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a knowledge centre  
and laboratory for  
urban design in today's  
European cities, where  
participants take  
advantage of real time  
postgraduate and  
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Fontys  
University of Applied Sciences

Stadslab European Urban Design Laboratory is the postgraduate program of Fontys Academy of Architecture and Urbanism, Tilburg, Netherlands

Between the Bridges Stadslab Master Class Belgrade 2011

# MASTERCCLAS S

Belgrade 2011

Between the Bridges



# Between the Bridges

## Stadslab

# Master Class Belgrade 2011



# 1

## Foreword

Zaklina Gligorijevic, Director Belgrade Urban Planning Institute

When Mira Milanovic, Igor Marko, and Reinout Crince of Stadslab presented the idea to organize a Master Class in Belgrade, in spring 2011, it seemed inspiring and exciting, especially because of the proposed participation of Belgrade Faculty of Architecture, Association of Architects with BINA and our Urban Planning Institute. The international group of young architects, urban designers and landscape architects, led by three experts, intended to explore, comprehend, and propose ideas for the Belgrade Riverfront area. The project was mutually accepted, all the parties agreed on the program and the group of around 15 international participants arrived in Belgrade in October. Instead of working on a large scale Belgrade waterfront Master plan, the scope was changed to a smaller but, from the Belgrade planning point of view, more sustainable and concrete project. The leading team agreed to work on transformation scenarios for Savamala, the old urban mixed use area near the Sava River, with an established urban identity. The area draws its character from both the train and bus stations, but also from the early XIX Century urban development and beautiful old buildings around. The local public space was not particularly articulated except for the main transportation use, lacking design, lighting, visual and physical communication with the Sava River. The area has been quite neglected, polluted by the transit transport and positioned between the two busiest bridges on the river in that time.

This part of the Sava Amphitheatre was also pointed out as one of the main City revitalization projects by the Belgrade Development Strategy, adopted in 2010. Time of crisis has also given the chance for rethinking of existing ideas and projects, facing the challenge of urban transformation in a new legal, economic, and social environment.

The site invokes associations to quarters like SoHo, West Chelsea, Williamsburg, or projects like Highline in NYC, or similar revitaliza-

tion project in European cities. There were no particular design goals, quantities or numbers, nor new plans or projects that were expected. The Urban Planning Institute (UPI) only expressed a necessity to think simultaneously in two different layers: through temporary solutions like urban recycling, short term affordable projects, as well as long term development goals and ideas, hoping for richer times to come.

Having in mind that the UPI should always consider all the facts while proposing new spatial organization, including the global environmental and economic context, we used the opportunity to share experiences and open our minds to ideas and solutions coming from international, young, educated architects and theoreticians, dealing with Belgrade issues. The team proposed bold new ideas and solutions for some of our city issues: the floods, transportation, skyline, new uses, open spaces, street life, mental mapping and urban signing, city marketing, all exercised on a small scale project, between Belgrade two bridges. The visit by Stadslab made inspired local planners to abandon the old planning patterns for a moment and start thinking in the new paradigm: smaller budgets, partnerships and green projects for a time of climate change, CO2 reduction, socially responsible projects, etc.

This workshop was an excellent refreshment to the UPI master planning team, and the instrument to review the basis for the city planning. The presentation showed two types of ideas, temporary and long term solutions, proposed some alternative development goals for the new global environment, and opened discussion about the unexpected possibilities for the Belgrade inner city riverfront development.

This Master Class opened our minds to new, unexpected, and fresh ideas in the permanent Savamala revitalization process that would have never appeared without a different perception demanding a different mindset.



## 2

# Introduction

Marc Glaudemans, Director Stadslab European Urban Design Laboratory  
Professor of Urban Strategies at Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Tilburg,  
Netherlands

### Savamala. A Roadmap Towards Transformation.

After decades of geopolitical, economic and political turbulence, Belgrade is struggling to regain its position as a capital city. Geography is a dominant factor in the cities' historical fate. Beograd - the 'White City' - sits at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. In history this has repeatedly turned out to be a frontline. The majestic Kalemegdan fortress, towering high above the rivers, still embodies this frontline condition. The wide Sava and Danube rivers are not only key elements in the geopolitical fate of the city, but also dominate and organize daily urban life. Novi Beograd, or 'New Belgrade', on the left bank of the Sava river is one of the largest modern settlements in socialist planning tradition, and has a completely different feel from the historical, and topologically more challenging right bank. The Danube River forms a massive barrier and there are virtually no urban settlements on the opposite site of Belgrade. Bridges organize the flow of people and goods in and out of town; they are key elements in any scenario dealing with Belgrade's urban future. Today the capacity of the bridges crossing the Sava River is insufficient. Several new bridges are being completed with an expected shift in economic activities towards the south. Nevertheless, the Branco Bridge and the Sava Bridge remain the major connections for public transport, cars and pedestrians right into the heart of the historical city. Belgrade's major bus terminals and central railway station are located at the Sava banks on the Belgrade side of the river. Many urban planning scenarios have been drawn with the relocation of these transportation hubs as a key driver for necessary urban renewal. A half-completed new central railway station is now in use, but far below its capacity. In fact, it can be argued that most of these scenarios are still reminiscent of the centrally oriented, blue-print planning tradition that clearly doesn't function any more due to effects of globalization and the lack of investment potential of the impoverished

state. A need of a more open planning process, engaging a wider community of stakeholders and a less prescriptive orientation is needed to kick-start urban developments. Stadslab Urban Design Laboratory, together with the Belgrade Urban Planning Institute, devised a Master Class program focusing on new planning methodology and ideas for the development of the Sava banks adjacent to the railway and bus terminal area. This part of the city, 'between the bridges' now suffers from the indecisiveness on relocating the railway and bus terminals and a poor reputation in general for these lower parts of the historic center, prone to flooding and relatively inaccessible due to heavy infrastructure and steep elevations. The successful Beton Hala river bank redevelopment to the north of the Master Class site seem to prove that a regeneration of the river banks and the industrial heritage is possible and, in fact, quite suitable for capitalizing on Belgrade's reputation as a nightlife city. An intensive 10-day program, starting in Amsterdam as a reference for waterfront development, resulted in a strategic 'roadmap towards transformation' for the Sava Mala area (Sava river banks). The international team of participants and supervisors mainly focused on acupuncture interventions to create urban resonance and gradually improve the image and attraction of the area. We subsequently provided a suggestion of a far-reaching intervention in the regeneration of the riverbanks at the site of the railway yards. Together these strategies frame a planning direction open for professional and public debate. Since this debate could not be integrated in the limited timeframe of the Master Class this publication and the public presentation during the Belgrade Architecture Week 2012 help to stage a platform for participation. For Stadslab, as an international think-tank on urban transformations, the Belgrade case is extremely interesting and we hope to stay involved in the subsequent stages of the planning and decision making process.



