

## Case study on Belgrade: Public art Public space

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### 1. Introduction

#### Theme

In search for understanding qualities of urban, this paper/catalogue examines and represents urban density, urban intensity and public/private interface - on the case study on Belgrade. Based on the understanding of the nature of these categories, specific cultural and developmental context of Belgrade and relational view of space, urban density, intensity and public/private interface are captured in multiscale as manageable through public art and interpretable through different cultural viewpoints.

#### Definitions

Urban density is a quantitative category. It's possible to measure, analyze and describe it, even plan and manage it, by usage of relatively simple mathematic/statistic methods and tools. Results that we get on this way are mostly acceptable and relevant. They "speak" about the relation of *matter* (people, buildings, greenery, equipment...) and *space*. Densities can be examined as countable or uncountable. They can be expressed in various forms: numbers, drawings, diagrams....

Urban intensity is something completely different. Urban intensity is vivid, qualitative category. Furthermore, the quality is directly related to the culture, because the quality directly depends on specific value system of the origin culture. Urban intensity is cognitive and depends on our knowledge of place. Urban intensity is personal. It "speaks" about relation between *place* and "me". It can be interpreted as experience. Therefore it is related to issues of preparation, realization and reflection.

Public/private interface is both quantitative and qualitative category. It is at the same time physical and psychological border/connection. It sets the questions of domination, control and appropriation of space. It can be natural or cultural, hard or soft, permeable/non-permeable, open/closed... depending on both cultural and social values and space qualities. It "speaks" about relation between "we", "me" and "other" in urban space.

#### Context and approach

Key issues - urban density, intensity and public/private interface - are interpreted and discussed on the case study of Belgrade and from the perspective of relational space.

Belgrade is the capital of Serbia, small European country. Serbia is the country in multilevel transition: from autocracy to democracy, from socialism to capitalism, from collectivism to individualism, from local isolation to globalisation, from celebrated to hated and then accepted again. Belgrade is set on fluvial border between East and West. It is often referred to as the "gateway to the Balkans and the door to Central Europe", due to its unique position where cultures and civilizations meet, struggle, interact, interfere - relate in space.

Perspective of relational space recognizes space as the product of interrelations, constituted through interactions. Space is perceived as the sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity. Space is always in process, never a closed system. (Massey D. 2005)

Taking this into account leads us to the main propositions that set the frame of the catalogue:

- Urban density, intensity and public/private interface are space related, and therefore interpreted in **multiscale**.
- Urban density, intensity and public/private interface are manageable and interrelated, and therefore interpreted as issues of **possibility and change**. The tool for expressing manageability of density, intensity and public/private interface, presented in this paper, is PUBLIC ART. In our work, public art becomes a method for examining becoming of space, possibilities of urban seen as art of living, art of public. Three annual projects, that are realized

by Public art Public space program (PaPs), are presented as main case studies, according to their spatial and scale relevance:

- Step to the River: from density to intensity
- Belgrade Boat Carnival: from intensity to density and backward
- Study of development of public spaces in municipality of Stari Grad: spreading wider
- Urban intensity is defined through personal experience, and therefore is interpreted in **plurality** of views. In this paper plurality is examined from the standpoints of “in” and “out”. It is expressed through the DIALOG of Belgrade citizens and one of the visitors to Belgrade. They “speak” and “communicate” about urban intensities of Belgrade in multiscale - through their personal expressions of the city. They express their reflections on urban intensity through their drawings. Citizens of Belgrade are: Momo Kapor (writer and painter), Aleksandar Deroko (architect, writer and pilot), Jovan Nanic (economist, living in Kosancicev Venac area from 1947.) Herceg Slobodan (student of Architecture). Visitor to Belgrade is Sibel Bash, student of architecture from Turkey, in Belgrade for the first time. Dialog through drawings becomes a method for identifying and examining urban intensities.

