

Urban regeneration on riverfronts in European cities at the second half of XX century: Case of Belgrade riverfront

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Ksenija Krsmanović

Outline of the presentation

- Introducing myself and the research
- Relevance of the subject
- River-city relation
- Historical perspective of riverfront development
- Planning perspective on riverfront interventions
- Diversity of urban practices
- Danube cities' riverfront interventions
- Two faces of Belgrade riverfront regenerations:
The contradictory creation of new urban identity
- Open questions
- Findings



Landscape
Architecture
University of Novi Sad

Urban Planning and
Policy Design
Politecnico di Milano

UrbanHist European
joint doctorate



Universidad de
Valladolid
Blekinge Teckniska
Högskola



ksenija.krsmanovic@uva.es

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About me. PhD project

UrbanHist position UVa2.2: Urbanism and landscape in the evolution of urban heritage policies during XX century

Title :

Urban regeneration on **riverfronts** in European cities at the **second half of XX century**

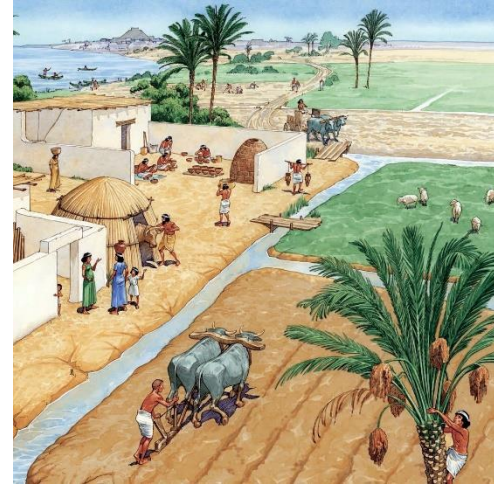
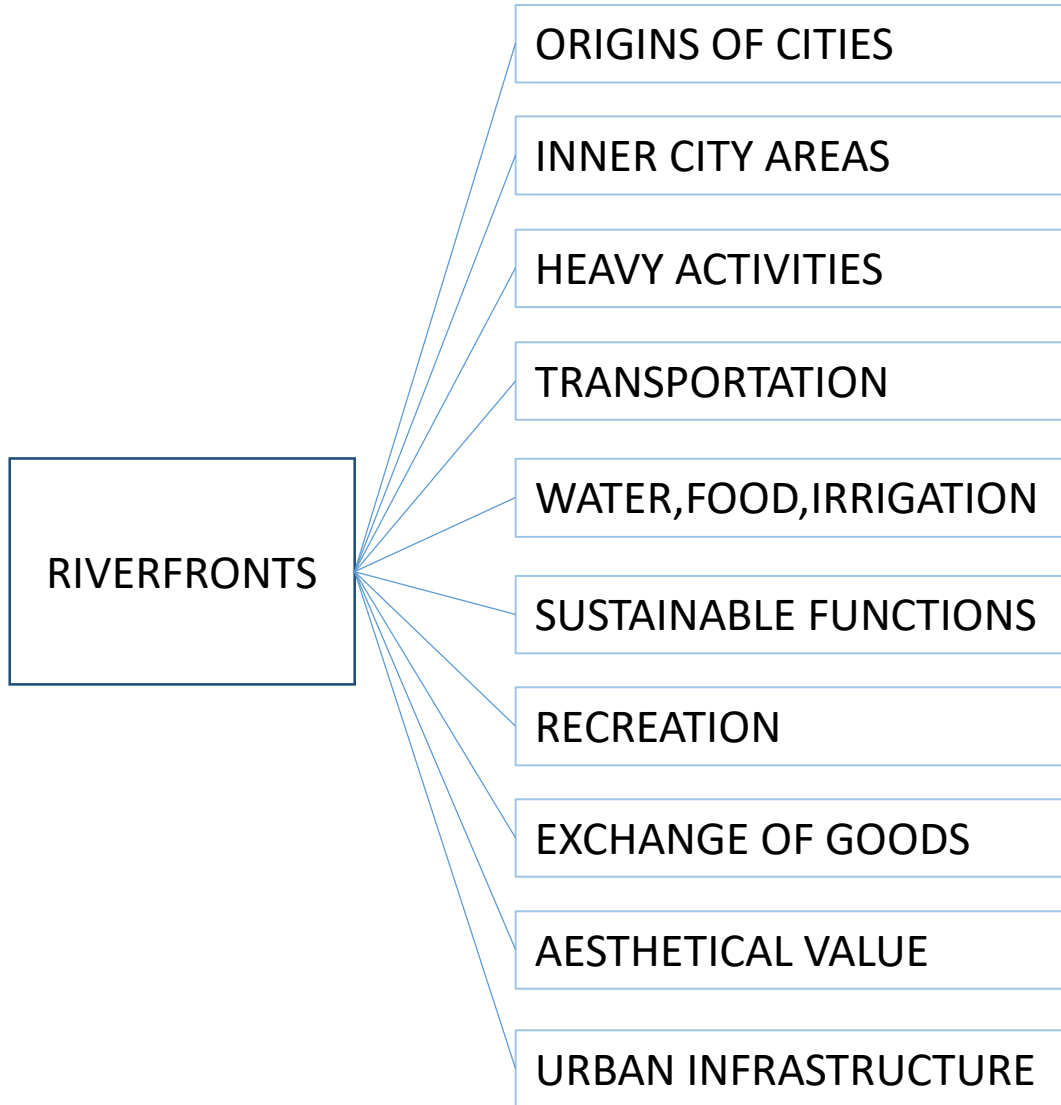
PROCESS/TOOL

