving machinery to tear down buildings at the location of planned construction for the BWP. This violent demolition of buildings in Hercegovačka street became a critical issue that spurred people to become more involved in the protests. According to various estimates the number of people taking part in the protests during the summer of 2016 was between 5,000 and 25,000 (see more in the chapters by Jelisaveta Petrović and Mladen Nikolić in this volume).

The implementation of the BWP shows the dominance of investor urbanism in Belgrade. In this case, criticism came from the expert community and civil initiatives. The inability to influence its implementation to some extent shows how other actors, beyond the political and economic spheres, have become irrelevant in directing the development of the city.

Conclusion

Some rare cases of pioneering gentrification are evident in postsocialist cities, however, in most cases it is profitable gentrification – where housing facilities are intended for members of the service class, primarily foreigners and the employees of foreign companies.[74] Thus, another peculiarity of gentrification is that foreign companies are present as investors, while foreigners are also the end users of residential space. Profitable gentrification is directly related to the development of the service economy and in postsocialist cities it is primarily dependent on the presence of foreign capital. The main actors are investors and entrepreneurs who build facilities for the middle classes (Prague, Budapest, Tallinn) or the economic and political elite (Zagreb[75], Belgrade).

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73 The Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiative has highlighted non-transparency of decision-making. The first activity they organized was participation in a session of the City Assembly, where a public debate was held on the construction of the Belgrade Waterfront project. Subsequently, they protested when the Agreement was signed on 26 April 2015: http: //www.b92.net/biz/vesti/srbija.php? Yyyy = 2015 & mm = 04 & dd = 26 & nav_id = 985118, accessed 12/02/2018.

74 In Hungary (Kovacs, Wiessner & Zischner, 2013) this has changed since the country joined the European Union. Unrestricted rights of foreigners to own property increased investment in the housing fund at central locations in Budapest because foreigners and highly-paid local professionals employed by international companies wanted to live near the workplace.

75 In the case of Croatia (Sviršić Gotovac, 2010), the middle class was replaced by the elite, who are the only ones able to afford apartments with a very high price per square metre (i.e. 7,000 up to 10,000 euros).

The BWP (commercial and residential luxury space) is an example of profitable gentrification whose implementation significantly transforms a central core of Belgrade. The constructed facilities are intended for members of the elite and for foreign citizens, in accordance with findings in other postsocialist cities. This foreign investment has undoubtedly been supported by national and local authorities. The implementation of this project shows that the involvement of foreign investors is too great and that the actions of the public sector are emblematic of the dominance of state level central power, non-transparent decision-making, disregard for expert opinion and the exclusion of the civil sector.

Appendix 1

Table 1 Increase of spatial concentration of highly educated residents in central Belgrade municipalities[76]

Municipality / Year	1991	2002	2001
City of Belgrade	11.7%	13.7%	27.8%
New Belgrade	17.7%	20.9%	40.6%
Savski venac	23.6%	27.5%	46.6%
Stari grad	23.8%	29.6%	50.2%
Vračar	27.6%	31.9%	52.3%

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76 Although New Belgrade does not belong to the old city core, due to the development it has experienced during socialism (in terms of housing) and in the postsocialist period (business and retail) it is now perceived as one of the city's central locations.

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BEHIND THE FRONTLINE OF THE BELGRADE WATERFRONT: A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE EARLY IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF A TRANSNATIONAL REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Jorn Koelemaij and Stefan Janković

Abstract: In 2012, plans were announced to develop a large-scale mixed-use waterfront project along the Sava River in central Belgrade. Within 30 years, the 80-hectare site is projected to contain the region's largest shopping mall, alongside thousands of square metres of luxury apartments and high-end offices. Promises of a 3.5 billion euro investment from the United Arab Emirates associated with this real estate development project quickly led to polemical interactions and tensions between the plan's supporters and critics. Based on a variety of qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews conducted in Belgrade, Dubai and Abu Dhabi, we will outline the strategies and actions that key actors and stakeholders undertook, particularly during the project's early implementation phase in 2015 and 2016. We will illustrate how these interactions and tensions between and among the actors took place on and across different scales. Prior to empirical investigation of confrontational actor-relations, the paper will concisely discuss how Belgrade Waterfront fits into a wider global trend of "world city entrepreneurialism" and associated state rescaling processes. On that basis, the paper will then focus on how this transnational real estate development project, despite claims that it will increase competitiveness and employment, came to be perceived as a potential threat by its opponents (who assume that it will trigger uneven development and functions as a catalyst for authoritarianism). This brings us to the focal point of the contesting voices and actions arrayed against this project, which revolves primarily around claims that the "public" are being excluded during its implementation.

Keywords: Belgrade Waterfront, world-city entrepreneurialism, real estate development, power relations

Introduction

"Eagle Hills develops flagship city destinations that invigorate aspiring nations, [h]elping countries raise their global profiles to new heights"
(Eagle Hills, 2014)

"Belgrade Waterfront takes urban renewal to new heights – a smart city for a future that combines commerce, culture and community"
(Eagle Hills, 2014).

The above quotes are just two examples of the many catchy proclamations with which readers were confronted in the original official brochure of the "*modern centre of excellence*", presented to the public shortly after the project was announced. Belgrade Waterfront (BW) is a transnational real estate development project in Serbia's capital that is currently being realized on a mostly derelict, yet centrally located site along the river Sava, to the rear of the city's 19th century central railway station. Within 30 years, the site, covering almost 80 hectares, is intended to contain a 200-metre-tall tower, a large shopping mall and mixed-use spaces for working, living and leisure. The project, which has taken shape as a joint venture between a United Arab Emirates (UAE) based investor and the Republic of Serbia, has caused significant controversy and brought rise to struggles between different socio-cultural actors representing a variety of scalar positions and hierarchies. The overblown ambitions and promises that accompanied promotional activities during the project's early implementation phase attracted the attention not only of potentially interested investors and buyers, as was intended, but also that of a variety of (local and international) journalists and academics, who more often than not placed particular emphasis on the concerns of critical voices opposed to the project.

Indeed, the case of Belgrade Waterfront offers a unique opportunity for scholarly reflection from multiple interesting analytical angles. Researchers have thus far focused on four areas: the role and strategies of actively resisting social movements (e.g. Matković & Ivković, 2018); the public interest and participation or the lack thereof (Lalović *et al.,* 2015); changing institutional frameworks (Zeković, Maričić & Vujošević, 2016) and the active, top-down role of (those acting on behalf of) the state (Grubbauer & Čamprag, 2019; Koelemaij, 2018); and finally the displacement of informal settlements (Stanković, 2016). Our goal in this paper is to integrate those insights, and to reconstruct the early days of Belgrade Waterfront by adopting an agency-focused, relational analytical approach.

The main intention is to reflect upon existing power relations behind the project while assessing to what extent it is possible to speak of "scalar hierarchies" in this particular context. Additionally, we will evaluate strategies adopted by the project's main stakeholders and the underlying rationales they serve. In order to do so, we have conducted in-depth interviews with numerous stakeholders who were closely involved with the project, either directly or indirectly. Our respondents can be identified both as supporters, who personally or professionally approve of the project, and as opponents, who disapprove of the project for a variety of reasons and from a variety of backgrounds. Additionally, city and national-level policy documents relating to the project or to spatial planning in general were extensively analysed.

Due to on-going changes to the project's design and legal status, as well as the constantly shifting frontline between opposing and supporting actors, this chapter is confined to the project's early implementation phase: from the summer of 2014 to the summer of 2016. Taking an agency-focused approach as essential to obtaining insights into the social, economic and political dimensions behind global urban policy-making, we set forth from three main research questions. In short, we aim to exploratively reveal *which actors* act on behalf of which structures and institutions, to observe *how* they act and to understand *why* they act the way they do. This approach allows us to engage with on-going debates in the academic literature that question the notion of state rescaling as it pertains to world city-entrepreneurial projects (e.g. Golubchikov, 2010), as well as with the generally accepted logic behind speculative urbanism in so-called frontier capital markets.

Prior to presenting the Belgrade Waterfront project in more detail, Section 1 will briefly discuss how the term "world city entrepreneurialism" has been understood thus far. Subsequently, in Section 2, we explain and justify the methodology employed. Section 3 discusses the main events relating to the launch of Belgrade Waterfront and the reactions and tensions the announcement triggered, as well as identifying the key actors and groups who have raised their voices against the project. Similarly, Section 4 reveals how actors on the other side of the frontline have defended and justified the project. In Section 5 we analytically discuss the power relations between these different actors, which attitudes and interactions accompany their positions and how this relates to the scales on and across which they operate. In the concluding section, we argue that the main incentives for all of the involved stakeholders are, to a greater or lesser extent, to gain symbolic capital from the Belgrade Waterfront project.

1. World City Entrepreneurialism and its Speculative Urban Practices

When David Harvey (1989) wrote his seminal paper on urban entrepreneurialism, he first and foremost expressed concerns on how the increasing focus on inter-urban competition not only led to changing trends in urban governance and policy but also that this new fashion had macroeconomic consequences. Public-private partnerships facilitating speculative urban development projects became a widespread phenomenon in North American cities from the early 1980s onwards. Harvey noted that this new type of boosterism implied that local governments often took on the financial risks, while the private sector took the benefits. In what proved to be prescient, Harvey (1989, p. 10) further noted that one of the features of urban entrepreneurialism would be that "it may even force repetitive and serial reproduction of certain patterns of development (such as the serial reproduction of 'world trade centres' or of new cultural and entertainment centres, of waterfront development, of post-modern shopping malls, and the like)".

In the three decades that have passed since, numerous studies have shown that urban entrepreneurialism is not only a US phenomenon. Moreover, inter-urban competition has been upscaled and, since the beginning of the new century, it appears to have become fashionable for many urban policymakers across the globe to try to put their city "on the map" through city marketing campaigns and flagship architecture, in order to improve the city's so-called global status. While it started out as a critical academic concept (Sassen, 1991, see also Van Meeteren, Derudder & Bassens, 2016), the global city has in recent years increasingly become an aspirational category, due to the growing influence of transnational consultancy firms in global policy-making, as is frequently highlighted in the burgeoning policy mobilities literature (e.g. Prince, 2012). According to Leon (2017), who describes this trend as "municipal mercantilism", such interventions require an active state (contrary to neoliberal assumptions) and they reinforce class relations.

Although similar observations about the active role of the state in urban entrepreneurial projects are now being more widely recognized, the key question remains precisely which state actors are to be most involved. Framed differently: "which actors act on behalf of the state?". It seems that in most cases, urban entrepreneurial projects in "emerging" or "developing" economies, particularly larger scale projects, still rely on the close involvement of central, national-level governments (Golubchikov, 2010). It is they who often initiate and facilitate boosterist policies with the aim of

eventually asserting the political elite's power position. Policies and projects such as these often have a very speculative and experimental character, meaning that the financial outcomes are uncertain, thus involving high-risks where public money is involved (Goldman, 2011; Goodfellow, 2017; Lauermann, 2018). This is a phenomenon that has thus far mainly been witnessed in the Global South, namely the Middle East (Acuto, 2010; Wippel et al., 2014), Asia (Ong, 2011; Olds & Yeung, 2004) and Africa (Watson, 2013). When a world city entrepreneurial project is also being facilitated by foreign capital, such as in the case of Belgrade Waterfront, an interesting additional layer is added in terms of governance dynamics. What makes such cases particularly interesting is that while both the providing foreign or "global" investor and the receiving "domestic" government share some similar goals, their respective incentives and rationales for becoming involved in these kinds of projects can simultaneously differ.

2. Doing Global Urban Research Relationally: A Matter of Methods

In the same year that Harvey published his urban entrepreneurialism paper, Manuel Castells (1989) came up with his concept of the (global) "space of flows", arguing that spaces and cities are continuously being produced by what (transnationally) flows through them. This epistemological shift implies an almost unequivocal compliance with the coexistence of multiple spatial arrangements (Löw, 2016; Low, 2017; Janković, 2015) – *inter alia*, subtracting the assumed fixity of spatial affairs. It has additionally inspired many urban studies scholars who have since applied those conceptual thoughts in a variety of ontological ways, ranging from the more structural (e.g. Taylor & Derudder, 2015) to post-structural and assemblage approaches (e.g. Jacobs, 2012; Allen, 2016; Amin & Thrift, 2017) and everything in between (e.g. McCann & Ward, 2010). With the intention of comprehending the global networks and negotiations that underlie Belgrade Waterfront, and thus of focusing on the geographies of governance behind the project, our approach endeavours to combine a political economic narrative with insights derived from some useful elements of topological and assemblage analyses. In line with Büdenbender and Golubchikov (2017, p. 81), our "take on assemblages is more tactical than ontological" and is thus located somewhere in between the sharp divides, as it acknowledges the existence of structured realities whilst concurrently seeking to trace how they are composed. While allowing us to find out how state authority is being socially constructed through the role of dif-

ferent actors and materialities (see Allen & Cochrane, 2010; Sassen, 2008), this approach enables us also to assess how different scales are socially constructed through relationalities (Massey, 2005). The major advantage of this approach is that it makes possible to discern the mechanisms through which world city entrepreneurialism operates, while also taking into account the various and often-conflicting tonalities that actors display in relation to this project.

Thus, rather than force our observations into neat and harmonious patterns, we intended to extract as much as possible from the recent restoration of processual thinking (e.g. Abbott, 2016) and "agency-driven" methodological prescriptions. If the maxim proposed by Desmond (2014, p. 565), "processes live in relations", is truly adopted it then appears necessary to reject the view of (collective) actors as "culturally bounded", allowing them instead to create boundaries through conflict permeated by a distinct moral grammar and interpretative strategies. Such methodological approaches make it possible to retrieve the enduring pursuit of power, recognition and resources that exists within urban affairs and particularly in defining "public space" (Vigneswaran, Iveson & Low, 2017). Still, the focus set on the field where these relations enmesh, seeks to go beyond merely registering relevant actors and aims to discern the very rationale of action or involvement. As Hoyler and Harrison (2018) state in their concluding remarks in the recent edited volume, *Doing Global Urban Research*, a trend towards agency-focused research has indeed helped in sharpening analytical lenses. Namely, they argue that having asked and answered the "who-questions", "questions that begin with '*what*' and '*where*' will help you define the scale and scope of their agentic role in the global urban; those starting with '*how*' will allow you to uncover the strategies and mechanisms that enable the actor(s) to fulfil this role; and '*why*' questions will help to unpack their motivations and interests" (p. 227).

To unravel exactly these research questions regarding the Belgrade Waterfront project, we have made use of a variety of qualitative research methods and conducted fieldwork research at different locations. Between August 2015 and August 2016, we conducted 14 in-depth interviews with a total of 21 stakeholders in Belgrade, including politicians, consultants, civil servants, journalists, academics, activists and businessmen. In the selection procedure we aimed to find a balance regarding their *pro* or *contra* attitudes to the project. In every interview we asked the respondent to not only reflect upon their own involvement regarding the Belgrade Waterfront project but also to share their knowledge with us on what they thought about the power relations and motivations behind certain actions. In this way we were able to familiarize ourselves with whatever took place

"behind the frontline" of the project but it also allowed us to better understand why it is that the different opposing groups make use of different strategic discourses. The insights that we derived from this collected material was supplemented by thorough analysis of several policy documents (mainly issued by the Republic of Serbia and the City of Belgrade), as well as advertising brochures issued by the Belgrade Waterfront Company. Additionally, during the spring of 2018, 13 interviews were conducted with real estate development experts in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, London and Amsterdam. Some of these provided us with important insights into how UAE-based developers generally perceive transnational real estate development activities.

In the remainder of this paper, we will gradually construct our concluding arguments according to the "show, don't tell-principle". A relatively large number of quotes will be shared, not only to make the text more vibrant but even more so to illustrate the actor-perspective in practice as accurately and as authentically as possible.

3. A New Skyline for Belgrade: The Main Criticisms

The introduction to this chapter reveals some of the main characteristics of Belgrade Waterfront or at least how it was presented during its first announcements in 2013 and 2014. According to Radosavljević (2008), the *Amphitheatre* site, on which Belgrade Waterfront is being constructed, has for quite some time been regarded as a site that could potentially yield political and societal support for ruling political elites. Over the past century, there had been several plans and proposals to develop this centrally located site but they remained unimplemented for various reasons. This situation changed from the moment that Aleksandar Vučić rose to power, from his becoming deputy prime minister in 2012, prime minister in 2014 and eventually president of the Republic of Serbia in 2017. During earlier electoral campaigns, he assured voters that he had found a foreign investor that was willing to help the country to finally develop the mainly unused site along the Sava River, and thus to contribute to the city's "global profile".

During 2014, large billboards and advertising exhibition spaces showing a model of BW emerged throughout Belgrade's city centre, attracting a lot of attention, from journalists, architects, activists and academics, both domestic and international. Another factor that contributed to the profile of the project was, as has already been mentioned, the striking amount of foreign direct investment (purportedly €3.5 billion) that was quickly

emphasised by those directly involved. Moreover, Vučić himself, the prime minister at that time, and Siniša Mali, then mayor of Belgrade and a member of the same political party as Vučić, often acted as a spokespersons and ambassadors for the project. From the investor's side, the well-known real estate developer, Mohammed Alabbar, who has been the chairman of Dubai-based developer Emaar Properties for over a decade, presented himself as the man behind the project. It is known that Alabbar has close ties to Dubai's long-time ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, while also being a member of the Dubai Executive Council, a position that gives him a voice in the country's economic, geo-economic and political strategies – something we will return to at the end of this chapter.

As has already been indicated, initial reactions to the presentation of the BW model were generally fairly sceptical and critical. Accusations of perceived corruption and naivety behind the project went hand in hand with those stressing a mismatch between such an "elite-serving" project and the apparent lack of demand for it. The actual motivations behind the project remained largely opaque. The extent to which BW would serve the "public interest" thus quickly became a central issue. While urban theory has consistently emphasised the politics of dissent (e.g. Smith, 2005), it has hardly been "engaging directly with the ongoing discord that is a characteristic of many urban political contexts" (Phelps & Valler, 2018: 83). Generally speaking, the project was opposed from its earliest moments predominantly by urban civil society groups such as activists, professionals (journalists, architects and urban planners with links to NGOs), academics and opposition politicians. A shared social commonality among these actors is either their privileged academic careers or the rich professional experience they were able to garner in fields such as architecture, planning or journalism. This common ground helped shape the bulk of the criticism levelled at the project itself. We identified six main points that nearly all of the "opposing stakeholders" advanced during our fieldwork. These were: 1) the top-down way in which the project had been imposed upon them; 2) the illogical design and "inverted" implementation of the project; 3) the project's elite-serving and supposedly "exclusive" elements; 4) the neglect of existing planning laws and regulations; 5) the lack of transparency regarding planning details and the amount of public money that was involved; and 6) allegations regarding personal enrichment, money laundering and/or corruption.

The fact that the ruling political elites in Serbia and Belgrade "instantly" came up with an investor and almost immediately presented a model frustrated many of the aforementioned groups. Two representatives of the activist initiative *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* (which means *We Won't Let*

Belgrade D(r)own in English) with whom we spoke indicated that they found it worrisome that there had not been any international competition for the design of the project, as required by Serbian law. As an opposition politician from the City Assembly stressed:

> "It is not possible that the mayor, or anybody, decides alone. This is what Tito did and Hitler and Stalin and Mao Zedong, but [this can] not [happen] today. There is an obligation to conduct an international competition, [to look] for architectural solutions" (Opposition politician, City Assembly).

While a public hearing was organised in 2014, during which citizens were invited to come up with alternative ideas or solutions, several of our respondents were convinced that all alternative proposals had been ignored:

> "Nobody asks the municipality anything... Only if we have, when they change some urban plans, all Serbian citizens can give their suggestions; municipalities can also give their suggestions but, you know, nobody takes them into consideration" (Municipal Architect, Savski venac).

The top-down implementation of the project was reaffirmed by employees of the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade, who admitted that their role in it was fairly limited:

> "It was on the state level. It was on the top level. It was on the level of the prime minister, I think, so it was something that had been decided before our [Master] plan." (Civil Servant, Urban Planning Institute).

Furthermore, it was not surprising that immediate and uncompromising criticism of the project's Master Plan came mainly from members of the Serbian Academy of Architecture. Apart from disapproval based on personal taste, they mainly disregarded the design as being "childish" and "empty", while they highlighted the lack of integration into the city's wider urban fabric – such as, for instance, in terms of issues relating to mobility. All in all, it seemed to them as though the plan had been simply copy-pasted from previous developments in the UAE, although the people from the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade denied this. As one of our respondents, an emeritus professor who also held positions in public spatial planning agencies, put it:

> "Of course, what we saw was really funny. No studies [had been done]. No feasibility studies, no calculations. Nothing. It is just for small children, you know. [They] prepared some nice pictures and put two sentences under each picture, and that was all. The city, the state, they have [communicated] nothing about controlling financial, economic or ecological implications or whatever" (Urban Planning Consultant).

In line with that, many opponents of the project expressed concerns that BW failed to follow normal planning procedures:

> "[...] usually, like in any state in the world I think, the first steps are to make a plan, to discuss it with stakeholders, to adopt the plan, to make it official, then to make a project, then to get construction permits and then to do marketing, yeah? But here, everything was mixed. First there was the model, then the project, then the plan" (Municipal Urban Planner and Consultant).

While these criticisms almost unanimously tackled the developers' lack of professional competence and deviation from standard procedure, they also displayed a renewed commitment to shaping public spaces and the possibilities thereof (Vigneswaran, Iveson & Low, 2017). The third main point of criticism was mainly ideological and referred to the exclusionary nature of building an elite-serving waterfront project which comprises only luxury apartments, retail and office space. Many respondents ridiculed the conspicuous lack of feasibility studies and, more importantly, expressed serious doubts – based on the rather limited size of the Serbian real estate market – about whether there would be sufficient interest in the large quantity of residential and office space proposed. Despite all the rhetoric on increasing competitiveness and employment, opponents have seen it as a potential threat, assuming that the project will trigger uneven development and act as a catalyst for authoritarianism. These worries were mainly expressed by activists with links to Ne da(vi)mo Beograd. Although the BW site had indeed been derelict for decades, a number of abodes remained, the inhabitants of which had to be relocated when the site was cleared in preparation for construction. Although government representatives argued that these domiciles were "illegal anyway" and that they had been generous in offering compensation to the inhabitants so they could relocate, many of our respondents had their doubts about whether the relocations were socially just:

> "Everything there was... not state-owned, it was publically owned... It was a system in former Yugoslavia, so you were a shareholder in your company and then the company would give you an apartment. And they got a promise and they got the apartment in the beginning of the 1990s, but then the civil war happened and everything, households, went to the private sector and stuff like that" (Activist 1).
>
> "...But they were not illegal, that's important. They just needed to transform from that form of ownership to the new one. So, they had the right to live there, given to them by the railway company. So yes, they are not the owners of this place but they are not illegal. They live there" (Activist 2).

In addition to this, all of the opposing groups stated that the implied price of housing in BW would result in a sharp mismatch with the average income in Belgrade and would thus be unaffordable for the vast majority of people:

> "We have so much office space here in Belgrade that is actually empty. And you cannot rent it or sell it or... So, who is going to come to rent an office here? Or to buy an office, or to buy an apartment? Who? The salary here in Belgrade is around 450 euros per month. In [the rest of] Serbia it is 350. It's... impossible to imagine..." (Urban Planning Consultant).

Apart from the supposed lack of demand for so much high-end residential and office space, several respondents indicated that they were afraid the project would become too much akin to a gated community, lacking public space and essentially rendering the Sava riverbanks private space. Probably the fiercest point of criticism related to the alleged illegality of the proposed plans and the fact that new laws were introduced in order to meet the developers' needs. In 2015, the Serbian government declared the project to be of "national importance", which justified pursuing a so-called *Lex Specialis* (Službeni glasnik RS, 7/15) – i.e. a special law that would apply only to BW and which overrules existing laws regarding planning permission, while simultaneously serving as a permit allowing construction to begin. As a result of the *Lex Specialis*, all limitations on the permissible height of buildings or the required ratio of buildings with "public functions" were stripped away. The ease with which existing laws were being bypassed led to indignant reactions amongst the project's opponents:

> "[It started already with the] railway station, [which] is officially cultural heritage. It was built in 1884. The facade is protected. So, it's impossible to put anything on that facade because it's protected. But they built an enormous, gigantic commercial billboard [in front of it]. So, I, as a member of the assembly, I asked: 'how is it possible?' Where are the inspectors? Where are the police?"
>
> "Eagle Hills is a private, commercial company. So, you know, they just ignore the law. The city ignores the rules of the city. Any other private company would have had big problems to find advertising space. You know it's [usually] very expensive, it's very difficult to find a place, and they [just came and] have this... So, there is no law in this country, it's the Wild West..." (Opposition politician, City Assembly).

Both activists and architects emphasised that they were not necessarily against foreign investment – stating that there is a conspicuous contrast between an investor who manages to comply with local laws and one that just benefits from close ties with local political elites. The initial lack

of clarity and transparency regarding the amount of public money that was involved in the project was repeatedly highlighted as a major concern. This contributed significantly to rumours that BW was either a big confidence trick that naïve politicians were unaware of, or that it was a mechanism through which they could eventually enrich themselves:

> "All investments are welcome, we don't have enough investors here, of course we need international investors, they're welcome.... But we cannot be a part of contemporary Europe if we do not respect the rule of law" (Municipal Urban Planner).
>
> "There is no development without investment, so let's be clear about that... But you have to make it transparent, you have to have a system that defends your rights, the rights of the citizens. And that's what never happens here. I mean, you have the system of laws and you have the investor and then you change the laws, you're not defending the interest of the people who vote for you" (Activist 2).
>
> "They are going to have a contract, which is still secret, we don't know anything about the contract. So, I suppose that Belgrade has the obligation to prepare the site, for such large costs, and we are not going to be able to fulfil that and they're going to sue us, to get some extra money. And to share that with the government, and that's the idea." (Municipal Urbanist).

4. Mutual mystifications?

A contract was indeed signed in April 2015 by the Serbian Minister of Construction, Traffic and Infrastructure, Zorana Mihajlović, and the Chair of the Managing Board of Eagle Hills, Mohamed Alabbar, who simultaneously represented Belgrade Waterfront Capital Investment LLC (the "Strategic Partner"), Al Maabar International Investment LLC (the "Guarantor"), and the Belgrade Waterfront Company (a re-branded name for what used to be the local subsidiary of Eagle Hills). This contract was, seemingly as a result of increased public pressure, made publicly available a few months later (Joint Venture Agreement – Belgrade Waterfront Project, 2015). It mainly contains information about how the newly established "public-private"[1] Belgrade Waterfront Company is organised. While the legal and operational details of this contract are more extensively discussed by Grubbauer & Čamprag (2019) and Koelemaij (2018) respectively, the most important thing to note here is that the project does not contain even close to €3.5 billion of direct investment

1 Although, the usage of the notion "public-private" is somewhat tricky here as it was admitted to be mainly a government-to-government agreement, see also Section 5.

and that it will be developed in multiple phases, whereby the Republic of Serbia is responsible for preparation of all basic utility infrastructure and services, while the "Strategic Partner" is responsible for development of the project in co-operation with a select number of partner companies. An example of the latter is the US-based "global architectural company" RTKL, which was repeatedly mentioned as responsible for designing BW's "master plan".

When we discussed increasing concerns regarding the project's lack of transparency with two managers at Eagle Hills (later the Belgrade Waterfront Company), both of Serbian origin and with degrees in international business and finance from US universities, their reaction was twofold. Firstly, placing at the forefront the logic of markets as an impersonal force regulating their work (West, 2017), they asserted that many details were deliberately kept secret precisely because they had to adapt rapidly to "a fast-changing market". Secondly, they admitted that it may as well be better for public opinion concerning the project if they revealed more details about their plans. This eventually happened to an extent when the contract was later made public. They did, however, also acknowledge that most of the main decisions came from the Eagle Hills head office in Abu Dhabi and that thus they did not always have that much impact on the way the project was being implemented – although they did emphasise continuous interaction with Abu Dhabi. This was also carefully admitted by the Belgrade Mayor's Chief of Staff, who simultaneously holds a position on the Supervisory Board of the Belgrade Waterfront Company (even though it is a "project at the state level") and who explains that "only me and Siniša Mali were there from the beginning and are therefore 100 percent acquainted with the project":

> "We are not dealing with that (advertising campaign), it's an investor-story you know... they provide the finance and they're taking care of the project, because that's something that they do the best, you know. We cannot do that... But it's... Now, you have (the situation) that the government is defending the project more than the investor itself, you know..." (Mayor's Office Chief of Staff).

While he did acknowledge that this limited decision-making power was sometimes a bit frustrating, he also accepted and justified these uneven power relations by stating:

> "That is investor-urbanism... ...In this kind of world, you have multinational companies, big companies that have businesses all over the world. They already have that knowledge, you know, they have that know-how" (Mayor's Office Chief of Staff).

As a counter-accusation to the allegation that Serbian government institutions were too secretive about the project, it was rather contradictorily, repeatedly stated that critics of the project continually and deliberately "mystified" things:

> "...it's again, that mystification, you know. It [would be a] problem for [every] single investor in the world, to invest only in equity. Now [we have] one [that] is investing in equity in that amount...[Normally] when you have a real estate project, you will go into classic project financing, you are going to the banks, and tell them 'ok, this is what I have'. But for political reasons, and we know how people are going to [perceive that as if] 'we were selling our land for not even a dime', but we are not selling, we are leasing it, but when we show that to them they go like 'ok but that's the same'. It's not the same! Then of course, when you build real estate, you will offer apartments for pre-sale, [...] it's normal, you know, it's business, it's everyday business things, you know... But people don't know that, they will always mystify something" (Mayor's Office Chief of Staff).

The aforementioned Eagle Hills representatives also argued that their biggest challenge was to "create a belief amongst the people", since according to them, "there was a lack of knowledge in Serbia about how present-day business is conducted." According to them, people still relied too much on the state to look after them, and they should accept that "changes in the law are necessary for the international property market" and that "nations should be competitive with their tax and visa-regimes." In order to create some trust and constancy regarding the project, Eagle Hills decided to open a publicly accessible exhibition space as an advertisement for the project, right next to the future construction site. For this purpose, they renovated a dilapidated building, making it possible for supporters of the project to claim that "in a few years time, this whole part of Belgrade will look as beautiful as this". They also launched an immense advertising campaign as a "legitimizing" strategy that imbues the public with what one researcher recently termed "affective promise" (Dekeyser, 2018). Furthermore, the civil servants, politicians and private actors who defended the project all emphasized that Alabbar and his other company "Emaar Properties" had a very reliable reputation across the globe:

> "Look at what happened in 2007, when we had the global financial crisis. Many investors worldwide pulled back their investments, but Emaar did not, they kept their promises" (Mayor's Office Chief of Staff).

Another common message amongst the executives of the project was that they continuously downplayed its size or significance, emphasizing that the project was in fact "nothing special". Neither within the context of

Belgrade, since "the development of *Novi Beograd* was a lot bigger" (Acting Director, Belgrade Land Development Public Agency), nor internationally:

> "Because Emaar, the company that is managed by Mr. Alabbar, in 2000-and... I think that was 14... they had 52 projects all around the world... A new one being launched every week. In one year, 60+ billion of investments for just that team. So, it's not that we [in Belgrade] are something special, something that they are not used to do... So, it is not something that was happening because, you know, someone was whispering in the sheikh's ear or something... No, these guys are developing mainly in Africa, and I think also in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and so on. So those are their main projects, and we are just one of them, so..." (Mayor's Office Chief of Staff).

In the next section, we will take a closer look at the power relations behind the early implementation process of BW, supplemented by insights that were acquired through interviews with real estate development experts in the UAE. These subsequently also allow us to reflect on the *why questions*, or the incentives that lie behind the project and have caused so much controversy.

5. Rationales and Relationalities

If BW can indeed be categorised as "unexceptional" in any way whatsoever, this can only be because other transnational real estate development projects operated by UAE-based companies are equally lacking in transparency. Based on online research and interviews conducted with real estate development experts, we have found that many of those transnational schemes are actually not as "big" or as "successful" as the Mayor's Office Chief of Staff assured us. Although multiple respondents in Abu Dhabi and Dubai did acknowledge Alabbar's "cleverness" in many ways, they also assured us that his transnational activities were in fact rather experimental:

> "What they did is that they formed a new company called Eagle Hills. So, Eagle Hills is a master developer, based out of Abu Dhabi, it's effectively [the] Abu Dhabi Government, "royal family money"... It's run by Alabbar and he's doing exactly the same as he did with Emaar International... He's doing huge schemes, all over the world and, so far, he's been making a complete mess of it" (Real Estate Development Consultant).

Later in the same interview, the respondent further explained why he thought many transnational real estate development projects by UAE-based companies were failing:

> "Alabbar tries to apply Dubai principles to his projects. And those projects do not work the way that Dubai works. You know, in Dubai or Abu Dhabi, if he wants to get consent, he will just go ahead, and Emaar will go ahead, and they will go and start building, even though they haven't got a building permit" (Real Estate Development Consultant).

Additionally, several UAE-based real estate development consultants who we interviewed also highlighted the fact that feasibility studies, which should always be the starting point of a development project, were frequently not taken too seriously when it came to transnational activities. According to the experts, another reason why many of them have not been very successful in the past – apart from unexpected political regime changes or the global financial crisis – is that it is extremely difficult to successfully develop a project while retaining the main command and control function at a headquarters in Abu Dhabi and without having a solid team on location.

As we have already shown, this corresponds to statements by local representatives of Eagle Hills (the BW Company) who we interviewed. Although they were of course involved in the project's implementation, the main decisions continued to come "from above" – i.e. from Abu Dhabi. Whilst the local representatives firmly and repeatedly stressed that the primary motives behind the project were economic, explaining that it "would attract the wealthy Serbian diaspora", and that the "psychology of people is similar everywhere, so we will build it and they will come", our respondents from the UAE almost unanimously argued that transnational projects were instead mainly driven by political motives. During the early implementation phase of BW, some journalists revealed that the project is not self-contained and that it is part of a wider bilateral agreement that also includes deals in other sectors (e.g. Wright, 2015). This was also, albeit a little hesitantly, alluded to by the Mayor's Office Chief of Staff:

> "Just so you understand, it was G to G business... Government to government. We have those... bilateral agreements, signed with them" (Mayor's Office Chief of Staff).

These findings tell us a lot about the actual motives behind the project. Despite on-going rhetoric on economic incentives, such as "providing jobs", "attracting creative businesses" and "increase Belgrade's international competitiveness", the motives do indeed seem to have been mainly political and geopolitical (see also Barthel & Vignal, 2014 and Büdenbender & Golubchikov, 2017 respectively). The developer, being ostensibly private while possessing close social and financial ties with the government in Abu Dhabi, operates across scales, selectively co-operating with a *growth*

coalition including international consultancy firms as well as local and national-level politicians, civil servants and companies in Serbia. Although the investors do of course hope to realise some return on their investment into BW, it is clear that other bilateral agreements are a more attractive part of the portfolio. Furthermore, UAE elites aim to expand geographically to gain and maintain legitimacy and visibility or, in other words, to increase their "symbolic capital" in order to "stay on the map" (see also: Wippel *et al*., 2014).

For Serbian political elites, the project also clearly serves to assert their power position. Despite all the controversies and resistance regarding the project, Vučić was re-elected in 2017, indicating that a large proportion of the electorate continues to have faith in him. In a way, BW can be regarded as a scale-making project for the Vučić administration. Since his party, SNS[2], currently holds a majority position in both the national and the city assemblies, they are able to "move" actors from one level to another with relative ease. This is for instance illustrated by the Mayor's Office's Chief of Staff's simultaneous role of being on the Belgrade Waterfront Company's Supervisory board or the former Mayor of Belgrade, Siniša Mali, who recently became the Minister of Finance. Furthermore, the fact that Mali has travelled across the globe to promote the BW model and advertise the pre-sale of BW apartments also implies that the project enables "them" to build on their symbolic capital in the arena of the global *wealth elite*.

At the same time, however, the international attention the project has attracted has also inflicted some harm to their image. Due to the fact that some of the members of the Ne da(vi)mo Beograd activist initiative are also involved in global activist networks, such as INURA or DiEM25, the top-down and rather authoritarian way in which BW is being implemented has been condemned by members of the European Parliament. Particularly in April 2016, when several buildings on Hercegovačka street (part of the future construction site) were demolished overnight by a group of unknown, masked men (Zaštitnik građana, 2016). Unsurprisingly, these events further galvanised resistance against the project, resulting in increasing numbers of people attending Ne Da(vi)mo Beograd's demonstrations in the following weeks (see more in the chapters by Jelisaveta Petrović and Mladen Nikolić in this volume). Conversely, BW has also appeared to be a scale-making project through which Ne da(vi)mo Beograd has been able to gain symbolic and political capital. Their movement has since grown into a political party that participated in the municipal elections in early 2018. Clearly this story does not end there.

2 Srpska napredna stranka [Serbian Progressive Party]

Conclusion

At the time of writing, the first two residential towers (the BW Residences complex) have just been completed, two more towers (the BW Vista complex) and the shopping mall (BW Gallery) are under construction, while sites for several further buildings are being prepared. This chapter has focused on a variety of events that occurred during two years of the early implementation phase of this large-scale real estate development project – a project that has attracted widespread attention and which continues to cause a great deal of controversy. We have adopted an approach that has allowed us to focus on the role of agency, as well as the mutual relationalities between the most prominent actors on and behind the project's "frontline". This methodological strategy enables us to critically engage with contemporary debates regarding state rescaling and world city entrepreneurialism, as well as discussing the stated rationales and motivations behind similar controversial, speculative real estate development projects. For that reason, we would like to encourage others to persist in conducting follow-up research that could further elaborate on our insights and analyses. We continue to hope that the "mist" still currently obscuring Belgrade Waterfront and its "frontline" will eventually lift.

First, we can conclude that world city entrepreneurial practices, particularly those falling outside the so-called Euro-American context, are often initiated and facilitated by central governments rather than local ones. While the political elites backing such projects try to justify them mainly by relying on economic advertising jargon that relates to "boosting" the future urban economy, they are actually boosting and asserting their own symbolic power position through experimental development schemes that are primarily "meant to impress". Adding the layer of transnationalism to this theoretical concept opens up another dimension regarding the political and geopolitical incentives behind the scenes. On the basis of our research, we state that transnational real estate developments are often government to government agreements and that they cannot be understood as stand-alone projects. In other words, they seem to be a part of wider bilateral agreements or strategic political decisions. While geo-economics and geo-politics frequently co-exist, the latter appears to dominate.

A second conclusion that we want to emphasise is that a project like BW can serve elites by being a scale-making project, in that it allows the main actors to operate across and "jump between" different scales in order to extend their coalitions and thus their actual power. Although the decision-making processes behind BW appears, at first sight, to indicate scalar hierarchies where a "global" investor makes the decisions that are

then executed by national-level politicians and civil servants at the expense of the existing plans and ideas of local-level policy-makers and civic society groups, our analysis illustrates that this is not the whole story. It has proved to be the case that those actors who are able to "jump scales", including the opponents of the plan, are in fact the ones who possess the most political and strategic capital. Along with Leon (2017) and other critical scholars who have discussed urban entrepreneurialism in the spirit of David Harvey, we can therefore also confirm the statement that world city entrepreneurial projects significantly reinforce class relations.

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SOCIO-SPATIAL INEQUALITIES IN THE HOUSING MARKET: THE OUTCOMES OF BELGRADE'S SOCIALIST AND POSTSOCIALIST POLICY REGIME

Barend Wind

Abstract: The housing market in Belgrade is characterized by a structural disequilibrium: the median income is far too low to enable most people to afford the average sales price for a small family apartment. This chapter tries to build an understanding of this situation by positioning housing in the political economy of Serbia's rudimentary welfare state. Serbian cities have nearly universal homeownership (up to 90% of the population resides in owner-occupancy). Tenure inequality might be limited, but it would be delusive to conclude that the housing market in Belgrade does not generate other inequalities. In this chapter, we distinguish between inequality regarding: 1) housing wealth, 2) housing conditions, and 3) residential location. We describe how these three forms of inequality coincide with socio-economic status and birth cohorts. The combination of housing privatization during the transition from a socialist to a market economy is followed by an incomplete marketization of the underlying assets, which has slowly reshuffled households across urban space. In this chapter, we reflect on the outcomes of this process by showing which neighbourhoods, socio-economic groups and birth cohorts can be considered winners and losers in terms of wealth, housing conditions and residential location. The empirical results are based on the ISR (Institute for Sociological Research) survey, conducted in 2012. The analyses show that privatized housing assets function as welfare arrangements (by providing income in in-kind benefits) for many, but that the marketization of housing increases the economic vulnerability of younger households with limited resources.

Keywords: housing wealth, asset-based welfare, homeownership, spatial justice

Introduction

Socio-economic inequality and socio-spatial segregation have increased since the fall of communist regimes in nearly all Central and Eastern European countries (Brade et al., 2009; Marcińczak et al., 2015). These findings cannot be translated one-to-one to Belgrade (Serbia), due to the heritage of Yugoslavia's distinct (quasi-market) socialist model and Serbia's distinct (slow and messy) path towards a market economy. However, as in other postsocialist countries, Serbia has privatized public rental housing, deregulated spatial planning and liberalized the housing market. In terms of housing costs, housing wealth, housing quality and spatial quality, these measures have generated winners and losers who are distributed unevenly across age cohorts and socio-economic groups. Unfortunately, detailed accounts of the socio-spatial patterns that have emerged in Belgrade during the transition period are lacking.

After the collapse of the Serbian League of Communists in 1990, housing allocation mechanisms that formerly suppressed class-based segregation were dismantled and the economy liberalized. The state monopoly over spatial planning and development ceased to exist and publicly-owned companies that distributed housing among their workers were privatized or dissolved. Therefore, academic commentators from the 1990s argued that the urban structure of the socialist city (often characterized by spatial inequality on the basis of regime-loyalty) would soon become more similar to other European (particularly Western European) cities in which the market has already been the dominant allocator of housing for decades and which are often characterized by more pronounced income-based forms of urban inequality (Sailer-Fliege, 1999). Whereas institutions may have changed overnight, spatial patterns do not change at a similar pace as they require residential mobility as well as construction of new and demolition of old housing. During the 1990s, residential mobility was limited, as the give-away privatization of publicly-owned housing allowed working class households to purchase apartments they could have never have afforded in a "free" housing market (Yemtsov, 2007). Hence, the socialist distribution of households across the urban space could persist during the first phase of the transition to a capitalist economy. According to Struyk (1996), housing played a role as a "shock absorber".

At present two generations have navigated through a postsocialist housing *market* to find their first home. All those who were too young to buy their home as part of a privatization scheme are confronted with this new reality. The introduction of a market for land and housing has driven up land and house values at central locations, leaving young households

with low incomes no other choice than to suburbanize or to rely on family assistance to find affordable housing in a more central neighbourhood. Evidence from across postsocialist Europe shows a gradual displacement of former blue-collar workers by highly-educated youngsters in central districts of popular cities (e.g. Prague and Budapest), indicating gentrification (Ouředníček et al., 2015; Kovacs, and Szabó, 2015) (see more in the chapter by Vera Backović in this volume). On the other hand, evidence also shows that the socialist stratification of housing is tenacious, as families hold on to their socialist-era housing assets and use them as a source of family-help (Druta & Ronald, 2018). In an analysis of postsocialist Belgrade, Kušić and Blagojević (2013) poetically argue that "post-socialist cities are the result of 'multiple transformations'. Their 'morphology, land use and social segregation' are similar to 'typically capitalist cit[ies]', but in part they still 'resemble frozen mirrors of socialism'. In Belgrade, also, the urban landscape is torn between the heritage of the socialist era and dynamic post-socialist processes" (p. 283).

This chapter attempts to understand the effect of the socialist and postsocialist stratification of housing on the socio-spatial structure of Belgrade, the capital of Serbia (1.6 million inhabitants). The stratification of housing entails the distribution of housing tenure (homeownership versus rental housing), housing wealth, housing affordability and overcrowding across socio-economic groups. The chapter compares the stratification of housing for three groups with different housing careers. These three groups are based on the birth cohort of all household members due to the fact that the period in which various household members entered the housing market impacts upon their current housing situation. The first group consists of households in which the head of the household is born before 1965 and there are no adult children (older than 25) living in the home. Although all cohort demarcations are inherently questionable, those households are likely to have fulfilled their housing needs under socialism, as the head of the household was over 25 (the average marital age) by 1990. The second group consists of households in which the head of the household was born after 1965 and there are no members of their parents' generation living in the household. These households have most certainly entered the housing market during the postsocialist period. The third group consists of households with adult members born before *and* after 1965, belonging to different generations. Their housing choices might be influenced by both the socialist and the postsocialist policy regimes. Comparison of the three groups with their different housing careers is based on the assumption that their housing patterns are the result of a differential exposure to the two policy regimes, whilst also remarking

that the results might be less pronounced than expected as many young households use parental resources accumulated under socialism to enter the housing market.

The empirical work was carried out on the basis of the ISR Survey, a nation-wide survey of household consumption, income, and wealth. The survey was carried out in 2012 by the Institute for Sociological Research in Belgrade and contains more than 2,200 households in Serbia (653 in Belgrade). This allows for descriptive analyses on the sub-city level and for multivariate analyses of housing patterns in the Belgrade urban region on the individual level.

The empirical analyses contribute to at least three debates. First, they contribute to the literature on the role of (historic) institutions in producing (present-day) social and spatial inequalities. The concept of institutional sedimentation is mentioned in the context of spatial planning (Willems, 2018) but has never been used as an analytical tool in housing studies. Second, this chapter shows the role of housing assets in the provisioning of welfare. Whereas the role of asset-based welfare is widely discussed in the Western European context, evidence on the postsocialist context is scarce (for a notable exception see Druta & Ronald, 2018). Third, this chapter enriches studies of postsocialist housing by focusing on a context with a different starting point (the more liberal form of socialism in Yugoslavia – see Estrin, 1991) and transition to a market economy (characterized by a devastating inter-ethnic war during the 1990s).

This chapter continues with an overview of the literature on housing and welfare, in general terms, and in postsocialist countries in particular. Subsequently, this chapter discusses Serbia's socialist-era policy framework and Serbia's postsocialist-era policy framework on housing. After a description of the data and methods used, the main findings are discussed and positioned in the international literature.