## 2. Belgrade density/intensity/public-private interface in multiscale

### 2.1 XL- Urban whole: Belgrade-Green Heart and fluvial Boulevards

Belgrade is the capital and the largest city in Serbia. It lies at the confluence of two international, navigable rivers - the Sava and the Danube, where the Pannonia Plain meets the Balkan Peninsula. These two rivers define the city structure - separating its territory into 3 units while, at the same time, integrating it around the centrally located Big War Island, Belgrade's natural oasis.

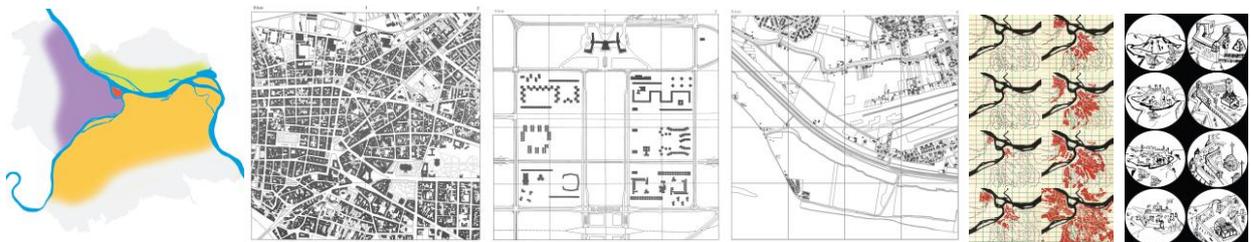
At the city - wide level density, intensity and public/private interface of Belgrade are set more through symbolical than to real, lived or abstract space. Natural structures and elements such as rivers, islands and relief defined city structure. Geographical position and fluvial border introduced cultural divisions and separate histories of 3 main parts of the city.

Facts: 116m above sea level, coordinates 44°49'14"N 20°27'44"E, area: city- 359.96 km<sup>2</sup> , metro- 3,222.68 km<sup>2</sup> , population: city- 1,154,589 metro- 1,639,121; density: city- 3,207.5/km<sup>2</sup> metro- 508.6/km<sup>2</sup>

- Urban space > space as whole, determined by nature and structured by culture
- Public/private interface > rivers as entirely free, public space



- Density > density of history in place; determined by nature and structured by culture: 3 Belgrade's: old (historical BG), new (after WW2) and third (green) - various build up densities.

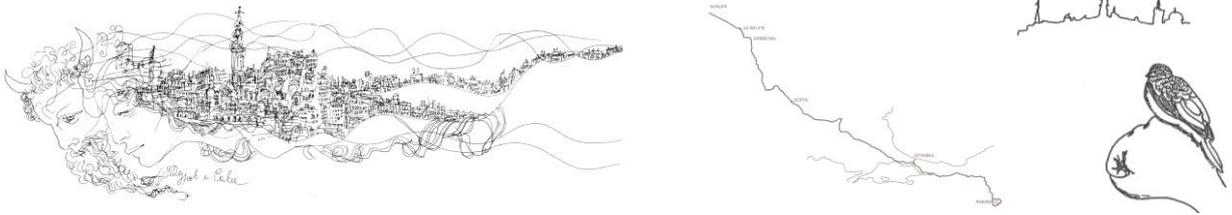


density/intensity: Public art strategy at this level is to intensify, densify and diversify the meaning and perception of the main structural elements of the city: rivers becoming blue boulevards, paths for celebrations...

- Intensity > intensity is determined by persistence through history and meaning : green heart and veduta



citizen/visitor: citizen feels symbolical Belgrade of green heart and veduta, visitor recognise geographical Belgrade and Belgrade presented in media.



## 2.2 L- Urban area: City municipality Stari Grad- networks of representative and marginal spaces

Municipality Stari Grad is central and most significant city municipality that gathers all main natural and cultural city values and development contradictions. It lies on the both rivers, faces Big War Island, is shaped by various cultural influences and holds places with the greatest symbolical meanings. Stari Grad is, at the same time, place of great contrasts and hidden potentials. As the oldest and one of the most important areas of the City of Belgrade, it is rich in public spaces of different types (parks, squares, crossroads, streets, pedestrian zones, riverbanks...). Unfortunately, they are usually not properly used and managed. Also, there are many public spaces which have expressive ambient and environmental value.