SETTING

TIME FRAME

INITIAL IDEAS:

- The emergence of urban regeneration strategies and landscape issue in the evolution of urban sustainability concept
- Specific problem of urban design in XX century at urban waterfront areas: catalyst for economic transformation
- Developing acknowledgments about the interaction between urban regeneration policies and urban landscape in European inner city areas
- Understanding how these transformations in the form of riverfront regenerations affected evolutions of tools, policies and urbanity in different settings



URBAN REGENERATION

DEINDUSTRIALIZATION

ABANDONT AREAS

POST-FORDIST CITIES

1960s, 1970s

ENHANCING ECONOMY

PROMOTING

REDEFYING ROLE

NEW IMAGE

RELATION CITY-WATER

GLOBAL CHARACTER



Historical perspective

- Cities and rivers are closely linked; they coevolved and shaped each other in different ways
- Urban rivers present part of history, identity, collective memory
- In last 150 years urban rivers have gone from decline and abandonment to resilience, recovery and cultural appropriation
- Relation between city and its river offers a perspective for understanding the relation between the city and nature (ENVIRONMENTAL POINT OF VIEW)
- Rivers play essential role in RENATURALIZATION and in urban development in last decades (*Rivers lost, Rivers regained: Rethinking cities-rivers connection*, 2017)
- Robertson (*The Three waves of globalization: A history of Developing Global Consciousness*) connected to expansion and mercantilism 15, 16th century
- In the 19th century docks, ports and deposits, riverfronts lost their larger significance as a public space: **INDUSTRIAL CENTER**
- 20th century: technological development led to relocation of the port and industrial areas out of the city center: **DECLINE AND DECAY** riverfront became the no-go area in the city and the barrier for the citizens to reach the waterside