Welfare, Housing and Segregation

The stratification of housing can only be understood as a part of wider social stratification. The welfare regime determines the level of income inequality and impacts indirectly – through the purchasing power it provides – on the stratification of housing. Spatial planning and housing policies directly impact upon the stratification of housing by altering what kind of housing individuals with different levels of purchasing power can afford.

Esping-Andersen (1990) defines three ideal-typical welfare regimes, based on the degree of decommodification (protection against market

risks) and the nature of stratification. First, in the liberal welfare regime (e.g. the US), the market is the main distributional mechanism. The state provides a minimum level of means-tested social assistance, whereas social insurance to bolster incomes in times of need is provided by market actors. This results in high levels of income inequality. Second, in the conservative welfare state regime (e.g. Germany) the non-profit sector is the main distributional actor. The state provides a moderate level of social assistance, whereas state-mandated and occupationally fragmented non-profit organizations provide social insurance maintain the recipient's social status even in times of unemployment. Finally, in the social democratic regime (e.g. Sweden), the state is the main distributional mechanism. The state manages generous and universal social assistance and social insurance schemes and generally levies progressive taxes, resulting in a more equal distribution of incomes.

Housing can be considered the "wobbly pillar" of the welfare state (Torgersen, 1987), as it fulfils a social need but is mainly allocated through the market – unlike the other welfare domains such as healthcare, education and social security. Homeownership and welfare are, however, intrinsically connected. Given that most welfare arrangements are forms of horizontal redistribution (within an individual, across the course of their life) rather than vertical redistribution (from higher income groups to lower income groups), homeownership competes with the opportunity to contribute and the necessity to use collective welfare arrangements (Kemeny, 1981; Castles, 1998). First, paying welfare contributions crowds out mortgage payments or savings for building materials. Second, homeowners need a lower pension after retirement due to the low costs associated with outright ownership of their home. Homeownership as (partial) replacement of second-tier pension schemes is the core characteristic of passive asset-based welfare (Ronald & Kadi, 2017). Passive asset-based welfare is an essential element of Mediterranean countries with a familial and multi-generational tradition of homeownership (Allen et al., 2008). Active asset-based welfare occurs especially in liberal welfare states, as it allows homeowners to use their housing wealth as an addition to second-tier pensions by selling their home, or by using reverse mortgages. Proactive asset-based welfare is based on the rental income from secondary property ownership, especially common in conservative welfare states with fragmented coverage.

Socio-economic and housing inequalities do not automatically translate into segregation, but segregation does seem to exacerbate these same inequalities. Whereas the egalitarian Nordic countries are characterized by considerable levels of ethnic segregation, the more unequal Mediter-

ranean countries are characterized by the lowest levels of segregation on the continent (Arbaci, 2007). The explanation can be found in differences in spatial planning doctrines but also in the role of the market in the allocation of housing. In countries where the family plays a large role in the allocation of housing due to self-construction and inheritance, the link between income stemming from the labour market and the housing market is weaker, resulting in less segregation (Allen et al., 2008). In nearly all European capital cities, socio-economic segregation has increased (Marcińczak et al., 2015). First, this is the result of welfare state restructuring in a neoliberal and productivist direction, generating more uneven income distributions. Second, this is the result of the uneven absorption of capital by the built environment, making way for lucrative redevelopment projects that gradually displace low income residents. The overall upswing of socio-economic segregation results in a concentration of housing wealth (Wind & Hedman, 2018). New housing market cleavages could increasingly become cleavages of welfare as well.

Serbia's Socialist Policy Regime

Serbia's socialist welfare model cannot be understood on the basis of Esping-Andersen's theory that takes the "democratic class struggle" as its starting point. Although Yugoslavia's socialist model was characterized by more freedom and market influence than Soviet communism, the internal dynamic of its political decision-making was not guided by democratic competition for the working– or middle-class vote (Dyker, 2013). Orenstein (2008) points at four distinctive characteristics of the communist welfare model that also fit the Yugoslav case. First, the model is characterized by full employment for both genders. This was achieved mainly by allocating labour through state-owned companies. Second, the communist welfare model is not characterized by financial transfers to low-income households, but by subsidies for life necessities, such as food, housing, holidays and culture. Third, it is state-owned companies, rather than the state itself, that take care of the welfare needs of their workers. As a result, the communist welfare model is fragmented along the lines of occupational status – just like conservative-corporatist welfare states. Fourth, welfare strategies are used to create loyalty towards the state, rather than protecting workers against market risks.

The Yugoslav welfare model differs from the models in states dominated by the Soviet Union. First, decision-making was more decentralized due to the federal nature of the state and the belief that local decision-making was better able to satisfy local needs. Second, the influence of

workers on social and economic processes was greater. After the incorporation of self-management in the constitution of 1974, the influence of workers' councils in state-owned companies was increased and workers were allowed to become shareholders in socially-owned enterprises. Third, the Yugoslav model can be considered to be a form of market socialism in which competition was encouraged, resulting in higher quality products and more exports (Estrin, 1991; Thomas, 1999). The socially and publicly (state and municipality) owned companies functioned as the main providers of life-long social security. As a consequence, those employed in other sectors, faced lower living standards due to a lack of social protection (FES, 2011).

Yugoslavia's socialist housing system has shifted from a state-led model right after World War II, to a social-market model before the dissolution of the socialist state in 1990 (Le Normand, 2014). The rapid industrialization of Serbia after WWII triggered a wave of rural-urban migration that needed to be accommodated in the larger cities. A state monopoly of land supply for new housing construction, based on the collectivization of buildable land, gave local authorities the opportunity to remove the cost of land from the cost of new housing (Waley, 2011). Based on the ideology that housing is a primary social good (Ristić-Trajković et al., 2014), the production costs of housing led the new developments, largely disconnecting disposable income from housing consumption. In this period, the municipality and publicly-owned companies took the lead in constructing housing, distributing it among their employees via use-rights. This allowed blue-collar workers, seen as the ideological and political bearers of the state, to obtain affordable housing in modern, small-scale housing estates, alongside white-collar civil servants. However, the distribution of socially-owned housing also generated considerable inequalities, as it prioritized the needs of those loyal to the state – mostly those well-positioned in state-owned and socially-owned companies (Petrović, 2001). In Belgrade, first-generation socialist housing can be considered a form of post-war reconstruction, filling the empty spaces in the urban fabric. In later stages, large-scale housing projects, envisioned as neighbourhoods with their own cultural and community centres and commercial facilities, were based on public land ownership, construction subsidies and strict planning regulations. The prime example of such development is Novi Beograd (New Belgrade), envisioned as a socialist model city, with modernist residential blocks in a garden-like environment – see, for example, neighbourhoods such as Pionir and Fontana (Waley, 2011). Whereas initially most housing blocks were developed by the municipality, the army and several large state-owned enterprises, during the 1960s and 1970s

housing cooperatives took on a larger role in developing housing for their members. After the economic reforms of the 1980s, construction firms evolved into competing real-estate developers, using bank credit and company profits to develop housing estates with a more playful design – for example, the Cerak vinogradi neighbourhood (Kušić & Blagojević, 2013).

A considerable share of the population remained outside the focus of "mainstream housing policy", especially the party nomenklatura and those who could not obtain housing through the official housing distribution system turned towards self-construction. By the 1960s it had already became clear that the government did not have the means to invest in housing for those not employed in publicly and socially-owned enterprises (Kos, 1994). In line with other Southeast European countries such as Bulgaria and Hungary, Yugoslavia began to permit informal forms of self-construction (Tsenkova, 2011). The urban fringe became a place for all those who could not obtain housing through the official housing distribution system: such as employees of publicly or socially-owned companies stuck on waiting lists or low-income rural-urban migrants employed by private small or medium-sized companies located in the city. Le Normand (2014) shows that this strategy is reinforced in the 1970s and 1980s by allocating increasing amounts of land to the development of single-family housing (for example, the settlements of Block 49 or Block 60 in New Belgrade), which were in higher demand than the ideologically-preferable apartments blocks (see Ristić-Trajković et al., 2014 for an overview of socialist ideology and housing forms). Meanwhile, financial incentives were introduced to enable households, rather than the state or employers, to bear the cost of construction: "in line with economic reforms at the federal level aimed at increasing competition, banks would be given a role in financing housing, through what was essentially a mortgage system. Persons who did not obtain a housing unit from their employer could apply for a loan, based on their ability to provide 50 percent of the cost" (Le Normand, 2014:167). The party nomenklatura, who were prioritized through the official housing distribution system, also granted itself the freedom to construct villas (sometimes as second homes) outside of this system, mostly at attractive locations in the leafy neighbourhoods around the city centre. A practice that intensified in the 1990s. As Hirt (2009) argues, "[i]n Belgrade, however, building illegal homes also became a strategy of the upper classes, including elites in the Milošević regime, who did so to prey on public space and infrastructure. The city's most desirable areas, Dedinje and Senjak, became ridden with such illegal villas; in fact, entire new neighborhoods, like Padina, were created in this fashion" (p. 298).

Altogether, at the end of the socialist period, Belgrade was a moderately mixed city: the pre-war city remained socially mixed due to a high degree of private ownership combined with familialist housing practices (Tsenkova, 2011), whereas the new modernist model neighbourhoods were mixed due to the allocation of use-rights of housing on the basis of one's employer rather than one's income. Low-income households concentrated in self-built housing in the urban periphery, whereas the elite concentrated in separate villa estates in Dedinje and certain parts of New Belgrade. Passive asset-based welfare was a cornerstone of the Yugoslav welfare regime. The provision of use-rights for housing (rather than property rights) through a wide variety of strategies (from self-construction to building publicly or socially-owned apartment blocks), resulted in low housing costs throughout the life course, allowed the state to keep welfare expenditures low.

Serbia's Postsocialist Policy Regime

The dissolution of the Serbian League of Communists in 1990 marked the beginning of a wave of economic liberalization, whilst also ushering in authoritarian rule under subsequent Milošević governments. This combination resulted in practices of crony capitalism, which had major consequences for the provisioning of welfare. State-owned companies, previously the main supplier of welfare, were privatized or became bankrupt. Subsidies for life necessities were also rapidly abolished (Upchurch & Marinković, 2011; Mikuš, 2016). As in other communist Central, East and Southeast European countries, international organizations such as the World Bank and IMF propagated private ownership, economic liberalization and free trade (Stenning et al., 2011). Although these reforms already rendered the communist welfare state obsolete by the early 1990s, a thriving market economy based on (international) trade did not emerge due to the Yugoslav wars (Orlović, 2011). Instead, a new business elite emerged that made a fortune from the privatization of state-owned assets and the import of goods during the war. On the other hand, a large group of workers in publicly and socially-owned enterprises became redundant (FES, 2011). Across the board, living standards fell sharply during the 1990s and socio-economic inequality increased. In real terms, Serbia's GDP reached 72 percent of its 1989 level only in 2008 (Uvalić, 2011). During the transition period, the government's response was limited, inadequate and fragmented, just as in most other post-communist countries. As Orenstein (2008) puts it: "While communist economies had not performed particularly well, they did ensure a basic standard of living

for all. As this guarantee began to unravel, governments sought to address the growing social crisis with a set of emergency responses that shaped welfare-state policy through the mid-1990s" (p.83). Serbia did not develop a comprehensive welfare model: some groups were moderately covered by privatized pensions but the overall level of welfare arrangements (unemployment, sickness and pension schemes) remained insufficient to finance basic needs such as food, energy and housing (FES, 2011). As a result, the role of the (extended) family in providing social security through resource pooling increased. All across (South-) Eastern Europe, post-communist states developed rudimentary welfare states supplemented by family-help, whereas the Northern European postsocialist countries developed classic liberal welfare models with small and means-tested benefits (Fenger, 2007).

As housing played a pivotal role in Yugoslavia's socialist welfare state, the collapse of communism impacted the construction and allocation of housing. With the dismantling of those publicly and socially-owned enterprises that owned a large share of the post-war housing stock, the state was confronted with the question of whether to turn these housing units into (1) social/private rental housing, or (2) into owner-occupancy. As the first option was costly due to high maintenance costs and the second option highly propagated by international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, most states opted for the latter (Pichler-Milanovich, 2001). In Serbia, more than 95 percent of all publicly-owned housing was privatized for give-away prices during the economic and ethnic turmoil of 1990s (Hirt, 2009). *De facto*, not much changed. The use-rights of housing that formed the basis of the Yugoslav passive asset-based welfare model were transformed into property rights that form the basis of the current Serbian system of passive asset-based welfare. However, responsibilities for maintenance shifted to the new owners, resulting in poor housing conditions (Mandić, 2010). As the newly acquired housing assets could be traded on the market rather than exchanged within family circles, the accumulation of housing wealth gave rise to the opportunity for active asset-based welfare by liquidating assets and moving down the housing ladder.

The privatization of publicly and socially-owned housing has perpetuated the socialist distribution of households across urban space. The alternative, transforming them into private rental housing would undeniably have resulted in an increase of rental costs at popular locations, eventually reshuffling households towards a market-based spatial order with a higher degree of segregation. Struyk (1996) argues that the privatization of housing should be seen as *the* shock absorber during the transition phase, as outright homeownership allows households to sustain their livelihood with very limited social benefits.

During the first transition period, the construction of informal settlements spiked due to falling levels of legal housing production and loosely enforced planning regulations. With the fall of socialism, belief in planning also collapsed. On the one hand, this could be due to ideological reasons, on the other, planning was perceived as an obstacle for the new ruling class of entrepreneurs (Vujošević & Nedović-Budić, 2006). In the 1990s, the lack of consistent and comprehensive urban planning and the absence of publicly and socially-owned companies, which had previously carried out most of the housing construction program, resulted in a decline of housing construction from 10,000 units per year in the 1980s to close to zero by the early 1990s (Kovachev et al., 2017). At the same time, construction of informally-built family homes on the urban fringe – a practice that gained ground during the socialist era – skyrocketed (Tsenkova, 2011). In Belgrade, Kaluđerica, an informal settlement on the urban fringe, grew to 60,000 inhabitants in just a few years. This was particularly the result of an influx of rural households, internally displaced persons and returning guest workers, all searching for economic opportunities in the city. While building standards and spatial quality may be low, these settlements are by no means home only to the urban poor who are, nonetheless, overrepresented in these neighbourhoods (Bajić et al., 2016). Whereas construction on vacant land or additions to existing buildings resulted in the densification of existing neighbourhoods (Žegarac, 1999), uncontrolled urban sprawl has reduced the overall density of the urban area (Zeković et al., 2015). According to Bertaud (2012), Belgrade is Europe's least efficient capital city, as urban land use consumption is 670m^2 per inhabitant.

The only legal spatial developments in the early transition period are new business and leisure facilities, built to take advantage of the tertiarization of the economy (Aranđelović et al., 2017). In Belgrade, across the city, new shopping malls appeared, and in New Belgrade – once the administrative core of socialist Yugoslavia – a new business district emerged (Jovanović & Ratkaj, 2014). Evidence from other former Yugoslav cities shows that changing land-use patterns function as a catalyst for the popularity of centrally located neighbourhoods, which have become attractive residential and leisure areas (Spevec & Bogadi, 2009). In Belgrade, the redevelopment of industrial sites, often "located in the most attractive central parts of the city (e.g., in Novi Beograd) as a result of the communist policy of prioritizing industry over other land uses [...] presents a substantial planning challenge, as all recent planning documents indicate" (Hirt, 2009:300). After the year 2010, many of them are transformed into creative hotspots. In Zagreb, it is argued that these processes have

driven up property values. However, the inertia of the socialist housing stratification has preserved a social mix: "a part of the housing stock in the historical centres of Croatian cities has been renovated, but due to a high share of low-income elderly, a large part is still in worn-out condition and reconstruction is limited" (Spevec & Bogadi, 2009:464). In Belgrade, parts of the old town have lost some of their population as "residents began selling their properties to commercial bidders (e.g., the district of Stari Grad or Old Town, for example, lost 18% of its residents in about 10 years)" (Hirt, 2009:300). This process is reflected in the geographical distribution of house values, ranging from 700 EUR/m^2 at peripheral locations to 4,500 EUR/m^2 at central locations in 2010 (Bajat et al., 2018). The renovation of old factories and warehouses in Stari grad, Vračar and Savski venac signals gentrification (of facilities), and is translated in relatively high property prices for those who move in as new residents. However, a substantive share of the housing stock has not changed hands since 1990, which limits residential gentrification.

Having been absent for nearly two decades, spatial development returned to the political agenda during the second decade of the 21st century. Across postsocialist countries, governments started to once again actively intervene in the built environment, often in collaboration with commercial partners. The social objectives are subjugated to economic ones, based on a narrowly understood form of there-is-no-alternative politics (Lalović et al., 2015). The development of the waterfront project in Belgrade is an emblematic case of this new approach to spatial planning. Koelemaij (2017) describes the waterfront project, carried out as a joint venture between an Abu-Dhabi-based investor and the Serbian government, as a prime example of risk-taking entrepreneurial behaviour by the local and national government. Increasing property values in the city are presented as an investment in the common good, even though the average Belgrader (with a median monthly income of around 600 euros) cannot afford the new developments (apartments are currently selling at over 300,000 euros). As land privatization and restitution in Serbia has been less pronounced than in other postsocialist countries, resulting in 84 percent of the land within the boundaries of Belgrade's master plan being owned by the state (Nedović-Budić et al., 2012) and hence enabling the state to guide spatial development through intransparent individual arrangements. Through changes in the institutional framework, the Serbian government triggers demolition-reconstruction practices in the existing urban fabric in order to improve the investment opportunities and potential returns of private parties but without taking into account displacement of former residents (Cvetinović et al., 2017).

When compared with previous generations, the generations that came of age during the transition find themselves in a more difficult position in terms of securing adequate housing: unemployment rose sharply and (official) housing supply plummeted. Empirical research shows that a combination of both factors caused a postponement of critical life course events, such as establishing independent households, marriage and childbirth. Tomanović (2012) points out that in 2011, 57 percent of individuals in the 18–35 age group were still part of their parents' household. Marriage (occurring in Serbia on average around the age of 25, see UNECE, 2018) triggers the establishment of an independent household for some but triggers forms of more intense multi-generational living for others. Although the financial situation for the younger age group has improved considerably between 2003 and 2011, the housing situation has not improved. Similar findings are apparent throughout former Yugoslavia due to economic, housing and cultural factors (Tomanović, 2012). The same could be said, to a lesser extent, of Mediterranean countries such as Italy (Mulder & Billari, 2010). Tomanović (2008) argues that the role of the family in the provision of housing and welfare "recognized by socialist system policies, which oriented most rights and privileges towards the family (e.g. housing policy) rather than towards individuals. In the postsocialist period, the security basis provided by the socialist system was ruined, and families became even more important as providers of resources (material and non-material)" (Tomanović, 2008:6). For young people, co-residence with parents seems to be the main way to solve the housing crisis. If couples eventually establish their own household, other forms of family help might play a role. Although these practices are less well documented in Serbia, evidence from other Southeast European postsocialist countries (e.g. Romania) shows that such strategies might entail the use of family savings, the sale of the parental home in order to finance the purchase or construction of housing on less valuable land, or exchanging housing within the family (Druta & Ronald, 2018).

Since the beginning of the transition period, the pattern of land-use has changed considerably. Belgrade's city centre and a part of New Belgrade have seen an increase of commercial and leisure functions that have been accompanied by rising house values in these areas. The initial phase of the transition towards a market economy is, however, characterized by two features that have barely affected the socialist-era stratification of housing: 1) the sale of publicly and socially-owned housing to existing tenants, and 2) the increased intensity of informal construction, particularly by rural-urban migrants and internally displaced persons from the Yugoslav wars. In later phases of the transition, regulatory changes and

entrepreneurial urban planning practices have actively undone the socialist stratification by 1) driving up house prices, which impacts the housing market opportunities of young households, and 2) the displacement of inhabitants from areas selected for redevelopment. In conclusion, a majority of those who entered the housing market under socialism are shielded from the consequences of the partial marketization of urban space by outright homeownership. The generation that came of age during the transition period needed to navigate through the marketized urban context, in some cases using their parent's homeownership and housing wealth as a buffer against the unavailability and unaffordability of suitable housing. However, the geographical patterns of their housing decisions remain unknown.

Data and Methods

The description of changing housing patterns in Belgrade is based on the ISR Survey, carried out in 2012. This is a nation-wide survey, commissioned by the Institute for Sociological Research of Belgrade University, comprising more than 2,500 respondents. The ISR Survey consists of questions about income, wealth, consumption and various background characteristics of the household. The analyses focus on a subsample living in Belgrade (653 respondents). Although sample weights are constructed on the national level, they are used to improve the reliability of the analyses compared to non-usage of weights.

A classification of neighbourhood (types) is the starting point for a description of the spatial side of the stratification of housing in Belgrade. The Belgrade Metropolitan area is comprised of 17 administrative areas (municipalities). Ten municipalities are predominantly urban (Čukarica, Novi Beograd, Stari grad, Palilula, Rakovica, Savski venac, Voždovac, Vračar, Zemun and Zvezdara). They comprise the old town and surrounding old villages that have, in the course of time, turned into urban neighbourhoods when they became encapsulated by the city. Seven municipalities are predominantly suburban (Barajevo, Grocka, Lazarevac, Obrenovac, Surčin, Mladenovac and Sopot). Some of them are centred around a core village, but all are part of the housing market of the Belgrade Metropolitan region. For this study, a more detailed classification is used, which cuts through municipal boundaries. The ISR Survey provides a classification of residents in 1) the city centre, 2) urban neighbourhoods, 3) urbanized suburban areas, and 4) rural suburban areas, resulting in concentric rings around the old town. This classification better

fits the housing market dynamic in the Belgrade Metropolitan Region, as in each of these "rings" different forms of housing construction and allocation have been dominant. Whereas the city centre is historically dominated by private homeownership, the situation in the urban neighbourhoods is more mixed due to a higher level of building activity during the socialist era (Tsenkova, 2011). Informal construction, such as in Kaluđerica, is most pronounced in the urban fringe (the urbanized and rural suburbs). In contrast to the setup of the ISR Survey, all respondents living in the municipality of New Belgrade, are classified in a fifth category. New Belgrade is considered a separate category as it has a distinct past and social status compared to other municipalities in the concentric ring in which it is otherwise located. As it was built as the representative capital of Yugoslavia, nearly all housing units were publicly or socially-owned during socialism. Furthermore, the social status of New Belgrade has remained relatively high throughout history.

Table 1 Distribution of cases across Belgrade's neighbourhood typology, supplemented by the share of apartments in the housing stock

	Number of observations	Percentage of observations	Percentage apartments
City centre	81	12.4%	94.7%
Urban neighbourhoods	203	31.1%	93.6%
New Belgrade	93	14.2%	79.9%
Urban suburban	176	27.0%	83.5%
Rural suburb	100	15.3%	27.7%
Total	653	100.0%	75.0%

The socio-economic status of the household is assessed on the basis of 1) income and 2) the educational achievements of the head of the household. A combination of occupational status and income is regularly used to operationalize the socio-economic status. However, the specificities of Serbia's transition towards a market economy legitimize the use of both income and educational status as proxies for socio-economic status. Whereas income captures the socio-economic status of the working population relatively well, the educational level is more telling for income-poor and asset-rich pensioners. Both indicators are used simultaneously to locate housing disparities. The first indicator, the educational level of the head of the household, is simplified into three categories: low, middle and

high. Those who did not attend school, did not finish primary school, only attended primary school, did not finish high school or attended a high school for practical education are classified as having a low educational status. Those who attended a technical high school, a grammar school or attended less than two years of academic education, are classified as having a middle educational status. Those who finished an academic degree or post-graduate education are classified as having a high educational status. The second indicator, is simplified into three categories as well: low, middle and high. These three groups are derived from a procedure that creates three equally-sized groups based on their income level.

Four variables are taken as indicators of the housing situation: housing tenure, housing affordability, housing wealth, and overcrowding. Housing tenure has three categories. Outright and mortgaged homeowners are treated as "homeowners", due to the small share of mortgaged homeowners in the sample (3.5%). Family rental (5% of the sample) and public or company rental housing (1.5%) is treated as "rent-free". Private rental housing (8% of the sample, N=51) is considered as a separate category. The affordability of housing is operationalized as the percentage of the household income spent on rent. This variable is available for tenants only, as others do not pay rent (and information about mortgage amortization of maintenance costs are not available). Housing wealth is measured as the self-assessed value of the home. Whereas other studies treat housing wealth as the house value minus residential debts, in this chapter housing wealth is considered as the market value of the home only due to a lack of information on mortgage debt in the ISR Survey (and the limited use of residential mortgage debt in Serbia). All values are cross-validated by the interviewer on the basis of sales prices in the vicinity. Overcrowding is measured by the ratio between the number of household members and the size of the home. The housing situation is overcrowded if fewer than15 square metres are available per person.

Separate analyses are carried out for three groups of households that can be expected to have followed different housing careers. This classification is based on a distinction in two birth cohorts, while taking into account the household structure. First, for all singles, couples without children and couples with children younger than 25 years old, a differentiation is made between those who are likely to have entered the housing market during socialism (hereafter: a *socialist housing career*), and those who most certainly have entered the housing market in the postsocialist period (hereafter a *postsocialist housing career*). We use the assumption that the beginning of the independent housing career usually starts

around the age of marriage (25 years old in Serbia at the beginning of the 1990's [UNECE, 2018]). Therefore, we are able to distinguish between an older birth cohort (head of the household born before 1965) that was older than 25 in 1990, and the younger birth cohort (head of the household born after 1965) that was younger than 25 in 1990. Multigenerational and complex living arrangements (ranging from parents or grandparents living with adult children to co-residence with other family members) are common in Serbia. Multigenerational households in which all adult household members are born before 1965 are classified as having a socialist housing career. Multigenerational households in which all household members are born after 1965 are classified as having a postsocialist housing career. Households in which the head of the household (born before 1965) co-resides with an adult member of a younger generation (children or grandchildren born after 1965), are classified as having a *mixed housing career*. In these cases, both the socialist and the postsocialist housing regime might have impacted upon the housing decisions of the household members. In a similar fashion, households in which the head of the household (born after 1965) co-resides with an adult member of an older generation (parents or grandparents born before 1965), are classified as having a *mixed housing career.* Finally, those with missing information on the relationship between the household members, are classified on the basis of the birth cohort of the head of the household. The table below summarizes the size of all three housing career groups.

Table 2 Distribution of cases across the three housing career groups

Housing career group	N	Percentage
Socialist	275	42.11%
Postsocialist	82	12.56%
Mixed	296	45.33%
Total	653	100%

The following chapter presents a mix of descriptive and multivariate statistical analyses. First, descriptive information about housing tenure, housing wealth and overcrowding is presented for different neighbourhoods, and households with a different educational status. Results are differentiated for those with a socialist, postsocialist or mixed housing career. Subsequently, multivariate OLS regression analyses test the significance of these patterns.

Results

The Urban Structure

Serbia is recognized as a familialistic homeownership society, characterized by nearly universal homeownership and a large role played by the family in the allocation of housing. When five neighbourhood combinations in Belgrade are compared, owner-occupancy is the dominant housing tenure in all of them. Homeownership rates are somewhat higher in the urban and rural suburbs of Belgrade (around or just below 90 percent) than in the city centre or other urban districts (where they are around or just above 80 percent). However, the historic causes of these high homeownership rates differ. Whereas private ownership in the pre-socialist housing stock of the city centre and the urban neighbourhoods remained the dominant tenure during socialism, privatization of publicly and socially owned housing is the main engine of high homeownership rates in the post-war stock of urban neighbourhoods and in New Belgrade. In the rural and urban suburbs, self-construction during and after socialism resulted in high homeownership rates. Although not all differences are significant on the $p<0.005$ level, *Figure 1* indicates that there is a clear tenure gradient from central to more peripheral locations. Rental housing is much more common in the city centre and urban neighbourhoods (respectively 15% and 11%) than in the urban and rural suburbs (respectively 7% and 1%). On the one hand, this is the result of a higher demand for (short-term) rental housing at centrally located areas, while on the other, the greater flexibility of the older private housing stock for sub-letting fuels this process. The larger private rental sectors in the central parts of Belgrade might be both the outcome of gentrification and the driving force behind this process.

Whereas tenure inequality between neighbourhood combinations is limited, housing wealth inequality might be more pronounced. After all, local house price dynamics determine the financial meaning of owning one's home. Figure 2 clearly confirms the pattern sketched out by Bajat et al. (2018), showing a gradient from high levels of housing wealth in the city centre to low levels of housing wealth in the rural suburbs. The city centre (Stari grad, Vračar) has the highest levels of housing wealth (the median being slightly above 100,000 euros). Households living in the urban districts surrounding the city centre (the urban parts of Čukarica, Palilula, Rakovica, Voždovac, Zemun and Zvezdara) have somewhat

lower levels of housing wealth (the median being around 80,000 euros). Similar levels of housing wealth can be found in New Belgrade. This might be surprising in comparison with Western European cities, where modernist high-rise estates have fallen out of grace but the relatively high quality of building stock and the high level of accessibility boost house prices in the former socialist utopias. The urban suburbs are characterized by lower house prices due more remote locations, poorer access to facilities and the complex legal status of informally-built housing stock. Households living in these socialist and postsocialist (informally built) family homes, accumulate less housing wealth than their counterparts in New Belgrade (the median being 60,000 euros), but reside in much larger houses (on average larger than 100m^2). The median housing wealth level in the rural suburbs amounts to only one third of that in the city centre: 40,000 euros.

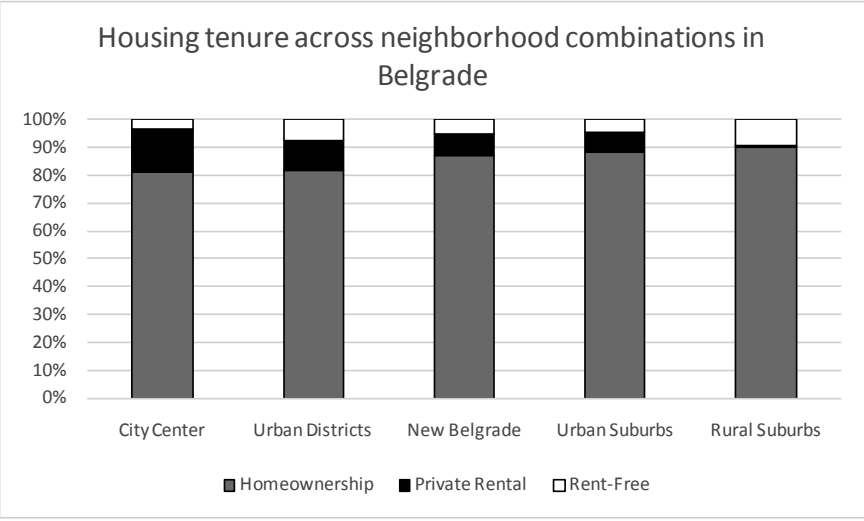

Figure 1 Housing tenure across neighbourhood combinations in Belgrade. Source: ISR Survey (2012).

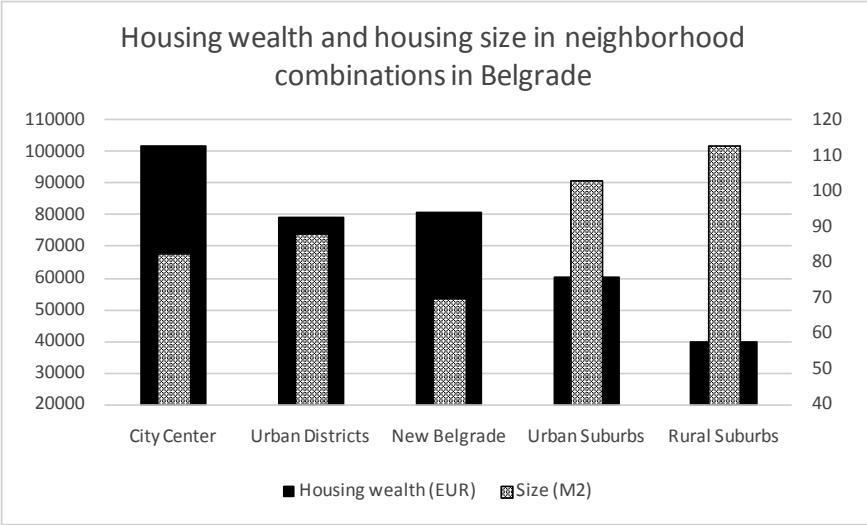

Figure 2 Median income and housing wealth across neighbourhood combinations in Belgrade.
Source: ISR Survey (2012).

Belgrade is characterized by a lower level of socio-economic segregation than could be expected on the high location gradient of house values. Instead, all neighbourhood combinations have a relatively mixed population in terms of socio-economic background. Figure 3 shows the socio-economic composition of different neighbourhood combinations, based on the educational status and income of the head of the household. It is remarkable that households with a medium educational status are well-represented (30–60% of the total population) in all neighbourhood combinations, from the city centre to the rural suburbs. However, households with a high educational status are far more likely to live in the city centre (57%) or New Belgrade (55%) than in the urban suburbs (17%) or the rural suburbs (8%). Households with a low educational status show a reversed pattern. They constitute a large part of the population in the rural suburbs (59%) and the urban suburbs (27%) and a very small part of the population in New Belgrade (8%) or the city centre (1%). The distribution of income groups across neighbourhood combinations is more equal due to the low pension incomes of retired people. As a result, a relatively large share of the inhabitants of the city centre (22%) and the urban districts (43%) has a low income. Whereas some of these might be working poor, a majority is likely to be retired employees of publicly and socially-owned enterprises who enjoyed a high

social status under socialism. The rural suburbs show a reversed pattern: the share of low-educated inhabitants is much larger than the share of low-income persons, indicating an overrepresentation of "self-made entrepreneurs". There are two main reasons why all neighbourhood combinations are relatively mixed. First, it is the outcome of widespread ownership of housing that has been occupied by the household since the socialist period. The allocation of – later privatized – rental housing was not primarily based on one's purchasing power but loyalty towards one's employer. The construction of these complexes throughout the city has contributed to neighbourhood mixing. The privatization of these units has prevented displacement of poorer residents, as outright ownership functions as a hedge against house price inflation. As a result, well-educated retired people with limited incomes are able to remain in the urban districts. Self-construction, concentrated in the suburban areas, has been an attractive strategy for higher middle-class households to escape the city and for poor rural-urban migrants to get access to the city's economic opportunities. The distance between both developments is small, resulting in relatively mixed communities. Due to the mixed nature of most neighbourhoods, phenomena such as overcrowding (in Western Europe associated with neighbourhoods of concentrated disadvantage), are widespread throughout the city. The results show that 30 to 35 percent of all homes in the urban districts, New Belgrade, urban suburbs and rural suburbs can be considered overcrowded.

The over-representation of lower socio-economic groups in the suburban areas, and the overrepresentation of higher socio-economic groups in the city centre and New Belgrade might be the result of 1) inequalities that emerged during the socialist period, and 2) processes of gentrification and the suburbanization of poverty during the postsocialist period. However, the current cross-sectional reading of the data does not make it possible to distinguish between the two. Most likely, both factors play a role. Historic overviews of Belgrade's urban development highlight the concentration of lower-educated and poorer households at the city's edges, mainly in informal settlements. The socio-economic profile has likely decreased during the 1990s due to the influx of internally displaced persons resulting from the Yugoslav wars. The results show an overrepresentation of ethnic minorities such as Roma, Bosniaks and Macedonians in the urban suburbs (19% of the total population, compared to 12% in the city centre) and the urban districts. The larger share of private rental housing in the city centre and the urban districts indicates an increase of the socio-economic status of these areas, as house price increases have rendered these units unaffordable to tenants with low socio-economic status.

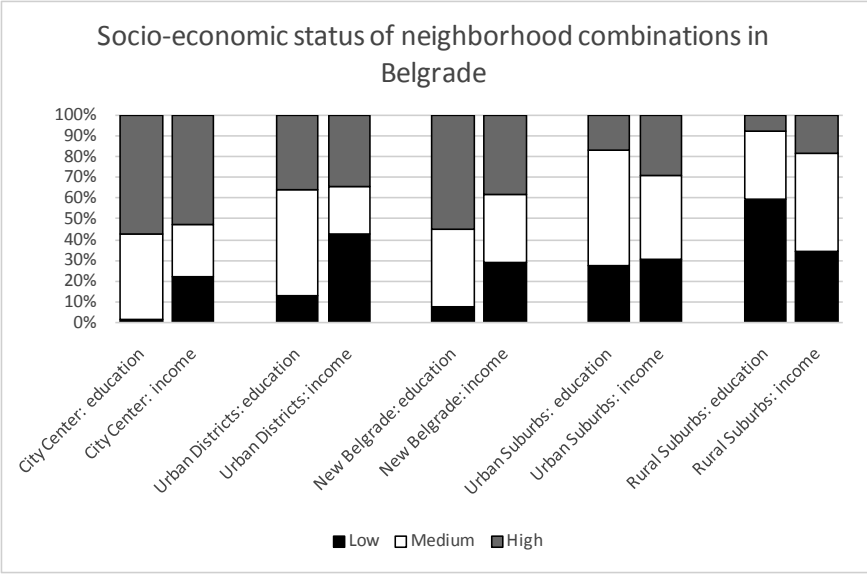

Figure 3. The socio-economic status of neighbourhood combinations in Belgrade. Source: ISR Survey (2012).

Social Structure

A comparison of three socio-economic groups shows to what extent social inequalities translate into housing-related inequalities. Whereas the tenure distribution only varies to a limited extent between neighbourhood combinations, tenure inequality between socio-economic groups is more pronounced. Figure 4 shows that 89 percent of all households with a highly educated head, are homeowners. Homeownership is even more widespread among high-income households (93%), indicating that the profitability of one's labour market career is more important than high initial credentials (although both are strongly correlated). Around 84 percent of all low-educated households own their home. This figure is even lower if income is taken as indicator for socio-economic status: 81 percent of all low-income households own their home. The results indicate that higher educated households with low labour market earnings more often turn towards housing alternatives beyond homeownership. Interestingly, the results show that private rental housing is more common among medium-educated households (10%) and middle-income households (12%) than among low-educated households (5%) and low-income households (8%). Whereas households with a medium socio-economic status can afford private rental housing (where rents comprise between 30% and 50% of their income), households

with a low socio-economic status turn towards rent-free housing solutions within the family (as less than 1.5% of the housing stock comprises social housing). Furthermore, lower and higher educated individuals might have different forms of social capital deployed to acquire affordable housing, translating the social stratification into a stratification of housing.

It is deceptive to conclude that housing-related inequalities are limited because more than three quarters of all socio-economic groups reside in homeownership. Figure 5 indicates that housing wealth inequality between different socio-economic groups is considerable. Housing wealth inequality is more pronounced when educational groups are taken into account, compared to income groups. Education is more suitable as a long-term proxy to capture the socio-economic status of retired households. Whereas the median housing wealth of low-educated households is 40,000 euros, it is 60,000 for low-income households, due to an overrepresentation of income-poor and asset-rich retired households. The median housing wealth of highly educated households and high-income households is much higher (100,000 euros). The higher average levels of housing wealth among highly educated households (129,000) compared to high-income households (143,000), indicates that those owning the most expensive housing units are more often highly educated than high-income earners. It is remarkable that housing wealth inequality between socio-economic groups is considerable but also that these groups are not spatially concentrated. This means that the fragmentation of housing stock within neighbourhoods causes the inequality between socio-economic groups in terms of housing wealth.

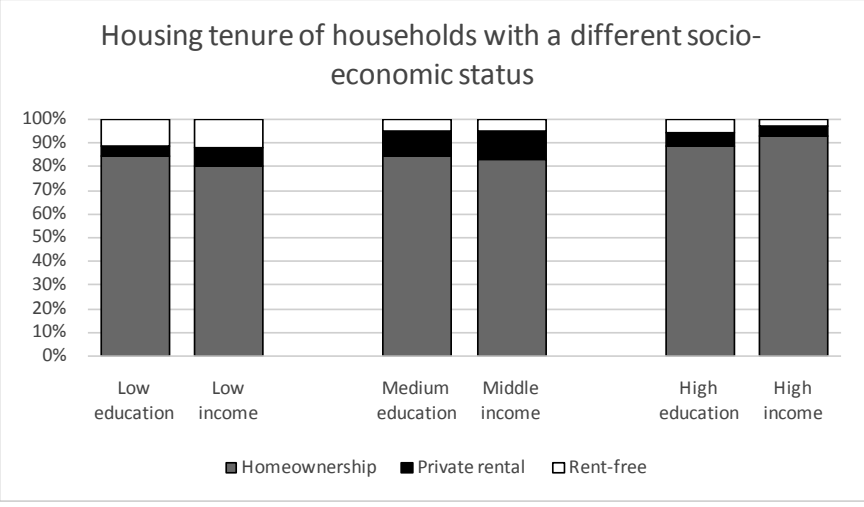

Figure 4 The tenure balance for three socio-economic groups in Belgrade.
Source: ISR Survey (2012)

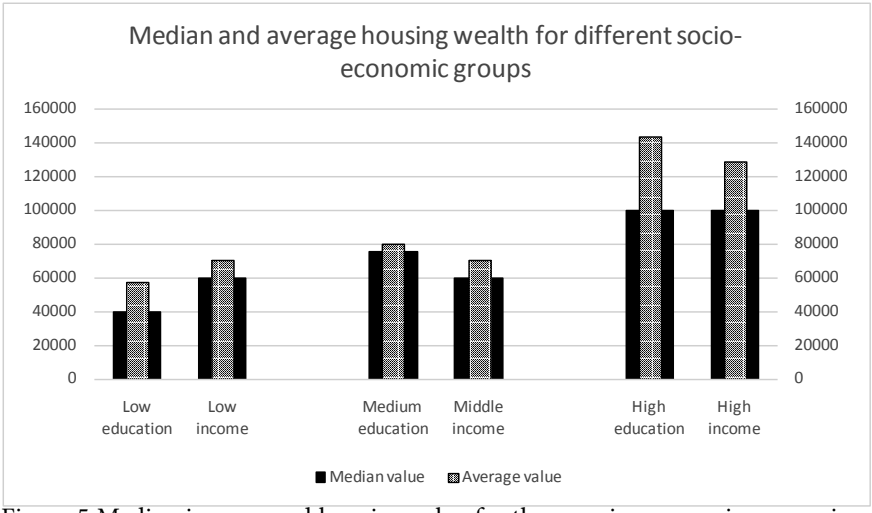

Figure 5 Median income and housing value for three socio-economic groups in Belgrade.
Source: ISR Survey (2012).

A Tale of Two Generations

In the next figures, the stratification of housing is compared across three distinct housing career groups: households that are likely to have started their housing career before the collapse of the socialist system in 1990 (head of household born before 1965), households that have started their housing career during the postsocialist period (head of household born after 1965 and living independently), and households with a mixed housing career (household members from different generations born before *and* after 1965), impacted by both policy regimes.

A minority (39%) of the individuals that came of age after the fall of socialism and were 25 years or older in 2012 (the average marriage age), has established an independent household. The rest (61%), reside in multigenerational households. Multigenerational living is deeply engrained in the culture of the former Yugoslav countries and allows for familialistic forms of welfare and domestic care. However, other sources point out that the large share of multigenerational households is not primarily the result of personal preference but merely the outcome of a shortage of affordable housing (Tomanović, 2012). Our results provide partial evidence for this claim, as the profile of the independent households with a postsocialist housing career is socially selective. Whereas only 20 percent of the low-educated individuals (born between 1965 and 1987) have established their own household, slightly less than half of the highly-educated have estab-

lished their own household. This might be due to different cultural preferences but also due to housing market constraints. The results indicate that those with a postsocialist housing career (born after 1965 who established their own household) face a different housing market context. Figure 6 shows the tenure balance within the three housing career groups. Whereas only a few percent of households with a socialist or mixed housing career reside in private rental housing (4% and 3% respectively), almost a quarter of the households with a postsocialist housing career rent their homes. One explanation for the large share of private rental housing is the unaffordability of homeownership. With a median labour market income of 6,500 euros per year is it difficult to afford to purchase a home in the urban parts Belgrade, where the median house value is close to 100,000 euros.

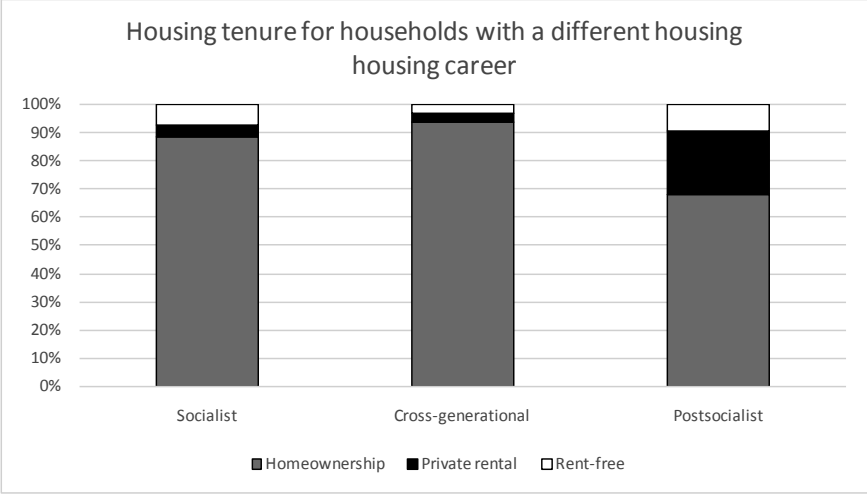

Figure 6 Housing tenure of households with a different housing career.
Source: ISR Survey (2012).

Households that have followed a different housing career are characterized by different housing market outcomes in terms of housing conditions and housing wealth. Figure 7 shows that, comparing households with a socialist and a postsocialist housing career, the latter group faces much higher levels of overcrowding (36% live in overcrowded conditions compared to 20% of those with a socialist housing career). Housing conditions for multigenerational households are worse still. Even though members of this group generally live in larger homes, 45 percent live in overcrowded conditions. On average, these households have less than one room per person (including the living room), indicating high levels of room sharing among siblings.

Interestingly, median levels of housing wealth do not differ much between those who followed a socialist, postsocialist or mixed housing career. A big difference is the price that different households have paid to accumulate their housing wealth. The households that entered the housing market under socialism (those who follow a socialist or mixed housing career) have not paid for their home individually (although they did collectively) as a consequence of give-away privatizations and self-construction. The independent households born after 1965 (following a postsocialist housing career), paid the market price to attain homeownership if they did not use family help, as is common. This outcome contributes to housing wealth inequalities between socio-economic groups, as establishing an independent household at a relatively young age becomes the domain of individuals with a high socio-economic status. The concentration of individuals with a low socio-economic status in multigenerational households (indicated by their mixed housing career) means they need to share the same amount of housing wealth with more family members. Both trends reinforce societal disparities.