Central part of the municipality is a main pedestrian, commercial, cultural and tourist area. Located at the top of the hill, the main axis of city life, commercial and various other urban activities is pedestrian street Knez Mihailova and Terazije square. Unfortunately, moving away from Knez Mihajlova-Terazije axis activity level declines. Some of the important areas of the city (Kosancicev venac, Sava mala) have very low level of activities and rest forgotten and passive. They became spatial and mental barrier instead of connection between two main city magnets: pedestrian zone and the river Sava. Cities connection to the river is also cut off by industrial and port structures.

The rivers became a dream, a far distant, more a symbol than reality. From the top of Kalemegdan hill, rivers can be seen, but never touched. And yet, between representative spaces of commercial city core and the Sava river and the Danube river as natural magnets, lies a sea of marginal urban spaces of hidden beauty: residential, post-industrial, vacant that can be connected, thus generating a paths from city to its rivers, and back again.

Facts: area: 5 km<sup>2</sup>, population: 48061

- Urban space > space as flow, hubs and connectors
- Public/private interface > network of public spaces (filled with obvious private/individual influences)



- Density > densities of people, activities, built forms, green spaces; various types of density in relation to position and history of development, various levels of density according to period of the day/year.



Density/intensity: Public art strategy at this level starts with premise that not only representative public art spaces are important for city life, but marginal as well. It also stresses the importance of connections and relations of public spaces among themselves and with people who use them.

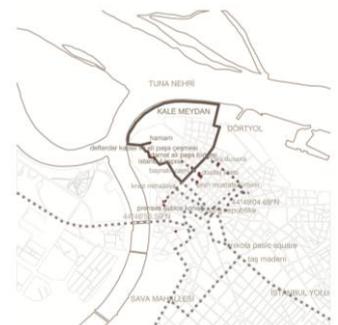
The "Study of development of public spaces in municipality of Stari Grad" identified potentials of marginal public spaces and ways to share, perform networking and partially merge those potentials/identities, not only aiming to connect them, but to join them, to correlate them, to coordinate them, to cooperate them... Moreover - to produce such a new "mutual" identities, while using "sharing/merging" of identities among them, to make the place of excellence from different kind of significant or insignificant space. As a final result of this "sharing/merging" of identities, the appearance of densities and intensities overflow is expected among those re-significant public places. This process of mutation of public urban spaces we called "placemaking". At the site level - increase of urban intensity through public art interventions enable increase in density of active, integrated public art spaces. At the public space network level - increase in density of public spaces can thus result in increase of intensity of urban experience.



- Intensity > urban symbols, landmarks, special places, differential, transitional spaces.



citizen/visitor: citizen feels intensity of urban paths as everyday experience and enjoys intensity of change of known places; visitor "reads" and experience network by encounter, gaining a meaning through repetition.



### 2.3 M - Urban ambience: between the city center and the river - Kosancicev Venac

Kosančićev Venac, the oldest urban part of Belgrade, is located between Knez Mihailova street, Belgrade Fortress, Branko's Bridge and the river Sava. The quarter served historically, as a counterbalance to the Turkish downtown located on the Danube slope. Turkish and Austrian remnants and influences are still visible today, primarily in the shapes of streets, the bastion's pathways and their subsequent transformation into curved streets. Emilijan Josimović made the first city plan for this part of Belgrade at the end of the 19th century. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, Kosančićev Venac, with the Sava pier and the đumrukana-customs house, was the most important part of Belgrade.

Today, it is a slow, neglected, mostly residential urban neighbourhood, disintegrated from both city centre and the river Sava. Many significant public buildings and institutions (University of art, Saborna church ...) are located there. It is an area designated for cultural preservation and a place with most beautiful views on the river Sava and New Belgrade. It is an urban area that, like Belgrade itself has a physically "empty" but symbolically "full" heart - site of the former National Library.