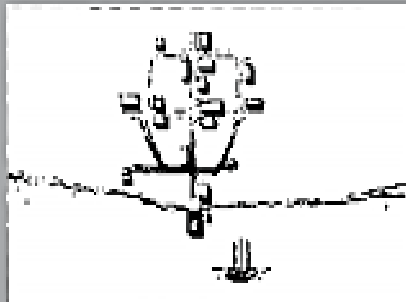
Direct contact with shore

Ports and docks formation

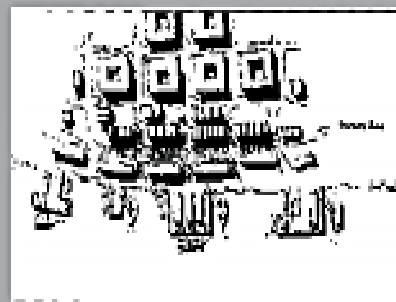
Industrialization

Relocation and abandonment

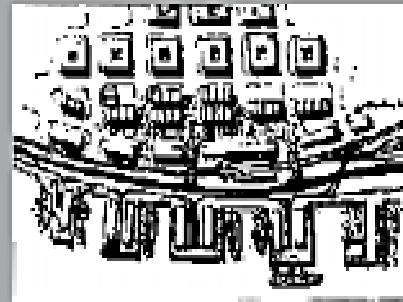
Reconnecting city and its waterfront



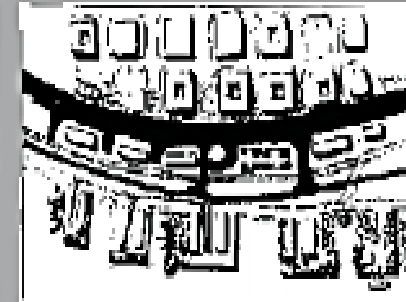
SETTLEMENT



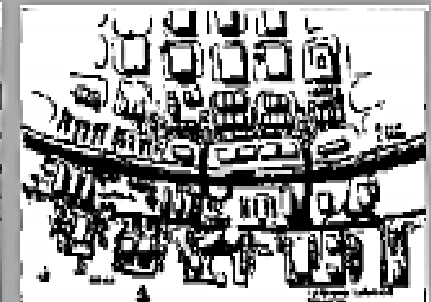
A PORT IS ESTABLISHED



CITY DETACHES



DECLINE



REDISCOVERY

Planning perspective

- In last decades of the 20th century major changes evident and frequent, urban waterfronts underwent functional and morphological transformations
- Urban development practice shifted from social to more economic objectives and from national to international market competition
- City authorities world-wide were creating policies for urban transformations in order to tackle with ongoing social and environmental problems
- Urban growth followed by an increase of population; inner-city decay and economic decline were the main issues: urban regeneration strategies found their major implementation at the inner urban waterfronts
- The chapter of postmodern cities has been opened with international practices aiming to achieve a sustainable city
- Free market liberalism and tendencies for economic growth that spread around the Western world: planning underwent changes towards the formation of a neo-liberal approach
- Brundtland report in 1987, the General Assembly of the United Nations brought questions about long-term environmental strategies and agreed on the common need for a new type of growth that is socially and environmentally sustainable
- Agenda 21 (Earth Summit Rio 1992), Aalborg charter 1994, Leipzig charter 2007, UN: SDG



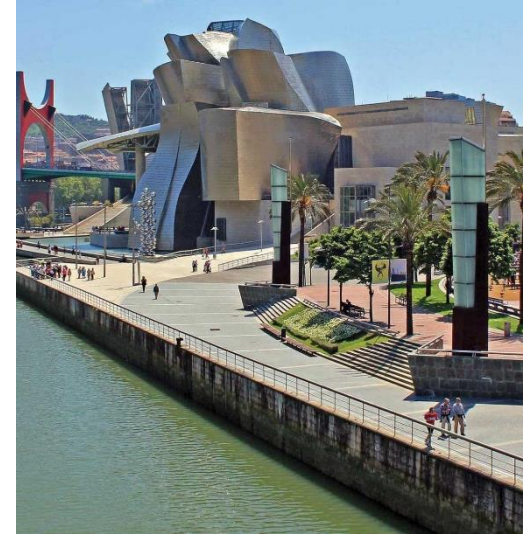
How do cities cope with the challenge of creating an
economically viable, socially just, environmentally sustainable and livable
mixed-use inner city for the 21. century?

Urban practices

- Numerous successful examples of the riverfront regenerations world-wide lead us to the contemporary practices that testify the importance and relevance of the riverfront regeneration in current urban tendencies. Once implemented, it becomes the catalyst of the numerous processes happening in the city
- Nowadays, riverfront regeneration projects are aiming to rediscover new methods in planning, reconnect rivers with the city, recreate urbanity, rethink safety and most prominently, revitalize economy
- Many varieties in their urban role and complex urban development
- Several authors have classified different riverfront projects according to their role in the urban context



- Schubert (2019) types of transformation based on new uses:
- (1) Office-led (London Docklands),
- (2) Housing led (Amsterdam Eastern Docklands,
- (3) Culture led (Bilbao Ria 2000)
- (4) Mixed-use-led (Gotheburg, Norra Alvstranden)
- Breen and Rigby (1996): based on functions (1) 'commercial type', (2) 'cultural, education, environment type', (3) 'historic type', (4) 'entertainment type', (5) 'working type', and (6) 'residential type' waterfronts



Aim is to create typologies
of the cases, understand
variety, complexity.
Detect features