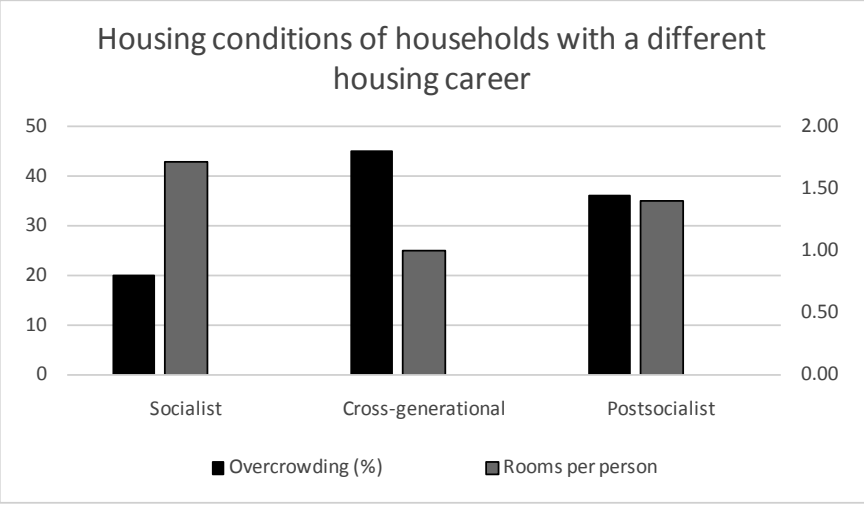

Figure 7 Overcrowding and the number of rooms per person among households with a different housing career.
Source: ISR Survey (2012).

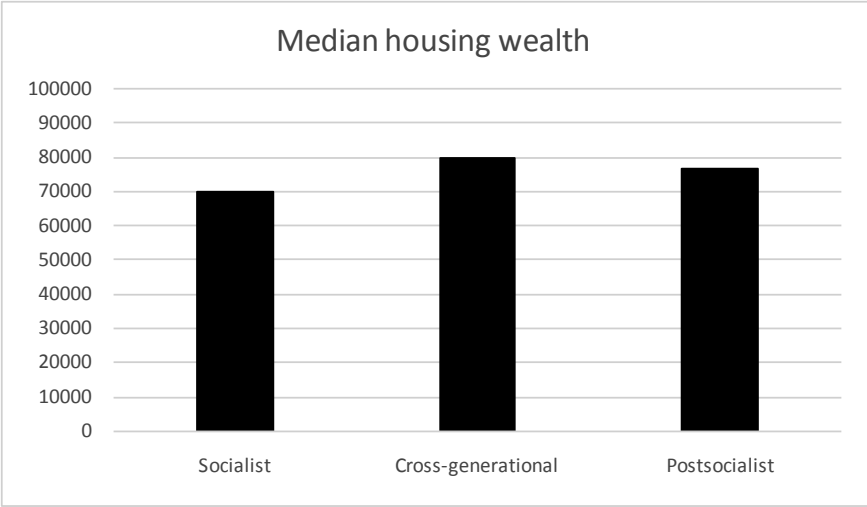

Figure 8 Median housing wealth of households with a different housing career. Source: ISR Survey (2012).

During the transition from a socialist to a market economy, the allocation of housing has shifted towards the family and the market. As a result, the distribution of households across urban space has changed. The households that entered the housing market under socialism and those with a mixed housing career (in which the older members entered the housing market under socialism), are barely influenced by the shifting housing regime. Figure 8 shows that the main difference between households that followed a socialist and a mixed housing career, is an underrepresentation of the latter group in the city centre and New Belgrade, and an overrepresentation in the urban suburbs. This outcome is associated with the family size of multigenerational households with a mixed housing career, as housing units in the central areas are smaller than on the periphery. A comparison between households with a socialist and postsocialist housing career shows that independent households headed by an individual born after 1965 (those with a postsocialist housing career) are more likely to live in the city centre (Stari grad, Vračar) and less likely to live in the rural suburbs (e.g. Kaluđerica, Čukarica and Grocka). The differences are more pronounced when comparing the residential location of two groups of individuals who came of age during the postsocialist period, those living independently (postsocialist housing career) and those living in a multigenerational household (mixed housing career). Whereas only 8 percent of the households with a mixed housing

career live in the city centre, this figure is 15 percent for households with a postsocialist housing career. Nearly 20 percent of the households with a mixed housing career live in the rural suburbs, compared to 12 percent of the households with a postsocialist housing career. On the basis of the cross-sectional data used, it is impossible to determine whether the different spatial patterns between groups with a different housing career are the result of 1) the social selectivity of independent living, or 2) increasing socio-economic segregation. However, it is plausible that the social selectivity of independent living plays an important role as households with a high socio-economic status are overrepresented among households with a postsocialist housing career. They have a higher likelihood of living in the city centre, as they have the familial resources to buy or inherit a home in an area with higher house prices. However, living independently comes at a high cost for 20 percent of households: those who rent generally spend between 30 and 50 percent of their income on rent. Those with a low socio-economic status have a lower likelihood of living independently and a lower likelihood of living in an urban area (the city centre, urban neighbourhoods and New Belgrade). Living in multigenerational housing for many comes at the expense of overcrowding (45% of households with a mixed housing career live in overcrowded conditions). The different residential patterns of postsocialist households might suggest gentle forms of gentrification in the city centre, but the overall picture (see Figure 3) is one of neighbourhood mixing rather than segregation.

Although they might be neighbours, the housing conditions of different socio-economic groups do vary. The socialist households (often having a relatively high socio-economic status) predominantly reside in homeownership with low monthly costs. A large share of the postsocialist single-generational households (often also of relatively high socio-economic status) are frequently overburdened by high levels of rent. Households that followed a mixed housing career (these multigenerational households often have a lower socio-economic status) are predominantly homeowners but face overcrowding due to small floor space relative to the number of household members.

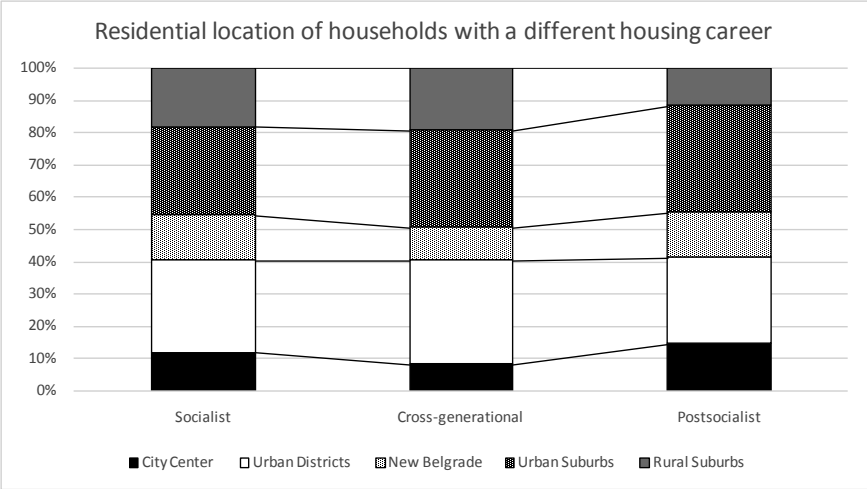

Figure 9 Residential location of households with a different housing career.
Source: ISR Survey (2012).

A Comprehensive Picture

Three characteristics of the housing situation impact upon a household's position in social stratification: housing tenure (homeowners have lower housing costs), housing wealth (the home is generally a household's most valuable asset) and housing situation (overcrowding). The descriptive analyses show that these three housing outcomes are distributed unevenly across households with different housing careers, socio-economic positions and residential location – however, these factors are related. The OLS regression models in Table 3 test the impact of each of these factors – controlling for variables operationalizing the other two – on homeownership, overcrowding and housing wealth. Models 1.1, 2.1 and 3.1 include housing career, income and educational status. Models 1.2, 2.2. and 3.2 estimate the impact of family composition (housing size, children, ethnic status), housing characteristics (housing type, housing size, number of rooms), and the residential location (city centre, urban districts, New Belgrade, urban suburbs, rural suburbs), controlling for the characteristics included in model 1.1, 2.1 and 3.1.

Model 1.1 confirms that homeownership is less common among households following a postsocialist housing career (single-generational households headed by an individual born after 1965), controlling for income and education. Furthermore, it shows that households with a higher

income are more likely to be homeowners. These effects remain significant when variables describing family composition, housing characteristics and residential location are added in Model 1.2. Of all variables added in Model 1.2, only the residential location shows significant results. *Ceteris paribus*, those living in urban or rural suburban neighbourhoods are more likely to own their home than those living in the urban part of the Belgrade metropolitan region.

Overcrowding is more common among households following a postsocialist or mixed housing career than among households that followed a socialist housing career, even after controlling for income and education (Model 2.1). Households with a postsocialist housing career have bought on average smaller apartments than those who followed a socialist housing career, but inhabit them with a comparable number of household members. Multigenerational households (those with a mixed housing career) share a larger home with an even larger number of household members. Controlling for the housing career, no significant results are found for income and education, indicating that overcrowding is common not only among households with a low socio-economic status but other households as well. It is remarkable that none of the neighbourhood variables is significant, meaning that overcrowding happens throughout the city, from self-constructed family homes in the suburbs, to privatized apartments in the urban areas of the metropolitan region.

The distribution of housing wealth reinforces tenure inequalities. Model 3.1 shows that the households that followed a socialist, postsocialist or mixed housing career do not differ significantly in terms of housing wealth. As multigenerational households that followed a mixed housing career need to share their housing wealth with a considerably larger amount of household members, their position in socio-economic stratification is lower. This has implications for the welfare function of the home. Multigenerational living is a strategy to allow more family members to profit from passive asset-based welfare, without allowing them to engage in active asset-based welfare. Housing wealth is, however, strongly associated with both the educational level and income of the head of the household. During socialism, highly educated individuals could obtain better housing at more attractive locations, turning it into valuable assets that they could cling onto after their income drops upon retirement. In the transition period, high-income households (mostly, but not always, higher educated) could buy better housing at more attractive locations. Controlling for the above-mentioned indicators, housing wealth is positively associated with more centrally located neighbourhoods. Interestingly, house values in New Belgrade are higher than in other neighbourhoods at a similar distance from the city centre.

Table 3 Results of OLS regression analyses with homeownership, house value and overcrowding as dependent variables. Source: ISR Survey (2012).

	Homeownership		Overcrowding		Housing wealth	
	Model 1.1	Model 1.2	Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 3.1	Model 3.2
Housing career						
Socialist	–	–	–	–	–	–
Postsocialist	-0.22***	-0.22***	0.13**	0.12**	-6515	7290
Mixed	0.02	0.00	0.26***	0.25***	-855	14842
Income						
Low (ref.)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Middle	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.04	766	3893
High	0.10**	0.08*	0.02	0.03	46375***	26709*
Education						
Low (ref.)	–	–	–	–	–	–
Middle	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.02	19011	13825
High	0.02	0.09+	-0.09+	-0.11+	69758***	33252*
Children						
No		–		–		–
Yes		0.01		0.00		-8591
Household size		0.00		Omitted		-11433**
Ethnic minority						
No (ref.)		–		–		–
Yes		-0.04		-0.03		-5450
Housing type						
House		–		–		–
Apartment		-0.02		0.00		-27942*
House size (M2)		0.00		Omitted		1009***
Number of rooms		0.03*		Omitted		-2443
Neighbourhood combination						
City Centre		–		–		–
Urban Districts		0.04		0.10+		-57478***
New Belgrade		0.09+		0.13+		-35288*
Suburban		0.12*		0.09		-83723***
Rural		0.12*		0.07		-122552***
Constant	0.84***	0.68***	0.19***	0.08	48900***	99418***
R-squared	0.09	0.13	0.08	0.09	0.10	0.35
N	653.00	647.00	653.00	653.00	589.00	583.00

Conclusion

In the years that followed the overthrow of socialist governments in the former Soviet Bloc and in Yugoslavia, housing scholars expected that the stratification of housing would change dramatically during the transition towards a market economy. The role of the state in the provision and allocation of housing would be taken over by 1) the family, or 2) the market, resulting in a familialistic or liberal stratification of housing (Struyk, 1993; Druta & Ronald, 2018). Whereas the political system and economic model has changed rapidly, the stratification of housing remains "sticky" as residential mobility is the only driver for change. The policy recipe followed by nearly all postsocialist governments during the transition period, consisting of a mass-privatization of publicly or socially-owned housing units to their residents, has decreased residential mobility (Pichler-Milanovich, 2001; Tsenkova, 2008). This has partly preserved the socialist stratification of housing. The privatization of housing protected households for the economic turmoil that accompanied the transition towards a market economy, by providing them with passive asset-based welfare (Stryck, 1993; Mandic, 2008). Outright homeownership allows households to sustain their livelihood even in times of instable and reduced labour market incomes (Ronald et al., 2018). Nevertheless, since the fall of socialism, socio-economic segregation has increased in most larger cities in Central and Eastern Europe (Marcińczak et al., 2015). This indicates that part of the housing stock has been traded on the market, where the income level is the main determinant of housing consumption. Twenty-five years after the beginning of the transition period, households are faced with the remains of the socialist system *and* the new market context. On the one hand, housing assets acquired (by family members) under socialism, impact housing market opportunities. On the other hand, the market determines house prices, shaping the conditions under which new households enter the housing market. This chapter attempts to understand how the former socialist context and the current market context shape the stratification of housing in Belgrade, by providing a spatial, socio-economic, and generational account of inequalities in terms of tenure, housing quality and housing wealth.

Looked at from a spatial perspective, tenure inequality is limited. Homeownership is the dominant tenure in all neighbourhoods of Belgrade, both for central apartments and for suburban detached housing. Whereas homeownership was already dominant in the suburbs during socialism due to informal self-construction, it became the dominant tenure in urban areas due to the mass privatization of housing in the 1990s. The introduction of a market for housing has given a different financial mean-

ing to homeownership in different neighbourhoods. As a result, the median housing wealth in the city centre (Stari grad, Vračar) is twice that in the rural suburbs (Kaluđerica, Čukarica and Grocka). However, most neighbourhoods in Belgrade are relatively mixed in terms of socio-economic status. First, this is the outcome of the privatization of housing, allowing blue collar workers to obtain homes at locations that would be unaffordable for them under current market conditions. Second, this is the result of the large role of the family in the provision of housing. Households rather pool resources within the family than obtain a mortgage to buy a home, breaking the direct link between income and housing consumption.

Looked at from a socio-economic perspective, households with a lower socio-economic status have a lower likelihood of being homeowners, accumulate less housing wealth and more frequently live in overcrowded conditions. Interestingly, rent-free housing, provided by the family, is the most common housing solution for low-income households, whereas private rental housing is more common among middle-income households (mainly due to relatively high rental costs). Although a large majority of all households own their home, households with low socio-economic status accumulate only half the housing wealth of their counterparts with a high socio-economic status. This is the result of an overrepresentation of the former in suburban areas and the lower housing conditions of this group in the more mixed urban areas.

A comparison of households that started their housing career under socialism, households that started their housing career during postsocialism and those with a mixed housing career (multigenerational households that are impacted by both policy regimes), shows that individuals who came of age during the transition period have fared worse than their parents' generation on the housing market. A majority (60%) has not established their own household, but co-resides with family members. Although this is historically a common housing strategy in Yugoslavia, the results suggest that this practice has become more wide-spread during the transition period. It impacts upon the stratification of housing as multigenerational households are prone to overcrowding (45%), and accumulate smaller levels of housing wealth. The minority that has established an independent household often lives in private rental housing (30%) and are overburdened with high housing costs (often 40–50% of the income).

The stratification of housing in Belgrade is the outcome of "institutional sedimentation". The current distribution of 1) households across urban space and 2) housing tenures, housing wealth and housing conditions across socio-economic groups, is as much a result of the socialist housing regime as it is the postsocialist housing regime. The high level of outright

homeownership at the beginning of the transition period has consolidated the socialist stratification of housing. It is the result of the privatization of rental housing and wide-spread forms of ownership during socialism (self-construction, socialist owner-occupation). Outright homeownership allows the use of housing as a form of passive asset-based welfare. The transformation of decommodified socialist-era use and ownership rights into market assets has triggered the uneven development of house prices. This transformation determines the financial value of housing allocated during socialism, setting the limits for future residential mobility and active asset-based welfare. Only a small group of households that has either very high incomes or no family resources is solely affected by the postsocialist housing regime. Therefore, private rental housing is much more wide-spread among those who entered the housing market during the transition period. Most households that came of age during the postsocialist period use family help (savings, housing assets, etc.) to get a head start on the housing market. Together, these processes put a brake on a sorting of households on the basis of their incomes, along the lines of house price inequality. Whereas households with a low socio-economic status concentrate in the suburbs, most of Belgrade's neighbourhoods are relatively mixed. However, the same strategies that produce these mixed outcomes, generate inequalities within Belgrade's neighbourhoods in terms of housing quality and housing costs. In the event that housing comes to be seen as a financial asset in the future, triggering residential mobility, housing wealth inequalities between socio-economic groups could also result in spatial disparities.

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THE SYMBOLIC MARKERS OF BELGRADE'S TRANSFORMATION: MONUMENTS AND FOUNTAINS

Ivana Spasić

Abstract: The aim of this chapter is to examine a number of Belgrade's freshly constructed monuments as symbolic markers of the transformation the city has recently been undergoing. The selection includes statues to Tsar Nicholas II Romanov and Gavrilo Princip, as well as the fountains at Slavija Square and Topličin venac. It is argued that by their physical and aesthetic properties, as well as in how the process of their construction unfolded, these structures embody in a nutshell the crucial features of the overall urban change in Belgrade lately. These features may best be described as twin developments of postmodernization and demodernization. The first refers to an overemphasis on tourism, consumption, entertainment and "pleasure", foregrounding visuality and surfaces; as well as to disposing of previous practices of rational, strategically guided urban development based on expert opinion and relatively transparent lines of administrative decision-making. The latter concerns the aesthetic aspect where the legacy of Serbian/Yugoslav modernism is being discarded and increasingly replaced with older, more monumental and "literalist" artistic forms of earlier epochs.

Keywords: Belgrade, urban change, monuments, fountains, postmodernization, demodernization

Introduction

Belgrade's urban landscape displays an astounding diversity of shapes, sizes, styles, and eras – "excessive stylistic variegation", in the words of architectural historian Aleksandar Kadijević (2017: 13).[1] Whether this

1 "The cultural identity of Serbia's capital has over the past two centuries often changed, in parallel with its spatial expansion, dense buildup, and demographic growth," writes Kadijević, and the medley results from "war destructions, developmental discontinuities, changes in political regimes, as well as in dominant political and architectural ideologies" (2017: 13). See also Vujović (2014) and Ristović (2018).

is taken as a virtue or a failing, it constitutes the inevitable backdrop to any examination of urban change in Belgrade. Lately, we have witnessed a wave of transformative moves, threatening – or promising – to change the city in a more fundamental sense. Applying the useful typology of urban interventions proposed by Kadijević,[2] these changes can be characterized as: unnecessary, hasty, poorly elaborated, lacking the support of experts or justification through democratic public dialogue, and following the strategies of crass capitalism and "investor-led" urban planning.

While this is the general subject matter of the entire present volume, this particular chapter[3] discusses a number of recently erected structures which, as will be argued, conveniently condense the main trends in the city's current urban transformation, as tokens of an advertised "new" face of Belgrade. Over the past couple of years, a number of statues and public fountains have been built,[4] purporting to turn Belgrade, "finally", into the bustling, shiny metropolis it "deserves to be". As such, they may be subsumed under what Radović (2014: 140) has called the "targeted symbolic marking of the city center". In contrast with "spatial cleansing" identified by Herzfeld (2002) as expression of the political in physical space, we may call this "spatial cluttering", with the same function.

It has long been recognized that material objects and their distribution in space provide underpinnings to a shared, commonsensical reality of everyday life. "By their physical presence in the world, and in specific times and places, things sustain identity by constituting part of a matrix of relational cultural elements including practices, representations, and spaces which gather around objects" (Edensor, 2002: 103). Public statues and fountains are recognizable landmarks in the urban landscape and are often taken up in urban studies for an insight into deeper political and social processes. Public fountains, thanks to the presence of water, a vital natural resource but regularly shrouded in strong cultural significa-

2 Differentiating by: 1) scale: expansive (encompassing) vs. smaller (less conspicuous) transformations; 2) degree of implementation: complete vs. less fully implemented; 3) civilizational character: necessary, inevitable, purposeful, supported by consensus of expert opinion vs. abrupt, ill-devised and under-elaborated, aggressive, environmentally destructive; 4) discursive viability: publicly justified with clear and reasonable arguments, or not, 5) methodology, 6) ideological and economic strategy (Kadijević, 2017: 14–19).

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4 And as many as 54 more fountains were promised by the Serbian president and ruling party leader, Aleksandar Vučić, in April 2018 https://www.danas.rs/beograd/vesic-na-inicijativu-vucica-beograd-ce-dobiti-54-fontane/, accessed 24/08/2018.

tion, bring together visuality and utilitarianism, symbolic and pragmatic functions: they quench the thirst of passers-by, represent focal points for sociality, while often also possessing a memorial and symbolic character (Popadić, 2012: 144–160).

Public monuments in turn are prime vehicles for materializing urban memory. As "memory objectified" (Popadić, 2015: 66), they are indispensable instruments in the "symbolic coding of public spaces" (Potkonjak & Pletenac, 2007) and crucial elements in the "canonical system of symbols" – a system of signs that defines the text of a collective identity, determined in accordance with official ideology by those holding power (Azaryahu, 1999). Verschaffel (1999: 333) defines the "monumental", as form and idea, as "the visualisation of a relation between time and stone", with two main functions: to commemorate, and to represent power. This is accomplished by a specific materiality both woven into and defying everyday routines: "Monuments stand out, by their central and eye-catching position, by their size, which is somewhat larger than the habitual size of the quotidian, by their being placed on a pedestal, or by their massive and solid appearance. They thus function as landmarks and at the same time as obstacles one stumbles on as one goes about one's daily business" (1999: 333).

Especially as, according to Johnson (1995:52), "an examination of public statuary ... highlights some of the ways in which the material bases for nationalist imaginings emerge and are structured symbolically". Monuments are useful as a heuristic source for understanding the emergence and articulation of dominant discourses, and their locations "serve as the focal point for the expression of social action and a collectivist politics" (Johnson, 1995: 62). Even though they generally express dominant ideologies of states and rulers, monuments can also be used to challenge these, so battles over their placement or displacement occur regularly as part of political struggles (Crinson, 2005: xvi-xviii). After historical ruptures, the choices political actors make about which existing memorials to retain and incorporate into the new political idiom, and which to eliminate, tell us a great deal about changing official conceptions of national identity and the nation-building process (Forest and Johnson, 2002: 525)

The Markers

In spite of their obvious differences, the structures discussed in this chapter, together with a few antecedents, share a number of common features. To begin with, they have stirred controversy and divided the public opinion: people either like or utterly dislike them, few are left indifferent.

Secondly, in their coming into being, the institutional procedures of decision-making as defined by existing regulations have not been followed, or not fully. This also means that expert opinion (town planners, architects, landscape architects, designers, artists, art critics, and conservationists) has largely been sidestepped. The relevant professionals were generally not consulted, or the consultation was feigned; when they opposed the projects, their objections went ignored. Many of the structures were designed abroad rather than by Serbian artists. In sum, existing local knowledge was not tapped but instead, the whole "package" was simply imported. Finally, the form, design and location of the structures are in many cases marked by amateurism and incompetence.

Thirdly, decisions on which structures to build and where to place them have shown little or no concern for the needs of people actually living in Belgrade. Rather than amenities for residents, sorely missing in so many areas, these are devices to prop up a tourist and image-oriented vision of Belgrade, aimed at its visitors. A more general, and more upsetting feature, let us call it *symbolic abdication*, refers to the community's abrogation of its own power to aesthetically regulate itself. In other words, the city gives up its sovereign right to determine its own visual landscape and the meanings the latter exudes. In the selected examples, this is expressed as surrendering to the pressures of money ("investors"), foreign political powers, or both.

It will be contended that the underlying process these examples point to can be described as *un-modernization*: a simultaneous *post*-modernization and *de*-modernization of Belgrade. The former refers to two kinds of change: in the fundamental concept of the city (overemphasis on tourism, entertainment, "pleasure", and visuality), and in the practices of urban planning (where rational, strategically guided urban development is replaced by haphazard individual projects directed by erratic money flows). The latter process, de-modernization, takes place in the aesthetic realm: the legacy of Serbian/Yugoslav modernism is being discarded in favour of traditional art forms revived from earlier epochs.

The analysis focuses mainly on a selection of four representative structures: two fountains, at Slavija and in Cara Lazara Street; and two statues, for Emperor Nicholas II of Russia and Gavrilo Princip. All of these landmarks have been erected in the past six years, that is, since the abrupt political changeover of 2012 that brought the newly dominant Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) to power in the city of Belgrade. These structures, while not unprecedented in their formal-visual and institutional features, do illustrate a significant acceleration of trends initiated previously. They might even turn out to be the beginning of the new mainstream in the

capital's town planning: What perhaps was a series of disconnected, loosely planned one-shot actions may be crystallizing into a more consistent new "logic" of urban policy in Belgrade.

The Red Rooster Fountain

The first marker to be discussed is the fountain constructed in 2016 at the quaint triangular intersection of Cara Lazara, Vuka Karadžića and Gračanička streets, in the very heart of Belgrade. The name comes from the granite sculpture of a rooster that sits atop the fountain, referencing a famous eponymous cafe nearby. The rest of the fountain is made of (very) white marble. Its author is the respected architect Branislav Jovin. Two identical exemplars (minus the rooster) already exist, previously designed by Jovin for towns beyond the borders of Serbia, but within what are sometimes called the "Serbian lands": one is in Herceg Novi (Montenegro) and the other in Trebinje (Republika Srpska, BiH).

The fountain came as part of a reconstruction of the square, undertaken in 2015–2016. The renewal also involved the removal of a number of large mature trees, which used to make the square uniquely pleasant on hot summer days. The cafe changed too.[5] In such a setting, the fountain looks odd and superfluous. Visually, it cannot be appreciated from any angle, since the square is too narrow. The spot where it stands seems as though it was chosen at random. The marble sticks out in the environment, leading one commentator to liken it to plastic. The fountain's design is highly conservative and vaguely replicates the style of traditional Mediterranean architecture, which might be an excellent fit for Trebinje or Herceg Novi, but is absent from Belgrade's visual landscape (at any rate, a Mediterranean fountain would definitely not have a red rooster on it). The fact that this is practically a copy of fountains already constructed in smaller towns reinforces a sense of inauthenticity and secondhandedness.

The idea for the site, including the fountain itself, was originally conceived as part of a comprehensive plan for the pedestrian zone in central Belgrade whose implementation began in the mid-1980s. The whole project was premised on the anticipated construction of a subway system, which would allow for the heart of Belgrade to rid itself of car traffic, but which never materialized. The project was partly realized, most visibly in Knez Mihailova street, but then discontinued for lack of money. It was relaunched in the 2010s, despite changed circumstances and new aesthetic

5 After several rounds of changes in ownership, design, atmosphere and clientele, the current Red Rooster Cafe is a far cry from the old venue embedded in Belgrade urban mythology.

exigencies, by simply taking old sketches up from the shelf. As a critic writes, to revive a project that may have been good in its time but is now thirty years old, without any reassessment or adjustment to the new situation, is bound to cause problems.[6]

The Slavija Fountain

The other, much more massive and central fountain is the one at Slavija interchange. It was opened in June 2017, then closed again from August to November, for a large-scale reconstruction of the interchange. In the process, the statue and the grave of the early 20th century socialist politician and writer, Dimitrije Tucović, were removed (without his family's approval). This monument was the longtime visual and symbolic marker of the place, officially called Dimitrije Tucović Square for decades. Tucović's earthly remains were reburied at a cemetery, and the monument was moved to a much less prominent location at the edge of the square. This replacement of a leftist political leader, labor organizer and critic of Serbian nationalism, with a brightly-colored singing fountain, constitutes a near-perfect example of "re-writing the past into urban tissue" (Radović, 2013). In this unequal battle between socialist and capitalist imaginings of the Serbian past, it was not hard to guess which side would win.

The fountain is quite large, encompassing 800 square meters of water surface, with 350 nozzles that spray water 16 meters upwards, and 400 differently coloured spotlights. At certain hours during the day the fountain also plays music. It was enthusiastically promoted by the Belgrade authorities as something spectacular, fantastic, world-class, never before seen in Belgrade, "the only such fountain in this part of the world", "one of the largest European fountains", a symbol of Belgrade and a tourist attraction. In sum, "one of those things that make the difference between big and small cities", to quote city manager, Goran Vesić.[7]

Yet it was from the very beginning mired in controversies. The general public received it with both jubilation and the sharpest criticism. The broad framework for the debate concerns the entire reconstruction of Slavija, an important traffic node for Belgrade with a sad history of bad

6 Marko Stojanović, Očerupani pevac: Kako je jedna česma podelila struku i javnost, https://www.gradnja.rs/ocerupani-pevac-kako-je-jedna-cesma-podelila-struku-i-javnost/, 2016, accessed 12/07/2018.

7 Quoted in *Nedeljnik*, http://www.nedeljnik.rs/nedeljnik/portalnews/glasajte-u-anketi-da-li-vam-se-vise-svida-slavija-65-ili-slavija-2017-godine, accessed 3 Sep 2018. Interestingly, in the online poll the weekly organized, attaching two photos of the square 50 years apart, and asking the readers "Which version of Slavija do you prefer, 1965 or 2017?", 70% of respondents chose the old one.

reorganizations and botched attempts at improvement. This time, there was a comprehensive plan, which might have solved at least the most urgent circulation problems (especially the intersecting pedestrian and motor vehicle traffic), but then the local government changed and the project was changed accordingly.

That a fountain, of all things, was placed in the middle of a roundabout, with no access by pedestrians, caused considerable bafflement. By its sheer size, even without the multicolored lighting at night, it distracts drivers. Then, there are safety concerns: spraying water is not a desirable companion to speeding cars, especially in winter. As for its appearance, the designer and producer remain unknown. We may surmise that it is simply an item from the mass-manufactured, anonymous urban embellishment assortment purchased from a contractor.

The music is a problem in its own right. No one can sit down and listen to it, since there is no place to sit. Many have also complained about the poor selection of musical numbers (citing "bad taste," and "lost opportunity to influence the nation's cultural level"). A small number of songs are replayed over and over again for hours, which annoys the few who can – indeed, *must* – hear the fountain's music, that is, the residents of the nearby apartment buildings and workers in offices overlooking Slavija. Again, the disregard for the interests of citizens is striking.

Investigative journalists discovered a host of unpleasant facts about the fountain. For instance, that it still lacked a use permit when it was opened; that the opinions of experts from the Faculty of Traffic Engineering were ignored; that safety warnings were not heeded and the requisite tests never conducted, and so forth.[8] Within just weeks of opening, the fountain became the center of a series of smaller and larger scandals. Politically the most consequential of these, let us call it the "AliBaba controversy", concerned the price of the fountain. A nearly identical fountain was promptly discovered on the Chinese online trading site AliBaba.com, offered for EUR 200,000 instead of the 1.8 million that were actually paid.[9] This caused a debate that still continues and centers on allegations of corruption. The price difference remains unexplained, just like, after all, the whole business of procuring the fountain.

In the "foam scandal" in March 2018, unknown perpetrators poured detergent into the water at night. No group came forward to claim responsibility for this action but the city authorities immediately accused, with-

8 https://www.istinomer.rs/clanak/2066/Kosava-ili-institucije-ko-je-zaduzen-za-bezbednost-fontane, accessed 15/07/ 2018.

9 See e.g. https://www.kurir.rs/vesti/beograd/2862307/pronadjena-potpuno-ista-fontana-na-alibabi-kosta-200–000-dolara-u-beogradu-18-miliona, accessed 15/09/2018.

out reservation, their political opponents, who at the time were protesting the results of an election won by the ruling party.[10]

The "leaking scandal" occurred just three days after the fountain's opening, when it began to leak on one side, flooding parts of the roadway and interfering with traffic. In the public altercation that ensued, it turned out that the project had to be modified during construction when it was realized that the originally planned pumps would push water over the brim and onto the street. Funnily, this simple fact was not discovered until four long months into the actual works.[11]

Finally, the "crumbling scandal" involved the paved area across the fountain, on the square's outer perimeter, rebuilt as part of the reconstruction project. Composed of terraced concrete defying the terrain and meaningless metal poles, with an overall design whose rationale remains obscure, the plateau began to fall apart almost immediately. After provoking a minor public outcry online, it was closed in March 2018 and stood abandoned for many months, to be provisionally re-opened towards the end of the year – though still deprived of any identifiable aesthetic or practical function.

To conclude, the Slavija fountain merely "looks" (and, alas, "sounds"), but, physically isolated and inaccessible as it is, it does not serve any practical purpose, be it rest, quenching thirst, or socializing. It cannot become part of everyday life since people cannot walk around, sit on its steps, enjoy the coolness of the water, or relax while listening to the music. In short, it cannot be directly utilized at all. It can only be *admired* from a distance.[12] In this sense, it is a remarkable illustration of postmodern "empty" visuality, a spectacular appearance in place of a real solution to real urban problems, with the residents' voices unheard. As will be discussed in the concluding section: a skewing of the public agenda, if ever there was one.

10 "City manager Goran Vesić [...] blamed explicitly the activists of the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiative. The movement denied the accusations, claiming their activists took no part in damaging the fountain and stressing that they always take responsibility for what they do, hence all their actions are public and announced in advance." https://www.blic.rs/vesti/beograd/iskljucena-fontana-na-slaviji-vodovod-zbog-sipanja-deterdzenta-podnosi-krivicne/2qezm8n, accessed 08/07/2018

11 https://www.blic.rs/vesti/beograd/menjali-projekat-fontane-na-slaviji-u-toku-radova-ustanovljeno-da-ima-jednu-ozbiljnu/fgxytbk, accessed 08/07/2018.

12 Architect and blogger Marko Stojanović has an interesting answer to the question of why a fountain was built on the square in spite of all the obvious reasons to the contrary: because it harks back to the (imaginary) past of a bourgeois Belgrade from the 1930s, which is currently the favored historical period in the popular imagination (Stojanović, Muzička fontana na Slaviji koju niko ne čuje, https://www.gradnja.rs/muzicka-fontana-na-slaviji-koju-niko-ne-cuje/, accessed 09/07/2018).

The Gavrilo Princip Monument

Turning now to the recently erected statues, the first of these is dedicated to Gavrilo Princip, the patriot-revolutionary from Bosnia who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand von Habsburg in Sarajevo in 1914. In Serbia, Princip is generally considered a hero and freedom fighter, though no monuments have been dedicated to him thus far. The statue is located in a park, at the corner of Nemanjina and Sarajevska streets, close to the buildings of the Government of Serbia and the Ministry of Finance. This is the oldest public park in Belgrade (it originates from the mid-19th century), long called the Financial Park but in 2017 renamed after Gavrilo Princip.

The monument was unveiled in the presence of the presidents of Serbia and Republika Srpska (the Serb entity within Bosnia-Herzegovina), Tomislav Nikolić and Milorad Dodik, government ministers, officiating priests,[13] and an audience of about one thousand onlookers, on 28 June 2015. This day, called Vidovdan, is probably the most heavily symbolic date in Serbian historical consciousness, on which many decisive events have taken place, starting with the 1389 Battle of Kosovo and including the 1914 Sarajevo assassination. According to press releases, the site was chosen because the members of Mlada Bosna used to gather in this neighborhood and it is from here they are said to have left for Sarajevo in 1914 (the railway station was nearby).[14] However, the entire project appears to have been quite confused, and the eventual site was selected at the very last moment, through a decision-making process lacking any transparency. The initiative for the monument officially came from the national government and rather curiously, the Ministry of Labor, whose minister Aleksandar Vulin[15] chaired the committee entrusted with organizing the monument's construction. The initiative was subsequently accepted by the

13 The decision to consecrate the monument with an Orthodox religious rite singularly falsified the original political convictions and goals of Princip himself and the organization he belonged to, Mlada Bosna (Young Bosnia), whose patriotism was emphatically secular, modernist and proto-Yugoslav rather than religious, conservative and ethnically exclusive.

14 That Belgrade's main railway station is no longer where it stood for more than a century, since it was closed in 2018 to make room for the Belgrade Waterfront renewal project and hastily moved into the unfinished, poorly equipped and nearly unreachable facility far from the city center, is another important feature of the "new face of Belgrade", but one that remains beyond the scope of this paper.

15 If one is tempted to ask what on earth does a labor ministry have to do with erecting monuments to controversial national heroes of the past, the answer should probably be sought in person of Vulin himself. This most colorful member of Aleksandar Vučić's entourage has for years been assigned the role of *provocateur*, giving the most

city administration's Committee for Monuments and Street Names. Described as a "joint project of the governments of Serbia and Republika Srpska, and the city of Belgrade", it is actually a donation from Srpska.[16] An identical statue has been standing in a park in East Sarajevo, the entity's second political center, since 2014.

Lest the national-political implications of this monument, and the whole endeavor which brought it into existence, be lost on the public, President Nikolić in his speech linked the resistance to memorializing Princip with the prosecution of Serbian war crimes from the 1990s, and conversely, the celebration of Princip with the values of freedom and independence, and said that the monument was delayed by a century because Serbia had been ruled by the wrong kind of people.[17] In this way he made quite an explicit connection between the monument he was unveiling and the most brazenly nationalist, self-complacent and denialist strand in Serbian politics.

The bronze statue is two meters tall and weighs 350 kilograms, a rather humane scale. Its author is Zoran Kuzmanović, a relatively well-known Serbian sculptor and expert in bronze. This statue's main drawback is its location and lack of harmony with its surroundings. It sits awkwardly at the lowermost corner of a descending park, facing the fence and with the park's grassy, rugged slope as an unseemly background. It has the air of a bad photomontage. Its position in the far corner of the park gives off a sense of marginality and negligence. But perhaps that was precisely one more political message – this time implicit, and reflecting the schizophrenia of contradictory political orientations generally characteristic of the SNS ("Yes, we celebrate Princip, but listen, let's not overdo it...").

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aggressive, outrageous, unfounded and unreasonable public performances aimed against Serbia's neighbors and/or the domestic opposition.

16 See e.g. http://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/330061/Spomenik-Gavrilu-Principu-u-Finansijskom-parku, https://www.blic.rs/vesti/beograd/pogledajte-postavljanje-spomenika-gavrilu-principu-u-beogradu/ywpe329, accessed 24/06/2018.

17 "If Winston Churchill ... wrote that Princip died in prison, and that the monument erected by his compatriots celebrated his and theirs crime and genocide, then the proposed resolution on Srebrenica comes as no surprise ... Gavrilo Princip did not have a monument in Serbia, and nothing is by accident. We had to wait for such people to decide on it who live by his principles of freedom, independence, unity; we had to wait for such people to decide on Princip who wouldn't have pulled Princip's memorial down, had there been enough courage to create it before." Quoted from:/http://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/beograd/1634063-gavrilo-princip-je-konacno-u-srbiji-na-vidovdan-otkriven-spomenik-na-koji-se-cekalo-vise-od-jednog-veka-foto, accessed 24/06/2018.

The Tsar Nicholas II Monument

The other monument in our sample is, on the contrary, impossible to miss. It is the huge statue of Nicholas II, the last emperor of Russia, slain in 1918 by the October revolutionaries. It is placed in a – or better, *the* – central street of Belgrade (Kralja Milana), which connects two major squares (Terazije and Slavija), next to a whole series of important seats of political power: the Presidency, City Hall, and the former building of the National Assembly. The embassy of imperial Russia used to stand at this site in the 19th century and the present-day Russian Cultural Center is nearby.

The statue is a gift from the Russian Military Historical Society and the Russian Federation. The 50 tonnes, 7.5m monument was designed by Russian artists, Andrei Kovalchuk and Gennady Pravotvorov. The monument consists of a 3.5m full-figure statue of the stern-looking Tsar, clad in a military uniform, resting his hand on a column wrapped in symbols of imperial power and Orthodox Christianity, all portrayed in minute realistic detail and standing atop a granite pedestal, with a historical quote engraved on the sides.[18] Having arrived from Russia, it was unveiled in November 2014, within the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of World War I. The erection of the statue was accompanied by a reconstruction of the surrounding park, also in cooperation with Russian experts. The park, once Devojački Park, was renamed Aleksandrov Park in 2017, to honor the Red Army Choir members killed in a 2016 plane crash over the Black Sea.

The monument was consecrated by the patriarchs of the Serbian and Russian Orthodox churches, and the ceremony was attended by a long line of dignitaries from both sides, including the Serbian president, Tomislav Nikolić, ministers, emissaries of the two governments, high priests, the mayor of Belgrade and his aides, and the Russian ambassador to Serbia.[19] President Nikolić extolled the virtues of the Emperor and declared the eternal unity of the Serbian and Russian national destinies,[20] while

18 The quotes, in Russian and in Serbian, are taken from Nicholas' July 1914 letter to the Serbian Crown Prince, Aleksandar Karađorđević: "All my efforts will be turned toward protecting the dignity of Serbia... In no case will Russia be indifferent to the fate of Serbia."

19 The Serbian Wikipedia entry on the monument offers details. See https://sr.wikipedia.org/, accessed 19/06/ 2018.

20 "This monument at the heart of Belgrade shines to celebrate the memory of the martyred Emperor Nicholas, as a sign of the eternal victory of goodness and justice ... The pages of Serbian and Russian history are as if written by the same hand. Regardless of time and place, regardless of the social system in power ... the struggle for freedom, often for life itself, and Biblical martyrdom are common links in the sacred chain of endurance of the Serbian and Russian peoples." Source same as preceding footnote.

Russia's Patriarch Kiril called the event historical and pointed out that this is the first monument to Nicholas in Europe but outside Russia. Serbia's Patriarch Irinej, elaborating on the emperor's saintly character, stressed that now we are "reminded of what the Tsar did for *his* Orthodox, Serbian people" (emphasis added). Andrei Kovalchuk, also present for the occasion, assured that he and his coauthor did their best to harmonize the monument with the setting, adding that it was made "following the classical tradition, which is these days rather rare in Europe".[21]

Kovalchuk is a prominent Soviet and Russian sculptor, an artist in obvious political favor.[22] He has won numerous state awards for his memorials to people and events from Russian national history (rulers, priests, poets, artists, warriors, workers, chiefs of security, and victims of disasters alike), scattered throughout Russia and the former Soviet republics, including a 2017 statue of Emperor Alexander III in Crimea. His aesthetics are unapologetically realistic, monumental, explicit, and celebratory, bereft of any trace of irony, doubt, ambivalence, or social critique.

So is Nicholas. In its physical proportions, the statue seems to conform to the "politics of scale" (Sidorov, 2000) from back home.[23] Awe-inspiring, almost intimidating by its size and posture, and in conjunction with the location, it clearly conveys the (geo)political message of intended Russian dominance. Given that it was erected voluntarily, there is more than a hint of embarrassing colonial obedience for the receiving side. Aesthetically, it is disheartening for its humorless literality. It emanates a distant, authoritarian power, aloof from everyday life and ordinary people. With the placement of the statue at such a highly charged site, an instance of "symbolically dense landscape" (Forest & Johnson, 2002: 529), the entire setting has been changed profoundly. Such as it is, the monument clearly embodies the "symbolic abdication" mentioned in the introductory sections: everything in this undertaking, from the general idea to the last

21 Quoted from: http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/beograd.74.html:514543-Postavljen-spomenik-ruskom-caru-Nikolaju, accessed 19/06/2018.

22 In addition to creating state-building monuments that promote the official ideology, Kovalchuk often poses for photos with Putin and plays prominent roles in Russian cultural institutions, including chairmanship of the Artists' Union.

23 Following the example of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow (1997), Sidorov writes that the new, reconstructed temple, in spite of the contrary opinion which was widespread but not attended to since there was no public debate – sound familiar? – followed the desires of the government to tread in the steps of an earlier architectural tradition: "The state-led restoration was to continue the tsarist and Soviet tastes for grandiose structures", a "past monumentalism" that "prioritize[d] size over symbolic significance" (Sidorov, 2000: 563). That in present-day Russia "the style and design of official monuments reflect[ed] much continuity between Russia and the USSR", and that "authoritarian and imperial representations of the Russian nation" persist today is also noted by Forest and Johnson (2002: 525).

detail of the finished work, was "donated", that is, imported/imposed from the outside, with Belgrade acquiescing obligingly.

The monument did not go totally unchallenged however. In June 2017, it was sprayed with graffiti by an activist group, apparently (according to their Facebook post) in protest against nationalist and conservative cultural policies of the Serbian government. In news reports this was described as a "destruction" or "ruining" of the monument. Municipal officials, headed by the ubiquitous Vesić, said they were "appalled" by the fact that "vandals" damaged this "cultural-historical monument" (barely two years old at the time), "one of Belgrade's most important ones", and promised to punish the offenders.[24]

Predecessors and Successors

The trends the examined structures represent so well, however, did not start in 2012. They can be traced at least a decade into the past, to a time when Belgrade was run not by the SNS but by their political opponents, a coalition around the Democratic Party (DS).[25]

Some commentators see the monument to the turn-of-20th-century populist politician, Nikola Pašić, erected in 1998 at the freshly renamed eponymous square,[26] as the point of departure. Against the backdrop of increasingly strong appeals to "decommemorate" Yugoslavia and socialism in Belgrade's public spaces, and "commemorate" a different, ethnonational and anti-communist past, the emergence of this statue "sent a clear message about both the new dominant political symbolism and new trends in urban public sculpture" (Radović, 2014: 131).

The second half of the 2000s abounded in realist figural memorials. At Belgrade International Airport, a controversial statue of Nikola Tesla was erected in June 2006 on the 150th anniversary of the inventor's birth. Made of bronze, 3.5m tall and weighing one tonne, it portrays a standing Tesla, looking rather clumsy and confused. Of all the memorials discussed here, this one provoked the most resistance. It was denounced almost unanimously as dilettante and kitsch by experts,[27] the two relevant

24 http://www.novosti.rs/%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8/%D0%B1%D0%B5%D0%BE%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4.491.html:672489-Vesic-Unistavanje-spomenika-caru-Nikolaju-vandalizam, accessed 16/09/2018.