# 3

## Master Class program

Marc Glaudemans



Belgrade has gone through a transition phase and aims at becoming an open international city, retaining its former status as a focal point in transnational transportation and infrastructure. Cultural life has boosted with many cultural events and institutions, making it a vibrant city and the main center in the whole region. Its rivers and the confluence of the Danube and the Sava Rivers near the center of the city dominate the view of the city. The city has a diverse and interesting waterfront profile which is not fully capitalizing on its tourist and real estate potential. Several investments and harbor redevelopments projects are being developed next to the river, leading to debate about the larger concept of the riverfronts in the city. The relation between city, waterfront and former harbor areas demands new perspectives on the waterfront and its relation with the larger metropolitan area. A second dominant element, as in many cities, is the Central Station and its surroundings. The station forms a central hub in the urban infrastructure and an important entrance to the city. In Belgrade however the relation between the urban transportation network, city center and central station is not optimized. The potential of this central place is therefore not realized, as we tend to see in comparable cities. Stadslab was requested to offer an international Master Class in Belgrade. The Master Class focused on urban regeneration, urban waterfronts and placemaking strategies. Belgrade Urban Planning Institute, Belgrade University, Faculty of Architecture, Association of Belgrade Architects, Institute of Transportation CIP, "Beogradcvor" company, "Masinoprojekt" company and the Belgrade International Architecture Week (BINA) were organizing partners. Urban Planning Department (DRO) of Amsterdam was also involved. In the Master Class we studied the redevelopment of Amsterdam Central Station and riverfront redevelopments as reference projects for the redevelopment of Belgrade Central Station urban area. The concept of the Master Class was a ten day international design workshop, supervised by Igor Marko from the London based office FoRM

associates and Mira Milanovic, urbanist at DRO Amsterdam. The goal of the Master Class was to create a vision and design for the above-described area. An international group of attendants formed a think tank and was divided theme-wise and location-wise. Each group did research on a specific subject and site and communicated and discussed the results with the whole group. In this way we created a full and intense network of information, which was input for the vision and the eventual design strategy for the area.

### Stadslab Methodology

Stadslab combines a design laboratory and a knowledge center for architects, urbanists and landscape architects. Stadslab offers design expertise to cities and regions in Europe and always works on actual cases. These cases are examined in a laboratory engaging a wider set of interests and integrating them into conceptual design proposals. Hence the urban vision, the strategic plan or a master plan are not ready made solutions but develop the cities potential, international profile and ambitions. Finally this serves as a launching platform for further discussion and it may enhance the investment prospective for the city. For Stadslab and its participants the results are part of post-academic professional education. Through working in the Master Class young and more senior architects, planners and landscape architects develop their professional skills. In engaging the assignment, which asks for an analysis and a design solution, participants are able to train their working methods and skills in an international oriented group of talented architects and urban designers. Also they have the opportunity of being coached by internationally appraised experts. The methodology Stadslab uses for its Master Classes is research by design. Hence research and design are closely involved with each other and the design process itself is approved as a research technique. By compressing the actual cases in a ten days Master Class program design





and research are fluidly used within the working process. Consequently knowledge production through designing exercises is part of the methodology. As a result a large part of the program is established as Design Studio in which research and design are performed. Working in a different culture with a group of nationalities as well as working on new methods, which are different from their normal approach, results in a rich ambiance and a wide range of solutions. The methodology results in a varied approach towards the topic and stimulates the implicit transfer of



knowledge between participants. A second part of the program consists of lectures and seminars in which experts are invited to speak about their subject. The third part is a program of intensive field trips to the project sites as well as to reference sites. Together with a short literature list this part of the program comprises the explicit knowledge transfer in the program.

## Program

### Thursday 13 October 2011

19.00 Dinner in Amsterdam at restaurant, opening and introduction

### Friday 14 October 2011

09.30 Opening by Marc Glaudemans (StadsIab and professor Urban Strategies), welcome lecture with a general introduction to the Master Class.  
 10.30 Lecture in Amsterdam: Tineke van der Pol (DRO Amsterdam)  
 11.30 Depart for a tour to the western Riverfront of Amsterdam via Amsterdam Central Station.  
 12.30 By boat to the northern riverfront of Overhoeks, lunch.  
 14.00 Introduction to the Overhoeks project.  
 15.00 To the NDSM area by boat.  
 16.00 To the Western Dock Island and Silodam.  
 19.30 Dinner

### Saturday 15 October 2011

09.30 Lecture by Tatjana Trzin (principal at TRZIN) on architectural development in Belgrade  
 10.30 Lecture by Mira Milanovic (urbanist at DRO Amsterdam) – Generic evolution of the city related to its transportation and water system, a comparison between Amsterdam and Belgrade  
 11.30 Collect the bikes for a bike tour to the Eastern waterfront of Amsterdam. We first pass the Eastern Docks with the Cruise terminal and then go on to Java Island, KNSM and Borneo-Sporenburg.  
 12.30 Lunch at KNSM  
 14.30 We arrive at IJburg and visit the newly developed island in the IJmeer.  
 19.30 Dinner

### Sunday 16 October 2011

11.50 Departure to Belgrade  
 14.05 Arrival Belgrade, collect baggage, by bus to the city center.  
 17.00 Stroll around the city center, Kalemegdan and the design location  
 20.00 Welcome dinner provided by the partners and the city

### Monday 17 October 2011

09.00 Day opening with a short lecture on Transportation systems by the Train Company  
 09.45 Design studio, analysis, SWOT, split into groups to make detailed observations in the project area:  
 - North – river front development

- West – transportation  
 - South – public space and green  
 - East – tourism

17.30 Presentation: short plenary presentation of today's work  
 20.00 Dinner in the center

### Tuesday 18 October 2011

09.45 Design studio: collecting information, concepts and defining strategic agenda for the area  
 12.30 lunch  
 13.30 Design studio  
 17.30 Presentation: short plenary presentation of today's work

### Wednesday 19 October

09.00 Lecture Milica Joksic (Director of the Department for Strategic Planning and Development at Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade)  
 09.45 Design studio: completing strategic agenda, working on master planning and branding concepts  
 12.30 lunch  
 13.30 Design studio  
 15.30 Presentation: short plenary presentation of today's work, some partners will be present and may react on proposals  
 17.00 Lecture by Igor Marko on Placemaking

### Thursday 20 October

09.00 Lecture Zaklina Gligorijevic (Director Belgrade Urban Planning Institute)  
 09.45 Design studio: fine-tuning strategic agenda, completing branding concepts and Master planning  
 12.30 lunch  
 13.30 Design studio  
 17.30 Presentation: short plenary presentation of today's work

### Friday 21 October

09.00 Design studio: finalizing results, fine-tuning presentation  
 10.00 Public presentation to partners and stakeholders at Belgrade Urban Planning Institute  
 11.30 Discussion  
 13.30 Lunch and free-time  
 20.00 Dinner

### Saturday 22 October

10.00 Field Trip: Novi Beograd  
 20.00 Dinner

### Sunday 23 October

06.00 To the airport  
 10.50 Arrival in Amsterdam

# 4 Roadmap to Transformation: The Process and Results

Igor Marko, Director FoRM Associates, London, UK.