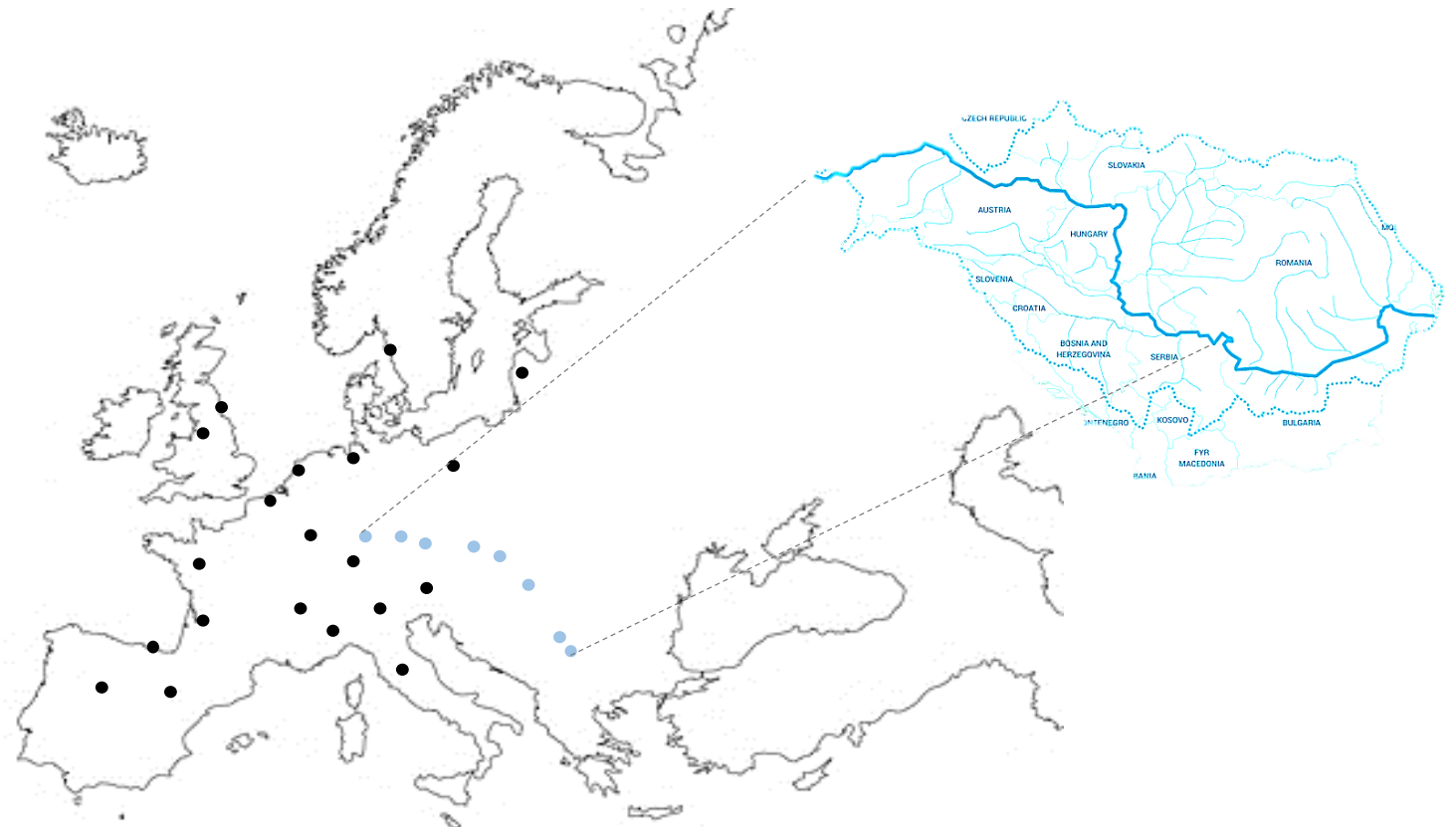


The idea is to understand better what
riverfront regeneration in taken cities
means.
Define features



Cases on the Danube River.
Studying culture, history and
urban complexity of cities that
were once belonging to the
same Empire.
Test features

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Bilbao (Spain) | 21. Belgrade (Serbia) |
| 2. Valladolid | 22. Novi Sad |
| 3. Zaragoza | 23. Bratislava (Slovakia) |
| 4. Bordeaux (France) | 24. Linz (Austria) |
| 5. Lyon | 25. Viena (Austria) |
| 6. Nantes | 26. Passau (Germany) |
| 7. Hamburg (Germany) | 27. Ulm (Germany) |
| 8. Heildelberg | 28. Budapest (Hungary) |
| 9. Mainz | |
| 10. Groningen (Netherlands) | |
| 11. Antwerpen (Belgium) | |
| 12. Torino | |
| 13. Florence/ Pisa (Italy) | |
| 14. Verona/ Trento | |
| 15. Gothenburg (Sweden) | |
| 16. Wroclaw (Poland) | |
| 17. Ljubljana (Slovenia) | |
| 18. Riga (Latvia) | |
| 19. Leeds (GB) | |
| 20. Newcastle or Glasgow | |



Danube cities

Bratislava

Top down, multiparty approach with goal to develop city center on both sides of Danube

Riverfront development is driven by private sector, hard to achieve balance with authorities, people not always in favor of change

Projects: River Park (residential and commercial function) building volumes out of context

Podhradie currently under development of private investors

Eurovea: new part of the city on former brownfield, offices, leisure area, residential buildings, new parks and promenade

Petrzalka: opposite of center, huge modernist housing area

New Lido: leisure and recreation

Jarovecke rameno: sport and tourism

Rameno: flood protection and urbanization of former agricultural land

Lessons learned: create new approach based on equal rights of all parties and create environmental and urban quality as a main objective

Budapest

Both large scale investments failed, riverfront transformations are slow. It takes place in smaller territories (former industrial zones) scattered around Danube; Western ideas implemented in post-socialist city