25 Yet significant continuity is established through the powerful figure of Goran Vesić, who has succeeded in holding onto key positions in the city government for years and irrespective of changes in political leadership.

26 Marx and Engels Square until 1997.

27 More than one open letter protested the monument. Twenty-five Serbian members of the International Association of Art Critics demanded the statue to be removed:

committees of the city administration, and the public at large. The incompetence of its author, Drinka Radovanović, was pointed out, along with her evident political backing,[28]as was the bypassing of the required public competition and evaluation by expert committees. Still, the project was approved by the national-level Committee for Tesla's 150th Anniversary, headed by the then prime minister, Vojislav Koštunica, and the Belgrade City Assembly assented. The memorial was commissioned by EPS, the national electric utility, and hence also belongs to the category of "gifts". This becomes particularly problematic at the symbolically crucial location of the international airport, the "door to a country", as a critically-minded young sculptor put in his comment,[29] where foreign visitors arrive and first see Belgrade and Serbia.[30]

Another addition to the "gifts" series appeared in 2009, when a statue of the Russian poet, Alexander Pushkin, was erected in the (again, freshly renamed) Cyril and Methodius Park. A donation from the Association of Russian Writers and the Russian Federation, the statue was created by Russian sculptor, Nikolai Kuznetsov-Muromsky, and unveiled on Pushkin's birthday by the Russian Ambassador.[31]

The point at which aesthetic anti-modernism was conjoined with symbolic abdication in its crudest form – before the Tsar Nicholas statue plunged standards to new lows – was the reconstruction of Tašmajdan Park in 2011. The works were financed entirely by the government of Azerbai-

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"The chance for Serbia to place at this key node of communication with the world ... a convincing, adequate memorial, worthy of Tesla's name and legacy, has been wasted mindlessly. Instead, what was put on the pedestal was a monumentalization of illiteracy, ignorance and primitivism of a community unable to tell art from non-art" (http://mondo.rs/a30254/Zabava/Kultura/AICA-trazi-uklanjanje-spomenika-Tesli.html, accessed 12/07/2018.). Another, very similar statement came from a dozen prominent visual artists and art professors, published in *Politika* on 20 Jul 2006.

28 Radovanović, although a self-taught sculptor without academic credentials, has been entrusted since the late 1980s with creating a large number of memorials to Serbian historical personalities. See e.g. https://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=508261&print=yes, Vreme, 9 Aug 2007, accessed 12/07/2018). For a more elaborate analysis see Milenković (2009).

29 Quoted in *Novosti,* http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/kultura.71.html:186107-Umetnicko-gusarenje, accessed 12/07/2018.

30 In spite of all the criticism, the statue not only remained in place but its maligned author was warmly welcomed ten years later by the Airport Authority, as special guest at the celebration of Tesla's 160th anniversary (http://www.beg.aero/lat/vest/13011/aerodrom-nikola-tesla-obelezio-160-godina-od-rodenja-naucnika-cije-ime-nosi, accessed 05/09/2018). Passions apparently fade rather quickly.

31 The official press release explained that Pushkin, together with the existing monuments to Saints Cyril and Methodius and the Serbian language reformer Vuk Karadžić, completed a monumental personification of Slavic culture (http://www.seecult.org/vest/spomenik-puskinu-kod-vuka, accessed 24/08/2018).

jan, under the condition that a statue to Heydar Aliyev, the country's first president, be placed in the park. The city authorities agreed, adding the statue of the Serbian writer, Milorad Pavić[32], as a sort of fig leaf intended to ease the humiliating asymmetry of the deal. The park was opened with much pomp by the presidents of the two countries (Boris Tadić and Ilham Aliyev, the son of Heydar), and hailed as a "symbol of permanent friendship of the two peoples" (which incidentally lack any direct historical, cultural, personal, or any other kind of connection). It was probably the most expensive, and the most un-democratic, "donated" intervention into the city's tissue ever enacted in Belgrade.[33]

The line of anti-modernist public statuary with dubious institutional backgrounds seems to be continuing. In late 2016 a monument to the American pop-art icon Andy Warhol was announced, its design totally at odds with the artistic credo of Warhol himself (Stojanović, 2016). Although nothing has been heard of it since the announcement. In spring 2018, a much-ridiculed Yuri Gagarin memorial, another gift of shady provenance that includes Russia and a domestic tycoon dynasty, was put up and quickly taken down, amidst public uproar over its caricatural appearance. In the same year, the project for a (very monumental) memorial to Stefan Nemanja, the medieval founder of the Serbian state, designed again by Russian authors won the first prize in a competition for the reconstruction of the square in front of the former railway station.[34] We cannot but wait and see what the future will bring.

Urban Transformation as Post– and De-Modernization

The structures discussed conform in many respects to Belgrade moving in the direction of what is usually labeled the "postmodern city". This concept emphasizes "the significance of culture ... and consumption for (economically) promoting the city, as well as the role of urban consump-

32 Pavić's most famous novel, *The Khazar Dictionary,* is ostensibly about the ancient Khazar people, believed to be the forefathers of today's Azeris. However, the connection, made out of desperation by the cash-strapped, hypocritical city authorities, would likely have been dismissed by Pavić himself, had he lived to see it: his sophisticated literary postmodernism hardly squares with such simplistic political assimilations.

33 The reconstruction cost EUR 2 million. Both statues, made of bronze and about 3m tall, authored by the Azerbaijani sculptor Natig Aliyev, were completely produced in Azerbaijan. No one from Belgrade had any influence on their design or execution.

34 The jury's president was Nikola Selaković, the Serbian president's chief of staff and a lawyer by training. http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/389683/Beograd/Spomenik-Stefanu-Nemanji-2019, accessed 20/09/2018.

tion spaces and urban lifestyles as major aspects of social integration accomplished through consumerism" (Petrović, 2009: 44). Statues and fountains, especially if they lack a strong use value and are not grounded in citizen demand, are superficial adornments that serve other purposes than satisfying the needs of residents, solving urban problems, or enhancing the quality of life in the city. They are rather moves in the game of the symbolic economy – "the production of a dominant city image" – which in postmodern urban policy takes over from political economy (Petrović, 2009: 91).

The construction of these structures, like just about anything else that the Belgrade municipal authorities have been doing since 2012, is being justified in terms of "attracting more tourists", "polishing our city and making it more beautiful", or "making our city enjoyable to our guests". We already know of "city as advertising space" (Batarilo, 2015), but more is suggested here: as if the entire city ought to become a huge ad for its own self.[35]

These arguments are reminiscent of what Eisinger (2000) has called "building the city for the visitor class" which is based on the "politics of bread and circuses" (although, admittedly, "bread" is increasingly being dropped from the equation). Turning a city into an entertainment venue, Eisinger warns, "is a very different undertaking than building a city to accommodate residential interests", and the two are not easily reconciled (2000: 317). This orientation towards outsider needs, whereby "local elites create a hierarchy of interests in which the concerns of visitors ... take precedence over those of the people who reside in the city," skews the civic agenda to the detriment of fundamental municipal services. Huge resources are invested in urban face-lifting and entertainment, while "more mundane urban problems and needs must be subordinated or ignored" (2000: 322). Similarly, Harvey speaks of a transition "from managerialism to entrepreneurialism", in which "urban governance has become increasingly preoccupied with the exploration of new ways in which to foster and encourage local development and employment growth", even though "such an entrepreneurial stance contrasts with the managerial practices of earlier decades which primarily focused on the local provision of services, facilities and benefits to urban populations" (Harvey, 1989: 3).

In Belgrade, all questions asked by the public as to the justifiability and viability of new urban projects receive one and the same answer: they

35 The curious practice of keeping Christmas lights on in the city streets from mid-September until late March, with the costs rising 150-fold between 2014 and 2018, is arguably the most outrageous example of this attitude. https://www.danas.rs/beograd/vesic-da-dokaze-kako-je-grad-zaradio-od-rasvete/, accessed 25/09/2018.

will boost profit from visitors. In this, again, Belgrade behaves in a "postmodern" way. As Srećko Horvat (2007: 12) writes, in postmodern cities any protests against new buildings are quickly quelled by the argument of "millions of visitors", that is, profit. All this is manifested even more brutally in a postsocialist context, where "local authorities ... comply with the strategy of promoting urban consumption spaces ... which, due to inherited underurbanization, is presented uncritically as a form of progress. In this way capitalism is sub-consciously legitimized, although the city of consumption creates more divisions than it provides services" (Petrović, 2009: 68).

The other aspect of postmodernization, identified in the introductory section, is a transformation of planning practices. The discussed symbolic markers of Belgrade have resulted from processes that do not show any overall plan and in which the purposeful and consistent agency of state institutions is not prominent. In other words, earlier practices of rational, strategically guided urban development, based on expert opinion and relatively transparent lines of administrative decision-making, are being disposed of.

The modern city was characterized by plans and programs developed on the basis of information. "Survey before plan", the touchstone of such rational comprehensive urban planning, assumed accumulation of knowledge on how the urban system operates before interventions are devised by planners to improve the urban environment. Moreover, "modernist planning was committed to an idea of social progress, via social engineering and the intervention by planners to achieve specified ends. Usually such plans involved ideas of social balance, greater social equity and increased access to resources and facilities" (Thorns, 2002: 77). This "authoritative planning", based on strict projects and universal schemes (Petrović, 2009: 54), sought legitimation through technical and scientific expertise: "It was based around the idea that it was possible to produce logical, coherent and systematic arrangements for urban development" (Thorns, 2002: 182).

While in the Fordist/modern city local government aims at developing and maintaining collective consumption, in the postmodern/post-Fordist city it focuses on utilizing urban resources in order to attract mobile international capital. In the former, space is shaped in accordance with collective goals set on the basis of utopian visions grounded in solidarity; in the latter, space is independent and autonomous, and local specificity is defined in the service of economic growth and competitiveness (Petrović, 2009: 54). Investor-led town planning takes over, which is the "adaptation and subordination of urban space to the interests of those who intend to undertake (re)construction", when the interests of the investor are taken as absolute, regardless of the consequences for the environment, quality of housing and living, or the city as a whole (Petovar, 2006).

These two sides of the process of postmodernization – culturalization and spectacularization, fueled by entrepreneurialism, on one hand, and the abandonment of planning, on the other – are not unrelated. Harvey (1989: 12) identifies a "subterranean but nonetheless vital connection between the rise of urban entrepreneurialism and the post-modern penchant for design of urban fragments rather than comprehensive urban planning, for ephemerality and eclecticism of fashion and style rather than the search for enduring values, for quotation and fiction rather than invention and function, and, finally, for medium over message and image over substance". Cynics will say that we should, after all, rejoice that Belgrade has finally joined the trends Harvey diagnosed three decades ago.

There is an important sense, though, in which the way Belgrade is transforming is *not* postmodern, at least not in the customary understanding of the term. Urban theory holds that not only does the focus in urban policy move from the political-economic to the cultural-aesthetic dimension, but "urban political debate tends to shift from questions about how to redesign the city to increase equality and social justice ... to ones more focused around the politics of identity" (Thorns 2002: 80), or more precisely, "towards the expression of *diverse* identities" (Petrović, 2009: 52, emphasis added). What is alluded to here, of course, is a plethora of identities *other than* and *thriving within* the single, national identity: gender, ethnicity, age, race, sexuality, cultural background, lifestyle, value choices and commitments etc. In Belgrade on the contrary, what is promoted by the current selection and design of symbolic markers is precisely the good old nation. The analyzed monuments unify and uniformize collective identity: a "(re)invention of tradition" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) clearly gives precedence to the national over other types of membership. What is more, this one identity is given a single prescribed shape, mandated from above, that rules out critical reflection. In other words, instead of postmodern *diversity*, it is *sameness* that is celebrated. One is tempted to conclude that here we have a two-pronged, seemingly contradictory development: culturally modernist objectives – homogenization and centralization – are pursued by postmodern means, in terms of the technology of governance. Another possible interpretation would be to see what has been going on in Belgrade simply as an instance of a "reactionary" response to the crisis in urban planning that shook off its old habits and certainties from the early 1990s onwards (Thorns, 2002: 192).[36]

36 Thorns explains: the outcome of the crisis "has been either reactionary, with an affirmation of the status quo and tradition leading to what has been termed neo-traditionalism which tends to be expressed through the revival of community ideologies as part of a new set of moral rhetoric about social inclusion, or resistance which, in contrast to the first, looks for a program of political change which addresses issues

The second process, de-modernization, concerns the formal artistic properties of the markers. Here, a traditional realism, which the top echelons of Serbian art effectively renounced decades ago, is resuscitated. The discussed statues are all figural (i.e. they materially "represent" the personalities they are dedicated to) and realistic in terms of style. They date from the beginning of the 21st century, while a history of public monuments (Michalski, 1998: 7) argues that as far back as 1914, the epoch of stately marble statues of great individuals had already past. In the period that followed, abstraction was gradually gaining ground and the "demise of the public figural monument" became definitive in the second half of the 20th century. Moreover, a new type of monument emerged in the 1960s: the inconspicuous one. "In the mid-1960s, the widespread feeling that the status of the political public monument had been rendered meaningless resulted in a new art form: monuments which tried to attain invisibility as a way of engendering reflection on the limitations of monumental imagery" (Michalski, 1998: 172). In Serbia, having participated in global art trends for a couple of decades, we are now evidently moving in the opposite direction.

Being an integral part of international artistic developments coincided, paradoxically, with the period of communist single-party rule. In Yugoslavia, this rule was specific in many respects, including the arts. Socialist realism, originally the official style of the communist regime, uncritical towards and celebrating the dominant ideology – a "kind of antimodernism" (Šuvaković, 2008), was abandoned in SFRY as early as 1952, after the 1948 break with Stalin's USSR. It was superseded by socialist modernism, which developed thanks to increasing communication with Western high modernism and the avantgarde (Denegri, 2003). Socialist modernism, the dominant artistic orientation in Yugoslavia for more than thirty years, was considered an expression of the country's progress and independence, yet with an explicit awareness of belonging to the international artistic world. And not only that: due to the country's position between the two Cold War blocs, it "emerged as such only in Yugoslavia, thus constituting a unique formation resulting from the cross-breeding of the properties of the Eastern and Western art model", although the Western model prevailed over time (Denegri, 2003: 173). Importantly, modernist art understood itself as ideologically neutral and autonomous from political power, guided exclusively by aesthetic concerns. It is ironic that under a repressive regime art enjoyed more autonomy than in the context of political pluralism and apparent democracy, when it is again called upon to perform political and ideological services.

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of power" (2002: 192). In Belgrade, the former evidently dominates, while the latter is present marginally and sporadically, e.g. in the form of urban civic initiatives like Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own.

After the abstractionist recess, we have reverted to the most classic figural realism of 19th century. Also, sharing in trends characteristic of Western art seems no longer to be taken for granted. Belgrade is obviously happy to have, on its central street, a monumental statue whose style is, in the words of its own author, "rarely found in Europe these days". The prominent art historian and critic, Irina Subotić, notes the strangely regressive form of recent monuments. These "utterly conservative, meaningless and artistically worthless memorials," she argues, are radically changing the spirit of Serbian cities. An "urbicide by monuments" is taking place in which Belgrade is being killed by "a collision of provincial traditionalism with neoliberal economy".[37] Though not as extensive and ambitious as the thorough "rebranding through architecture and monuments" in Skopje (Cvitković & Kline, 2017), the revamping of Belgrade shares some of the latter's features.

While monuments are generally put up to embody "sacred" or "iconic" (Alexander, 2010) societal values, recent monuments in Belgrade and Serbia engender social conflict and division because they do not stem from a consensus reached through open, democratic debate. Instead, as art critic Nebojša Milenković (2009) writes, they come as results of political brokerage: "A politician in power, disregarding the requisite procedures, or barely, chooses an artist on his or her own whim ... transfers the money from the public funds, and *voilà*!" In this way, Milenković argues, rather than being "symbolic sites that reflect those (central) values that in a given society are exemplary and thereby incontestable – the monuments become points of endless conflicts, divisions and the basest politicking".

Conclusion

The symbolic link that mediates the triadic relationship between the visual form, the city, and the political, is undergoing transformation in contemporary societies. Yet the direction of this transformation is apparently not the same in all contexts. Overall, the movement has been described as one of informalization and wilful unpretentiousness, so to speak. "The monumental is out of fashion in modern societies. Although on some occasions power still relies upon monumentality and the distance it creates, it now prefers to look more 'informal' and warmer", while the significance of monuments in public space "seems to lie primarily in their suitability to be transformed into an icon" (Verschaffel, 1999: 335).

In Serbia, however, a different path has been taken. Power still likes to be expressed in the old-fashioned, grand forms, and the iconicity of

37 Interview published in Vreme 1425–1426, 26/04/2018, https://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1594251, accessed 12/07/ 2018.

Belgrade itself seems to no longer be a priority. The statue of a foreign emperor at a key spot in the city center, an assembly-line fountain, another fountain with two older twins in small towns – these are all clearly not intended to become symbolic markers of Belgrade as a unique, inimitable place. At the same time, older Belgrade icons, that is, structures that can be found only here, distinctive in their form and meaning, which have served as symbols of the city for a long time – such as the statue of the Victor at Kalemegdan, the Monument to the Unknown Hero at Avala, the Museum of Modern Art, or the city skyline at the confluence of the Sava and the Danube, which is currently being permanently disfigured by the high rises of the Belgrade Waterfront project – are almost forgotten. They are falling into disrepair, as well as being symbolically dissolved in the new jumble of proliferating signs.

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STRUGGLING WITH THE TITLE: A CAPITAL OF CULTURE AT THE SUPERPERIPHERY OF EUROPE*

Ana Pajvančić – Cizelj

Abstract: Numerous criticisms of the "creative city" concept have pointed to its loose argumentation and the social consequences of its practical implementation. In this paper we start by briefly presenting these criticisms before turning to the specific ways in which the creative city has been manifested in Central and Eastern Europe. We turn finally to situating the topic in the Western Balkans – i.e. the superperipheral context – and engaging in analysis of Novi Sad, which has been selected as a European Capital of Culture (ECoC) for 2021. Following the ideas of Harvey (2001), Peck (2005) and Todorova (2006) our starting hypothesis was that in the superperipheral and postsocialist context of the Balkans the ECoC project produces struggles in the economic and cultural (discursive and material) domains which are both intertwined and mutually reinforcing. We conclude that, in this case, the struggle is revealing due to the highly selective process in which some "exotic" and "appropriate" parts of the local/national culture are used as "decoration' for the introduction of homogenized neoliberal urban models, while other "unwanted" local socio-cultural elements are "cut off" and suppressed. The ECoC title has also, however, brought a new urban dynamic into the city, within which we can hope to also see the articulation of different visions that could address structural and long neglected urban problems alongside the creative city for all.

Keywords: European Capital of Culture, creative city, neoliberalism, superperiphery, Novi Sad

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Introduction

Strategies embedded in discourses of culture/creativity are attracting considerable interest among urban researchers and practitioners in cities all around the world. Although the relationship between culture and urban development is certainly not a new discovery (see Mamford, 2010; Hall, 2001), there is an obvious shift in the way this relationship is interpreted and acted upon. This shift was introduced in Richard Florida's 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class*[1]. Despite its "conceptual and methodological weaknesses" (Krätke, 2012) and later revisions, Florida's ideas still drive urban developers from San Francisco to Cairo and Singapore. His main thesis was simple (banal even, as noted by Schmid, 2012) and catchy: creativity has become the primary driver of economic growth in the most recent phase of capitalist development. Cities should, Florida goes on to explain, invest in trendy, exciting, authentic, attractive and vibrant places in order to attract the new creative class with its specific lifestyle demands and spending habits. This class will then, as the story goes, somehow generate economic growth through new jobs in the creative sector, new markets and an influx of tourism.

Despite the increasing popularity of this thesis, concerns have emerged that question the validity of its basic assumption about culture/creativity as a propellant for urban economic growth. Needless to say, the whole discourse where culture is treated as a "commodity as any other" is highly questionable on many grounds. Numerous critical reviews have emerged, citing mostly Western, American and Western European cases (Peck, 2006; Malanga, 2004; Krätke; 2010; 2012; 2012a; Scott, 2006; Storper & Scott, 2009; Marcuse, 2011).

These critical evaluations have pointed to the loose arguments of the creative city thesis and the social consequences of its practical implementation (namely social exclusion, elevation or reproduction of social inequalities, gentrification, commodification of culture and the normalization of the neoliberal environment).

Until recently, very little was known about the specific manifestations of creative city strategies outside the West. Thus, the role of local contextual factors, the position of the city in global and regional urban hierarchies and the mediation of these processes, remains unclear. This poses an important question on how the dependent, peripheral position of cities influences different manifestations and impacts of homogenized and "manualized" cultural and creative initiatives.

1 Florida's idea is not the only one that refers to the role of culture and creativity in urban development. Similar ideas were previously developed by Charles Landry (2008) and later emerged as responses to Florida (Scott, 2014; Marcuse, 2011). In this paper we mostly refer to Florida's concept as it seems to have been the more influential in the terms of practical implementation.

In this paper we use several theoretical starting points in order to examine the impact of urban policy led by concepts of culture/creativity in the superperipheral context. To achieve this, we have selected as our case study the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) project in Novi Sad, Serbia. The concept of "superperiphery" (Bartlett, 2009)[2] is used to denote circumstances within which a city is vulnerable to the problems produced by globalization but lacks the internal regulatory capacity – as well as external support from supranational institutions and regulations – to resolve them. While we certainly acknowledge the importance of political economy perspectives to understanding cultural manifestations in cities, we also intend to capture the role of deeper cultural layers embedded in their specific historical development. We find the ideas of Maria Todorova (2006), who traces discursive constructions of "the Balkans", especially relevant for this kind of analysis. By relying on this kind of perspective, the position of a superperipheral city can be observed not only in the material or economic but also in cultural, discursive terms.

The ECoC event is seen as an opportunity to observe the interplay of the cultural (discursive) and economic (material) dimensions of the globalization and also as the main platform that introduces and advocates the creative city discourse in the city of Novi Sad. Thus, in this paper, we are not focusing on the ECoC project as such, rather we use it as a lens through which we can observe this specific form of globalization. We start by briefly presenting some of the main criticisms of the creative city concept, then turn to its specific manifestations in the CEE and Western Balkans and finally engage in analysis of the first activities surrounding the ECoC project in Novi Sad. As the title of ECoC was awarded only recently, the paper is organized as a preliminary report relying on the available official documents provided by the Novi Sad 2021 Foundation (Application (Bid) book, official web pages and newspaper articles) as the main empirical evidence.

The Creative City and Neoliberal Governance: Roots and Consequences

Jamie Peck (2005)[3] developed one of the first systematic critiques of the kind of urban development that is led by culture and creativity, as rooted in the Florida's thesis. According to Peck (2005: 763) "rather than civilizing urban economic development by "bringing culture in", creativity strategies do the opposite: they commodify the arts and cultural resources,

2 William Bartlett (2009) uses the concept developed by Sokol (2001) to argue that the conflicts in the 1990s pushed the Balkans countries into the European superperiphery.

3 The title of his paper is used as an inspiration for the title of this paper.

even social tolerance itself, suturing them as putative economic assets to evolving regimes of urban competition". Consequently, creativity plans "do not disrupt established approaches to urban entrepreneurialism and consumption-oriented place promotion, they extend them" (ibid: 761). He correctly noted that Florida's ideas can serve to legitimize and normalize the neoliberal environment as the "natural habitat" of the creative class. This vision is, according to Peck, "manualized" in the rapidly-growing literature as a set of techniques, "habits of the mind" and "hypsterization strategies" that explain "how to" transform places to attract the creative class. This "creative awakening" is manifested through the "recycling [of] the rather narrow repertoire of newly legitimized regeneration strategies" (ibid: 752). For example, the conversion of postindustrial spaces into art centres. Peck argues this idea has been taken for granted in the form of the "creative cities script", which determines "favoured strategies and privileged actors, determining what must be done, with whom, how and where" (ibid: 742). Often, this implies the process "by which selected segments of erstwhile oppositional milieus are integrated and co-opted into the new metropolitan mainstream" (Schmid, 2012: 55). According to Peck, cities have *willingly* entrained themselves to Florida's creative vision because of the claim that practically any city can achieve the economic regeneration by applying the creative city script. Thus, even in the face of budget crises, additional funding is raised for creativity strategies.

However, "whether or not this will stimulate creative economic growth, is quite another matter" (ibid: 749). Peck quotes Malanga (Malanga, 2004:45 in Peck, 2005) who reasonably asks whether the marginal cultural attractions can indeed stimulate economic growth and, even more importantly, is it possible to build such "creative places" artificially? Indeed, the most creative cultural places around the world are the result of spontaneous processes. But even if it does create economic growth, how would the "creative trickle-down" take place?

Stefen Krätke further develops Peck's critique and claims that "only a limited number of specific cities and metropoles can make use of the cultural economy sector as a relevant focus for their development strategy" (Krätke, 2012: 143). And even in those places, in the shadows of those apparently successful creative islands, lay a number of social problems: marginal groups, elderly, social welfare recipients who do not fit in this new cultural urban vision (ibid). In addition, the original creative scene, the pioneers who worked to upgrade a given inner-urban area, are often pushed to relocate to other, lower-value locations (Krätke, 2010).

Scott (2006) has shown that the main logic behind the creative city concept – that jobs follow people – is flawed. Actually, it is the other way

around – the system of production generates jobs and influences regional economic competitiveness.

Florida fails to articulate the necessary and sufficient conditions under which skilled, qualified, and creative individuals will actually congregate together in particular places and remain there over any reasonably long-run period of time. The key to this conundrum lies in the production system. Any city that lacks a system of employment able to provide these individuals with appropriate and durable means of earning a living is scarcely in a position to induce significant numbers of them to take up permanent residence there, no matter what other encouragements policy makers may offer. A few fortunate centres perhaps may achieve something that approaches a creative, high-quality environment across the board, but in most metropolitan areas, developments of this type will most likely continue to exist only as enclaves in an urban landscape where poverty and social deprivation still widely prevail (Scott, 2006:12).

But how can we explain the popularity of the creative city concept and the support that local and national governments generously provide for such initiatives, despite budget constrains? All the mentioned critical reviews clearly point to the *social consequences* but not the roots and causes of creativity-led urban development. In the next paragraph, we briefly present what might be the main driver, or socio-economic *cause* behind this model of development, by relying on the arguments offered by David Harvey.

In *Spaces of Capital* (2001: 394–411) Harvey examined the relationship between culture and capital through the concept of *monopoly rent* (higher rent for owners, based on the holding of a monopoly over a specific place) and showed how local cultural developments can be understood in relation to the (global) political economy. The culture and creativity strategies and their emphasis on producing unique places are here seen as attempts to garner monopoly rents in the latest phase of capitalist development, where natural monopolies based on space and proximity fade away. "What is at stake here is the power of collective symbolic capital, of special marks of distinction that attach to some place, which have a significant drawing power upon the flows of capital more generally" (ibid: 405). The scarcity of place can be created by withholding land or resources from current uses and speculating on future values. According to Harvey, claims to uniqueness and authenticity, embedded in the historically constituted cultural artefacts and practices are the main basis for speculation on future value of place. They are as much an outcome of discursive constructions (historical narratives, interpretations and meanings of

collective memories) and social struggles as they are grounded in material fact. "Once established, however, such claims can be pressed home hard in the cause of extracting monopoly rents" (ibid: 405). This discursive process of selecting appropriate cultural narratives that will later serve as the base for monopoly rents is highly selective and the "guardians of collective symbolic and cultural capital (the museums, the universities, the class of benefactors, and the state apparatus) typically close their doors and insist upon keeping the riff-raff out" (ibid: 406). Thus, the discursive creation of the new cultural profile of cities, aligned with the logic of capital, is exclusive and makes a distinction, breach or conflict between privileged and marginalized actors in cities. The material benefits of this development are unevenly distributed, causing a rift between the high valued "new urban culture" and suppressed and devaluated everyday urban culture of the local population. By analysing Liverpool's hosting of the European Capital of Culture in 2008, Eliot Trotter (2009:113) expands on Harvey's insights, and suggests that a pre-condition for exploiting the cultural infrastructure of a city is the transformation of elements of cultural distinctiveness –or, more generally, "the commons" – into fixed capital, which in many cases involves outright or de facto forms of privatization.

But, "why let the monopoly rent attached to that symbolic capital be captured only by the multinationals or by a small powerful segment of the local bourgeoisie?", asks Harvey (2001: 407). Who has the right to the creative city? Peter Marcuse (2011) makes a contrast between the creative city and the right to the city concept, arguing that the Florida's concept is exactly what we need to overcome in order to have a truly *creative city for all*. According to Marcuse, that kind of creative city:

> "[...]will not be the city that, on the one hand, leaves a large portion of its residents with less than the basic material needs for a decent and healthy life: leaves many homeless, undernourished, in bad health and with inadequate care, in polluted environments, congested cities, insecure neighborhoods, subject to the domination and exploitation of their labor power and the restriction of their freedoms to speak, to act, to assemble, to develop – residents deprived of even the rudiments of a decent life" (ibid: 1).

Democracy, recognition, representation and redistribution are, in other words, the necessary elements of the true creative city.

Harvey (2001) sees this possibility within the contradictions of the cultural logic of capital itself. Namely, its tendency to value uniqueness, authenticity, particularity and originality is inconsistent with the homogeneity presupposed by commodity production.

> "And if capital is not to totally destroy the uniqueness that is the basis for the appropriation of monopoly rents (and there are many circumstances where it has done just that and been roundly condemned for so doing) then it must support a form of differentiation and allow of divergent and to some degree uncontrollable local cultural developments that can be antagonistic to its own smooth functioning" (Harvey, 2001: 409).

Drawing on these insights, it can be concluded that culture/creativity-led urban policies go hand in hand with neoliberal urban governance and result in the concentration of wealth and power, dispossession, gentrification and displacement (Harvey, 2012; Brenner and Theodore, 2002). On the other hand, these developments seem to open up "spaces of hope" (Harvey, 2001) and stimulate new alliances as the basis for new contentious (cultural) policy in the city.

The high hopes raised by Florida's recipe turned out to be unjustified – not only because of their social consequences, but also because these strategies are highly contextual and depend on the system of production that underlie the city/region. Despite the unifying tendencies of globalization, it is obvious that neoliberal urban policies do not manifest in the same way in all places. Brenner and Theodore (2002: 349) introduced the concept of "actually existing neoliberalism" and argued that "an adequate understanding of actually existing neoliberalism must explore the path-dependent, contextually specific interactions between inherited regulatory landscapes and emergent neoliberal, market-oriented restructuring projects at a broad range of geographical scales". Following this conceptual framework, we now turn to the specific manifestations of urban strategies led by culture/creativity in the postsocialist cities of CEE.

The Creative City in the Postsocialist, Neoliberal and Peripheral CEE

The global city discourse is marked by western-centrism, economism and presentism, resulting in attention being focused mainly on the primary economic centres in the West, while the peripheral cities, the cultural/political dimension of globalization, as well as the role of path dependencies in the globalization of the cities, are neglected (Pajvančić – Cizelj, 2017). However, peripheral urban centres that do engage with cultural/creative urban development are difficult to examine due to the underdevelopment of theories relevant to local contexts and a general lack of relevant empirical data.

The recent work of Czirfuzs (2018) about the role of creativity and culture in reproducing uneven development across Central and Eastern Europe, gives an excellent overview of urban development led by creativity and culture in CEE. According to him, critiques of culture/creativity driven urban development, described previously in this paper, are largely valid in CEE and even exacerbated by the lack of capital. In addition, culture/creativity discourses in CEE can be seen as powerful signifiers that the region has left behind its old industry-based development and embraced the western way of creative economy. Drawing from the results of different studies conducted in the region, Czirfuzs (2018) concludes that behind these powerful discourses, the old path dependencies and structural centre/periphery relationships seem to endure. Within the new mode of development, CEE cities are often (if not always), stuck in the lower-ends of the knowledge economy or less knowledge-intensive parts of global production networks (Blažek & Csank, 2015, in Czirfuzs, 2018: 107). Besides, the concentration of those services in the main CEE cities further exacerbates problems of urban-rural divides and uneven regional development across CEE, or as stated by Czirfuzs (2018: 107), "simply reproduces former unevenness in the manufacturing sector". Drawing from numerous empirical case studies, Czirfuzs (2018: 110) states that this kind of urban development "increases gentrification and displacement, raises socio-spatial inequalities and starts new rounds of capital accumulation in cities". However, he also notes how new social movements against creativity-led urban development are on the rise.

The ECoC: Rebranding Peripheries

A recent phase of the European Capital of Culture programme can be used as an illustrative example of cultural-led urban development through "mega events" in the European periphery. The ECoC programme itself was launched by the European Commission in 1985 with the aim of establishing greater cultural cohesion between the member states. In the first years, ECoC titles were awarded to traditional cultural centres like Athens (1985), Florence (1986), Amsterdam (1987), Berlin (1988) and Paris (1989). This practice changed in 1990 when Glasgow, until then known as a small, "dirty industrial city" with huge economic and social problems, was awarded the title of ECoC (Griffiths, 2008)[4]. The case of Glasgow[5]

4 Corina Turşie (2015) identified two phases of the ECoC program, marked by two different strategies used by host cities. The first was inspired by a top-down entrepreneurial vision, city competitiveness, internationalization and "high" culture, and second, progressive or capability strategy focused on the distribution of benefits to the citizens, reducing socio-economic disparities and raising overall standards of living, reflecting the broader trends in cultural policy.

5 For critical reflections about the Glasgow case see Mooney, 2007.

set a precedent because the award was motivated globally (not locally) and its primary goal was economic. The experience of Glasgow, seen as a worldwide success, has prompted other de-industrialized cities to test this "prescription" for securing a safer, post-industrial future (Griffiths, 2008).

This idea quickly found its way to postsocialist cities, especially smaller cities that have been left out of global integration in the initial phase of their transition. Deindustrialization, dismantling of regulatory institutions and aggressive (often corrupt) privatization in those cities created structural problems such as unemployment, growing inequalities, commercial overbuilding, the usurpation of public spaces and the reduction of public services. This scenario, correctly noted by Trócsányi (2011:266) as "recalling the world of free competition capitalism of the 19th century in many respects", did not favour the spread of cultural urban rehabilitation. Nevertheless, throughout CEE "culture appears to offer a relatively cheap and quick way to "do the trick" and represent the region as equivalent to other developed democratic countries" (Czirfuzs, 2018:111). The ECoC is seen here as a tool for rebranding the city, repositioning it in the European urban hierarchy, and attracting investment and tourism.

Márta Bakucz (2012) analysed the Hungarian city of Pécs from the perspective of a peripheral ECOC title-holder for 2010 and stressed the importance of simultaneous development of culture and other industries. Corina Turşie (2015) posed the question how formerly communist, peripheral cities deal with their past while re-inventing their identities and re-narrating their history in a European context[6], in order to fit in the European dimension of the ECoC programme? By examining two former ECoCs, she observed how the unwanted heritage of the cities' past, soon became exploited and re-invented to fit the general ECoC aim of promoting diversity and the richness of European culture.

This process of re-invention of culture in the postsocialist/peripheral context is, however, complex and contentious as it is situated in the broader urban dynamic and its actors. Ooi, Håkanson and LaCava (2014: 421) make a useful distinction between the *politics* of the ECoC – the "grubby business of seeking legitimacy, mobilizing community support and managing local dissatisfaction" and the *poetics* of the ECoC – the "presentation of ECoC in an attractive manner to win local support and attract outside attention". Accordingly, analysis of every specific ECoC case needs to address the process of negotiation within conflicting urban realities as well as the arguments, means and rhetorical devices used to justify and legitimize new cultural activities. From the sociological point of view, it is

6 Persistent orientation towards Europe ("Europeanization") in CEE seems to distinguish this region from other postsocialist places.

important to observe who gets to speak and be heard, how the conflicting meanings of culture are managed and finally, whose definition of culture is accepted.

It appears that most peripheral cities that were awarded the ECoC title used their peripherality as an advantage. Following Harvey's line of argument, it might be claimed that peripherality itself is used to denote distinction and uniqueness, to add extra value to the space. The question of peripherality becomes even more interesting when it is applied to the Balkans. From the perspective of political economy, Balkan cities could be seen as the superperiphery of Europe. Many countries, according to Bartlett (2009), became labour-export economies, with significant outflows of skilled labour and follow a path of low-skill growth. They have been left out of the most beneficial elements of the globalization process, while simultaneously suffering from its main defects. "Furthermore, as transition has proceeded, disparities between capital cities and rural areas have increased, while weak administrative capacities have hindered the implementation of effective local development policies to counteract these effects" (Bartlett, 2009: 21–22).

From the cultural/discursive perspective, the Balkans can be defined through their Ottoman and socialist heritage and seen as the "other" within Europe while *Balkanism* refers to specific discourses that determine attitudes and actions toward the Balkans (Todorova, 2006). Within this discourse "Balkan" is the symbol for something "aggressive, intolerant, barbaric, semi-developed, semi-civilized, semi-oriental" (Todorova, 2006:11). These notions have, according to Todorova, often served as a repository of negative characteristics upon which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the "European" has been built. Taking this as a starting point, we can approach the subject of this paper from a different perspective and pose the following question: How does the presence of European authority affect local processes of reinventing peripheral, post-socialist and Balkan urban culture?

Our starting hypothesis is that, for several reasons, the ECoC project produces *struggle*. The first of these reasons arises from tension between the homogenized European dimension and heterogeneous local specificities, in this case deeply embedded in the Balkan discourse. It is difficult to reconcile "Balkan" and "European" because, as shown by Todorova[7], they function as oppositions to one another. Thus, what is the accepted "dose"

7 This is, according to Todorova (2006), one of the key differences between the notions of the Balkans and Orient. In the eyes of the European, the Orient is a source of mystery, the unknown, the exiting other to be conquered. The Balkans is on the other hand a mirror image for Europe, a despised part of the self to be rejected.

of the Balkan that makes it interesting but not imposing and threatening? The second reason for the struggle with the ECoC title arises from the material, superperipheral position of the city. The poor social and communal infrastructure of the city and the ongoing socio-economic crisis, make it hard to advocate and allocate funds for cultural regeneration. The second proposition that will guide our analysis is that cultural and economic (discursive and material) dimensions of the struggle are intertwined.

The ECoC in Novi Sad: Empirical Analysis

Serbia and Novi Sad – A General Overview

The following table (Table 1) presents some basic data about Serbia, comparing it to one "core" Central European and one semi-peripheral, neighbouring Eastern European country (Austria and Hungary, respectively).

Table 1 Country profiles – Serbia/Austria/Hungary

	Serbia	Hungary	Austria
Total population (in thousands)	8,820	9,753	8,712
Annual population growth (%)	-0.5	-0.3	1.3
Rural population (% of total population)	44	28	34
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	5	4	3
Life expectancy at birth (years)	75	76	82
Poverty headcount ratio at 3.10 PPP$ a day (% of population)	1.3	0.5	..
GDP per capita – PPP$	13,482	25,582	47,824
Annual GDP growth (%)	2.8	2.2	1.5
GDP in billions – PPP$	104	265	443

Source: UNESCO Country profiles

When it comes to the knowledge economy and its indicators, in 2016 Serbia had around 2,300 researchers per million inhabitants, Hungary had 4,000 and Austria had 7,000. In the same year, Serbia's gross domes-

tic expenditure on R&D was 0.9 percent of GDP, in Hungary around 1.5 and in Austria around 2.7 percent (Source: UNESCO). Although at the beginning of the decade the country was relatively well integrated into the world economy and had a higher standard of living than many other transition countries, the Serbian economy was devastated as a result of armed conflicts, international sanctions and trade shocks stemming from the breakup of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) during the 1990s (Country Report, Serbia, European Commission, 2006). Given these broad indicators we can situate Serbia in Bartlett's (2009) conception and define it as part of the European superperiphery.

Despite the lack of disaggregated data, especially on the local level, it is obvious that Serbia's development is highly territorially uneven.[8] Novi Sad is one of the few "growth poles" in the country. Compared with other Serbian cities it is: a) one of the very few places experiencing a slight demographic growth; b) multi-ethnic; c) developed above the national average (National Agency for Regional Development); and, d) one of the Serbian cities with the highest index of social development (Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Unit, 2015)[9]. Novi Sad is the administrative centre of the Province of Vojvodina, Serbia's most important agricultural region, inhabited by many minorities. With around 250,000 inhabitants, Novi Sad is second only to the country's capital in terms of population. As is the case with many other cities in Serbia, Novi Sad has suffered from a breakdown of industry during the last decade of the 20th century and has managed to restore some of its previous economic functions only during the 2000s.

The socio-spatial structure of Novi Sad reflects the territorial unevenness seen on the national level. One of the striking examples is water and sanitation – most smaller settlements located in the wider Novi Sad municipality lack access to sanitation (or have only gained access very recently)[10]. In addition, there is a lasting, neglected problem of the substandard settlements in the city[11], as well as a high number of illegally

8 Overall income inequality, measured by Gini coefficient, is significantly higher in Serbia when compared with EU states – 38.6 in 2015 compared to the EU– 28 average of 31.0 (Arandarenko, Krstić & Žarković Rakić, 2017). Recent research points to the fact that Serbia is "economically, socially and demographically polarized space" with "deepening differences between regional centres and the rural hinterland" (Joksimović & Golić, 2017:246).

9 Detailed data about the economic profile of the city is available here: http://www.novisad.rs/sites/default/files/attachment/profil_2011_eng_web.pdf, accessed 01/06/2018.

10 In addition, Novi Sad, as well as Belgrade, still pours sewage into the Danube, as both cities still lack central sewage treatment facilities.

11 The city of Novi Sad is surrounded by several substandard settlements (Veliki Rit, Bangladeš, Šangaj and part of the Adice) inhabited by more than 500, mostly Roma,

constructed buildings. A development strategy driven by short-term economic thinking resulted in overbuilding, reductions of public and green spaces, neglect of environmental issues and the deterioration of living conditions in the city (see Pušić, 2009). This is coupled with the construction of luxury housing complexes, further increasing socio-spatial inequalities and mimicking the neoliberal developmental path of the capital. In contrast with prevailing assumptions about entrepreneurial cities – and as a result of high centralization and concentration of power within the ruling party – the national government plays the primary role in (neoliberal) urban development in Serbia (Grubbauer & Čamprag, 2019).

Historically and culturally, the city of Novi Sad is located at the crossroads of civilizations, which can be illustrated by the fact that the line Huntington (1996) drew through the Europe in order to divide the Orthodox and Catholic parts of the continent, goes directly through the city (Image 1)

Image 1 S. Huntington divide of Orthodox and Catholic civilization in Europe[12]

Behind stereotypical portrayals of the city – such as the "Serbian Athens", with its peaceful, tolerant and multicultural profile – lie ethnic tensions and nationalist exclusion. While the city was developing (in fact growing) according to the neoliberal recipe, the Cultural Centre of Novi Sad, was heavily criticized for favouring nationalist cultural content, as stated during a protest organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights[13]. The same institution censored an art exhibition because it "offended Christianity", which resulted in the group of artists pulling their

families living in critically disadvantaged conditions. They lack basic urban infrastructure and some of them are situated directly next to landfill sites (Jovanović & Bu, 2014).

12 Source: Huntington, S. P. (1993). *The Clash of Civilizations? Foreign Affairs, 72*(3), *22.* doi:10.2307/20045621, accessed 05/06/2018.

13 http://www.autonomija.info/antifasisticka-dekontaminacija-kulturnog-centra-novog-sada.html, accessed 01/06/2017.

work from the Centre and boycotting it for suppressing artistic freedom[14]. Moreover, the officials of the City of Novi Sad ecstatically announced huge investment in the construction of a museum devoted to the events of 1918 when Vojvodina proclaimed its secession from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to unite with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In the meantime, the same local government allowed a private investor to demolish a protected historical building in the city centre, which contained some important elements of Armenian heritage that is now almost completely wiped out from the city. This kind of urban policy is simultaneously embedded in anti-modern (nationalist, traditionalist) and postmodern (neoliberal) values, that go "hand in hand". Mišović (2017) correctly noted how the "postmodern Triumph created the conditions for revisionism at the periphery of the world capitalist system, as the basis on which a globalized neo-liberal society is being built, and which, for its new symbolic markers, takes the philosophy of ethno-exoticism as one, essentially, anti-modern policy of servitude and auto-colonialism".

Novi Sad – ECoC 2021

In order to map and interpret two presumed dimensions of struggle with the title of ECoC (economic and cultural), in the following chapter we analyse several illustrative elements of the ECoC project in Novi Sad. The evidence is gathered from the official web page of the Novi Sad 2021 Foundation and from local newspapers.

The ECoC programme in Novi Sad is deeply rooted in the creative city script, as described above, and functions as the main platform that introduces and advocates the creative city discourse in Novi Sad. The struggle with the title was obvious from the very beginning – the initial candidacy did not impress the panel, who stated that there is a "considerably underdeveloped European dimension" and that the bid lacks "an innovative approach" (European Capital of Culture, 2016). The Report from the First Monitoring Meeting by the panel of independent experts in 2017[15] repeated that the European dimension is undeveloped and also criticized the "lack of clear artistic vision" and "event-oriented approach". This points to struggles with the *reinvention of an urban culture within the creative city discourse in a peripheral context* but also to European authority over the project and the servility of the local developers. The tension

14 https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/otvorena-izlozba-umetnika-koji-bojkotuju-kulturni-centar-novi-sad/zhpy9wc, accessed 01/06/2017.

15 Available at: http://novisad2021.rs/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Ocena-panela-eng..pdf?jez=lat, accessed 15/06/2018.

between *what are perceived as* European values and Balkan culture can be illustrated by the main logo of the project, which consist of words written with a combination of Cyrillic and Latin letters (Image 2) and also the biggest event organized by the Foundation so far – celebration of the Orthodox New Year.