## Preparation

The area between the bridges emerged after several days of walking, observing and discussing in Belgrade. The de-urbanized land between the bridges presents itself as a laboratory condition upon which it is possible to demonstrate a diversity of ideas for active regeneration. Given the ingredients such as the river and the immediate adjacency of the city center with its established urban grain, the site has potential to become an agent of change in shaping the overall development in the future of the city. That's why we have chosen the area between the bridges, locally called Savamala.

The method we used to develop a strategy for Savamala was based on our mutual experience of the city in active engagement with its people. Without this experience and the dynamics of the group the process doesn't exist. The compressed time window into which the team has to articulate solutions – though discussion and words, rather than drafting in isolation – enables to unlock problems and their underlying cause.

## Analysis

The masterclass began with an intensive day of site investigation and site analysis. During this day, the participants were urged not to think of solutions, but to focus only on recognizing problems and constraints. Split into smaller groups, they mapped the area in order to establish the urban grain, connectivity, hubs and linkages to the city and the river. At the end of the day each group presented their findings. It was important that everyone presented their own perception and impressions of the site and communicated these to the group in order to compare and prioritize. People who don't know a city well are sometimes naturally able to see the problems in a much clearer light, as they are distanced from the everyday routines how it operates. The local insight on the other hand draws attention to things that may not be readily visible, but may be very ingrained in the local culture.

## Identification

After the intense day of analysis, we drew a line and redirected the team to a completely different mindset. Everyone was free to experiment, go out there and find opportunities. We encouraged the participants to come up with as many small ideas as possible – from architecture or urban-led solutions through to any other form of opportunity tapping into the social, economic or ecological context of the site. We were creating a palette of possibilities. This time the selection process started within the smaller groups – each of them had to discuss and prioritize, which ideas have potential and present only those at the end of the day to the rest of the team. Again, this proved a valuable communication exercise. An overall selection was made and the groups proceeded to develop the ideas.

## Creating Resonance

This palette of possibilities formed what we named the 'urban resonance'. Unlocking the area through small interventions, the potential of each site is highlighted as an opportunity. Under our supervision, the participants embraced the method of placemaking through several different approaches, which naturally emerged in progress. In order to create awareness and build up confidence of the city, they developed identification through branding, which had a physical and a psychological layer. Blurring the edges was about overlapping of some projects in order to eliminate barriers creating a seamless integration with the existing city grain (such as infrastructure nodes, waterfront). Animation introduced new activities and supported existing ones. It was also important to eliminate elements to enable permeability of the site.

## Reconnecting

During the process of developing the individual interventions, the natural overlap started to emerge and shape the overall strategy.

At this stage, the individual ideas were fine tuned and locked into the network of proposals that no longer stood alone, but strengthened one another. They were connected into a 'progress map', identifying the origins of each individual resonance. The resonance points will grow and overlap over time, creating a solid foundation for interlocking Savamala with the urban grain of the city, and eventually bringing the city to the river and vice versa. If this is achieved, we can recognize the new identity and character of the site.

Phasing of this process is critical to enable such transformation, which can happen only over time. It is a logical process of initiating change gradually, enabling the city to effectively test various uses within an area at relatively low cost. A site such as Savamala is developable, but not yet ready for the traditional top down large-scale development. The problem of many Eastern European cities such as Belgrade is that there are no mechanisms in place to embrace and capitalize on the process of unlocking bottom-up. Our approach was about showing the potential of placemaking through interventions that react very precisely to their immediate environment. This method in combination with top down strategic urban planning enables sustainable long-term transformation of the city.

## Future Vision

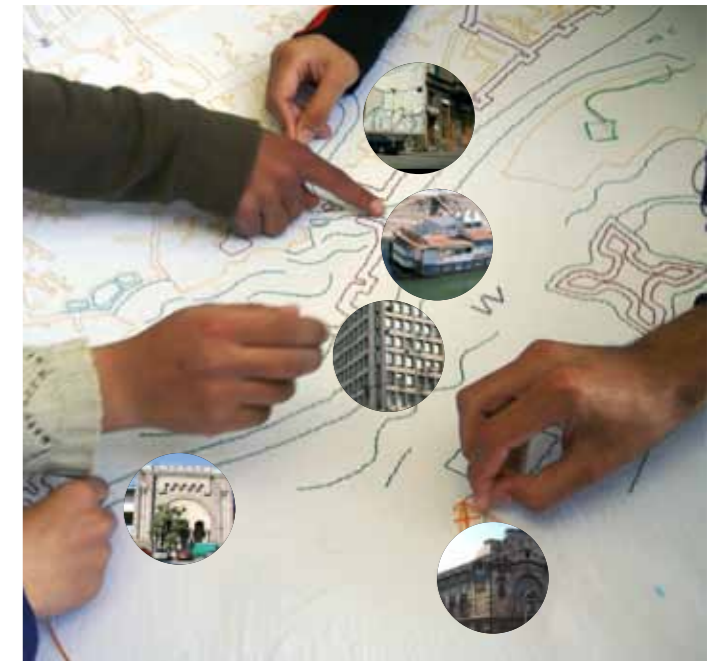
Our focus was to develop the strategy based on small interventions gradually unlocking the site, but it was also very important to articulate a larger vision. This way we could show how the small ideas, which were developed during a few intensive days have the potential to build up momentum and enable transformation on a scale currently unimaginable. For any strategy to work, it needs to be driven by a belief in the future.

## Communicating

The crucial final task was to develop a language of communicating these ideas to the city and public. We didn't present polished solution, but the process and opportunities. The aim was not to say this is the blueprint. It was to inspire people to see opportunity where they would not have looked otherwise. The immediate positive feedback was a proof that the strategy has presented real possibilities that people could recognize, imagine and materialize. It was about setting the first milestone of a roadmap to transformation.

## Conclusion

Even though many of the participants have never been to Belgrade before, their relationship with the city through the intense process of the masterclass grew into much more than that of a regular visitor. They became the ambassadors of change for the city. On a micro scale of the site, the group represents the city and its diversity and the intensity of the process creates a momentum of possibilities. This method works not only from the outside but also from within – and cities should really embrace their inhabitants as primary agents of change. It is through them that the city acquires its attractiveness. If people have opportunity to engage and participate in transforming their own environment, they strengthen their psychological bond to the city. It becomes not only a place of economic necessity for them, but also a place they are proud of and confident in. This is what makes a city attractive to visitors and investors, who want to take part in shaping its future.