In process of development: Marina Bay (no social context considered), Danube Terrace, Prestige Towers, North Pest; Kopaszi Dam transformed from unregulated public to controlled private consumption site

Millennium City Center in inner city area (started with cultural institutions)

Lagymanyos Campus and Infopark (education, innovation and technology)

DunaCity not realized

Lessons learned: achieve sustainability by contextualized solutions, rationalizing financial resources, promoting community interest, opening towards water (Tolnai, 2018)



Belgrade riverfront
case study

Belgrade



EDGE: it is at the edge of Europe, and historically was at the edge/ border between two empires

FRONTIER ZONE: Its riverfront was at the same its face (postcard image and identity) and forgotten backyard

TRANSITION: Belgrade is transiting between its post-socialist legacy (capital of ex SFR Yugoslavia) and European integration is a new old capital of Serbia

REGENERATION OF THE RIVERFRONT: through two different approaches: bottom-up (Savamala creative district) and top-down (Belgrade Waterfront real estate development project)

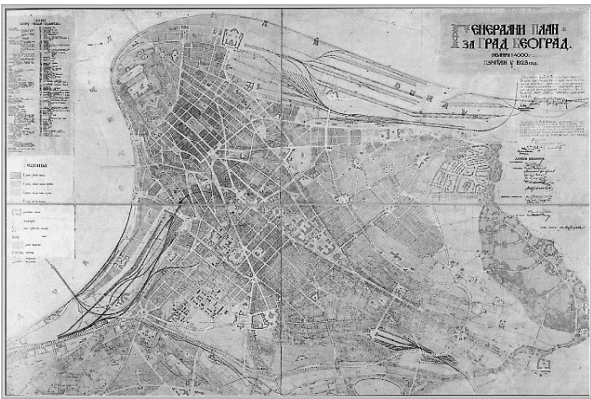
Aim is to understand impact of the major changes on inhabitants, creation of new urban image, and identity

Belgrade

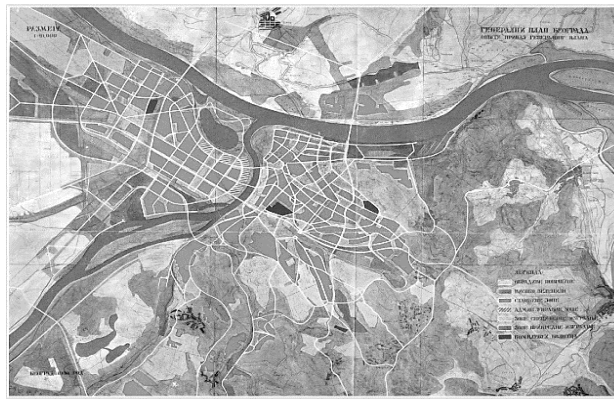
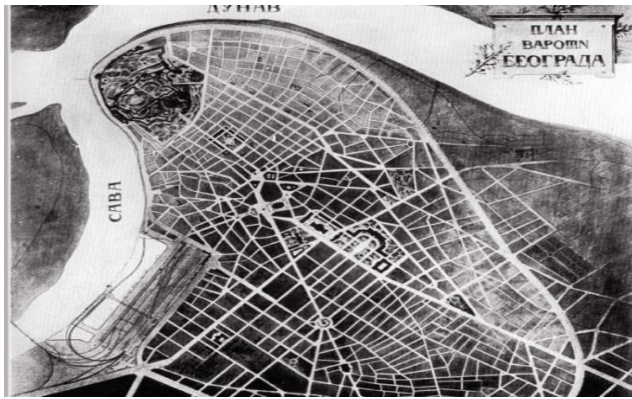
- Largest and capital city of Serbia, 5 000 years old settlement
- Located on confluence of two major rivers
- Through its long history it has been a border city between the “East” and the “West” (influences from both) and as a result of its important strategic location, it has been often attacked and demolished through history
- The turbulent history influenced its urban structure, after XIX century intensive reconstructions had begun
- It is a meeting point of two Pan-European Corridors (7th and 10th)
- Nowadays, Belgrade is under process of European integration and rebuilding its image
- Connection between urban and political change in Belgrade is more than evident



What happened in history? Historical background



What happened in urban planning? National/ regional strategies for fluvial areas, riverfront development, protection



After WWII

Communism brought fundamental change in city-building and had a significant role in the region

- Primer urban developer was a state
- Period of rebuilding war-damaged urban fabric
- Industrial expansion and production of large new city quarters
- Urban development under ideological and demographical pressures - housing conditions were connected to phenomenon of social stratification

1960/70s

with the political reforms (decentralization and democratization), powers from the federal shifted to republican level and permitted private ownership

- Planning with high level of civil participation
- Historic preservation and contextualism
- Master plan from 1972