Image 2 Novi Sad 2021 Logo

The total budget for the (four-year) project is around 30 million euros, with an additional 34 million planed for infrastructural investment[16]. Compared to some other ECoCs, this might look like a relatively small budget (see, for example, Mons[17]). Actually, it is a large figure when we take into account that the city's total 2018 annual budget was around 200 million euros (with the budget for culture in 2016 being around 8 million) and the total budget of the Province of Vojvodina for 2018 was around 550 million euros[18]. Similar to other, past ECoCs, *the majority of funding comes from the domestic public sector* (around 85% for operating costs and around 60% for capital investments). The infrastructural costs are mostly planned to be provided by the Province of Vojvodina (51%) with little funding from the local (5%) and national government (5%)[19]. This might indicate that the already high level of centralization, uneven development and urban-rural divide in the Province (also called "Novosadization") might become even larger in the coming years. The costs of the Project (especially it biggest infrastructural investment, located in Novi Sad) are borne by the whole Province, while the benefits (if any) will be enjoyed by a narrow segment of Novi Sad's population.

A brief analysis of the table showing the main potentials and risks of the project in the Bid Book shows how the actual social context is ignored and distorted: the reality marked by inequalities, poverty, environmental problems and partocracy is erased and the "blame" for the supposedly inadequate (cultural) profile of the city is, in a neoliberal manner, transferred to its citizens. For example, the citizens of Novi Sad are seen as a potential obstacle and described as "apathetic and uninterested in culture due to exposure to reality [TV] programs", which will be solved by a mod-

16 Source: Bid Book

17 Source: European Commision (2016) Ex-post Evaluation of the 2015 European Capitals of Culture, accessed 01/10/2018.

18 http://www.budzet.vojvodina.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/GRADJANSKI-BUDZET_2018.pdf, accessed 15/06/2018.

19 Source: Bid Book

ern, participatory approach to culture. In fact, the citizens, especially the marginal social groups, often do not have the financial means or objective opportunities to participate in the cultural life of the city in any way other than they do now. Other obstacles that were identified are the perceived "low capacities" and old-fashioned style adopted by cultural workers, which are to be overcome through capacity-building and education. In reality, a number of cultural workers actually have high professional capacities and the real problems lie in the low salaries and political, rather than the professional, management of their institutions. In addition, an alleged lack of communication between members of different ethnic communities is posed as an obstacle, as if it were a matter of personal animosity and not the systematic marginalization of minorities, especially in area of culture. Finally, local artists are also seen as an obstacle because they are "not interested in cultural industries and are engaged in *art for art['s sake]*", a fact that is intended to be changed by raising their entrepreneurial capacities. Again, the structural problems of insufficient support for the arts and continued politicization remain intact.

In a way, the Bid Book ignores structural social problems and shifts responsibility to the individual and local level. Such a distorted image of reality will probably produce even more struggles against the realization of proposed activities because some of these continue to be uninformed and mistargeted. The European intervention is here seen as an opportunity to "save" the culturally unaware, old-fashioned local community. This discursively enhances the material and superperipheral position of the city, making it look weak, subordinate and dependent on foreign knowledge and expertise. This then clears the ground for practical transformation of the urban space under the ECoC, inspired by neoliberal practices.

We now turn to the one of the biggest infrastructural projects within the ECoC project in Novi Sad, the transformation of the former industrial site known as the Chinese Quarter into "Youth creative polis", costing 16 million euros. The main idea is "to revitalize [the] so-called Chinese quarter" as an "abandoned and deteriorated factory site" and transform it into a "new creative district for youth activism" through "complete reconstruction of the infrastructure, revitalization of the existing objects and building new objects for tourism, arts, ICT, and creative industries, through public-private partnerships"[20]. Public funds are planned mostly for the reconstruction of infrastructure and private funds (around 9 million)[21] for the new buildings, which raises serious concerns about whose interest are going to come first. Although promoted as something innovative,

20 Source: Bid Book.

21 Source: Bid Book.

it is obvious that this project was inspired by dozens of similar initiatives, through the recycling a narrow repertoire of routinized strategies, as described by Peck (2005). The economic potentials, although highly questionable, are frequently repeated ("for every euro invested in culture, we can expect eight times as much in return"[22]) and expected mostly from the very broadly defined "creative class" (in this case, the ICT sector). Although in bad physical shape, the Chinese Quarter was a socially rich, lively, artistic and alternative space, used as an urban "common". This unique, spontaneously developed feature was obviously the main motive for picking this particular space for revitalization under the EcoC and used to attract private investors (there are a number of both psychically and socially abandoned industrial sites in the city that could have been selected instead). In order to do so, the space needed to be "sterilized" by pushing out some unwanted elements ("riff-raff" in Harvey's terms). In this case, the "riff-raff" was composed of artists, social activists, manual labourers and a few homeless people who used the place as a shelter. Their contribution to the "social life" of this place was dismissed and one part of the original creative scene was pushed out to other, lower-value locations, as was similarly noted by Krätke (2010).

This "sterilization" was not merely material, it was also discursive. In order to obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the public, the quarter needed to be reimagined and shown as an underused place without an identity[23]. This was achieved by a survey conducted by a private media agency[24], a series of informal public talks organized by the Foundation and through the one official and obligatory mechanism for public participation in urban planning. Public discussions organized by the Foundation were presented as an innovative participation mechanism, while in fact their loose structure and undefined procedures could legitimize almost any decision (by selecting appropriate participants, by subjective interpretations of the course of events during the discussions and so forth). Employment of the obligatory, official and legally grounded mechanism of participation in Local Parliament was followed by the large number of objections to the new plan by the citizens and experts but all of them were simply dismissed and rejected by the city officials[25]. The public quickly recognized the po-

22 http://rs.n1info.com/a201173/Vesti/Kultura/Novi-Sad-proglasen-za-Evropsku-prestonicu-kulture-za-2021.html, accessed 15/05/2018.

23 In fact, very few places in Novi Sad have a clear identity function, especially for those people who do not live close by.

24 http://www.mojnovisad.com/vesti/istrazivanje-novosadjani-znaju-gde-je-ali-ne-znaju-sta-je-kineska-cetvrt-id17547.html, accessed 01/06/2018.

25 http://www.021.rs/story/Novi-Sad/Vesti/155659/Burna-rasprava-i-masovan-odziv-Novosadjana-zbog-rusenja-Kineske-cetvrti.html, accessed 01/06/2018.

tential risks and questioned: a) the potential gentrification and displacement[26]; b) privatization and commodification[27]; c) irrational and unjustified public expenditure[28]; and, d) potential corruption[29].

One segment of these erstwhile oppositional milieus (cultural workers, experts and grassroots movements) could be easily neutralized, integrated and co-opted into the new mainstream, as also noted by Schmid (2012), because the Foundation is allocating a significant amount of funding for cultural projects in the city.

Concerns that have been raised over these issues were initiated by plans for the reorganization of the Chinese Quarter, which involved the relocation of users and an influx of new private actors. All these fears and criticisms are still not fully articulated or expressed because the project has not yet been realized and its full plan has not been presented to the public. While the new physical appearance of the quarter has been widely publicised, it is still unknown what the reconstruction will mean in terms of the area's social content (new functions and actors are just broadly and not explicitly defined). This situation can be described as a non-transparent process of speculation over the future value of this part of the city.

Conclusion

The challenge of this paper was to describe the situation without sufficient data about the real impact of the project on the built environment and social life of the city. Most of the planned interventions into built environment (such as the transformation of the Chinese Quarter – as covered here – as well new building for the Music School, new cultural centres and revitalized public spaces, that were not covered by this analysis) have yet to be completed and it is not possible to fully judge their impact at least until the first evaluations are publicly available. That is why we conceived of this paper as a preliminary analysis aiming at capturing and explaining the initial social tensions – struggles – that this project has brought to the city.

In this paper we presented some of the main criticisms of creative/cultural-led urban development: on one hand, they are based on the loose assumption that economic development can be boosted anywhere, solely by applying the "creative city" script, and on the other, they often result in social exclusion, gentrification and the commodification of culture. The

26 http://detelinara.org/petar-drapsin-kineska-cetvrt-i-youth-creative-polis-tekst-slobodana-jovica-u-novom-5-broju-biltena-stanar/, accessed 01/06/2018.

27 http://www.masina.rs/?p=500, accessed 01/06/2018.

28 http://dostajebilo.rs/blog/2018/06/22/izvestaj-o-radu-evropske-prestonice-kulture-2021-slobodnim-stilom/?lang=lat, accessed 01/06/2018.

29 http://javno.rs/analiza/novi-sad-2021-privatna-prestonica-kulture, accessed 01/06/2018.

rising popularity of these strategies can be explained via Harvey's notion (2001) that they serve as a means for extracting monopoly rent in a new round of the capital accumulation, based simply on of the cultural distinctiveness of a place. Thus, cultural/creative-led urban strategies, at least in their present form, can be regarded as the companions of an overall pattern of neoliberal urban development.

In the European context, these strategies are often implemented under the umbrella of the European Capital of Culture, especially after its shift towards smaller, peripheral and formerly industrial cities. Taking the Novi Sad ECoC 2021 project as a case study, our starting hypothesis was that, in the superperipheral, postsocialist, Balkan context, the ECoC project produces struggles in the economic and cultural domains. Those two sources of struggle against the ECoC title – cultural and economic (discursive and material) – are seen as intertwined and mutually reinforcing. Although the material conditions play a minor role in the public promotion of the ECoC project in Novi Sad, they are crucial for understanding the discursive efforts to change the cultural profile of the city. In the case of the Chinese Quarter in Novi Sad, a new, neoliberal, economic model of urban development, as a companion of the creative city concept, is legitimized and justified both by imposing and promoting new cultural values and discourses and their actors, and also by suppressing those who do not fit the new urban vision.

The analysis has confirmed previous findings (Czirfuzs, 2018) that critiques of urban development driven by culture/creativity produced in the West are largely valid and even exacerbated in the CEE context, due to lacking resources, aggressive neoliberalism, underdeveloped local regulatory mechanisms, marginalized social agenda and endangered urban commons. Elevation of specific socio-spatial problems observed elsewhere in CEE, namely the regional inequalities and urban-rural divide, were also noticed in the case of Novi Sad. However, our case departs from the CEE because the Balkan region lacks systematic outside support for territorial cohesion and regional development. The superperipheral position makes the region highly vulnerable to the risks deriving from global integration, with a low local capacity and supranational support to overcome them. The most pressing, structural urban problems of the peripheries will most likely remain intact or even become exacerbated within the ECoC title while the public budget and attention will be redirected to controversial cultural mega-projects.

In this paper, however, in the absence of sufficient "hard" empirical evidence (e.g. about the concentration of lower segments of the knowledge economy in superperipheral cities), the question of whether cultural/creativity-led urban development leads to the *reproduction* of superperipheriality remains open. The peripheral or superperipheral position of

a city is not just economically defined, however, it is also embedded in cultural and discursive marginalization. In a way, peripheriality is not defined from within but clearly defined (stigmatized) from the outside. This stigmatization is, in our case, based on the discourse Todorova called Balkanism. Brief discursive analysis conducted in this chapter, pointed to the dependent, servile position of local actors before European authority/knowledge regarding the ECoC title, which in a way reflects or even enhances the dependent material position of the city. Local actors are obviously struggling to find the appropriate European "look" and with satisfying their European audience. In the initial phase of the ECoC project in Novi Sad, this struggle is revealed as the highly selective process in which some "exotic" and appropriate parts of the local/national culture (Orthodox religion, Balkan motifs) are used as "decoration" for the introduction of homogenized neoliberal urban models, while other "unwanted' local elements are "cut off' and suppressed.

This illustrates how a global neoliberal system interacts with a local culture and national state, but also points to the struggles and resistance of local actors facing the need to reconcile local heterogeneity with global unification. Although often seen as opposing forces (internationalization vs. national isolation) neoliberalism and nationalism can indeed go hand in hand. In this case, it is difficult to identify whether nationalistic discourse serves to support neoliberal intervention or if it is rather the other way around. In any case, they are obviously complementing or even reinforcing one another.

The case of Novi Sad differs from the Western cases, where short-term creativity projects disrupt comprehensive planning in favour of selective development of "urban fragments' with market potential (Peck, 2005). Here, the long-term planning was disrupted in the 1990s, during the war, transition and institutional breakdown. This state of affairs changed only slightly during the 2000s when Novi Sad continued to grow almost spontaneously, driven by short-term economic goals when "anyone who had even a small amount of money, could build anywhere whatever he wanted", as noted by Pušić (2009). Given that, the ECoC title can also be seen as a chance to develop long-term, integrated and strategic planning in the city. For example, the strategy for the development culture in the city of Novi Sad was developed as part of the preparation for the ECoC bid. In addition, the title brought new roles for urban actors, initiated public debate about the goals of urban development and triggered new alliances as well as the new conflicts. Within this new urban dynamic, we could hope to also see an articulation of different visions, which address structural and long neglected urban problems and advocate for poverty alleviation, social welfare concerns, environmental sustainability and socio-spatial redistribution, alongside the creative city for all.

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PART II
URBAN (RE)ACTIONS: AWAKENING OF URBAN MOVEMENTS

RIGHT TO THE CITY: URBAN MOVEMENTS AND INITIATIVES AS THE PULSE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN SERBIA*

Jelena Božilović

Abstract: The chapter deals with the phenomenon of urban movements and initiatives in Serbia in recent years. The topics focused on by the chosen social and urban actors are varied and depend on the local context and actual problems encountered by dissatisfied citizens. What is common to all of them, however, is that by demanding their right to the city they point to deeper systemic and institutional fractures, injustices and the narrow interests of power-wielding elite, which come to life in interactions between the local and state authorities. This chapter discusses these urban movements and initiatives within the political-party milieu of contemporary Serbia, as without this context the phenomenon could not be fully explained. Furthermore, the chapter emphasizes that the actors studied here are not merely dissatisfied with the actions and decisions of the political parties currently in office but are also critical of opposition parties. These are seen as having failed to live up to the trust placed in them in the past (i.e. when they were in power) and are now seen as disorganized, disunited and weak in responding to the needs of dissatisfied and apathetic citizens. Urban movements and local initiatives represent, therefore, a social and political rebellion from below that, even though it begins as the right to the city, possesses a wider social significance. The chapter provides particular insight into the city of Niš and the specific initiatives that, acting against the state and local party elite, defend the interests of ordinary people by performing actions directed towards the right to the city.

Keywords: city, right to the city, urban movements, civil society, civic activism

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Introduction

Since urban movements and protests fall within the scope of civil society, the introductory part of this chapter will discuss the meaning of the term civil society, followed by a brief review of the development and characteristics of civil society in Serbia.

As an autonomous sphere of activity, civil society has its roots in the period of great revolutions, when the bourgeois class struggled and won the autonomy of the economic sphere (market principles and self-regulation) of society from the state. After the establishment of the capitalist system, the strengthening of the capitalist class and the wars in the first half of the 20th century, civil society has been revived but this time with new demands. These are no longer concerned with economic freedom but, on the contrary, with the limitation thereof as, together with the state apparatus, it is believed to suppress the "life-world". It is therefore the autonomy of society that is now being demanded, both from government and from the private interests of the most economically powerful class. It was in the second half of the 20th century that social movements in the West expanded and advocated for the common interests they deemed to be under threat. The values promoted are peace, ecological balance, emancipation of women and gender equality, sexual freedom and solidarity.

Civil society can be defined based on its genesis through three crucial characteristics: it is a type of social action; it has a relationship with the economy and the state, yet is autonomous; and it is a project that contains utopian dimensions (Lazić, 2005: 100). Civil society is permeated by communication and its main actors are citizens, social movements and different civil organizations and associations that draw attention to certain issues and problems and defend certain values that are, for them, imperative. Its main components are therefore civil initiatives, advocating for the common good, as well as the supplementation and control of the political system of representative democracy.[1] Vukašin Pavlović believes that social movements are the most important link in the chain of various collective actors in civil society, considering them doubly critically oriented: towards the state, institutions and political community, on the one hand, and towards the society as a whole, on the other (Pavlović, 2006: 38).

When it comes to Serbia, one can speak of the emergence and existence of civil society only after the collapse of Yugoslav socialism and the introduction of a multi-party system in the 1990s. Prior to this, during decades under a one-party system, civil engagement was sporadic and

1 More on the history and the meaning of the term "civil society" in Molnar, 2003.

occurred usually in the sphere of culture, which was relatively open to Western influence. The only relevant political actor in Yugoslavia was the political elite, while the civic activism of groups and masses was temporary and kept in check by the authorities and police. Furthermore, the command and plan model of state development spread into all aspects of the society, thus making it impossible to talk about a developed pluralism, which is immanent in democratic societies. This was a case of the totalization of all social subsystems and ideological monopoly (Lazić, 2005: 67), where if certain initiatives appeared as the voice of the people, they often did not even constitute opposition to the fundamental assumptions of the system (the party, the leader and the values of socialism).

It would be incorrect to think, however, that the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) was governed by totalitarian consensus. In contrast to other socialist countries, Yugoslavia was more liberal and not all opposing opinions were censored or suppressed. Proof that there existed an alternative way of thinking and acting within the system lies in the scientific, philosophical, artistic and other cultural endeavours whose practices showed that a civil-critical relationship towards the authorities and dominant values was possible. The openness of Yugoslavia towards Western culture can most easily be traced through popular culture and especially film. Foreign films from various countries were shown throughout SFR Yugoslavia, the majority of which were American (thanks to the US being the largest producer). Large numbers of Italian, French and British films were also shown – meaning imports were dominated by western cinematography. Soviet films also featured but their number was reduced after the de-Stalinization of the country. All of this took place during a time when the Yugoslav authorities began to question Soviet models of governance, including in the cultural sphere (Vučetić, 2012; Janjetović, 2011).[2]

2 In Serbia the *Black Wave* movement represented an interesting alternative phenomenon in film. It emerged during a period of development for Serbian independent film, somewhat inspired by the French *New Wave*, yet with contextual, social specificities (socialist society) and original aesthetic approaches (directing, acting, camera movement, cuts, etc.). In contrast to films about the Yugoslav Partisans, which were ideologically acceptable in the sense that they defended socialist ideas through the medium of motion pictures (Zvijer, 2011), *Black Wave* directors focused their stories on the common man and everyday life in the suburbs, filled with misery and with existential and psychological difficulties – subjects very far removed from the proclaimed state of socialist wellbeing. Precisely due to its critical examination of socialist reality, realism and naturalism, certain *Black Wave* films were banned, however, the majority still played in cinemas or at film festivals, such as those in Pula or Niš. It is also interesting to note that the best *Black Wave* films (even though disliked by the Yugoslav authorities) were sent to the most prestigious international festivals (for example, Želimir Žilnik's *Early Works* won a Golden Bear at the Berlinale).

As Yugoslav intellectual projects, the *Praxis* journal and the *Korčula Summer School* were based on the Marxist paradigm of the critiquing of everything, which implied a critical evaluation of the capitalist world but also of Yugoslav socialism and the governing party. Praxis was founded by philosophers and sociologists from various Yugoslav university centers but its editorial board also included the leading global intellectuals of the time. The journal was published for ten years, after which its publication was precluded through pressure and attacks in the media. Regardless of the fact that it ceased to exist, its ten years of publication speaks volumes of the possibilities for opposition, civil and intellectual activity, while some even claim that it represented, for Yugoslavia, a period of democratization of sorts (Eterović, 2007). Politically, one of the most intriguing years was certainly 1968, known throughout the world as a year of student movements and demonstrations, which also spilled over onto Yugoslav soil. In the SFRY this movement began as the expression of the tendency to democratize society, strengthen self-government, but also against elitization, authoritarianism and the growing bureaucratization of society. Similar to the intellectual circle gathered around *Praxis*, the student demands were also made with the aim of encouraging leftist ideas. The authorities and the party were challenged, but not the socialist ideology itself. On the contrary, it was a deficit of socialism evident in the regime that initiated the activism in the first place.

At the time, other organizations and movements also stood as expressions of certain sections of society. Namely, a new feminist movement emerged in Yugoslavia in the 1970s, precisely in the aforementioned atmosphere of re-examination and critique of the state and the scope of socialism. Thus, feminism in Yugoslavia should not be interpreted outside of the context of *Praxis*, the *Korčula Summer School* and the 1968 student protests. In a series of conferences held in cities around the SFRY, the "female question" was posed publicly, enabling the second wave of feminism to reach the Yugoslav socialist society (Stojčić, 2009: 113). It is also worth mentioning the environmental movement in the SFRY, which has its roots in the 1970s, only to develop into a social movement a decade later through a number of spontaneous "bottom-up" civil actions and protests in various urban centers. Parallel to the environmental movement, an anti-nuclear movement emerged in the middle of the 1980s, within which renowned scientists expressed their stern concerns regarding the construction of nuclear power plants. They were mostly physicists but the movement also included political scientists and sociologists (more on this in Oštrić, 1992).

The 1980s were, however, the decade in which the SFRY began to decline and nationalist discourses started to slowly but surely dominate the public sphere. The intelligentsia became the forbearer of nationalist tendencies, removing class identity into the background and forming a milieu in which Serbian nationalist leader Slobodan Milošević could thrive. Despite the strengthening of nationalist movements and options, the resistance, primarily intellectual, was also present and able to point to the dangers of increasing nationalist narratives and the importance of a democratic transformation for Yugoslavia. One such civil-intellectual circle was the *Association for Yugoslav Democratic Initiative* (*Udruženje za jugoslovensku/jugoslavensku demokratsku inicijativu, UJDI*), formed in Zagreb in 1989. As the coming years would come to show, their appeals, as well as those of other anti-war civil movements, remained marginalized.

The 1990s, marked by Yugoslavia's blocked transformation,[3] were the decade when political and party pluralism were created in Serbia. It was also a time when different shoots of civil society began to appear, such as the social movements and non-governmental organizations that, through almost continuous activity, worked to bring down the newly-formed regime as it was based on the tenets of nationalistic authoritarianism (see Gordi, 2001). A significant increase in the number of non-governmental organizations was recorded especially after the opposition bloc won the 1997 local elections. NGOs continued to multiply and strengthen after the year 2000, while the civil society in the nineties pulsated primarily due to the activities of opposition parties and social movements, as well as protests that they organized in major cities across Serbia. The emergent civil society described here played a key role in overthrowing the regime of Slobodan Milošević and one of the most important movements within it was the student movement *Otpor* (Resistance – more on this in Božilović, 2011). Apart from *Otpor*, other social movements that had previously formed in the SFRY, directed their activism during the 1990s towards anti-nationalist activities, such as feminism. The anti-war movement is also of particular interest, since it brought together several initiatives, among which were *Žene u crnom* (Women in Black). The anti-war civil protests that took place in the streets of Serbian cities in 1991 and 1992 were well-attended and one of the more famous pacifist initiatives was *Rimtutituki*, a supergroup comprising famous Serbian rock and roll musicians, who called for the cessation of hostilities and the breakup of the country in their own specific, creative way.

After the political changes in 2000, when society in Serbia started to build democratic institutions and a democratic political culture, non-gov-

3 See Lazić, 2005:122.

ernmental organizations appeared as a significant factor in civil society and their number was growing. On the other hand, civil activity through social movements declined. It did not, however, disappear entirely and remained present in, among other things, the actions of right-wing movements that emerged in reaction to the movements and civil initiatives that defended the right to *freedom* (primarily the freedom of life choices, freedom of speech, right to space, etc.), such as LGBT movements. Despite the significant increase and spread of the NGO sector, along with many other ideologically diverse civil associations, civil society in Serbia remained fragile.

Even though it can generally be said that the period after the 5th of October changes was a time when the conditions for the development of civil society under the democratic principles being established were finally met, this development was itself far from simple. It was somewhat expected from the example of other former socialist countries, which had begun the establishment of democratic institutions and civil society before Serbia, that the development of civility and civil political culture would be difficult. Pavlović states that postsocialist societies can be described as societies of poor political culture with insufficiently developed civil experience – a fertile ground for easy deterioration into authoritarianism and the exclusion of society from the social and political balance for which democracy strives (Pavlović, 2006: 171). Examining the difficulties of the democratic transformation of postsocialist societies, Piotr Sztompka analyses them from the perspective of culture, where apart from the underdeveloped entrepreneurial, discursive and everyday culture, the undeveloped *civil culture* also represents an obstacle on the way towards democratization. Citizens are not politically active and ready to participate, no one cares about public goods, opponents do not respect each other and the rule of law is fragile (Sztompka as given in Pavlović, 2006: 172).

Of importance here are research results that can be used to trace the path of civic activism in Serbia from the 1990s to the present, which serve to corroborate the stated observations. It is shown, namely, that the participation of citizens in protests and their involvement in political and social organizations was much higher in the nineties has been decreasing since. There exist different interpretations of the reasons behind this phenomenon but it can be generally concluded that the reforms of the 5th of October were questionable and painstaking and the transformation was inefficient and inconsistent, which caused disappointment, passivity and mistrust in social institutions (Petrović, 2016: 381). A 2012 study of civic engagement indicates that the reliance on one's own abilities, as well as one's own family, is seen by most citizens as the best way to realize the common interests of citizens (see Petrović, 2016). Similar attitudes are also observed in the citizens of other postsocialist countries (Jacobsson,

2015: 15). The state, including the political parties, retains very low levels of trust.[4] In favour of this disappointment and maintaining one's distance from politics, 2017 findings also indicate a very low level of political activism (engaged in by only four percent of citizens) and a very high percentage of apoliticism (37%). Also, a very high percentage of those respondents who deem themselves to be well-informed are not active in the political sphere (34%)[5]. It is also interesting to note that citizens do not perceive non-governmental organizations as organizations of trust but rather as actors oriented towards profit. Besides, NGOs are seen as dealing with public policies rather than with politics, their results are temporary, they have insufficient power to challenge the power of the state and their power to mobilize is weak (Vuković, 2015).

Apart from great apathy and apoliticism, the Serbian civil society today still pulsates mainly thanks to the growing urban movements and local initiatives that have become one of the major sources of resistance towards the current government through the right to the city. Consequently, some authors interpret the growth of urban movements as a new developmental phase of civil society in postsocialist countries that challenges the dominant and leading role of non-governmental organizations (Jacobsson, 2015: 5). Before we take a look at some of these movements, we need to explain the political context within which we observe them.

The Socio-Political Context and the Awakening of Cities

It has already been mentioned that after the 5th of October changes the unfulfilled expectations citizens led to civic apathy and a certain loss of hope. This disappointment manifested itself in, among other things, the electoral will of voters, when the coalition gathered around

4 The described characteristics of Serbia's political culture can be related to *amoral familism*, which Benfild wrote about in a study on the characteristics of the citizens of southern Italy or the *incivism* (srp. *necivizam)* that was studied by Willy in France (Podunavac, 1982; Stevanović, 2008). It is a social phenomenon characterized by high distrust of citizens in all social structures that stand outside the family and close circles. Not only is there a cynicism towards the bearers of political power, but citizens have no confidence in one another, which prevents civic cooperation and engagement for the promotion of general interests: "Only the holders of public functions are in contact with the public sphere and they are paid for that. For ordinary citizens there is no serious interest in politics, even the manifestation of this interest is qualified as immoral and indecent" (Benfild according to Podunavac, 1982: 159).

5 https://demostat.rs/sr/vesti/istrazivanja/politicki-aktivizam-u-srbiji/131, accessed 19/08/2018.

the Democratic Party (Demokratska stranka – DS) lost the 2012 election and the majority opted for the Serbian Progressive Party (Srpska napredna stranka – SNS) – which had formed as an offshoot of the nationalistically oriented Serbian Radical Party (Srpska radikalna stranka – SRS). Since then, a specific political climate has been formed in Serbia, in which the government is overwhelmingly centred on the person and the authority of the leader, while partially established democratic institutions are suppressed as are the media, which would previously allow the circulation of different discourses and would thus strengthen the democratic public. This style of government is based on a combination of autocracy and unconsolidated democracy and the result of this combination is a hybrid regime, frequently called a *stabilitocracy* in social and political studies[6] (Primatarova & Deimel, 2012: 5). It is a powerful type of regime that currently characterizes almost all of the countries in the Balkans. Although it could be expected that the democratic institutions of Balkan countries would gradually become stronger during the long process of integrating with the EU, it has actually been shown that democratization and EU integration are not parallel processes (BiEPAG, 2017).

As well as suppressing democratic procedures, political pluralism and an open media environment, stabilitocracies are also strengthened by crises that are produced by the governments themselves to create fear and thus generate their own legitimacy. At the international level, this kind of government is supported by Western countries, whose leaders see them as a factor of sustaining peace and stability, regardless of their evidently autocratic character, which results in significant erosion of the democratic political culture[7].

By operating in this manner, stabilitocratic regimes, including the regime in Serbia, obtain high percentages of votes in elections.[8] On the other hand, there is much abstention among citizens, who do not support the government but do not seek solutions to the problem by turning to opposition political parties. Citizens are fed up with political figures that have been present in the political scene since the nineties and there appears to be a prevailing attitude that all politicians are the same, hence

6 https://www.cirsd.org/en/horizons/horizons-winter-2018-issue-no-10/the-rise-and-fall-of-balkan-stabilitocracies, accessed 20/08/2018.

7 https://florianbieber.org/tag/stabilitocracy/, accessed 20/08/2019.

8 In the 2017 elections the governing party won 55.08 percent of the vote. These results are compatible with the authoritarian leanings of the citizenry, which are illustrated by a 2016 study. According to the findings, a high percentage of respondents declared that they support a strong leader (in Serbian "a strong hand") and they value obedience as a personality trait (https://demostat.rs/sr/vesti/istrazivanja/istrazivanje-javnog-mnenja-srbije-oktobar-2016/7, accessed 19/08/2018.)

it does not matter who is in power. Furthermore, the opposition parties are ideologically heterogeneous, which makes it more difficult for them to unite and organize around clear political goals and a common vision of the future. Moreover, they do not have sufficient media coverage that would allow them to address the citizens and criticize the government and the condition of society. Hence, it can be concluded that the opposition is significantly weakened.

Part of the Serbian population has lost trust not only in domestic political actors (the governing and opposition parties) but also in the European Union, which supports the government. Although the results of opinion surveys, which have now been gathered for years, show that support for the integration of Serbia into the EU has never fallen below 40 percent, it is noticeable that this percentage has decreased during the last nine years and, in 2016, a quarter of respondents did not find anything positive in Serbia's membership of the EU.[9]

Regardless of the prevailing distance from the political sphere, however, civil society in Serbia has not died out – it lives on thanks to mostly urban movements and initiatives. Namely, over the past few years, some people have begun to organize spontaneously and gather around specific, local issues. In contrast to grand political issues (such as EU integration and Kosovo), the course of which ordinary people feel they cannot influence, issues faced by local communities have to some extent succeeded in mobilising apathetic citizens because they are concerned with a direct context that is much closer to their daily lives.[10] Turning to municipal issues and problems has grown into a struggle for the right to the city. Thus, cities have become bases of civic democratic practices that highlight the neglect of the *common good* and tendencies to make decisions in the centre or "from above" without consulting the public and sometimes even by bypassing the legal and institutional framework. These urban movements stand against the "strong hand" and the suppression of freedom as well as the neoliberal policies connected with this government. These actors, through organized actions and protests for the right to the city, demand more democracy and seek the right of citizens to participate in the process of running the city – which Castells holds as one of the most important determinants of an urban movement.[11]

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9 Unlike today, in the 1990s, the countries of the West clearly supported the opposition in Serbia, and then the citizens were more attached to the democratic values these countries symbolized. (https://demostat.rs/sr/vesti/istrazivanja/entuzijazam-za-pristupanje-eu-se-smanjuje/317, accessed 19/08/2019.

10 A survey by Cesid shows that 52% of citizens believe that they cannot change anything in the politics (Cesid, 2017). (www.cesid.rs, accessed 20/08/2018.)

11 Urban movements can be defined as social movements which "are generated by the mobilization of citizens in order to highlight certain requirements regarding acces-

Civil Society in the City of Niš: Movements and Protests

One of the first urban revolts that became a movement is related to the formation of the *Association of Free Tenants* (Udruženi pokret slobodnih stanara – UPSS) from Niš. It is a movement that originated in 2015 as a spontaneous gathering of citizens on the initiative of tenants (residents) of an apartment building in Niš because in response to the almost doubling of the cost of district heating by the public utility company, *Toplana* (District Heating Plant). News of the meeting of these residents spread quickly and gathered a large number of tenant assembly presidents interested in some form of cooperation to solve local problems. After a few meetings, they came to the idea to organise an association that will monitor the work of *Toplana* but also the work of other city agencies, which the activists believed operated more to the detriment than the benefit of citizens.

The authorities did not approve of this kind of civic action and the movement had trouble finding premises in which they could hold meetings and discussion. Although local community centres should serve such a purpose, the head organizers were initially told that local community centres could only be used for political gatherings. They were also denied the use of the city hall without any clear explanation[12]. After the activists had appeared in the media, a local community centre opened its doors to them.

Civic protests, as well as meetings and discussions with guests of the UPSS, have been held regularly and it can therefore be said that this movement has been continuously active. Communication with the public is mostly conducted via social networks but this year they also started publishing a bulletin, *Glas stanara* (Voice of the Tenants), which is distributed to citizens free of charge in order to inform them about local issues, indicating broader cracks in the system. The topics that are discussed are highly important, especially because they are concerned with the position of underprivileged and marginalized citizens, who are frequently on the very edge of destitution. The institutions of the City of Niš seldom react to or solve the problems faced by ordinary people so the movement contributes to a wider public becoming informed about everyday difficulties encountered by certain citizens. Although the activities of the movement are mostly of a local character and, as such, are focused on the promotion

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sibility and quality of urban resources. Unlike interest groups that put pressure on politics through routinized approaches to political authority, urban movements are situational and challenging, as their demands usually call into question the current practice of urban politics" (Petrović, 2009: 199).

12 http://www.upss-nis.org/o-nama/, accessed 25/08/2018.

of the common good of the citizens of Niš, the activists have displayed solidarity with other movements and participate in the activities of organizations across the country that share the same values. The movement has, for instance, lent its support to strikes by the workers of those factories that have been affected by bad privatization. In addition to labour rights, their activity is also directed towards raising the awareness of freedom of the press, which is currently under threat, since they believe it to be one of the crucial problems of contemporary Serbia. One of the pivotal points of the movement is a struggle against the domination of partocracy, i.e. the employment of incompetent individuals based on their membership of a political party. They also promote values based on local autonomy and decentralization as the most effective way to react to the everyday problems of a city's inhabitants. In a broader sense, the movement promotes antifascist values and ideologically and is left-oriented. Furthermore, the political activities of the movement are conducted in cooperation with other movements and organizations in the city and the country but are independent of political parties.

One of the achievements of the UPSS was a successful lawsuit against *Toplana*. This "win" points to the wider significance of the movement. More precisely, it has shown that even in a civil society permeated by passivity, a citizen as a political subject, aligned with others and by means of perseverance and good organization, can demonstrate that the system is not omnipotent, which inspires the continuation of joint action.

The emergence of the UPSS has influenced civil society to wake up through a call for the right to the city. The large-scale protests as a sort of fight for the right to the city triggered, however, another event. In March 2018, a wave of civic protests began in Niš, instigated by the spontaneous revolt of citizens due to the announcement by the Government of the Republic of Serbia that Niš's *Constantine the Great Airport* – which is owned by the city – could be handed over to the state. State officials and local leaders claimed in unison that the city of Niš does not have enough financial resources to invest in the development of this institution and that the state should, therefore, "help" with airport maintenance. Since the citizens of Niš know that the airport has been operating successfully over the past few years and that there is no economic justification for a change of ownership nor a change of business model, the public suspected that the hidden interests of the authorities lay behind the change of ownership. Dissatisfied citizens managed to mobilize quickly and gather around the civic initiative, *We Won't Give Up Niš Airport* (Ne damo niški aerodrom)[13], to

13 The initiative comprises former municipal councilor Miloš Bošković, the *United Movement of Free Residents*, the *National Coalition for Decentralization*, the *Media and Reform Centre* and *Proaktiv*.

ask why a successful model of ownership – which has led to the business expanding and the number of passengers increasing – should be changed to a centralist model.[14]

Not long before the announcement of the change of ownership of the airport in Niš, a concession agreement was signed with a French company for *Nikola Tesla Airport* in Belgrade. It was not difficult to connect these two events and see that the development and successful operation of Niš Airport could impact the success of the country's main airport. Representatives of the civic initiative believe that behind the idea of a change of ownership was the state's intent to establish control over Niš Airport in order to limit the number of flights and passengers (so that it does not exceed a million passengers per year) and hence enabling Belgrade airport and its concessionaire to achieve better results. The contract concluded between the state with the concessionaire has not been made public – which violates basic democratic and civil principles – and the very act of establishing control over Niš airport consequently implies the sabotage of the economic development of the largest city in southern Serbia.

Over the following months, a wave of dissatisfaction broke into civil protests for the right to the city, which took place in the city's central square and in front of the City Assembly of Niš, where the vote on handing over the airport to the state was supposed to take place. Due to the civil revolt, the City Assembly session was postponed and, during that time, the citizens symbolically held a public vote in front of the Assembly building and said no to the handover of Niš Airport, making it clear to the authorities that the airport belongs exclusively to the citizens of Niš.

Image 1 Protests in Niš, June 2018.
Source: www.jugpress.com, 25/08/2019

The protests were held periodically and each protest was followed by rock music, continuing the tradition of civil protests in Serbia from the 1990s. Also, songs by local groups and songwriters were chosen in order to emphasize the local character of the civic struggle and enhance the local identity of the protest. As

14 It has been established that the successful operation of Niš Airport has positively affected the city's economy and the airport's cultural significance is also a worthy point for discussion. Due to the lowered cost of European flights, the mobility of young people has increased, as has the number of domestic and foreign tourists in the city – all of which has contributed to something of a revival for the city of Niš.

a follow-up event, a full-length musical concert in the form of a protest party was held on the banks of the Nišava. As is usually the case, civic protests involve a kind of carnivalization of space and carry with them a certain ludic character. Local spirit and humour came to the fore through numerous humorous banners directed against key political figures. One of the more prominent symbols of the initiative, found on various protest paraphernalia, is a raised fist.[15]

As already mentioned, the citizens of Serbia are disappointed with all political parties, so civic protests in the country take place largely without cooperation with opposition parties. The *We Won't Give Up Niš Airport* initiative also distanced itself from opposition parties when they announced that they would also organise a protest against handover of the airport. The initiative's representatives came out with the view that, while they respect the right of opposition parties to publicly express their dissatisfaction, they do not want the Niš Airport "story" to be misused for political point-scoring. The organizers did not want to disrupt the unity of the citizens of Niš who, despite different political affiliations, managed to agree on this important issue concerning the city. As they claimed, this topic was bigger than the authorities but also bigger than the opposition.

Despite the citizens' resistance, the vote at the Assembly of the City of Niš was held in June 2018, and it was decided that the city would transfer ownership of the airport to the state. Citizens gathered in front of the assembly were not allowed to attend the vote. The transfer agreement was signed sometime later in Belgrade, in order to avoid further and larger protests by the dissatisfied citizens of Niš. In spite of the fact that the primary goal of the initiative was not achieved, it has not been disbanded and continues to seek access to information about the development and investment plan promised by the state when it argued for the change of ownership.

The requisition of Niš Airport should be observed by taking into account the context of the issue of decentralization. Serbia is one of the most centralized countries in Europe, both in the concentration of authority at the state level and in terms of demographic indicators that speak of a constant increase in the population of the capital and the disappearance of smaller communities. This process is sometimes known in public discourse as "Belgradization". The economic aspect of this process of centralization is also significant. While almost half of the total budget of some EU countries is passed along to local communities, in Serbia only 11 percent of funds are allocated for local government needs (Miladinović

15 Three fists are part of the memorial of the Bubanj Park in Niš. It is a monument dedicated to the victims of Fascism and embedded in the identity of the city.

& Strahinić, 2016). The rationale for this centralized fiscal policy is often found in the allegedly irresponsible disposal of funds by the local governments, which are not sufficiently competent to rationally spend the money that they get. The problem of the centralization of the country is, however, also a political issue that undermines democracy, above all at the local level. Instead of the residents of cities electing their own representatives, these are appointed by the leadership of the party. This results in an all-encompassing situation in which the people who govern cities do not express their primary loyalty to the cities themselves and their citizens but to the party and its leadership. Thus, the political culture ceases to be civic and democratic and local governments and citizens suffer due to a political body that strives to comply with the central authorities while retaining its privileged position. The requisition of the airport from the city is one of the examples that corroborates the described political interest pattern.

In any case, the *We Won't Give Up Niš Airport* citizens' initiative did not operate in isolation but was always actively supported by members of civil movements from other Serbian cities. Solidarity with the protesters was not merely declarative in terms of support through social networks and activists from other cities participated in the rallies and street protests organized by the initiative.[16] The Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiative was one of the first movements to support the activism of the Niš initiative, since it also emerged as the result of a citizens' revolt against the city government, i.e. against the decision to build the Belgrade Waterfront complex. Here, the right to the city was also the backbone of the struggle. Above all, the citizens objected to the simple decision on the use of public space but particular outrage was caused by a violation of the law in the demolition of buildings in the Savamala district. This event has ultimately developed into a long-standing affair.[17] The Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiative took a political step further in its independent participation in the 2018 Belgrade elections. Having won just over three percent of the vote, they did not cross the threshold and gain seats in the city parliament (see more in the chapter

16 Digital communication and the spread of information through social networks are all the more important for contemporary social movements and civil protests as they allow rapid distribution of news, fast mobilization of citizens and the networking of movements gathered around the same goal. In addition, this type of civic engagement in virtual space, unlike in real life, has continuity (More on Petrović & Petrović, 2017). This, however, does not in any way reduce the importance of real space for any form of civic-political engagement, which Castells confirms when he discusses *revolutionary tourism* (See Božilović, 2017: 118).

17 In addition to citizens' criticism, numerous professional critics arose, from architectural and infrastructural ones, through legal, sociological, financial, and, finally, those symbolic-aesthetic, who pointed to the violation of the identity of the city (More in Backović, 2018: 157–160).

by Jelisaveta Petrović in this volume). On the other hand, the ruling party won almost 45 percent of the vote so the entire struggle over calling for the right to the city, democracy and respect for the law might seem to be in vain. However, the activists do not consider this result to be a failure, since they are a new actor on the scene and, moreover, did not have enough media coverage to present their values and ideas. Through its activism, the initiative continues to point to urban injustices, carry out actions to support citizens who want to be consulted about topics relating to their neighbourhood and rights to the area. The basic idea that permeates this and other movements is that the field of politics is where life takes place and that cities and neighbourhoods are spaces that must be shaped according to the needs and interests of citizens, not authorities, parties or private companies that are in cahoots with the authorities. Their struggle for the right to the city is, in this respect, both anti-autocratic and anti-party as well as being opposed to neoliberalism.

Other cities have also started their local stories by establishing new or activating existing movements and associations. Among the more active groups of citizens that also assume neighbourhood policy is the most needed by citizens and at the same time neglected by political parties, is the *Local Front* from Kraljevo. In the 2016 elections, their representatives won seats in the local parliament, winning a higher percentage of the vote than some of the more established political parties. *The Roof Over Your Head Joint Action* is also a very active association that operates more through deeds than through words and is formed by bringing together several local associations that share the same goals, such as strengthening local democracy and defending the right to the city. Starting from the imperative that every person deserves and should have somewhere to live, this association largely focuses on providing support to citizens who are (for various reasons) subject to forced eviction by the state. The right to housing is a basic human right and, according to these activists, the existence of the institution of private bailiffs violates human dignity and contributes to increasing poverty and homelessness, while the state fails to offer adequate solutions. It is noteworthy that opposition politicians are rarely seen at the protests of this organization, which gives the impression that they are more inclined towards armchair policy-making. The very emergence of many urban movements and organizations in Serbia can be explained somewhat by disappointment in this style of politics and a tendency to break down the current alienation and distance of politicians from citizens. That is why what is promoted by urban movements and initiatives can also be called an antipolitics, as the kind of association and action that understands civil society and civic action more through a prism of ethics rather than politics (Jacobsson, 2015: 14).

The UPSS, Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiative and *Local Front* have formed a left-oriented political bloc under the name, *Civic Front*, with the aim of motivating citizens to get involved in public life. In spite of the fact that each of these movements deals primarily with topics of local significance, their cooperation indicates that they share wider common values they feel are under threat society as a whole. Partocracy, corruption, the lack of freedom of the press, inefficient public city enterprises, arbitrary use of space and other topics that the movements raise in public reveal that the problems faced by citizens at the local level are in fact universal problems of Serbian society and that they are systemic in nature. The struggle for the right to the city is a way to channel dissatisfaction. Such hypotheses have previously been presented by well-known urban theorists, arguing that urban social movements are movements of broad masses and larger social tendencies that are localized in a certain territory (See Čaldarović, 1985: 161; Jacobsson, 2015: 1). Since they strive for alternative social relations – an alternative city – and since they do not have one but a multitude of social issues that drive them into action and, therefore, are multidimensional, they can be considered urban movements in the true sense.[18] They are organized as movements, not parties, precisely because they want to manifest their revolt against the idolatry of political leaders and to break down the strict hierarchical division into leaders and obedient followers that characterizes political parties.

An interesting feature of the urban movements presented here is that they are not monolithic when it comes to social class – something that is often, though not always, a feature of urban movements.[19] Being exposed to the same problems in the local community and neighbourhood (communal problems, corruption in local public enterprises, the use of land by the city authorities without the participation of citizens in decision-making, etc.), they overcome class and other collective differences or identities and it is often impossible to classify them using a single social category.[20] Čaldarović argues that the social composition of urban movements is sparse precisely because they are *urban*, that is they are mobi-

18 Castells defines urban social movements as more complex creations with an alternative vision of the city and society, in contrast with urban protests that represent urban rebellions of a one-dimensional character (according to Čaldarović, 1985: 163).

19 It is certainly important to emphasize that there are numerous obstacles that make the organized activities of members of different classes and status difficult or impossible and that class unity should not be taken as an unquestionable feature of urban movements. Some of these obstacles are pointed out by Mayer (Mejer, 2005: 291; Mayer, 2014).

20 Some studies show that creating an alliance between citizens of different classes, as well as linking other heterogeneous collectives into an alliance, is a growing tendency among movements in Central and South-Eastern Europe (Jacobsson, 2015: 9).

lized and formed because of common problems and issues that are territorially defined, so that it is the sharing of common space and territory that unites them (Čaldarović, 1985: 159). For example, the UPSS's forums bring together citizens who are university professors with citizens of lower educational attainment and lower incomes – what unites them is a common ethical framework that does not allow them to remain indifferent to situations that they believe show the system working to the detriment of citizens.[21]

Concluding Remarks

The research we relied on unquestionably shows that the citizens of Serbia are disappointed with the sphere of politics, political parties (as one of the key actors in politics), that they do not have confidence in the institutions of the country and that their trust in the EU has been weakened. Some citizens channel their dissatisfaction through apolitism and passivity, so it is noteworthy that civic activism has been decreasing since the 2000s. Nevertheless, others express their dissatisfaction with the socio-political situation by offering resistance from the bottom up. They organize themselves around the subject of their local community and defend its resources.