# 5

# I love Belgrade

Camila Bustamente, Joanne Pouzenc, Elena Pavlovska

City branding nowadays is standard in any marketing package for any self-respecting city. Campaigns such as I love New York or I AM STERDAM have become famous references in city branding. Important is that the logo somehow contains a specific feature of the city. A quick exercise in logo development led us to use the logo that has been developed for Serbia, with the 'B' in the organic shape of a heart, but clearly distinctive from a 'regular' heart-shape. The heart shaped logo is furthermore used

in different colors and with different icons in it to indicate the activities or qualities that are famous, typical or to be promoted for Belgrade: water, food, partying, cycling etc. An open source policy whereby everybody is free to use the logo can result in unexpected applications and ideally people and companies will be proud to use the logo, and it will spread like a viral. It doesn't have to be expensive to finance a public relations campaign for Belgrade, while the necessity of it is clear for us.



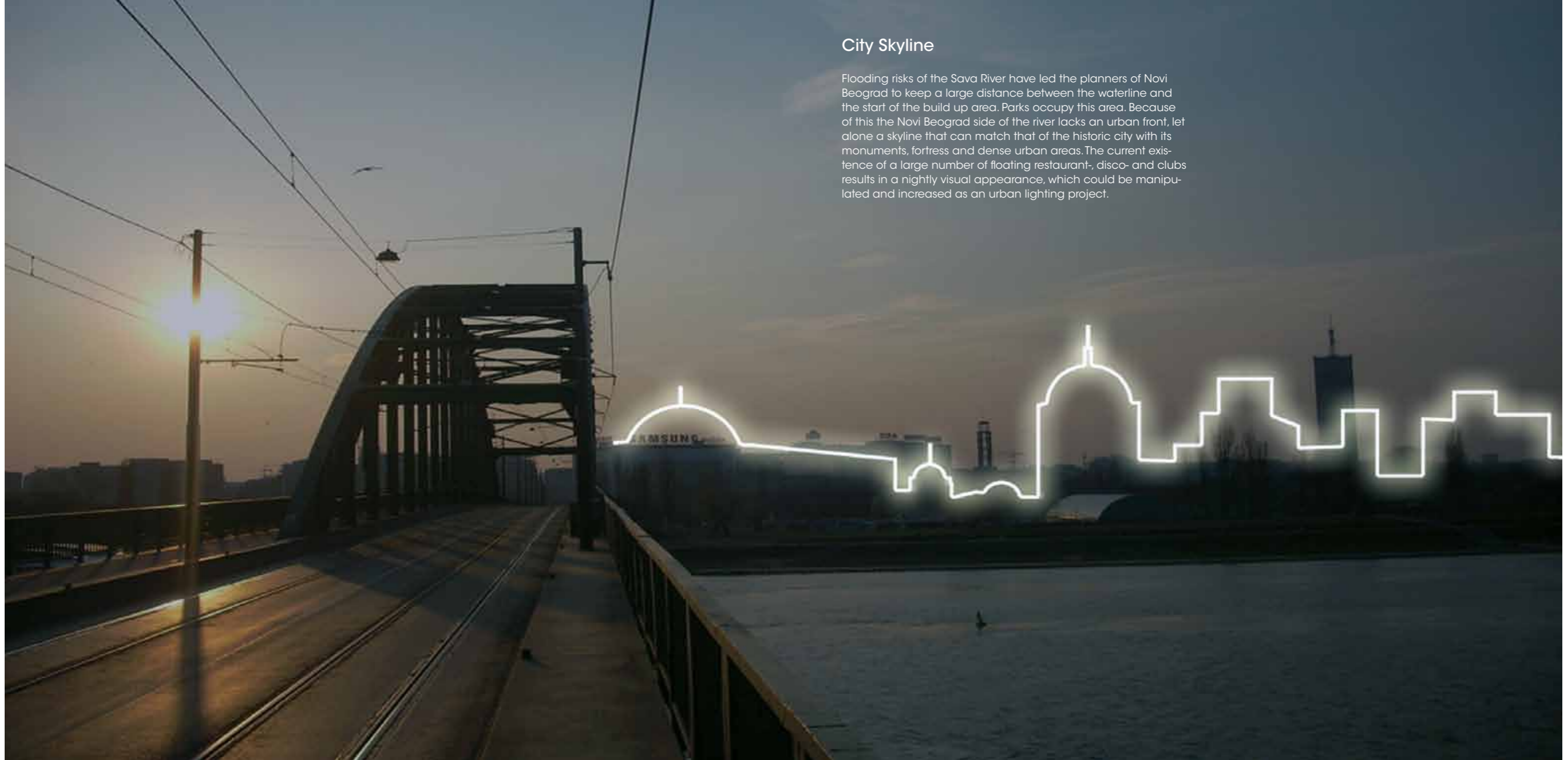
# Hearts of Belgrade

On a rather prime spot in the Master Class study area stands a ten-story apartment building. Its superb location has been recognized for its commercial interest. Billboards are located on the rooftop and cover part of the facade. The billboard can even be seen from Novi Beograd side of the Sava River. The building itself is bland and has few if any attractive features. Its location and visibility however, could be exploited in more interesting ways than just billboards on top of it. In this project the building is used for an experiment to generate resources through revenues by marketing campaigns. The revenues will be used to transform the building itself into an icon with an environmental green facade, while the interactive LED-‘billboard’ on top can be a device that responds to input through social media. Ultimately, the building and its surroundings can become a centerpiece in the branding of the city, resulting in a modern and visually attractive assemblage.