1990s

Economic crisis, chaos, immigration, decline of municipal powers

- Planning collapsed in the country
- Huge influx of ethnic Serbs who emigrated from former Yugoslav countries
- Illegal dwellings

2000s to nowadays

After year 2000, with democratization and Euro integrations, Serbia started to slowly catch up with the surrounding countries

- The phase of the new urban development, Belgrade Master plan 2021 and Regional Spatial Plan adopted in 2004
- Plan for reparation, regeneration, renovation and reconstruction (4R plan)
- Main focus has been put on the regulation of the Sava and Danube riverbanks

What happened on urban riverfronts? Urban riverfront: actions and elements of regenerations



After WWII

- Working class, as a result of the social stratification and the lack of housing, moved along the banks of Danube and Sava Rivers that had lost former residents
- Intensive post-war growth triggered the need for building mass housing provided by the state. Building of *Novi Beograd* settlement on the left bank of Sava River had started
- Morphologically, new districts included massive residential blocks of flat-roofed buildings far from each other that dictated egalitarianism

1972 Masterplan

- Main realized idea was the creation of *Ada Ciganlija*, the most popular recreation area next to the Sava River, even nowadays
- Plan proposed the creation of the underground that would connect city on the both sides of the river and serve the city center

1990s

- Number of illegal dwellings increased rapidly creating the whole settlements that could be considered as architectural legacy of disastrous period of 1990s
- Sava bank continued to be a popular issue in the Belgrade city planning in this period. It was the topic of two competitions from 1985 and from 1991

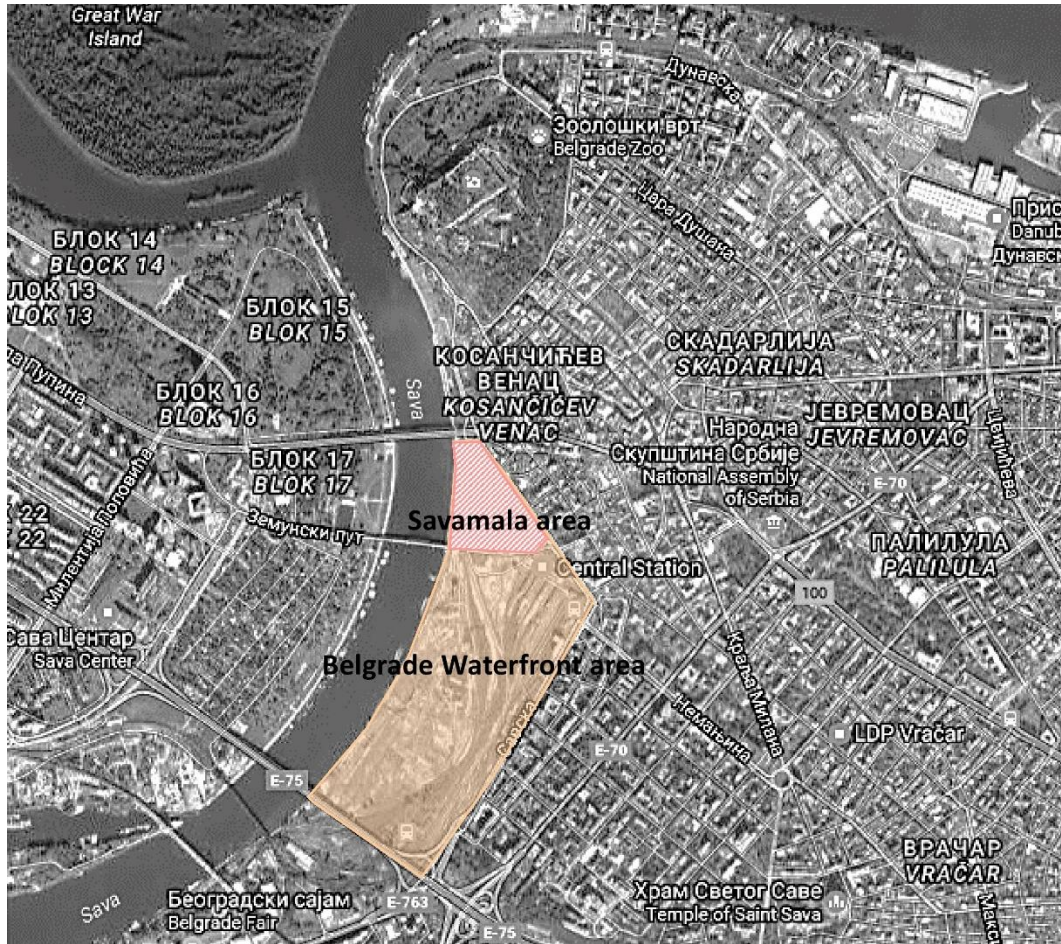
2000s -nowadays

Strengthening city's connection with rivers

Development strategy of the City of Belgrade determined priority projects for the City, which are all designed by star architects: *Beko Masterplan* (Zaha Hadid), *City on Water* (Daniel Libeskind and Jan Gehl), *Ada Bridge*, *Beton Hall* (Sou Fujimoto Architects) and *Belgrade Waterfront*