Over the past several years, in many cities, spontaneous gatherings have transformed into civil movements that have an alternative vision of the city and the political system, striving for the revival of democratic practices that would have a stronger foothold at the local level. The effectiveness of their operation varies and some of them have, as stated above, won seats in local parliaments, while others have failed to do so. Despite its persistent efforts, the *We Won't Give Up Niš Airport initiative*, which was discussed here in most detail, has not achieved its primary objective: the "defence" of Niš airport. In spite its unachieved goal, the initiative continues with targeted activities seeking to prove that the government's intention is not the development but the sabotage of this important resource for the city.[22] The UPSS has won a court case against the city-owned *Toplana* but this movement has not stopped here, it continues with its civic action by opening up various topics on the conflict between the system and the citizens.

21 Other civic activism research conducted in Serbia after 2000 points to its class heterogeneity, that is, that the civic activism cannot be tied exclusively to members of the middle class (see Petrović, 2016: 388).

22 Representatives of the *We Won't Give Up Niš Airport initiative* have even launched a procedure before the European Union authorities for the protection of competition.

It is questionable, however, how many local initiatives and urban movements can cause major socio-political change. Despite pressures, the authorities have so far exercised their will and decisions and the accountability of important local functionaries has almost always been absent. On the contrary, some of them have even been promoted to higher positions in the state apparatus.

On the one hand, the distance that the movements maintain from opposition parties wins them the trust of the broader public. On the other hand, however, it gives rise to the question of whether the significant political goals of these movements can be achieved without the resources of political parties (infrastructure, organization and mobilization of human resources, finance, etc.). Some theoreticians believe that urban movements can maximize their potential to achieve social transformation by entering into wider social alliances, which involves linking with political parties while retaining their autonomy (See Pruijt, 2007: 5117). Serbia's political past shows that, through associations of civic organizations and political parties and unification around basic values and common enemies, even the most oppressive regime can collapse. Civic protests are the lifeblood of a civil society that is opposed to the state, however, a major change in the socio-political system cannot be achieved merely through protest. The past performance of these movements shows that the achieved results are not great and that if their activities continue to be based on sporadic protests, they can only remain critics or a corrective agent acting on the authorities but not a political force that would bring about significant socio-political change.

Participation in local elections is therefore a significant step forward. Examples from other European cities show that some municipalist movements, which have also fought against ineffective party politics and struggled for the right to the city, favoured the local community as the real home of politics, achieved success and won power at the local level. However, if the goal of activism is to change the system and win state power, it is without doubt that urban movements will have to unite into stronger and wider civil unions. Since they are based on similar values, the association of the movements and the creation of a larger civil bloc can contribute to their strength in numbers – currently lacking in individual movements – and this is necessary for them to grow into a significant political force that would attract apathetic citizens. In addition, this would also include expressing a clear stance and presenting policies concerning major political and national issues, which are currently being avoided by these movements.

Therefore, even though urban social movements in themselves do not aim at developing into parties, nor coming into power, achieving a specific social change by exerting pressure on the authorities, that does not mean that this kind of transformation would not be welcome in certain circumstances. This becomes particularly important if one bears in mind that almost every urban movement in Serbia points to wider cracks in the system. *Otpor* is an example of a movement that transformed into a political party and vanished, yet that does not mean that such a transformation – i.e. a tendency towards political power – represents an end to every social and urban movement. On the contrary, it appears that it might now stand for a new beginning.

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THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF URBAN MOVEMENTS ON THE EUROPEAN PERIPHERY: THE CASE OF THE DON'T LET BELGRADE D(R)OWN INITIATIVE*

Jelisaveta Petrović

Abstract: In this paper, we focus on the case of the urban movement, Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own, and explore its development, organizational structure and impact. The main question we aim to address is whether the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiative can be regarded as a herald of a new, "participatory" phase of civil society development in Serbia.

The analysis is based on semi-structured interviews with the leaders and activists of the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own. The research findings suggest that, although the emergence of grassroots activism in the larger Central and Eastern Europe cities indicates the beginning of a new phase of civil society development in the region (Jacobsson, 2015), urban movements in Serbia struggle with some additional difficulties. Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own at least partly depends on the support of institutional donors since local fundraising capacities are not sufficient to fully cover the costs of its activities. Furthermore, local political culture appears to be incompatible with the development of progressive social movements.

Keywords: urban movements, civil society, European periphery, Serbia

Introduction

Until recently, scholarship on civil society development in postsocialist countries has largely neglected urban activism. One of the reasons for this blind spot in the literature on urban movements in the region is the development of the two separate streams of research – one focusing on changes to the urban environment and the other exploring civil so-

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ciety development trends in the process of postsocialist transformation. As noted by Kerstin Jacobsson and the other contributors to the edited volume on urban grassroots movements in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Jacobsson, 2015), this gap in the research literature and the lack of an intersectional approach has led to the oversight of a new phase of civil society development that is taking momentum in the region, with urban movements as leaders in the process.

The new wave of protests that broke out all around the region in the second decade of the 21st century is interpreted in the literature as the result of one or several intertwining factors: the economic crisis coupled with austerity regimes in the context of European (semi-)periphery, a crisis of representative democracy, democratic inadequacies, weak rule of law, as well as the development of a new type of activist citizenship in the region (Della Porta, 2015; Brentin & Bieber, 2019:2; Matković & Ivković, 2018; Fagan & Sircar, 2017; Dolenec et al., 2017). This new phase is characterized by the development of a participatory, grassroots type of civil society which differs from the professionalized version typical for the early days of the postsocialist transformation (Jacobsson, 2015; Fagan & Sircar, 2017; Dolenec et al., 2017). Following the insights made by Jacobsson and her colleagues, and on the basis of a number of case studies on urban movements in CEE, in this paper we develop a fine-grained analysis of the Serbian urban movement, Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own, which emerged as a grassroots reaction to the Belgrade Waterfront megaproject (BWP). Our analysis focuses on the question whether Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own (hereafter: the Initiative) could be regarded as the manifestation of a new "participatory" phase of civil society development in Serbia, as might be expected on the basis of recent research on urban movements in Central and Eastern Europe.

The "Weak Civil Society" Thesis and Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe

Following the collapse of socialism, societies in Central and Eastern Europe have undergone a process of intensive change. While civil society controlled and suppressed by the state was a characteristic of the socialist period, "transactional"[1], westernized, "liberal" civil society led by donor-

1 Petrova and Tarrow (2007) differentiate between two types of civic activism: transactional and participatory. By participatory activism they assume "the potential and actual magnitude of individual and group participation in civic life, interest group activities, voting, and elections." On the other hand, by transactional activism they mean "the ties – enduring and temporary – among organized nonstate actors and

driven non-governmental organizations was a hallmark of the early days of postsocialism (Mandel, 2002; Howard, 2003; Andreeva et al., 2005; Fagan, 2010; Petrova & Tarrow, 2007). Research conducted in Serbia revealed more or less the same general pattern of civil society development, with some distinctive features stemming from a prolonged process of postsocialist transformation that was slowed down and aggravated in Serbia by the civil war, international sanctions and economic collapse (Lazić 2005, Milivojević, 2006; Fagan, 2010; Vukelić 2012, 2015; Danković & Pickering, 2017; Mikuš, 2015; Vuković, 2016). While the civil society organizations (CSOs) in Serbia that were critical of the regime of Slobodan Milošević frequently encountered various forms of suppression by the state in the 1990s (Paunović, 2006), during the 2000s CSOs, now acting as partners in the processes of Europeanization and democratization, experienced relative levels of acceptance by the state authorities. Most of these organizations, however, were professional think-tanks not interested in mobilising or representing ordinary people. Therefore, citizens are in general not familiar with the work of CSOs and rarely participate in the activities they initiate. In this respect, Serbian civil society organizations cannot rely upon financial support from ordinary citizens as a source of financing and long-term sustainability. On the other hand, though politically active during the 1990s, in the 2000s CSOs became primarily orientated towards supporting the capacity building of the state and thus significantly less involved in contentious politics (Vukelić, 2012, 2015; Danković & Pickering, 2017; Vuković, 2016).

Based on a number of research studies conducted in different parts of the region (Jacobsson, 2015; Foa & Ekiert, 2017; Fagan & Sircar, 2017; Dolenec et al., 2017, Bieber & Brentin 2018; Delibašić et al., 2019), in the second decade of the 21st century one of the most notable developments is the flourishing of a more diverse and vibrant civic life. This is manifested through the emergence of urban "right to the city" movements, leftist/progressive movements, new forms of protest (via new digital technologies) and various forms of activist citizenship and micropolitics (ethical/political consumption etc.). Across the region, urban movements have been developing in response to local problems and needs, often inspired by the aesthetics and repertoire of action of social movements from the West – e.g. the Occupy initiatives, anti-gentrification, "right to the city" movements, etc. (Jacobsson, 2015:3–5). Urban activism in the region is characterised by small or medium scale activities focused on various aspects (cultural, economic, environmental, communal) of everyday urban

between them and political parties, power holders, and other institutions" (Petrova & Tarrow, 2007:79).

living. The repertoire of action of these initiatives tends to be peaceful and organized in a carnival and do-it-yourself fashion (Jacobsson, 2015:14). Urban activism in CEE is grassroots in its nature: it is characterised by a lack of professionalism among the activist groups and by predominantly domestic sources of funding (Jacobsson, 2015:275–6). The ability to connect individual citizens' concerns with the macro-level processes of neoliberal restructuring is perceived as a strength of these movements (Matković & Ivković, 2018:5). Urban movements in CEE are vigorous and challenge the image of a passive and weak civil society that still dominates the literature on civil society in the region. It could be argued that if the professionalized NGOs were symbolic of the early stages of postsocialist development in CEE, urban grassroots movements are the symbol of the new phase. These new developments demand an update in how civil society in the region is viewed and a reassessment of the "weak civil society" thesis (Jacobsson, 2015:6).

Based on the case of Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own, we aim to explore in greater detail the "civil society empowerment / emancipation" thesis that acknowledges a new phase in civil society development in CEE, led by urban grassroots movements. Considering the slower pace of civil society development in Serbia, characterised by donor-dependency, a lack of citizen support coupled with unfavourable economic conditions and a nonparticipative political culture, we assume that the development of grassroots urban movements in Serbia will have a slightly different pace in comparison to some other parts of the region, especially countries that already have become EU member states.

The Belgrade Waterfront Megaproject and its Opponents

Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own emerged as a grassroots reaction to the Belgrade Waterfront project, portrayed by activists as a flagrant example of "predatory" neoliberal urbanization that severely threatens the public interest.

The "Belgrade on the Water" (as BWP is popularly known) gentrification megaproject commenced in 2015, with a construction company from Abu Dhabi, Eagle Hills, as the main investor. Once completed, this $3 billion[2] development will encompass a large portion of land close to

2 https://www.eaglehills.com/sr/our-developments/serbia/belgrade-waterfront/master-plan (accessed 27/03/2018).

the city centre, along on the right bank of the Sava river between Branko's Bridge and the Belgrade Fair (*Sajam*). According to the project's plans, this new city centre will comprise luxury apartments, hypermodern office buildings, shopping malls, stylish hotels, cultural centres and the Belgrade Tower – the tallest building in Serbia. It has been promoted as an intervention that will significantly improve the cityscape, attract tourists from all over the globe and create 12,000 new jobs. From the very beginning, this project has been strongly supported by the Serbian government. High-ranking government officials proclaimed this urban revitalization to be of national interest and that the project is expected to boost both the local and national economy (see more in the chapters by Vera Backović and Jorn Koelemaij and Stefan Janković in this volume).

Despite the high expectations created by government officials and the investor, this venture has been heavily criticized by civil society organizations, architects, urban planners, economists and the political parties of the opposition. While architects and urban planners have argued that the project is not compatible with the existing cityscape, economists have stressed that its financial impact is not assured and that the risk of over-reliance on public funds is high. Civil society leaders, lawyers and opposition politicians focused on the *ad hoc* amendment of national legislation and adjustments to urban planning made in order to serve the needs of the project while neglecting the public interest, as well as the decision-making process, which they considered to be exclusionary. Social experts have stressed the increase in social inequalities and marginalization, while environmentalists have called into question the project's environmental impact (Zekovic et al., 2016; Lalovic et al., 2015:35; Maruna, 2015).

The Belgrade Waterfront megaproject can be understood as part of a wider process of the neoliberal urbanization/investor-led urbanism that has become a major force in postsocialist cities. Apart from some characteristics this process has in common with those in other postsocialist countries – such as the radical privatization and commercialisation of housing, services, transportation and public space; the liberalisation of urban policies; the rising cost of communal services; the emergence of gated communities and the rapid development of gentrification projects, etc. (Stanilov, 2007) – the situation is even more complicated in Serbia. The reasons for this additional complexity can be found in the country's slow and difficult postsocialist transformation, coupled with difficult economic conditions, its (semi-)peripheral position, corruption, informal and illegal construction, inadequate urban planning, policies often developed to suit private interests and so forth (Petrović, 2005; Backović, 2005; Vujović & Petrović, 2007; Hirt & Petrović, 2011).

Research Findings

In this paper we apply the *revelatory case* approach (Yin, 2014: 52) to explore the assumption of a gradual transformation from *professional* ("NGO-type") civil society in Serbia, emblematic of the early stages of postsocialist transformation/Europeanization (Lazić, 2005; Fagan, 2010; Petrova & Tarrow, 2007; Vukelić, 2015), towards a *participatory* version of civil society, led by urban grassroots movements (Jacobsson, 2015). The case of the Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiative was selected because, according to current information, it is an exception to the NGO-type of civic activism that has been a major characteristic of civil society in Serbia (Morača, 2016). The research centred on semi-structured interviews with the collocutors (N=7): leaders (core members) and newer (rank and file) members of the Initiative.

It should be noted that the timeframe of the study was relatively long – spanning from July 2017 to March 2018. The reason for the choice of a long timeframe lies in the fact that the Initiative was, at that time, in the process of transition from a flat and loose network to a more firmly organized association of citizens participating in elections for the Belgrade Assembly.

Analysis of the findings is based on the conceptual difference between the two types of civic organizations/movements: participatory (grassroots) and professional (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

1. *Participatory grassroots initiatives* usually develop as a reaction to the problems faced by local communities, such as pollution, lack of necessary public infrastructure, destruction of green spaces, etc. This kind of organization has an informal, horizontal structure and is organised around participatory decision-making procedures. They rely upon the strategies of mass mobilization – that is, on people, their spare time and volunteer engagement (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 140). In general, organisations that belong to this type lack resources, have trouble sustaining their activities and making significant social impact. Usually they last until the problem is resolved or while participant enthusiasm persists (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Members of these groups usually belong to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, but this is changing as members of the middle classes (also affected by neoliberal urbanism) take part in these kinds of local initiatives (Mayer, 2012).

Literature on social movements envisages two factors potentially threatening the development of grassroots social movement organizations: "bureaucratization", routinization and loss of a critical stance (due to Michels' (1962) "iron law of oligarchy"), on the one hand, and the peril of

dissolution/disappearance as a consequence of activist "burnout", on the other (Tarrow, 2011).

2. *Professional organizations* develop as a result of the work of professionals (domain experts and professional activists) on the resolution of social problems. This type of organization is focused on mobilizing financial resources from various sources (Della Porta & Diani, 2006: 140). Although they are capable of being critical of official policies, they mainly try to establish cooperative relationships with government officials and to achieve their goals by means of advocacy and lobbying. These organizations usually have strict membership procedures, written rules and statutes, as well as a formalized, nonparticipative management structure in which leaders make the most important decisions. They are distinguished by the engagement of paid staff who develop their professional careers within the organization. The membership base is usually thin and formal or non-existent. The advantage of such organizations is that they have the capacity to deal with specific issues on a continuous and professional basis. The negative aspects of this type of organisation are weak connections with the citizens and with those groups whose interests they are supposed to represent, then bureaucratization, the lack of critical attitudes towards certain social issues, as well as dependence on institutional sponsors (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

The Development Stages of Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own

The Initiative started modestly in 2014 as a result of the engagement of a small group of friends and colleagues who were interested in urban and cultural politics, urban sustainable development and protection of the common good. These people had been active in various civic associations, CSOs and collectives (in some cases, for over a decade) before joining the Initiative. Over the years, their work in the civic sector expanded from project management to different forms of activist engagement in urban grassroots initiatives.

> "We had all been working on various types of projects, thematically connected with what the Initiative is dealing with today. So, it was a natural course of events for me: I thought that, in addition to project management, [...] it was time for me, for us, our generation, to step out on the streets and show our dissatisfaction." (Interview 2, core member, June 2017)

One of the leaders of the Initiative described his path from an NGO employee to a civic activist:

> "While working for the Civic Initiatives back in 2006, I started on my own project called 'Openly on Public Spaces'. I was personally interested in this topic.... I started this project with the intention of exploring power relations in the city. In the organization, nobody objected nor helped this project (...) In 2010, I engaged in several urban initiatives like the Inex Film, squatting in the abandoned factory in Karaburma, the Street Gallery project, etc. (...) and this interest has spread into diverse directions but all related to urban settings (...) So, my concern and engagement around the Belgrade Waterfront project is, I would say, a normal course of events" (Interview 1, core member, October 2017)

The Initiative did develop from the NGO sector, however, its development was "organic" in the sense that it was not directed by project timeframes, budgets or action plans typical for NGO work. The activists recognize that although genuine and sincere, organic development can sometimes be disadvantageous since, *"there are always a lot of unattended issues, which you don't know how to resolve, there are challenges you have to face on a daily basis."* (Interview 2, core member, June 2017). Thus, as time passed and they became more experienced in running this type of organization, they set up certain organizational procedures and channels of communication and decision-making.

Over a period of four years, in search of the most effective model of organization, the Initiative has undergone several stages of development. At certain points, these phases were intertwined: "in-office" activism, street protest, direct local action and formal political engagement. From 2014 to 2016, the Initiative was mostly engaged in tracking the BWP's misdeeds in a procedural manner, analysing official documents and writing critical overviews and complaints (for more detail see Morača, 2016). They supported some local initiatives – such as a protest by residents of the Stepa Stepanović neighbourhood and a protest by pensioners – and also began to network with similar local initiatives from Niš and Kraljevo.

In April 2016, after illegal demolition of houses and sheds in Hercegovačka Street[3] was carried out for the purposes of clearing terrain for the BWP, the Initiative changed its repertoire of action towards a more direct confrontation. A series of mass protests followed this event. Between May and July 2016, Belgrade citizens, at times numbering tens of thousands, marched in the streets with banners and slogans such as: "The masks are off!", "Whose city? Our city!" and "This will not pass!" (Brochure, pp. 16) (see more in the chapter by Mladen Nikolić in this volume). The protests were peaceful, playful and organized with limited resources

3 Despite the fact that a group of masked people started the demolition in the middle of the night, the police did not respond to the calls of concerned residents.

in a do-it-yourself manner. On the first anniversary of the demolition in Hercegovačka Street, the last large-scale protest was organized, after which the organizers decided that it is time, once again, to change their repertoire of action.

After the "protest" phase, the next stage of development took the form of local activism and a focus extending beyond the BWP to other problems of urban living, such as the consequences of (controversial) privatization, (illegal) evictions, environmental problems in different parts of Belgrade, etc. They started a "battle" for public space at the micro level by helping and encouraging citizens to speak up and fight for themselves.

In the second half of 2017, a transition towards a more formal political movement/party-type organization commenced. When the City of Belgrade elections were announced in 2017, the leaders of the Initiative decided to engage in the arena of conventional party politics. Following these political ambitions, they decided to make significant changes to their organizational structure.

Transformation of the Organizational Structure

Up until late 2017 and early 2018, the Initiative was a flat and loose network of individuals[4], some of them belonging to other civil society organizations. *Horizontality,* as one of the core values of the Initiative, made the decentralized, loose, non-hierarchical structure the preferred organizational form. The dominance of the narrative of horizontalism (informal leaders are often called "the core", hierarchies and leadership are negatively evaluated) is also apparent in most of the progressive social movements in Serbia (Delibašić et al., 2019: 68–9).

However, despite the narrative of horizontality maintained by the leaders of the Initiative, newer ("ordinary") members noticed a difference between them and the older (core) members. In an interview conducted before the organisational change, one of the respondents – a newer member of the Initiative – described the internal mechanism for the distribution of roles and tasks in the following manner:

> "There are several circles of people and they function according to the principle 'from each according to their ability' ... They sometimes invite us to participate, and if I decide to join, they tell me what the plan is ... if you want to do something else, you're free to do that ... It is a flexible and cool way of organizing. However, I expected it to be a bit more

4 Members of the Initiative are young, educated people aged between 25–40, typically belonging to the so-called creative classes: journalists, architects, social scientists, artists, designers, etc.

> integrated and with a bit more continuity of action, but it is still really cool because I can combine it with all my other stuff" (Interview 3, newer member, June 2017)

The decision-making process within the organization was described as participatory, although apparently core members had more influence on final decisions.

> "It's not structured, but you know who has the last word – those people who have been here for a long time [...]" (Interview 3, new member, June 2017)

In the autumn of 2017, the Initiative commenced a process of transformation, partly due to preparations for the 2018 Belgrade elections. As explained by one of the core members:

> "At one point we asked ourselves: How far can we get with this type of action [local, civic]?[...]This prompted us to think about transition...We had plenty of this local work ... You do something, change some things, but it all actually remains at the level of the exception that confirms the rule, the wider effects are still missing. And if multiplied, it would be awesome... And then we wondered what if we tried from the inside, not in terms of taking power, but to see how it works, to learn something, and in the end, why should we shun away from politics, anyway?!" (Interview 1, core member, October 2017)

Alongside the need to scale up the effects of their actions, another reason for the transformation could be found in the inability of the organization to live up to its declared egalitarianism. The interviewed leaders of the Initiative were aware of the threat of the "tyranny of structurelessness" (Freeman, 1973) which means that, in spite of a professed egalitarian ethos, in reality decisions are made by informal in-groups.

> "The problem is when you have a non-hierarchical collective without an official structure, but rather with an implicit structure, invisible, unspoken but existing nevertheless [...] Newer members do not have the same information as those who have been here longer, do not have the same access to knowledge... Since the decision-making process lacks clear rules, some people feel excluded. In addition, there is a considerable lack of responsibility. Changes in the structure should lead to a clearer distribution of roles and responsibilities." (Interview 1, core member, October 2017)

Being aware of the potential downsides of a flexible organizational form and with the intention of becoming more transparent and effective in their work, the leaders of the Initiative embarked upon a transformation towards a more professionalized organizational structure with transparent

division of work, clear procedural arrangements and direct channels of internal communication. They even considered introducing some elements characteristic of very conventional bureaucratic organizations such as a general assembly, a supervisory board, an elected president and secretary. "Totally old school, but it works, everything is transparent!" (Interview 1, core member, October 2017). However, in order to avoid over-bureaucratization, they opted for a middle-ground solution that combines a central coordinating mechanism with affiliated working groups (these kinds of groups are a typical organizational form for most horizontal movements in Serbia, see Delibašić et al., 2019:72). Participation of the broader membership in the decision-making processes is encouraged within the working groups.

The organizational scheme (as of late 2018, still in the process of being finalised) is supposed to consist of a coordinating body as the central organisational unit and three working groups – thematic, territorial and operational. Each of the three groups delegates two members to the coordinating body. The coordinating body manages the main activities and it is where the strategically important decisions are made. Operational groups perform daily activities (e.g. finance, media relations, internal communication, etc.) while thematic groups act as a forum where urban policies are proposed, discussed and defined. Territorial groups are focused on locally specific issues – e.g. problems within neighbourhoods (Brochure, pp. 18).

The third reason for the organizational transformation was *financial* – directly related to the work of the Ministry of Space[5]. This organization is, in a sense, the organizational backbone of the Initiative, since most of the core members of the Initiative also work for the Ministry of Space. Project proposals of the Ministry of Space have not been successful lately as public authorities have started to perceive this organization as adversarial. Therefore, the leaders of the Initiative decided to formalize the work of the Initiative and to separate the two entities.

Financing

Recent research on social movements in Serbia show that they rely upon several sources of income: donations, membership fees, project and institutional funding and entrepreneurship (selling products and services). Membership fees are most desirable because they are perceived as an autonomous and sustainable source of financing. However, given the current socio-economic situation in the country (poverty and a high rate

5 The Ministry of Space has been dealing with urban issues and urban policies since 2011, with an approach that could be qualified as protecting the "right to the city".

of unemployment), social movement activists are aware that this is not the most reliable source of income. Members of progressive movements are, on the other hand, quite critical of project funding because it poses a threat to their autonomy (Delibašić et al., 2019:33–5).

The Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own initiative combines several sources of income. In the beginning, as explained by one of the leaders of the Initiative, they did not have to launch fundraising events or to collect money from supporters. Their actions in the first two years were relatively modest and the demand for resources was low, so everything could be organized on the basis of the voluntary work of a few dedicated activists. The Ministry of Space used its "project money" to cover some expenses (e.g. printing promotional material), and the members of the Initiative donated smaller amounts of money to buy necessary equipment (e.g. banners). As long as it was at the level of a couple hundred of euros, it was easy to cover costs from either personal or organizational (Ministry of Space) resources. However, when the Initiative began organizing protest events, the collection of donations from supporters became necessary. Fundraising activities were quite successful, since people donated enough money to cover the organizational costs of protest marches and accompanying events. For instance, between May 2016 and June 2017, the Initiative managed to collect around 20,000 euros, with the most frequent individual contribution being 1,000 dinars (around 9 euros) (Brochure, pp. 4–5). The donations came mostly from Belgrade, but the largest individual contributions were made by supporters who live abroad. As explained by one of the leaders, the Initiative's Facebook page and official website (where they sell t-shirts and books) have been very important fundraising tools.

The collected money was spent on the organization of events and the purchase of equipment, while activists continue work on a voluntary basis, without material compensation of any kind. Members of the Initiative have other jobs – they work for different NGOs, some of them are freelancers or they run small businesses. The core members are employed at the Ministry of Space, where they earn quite modest salaries – 350 to 400 euros per month each.

The Initiative does not have its own premises or office equipment. The office of the Ministry of Space is the venue where they usually gather and hold meetings. When it comes to the public events, such as public discussions, gatherings and round-tables, they make use of larger premises, usually lent by friendly organizations and people who support their work.

> "Our funds are not sufficient. Although they suffice for the realization of certain *ad hoc* activities, they are not large enough to cover the fees of people who get involved... I think it would be legitimate for a certain

> number of people to get paid for the work they do. I do not know how to provide funds for this type of work, but we hope we will figure it out at some point." (Interview2, core member, June 2017)

Although the Initiative manages to collect funds from supporters and product sales to cover the costs of the most of its activities, they do not have enough money to finance office rental and salaries. Therefore, the continuation of project funding by the Ministry of Space is essential for the maintenance of the voluntary work of the Initiative. To conclude, although the Initiative has developed from the NGO community and has evolved since, it is nevertheless, at its core, still bound to the NGO sector and its system of project funding.

Outcomes

In recent years, there has been a growing interest by social scientists in the outcomes of the activities of social movements. Researchers are interested in the social, political and cultural changes induced by social movements and the conditions that have to be met so that social movements can achieve their goals (Earl, 2004; Amenta et al., 2010).

When asked to assess the overall outcome of four years of their work, the activists stressed that, although they see some progress and positive impact of their efforts, they are not completely satisfied, since they aspire to bring about more far-reaching changes to society. Accordingly, the Initiative's promotional motto for the Belgrade elections was "Change is coming!".

They see the mass protests, known under the slogan "Against Dictatorship", that spontaneously broke out after the spring 2017 presidential elections, as one of the positive effects of their work.

> "I think of this 'Against Dictatorship' protest as a continuation of our effort to encourage people to express their dissatisfaction in the streets. And aesthetically, I see a lot of things that are similar to the work of the Initiative. Another visible outcome of our work is the continuation of different gatherings and local protests. This year it was in New Belgrade: the local authorities wanted to let a private investor build on a green space between some buildings and people gathered and protested and they specified the Initiative as someone who can help them. And we did help them. There is the effect of encouragement but, sadly, there is no way (due to organizational constraints) that people could be involved and work on a larger scale." (Interview 1, core member October 2017)

The problem of scaling up is primarily seen as a consequence of the specific organizational structure of the Initiative. Some of the Initiative's

leaders believe that people in Serbia, accustomed to hierarchical systems and authoritarian decision-making, expect to know who is in charge in the organization and await to be given clear instructions on what to do.

> "People here do not understand this flexible approach where there is no clear leadership or instructions on what to do... Here in Serbia, it is not common to work in the way we do, as a rule everything is hierarchized ... People don't get this 'let's discuss it together' approach. They reject it, they want us to give them clear directions. Otherwise, we are perceived as disorganized... When they see how we operate, people think: 'What is this, some hippies?!' " (Interview 1, core member October 2017)

Having in mind that a flexible organizational scheme is probably not the most suitable arrangement for the nonparticipative political culture of Serbia, they expect to have more success in the future with a more conventional form of organising. Therefore, they abandoned the practice of prefiguration (embodying the kind of society they want to bring about) for the sake of greater efficacy.

The Initiative participated in the Belgrade elections in March 2018. Unfortunately, they did not have much success. They won about 30,000 votes (3.5%) by nevertheless failed to pass the election threshold set at 5 percent and take seats in the City Assembly. After the elections, they continued to work as an oppositional movement, critiquing the government's moves, both at the local and national level, and supporting local initiatives.

Conclusion

Although the results of several research studies suggest that the expansion of urban activism in the larger CEE cities is the manifestation of a new phase of civil society development in the region (Jacobsson, 2015), our findings show that, in Serbia at least, this is still not entirely the case. Study of Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own reveals that, although grassroots in nature, urban activism is still at least partly dependent on foreign donors and state support, since local fundraising capacities are not sufficient to fully cover the costs of protest activities. Moreover, due to the specific socio-political context – the prevailing authoritarian value system – flat and loose organization structures seem not to be the most effective way of organizing. Thus, from the perspective of the leaders of the Initiative, certain level of hierarchisation and professionalisation appears to be necessary in order to bring about more significant social impact. Researchers investigating protests in Russia came to a similar conclusion, since they observed that the flexible organizational structures of the protest movements in the country, characterised by a nonparticipative political cul-

ture was disadvantageous for sustaining successful collective action for longer periods of time (Toepfl, 2018). The experience of the Right to the City movement from Zagreb, on the other hand, shows that movement transformation should not be taken as a fixed and irreversible process, since movements have proven to be very flexible and capable of strategic shapeshifting between professionalized and grassroots forms. Changes in tactics and strategies allow both organizational preservation and success in inducing social change (Dolenec et al., 2017). Therefore, it would not be wise to jump to conclusions before observing the outcomes of the current transformation of the Initiative. It is still early to say whether this is a permanent change or whether the Initiative will continue to strategically shapeshift and successfully avoid the threats of Michels' (1962) "iron law of oligarchy" and Freeman's (1972) "tyranny of structurelessness".

To conclude, although we do not reject the "empowering/emancipation" hypothesis and accept that civil society in Serbia – "seeded" by foreign developmental agencies in the process of democratization and Europeanization (Mandel, 2002) – is now developing organically, led by the urban grassroots movements, it remains evident that the political opportunity structures in Serbia are highly resistant and unsuitable for the development of participatory civil society. Moreover, although the urban movements in Serbia might have transformative potential manifested through their manifold influence on the practice of civic activism (e.g. through the introduction of a new repertoire of contention and empowering local people to express their grievances), the lack of resources for independent action imposes a significant barrier to the development of an autonomous grassroots civil society in Serbia.

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THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROTEST AGAINST ILLEGAL DEMOLITIONS IN BELGRADE'S SAVAMALA QUARTER*

Mladen Nikolić

Abstract: The transformation of cities and urban areas due to globalisation and the influence of corporate capital raises many problems and challenges in contemporary society. Owing to the dominance of private capital in the shaping of cityscapes, the "right to the city", defined in the 1960s by Henri Lefebvre as the right to use of the city, is an issue of increasing import. The market-based approach to regulating society has led to urban space and the city as a whole becoming the object of market speculation over which the local population has less and less control.

The gentrification of Belgrade's Savamala quarter has raised the issue of the right to the city in Serbia. The Abu Dhabi-based investment in the Belgrade Waterfront project, which is responsible for the radical transformation of Savamala, has been the subject of numerous controversies since the outset. Even so, the Belgrade Waterfront case culminated after the night of 24 April 2016 when unidentified, masked persons illegally demolished all of the buildings in Hercegovačka Street precisely on the site that the state had allotted to the Eagle Hills company. Soon after the demolition in Hercegovačka, a group of citizens gathered under the name Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own (Ne da(vi)mo Beograd) called on people to protest, hoping to uncover and compel the prosecution of the perpetrators. Nevertheless, even at the time of writing this paper, it remains unknown who perpetrated the demolition in Hercegovačka and all state and city institutions have denied responsibility.

This paper aims to provide a clearer picture of those who participated in the demonstrations that were set off by the demolitions in Hercegovačka and the circumstances that led to them. On 13 July 2016, during the fifth protest organised by Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own, we interviewed participants in the demonstration in order to learn more about who is protesting, why and how they were mobilised. We were also interested in the political leanings and political engagement

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of the protesters. We believe that this paper can provide a more detailed insight into the characteristics of the people who marched on the streets of Belgrade in 2016 under the slogan "Who's city? Our city!" ("Čiji grad? Naš Grad!") and will contribute to the study of urban social movements and their impact on contemporary society.

Keywords: social movements, urban movements, right to the city, postsocialist transformation, urban change in Belgrade

Introduction

Social movements are a significant agent of change in the modern world. How powerful they can be is illustrated by the fact that Serbia's recent history began on 5 October 2000 when thousands of people went out onto the streets to protest what they believed to be the rigging of parliamentary elections by the ruling party led by Slobodan Milošević. The consequences of this social upheaval were Milošević's Socialist Party relinquishing power and the formation of a new, pro-European government that unblocked Serbia's transformation into a market economy, which had begun during the 1990s (Lazić & Cvejić, 2004).

Over the past two decades, the adoption of capitalist principles has altered numerous aspects of society. On the one hand, Serbian society has experienced rising levels of democracy, while on the other hand, new problems characteristic of capitalism have emerged. All of which has resulted in new social movements appearing in Serbia.

For the past two decades, Serbian elites have been guided by (neo-) liberal ideas in which private property is seen as the basic engine driving the development of the country and, more generally, the wellbeing of its citizens. In socialist Yugoslavia, private property existed only in the domains of housing, small-scale entrepreneurship and agriculture, while urban spaces, factories and institutions were commonly regarded as belonging to society as a whole. This understanding of space is not common in capitalist systems, so the eventual privatisation of space was ultimately inevitable. The privatisation of space that has led to changes in the function and appearance of the postsocialist city – the effects of which are most evident in the country's capital, Belgrade – has gained momentum in recent years.

Recently, urban changes in Belgrade that stem from the activities of private corporations have frequently run into opposition from the city's population. While those in power are doing everything they can to attract investment, ordinary people do not have many opportunities to partici-

pate in the decision-making processes that affect their local area or their environment. Applying Lefebvre's terminology, we could say that in Serbia the exchange value of space is becoming more important than its use value. All of which contributes to the emergence of new urban movements that employ various methods to try to influence decision-makers so as to attain participation in the production of space in capitalist Serbia.

The subject of this study are the people who participated in the civil protests, which arose in reaction to the demolition that took place in Hercegovačka Street in Belgrade's Savamala quarter as part of the construction of the residential and commercial Belgrade Waterfront complex. The illegal demolition of privately-owned buildings along the entire length of Hercegovačka during election night on 24 April 2016 brought thousands of people out onto the streets in protests led by the (then still informal) organisation, Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own. The protests, which took place on several occasions during 2016, called for those responsible for the demolition to be prosecuted and brought to account. During the fifth protest, held on 13 July 2016, we conducted interviews with protesters with the aim of establishing their motives for participating in the demonstrations, their socio-demographic characteristics, their political leanings and their overall political engagement. In that sense, this paper seeks to contribute to the study of social movements in Serbia in the context of the urban changes that have taken place during Belgrade's postsocialist transformation.

Urban Change and the Right to the City

Social movements and public expressions of dissatisfaction through political protest have long been a neglected area of study within sociology. Only since the appearance of numerous social movements for the rights of women, homosexuals and minorities – as well as other pacifist and also ethnic and religious movements that erupted during the 1960s and have continued to this day – have increasing numbers of sociologists focused on studying social movements and how they are manifested.

Over the past two decades we have witnessed further expansion of social movements and new forms of their organisation, which have been enabled by the emergence of the internet and the continued shrinking of the world caused by globalisation. Social movements primarily emerge due an unsatisfactory system of needs in contemporary society and go on to call for changes to the state of affairs (Krstić, 2017: 15). They become a significant actor in the political sphere of contemporary democratic so-

cieties as they question the *status quo* and strive to change or amend the political order.

In contemporary society, urban movements have emerged as a special type of social movement. According to Castells (1983), the concept of "urban movement" denotes various forms of mobilisation, "from counter-cultural squatters to middle class neighbourhood associations and shanty town defense groups" (p. 328). Despite their diversity, however, he does believe that they share some common features: "1. They consider themselves as urban, or citizen, in any case, related to the city (or to the community) in their self-denomination; 2. They are locally-based and territorially defined; 3. They tend to mobilize around three major goals: collective consumption, cultural identity, and political self-management" (Castells, 1983: 300).

The movements build on the theoretical legacy of Henri Lefebvre and inspired by his idea of the "right to the city" have garnered particular attention over the last twenty years. In Lefebvre's mind, attaining the right to the city represents gaining control of the use value of space, rather than its exchange or market value. According to him, in industrial society, space itself became a commodity and urbanism became an amalgam of ideology and practice subordinated to the interests of big business (Lefebvre, 1970). According to Lefebvre, the problems of urbanism are, on the one hand, expressed through the formation of centres of decision-making with as yet unknown authority, which concentrate wealth, repressive power and information. On the other hand, conflict arises due to the dissolution of old cities, which results in segregation and the breakdown of social relations in the broadest sense (Lefebvre, 2005: 168). Lefebvre's work is quite revolutionary, considering how applicable and easily understood it continues to be today. Indeed, just as the new processes of the commercialisation of space were beginning to emerge, he recognised their significance in shaping the world of the future:

> "Today, the social (global) nature of productive labor, embodied in productive forces, is apparent in the social production of space. In the recent past, there was no other way to conceive of 'production' other than as an object, located somewhere in space: an ordinary object, a machine, a book, a painting. Today, space as a whole enters into production as a product, through the buying, selling, and exchange of parts of space. Not too long ago, a localized, identifiable space, the soil, still belonged to a sacred entity: the earth. It belonged to that cursed, and therefore sacred, character, the owner (not of the means of production, but of the Home), a carryover from feudal times. Today, this ideology and the corresponding practice are collapsing. Something new is happening" (Lefebvre, 1970: 155).

After the 1980s, neoliberal ideology and entrepreneurial approaches to managing local environments were on the rise, giving the idea of the "right to the city" a new dimension and significance. According to Purcell, in the neoliberal milieu management changed in three ways: 1) it was rescaled (institutions at the subnational and supranational levels became increasingly significant); 2) policy was reoriented away from redistribution and towards competitiveness; 3) many functions of the state were transferred to non-state or quasi-state bodies (Purcell, 2002: 105). Accordingly, today cities are experiencing growing political significance relative to the nation state, while on the other hand, they are more vulnerable to shifts at the global level, competition and the activities of supranational institutions.

According to Petrović, these new circumstances lead to the "compounding of the interests of various social actors in the city, whereby the significance of the interests of those who are not residents (tourists, national/international capital, students, commuters) is on the rise. Hence, a division emerges between the interests of the local population and local capital, on the one hand, and the creators of urban policy in the city, on the other" (Petrović, 2000: 11). The domination of private capital in the production of space has destabilised the concepts of "common good" and "public space". As Petrović notes, "the organisation and management of public space is increasingly being turned over to private sector actors, who then importantly determine the content and users of these spaces" (Petrović, 2009: 110). All of these changes over recent decades have contributed to the emergence of numerous urban movements around the world. These are often guided by the idea of the right to the city in order to achieve a greater degree of civic participation in decision-making on urban life and the management of urban space.

As the role of the city came to be more about attracting investment and achieving market competitiveness, this raised the question of civic participation in decisions on the transformation and continued expansion of the city. Even though suffrage formally grants citizens some influence on decisions made by government institutions following the interests of capital, that leverage is merely partial as the state can influence only the context in which capital is invested (through tax policy, labour law, environmental regulations, etc.) (Purcell, 2002: 102). According to Sasen, the city today appears as "a place for fresh demands by both global capital, which sees it as an 'organisational good/asset', and by the privileged urban population, whose presence in large cities is very frequently just as internationalised as that of capital" (Sasen, 2004: 197). Sasen claims that the "denationalisation of urban space and new demands made by transnational actors, as well as the related competition, raise the question of who the city belongs to" (Sasen, 2004: 197).

Gentrification in Belgrade's Savamala Quarter

Postsocialist Transformation in Serbia and Pioneer Gentrification in the Savamala Quarter

Since the early 1990s, socio-economic transformation began to reshape formerly socialist cities. According to Sýkora and Bouzarovski, postsocialist transformation occurs in three phases: 1. The short term, during which the basic principles of political and economic organisation undergo change; 2. The medium term, during which changes to people's behaviour, customs and cultural norms adapt to the new circumstances and initiate wider social change; 3. The long term, during which the urban structure is transformed (Sýkora & Bouzarovski, 2012: 45, according to Nedučin, 2014: 38). Today the postsocialist city has its own particular adjustment and restructuring problems but is a largely altered environment, dependent on global shifts in power and capital. The economic development of the postsocialist city is dependent on its ability to adapt to global trends, while global shifts influence the shaping and definition of the local.

Urban movements in Serbia can be seen also as a consequence of the postsocialist transformation of space. The establishment of the market economy in formerly socialist republics entailed a change in the role of the city from a provider of services and a leveller of social inequalities to its entrepreneurial role, in which the city authorities are focused on attracting investment (Petrović, 2009). In contrast to the planned economy, where the levelling of economic disparities between regions was one of the duties of the state, in the neoliberal economic order the entrepreneurial capability of the city authorities has become vital for the further development of the city and the region. As noted by Vujović, "under socialism, urban development depended on the redistribution of funds from the central budget, but in postsocialist cities development is fairly dependent on the presence of transnational companies, foreign investment and the local economy" (Vujović, 2008: 323).

Over the past two decades, Belgrade has begun to take on a new identity. The collapse of industrial production during its postsocialist transformation has resulted in the creation of large post-industrial spaces that, in the new system, have become functionless and disused. Due to unsuccessful privatisation and a climate generally unfavourable for industrial renewal (a consequence of fierce competition and low prices on the global market), the reconstruction of these spaces to suit new needs has begun. The Savamala quarter, where the Belgrade Waterfront project is planned and where the Hercegovačka Street demolition took place, setting off several civic protests in 2016, can serve as a good example to illustrate the

basic processes that currently impact the transformation of space, as well as the challenges faced by local authorities and the people of Belgrade (see more in the chapters by Vera Backović and Selena Lazić in this volume).

In Belgrade's recent past, Savamala has been the epitome of the underdeveloped neighbourhood ravaged by prostitution and crime. During socialist times, the area exclusively had the character of a hub for industry and transit, located as it was near the main train and coach stations, the Sava docks and two rail and road bridges. As a postmodern approach to development was adopted in Serbia at the beginning of the 21st century, many experts, artists' groups and associations began to see potential in this industrial site. Due to the proximity of the city centre, just a kilometre or two from Savamala, it was the tourism potential of the area that was first recognised[7].

The first wave of the transformation of the Savamala neighbourhood was linked with the activities of the creative class. The 2007 repurposing of the former Nolit warehouse into the Magacin cultural centre attracted groups of young artists into the area and initiated a wave of creative industries and services opening up in the quarter. The cultural industries launched the first wave of gentrification in the area, making it recognisable and authentic and changing its identity to suit the values of the arts and youth culture. Mele calls this process pioneer gentrification. Though perhaps lacking clear intent, pioneer gentrification, which can be defined as branding an industrial area through the development of creative industries, sometimes leads to larger gentrification processes (Mele, 2005, according to Petrović, 2009: 128). Such as was the case with the Savamala quarter after the announcement of the Belgrade Waterfront project (see more in the chapter by Koelemaij and Stefan Janković in this volume).

Belgrade Waterfront

Belgrade Waterfront is an investment by Abu Dabhi-based company, Eagle Hills, and is an urban revitalisation plan spanning some two million square metres along the Sava river. The project envisions the construction of 17 percent office space, 8 percent luxurious hotel space, 60 percent elite residential space, 5 percent commercial, 8 percent space for the largest shopping centre in the Balkans, while 1 percent is allotted for entertainment and leisure (Stokić & Radovanović, 2015: 304). Outstanding among the planned buildings are the Belgrade Tower, which is projected to be 170 metres tall and a shopping centre that will sprawl across 148,000 square metres. In contrast to the first phase of the area's transformation – which

7 See: http://www.goethe.de/ins/cs/bel/prj/uic/sav/srindex.htm, accessed 10/11/2018.

demanded the involvement and participation of locals and which largely did not have a negative impact on local residents – the transformation of space resulting from this project has brought about a series of problems and disadvantages for local people.

Since its announcement, the Belgrade Waterfront project has been treated as a project of the highest priority by the national and city authorities, a stance that was formalised with the Conclusion adopted in May 2014 by the Government of Serbia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, 2014[8]). As some of the land encompassed by the project was privately owned, the Government passed the Law on Establishing the Public Interest and Special Expropriation Procedures and the Issuance of Construction Permits for the Implementation of the Belgrade Waterfront Project. According to Zeković et al., "what is unusual in this case is that the public interest is determined through the construction of commercial and residential buildings, which essentially aims to satisfy the interests of the elite and above all international financial capital from the private sector" (Zeković, Vujošević & Maričić, 2015: 43).