## City Skyline

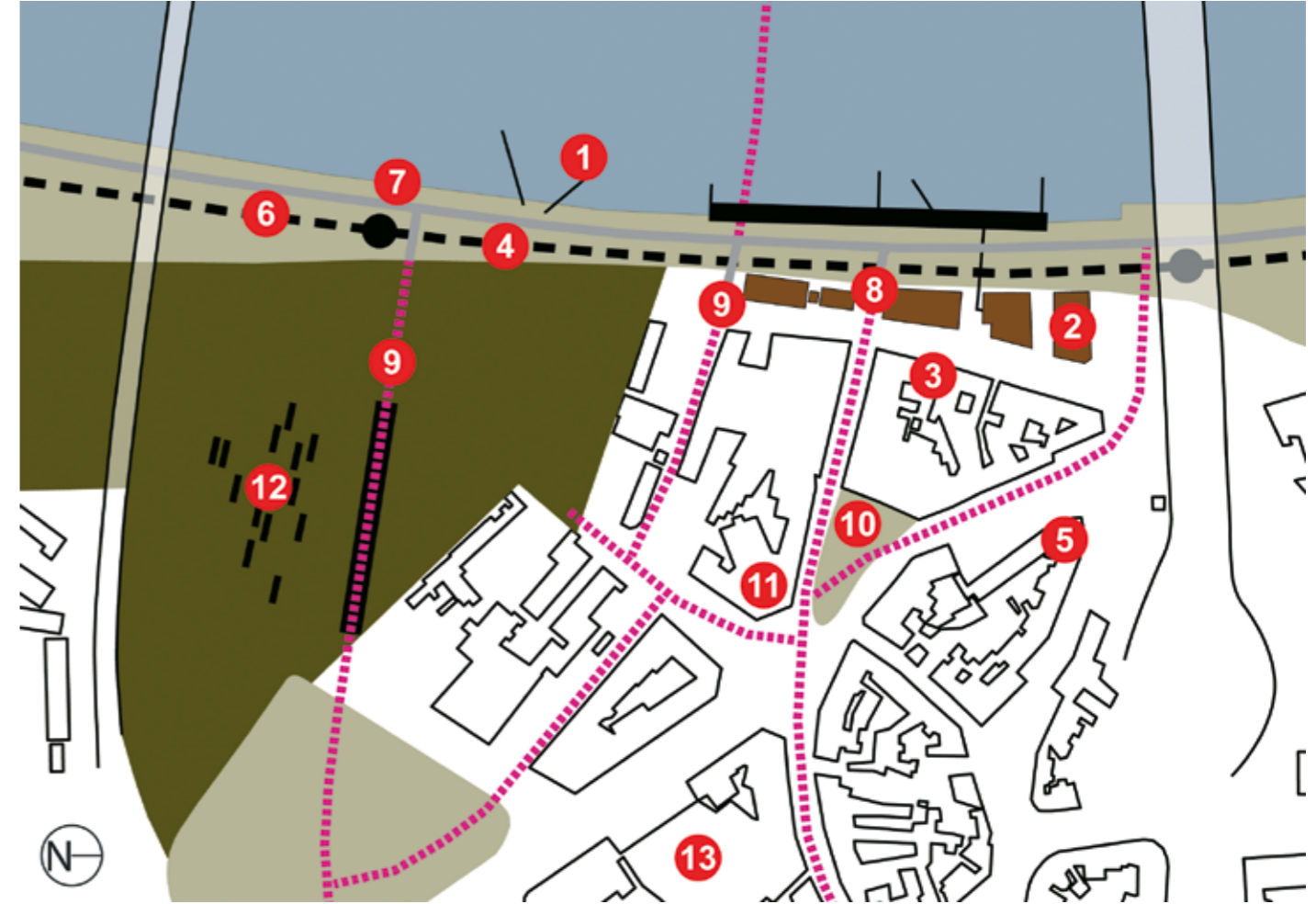
Flooding risks of the Sava River have led the planners of Novi Beograd to keep a large distance between the waterline and the start of the build up area. Parks occupy this area. Because of this the Novi Beograd side of the river lacks an urban front, let alone a skyline that can match that of the historic city with its monuments, fortress and dense urban areas. The current existence of a large number of floating restaurant-, disco- and clubs results in a nightly visual appearance, which could be manipulated and increased as an urban lighting project.



# 6

## Interventions

- 1 down to the water
- 2 pool in a void
- 3 city skyline
- 4 Olympic nostalgia
- 5 hearts of Belgrade
- 6 animated train
- 7 blurring the edges
- 8 bridging the gaps
- 9 easy openings
- 10 cameleon
- 11 upgrading
- 12 making transition
- 13 I love Belgrade



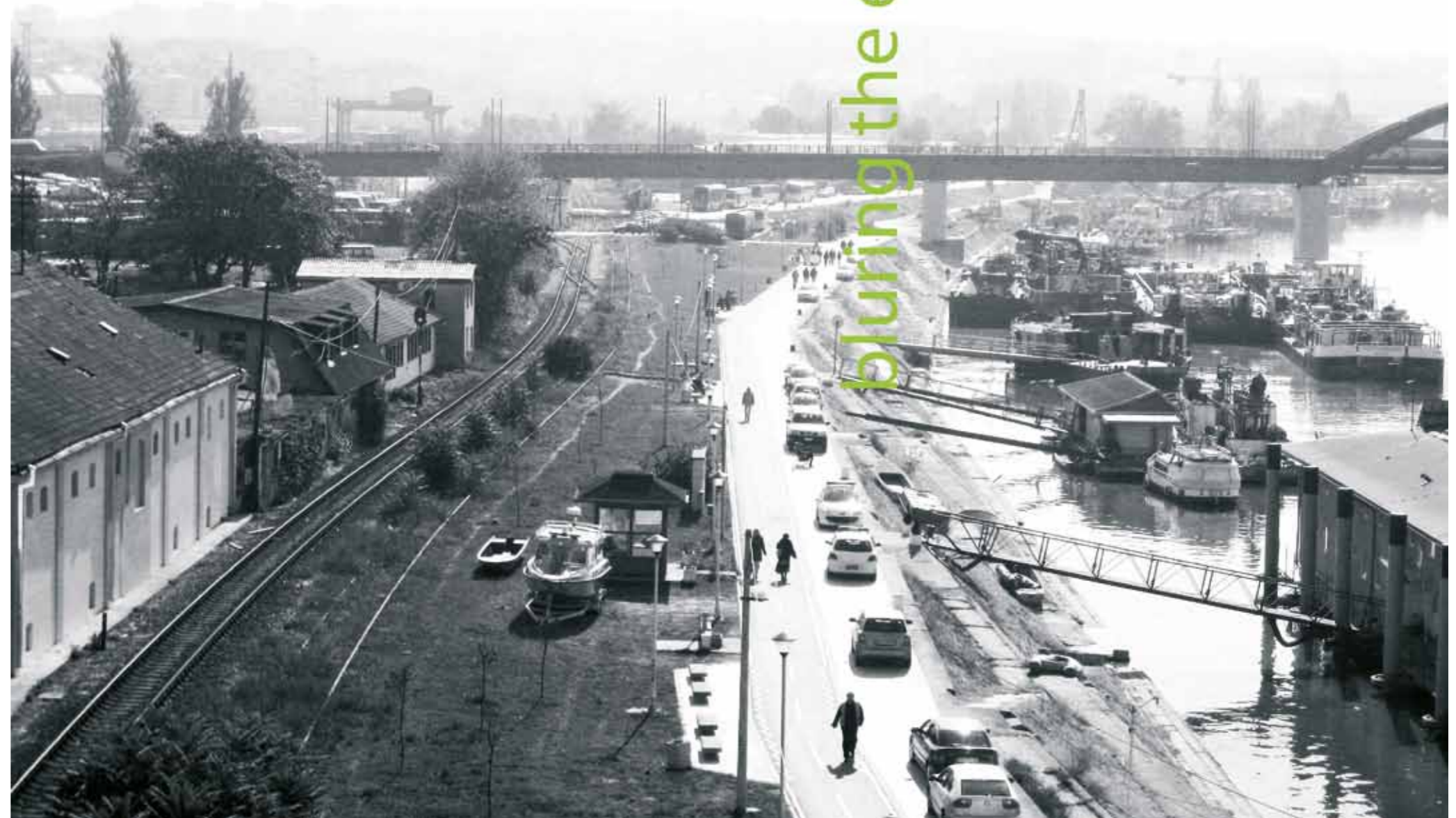
# 6.1

Intervention 1:

## Blurring the Edges

Silvia Penas Marques, Natasha Jankovic, Alena Makagon

In contemporary cities such as Belgrade is, or tries to be, in an accelerated way of life, free time has increasing importance, leisure time and how it is implemented in the city. In the city which lies on two rivers, such as Belgrade, what is a logical way to escape from contemporary urban everydayness, busy, noisy, and crowded city center, but escape to its opposite – descent to the river. Sounds like a plan? Strategy? Tactic? Habit? No. It is just wishful thinking. So near, but yet so far away. In the area of Belgrade 'between the two bridges' (Branko's and the old railroad bridge) trails (pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular) separate river and the city, making them separate entities whose connection was lost. Transport attacks. On the banks are railway tracks, cars, cyclists, and pedestrians; in the river are old ships- but static. That is the reason why there is no possibility to connect in the opposite direction, to connect river with banks, there are just bridges which "skip" both river and its banks, there are just those streams that cut this links, separate, make it impossible. Initial concept of this intervention was the goal of dissolving boundaries between the riverbank (the city) and water (river).



## From City to Waterfront

In the Savamala district the River has never been recognized as a quality on its own and most buildings are oriented with their backsides to the water. Moreover, the infrastructure of the bridge pylons, fences and roads furthermore block the connection that we put in the center of our interventions. This project shows that with a keen eye on strategic locations modest interventions can result in a high impact on the quality and transparency of public spaces, improving the accessibility of the riverside and in general the connectivity of the whole area for pedestrians and cyclists. The technical interventions themselves will generate potential places and spaces for commercial development, such as kiosks, bars, restaurants or clubs.



## Down to the Water

Due to the extreme seasonal differences in the level of the river, the quays are high and solid and at times the river feels far away even when you are directly at the edge of the quay. A solution has been proposed to transform the slope into an attractive public space with some landscaping, benches and plank-bridges, adding a new dimension to the Sava Riverfront. Several times per year this area will be flooded, but smart execution of the design could make it durable under these conditions.



## Blurring the Edges

The basic idea of this intervention was to return what was taken away, to connect what is separated in order to permeate city and river. The method of intervention was "cut" and "fill" method. To "cut" ("still") a bit of one and to add to another ("slice" of the bank to the river, "slice" of the river to the bank). By applying this method on the banks of the river there can be set a montage of pools – in that way we can bring to the bank that from what it is separated – water, in which then people can enjoy, while we can "fill" old ships which are in river by placing vegetation in them, creating urban gardens, piece of floating river bank. Places like these – pools and floating gardens may represent active sites of everyday life, generating high-quality urban life, and urban oasis of Belgrade.



## 6.2

Intervention 2:

# Animated Train

Elena Pavlovska

While the tracks are still there, they are only used once a day. During the rest of the day the rail track could be activated by transforming some redundant wagons in a way they provide shelter for all kinds of social activities. The possibilities are endless. This page shows just a few examples of interesting transformations of trains.



# 6.3

Intervention 3:

## Bridging the Gaps

Alena Makagon

In the Savamala district the River has never been recognized as a quality on its own and most buildings are oriented with their backsides to the water. Moreover, the infrastructure of the bridge pylons, fences and roads furthermore block the connection that we put in the center of our interventions. This project shows that with a keen eye on strategic locations modest interventions can result in a high impact on the quality and transparency of public spaces, improving the accessibility of the riverside and in general the connectivity of the whole area for pedestrians and cyclists. The technical interventions themselves will generate potential places and spaces for commercial development, such as kiosks, bars, restaurants or clubs. (See also: From city to waterfront)



# 6.4

Intervention 4:

## Pool in a Void

Alena Makagon

Not far from the successfully regenerated Beton Hala complex, some characteristic buildings are waiting for a collision of an idea, an entrepreneurial initiator and commitment from local authorities. The Sava riverfront area is starting to become a meeting place for cool, hipster kids and other urban folks. Clubs and restaurants are doing well in this area that developed under the eyes of the local authorities, but without any support. Now the place has become a hotspot for international media attention, but the international competition resulted in projects that were too complex and too expensive to implement. Nevertheless, gradual, bottom-up transformation of the riverfront is fine. The structure depicted on this page is a sleeping beauty; very run down, but still with lots of potential. It could be anything, another club, bar or restaurant, maybe creative offices or even a swimming pool cum wellness complex.





# 6.5

Intervention 5:

## Upgrading

Joanne Pouzenc

Belgrade has a striking lack of quality hotels and this negatively affects its reputation as a destination for tourism and conferences. The city doesn't lack buildings with character and charisma which could be redeveloped into design or boutique hotels. Internationally, this is a trend in high-end hotels; people rather go for character than for standardized luxury. In our study area we found this majestic building which, according to our information, now hosts a school. A simple exercise in rebranding and revamping the gloomy façade shows the potential of such structures.