Savamala creative district





At the beginning of the XIX c, important harbor area

In socialist period decline: home to borough traders and dock workers

At the end of XX century, 'cultural urban regeneration' emerged as a government policy in Europe and it was manifested mainly through urban design and public art: 'design-led regeneration'

First cultural district in Belgrade that was based on rich cultural, historical and industrial heritage of the riverfront site, created by activities of individuals, NGOs and initiatives

Engaging locals in participatory activities, exchange of ideas: Mixer Festival, Urban incubator

International participants: Raumlabor, Goethe Institute, Nexthamburg...

Bottom up/ grass root approach

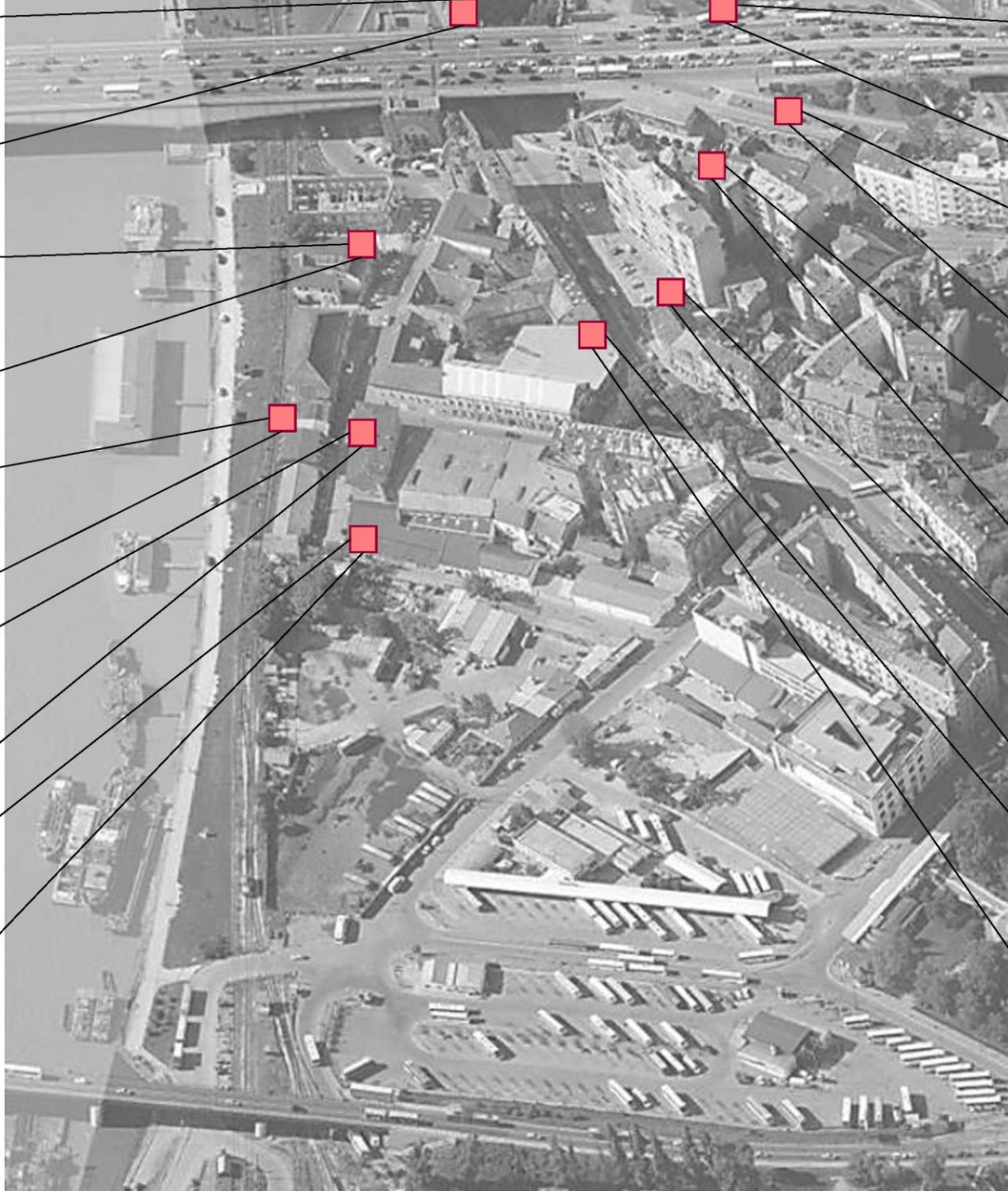
Creating events, organizations, hubs of economic activity, local identity