Until the adoption of this law, the public interest and expropriation processes in Serbia could be invoked only for public purposes, such as the construction of roads, infrastructure, parks and so forth. In accordance with the new law, commonly known as the *lex specialis*, those who own real estate in an area envisaged for the construction of a new part of the city are forced to hand over their property to the state in exchange for a certain amount of financial compensation. This gradually led to the demolition of buildings and the eviction of companies and people. Over 200 families were displaced from the area of the Sava riverfront, as were a large number of small and medium enterprises, commercial spaces, a football ground, a refugee centre that was part of the Mikser House cultural centre and other facilities with infrastructure on the ground. Since this was made possible by the fact that the Belgrade Waterfront project is considered to be a high-priority project of public significance, this sparked discussion of the issue amongst the wider community[9].

One of the biggest problems of this investment venture is the lack of transparency. Information that is served to the public is frequently incomplete and inconsistent[10]. The project's implementation has been turned

8 Odluka o izradi Prostornog plana područja namene uređenja dela priobalja grada Beograda – područje priobalja reke Save za projekat "Beograd na vodi" (2004), *Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije* (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia), br. 58/14. (http://www.pravno-informacioni-sistem.rs/SlGlasnikPortal/eli/rep/sgrs/vlada/odluka/2014/58/1/reg, accessed 05/08/2018).

9 See: https://pescanik.net/deklaracija-o-beogradu-na-vodi/, accessed 07/08/2016.

10 See: http://cn4hs.org/serbia-chronicle-7-belgrade-waterfront-from-vision-to-insecurity/, accessed 11/08/2016.

over to the organisation, Belgrade Waterfront LTD, and the city's role is the preparation of planning regulations and the securing of construction permits. The local governments of Savski Venac and Novi Beograd, parts of whose territories are encompassed by the project, are completely excluded from the institutional framework (Lalović, Radosavljević & Đukanović, 2015). On the other hand, there was no public discussion and numerous objections by experts and other public representatives were disregarded. For example, during the drafting of the new Master Plan for Belgrade, which was carried out in accordance with the needs of the Belgrade Waterfront project, over 1,200 objections were submitted but every single one of them was rejected as lacking foundation[11]. Consequently, in 2015 the Architecture Academy of Serbia issued a public statement expressing the opinion that the Belgrade Waterfront project must be suspended as it is harmful to the citizens and the identity of the city:

> "The executive authorities of the Republic and the City have coerced all, imposter-experts and Belgrade assembly members, into making terribly dangerous changes to provisions of the General Urban Plan. Its most important provision, that this central part of the Sava Amphitheatre, a belt some 300 metres deep along the right bank of the river, could be developed predominantly for public purposes and with limits to the maximum number of storeys, was removed. By bypassing broader expert opinion and the opinions of citizens, the riverfront was not protected as a common good that must be respected and safeguarded against any abuse."[12]

According to Zeković et al. this project is exclusionary and is being implemented in the interests of the elite, which can be deduced from the adoption of the *Lex Specialis*, the definition of the project as being of national significance, the regulation of property ownership, the exclusion of the local community from decision-making, the lack of sufficient information on future activities and so forth (Zeković, Vujošević & Maričić, 2015).

Demolition in Hercegovačka Street

As a grand gentrification project – and due to all of the controversies and lack of transparency that has been its hallmark – the Belgrade Waterfront project has provoked broad discussion in Serbian society and raised the question of who has the right to the city. The clearing of Savamala did not pass without causing some dissatisfaction but it did not

11 http://cn4hs.org/serbia-chronicle-7-belgrade-waterfront-from-vision-to-insecurity/, accessed 11/08/2016.

12 See: http://aas.org.rs/deklaracija-aas-o-beogradu-na-vodi/, accessed 15/09/2016.

incite overt dissent until the demolition of privately-owned buildings in Hercegovačka. According to reports by ordinary citizens, on election night and with no warning or permission masked individuals using demolition equipment and bulldozers flattened privately-owned buildings along the whole street. Everyone they encountered was held by force, without being shown any official identification or given any explanation. The then Ombudsman, Saša Janković, reacted to these events. According to a statement he issued a few days after the incident:

> "In the early morning of 25 April, an organised, motorised group of several tens of individuals wearing black uniforms and ski masks, equipped with expandable barons and powerful flashlights, temporarily, for around two hours, effectively took control of the part of Belgrade known as Savamala. In a street that they blocked with two construction vehicles, applying and threatening physical force, they brazenly and violently pulled citizens from buildings and cars, seized their personal means of communication, impeded their movement, preventing them even from looking into the blacked out windows of cars with no number plates that patrolled the neighbourhood, searched their vehicles and buildings, confiscated two pistols and a hunting rifle they found in one of the offices, confiscated video material recorded by security cameras and threatened citizens not to tell anyone what had happened. Through their activities they cleared the area and secured the demolition of several buildings, which was carried out using several construction vehicles."[13]

By the next day it was already clear that no relevant institution of the city or the state had participated in the demolition of these buildings and even at the time of writing there is no information on who was responsible. Meanwhile, the official position of all institutions is that the demolition of these buildings was illegal. Nevertheless, this incident was widely seen as being connected to the Belgrade Waterfront project and at one point the then Prime Minister, Aleksandar Vučić, stated that the demolition had been initiated by the leadership of the city government[14].

The Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own organisation emerged from within the activities of an organisation called the Ministry of Space (*Ministarstvo prostora*) and from the very beginning of the Belgrade Waterfront endeavour has engaged in pointing out the negative consequences of this project for the people of Belgrade and Serbia (see more in the chapter by Jelisaveta Petrović in this volume). This organisation, which bases its activities on the idea of the right to the city, has been active in urban policy circles in Belgrade for a few years, through the implementation of projects, direct action, public discussion and the occupation of space. After

13 http://www.zastitnik.rs/, accessed 07/09/2016.

14 https://www.krik.rs/vucic-gradska-vlast-iza-rusenja-u-savamali/, accessed 12/05/2018.

the demolition of buildings in Hercegovačka, the Don't Let Belgrade D(r) own initiative launched a series of protests that gathered large numbers of people with the aim of establishing who was responsible for the demolition and calling for their resignations or for them to be held responsible. The slogan of the protest, "Whose city? Our city!", strongly recalls Lefebvre's struggle for the right to the city.

Method

On 13 July 2016, an opinion survey was conducted among the participants in one of the protests initiated by the then still informal group, Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own, in reaction to the demolition of buildings in Savamala. The methodological approach was developed on the basis of the approach used in a project called, "Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualising Contestation" (Klandermans et al., 2011). The aim of the conducted research was to establish who participated in the protests, why they had decided to get involved, how they were mobilised, what their political leanings were and the degree of their civic activism. The questionnaire comprised three rounds of questions that sought to provide a more detailed insight into the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, their political opinions and their motives for participating in the protest. The questionnaire also included open and closed questions, as well as Likert scale questions.

Particular methodological difficulties arose from the fact that the participants of the protest were questioned during the protest march itself, which lasted around two hours. Consequently, it was necessary to clearly identify the methodological guidelines that would ensure the objectivity and scientific usefulness of the research. A sample of 90 subjects were selected at random. Seven interviewers[15] were located in various sections of the mass of protesters as they moved from point A to point B and they selected respondents at random (they would select every third row behind or in front of them and every third person to their right or left, depending on their starting point). Some of the interviewers began from the front of the protest, some from the back, while others were evenly distributed on the left and right flanks of the protest. As they moved through the crowd, each of the interviewers was assigned a direction, so as to avoid overlap. According to the authors of "Caught in the Act of Protest", "the procedure is meant to guarantee that all groups of demonstrators, no matter whether

15 Nataša Lenđel, Milan Škobić, Danica Popović, Jelena Nikolić, Nikola Stojanović, Ana Račubolk and Mladen Nikolić. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those involved for their assistance in gathering data.

their members prefer to walk in the first part of a march or as one of the last groups (this issue is also linked to questions of the visibility of a group in a march), have an equal chance to be part of the sample" (Klandermans et al., 2011).

Research Findings

The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Protest Participants

There are no particular gender or age characteristics distinguishing the analysed group. The sample equitably represents both the sexes – 51 percent of respondents were male and 49 percent female. Also, the age structure does not reveal a significant share of any generation. People of all ages participated in the protest and the average age of the participants was 35. In the sample itself, the youngest respondent was 16, the oldest was 70, while the most common age group (mode) was 25.

Education emerged as the factor distinguishing the cohort from the general population (table 1). That is, most of the participants, as many as 80 percent, have post-secondary or higher education attainment, with 18 percent having completed post-graduate degrees. According to the 2011 Census, only 16 percent of the Serbian population have post-secondary or higher education attainment[16]. Therefore, we can conclude that this protest has a significant factor that distinguishes its participants from the rest of the population. Based on the analysed data, it can be concluded that this was a protest of highly educated members of society.

Table 1 Level of education among the protest participants

Post-graduate level	18%
Graduate	47%
Post-secondary	7%
Secondary	17%
Elementary	1%
Total	100%

16 http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G2018/Pdf/G20182051.pdf, accessed 10/11/2018.

When it comes to place of residence, most participants were residents of Belgrade (88%), while the remainder lived in other Serbian cities or came from abroad. In the analysed sample, there was not a single participant who lived in a rural part of Serbia. Therefore, the second characteristic of this protest is that this was a citizens' protest in the original sense of the word "citizen" – based on the Latin *civitas*, meaning city.

Regarding the breakdown of Belgrade participants by municipality, there are certain consistencies here also. The most common municipalities in which the participants lived are Vračar, Novi Beograd, Stari grad, Zvezdara and Palilula. It is clear that the respondents largely live in central locations and that respondents from the more peripheral municipalities are not present in the sample.

Most respondents were in employment (55.6%). The breakdown of employment categories is such that the proportion of respondents in full-time employment is 34 percent, part-time 9 percent, self-employed or freelancers 5.6 percent and entrepreneurs 7 percent. The rest of the respondents were students or pupils (19%), unemployed (14%) and pensioners (9%).

The participants of the protest were mostly mobilised via the internet (74%), primarily via the social network, Facebook. Beyond that, they learned about the protest from their friends (16%) or via traditional media (8%).

Motives for Participating in the Protest

The question that aimed to capture the motives and reasons people had to participate in this specific protest was formulated as an open question and was posed as follows: "*What is the reason that led you to participate in this protest?*" The respondents' responses were, based on their frequency, grouped into eight categories. The most numerous reasons for participating in the protest were topics defined as "*The decline of democracy in society*" (35%) and "*Rebelling against those in power*" (25%). The protest participants largely based their involvement on the specific incident of the illegal demolition in Hercegovačka and the lack of response from the authorities in the days that followed:

> "Because a whole slew of laws was broken, threatening the institutions and endangering citizens." (A17)
>
> "I'm protesting because all aspects of the institutions have been violated, because the state has vanished, but not in a good sense. No pillar of democracy remains when someone can demolish part of the city without restraint." (A44)

> "Nobody has the right to occupy territory from behind masks, and for the police to ignore calls by the public." (A51)

The next most common motive for protesting present in the sample was "Rebelling against those in power" (25%):

> "To express my dissatisfaction and anger with the boorish, corrupt, mafia-like authorities." (A84)
>
> "To rise up against the authorities and the system." (A17)

By "authorities" most respondents are referring to the state, rather than the local government. This shows how significant the functioning of the national authorities is for local problems and for the specific problem of the Hercegovačka demolition incident. Only two respondents gave their reason for attending the protests as revolt against the city authorities.

Some of the protest participants considered their involvement to be a civic duty (12%) while 9 percent of respondents saw their role as supporting Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own. Only 7 percent of respondents cited lies and the misleading of the public as their primary reason to protest, while 6 percent directly attributed their involvement to opposing the Belgrade Waterfront project. The remaining 6 percent explain their involvement in the protest through emotional, political and other reasons. Overall, the respondents' answers indicate that they largely participated in the protest because they believe the act of illegal demolition in Hercegovačka Street violated democratic values and independent institutions and that they most commonly see the leaders of the state as the culprits (Table 2).

Table 2 Reasons for participating in the protest

The decline of democracy in society	35%
Rebelling against the those in power	25%
Fulfilling civic duty	12%
Support for Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own	9%
Opposing lies and deceit	7%
Opposing the Belgrade Waterfront project	6%
Emotional reasons (displeasure, anger)	2%
Political reasons	2%
Other	2%
Total	100%

According to 33 percent of the sample, the blame for the civic protests lies with the leaders of the state. Beyond that, the protesters most

often blamed the then Prime Minister of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić (16%). In third place is the "failure to react/non-existence of institutions" (12%). Moreover, as many as 6 percent of people referred specifically to the police who failed to respond during and after the Hercegovačka demolition. Only 11 percent of respondents blame the city authorities and 6 percent believe that political parties are to blame for the circumstances that led to the protest. Additionally, participants also blame themselves for allowing this to happen, the previous government, the poor economic situation, the lack of information, capitalism and so forth. Responding to the statement that, "the Belgrade Waterfront project is a good idea but is not being implemented in a good way", 64.4 percent of participants disagreed, 23.4 percent agreed and 16.9 percent were undecided.

When asked for their opinion on how the problem should be solved, the answers varied. Most respondents (15.7%) thought that the protests should continue and expand in order to solve the problem. Further, respondents also thought that those responsible for the Hercegovačka demolition should face criminal charges (13.5%) or resign (13.5%). Finally, 10 percent of respondents see a change of government as the solution, while 6 percent call for institutional reform. Table 3 lists the solutions proposed by respondents.

Table 3 Respondents suggestions on how to solve the problem that led to the protests

Continue and expand the protests	15.7%
Bring criminal charges against those responsible for demolition in Savamala	13.5%
Those responsible for demolition in Savamala should resign	13.5%
Change of government	10.1%
Institutional reform	5.6%
Greater citizen participation in decision-making at the local level	4.5%
Radicalisation of the protest/Initiation of a revolution	4.5%
Greater transparency	3.4%
Raising public awareness	3.4%
Change of the system as a whole	3.4%
The organisation of violence against people and property	2.2%
Halting the Belgrade Waterfront project	2.2%
Total	100%

The respondents' reasons for participating in the protest were also measured indirectly. Statements were read to the respondents and they were asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement. We asked respondents whether they participated in the protest in order to protect their own interests, to express their opinion, to exert pressure on politicians, to raise public awareness, to express solidarity or to fulfil their moral duty. Most respondents expressed disagreement in response to the statement, "I'm protesting to protect my own interests". In response to this statement 13.5 percent of respondents replied "I completely disagree" or "I partially disagree", while 14.6 percent responded "I neither agree nor disagree" and 7.2 percent responded with "I completely agree" or "I partially agree".

Most participants in the protest agreed with the following statements: "I'm protesting in order to raise public awareness" (99%); "I'm protesting to express solidarity" (94%); "I'm protesting to exert pressure on politicians" (92%) – even though all of the statements were evaluated as positive (Table 4).

Table 4 Goals of participating in the protest

	To protect my own interests	To express my opinion	To exert pressure on politicians	To raise public awareness	To express solidarity	To fulfil my moral duty
I completely agree	43.8%	67.4%	84.3%	80%	85.4%	74.2%
I partially agree	28.1%	23.6%	7.9%	17.8%	10.1%	12.4%
I neither agree nor disagree	14.6%	3.4%	5.6%	1.1%	2.2%	9%
I partially disagree	5.6%	1.1%	1.1%	0%	0%	2.2%
I completely disagree	7.9%	4.5%	1.1%	1.1%	2.2%	1.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The protest participants were not overly optimistic when assessing whether the goals of the protest would be achieved in the near future. One in eight respondents (13.3%) thought that the goals of the protest would not be achieved at all, while nearly one in three (29%) thought that not much would be achieved. On the other hand, 37 percent of respondents thought that the goals of the protest would, in the near future, be achieved

"in part", one in five of the respondents (18%) thought that "quite a lot" would be achieved, while only 3 percent of respondents thought that the goals of the protest would be fully achieved.

The participants did not identify themselves with the protest organisers to a great degree. As such, 6.7 percent did not identify at all, 10 percent – not much, 27.8 percent – a little, 37.8 percent – quite a lot, while only 17.8 percent identified with the organisers completely. The protesters mostly did identify with the other participants in the protest: 6.7 percent – not much, 26.7 percent – a little, 51.1 percent – quite a lot, and 14.4 percent identified with the other participants completely.

Political Orientation and Civic Participation

One of the aims of the questionnaire was to examine the political orientation of the protesters, their attitudes and their participation in politics. Respondents had the opportunity to define themselves along a left-to-right political scale, where 0 was considered to be a completely left-wing orientation and 10 a completely right-wing orientation. Most people characterised themselves as leaning more to the left than the right, even though the respondents' replies tend to converge towards the centre of the scale, where the mode average also lies (Figure 1).

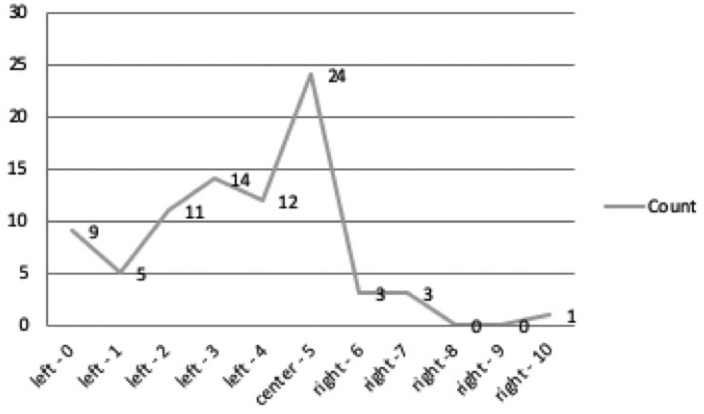

Figure 1 Political orientation on a left-right scale

Most respondents did not agree with the notion that even the most important public services and enterprises should be privatised. In response to this assertion, 51.7 percent completely disagree, 18 percent partially disagree, while 12.4 percent partially agree. When asked wheth-

er they agree with the following statement, "The Government should redistribute earnings from those who have more to those who are less fortunate", 20.2 percent of respondents disagree, while 64.5 percent either partially or completely agree. This indicates that the protesters are generally not inclined to support privatisation of the public sector and, in large part, still see the state as a leveller of inequalities among the population.

Compared with other institutions, the respondents expressed the least trust in the Government of Serbia. As many as 77.8 percent of respondents do not trust the Government at all, 20 percent trust it a little, while only 2.2 percent exhibited "some" trust. Levels of trust are also low for the National Assembly: 68 percent of respondents do not trust the Assembly at all, 19 percent trust it a little and 3 percent expressed some trust. There is also no trust in the legal system – 58 percent of the sample – 25.8 trust it a little and 15.7 percent expressed some trust. Most respondents have little trust in trades unions but more so than for government bodies (not at all – 48.9%, not much – 27.3%, some – 19.3%, quite a lot – 4.5%). From analysis of the sample it is clear that respondents exhibit greater trust in supranational institutions such as the United Nations and European Union than they do in Serbian institutions. Even though here trust levels were also low, they are nonetheless positive to some extent. Complete trust in European Union was exhibited by 2.2 percent of respondents, quite a lot of trust by 9 percent, some by 30.3 percent, a little by 31.5 percent and none by 27 percent of respondents. As regards the UN, none of the respondents exhibited complete trust, quite a lot was expressed by 10.2 percent, some by 34.1 percent, not much by 29.5 percent and none by 26.1 percent.

The surveyed protesters exhibited a high level of political engagement. This can, above all, be concluded from their tendency to vote in elections and their appraisal of their right to do so as being very important in contemporary society. As many as 86.5 percent of the protesters vote in elections. Given that the turnout at the April 2016 elections was 56 percent[17], it can be noted that the right to vote is highly valued by the cohort. When examining their attitudes, respondents were asked to assess to what extent they agreed with the following statement, "I see no point in voting as the political parties will do what they want anyway". Most respondents expressed partial or complete disagreement with this statement (61.1%), while 29 percent partially or completely agreed.

17 http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/doc/izbori-2016/rezultati/1.%20Zbirni_rezultati.pdf, accessed 10/11/2018.

Nevertheless, even though most respondents vote in elections and value their right to do so, most did not identify with any particular political party (70%). When they did identify with a party, they mostly cited Enough is Enough (*Dosta je bilo* – DJB). Considering that those who identify with this party make up 21 percent of the sample, it can be said that those whose views are represented by the values of this party made up an important part of the protest. This can be linked to calls by the leader of DJB, Saša Radulović, for citizens to join the protest, which indicates how significant political parties can be in mobilising the population. Even though the organisers of the protest distanced themselves from political parties and other political groups, people who were members of parties were invited to the protest in their capacity as ordinary citizens. As a result, this protest was often perceived in the public eye as a protest organised by opposition parties, in spite of the organisers protests to the contrary. In addition to respondents who identify with DJB, there were also those who identified with other political parties (the Democratic Party, the Democratic Party of Serbia, the Liberal Democratic Party, the Serbian Left) who together amounted to 5 percent of the sample. Given that the respondents did not identify with the ruling parties, this shows that the protest did have a somewhat oppositional character.

When looking at levels of civic engagement, 28 percent of respondents are members of an organisation or association (be it political, sports, civic, non-governmental or other). Those who are active in various organisations are mostly engaged in the NGO sector, cultural associations or political parties.

Wishing to explore the various forms of political engagement that can be applied to encourage change – or indeed, discourage it – the participants in the protest were asked whether in the preceding two years they had: contacted a political representative or institution; donated money to a political organisation; boycotted a product; participated in industrial action; signed a petition or open letter; purchased a product for ethical or political reasons; participated in direct action or blockades; participated in politically motivated violent actions against persons or property. The aim was to explore the political engagement of respondents and the directness of their approach to solving the problems that arise around them. The results show that the protest participants are characterised by a propensity for activism. As many as 74.4 percent had signed a petition in the last two years, while 57.8 percent had participated in direct action such as blockades, occupations or civil disobedience (Table 5).

Table 5 Political engagement by participants of the protest in the preceding two years

Type of political engagement	YES	NO
Participation in violent actions (aimed at people or property)	6.7%	93.3%
Participated in direct action (blockades, occupations, civil disobedience)	57.8%	42.2%
Purchased products for political/ethical/ecological reasons	31.1%	68.9%
Signed a petition/open letter	74.4%	25.6%
Participated in industrial action	37.8%	62.2%
Boycotted a certain product	41.1%	58.9%
Donated money to political associations/organisations	18.9%	81.1%
Contacted a politician, institution or the city authorities	33.3%	66.7%

Participants in the protest believe that an organised group of citizens can be an agent for political change in Serbia. When presented with this statement, "An organised group of citizens can influence the shaping of policy in Serbia", 45.5 percent partially agreed and 33 percent agreed completely. Only 13.6 percent of respondents expressed disagreement. This shows that activism is valued by those in the survey sample. The respondents also expressed faith in change through international networking. Almost three quarters of them (74.5%) agreed in part or completely with the following statement: "If the citizens of different countries join forces, they can influence international politics".

Conclusion

In postsocialist Serbia, which is faced with many political and economic issues, protests that are the result of urban change are a new phenomenon. With this in mind, we can say that the protests against the demolition in Hercegovačka are just an introduction into a redefinition of public priorities and the beginning of the struggle for the right to the city. The results of this research indicate that participants in this protest value activism highly and see an organised group of citizens as a potential agent for change. Those attitudes are the basic building blocks for future collective action. The participants in the protest were highly educated residents of Belgrade, living mostly

in central municipalities. The most common reason for participating in the protest was the decline of democracy – i.e. dissatisfaction with government institutions and their inaction during and after the violent demolition of privately-owned buildings in Hercegovačka Street. Additionally, people took part in the protests in order to oppose the high-handed behaviour of the authorities. They see top state officials and the inaction of the institutions as bearing the blame and the holding to account or criminal prosecution of those responsible as the solution. The level of political engagement and civic activism of the sample cohort was relatively high compared with the rest of the population. In order to solve problems in their environment, participants in the protest had in the past turned to various forms of political activism, such as participation in direct action and similar. They were mostly mobilised via the internet and social media. Even though they expressed a high degree of dissatisfaction with government institutions, participants in the protest valued political suffrage and voted in elections, which indicates some faith in the institutional order and democratic values.

The slogan of the protests, "Whose city? Our city!", shows that this protest was part of the struggle for the right to the city. Nevertheless, in their responses respondents rarely noted the wider structures of power – such as global capitalism and the interests of private capital – and blame for the circumstances that led to the protest is laid squarely at the feet of the political elite. It is interesting that participants in the protest largely do not believe that their demands will be met. Considering the fact that social movements emerge in order to accomplish certain goals, that people were motivated to protest without any hope of achieving their aims raises fresh research questions. Moreover, the low level of identification respondents exhibited with the protest organisers and with other protesters is also of interest.

The process of transformation that the Savamala quarter is undergoing is emblematic of many of the challenges and problems faced by the contemporary postsocialist city. On the one hand, without an influx of investment and the accumulation of international capital achieved via the application of the entrepreneurial function of the city in contemporary society, cities expose themselves to various economic problems. On the other hand, urban transformation initiated by the interests of capital frequently excludes the local population from shaping the environment in which they live and impacts their daily lives, perhaps leading to their displacement. Certainly, the gentrification of Savamala through the implementation of the Belgrade Waterfront project is a radical approach to urban renewal. The eviction of locals, the lack of transparency in expropriating land, the proclamation of the project as being in the public interest and especially the violent and illegal night-time demolition of part of the city raises the question: *Whose city is it?* Urban transformation influ-

enced by global trends and private capital is yet to come, so in the future we can expect a clearer articulation of views on investor-led urbanism, new movements for the right to the city and, consequently, new research questions and projects.

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THE ROLE OF THE CIVIL SECTOR IN THE URBAN TRANSFORMATION OF THE SAVAMALA NEIGHBOURHOOD

Selena Lazić

Abstract: During the last couple of years, the Savamala neighbourhood, located along the Sava riverbank in Belgrade, has been going through a complex process of socio-spatial transformation. Due to the lack of a clear strategy or plan for its urban development and the absence of interest from powerful investors, urban transformation of this neighbourhood began as the result of various civil sector initiatives. Creative entrepreneurs, NGOs and artists initiated the revival of Savamala through adaptive re-use of abandoned spaces for various cultural, artistic and educational programmes. This model of urban transformation that gained particular momentum from 2012 until 2015 can be characterised as a "bottom-up", culture-driven urban transformation.

To understand the role of the civil sector in the urban transformation of Savamala, it is necessary to analyse the motives and goals of all the relevant actors, their resources, as well as the level of communication and cooperation both among them and with the public sector – i.e. the local and city authorities and planning institutions. Having in mind that some of the activities were envisioned as temporary and that some of the actors have retreated from Savamala in the meantime, the durable effects of their activities are questionable, especially considering the on-going Belgrade Waterfront megaproject, which aims at transforming the wider waterfront area including Savamala.

Keywords: civil sector, Savamala, urban transformation, culture-led urban revitalisation

Introduction

Waterfront revitalisation in the cities of developed capitalist societies has represented one of the visible manifestations of the wider structural changes that these societies have undergone since the 1970s. New trends on the local political level, noted in this period, involve the expansion of

the urban political system towards the inclusion of a great number of non-governmental participants and the creation of new competitive forms of urban development in which cities intensively compete to attract investment and global capital (Mayer, 1998:1; Mayer, 1999:210–211). The shift from "managerialism" to "entrepreneurism" (Harvi, 2005) refers to the increased investment by local governments into proactive economic strategies and their shift towards empowering, mobilising and coordinating local development potential and entrepreneurial initiatives. The shift from "government" to "governance" refers to a move away from centralised and hierarchical structures of government towards a collaborative approach with social agencies and non-governmental actors, including the private sector (Hirst, 2000: 20–21). Almost all of the relevant strategic documents on urban development in the EU specifically stress the role of the civil sector and oblige local governments to actively cooperate with citizens regarding all important urban policies and practices (Čukić, 2016:160).

As a neighbourhood on the right bank of Sava river in Belgrade, Savamala has been going through a dynamic process of socio-spatial transformation during the last couple of years. It is important to have in mind that in this period there have been two conflicting approaches taking place here: culture-driven "bottom-up" transformation, on the one hand, and "top-down" gentrification through the Belgrade Waterfront megaproject, on the other[1]. The first model, which gained particular momentum from 2012 until 2015, is characterized by the great role of civil sector agents who were the first to recognize the spatial, social and economic potentials of Savamala, activating unused spaces and reviving this part of the city by introducing new functions. The Belgrade Waterfront project was announced at the beginning of 2014 as an urban development project that would completely transform the Sava riverbank through the construction of a luxury residential and commercial complex across around 100 hectares of city land. The national government found an investor from United Arab Emirates[2], proclaimed the project as one of national importance and undertook a series of legislative changes in order to enable its implementation. Public planning institutions were involved as mere executors of the already devised project and other urban actors were excluded from the decision-making process[3] (see more in the chapter by Jorn Koelemaij and Stefan Janković in this volume).

1 For more about these models, see: Lazić (2018).

2 An Abu Dhabi-based private real estate investment and development company known as Eagle Hills.

3 In the public consultation phase for amendment of Belgrade's General Urban Plan – for the purposes of the Belgrade Waterfront project – there were hundreds of objections, all of which were disregarded without any serious explanation. Many experts (architects, urbanists, sociologists, economists, etc.) and activists warned of the detrimental social, economic and urbanistic consequences of the Belgrade Waterfront

The aim of this chapter is to analyse civil sector activities and to examine their role in the urban transformation of Savamala. This needs to be put in the context of the postsocialist transformation of Belgrade after 2000, a period marked by the unblocking of transition, consolidation of the market economy and multiparty parliamentary democracy and gradual incorporation of the country into the global economy. Belgrade as a city has been coping ever since with the difficulties of adapting its socialist legacy to the new capitalist system. The process of Savamala's urban transformation is an example of the implementation of Western patterns of urban development but in a specific socio-economic, political and cultural context.

The Role of Culture in the Transformation of Cities: Culture as a new driver of city economies

In contemporary, postmodern societies, culture has been redefined as a resource and has been increasingly used as the means for resolving both political and socio-economic problems, including those of the city (Miles & Paddison, 2005: 834). The instrumentalization of arts and culture as a means of urban revitalization began with large-scale and flagship projects but then moved to policy aimed at creating spaces, quarters[4] and milieus for cultural production and creativity[5] (Mommaas, 2004: 507–508). Local authorities are increasingly supporting and fostering creativity and cultural clustering as an instrument of economic development that offers employment opportunities and induces changes to the image of an area or neighbourhood (Gainza, 2017:954–956).

Cultural clustering has been criticized mostly for inducing gentrification. Depending on the type of actors who initiate gentrification, it is possible to distinguish between pioneer gentrification (artists), private-led gentrification (entrepreneurs, investors and construction companies) and state-led gentrification (public sector). Artists (gentrification "pioneers")[6]

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project. In addition, a series of protests were organised in Belgrade to oppose the project, however the government has ignored all critical voices.

4 Cultural districts emerge in inner city areas, often centring on the large stock of derelict post-industrial sites, attractive to artists and creative entrepreneurs who re-use and adapt them according to their specific needs and tastes.

5 A mixture of cultural functions and activities are grouped together in various spatial forms. Along with purely artistic and cultural activities, they also incorporate multiple leisure and entertainment elements.

6 They are in a specific position due to the fact that they have high levels of cultural and low levels of economic capital, so they are attracted to dilapidated city areas both for practical (low rents and the availability of large, abandoned spaces that can be used for studios) and aesthetic reasons.

initiate gentrification by physically transforming the neighbourhood and offering a lifestyle attractive to more affluent members of the middle class. In the next stage of private-led gentrification, capital follows the artists into gentrified localities, commodifying its cultural assets and displacing local residents and even the pioneers themselves. Alongside this process, new cultural industries and boutiques are opening up and the neighbourhood is marked as "safe" for commercial investment that will eventually upgrade services and raise rents (Zukin & Braslow, 2011; Cameron & Coaffee, 2005; Gainza, 2017) (see more in the chapter by Vera Backović in this volume).

The temporary use of space[7] has also become a major urban trend, increasingly attracting popular, policy and academic attention. It is celebrated as a catalyst for change and a progressive force giving local communities and activists a stronger place as participants in urban transformation (Madinapour, 2018:1094). Temporary use developments in derelict sites can be defined as a set of practices with short-term returns, developed in a context of economic, urban and political disorder in a more or less unplanned manner. Temporary uses are spurred by weak planning, defined by its complex, fluid, flexible and permissive character, typical stemming from a context of crisis and disorder in the economy, the city and in the land use and development process – such as in the postsocialist period in Belgrade. Weak planning is characterised by lack of co-ordination, strategic guidelines, clear objectives and control by any higher authority. Temporary occupants, for a short period of time, obtain the power and ability to shape the space. Weak planning is opposed to master-planning which relates to the process of designing and implementing a development vision for the site and beyond. Master-planning involves an entrepreneurial approach in which the power of place-making has been reattributed to key decision-makers, particularly developers (Andres, 2013: 759–763).

Contextual Framework: The postsocialist transformation of Belgrade

The postsocialist period in Belgrade is characterized by a chaotic development pattern generated by the retreat of central authorities, the appearance of a multitude of new players, as well as uncritical implemen-

7 The most typical types of temporary use programmes for urban residual areas are related to youth culture (e.g. music, clubbing etc.), the art world, leisure/sports, start-up businesses, alternative cultures, migrant cultures, social services or flea markets/ car boot sales (Oswalt et al., 2013).

tation of western development models. After the fall of socialism, a dominant impact in city development came from the political and economic elite, as opposed to the general population as users of the city and carriers of expert knowledge, whose autonomy receded substantially[8]. Urban plans are often adopted or amended to suit the initiatives of investors, by applying non-transparent procedures and also quite frequent corrupt practices. These circumstances, in which politicians retain more power than they are entitled to and where investors' private interests dominate in shaping city-planning policy is called "*investor-led urbanism*" (Vujović & Petrović, 2006: 172–173). Postsocialist city governments are adopting entrepreneurial strategies but these are characterised by favouring economic actors and non-transparent decision-making processes (Petrović, 2009:65). Civic participation in decision-making on Belgrade's socio-spatial development is also on a very low level and it is reduced to "public insight" into already completed planning documents, thus representing a pure formality. In addition, civic initiatives on urban requirements are sparse and isolated cases[9].

It has been recognized that after 2000 the planning system and planning practice in Serbia suffer from the so-called "democratic deficit" syndrome and fail to introduce a more strategic mode of development guidance and control, thus chaotic decision-making predominates (Vujosevic, 2010). An underdeveloped urban development strategy (*ad hoc* decision-making and a reactive approach), together with insufficient national and local funding, results in an uncertain fate for various city locations, especially those that have not attracted strong economic actors – i.e. investors. Also, a large number of locations remain unused or derelict for a long period of time, due to unsuccessfully implemented privatization processes, delayed restructuring of state-owned enterprises, the owners' financial difficulties, etc. In such circumstances, those locations may attract other actors who require space the for ac-

8 Although during socialism the impact of political decision on spatial and urban planning was huge, the position of experts was more favourable, given that planning was considered a very important social function (Čaldarović & Šarinić, 2008: 373; Vujović, Petrović, in: Stanilov, 2007:374).

9 These are usually merely reactive, situational initiatives, following the tradition of how middle-class residents organise themselves in the West. Called NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) initiatives, which endeavour to preserve their existing privileges and quality of life, often by preventing or opposing new undesirable developments or residents in their immediate vicinity (Lazić, 2010: 40). Proactive initiatives in Belgrade are rare but important. An example is the NGO the Ministry of Space, founded in 2011, which focuses its activities on research of urban development, cultural practices and city interventions, https://www.facebook.com/MinistarstvoProstora/, accessed 20/11/2016.

commodation of their own needs, like small entrepreneurs, non-profit organisations, activists, artists, etc., which is exactly what happened in Savamala. Due to the lack of clear strategy and plan for its urban development and the absence of the interests of powerful investors, urban transformation of this neighbourhood began as the result of various civil sector initiatives.

This neighbourhood, which entered the 21st century as a run-down, neglected area, can be characterised as a "soft" location for urban revitalisation (Marcuse & Van Kempeen, 2000), that offers opportunities for functional conversion – introducing new, more productive and/or more profitable uses[10]. To understand what makes Savamala "soft" as a location, we should briefly turn to its historical development. The period of intensive social and economic development of this district includes the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century when it emerged as the commercial hub of Belgrade, as well as the centre of its social and cultural life. This was facilitated by its favourable position along the right bank of the Sava river where Belgrade's first docks and customs house were located. During this period, notable residential buildings[11], trade and banking facilities, hotels, taverns, etc. were built, as was the main railway station and the accompanying railroads. During the First World War, many buildings were destroyed and more still were looted, followed by two more rounds of bombardment during the Second World War (Dulović, 2015:6). After the Second World War, in accordance with a new socialist model of urban development, the focus was shifted to the development and construction of other locations and activities (industrial development, construction of large residential areas, etc.), while the historical cores of city were not of great importance to the socialist authorities. The main bus station was built in Savamala in 1966 which, together with the heavy traffic that flowed through the quarter, gave this area the character of a busy transit hub. Due to the noise and pollution, the quality of life in the area decreased dramatically. In the postsocialist period, Savamala is undergoing a re-evaluation as a specific cultural and historical entity of great architectural and atmospheric value, attracting various local and international organisations and cultural entrepreneurs.

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10 As well as other postsocialist cities, Belgrade has a lot of "soft" locations due to the "under-urbanization" (Szelenyi, 2006) inherited from socialist period, which makes a valuable space resource.

11 Many of them are protected by law as cultural assets and some as cultural assets of great importance.

The Role of the Civil sector in the Urban Transformation of Savamala

Actors and Activities

Several actors initiated activities and projects that have transformed Savamala's spaces: the Second Scene platform[12], the civil associations Cultural Front[13] and Mikser[14] and the local branch of the German cultural organization, the Goethe Institute[15]. Second Scene is a platform that has long argued for the development of an alternative cultural centre in Belgrade and eventually came to an agreement with city authorities in 2007. As the formal owner of a derelict warehouse that previously belonged to the publishing company Nolit in Kraljevića Marka Street in Savamala, the city authorities allowed Second Scene to use this space, via an intermediary – city of Belgrade's cultural institution, the Youth Centre. *Warehouse in Kraljevića Marka (MKM)* was the first case of the functional conversion of space in Savamala. It operated as a cultural centre for non-institutional production in the field of culture and contemporary art, but the legal status of this space remained unregulated even 11 years since its formation. In 2009, Cultural Front and the Felix Meritis Foundation from Amsterdam, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and the Belgrade Municipality of Savski Venac, founded the *European Centre for Culture and Debate: CITY*[16] in one of the dilapidated warehouses in Braće Krsmanović Street. From its opening until today, this cultural centre organises various activities such as exhibitions, concerts, debates, conferences and workshops. The Mikser association has initiated several projects in the Savamala neighbourhood: the Mikser Festival, Mikser

12 Second Scene is a platform that gathers autonomous formal organizations, informal groups and individuals active in the contemporary art, theory, culture, media and activism scenes in Belgrade.

13 The Cultural Front civic association was founded in 2000 with a focus on programmes in the field of contemporary art, design, cultural policy, literature and international cooperation. Among the most important projects of this association are the Cross Radio regional network (2001–2006), the Refract Festival (2002–2011), Take-Away Fashion (2005-today), the Belgrade of Lights Festival (2008–2011), Forum Belgrade – A Soul for Europe (2007-today), as well as the everyday programme of KC Grad from 2009 until today.

14 The Mikser association was founded in 2002 with the goal of promoting creative production.

15 The Goethe Institute is the international cultural institute of the Federal Republic of Germany that promotes knowledge of the German language abroad and also initiates and supports a wide variety of cultural projects, including those that address urban issues.

16 http://www.gradbeograd.eu/info.php, accessed 20/01/2017.

House and humanitarian centre called Miksalište. The *Multimedia Mikser festival*, first held in Savamala in 2012[17], was promoted as "the largest regional festival of creativity and innovation" and had a key role in attracting public attention to Savamala. The Mikser festival included exhibitions, an arts market, a rich musical programme performed on several stages in the streets and buildings in Savamala, as well as educational programmes and temporary artistic installations[18]. In 2013, the initiators of the Mikser festival founded a centre called *Mikser House*[19] in one of the derelict structures in the very heart of Savamala and renovated for that purpose[20]. Mikser also initiated a project *Miksalište* in 2015 – a humanitarian centre for helping refugees and migrants in Savamala. *The Urban Incubator Project: Belgrade (UIB)* initiated and financed by the Goethe Institute in Belgrade and supported by the Belgrade Municipality of Savski Venac was launched in March 2013. There was a competition for projects and the winners were invited to work in Savamala from March through November 2013. Participants included architects, artists, theorists, political scientists and scholars from the fields of architecture, design and cultural studies. The majority of the projects were international but some were proposed by local actors or included cooperation with them. UIB projects involved various forms of exploration and/or experimentation in the Savamala neighbourhood with the aim of testing the possibilities of its "bottom-up" urban transformation and offering alternative models for its future development that would, to a greater or lesser extent, also include local residents. After the end of its initial year, there was a conference where the results of the project were presented and evaluated and the future of the project was debated. Several international project-teams within UIB wanted to continue their work, so the Urban Incubator Association was founded in April 2014, also supported by Goethe Institute, and which carried out more projects in Savamala[21]. The focus of the project in this period shifted towards including

17 In the two previous years the festival was held in the derelict industrial complex of Žitomlin, situated in an industrial zone at the opposite end of the city, albeit also on the riverbank and in approximately equidistant from the city centre.

18 The Mikser Festival was held once a year in Savamala from 2012 until 2016.

19 On its official website, Mikser House was presented as a "new concept of [a] cultural institution that brings together cultural, educational as well as commercial activities in a multifunctional space created via creative transformation of an abandoned warehouse", http://house.mikser.rs/o-nama/, accessed 20/11/2016.

20 Mikser House was closed in the beginning of 2017.

21 For example, after the pavilion in the Spanish House was disassembled in 2014, the building was turned into an urban garden called Zdravamala. In 2015 the School of urban practices project took collaborative residency in the Spanish House and used the building as an open, participative space for action and made it accessible to outside parties. In late 2015, the Goethe Institute Belgrade lost permission to use the

more local projects. However, financial support decreased dramatically, due to Goethe Institute policy, which forbids the same project receiving a large amount of money two years in a row. Some of the project teams found ways to continue their work whereas others simply ceased to exist.

The civil associations Mikser and Cultural Front as well as the Urban Incubator Association that evolved from the project, are a mixture of professional[22] and participative[23] type of organisations. Members of these associations are highly educated individuals (and sometimes students), mainly from the fields of architecture, urbanism, the arts and social sciences. They often have a rich expert experience and skills necessary for accessing funds and implementing projects. Local residents are not members of these organisations, nor have they moved on from their local problems and needs.

Motives and Goals

An important difference between the civil sector organisations active in Savamala relates to their motives for settling in this area. On the one hand, there are those who were looking for available space to accommodate their activities and by chance found such space in Savamala (MKM and the European Centre for Culture and Debate: CITY [24]). On the other hand, there were those who wanted to actively engage in the process of Savamala's urban transformation (Mikser and UIB). The explicit, declarative goal of the Mikser organisation was precisely the revival of Savamala and its transformation into a creative district. The organizers of the Mikser Festival had identified the specific "spirit" of this neighbourhood and its cultural and historical identity as the key characteristics that drove them to this part of the city. This is in tune with current concepts of development where, in the quest for comparative advantage, local distinctiveness

building. Since the beginning of the 2016 the building stands abandoned and empty once again.

22 Professional organizations are managed by a steering committee, they have employed staff, they are financed through sponsorship by third parties and members are mostly part of the "new middle class".

23 Participative organizations develop as a reaction by citizens who are directly affected by a given problem, their topics are local, they are financed from their members' personal incomes and members make decisions together, democratically.

24 In an interview for the www.casopiskus.rs, Ljudmila Stratimirović, a co-founder of this cultural centre, in an interview for the www.casopiskus.rs says: "We didn't really target Savamala. It was important that the space suits our needs. That neighbourhood was probably uninteresting for everyone else, but for us it was interesting because it was near the river, close to the city centre and didn't accommodate any other cultural content".

and authenticity stand out more and more. This also includes the use of cultural and historical heritage as a resource, as well as engaging in its revaluation and redesign. It is the revaluation and the bringing of this heritage up-to-date that Mikser's project of urban regeneration of Savamala had strived to accomplish, simultaneously rebranding this part of the city as a creative, dynamic neighbourhood, attractive for entertainment, consumption and leisure. Mikser aimed to position itself as the key actor of Savamala's transformation and advocated for partnership with the public and corporate sectors in this process. Mikser's representatives also advocated for public-private partnership in the sphere of culture and for a new cultural strategy that would acknowledge the effort and importance of "private cultural institutions" such as Mikser House. According to the official website of the project, the objectives of the UIB were to:

> "[...] improve the quality of life of local residents, arguing strongly in favour of a city on a human scale, and to encourage the residents of Savamala to take charge of their quarter. It is the quarter's cultural and social values that should have driven Savamala's re-vitalization, rather than commercial and real-estate business interests[25]".

The project coordinator of UIB stated[26], however, that the use of the expression "urban revitalisation" was partly motivated by the need to gaining public support for the project and that the actual idea was to give an incentive to the local initiative and the existing cultural content of Savamala.

Spatial and Financial Resources

Spaces for civil sector initiatives in Savamala were mostly provided by the local government, primarily the Municipality of Savski Venac. However, this collaboration didn't always run smoothly. The example of MKM reveals that the willingness of city authorities to support these initiatives was inconsistent and discontinuous. The independent cultural scene was supposed to get access to a spatial complex in Kraljevića Marka Street (numbers 4, 6 and 8) to establish an alternative cultural centre but the city of Belgrade's cultural institution, Youth Centre, was appointed as an administrator of this space and never signed any contracts with organisations from this scene, so the Warehouse in Kraljevića Marka still functions in an un-regulated manner. At the end of 2014, Youth Centre ordered organisations from MKM to move out but the eviction was pre-

25 http://urbanincubator.rs/portfolio-item/about/, accessed 25/06/2018.

26 An interview conducted in August 2018.

vented thanks to the Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia Association[27] that has run MKM ever since. Another attempt of eviction in 2016 was also prevented, with the help of numerous artists, cultural workers, public figures and citizens.