# 6.6

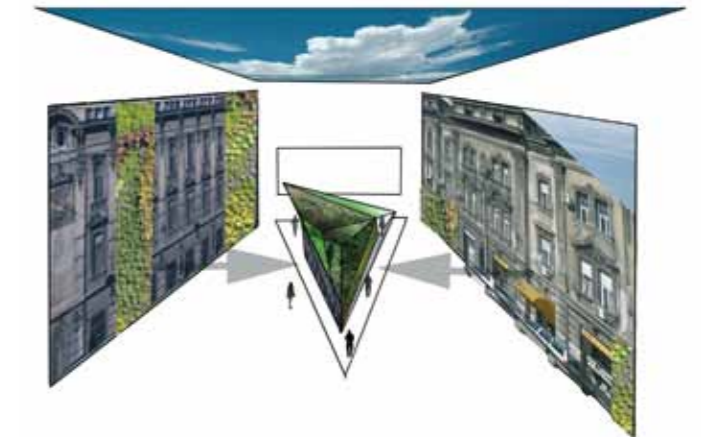
Intervention 6:

## Cameleon

Ana Savic

"Cameleon" is a project that aims to revitalize the space where the streets Karađorđeva and Travnička meet. It passes under the streets' meeting point and helps the whole space show on the surface the potential it already possesses. Flowing, bustling pace, fast traffic and absence of any interest of the passers-by to stop for a while and enjoy the beauty and authenticity of the old buildings characterize this part of Savamala. However, a triangle square happens to reside there as a solitary green space surrounded by the neglected old buildings that create a powerful framework for the square and stress its importance. At places, plants climb up the facades of the buildings, giving them clothing that has a unique positive potential of expanding. The "Cameleon" project will continue this spontaneous intervention, allowing at the same time the green space of the square to be copied into another dimension – only plants can revitalize the grey atmosphere of the old part of the town in a completely natural way. The whole area seems to long to fit into something natural.

The Project aims to create the square with a place for gatherings of young people and for their meetings, and a flower shop will just contribute to that. The plants on the square would create mimicry for the surrounding buildings, allowing the positive and natural influence to be transferred to the old and lifeless buildings, too. Such an intervention will be a point of acupuncture activity in the area between the two bridges and will thus become a place of attraction that will guide the visitors to other cultural and sports facilities of Savamala.



# 6.7

Intervention 7:

## Easy Openings

Wilco van Oosten

Savamala is potentially a great area in Belgrade: an under developed part of the capital, right in between the city centre and the waterfront of river Sava. Unfortunately that condition is almost impossible to experience. Even when just a few meters away from the river, you feel like being in a messy fringe of the city. Messiness and programmatic change of a part of a city require strategy and time, but in this case a first step in transforming Savamala into a quarter on the water can be rather easily done: there are opportunities for some 'easy openings'.

Checking on the site and looking closely at the map, possibilities for a direct relation are quickly found. One or two east-west connections from the centre for example, can be connected to the waterfront by just buying and removing a rather simple car wash or a shed-like building. And by opening up the bus station a bit more, together with tearing down the wall between the bus station and the disused parking lot on the water, suddenly the river forms part of the entrance to the city for all those arriving by bus. And - maybe temporarily - a field for all kinds of use becomes visible and available to the city.

Easy openings that make Savamala what it potentially is: an attractively located quarter of Belgrade. Connecting water and centre, the quarter can turn into an inviting area for small and temporal 'placemaking' activities at first. And with time, that change will mark the start of the transformation of Savamala into a vibrant part of Belgrade.





# 6.8

## Intervention 8:

# Marking Transition

Saxon-Lear Duckworth, Paul Cleuren

Investigating the Savamala district it is shocking how much it is detached from the city center, although it is the center. It is a hidden world with its own agenda. Future developments will push the current program elsewhere leaving a scar in the urban fabric. Beautiful Belgrade, rich with culture and heritage but currently stuck in a development 'gridlock'. With no available funds Belgrade has no means to claim its position amongst the great European cities in a traditional, large scale way. Only a well-conceived branding concept and a bottom-up approach based on the creativity of the local private and collective initiatives can drive a first improvement of Savamala. The Beton hala proofs this can work. Only by making the site loved by the inhabitants of Belgrade, Savamala will become through its unique qualities, an irreplaceable part of the city with intrinsic value. An area that could compliment the city center into a culturally brand-able attraction. To achieve this we propose a process-driven rather than result-driven approach.

The location is now home to hundreds of buses, boats, train carriages and tracks and a variety of scattered functional buildings. Since an organic approach is preferable because of slow investments these objects will not all be obsolete at once. There will be no state of 'tabula rasa'. The character of the area now could be suitable for a careful first development, as we see in many other cities in Europe, it can even be a branding tool that leads to a process of gentrification. In that case the area would need these objects as relics for 'marking transition'. Besides being a reminiscence of the activities at the site the buildings and perhaps the vehicles can be utilized for small commercial set ups. Using these empty shells for small cultural program and catering industry could thrive in the low density small grain objects. Nonresidential area means it can be a place to keep the reputation of Belgrade as night-live city of Europe despite recent curfew restrictions. By animation of a selection of the existing structures the area can drive its own transition through time,

adding value to the containers that accommodate an evolving program in an upward spiral. Unique is its approach compelling. Besides being a cultural hotspot, and a place for amusement, it has the potential to give a unique urban space to the city connecting it to the river front. It would have a daily function as park focused on sports and a size and atmosphere that could easily host national and international festivals. It is all about utilizing potential, helping to allow a bottom-up process to develop a reputable and desirable Savamala.



# 7 Bringing the city to the river

Marnix Scholman, Taddeus van der Weegen, Arie Gruijters

Belgrade arose at the confluence of the rivers Sava and Danube. The rivers have always been of great importance to the city. Not just for the trade possibilities but they were also an important barriers in times of war. The castle of the old town was built at this strategic location. This is the place where the old town connects to the river and overlooks the marshes, delta and Novi Belgrade. Despite this great importance, the city tends to 'ignore' the rivers in the last couple of decades, by putting its "back" towards the rivers. This is expressed by the fact that the city hardly has a real urban waterfront and instead a huge park zone with an average width of 800 meters separates Novi Belgrade from the river. This zone is also sparsely used. It results in an even spatial and functional border between Novi Belgrade and the historical city on one side and the rivers on the other. The potential position of the city on the river is hereby not fully utilized.

Belgrade is almost annually affected by high water levels in the rivers Sava and Danube and the city sometimes suffers from severe flooding. This is due to heavy rain and melting snow. Because of the global climate change, it is expected to be even worse in the future. Floods create huge urban problems for the city. Especially the eastern shore is severely hit now and then and this also affects the low interest people, developers or planners take in this part of the city. This is very unfortunate because of the potential of the area (to give back to Belgrade the importance of the river).

The concept of this proposal is to not extend the city towards the river but instead to provide the river with more space and to bring it into the urban fabric. A huge area of approximately 80 hectares along the river Sava on the eastern shore is currently in use by the railways. This area will lose its current function because the main train station of the city is being built south of the center.

We propose that this area can be flooded in times of high water levels. First this creates space for the river to flood. Specific parts of the area will be built higher and will not be under water, creating islands in de Sava. These are potential new urban greenery zones (comparable to the respected natural environment of the War Island in the Danube) or can be used as residential areas. By letting the water into the city, a new urban waterfront can be created along the Savska Trg street. The buildings on the eastern side of the street can become the new waterfront for Belgrade, another huge potential.