Facts: area: 23,02 ha (3,74 aqua, 19,28 terra) ; population: 2659

- Urban space > urban ambience, to be "in" space, to "exist"
- Public/private interface > levels and types of separation and connection: physical, visual, psychological, emotional, social, cultural... Local community participation as the desirable praxis of decision-making.



- Density > relations between built and built, built and open, built and green, green and green; levels of use and activity, density of memories.



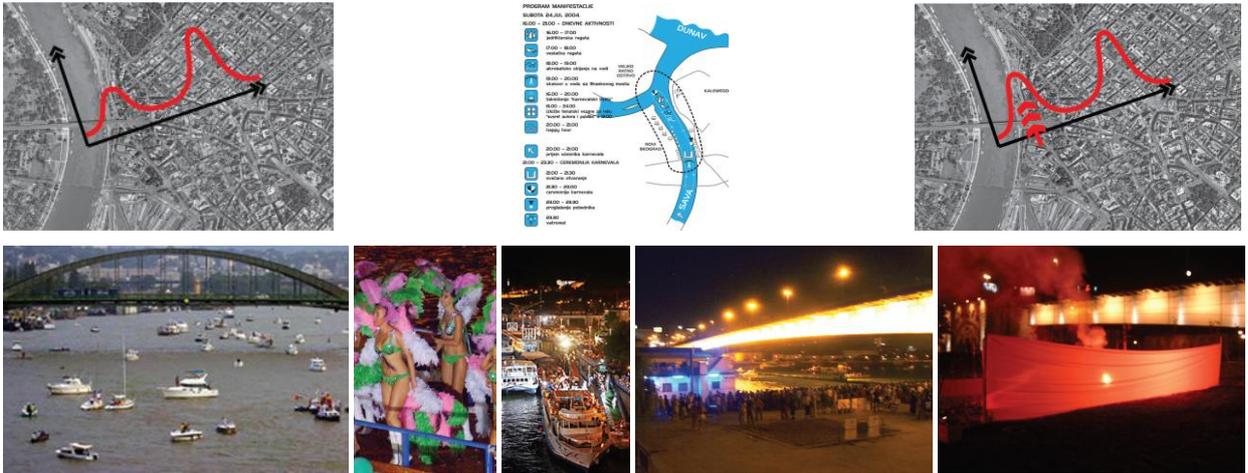
Density/intensity: Public art strategy aimed to integrate Kosancicev venac with the river Sava and city centre can be twofold.

S1- First public art strategy aims at densification of public art in the limited target area and having urban intensification as the action and as result. The strategy is to sprinkle the ordinary and mostly passive pedestrian pathways with the magnetic "art dust", i.e. create a lot of new "short distant" and "visually / sensually reachable" artistic attractions, i.e. optimally increasing the density of public art, that will lure people in taking target shortcuts between the existing public spaces. The main aim is not to speed up the walk, but to navigate the walk and made ordinary places more visited (density) and more enjoyable and intensive (intensity) at last. The aim of the "Step to the river" PaPs project was to bring people from the city centre to the riverbanks. The strategy was applied mainly in Kosancicev venac public spaces.