By making direct agreements, the Municipality of Savski Venac granted the use of an old hardwood floor storage facility on Braće Krsmanović Street to the European Centre for Culture and Debate: CITY, and also provided five locations in Savamala for the Urban Incubator Project, the most significant being: The Spanish House on Braće Krsmanović Street and premises at number 8 Kraljevića Marka Street (KM8)[28]. Interestingly enough, in 2007, these premises were meant for organisations active in MKM, but in 2013, the Belgrade Youth Centre granted use of them to the Goethe Institute, which took upon itself to fix them up and make them usable, i.e. to repair them and to cover all the service costs (electricity, internet and maintenance). Their contract terminated in late 2016 and since then the space has been used by the Probate Gallery (*Ostavinska galerija*) and the Bike Kitchen[29].

When it comes to financial resources, the European Centre for Culture and Debate: CITY and Mikser are recognised as having an unclear and non-transparent funding structure – they receive some public funding but they are also partly profit oriented – they incorporate profitable services such as cafés and bars, shopping areas, concerts and other lucrative events and activities (Cvetinović et al., 2016: 19). KC Grad ensured funding for the first three years of their operation via the MATRA programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands and later continued to finance their operations with some support from the Municipality of Savski Venac. The Mikser Festival had a large number of sponsors, which, apart from some big companies and Serbian media also included public enterprises and the city administration, as well as foreign contributors, whereas Mikser House was a private enterprise that financed itself. The UIB project was financed by the Goethe Institute, but it also received some funding from the EU through different projects such as Youth in Action.

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27 The Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia was founded in 2011 and 53 organisations from 15 towns and cities in Serbia are its members (http://nezavisnakultura.net/misija-i-ciljevi/, accessed 25/06/2018.)

28 Other locations were Number 5 Crnogorska Street for the School of Urban Practices and City-Guerilla Platform Projects, number 3 Svetozara Radića Street for the Bureau Savamala (later the Streets for Cyclists NGO), a small basement shop at number 2 Gavrila Principa for the Next Savamala Project, and the old Steamship Župa on the Sava.

29 More in: Knežević-Strika et al. (2017) The Magazine Cultural Centre on Kraljevića Marka Street, Belgrade: Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia Association.

Communication and Cooperation

Cooperation with local authorities, especially with the Municipality of Savski Venac and its importance for the projects in Savamala has already been stressed several times in this chapter. The municipality recognised the importance and benefits of such initiatives for the development and branding of Savamala and provided them with space to accommodate their activities as well as some financial support. The UIB project was publicly supported by the former Belgrade mayor, Dejan Vasović, who announced this project as a new model for planning and development in Belgrade. Of all the analysed actors, Mikser cooperated the most with the public sector, among others with the Touristic Organisation of Belgrade, the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia in Brussels and the Serbian Embassy in Belgium[30].

When it comes to cooperation between these organisations and projects, it is mainly characterised by mutual support – technical, organisational and declarative, especially between Mikser and UIB[31]. However, one of the UIB's projects, Bureau Savamala was critical toward Mikser's activities, interpreting them as commercial and focused on narrow personal interests, rather than the well-being of residents. The participation of the same individuals in different projects is also indicative of their mutual cooperation and similar goals. For example, architect Dr Ivan Kucina was a member of the artistic board of the UIB project as well as a programme director of the Mikser Festival, and Dejan Ubović, a co-founder of the European Centre for Culture and Debate: CITY was also a member of the artistic board of the UIB.

In most cases, local residents were not active participants in civil sector initiatives in Savamala and were mostly involved as visitors of various programmes and activities. However, two UIB projects explicitly aimed to engage Savamala residents. In the *Next Savamala* project, children, students and adults from Savamala developed several visions and ideas and set the framework for its future development. Five different scenarios were discussed at several workshops and meetings with local communi-

30 In Brussels in 2013 the Mikser Festival participated with a project called Serbia in Redesign: Mixer & Guests, initiated by the director of the Serbian Chamber of Commerce representative office in Brussels, wishing to "present to the European public an [*sic*] authentic creative potential of Serbia and the values it has and offers", source: https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/mikser-u-briselu-krajem-januara/654kjjd, accessed 20/06/2018.

31 As an example, The Model for Savamala project was displayed in Mikser House, along with accompanying programmes such as expert guidance through the exhibition and debates with Savamala residents about the future of the quarter.

ties, stakeholders and government officials[32]. An exhibition of The Citizens' Vision of Savamala 2030 was organized in the C5 exhibition space to encourage locals and the broader public to discuss, comment and give feedback on the presented scenarios. The outcome of the project was a book, "The Citizens' Vision of Savamala 2030", that was presented to official institutions and governmental officials of the City of Belgrade[33]. The *C5* project stands out as an example of failed participation. The idea was to include residents in the activity of transforming their courtyard into a common space. However, some residents refused to participate and a group of residents even managed to organize a petition that was delivered to the president of the municipality in which they asked to be left alone[34]. This indicates some mistrust and scepticism among Savamala's residents towards civil sector initiatives. NGOs may have been perceived as outsiders trying to impose their own visions and ideas in Savamala without considering the actual needs and problems of its residents. This lack of trust and cooperation between the civil sector and local residents significantly weakened the potential for "bottom-up" urban transformation.

The Belgrade Waterfront project brought powerful new actors and new dynamics into the process of socio-spatial transformation of the Sava waterfront. In 2014 Mikser and UIB representatives talked to the Tanjug news agency about the necessity of modifying their projects and adapting to the new context of the Belgrade Waterfront project and they expressed the belief that the other side will recognise their efforts and appreciate their initiatives. They emphasized the importance of initiating a dialogue with representatives of the Belgrade Waterfront project in order to synchronise their goals and establish cooperation. On the same occasion, the deputy of the president of the Municipality of Savski Venac also spoke about the uncertain fate of existing projects in Savamala. He said that although it would be useful that the municipality mediates between the two parties, this still is not possible since there are no formal mechanisms for that[35]. Evidently, the dialogue between organisations and projects in Savamala and the representatives of the Belgrade Waterfront project never took place. In January 2015 a press release[36] was issued by Savamala's crea-

32 During soup kitchen meetings of the Savamala Community in the spring of 2014, during the Mixer Festival in June 2014, as well as during a meeting with the Critical Mass Belgrade movement.

33 http://urbanincubator.rs/portfolio-item/nextsavamala/, accessed 25/06/2018.

34 http://urbanincubator.rs/portfolio-item/school-of-urban-practices/, accessed 25/06/2018.

35 https://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=1087&yyyy=2014&mm=12&dd=27&nav_id=941134, accessed 20/06/2018.

36 They were protesting against the "unannounced and semi-illegal visits of the Belgrade Waterfront representatives who [were] measuring apartments, galleries, restaurants, cultural centres with vague explanations about the reasons for that", source:http://

tive entrepreneurs (including Mikser and the European Centre for Culture and Debate: CITY[37]) and the local Association of Savamala-lovers who called for a meeting with the Mayor of Belgrade in order to be informed about the real plans for the area. After this release, no further action was taken, neither collective nor individual. The process of socio-spatial transformation of the Sava riverbank continued under the complete dominance of political and economic actors, excluding all other stakeholders.

Concluding Remarks

The concentration of numerous small-scale cultural projects in a relatively short period of time in Savamala gave the impression that an alternative model of its bottom-up urban transformation might evolve. However, these activities were supported by municipal and city authorities as a temporary solution for the neighbourhood's problems in the context of weak planning. They offered an opportunity for public authorities to avoid the image of decline and for creative entrepreneurs to access low-cost space. However, they were never implemented in strategic planning documents, thus their effects were small in scope. The capacities of the civil sector for the urban transformation of Savamala were low and to a large extent dependent on political will and support as well as on short-term project funding. At the moment when the government found a strong partner interested in investing a large sum of money in the waterfront area, civil sector initiatives lost their impetus. The most noticeable changes that can relate to civil sector initiatives in Savamala from 2012 to 2015 refer to its re-branding and commodification. The initiatives analysed herein, supported by local and foreign[38] media, have attracted the attention of local entrepreneurs to this part of the city, thus during this period there has been a huge increase in the numbers of cafés, bars, clubs, snack shops and hostels, while the hardware stores and tire-fitters once typical of Savamala have nearly all disappeared[39]. New offerings attracted mostly younger and more affluent middle-class citizens and tourists rather than Savama-

www.seebiz.eu/udruzenje-savamalaca-protestuje-zbog-uznemiravanja-stanovnika-savamale/ar-104248/, accessed 21/06/2018

37 The release was also signed by owners of cafés and clubs Mladost, Ludost, Radost, Ben Akiba, Brankow, Čorba Cafe, Berliner, Tranzit, Dvorištance, Prohibicija, Cafe SFRJ, Concept Bar Zavod and the galleries Štab and 12HUB.

38 Among other media, American TV channel CNN, American magazine Business Insider and British daily newspaper The Guardian reported about the urban transformation of Savamala and the role of the Mikser Festival and Mikser House in this process.

39 For more details, see: Krusche, J. & Klaus, P. (eds.) (2015).

la residents. During this period Savamala has not been affected by large real estate investments and its existing building stock mostly remained unchanged. In addition, having in mind that artists and creatives are not permanently residing in this area and that there was no displacement of existing residents through an influx of higher-income individuals[40], it can be argued that the civil sector actors did not initiate gentrification.

The announcement of the Belgrade Waterfront project marked the beginning of a new phase where weak planning was replaced by master-planning and the power of place-making was reattributed to key decision-makers – national and local government and an international investor. It is difficult to predict the future outlook of the Savamala neighbourhood, having in mind that the details of the forthcoming phases of the project are not known and that no new plans regulating this area were adopted. Changes caused by the Belgrade Waterfront project in Savamala so far included the renovation of the Belgrade Credit Union building as a space for the promotion of the project[41], demolition of several structures in Savamala, including the Dvorištance Club (2015) and Miksalište (2016)[42], renovation and illumination of the façades on one of the main streets in Savamala, Karađorđeva. All of this has improved the area aesthetically, enhancing its (symbolic) value, marking it as an appealing place for leisure and consumption and certainly for further private sector investment. In 2018, the famous Bristol Hotel was closed, which was just one of the buildings in the Savamala area that was passed to the Belgrade Waterfront Company for management after undergoing renovation. The most important changes so far are related to clearing the land for new construction, thus the existing railway infrastructure was removed from the area and the main railway station was relocated in June 2018. Belgrade's main coach station is also to be relocated from Savamala. This huge infrastructure presented one of the most serious obstacles that was cutting the link between Belgrade's city centre and its rivers[43]. However, the Belgrade Waterfront project usurped the Sava riverbank in a different way, with large buildings[44] inappropriate for this part of the city and functions that do not take into account the actual needs of Belgrade citizens nor any aspects of the local context. Evidently, over time the Savamala neighbourhood became incorporated into the Belgrade Waterfront project of private-led

40 Having in mind that most Savamala residents own their flats, their displacement continues to remain unlikely.

41 In 2016, a posh 1905 Salon restaurant was also opened in this building.

42 Miksalište was reopened on another location, also in Savamala, in Gavrila Principa Street.

43 For a detailed analysis, see: Vuksanović Macura, Z. (2015).

44 Until now, two residential buildings have been completed and a few others are under construction, as is a large shopping mall.

gentrification and its character has changed, pushing the civil sector initiatives out and nullifying the cultural infrastructure that had been built by them.

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BRUSHING OVER URBAN SPACE: BETWEEN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT TO THE CITY AND THE REPRODUCTION OF THE NEOLIBERAL MODEL THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF BELGRADE MURALS AND GRAFFITI*

Marina Čabrilo

Abstract: This chapter deals with the practice of painting murals and graffiti in the context of the contemporary city – here the chosen example is Belgrade. The analysis of painting in urban space is approached from the theoretical perspective of French sociologist and philosopher, Henri Lefebvre. The basic question the paper seeks to address is: bearing in mind the specific context of Belgrade, is the practice of painting murals and graffiti a form of struggle for the right to the city or is it a means for the reproduction of the neoliberal model of the production of space?

The research was conducted using the method of the structured interview. The research was carried out in September 2018, when interviews were conducted with 21 graffiti artists from Belgrade. The findings of the research indicate how bounded this practice is by the two different systems of functioning of the contemporary city. It emerged that there exists, among the interviewees, a shared awareness of certain social issues, which they incorporate into the messages that they directly or indirectly send out through their work. Accordingly, the findings indicate that, on the one hand, the act of painting murals or graffiti is a response by the artists to the existing representation of space and that, as such, it contains a certain potential for change in service of the right to the city. On the other hand, however, this practice has adapted to the laws of the neoliberal model of the production of space and, in the subjective assessment of the respondents, it can be a career and the artist's main source of income.

Keywords: neoliberalism, the city, urban, Lefebvre, right to the city, production of space, the practice of painting, graffiti

* This article was developed from a Bachelor thesis entitled, "Grafiti i ulična umetnost: crtanje kao borba za pravo na grad ili kao sredstvo reprodukovanja neoliberalne matrice u proizvodnji prostora?", and presented at the Department of Sociology in 2018.

Introduction

The starting point of this paper is the understanding that cities represent a particular framework for the manifestation of social relations. Social actors, in constant interaction with the space around them, shape it by assigning it new material and symbolic properties. The research focused on the practice of painting murals and graffiti, which was approached as a practice of marking space. Hence the aim was to explore the extent to which the artists' impact public space, as well as the interactions between them. The main aim was to examine the degree to which this kind of painting is part of the struggle for the right to the city. The analysis relies on the theoretical approach of French sociologist and neo-Marxist philosopher, Henri Lefebvre, and his concepts: the city and the urban, spatial practice, representation of space and spaces of representation, the production of space and the right to the city. In that sense, painting in urban space is approached as a practice that emerged as the result of action, as the result of attempts by social actors to realise and express their identity and the possibility of participating in the change of public space that belongs to them as residents of the city. However, the intrusion into and conquest of urban space by neoliberal capitalism opens up the potential for painting to fall into the service of profit, which somewhat dulls its critical edge. The spatial locus of this research is the central urban core of Belgrade, which provides a highly specific context, given the background of its postsocialist transformation.

How Urban Space is Understood in the Theory of Henri Lefebvre

A multitude of social processes and relationships collide and interact in the city, further shaping its reality. The socio-historical context is the main factor in understanding the changing characteristics of cities because, "every space contains within itself traces of its predecessors and is preparing anew for those who are coming, creating the complex historical geography of various social spaces" (Borden et al., 2002: 6). The key aspect of that dialectical understanding is the transformation of the city's identity and urban identity (Grbin, 2013: 476). Lefebvre saw the industrial revolution as the main milestone in that process. "The domination of the economy by industrial capital forced economic planning to incorporate into itself planning of the production of space, thus the means of producing

material spatial forms became industrialised and new urban spaces became industrial products. From the production of objects in space, there emerged the all-encompassing production of space itself" (Grbin, 2013: 476). This means also that with the industrial revolution the use value that had been the basis of cities until that time was replaced by exchange value and suppressed by the forces of commodification and surplus production. Nevertheless, Lefebvre continues to consider use value to be necessary for urbanisation to be complete and deems socialist production of space to be the only way for use value to overcome exchange value and, in so doing, to ensure the more equitable participation of all social groups in that process. Such production would have to ensure the appropriation of space and make use value accessible to all users (workers), while urban space must be a place for meetings, play and a varied cultural and social life (Vujović & Petrović, 2005: 39). It is important to understand the concept of the production of space itself. Urban space contains within itself the assumptions of the dominant ideological system – in this case capitalism – that are incorporated into each of its segments. The architecture and spatial planning of urban space shapes and organises it so that it can further replicate the capitalist system. All of which results in processes of the homogenisation, fragmentation and hierarchization of space (Lefebvre, 1996: 212).

Homogenisation implies that, by adapting to market principles, cities become similar to one another, both materially and in terms of overall social life. Even though cities vary on the basis of territorial capital and local specificities, their basic structure and their production and purposing of space are elements that contribute to their homogeneity. *Fragmentation* is a process that involves the establishment of boundaries between space intended for living, work, leisure, production, consumption, traffic, and so forth, which breaks up space and reproduces it in fragments that differ according to their function and the social groups that inhabit them. The next step of capitalist domination of urban space is *hierarchization*, which is reflected in the establishment of hierarchies of various spatial segments. "Hierarchization is established among various points of space: centres of power, wealth, leisure and information, material and spiritual exchange, on the one hand, and the periphery, with different internal levels of hierarchy, dependent on its distance from primary or secondary centres, all the way to areas abandoned 'by gods and men'" (Grbin, 2013: 477). Since the 1970s, the transition to a post-Fordist model of capitalist accumulation and the strengthening of the neoliberal economy, the points of fragmentation and hierarchization have increasingly been moving further apart. In line with these changes, Lefebvre sees transformation in cities themselves

during a given period as follows: "the street becomes the focus of a form of repression that was made possible by the 'real' – that is, weak, alienated, and alienating-character of the relationships that are formed there. Movement in the street, a communications space, is both *obligatory* and *repressed* [...] The street became a network organized for and by consumption" (Lefebvre, 1970: 20).

Lefebvre's Triad

By distinguishing the two spheres of reality that together constitute urban space and allow for the reproduction of social relations, *living (everydayness)* and urban reality, Lefebvre came upon a dual manifestation of space: as the subject of production and as a context in which production takes place. As the material characteristics of cities are, on the one hand, managed by urban planners, scientists, technocrats, engineers, city authorities and directly or indirectly associated private sector representatives, so, on the other hand, do real social actors use and shape space, assigning it meaning. Accordingly, mural and graffiti artists are social actors who, through their urban practice – i.e. painting – are able to use, modify and assign new meaning to the urban space that belongs to them as residents of the city. "In the street and through the space it offered, a group [...] took shape, appeared, appropriated places, realized an appropriated space-time. This appropriation demonstrates that use and use value can dominate exchange and exchange value" (Lefebvre, 1970: 19). In order to better understand this process, Lefebvre used three concepts that simultaneously come to be expressed. The first is *spatial practice*, the link between a certain space and a given social activity. Spatial practice pertains to physical and material flows (individuals, groups, goods), circulations, transfers and interactions in space, structured in such a way that they maintain the existing model of reproduction of social life (Grbin, 2013: 478). The notion of *representation of space* refers to the clearly conceptualised function and properties of space defined by decision-makers: the leaders of the government, the city authorities, scientists, engineers, technocrats, urban planners, etc. What links these actors as a group is their elevated position of power and knowledge on the basis of which they acquire the legitimacy to conceptualise the functions of space, which is equally their lived reality, bounded on one side by dominant social patterns contained in spatial practices and representation of space and, on the other, by the attribution of new meanings through relevant images and symbols. Spatial representations are in themselves frequently the bearers of potential change or, at least, the critique of dominant social conventions.

The Right to the City

Founded on Marxist principles, the idea of the right to the city is a form of representing and fulfilling urban strategies in social totality. The attainment of this right would mean the realisation of the urban, which would above all imply a completely new dimension of social organisation and functioning. At the beginning of the 21st century, a number of conventions were held that dealt with the attainment of the right to the city, finally resulting in the 2006 constitution of the World Charter for the Right to the City, formalising the idea and ushering it into the process of institutionalisation as a step towards it becoming an internationally recognised human right (Grbin, 2013: 486). The basic starting point of the idea is that all citizens make equal use of the city, therefore it is a form of struggle for the appropriation of the city and a critique of the dominance of the city's exchange value over its use value. Subsumed within the aegis of neoliberal politics, the right to the city is positioned so that it enables the participation of citizens in urban reality – the reality that, in his triad, Lefebvre called *representation of space*. The focus is, therefore, on attaining the right to the city as part of lived reality.

The practices through which actors assign a particular meaning to a given space can vary greatly and are always linked to the political message being sent. In that case, "activities and spatial practices that promote art, play, creativity and rebellion (graffiti, performance, subculture) and/or break down the fragmentation barriers of urban space and negate the architectural prescription of behaviour (street skateboarding, parkour, meetings, protests): are the closest to Lefebvre's original concept of the right to the city. These activities reach deeper and further than how the urban citizenry define the right to the city: beyond civic, political and social rights (that somebody else should secure and guarantee). They are closer to the original understanding precisely because of their insolence and directness in appropriating urban space" (Grbin, 2013: 486). As an example of such practices, we can highlight squatting as the occupation of space without the permission of its owner, with the proviso that the space in question is usually public or its ownership is unclear and is in most cases abandoned. In the absence of an adequate way of satisfying their social, cultural, existential and other needs, squatters find their way to realising their needs in a given building. The everyday life in the city and the bounding of fragmentary and designed representations of space result, on the one hand, in numerous spatial practices of its negation and violation, on the other. In that regard, flea markets are an interesting example of how city space can be redefined through deviations from the formalised markets. The exist-

ence of places such as flea markets is a reflection of many aspects of contemporary social reality, living conditions, critiques of consumer society and commodification, as well as the dehumanised and formalised interactions of exchange. From the viewpoint of the residents of a city they represent a means to redefine all fields of lived reality and the dialectics between the formal and informal, between necessity and symbolic value. Paths trodden through a green space or passages made through shrubbery as shortcuts, the jumping of fences, etc. are also examples of adapting the space to the needs of lived reality. Hence, the painting of murals or graffiti in urban space is also part of the struggle for the right to the city. It is important, however, to ascertain here whether that purpose of painting prevails over its use in service of the neoliberal model of the production of space.

Graffiti and Murals as a Means for the Socialisation of Space

The socio-historical context for the beginning and development of what we have today come to know as modern graffiti subculture is officially located on the streets of New York in the late sixties and early seventies, with the appearance of the first tags – i.e. signatures – as a form of individual expression by New York teenagers. "Tagging represents the first step of a writer's career, his/her 'roots', the credentials that make him/her a writer" (Macdonald, 2001: 75). Therefore, tags, the writing of names, contain the function of focusing the writer themselves as a real social actor who communicates, speaks, diverts attention onto themselves and says, "I am present", "I use this city".

In time, the *masterpiece* graffiti developed, requiring significantly more time and material to complete, but representing a greater challenge for artists with experience and the desire to stand out. The practice of creating graffiti exhibits its power to imprint new meaning through the element of risk and danger that goes with it. The growth of graffiti into a genuine subculture began with writing on New York subway cars, giving them the epithet of travelling artworks and enabling them to cover wider urban locations. Writing on such large surfaces as subway cars involved exposing the writers to greater risks, a fact that was highly valued within the subculture itself.

In the late eighties the city authorities began to react to graffiti with increasing frequency – initially simply removing graffiti-covered cars from service, which led to the relocation of graffiti to other visible plac-

es such as highways, walls, bridges, advertising billboards, freight trains, buses and trucks. The ubiquity of graffiti on the streets gave it a broader presence in the public eye and already in the eighties some of the first documentary films[1] were made with the aim of exploring the perception of urban space and the practice of writing graffiti from the point of view of the writers as the central subjects of lived reality. Moreover, they showed the simultaneous development of this subculture and the hip-hop scene, which was a significant urban platform for its growth. The members of this subculture were initially mostly African-American teenagers and teenagers from working class families. Clearly, the greatest contribution to their placement in the illegal sphere came very much from the power structures that left them without any other free space. Graffiti came to represent confirmation of their presence, a symbol of their existence.

The image of this spatial practice presented in the media or perceived by the observer is most often "mindless, senseless vandalism", due to its impenetrable motives and meanings (Macdonald, 2001: 2). This reaction placed the graffiti writers even deeper into the sphere of the illegal and what is considered destructive to the community, leading to the practice being criminalised and to attempts to eradicate it through various laws and programmes. The arguments mainly revolve around the high costs of removing graffiti from public areas. Laws and programmes for the eradication of graffiti are, however, generally applied selectively, favouring murals as painting that is more socially acceptable than "ordinary" tags or graffiti. Certainly, the perception that graffiti is vandalism is not in question. However, the perception of graffiti as mindless vandalism is completely irrelevant as – using Lefebvre's triad as a springboard – purpose, motive and meaning are more than imbued within the spatial practice of graffiti writing. Graffiti frequently transforms the space handed down to us in the form of a representation of those in power into a space for self-expression and for imprinting meaning and symbols that defy the monopolistic control of urban space. Creating, in this way, spaces of representation.

Murals, as a form of painting, are classified into a broader category called street art, which includes various forms of expression in urban space. Painting for the purpose of creating street art does not exclusively represent a subculture and a creative form of expression, but also a contribution to the promotion of human communication (Zimmermann, 2005). Paintings and performances that arise for the purpose of creating street art are more specific and focus on certain social issues, which enables passers-by to relate to the topics with which they deal and, hence, grants them broader social acceptance. Murals are mostly painted onto larger surfaces,

1 "Wild Style" (1982), "Style Wars" (1983)

such as the façades of buildings, and are often seen as a way of aestheticizing urban space, which grants them greater legitimacy. The legalised power to aestheticize that mural painting entails can be understood as an attempt by those in power to redefine the meaning of the practice of painting or drawing in public space, which dulls the practice's critical edge. By the second half of the eighties the establishment recognised street art and began exploiting it for profit and what had previously symbolised the street quickly found its way into art galleries – as was the case with the work of Jean Michel Basquiat[2] and Keith Haring[3]. Today the situation has evolved to the point that graffiti is used in advertising, as a means to make a place recognisable and attractive to potential consumers.

Taking graffiti and mural artists as social actors who are not in a position of power as a starting point, the focus is on their activity and approach to their work as the practice of appropriating and socialising space. In other words, the practice of attaining the right to the city. This notion is in direct opposition to the purpose that is given to painting by those who are in positions of power.

The Practice of Painting in the Context of the Gentrification of Urban Space in Belgrade

During the process of de-industrialisation many urban sites lose their original purpose and become characterised by degradation and ravaged urban and living conditions, which leads to gentrification, revitalisation and investment into physical improvements to the urban environment becoming important strategies for the city (the functional conversion of industrial buildings into apartments or entertainment and commercial spaces) (Harvi, 2005). On the other hand, postmodern cities are becoming consumer paradises overflowing with images and messages that stimulate consumption and the reproduction of the system. The properties of representation of space are reflected in the fact that city authorities and the private sector identify a particular location as a space that has the potential to yield greater accumulation of capital and the realisation of surplus value. Space adapts to the market, buildings are repurposed, they become commercialised, which accelerates the process of gentrification. The goal of those in power is to turn these locations into centres of entertainment and consumption.

2 http://basquiat.com, accessed 23/08/2018.

3 https://smarthistory.org/keith-haring-subway-drawings/, accessed 23/08/2018.

Gentrification is not merely a change in function and the physical restoration of certain parts of the city, it is also the alteration of the social structure, focusing the interests of the middle class and enabling it to actively participate in the use and planning of urban space. Taking a cue from Henri Lefebvre's thesis on the homogenisation of cities as one of the processes that results from the reproduction of capitalism, gentrified spaces are seen as free of classical homogenisation and more can be said of their distinctiveness relative to other city spaces, where the consumption of space can be influenced through authenticity and which represent a good foundation for the establishment and growth of the culture and tourism industries (Lefebvre, 1996: 212). The agents of representation of space make key decisions on organisation and use, on what will be visible and what will not, on how much freedom and space will be available for spatial representation. "Contemporary cities owe their survival to a more abstract symbolic economy, which is managed by 'entrepreneurs of place', representatives of the authorities and investors, whose ability to work on 'symbols of growth' produces real results in the development of real estate and new jobs" (Backović, 2015: 21). Therefore, how much space is left for the practice of painting will depend on the prescribed symbolic and aesthetic criteria. Painting contributes to the visual appearance of space, on which the image and identity of the city depends, especially in gentrified localities where it has the function of adapting space to the needs of the middle class.

In Belgrade's central core we can identify several locations that are encapsulated by the process of gentrification and that, as such, include the spatial practice of painting. One of them is Savamala, a quarter recognised as a space suitable for revitalisation and urban renewal (see more in the chapter by Selena Lazić in this volume). The streets of Savamala throng with numerous cafés and chill zones with restored old furniture, palettes, and an ambient that emanates the vintage, places that promote recycling, cycling, healthy diets and so forth. The area is hemmed in by numerous small industrial facilities and warehouses but also by older buildings from the early twentieth century, many of which are slowly deteriorating. On the other hand, in the vicinity is the (as of recently) former Main Railway Station[4], the Main Coach Station and the Belgrade docks, which lost their main purpose with the coming of de-industrialisation. The urban revitalisation of Savamala in the context of post-industrialisation involved numerous projects that brought together the private and public sectors but also, in a sense, the third, non-governmental sector, whose representatives called for the revival of traditional crafts, cultural production and the physical

4 https://www.danas.rs/ekonomija/zatvara-se-glavna-zeleznicka-stanica/, accessed 20/08/2018.

restoration of rundown areas, foreseeing in this way the quarter's economic development. In addition to the creation of jobs intended for members of the creative class, a large number of the jobs created actually involve poorly paid service sector work. Moreover, even as they contribute to the reviving and revitalisation of these spaces the artists are faced with a generally unfavourable environment for cultural production in Serbia and are forced to satisfy themselves with short-term contracts and spaces to show their work, which they see as a possible opportunity for future progress. That is to say, gentrification does not involve the rehabilitation or improvement of living conditions for the residents of a given quarter, it only involves the introduction of new, exclusionary and differing elements that yield profit for a few. "During gentrification, the elements of the everyday life that preceded it fade away, to be replaced by attractive (Disneyfied) semi-public space, intended for new residents who will settle new gated communities. Gentrification understood in this way – known as *profitable gentrification* – is characteristic of postsocialist cities and is led by the private sector" (Backović, 2015: 92).

Image 1 Mikser House, Savamala, Belgrade
Source: http://house.mikser.rs/

Image 2 Murals and Mikser House (2015), Belgrade

One of the long-term projects in the area was the Mikser Festival and Mikser House as its venue (Images 1 & 2), which constituted their ideas by calling for a golden age for Savamala – recalling the area's history from before the First World War.[5] The urban advertising used by Mikser left behind, suppressed and covered up a whole historical period – the socialist period, a time when Savamala was a workers' quarter – as well

5 http://www.masina.rs/?p=4230, accessed 01/09/2018.

as the de-industrialisation that took place over the last two decades and which is itself the reason so many previously industrial buildings stand empty and ready to be part of the *revival* project.[6]

In recent years Savamala has been the subject of a much broader urban development, the luxury architectural *Belgrade Waterfront* project (see more in the chapters by Vera Backović and Jorn Koelemaij and Stefan Janković in this volume). This project is also responsible for changes to the gentrified areas of Savamala, with many projects, galleries and cafés dislocated to other parts of the city, especially to Dorćol. Dorćol is one of Belgrade's oldest and most central quarters. It is home to some of the city's oldest buildings, museums, galleries, schools and institutions, which gives the area an important and unique place both in Belgrade's history and its present. One of the more emblematic examples of the gentrification of Dorćol is an area that was formerly the BIP Brewery in Cetinjska Street, nowadays often referred to as Dorćolmala (Image 3). It has become one of the most popular meeting places for young people belonging to the hipster subculture.

Image 3 Picasa (2016): *Polet4*, Cetinjska, Belgrade
Source: http://bellegrade.com/2016/04/25/belgrades-new-hotspot-cetinjska-street-15/

In the area around the aforementioned spaces there are a large number of murals and other street art mediums, which aestheticize, symbolise and imbue these localities with the image that entrepreneurs have identified as being profitable. Calls for tolerance – which is understood as the acceptance of diversity of nationality and sexuality and gender equality (Backović, 2015) – and messages against discrimination of all kinds and for the protection of human rights and freedoms are presented to visitors in the shape of the murals themselves. Also, the streets of the aforementioned Belgrade neighbourhoods are awash with graffiti, tags and alternative forms of street art behind which lie various messages and which were created as part of the struggle for the right to the city, through the self-organisation of artists dissatisfied with the space available to them for their personal promotion and for the unhindered marking of space.

6 http://www.masina.rs/?p=4230, accessed 01/09/2018.

Method

The aim of the research was to address the question of whether the practice of painting murals and graffiti, in the specific context of Belgrade, is a form of struggle for the right to the city or whether it is in the service of reproducing the neoliberal model of the production of space. The research applied snowball sampling, that is the first respondents were contacted on the basis of personal acquaintance and because they are well-known artists who have worked at central Belgrade locations. They were then asked to recommend other artists who would be interested in participating in the research. The interviews were conducted in the second half of September 2018. A total of 21 graffiti artists were interviewed – of whom 19 were male and only two were female. The underrepresentation of women in the practice of painting in public space was one of the significant and interesting topics covered by the research. On the basis of the gathered socio-demographic data, it emerged that the respondents were 22 to 37 years old and that most of the interviewees (18) were graduates, two were students and one interviewee had a secondary level education. Most respondents were in some form of employment and two declared themselves to be unemployed. Half of the respondents worked in fields that were in some way linked to art or painting – architecture, graphic design, painting, illustration or street art.

Research Findings

The first set of questions put to the interlocutors pertained to the practice of painting in public space itself and formed a kind of guide through the personal stories of the interviewees and their development and growth as artists. The first question read: "How long have you worked on painting in public space?" – the answers to which ranged from 10 to 25 years, which leads to the conclusion that the practice of painting plays an important part in the lives of the respondents. Subsequently the interviewees were asked to express their subjective feelings and opinions about painting as a practice, through the following question: "What does painting mean to you?"

> "Therapy for the brain. It's the moment when you can relax and, at the same time, focus but you're not thinking about anything else." (Interviewee 13, 28 yrs., male)

> "The best way to express my ideas, mood, thoughts. It's the release valve for everyday life, an escape from reality, enjoyment and the desire to leave something beautiful behind... [There are] many reasons why I found myself in precisely that [activity]." (Interviewee 16, 34 yrs., male)

> "The best satisfaction I can give myself without the help of someone else." (Interviewee 17, 24 yrs., male)

These responses represent the subjective experiences of the majority of the interviewees, showing that they are highly attached to painting as a social practice. For a large number of the interviewees, painting represents a certain *escape from reality* and their subjective mode of dealing with the society in which they live. On the other hand, we also encountered some other interesting responses:

> "A freedom of expression, mostly. Also, I believe that its part of human consciousness – the marking of space and the paths along which I move and I have a need to do that. Since ancient times humans have written their names on things or interpreted what they saw by drawing on walls." (Interviewee 6, 30 yrs., male)

> "Drawing is my need to beautify the environment around me." (Interviewee 12, 30 yrs., female)

The first set of responses to the question shows that the practice of painting affects the psychological state and inner satisfaction of the artist, while, on the other hand, the other responses show painting approached as the link between themselves and their environment. It should be noted, however, that in response to the question, "*Do you want to send a message with your painting?*", 10 interviewees stated that they had no intention of sending a message.

> "I never tried to send any kind of message through my work. People subjectively experience a work and interpret it in their own way. It was always important to me that what I do is beautiful and works in a given environment." (Interviewee 16, 34 yrs., male)

> "No, it's subjective, I aim for recognisability and authenticity without a signature or any kind of message. Let's say the message is when the passer-by or individual understands the work in their own way." (Interviewee 21, 29 yrs., male)

Some artists do not specify a message, leaving passers-by, as their audience, a degree of freedom to perceive the work in their own way. On the other hand, more than half of the painters stated that they do aim to send a message through their work.

Image 4 Aleksandar Đorđević aka Đalek (2016): *Tica*
Source: http://beogradskigrafiti.com

The gathered responses display a high degree of analogy-making from which it can be deduced that the respondents have developed an awareness of certain social issues as well as opinions on the existing representation of space and the way in which space is today used and organised. Through their work, many of the respondents seek to highlight personal but also social dissatisfaction, as well as existential problems and dissatisfaction with the political situation in Serbia and the world:

> "The messages change along with my personality. They cover mostly environmental, social topics, but recently the very beauty of existence has also been very important to me." (Interviewee 3, 32 yrs., male)

> "Generally, the message is that public space should belong to everyone, it should be varied, and sometimes the message can be dissatisfaction with the conditions I live in, that the state provides." (Interviewee 6, 30 yrs., male)

When presented with the statement, "It is important to me that people understand the message in my work", 7 interviewees agreed, 10 disagreed, while 4 said they were undecided. Half of all respondents agreed with the statement, "It is important to me that people see the aesthetic value of my work", while the other half either disagreed or remained undecided. On the basis of these responses we can conclude that the interviewees value the aesthetic and symbolic meaning of their work equally even though they are representatives of various forms of painting in urban space and adopt different perspectives in their interpretation.

Image 5 *Travnička-grafit* (2016), Savamala, Belgrade
Source: http://gayecho.com/news/beograd-unisten-gej-grafit/

Among members of the graffiti subculture the message is intended for other members of the subculture and remains within its confines. Through tags or masterpiece graffiti, painters express a strong self-concept (Macdonald, 2001: 92).

Image 5 shows a once well-known Savamala mural of two figures hugging, one of whom has rainbow coloured leggings, a recognisable symbol of the LGBT community. The right-hand portion of Image 5 shows a response to the initial message, which we can characterise as homophobic. Therefore, mural and graffiti painters do often transmit messages, to which they can receive responses from the environment, thus turning the street into a space for communication.

In addition to graffiti whose message is figurative, there are also works whose message is clear and those that can even be said to be a kind of propaganda for a given idea or *lifestyle*. On the streets of Belgrade, it is almost impossible to miss the graffiti promoting a vegan lifestyle, ideas about animal rights and those criticising the problem of barriers that prevent the raising of environmental awareness (Image 6).

Image 6 Aleksandar Đorđević aka Đalek (2017), *Friend Not Omelet*, Belgrade
Source: http://beogradskigrafiti.com

The next question posed to the interviewees aimed to broaden understanding of the contextualisation of spatial issues and read: "*How do you choose the locations in which you work?*" Beyond the physical state of the work surface on which they paint, the respondents' key criteria for selecting a location was whether it is permissible to paint in a given space:

> "Without much planning, I choose mostly those work surfaces that do not affect private property or cause problems with the authorities." (Interviewee 8, 27 yrs., male)

> "I choose tried and tested walls where I know I can paint legally without any problems. Sometimes, if I see a wall in a good location, I try to ask for or get permission." (Interviewee 16, 34 yrs., male)

Three of the respondents said that they work on request. On the other hand, some artists also took into account the visibility and accessibility of a work surface, in the sense that they frequently choose spaces and

buildings that have been abandoned or are in a state of disrepair. Some respondents who prefer painting on train carriages stated that they need to be well organised, that a given train is "staked out" for days and that their "operations" take place at night. Overall analysis of the responses to this question indicates the presence of both aspects examined by this paper among the interviewees: representation of space and the critical potential of the practice of painting that leads to spaces of representation.

Agreement with the statement that, "*It does not matter to me whether I have permission to work*" was expressed by approximately two-thirds of respondents, while others disagreed or remained undecided. Additionally, none of the interviewees agreed with the statement that, "People who paint only when they have permission to do so are not true artists". It seems that, however great the distance between their opinions and attitudes towards space, there is a certain degree of respect among the artists and that greater and more profound differences are actually linked more with existing representation of space and the way in which those in power produce and reproduce space.

The following quotation from a daily newspaper clearly illustrates how space is produced by those in power (in this case relaying the opinion of Belgrade City Manager, Goran Vesić): "Vesić stated that not all graffiti is an eyesore but, unfortunately, most graffiti in Belgrade is and added that, as well as punitive measures, educational programmes will be introduced, as will places where graffiti is permitted. 'We will launch an educational programme that will feature celebrities and actors who will explain why this should not be done and, on the other hand, we will call on all those who create graffiti as art to do so at certain locations. In the coming period we will devote ourselves to murals.' He also announced a commission that will determine what is to be considered art."[7] Moreover, many Belgrade buildings are subject to planned artwork and artists frequently ask a building's residents for permission to realise their ideas.

The next set of questions concerns the perception of the practice of painting as a career, that is, its incorporation in to today's dominant economic system. The first question in this section read as follows: "*How much time per week do you devote to painting in urban space?*" The recorded responses varied, from just a few hours, through 15 hours per week, to as much as 20 and 30 hours per week. The following two sets of responses are important in order to better understand the difference between devoting and spending a particular amount of time to the practice of painting. In response to the statement that, "Painting is my hobby", 11 respondents

7 http://mondo.rs/a773201/Info/Drustvo/Kazna-za-grafite-povecana-na-20.000-dinara.html, accessed 01/09/2018.

disagreed, while 9 agreed and only one respondent remained undecided. As is to be expected, the respondents agreed with the following statement at the same rate, "Painting is both my hobby and my career", but the responses were inverted so 11 agreed, 9 disagreed and one respondent remained undecided. Therefore, more than half of the interviewed artists saw their work as a career, as their profession.

When asked whether they have ever painted for a private company and whether they were paid for that work, all of the interviewees responded in the affirmative to both questions. Two interviewees highlighted the fact that painting is their main source of income. Also, the respondents confirmed that Savamala and Dorćol are the centres for painting in urban space in Belgrade and 15 interviewees stated that they had participated in various projects in these locations, in addition to having worked there on their own initiative.

The breadth of importance given to murals within the creative industries can also be deduced from the existence of organised tours of the most famous murals and other types of street art in the Savamala and Dorćol quarters, which adds to this practice the property of market good. In addition to the tours, it is also possible to participate in numerous workshops where visitors are able to meet and talk with Belgrade street artists. The prices of these activities range from 12 to 25 euros[8] and can be found exclusively on the internet and in this currency, which speaks to an attempt to construct a global image for the city. Beyond Savamala and Dorćol, these tours also take in the area of the former Trudbenik brickworks, now known as *Ciglana: A club for lovers of heavy industry*. This long-abandoned factory on the outskirts of Belgrade is today a space that attracts numerous artists from various disciplines.

Responses to the question of how often and when they have been engaged to paint by a private company or creative industry – and whether they have been asked to paint something that does not give them pleasure or the opportunity to express themselves – reveal a situation that is essentially unavoidable because it takes on the form of an employer/employee relationship and functions according to market principles. This can be seen from the following responses:

> "Generally something like that does happen. They ask for impossible things and when they hear the price they cross themselves." (Interviewee 1, 25 yrs., male)

> "It is always, but always, a pleasure to take their money." (Interviewee 13, 28 yrs., male)

8 https://putujsigurno.rs/vesti/street-art-grafiti-i-murali-beograda-dostupni-uz-street-tours, accessed 01/09/2018.

It seems that, on the one hand, the respondents feel deprivileged when their work is valued and transformed into economic capital. However, considering the fact that all of the interviewees were artists with many years of experience, they confirmed that these situations occurred more frequently when they were just starting to create for others and that they have, in time, learned how to incorporate the requests of clients into a style that they have made their own. A few of the more representative responses are presented here:

> "At the beginning there were more offers like that. In time and with experience everything changes to your advantage." (Interviewee 7, 34 yrs., female)

> "It happens a lot but even in those situations I try to smuggle in my own style." (Interviewee 16, 34 yrs., male)

Therefore, painting in urban space has adapted to the capitalist model of production of space, which was in a way to be expected as the artists themselves sell their work as a source of personal income. Presented with the statement, "I think it is possible to earn a good living from painting", half of the respondents agreed, one-third agreed completely, with the rest remaining undecided. On the other hand, around half of the respondents agreed with the statement, "It doesn't matter to me whether I receive financial compensation for my work", while the rest disagreed.

Although it is established as a career, this practice is still structured in a manner that takes into account the interviewees' awareness of the space in which they live and on the basis of personal interpretations of spaces of representation – in other words, their ability to redefine that space. Attaining the right to the city requires a given social practice and space of representation to work together. Consequently, the last set of questions pertained to certain social practices that have the potential to foster the change that leads to attainment of the right to the city.

This stage of the interview began with the following statement: "*Over the past five years I have participated in a protest at least three times*", to which 8 interviewees responded positively and were then asked to state what motivated them to protest. The responses were grouped into the categories of either student protests or political protests. Five of the respondents confirmed that they had participated in the latest round of protests organised by Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own to oppose to the Belgrade Waterfront project. This initiative was itself guided by some of the basic principles of the right to the city (more on this in the chapters by Mladen Nikolić and Jelisaveta Petrović in this volume).

The interlocutors were also asked about their opinions of squatting ("I think that it is justified for people who do not have reliable housing or space in which to work to occupy abandoned buildings and to adapt them to their needs"). In response to this statement, 17 respondents said they agreed, with the other 4 remaining undecided. Indeed, this breakdown of responses need not be surprising. The practice of squatting imply struggle against the barriers with which social actors are faced in a given representation of space and which they endeavour to change or adapt to their needs. In this way, this practice moves towards the establishment of spaces of representation, which will further enable the creation of the right to the city.

Image 7 Aleksandar Đorđević aka Đalek (2017): *Patka/Beograd nije mali*, Belgrade

Source: http://beogradskigrafiti.com/galerija/patka-beograd-nije-mali/

When asked whether they themselves had ever been in a similar situation or participated in organised squatting or similar, 16 of the interviewees responded in the affirmative.

> "Of course I have! I'm a member of the group that revived the old Ciglana. I think we succeeded. (Laughter)." (Interviewee 3, 32 yrs., male)

> "By writing graffiti you're constantly occupying space. It's unavoidable." (Interviewee 4, 34 yrs., male)

Concluding Thoughts

This study has shown that among the respondents there is a developed and shared awareness of certain social problems and issues, which they try to incorporate into the practice of painting. For the respondents, painting represents a practice through which they express themselves in both a psychological and a social sense. The differences between them emerge in the directness and specificity of the message they are trying to convey through their work.

In addition to its expressive and aesthetic function, the practice of painting murals and graffiti is, for the artists themselves, a career and a

source of income, hence it is subject to the laws of the neoliberal production of space. Despite the fact that most of the interviewees have at least once been paid for their work, it transpires that their creative expression was often curtailed by the requests of their clients – a state of affairs that could only be changed with the development of their skill, experience and the maturing of their own personal style, which allowed them to stand out. Also, the planned production of space functions according to the principle of selection, thus placing in space and enabling the visibility only of what is in line with the dominant ideology and has the possibility of yielding profit. In that sense, the practice of painting, especially of painting murals, becomes a part of the market that is particularly prized in gentrified neighbourhoods, which enables the practice's survival or further reproduction.

The practice of painting in public space emerges as a response and critique of the existing representation of space and the socio-economic *status quo* in the country and hence has the potential to introduce social change in service of the right to the city. The respondents were aware of the limits and hurdles established by the planned production of space – i.e. representation of space – to which they respond through the practice of painting, choosing topics that highlight those limits or, at least, redefine the relationship between space in the sense of legal/illegal. Bounded between the public and the private, the legal and the illegal, between their aspiration to adapt space to their needs and the real possibility to do so at a given moment, it seems that artists remain trapped between two different systems of functioning: on one side is what we might call the right to the city, on the other is their integration into capitalism as a system in which everything could be commodified.

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