There is also a significant psychological aspect to this proposal. By bringing the river into the city, it gives people the chance to start (re-) exploring the meaning of the river for the city. Not just historically but also the potential of a city along a river that connects places on the international scale. Serbia is investing in its international relations and has just been accepted as a EU candidate. This river can be a symbol of this international relation since it connects a couple of important European cities and countries.

The existing train line along the Sava shore can be used as touristic light rail to experience the importance of the river. Also the cycling path and recreation zone can become part of this experience. Several pedestrian routes are introduced, connecting the old town with the new waterfront and Sava shores. The existing station building can remain intact and redeveloped. It will be facing a large new water-park, influenced by the dynamics of the river. People can get more aware of the importance of water and specifically the Sava, and this new park can have great value for the city. Also new and urgently needed housing could be provided on the new islands in the new Sava delta. By providing space to the water, the problems of flooding will be addressed, and a new relation between Belgrade and Sava is created with potentially new meanings for both.



# Afterword

Mira Milanovic (Senior Urban Designer, DRO Amsterdam)

## Exchange of Experiences

The Program of the Stadslab Master Class in Belgrade workshops was organized as an exchange of experiences for both the local, Belgrade participants and other young professionals, from the Netherlands and other European countries. Comparisons between the two visited cities – Amsterdam and Belgrade, were part of the discussion from the first day. The questions raised in these discussions go further than the local issues. The two cities have entirely different topographical and historical contexts, and still, parallels in their current development can be found, compared and explored.

## Amsterdam and Belgrade

### Topography and History

In their origin and context the two cities are as different as two cities can be: Belgrade starting and living for centuries as a fortress on the natural high ground at the edge of a conquering Empire, first Roman and later Ottoman and Habsburg; Amsterdam as a trading centre in safe waters close to the Northern Sea routes connecting it with other cities of the region and distant countries where an own empire was built. It is not a coincidence that two cities started showing similarities in the time that European historical and cultural space become smaller and more connected, in the second half of the 19th century. The railway tracks and the station, the harbours and large storage and shipbuilding complexes transformed the structure of Belgrade and Amsterdam in the same way they did in the most of the European waterfront cities at that time.

## Waterfronts

The water dividing today's Amsterdam is regulated through centuries, connected by an artificial canal to the open sea and enclosed by several locks protecting the low lying housing and working areas. The eastern and northern harbour, built in the time of the expansion and industrialization were relocated at the end of the 20th century. These areas went through transformations to new housing areas with high density, high quality of urban environment, new public spaces along the water and an attractive mix of functions. The rivers Sava and Danube form waterfronts of Belgrade and have fluctuations of water levels up to 6 meters. The historical city was built on the safe higher grounds, until the area of Savamala filled the space between the old fortress and the new railway station. When the new modern part of the city was built on the north side of Sava, the river lost its natural space for expansion in the times of higher water and started flooding the lower part of the southern side, including the station area and Savamala. The plans for structural change and large developments of the waterfronts were made in Belgrade in the late 80's, at the same time as in many other European cities. Only, while Amsterdam, Barcelona, Rotterdam, London, Copenhagen, Helsinki and other cities were investing their economic growth into the new housing and cultural developments, Belgrade became part of the collapsing state, torn apart by several civil wars. Belgrade waterfronts are therefore still a potential development ground. Large-scale plans, including relocation of infrastructure, are being made by the city planning institutions but will have to be implemented in a new financial and political reality of economic crisis in Europe.

## Creative sector

Economic slowdown affects all European cities today. Re-use of deserted industrial buildings for cultural events and artists' spaces is the new way the cities are using their grounds and creative energy. In Amsterdam it was already present on the KNSM Island in the 90's, with informal communities of artists, later to be replaced by "official" housing development. The newest cultural centre in the old shipbuilding docks of the NDSM area unites the creativity with organisational capability. The result is an area that attracts not only the alternative culture, but to an increasing extent also mainstream media icons such as MTV. In Belgrade, the artists' community discovered the deserted area of the fair ground on the northern bank of the river Sava in the early 80's and remained there to the present day in an introvert area detached from the rest of the city. In the past decade a new generation of artists and cultural entrepreneurs started using the desolated parts of waterfronts for festival grounds, music clubs, cheap working spaces, architectural tours and new cultural centres. The area of Savamala plays an important role in this new wave involving Belgrade's growing creative sector companies.

## Savamala Projects

In the area of Savamala we find today a crossing between different speeds and scales of city development. The future is not determined yet, but the processes leading to it already started, mixed, complex and still vague, but ultimately certainly leading to a new role for this area. The choice for the Savamala area as a location for the Stadslab Masterclass offered therefore a wide range of themes - from issues of water management and infrastructure, to temporary objects and public space interventions.

## Waterbanks

Projects "I love Belgrade", "Hearts of Belgrade" and "City Skyline", (p. 12-19) were inspired by the visibility of the area from the river and two bridges over it, while the project "Blurring the Edges" concentrates on the line between land and water. They all explore the waterfront as a new face of the city, as a possibility to transgress both the emotional and commercial potential of it.

## City on the river

The heart of the old city lays just hundreds of meters away from the Savamala, but without good pedestrians routes the distance remains physically as well as in the mental map of the city. The projects "Easy Openings" (p. 32-35) deals with this missing link, introducing new routes and connecting spaces.

## Conquered space

With imminent outplacement of the railway and bus station new spaces can be used for new contents, starting with small, conceptual actions. Projects "Animated Train" (p. 27) and "Marking Transition" (p. 36-37) play with the idea of the memory of the place by reusing old wagons and bus vehicles for cultural activities.

## Local interventions

Building by building, square-by-square, ship-by-ship, the area can be transformed in so many different ways and for different purposes. Projects "Cameleon", "Bridging the Gaps", "Pool in the Void" and "Upgrading" (p. 27-30) show that, each of them using the specific quality of the place and transforming it into a possibility for the future.

## Large-scale scope

Small-scale interventions were the theme of the workshops. Still, the large scope remained present in the visits to involved institutions and various discussions during the Master Class week in Belgrade. Project "Bringing the City to the River" (p. 38-39) shows some of the ideas for Belgrade waterfronts based on clearly recognisable Dutch experience and designing tradition connected to water management.

## The future of the city

Urban planning and urban design demand simultaneous plans and actions both on large and small scale. That is the challenge for the participants of the Stadslab Master Class, but also for urban planners and designers in Belgrade, just like in other European cities. Exchange of experiences provided for a short time by Master Class and nurtured in annual activities of BINA Belgrade could be a forerunner of future exchanges that will become more frequent and intense with Belgrade opening again to the European political and cultural space.



On the photo, apart from the participants and the staff:  
 Zaklina Gligorijevic (director of the UPI)  
 Miodrag Ferencak (author of the actual Belgrade Master Plan)  
 Ivan Raskovic (president of the Association of Belgrade Architects)

# 9

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