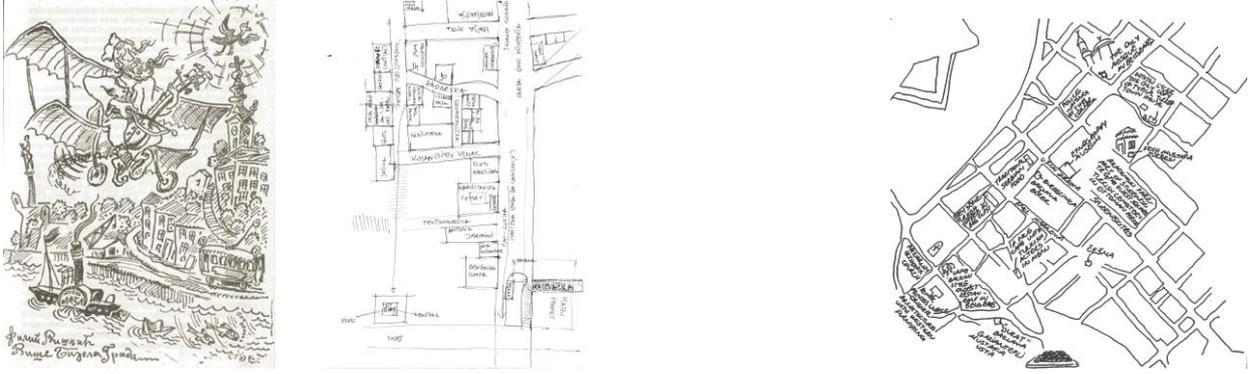
S2- Second public art strategy is to "think big" in strategically most important places. This means to increase the intensity of place, at least temporarily, and thus to gain attention and flow through space. The aim is to make an event of excellence, an event which will celebrate the place (in our case the rivers of the city of Belgrade), an event which would be out of previous experience of the city, an event which could change the meaning of the space (temporary at least), an event which will be unforgettable and memorable for all citizens for a long time, an event which could change and improve relation between people and the place. This strategy was applied in "Belgrade Boat Carnival". The intensity of event generated various densities in and generated denser flow and activity around the area - including Kosancicev venac - thus intensifying urban experience and integration.]



- Intensity > me and relations in space, intensity of meanings and feelings towards ambience and sequences



citizen/visitor: citizen relates to past/present/future qualities of space and thus gains intensity of ambience, visitor relates to present and gains direct intensity of qualities of space that is in relation to spaces that he/she knows.



## 2.4 S - Urban relations

Urban elements of the Kosancicev venac area and its surroundings are various and therefore generate numerous relations: greenery, buildings (existing and missing), public stairs, landmarks, barriers and openings... They constitute and enable communication with place.

- Urban space > space of relations (between elements)
- Public/private interface > expressions of division and connection, domination, occupation, appropriation... behaviour of people... Neighbourhood participation as the desirable praxis of decision-making.



- Density > relations that constitute urban elements: between built, open, green, between colours, textures, signs



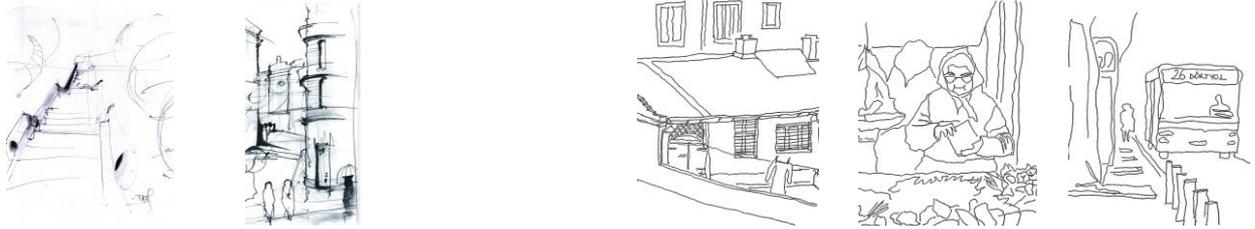
Density/intensity: Public art actions change the elements of urban scene by interventions on built (walls, pavement, structures...) and green and/or by introducing new activities, by changing the role and perception of element in urban scene.



- Intensity > is experienced through relations between constitutional parts of urban elements; by highlighting the element in the urban scene, by introducing a new meaning and use of the urban element in relation to its everyday perception



citizen/visitor: citizen relates to position of the element in its everyday scenery and life and reacts to the change. Visitor observes and experiences intensity of elements as they are. On the level of beauty and joyful event - they reduce the difference of experiencing urban intensity.



## 2.5 X - Urban Sparks

Urban details are urban sparks. They exist around us, waiting to be found. A glance, a smell, a touch, a sound... lights flickers in our mind. They set a stage for the dialog with our past, present and future feelings, thoughts and actions. Urban sparks express identity, leave a mark, stay in memory and open space for the future sparks.

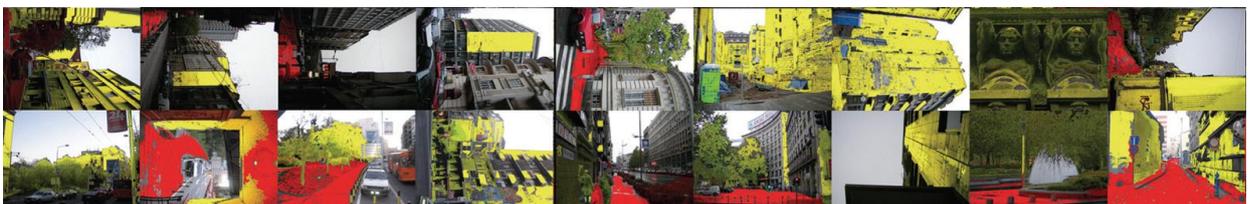
- Urban space > intimate space/space of intimacy, me/world, past/present/future interface
- Public/private interface > appropriation of space



- Density > density of details in space, variety of details, complexity of observed sequence



Density/intensity: Public art actions at this level aims to intensify and make obvious relations, contrasts, similarities between various details - to reveal history, nature, meanings - to connect the seemingly unconnected.



- Intensity > contrast, variability, inverted meaning



citizen/visitor: space relevance disappears, space of intimacy pervades and creates a meaning, citizen and visitor project their inner space outwards.



### 3. Conclusion and Epilogue

In this paper/catalogue urban density, urban intensity and public/private interface were identified, defined and represented in multiscale and investigated in the framework of relational space.

Urban density, urban intensity and public/private interface can be captured, interpreted, visualised in different ways. Although, they “speak different languages” on different scales, it is possible to correlate them. They are manageable and interrelated, and can be interpreted as issues of possibility and change.

Public art can be used as a method/tool for examining manageability of density, intensity and public/private interface. Through public art it is possible to enable becoming of space, of urbanity seen as art of living. Strategies and actions in the field of public art are different and depend on spatial scale. Two strategies are of the great importance. First public art strategy aims at densification of public art in the limited target area. The idea is to sprinkle ordinary and passive public spaces with the magnetic “art dust”, thus creating “short distant” and “visually/sensually reachable” attractions that will lure people in taking target shortcuts between the existing public spaces. Increase in density of active and attractive public spaces can result in increase of intensity of urban experience. The second public art strategy is to “think big” in strategically most important places. This means to increase the intensity of place, at least temporarily, and to gain attention and flow through space. The idea is to make an event of excellence which will celebrate the place, change its meaning and perception and be memorable for all citizens for a long time. In this way the relation between people and the place can be changed and improved and density of use and meanings increased.

Defined through personal experience, urban intensity can be interpreted in plurality of views. In this paper plurality of views was expressed through the dialog of Belgrade citizens and one of the visitors to Belgrade. Both citizens and visitors expressed their reflections on urban intensity through their drawings. Through their “dialog” differences and similarities can be identified. Some common issues can be identified on different spatial scales. In the case of Belgrade these were: veduta and church as a landmark on highest (XL) spatial level, urban details in Kosancicev venac on lowest (S and XS) spatial level.

#### Epilogue

All tools for “reading” and managing density/intensity, public/private interface through public art and cultural dialog, established on 3 cases (1<sup>st</sup> - Step to the River: from density to intensity; 2<sup>nd</sup> - Belgrade Boat Carnival: from intensity to density and backward; 3<sup>rd</sup> - Study of development of public spaces in municipality of Stari Grad: spreading wider) in city municipality of Stari grad are supposed to be implemented also on 4<sup>th</sup> case study: Study of development of urban right bank of river Sava: developing intensity and density in city municipality of Savski Venac.

Finally, some of our ideas have been realized, some of them are still being realized in some specific ways, forms and procedures. Step by step, it is visible that our projects have had and still have a deep impact in urban life of the community of the core of Belgrade.

### 4. Acknowledgment

This paper/catalogue is based on two precious sources of inspiration and documentation: city of Belgrade and people who live and love it, visitors who mirror it, students and artists who work on making it a better place to be.

\*011 is the dial up number for Belgrade, symbol as well.

*Belgrade, March, 2012*

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