Attracting artist, creative individual, entrepreneurs, tourists

Improving devastated urban areas and the quality of everyday life (rehabilitation)

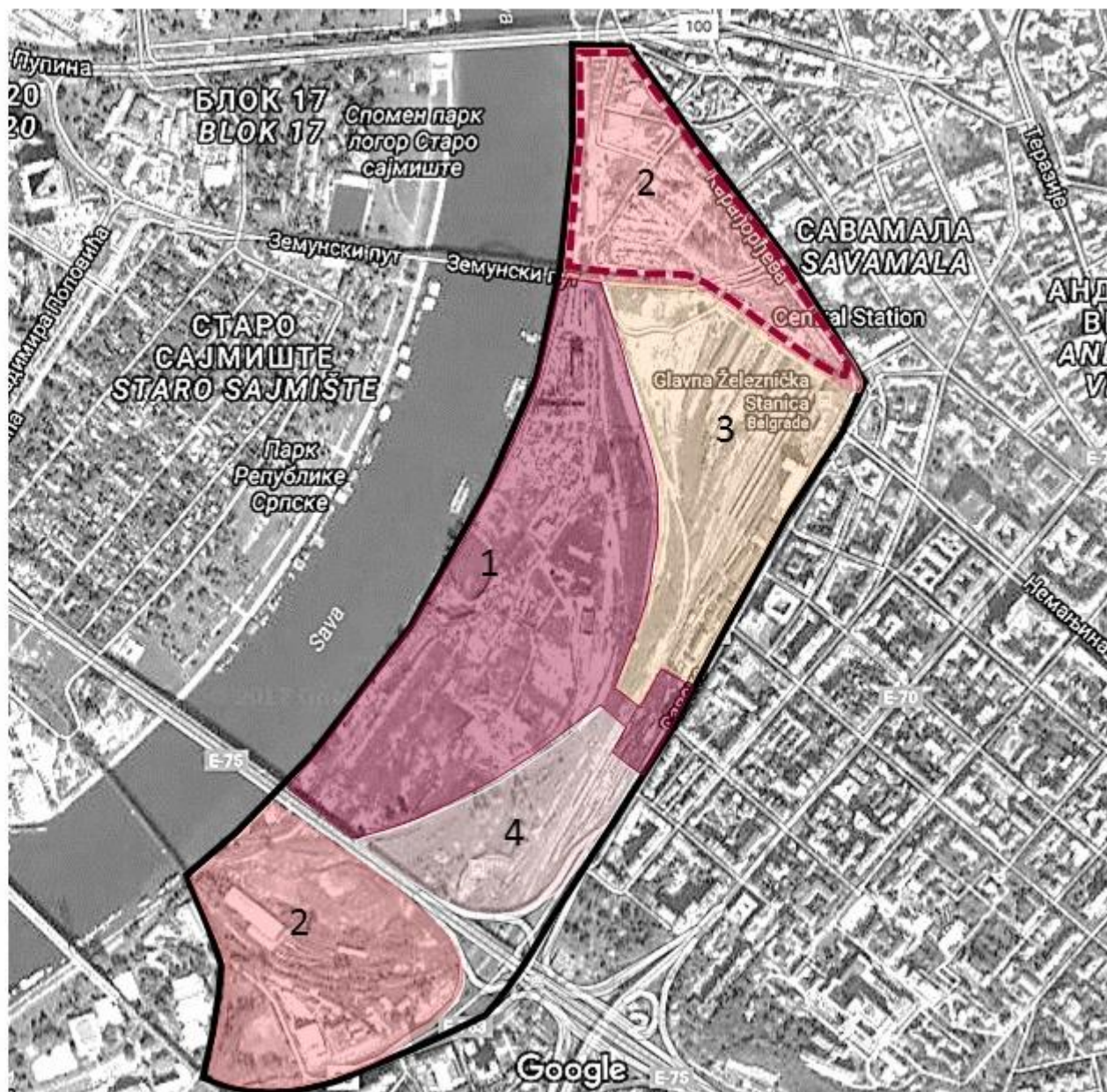
Increasing economic and land value led to **gentrification**





Belgrade Waterfront real
estate development





- Potential of the riverfront area for enhancing economy and attracting capital
- First introduced to public in 2012, as part of political campaign of the today's leading party
- BW project is PPP between Serbian Government and Eagle Hills private investor from UAE
- Proclaimed as a project of national importance and tourism potential
- Legal framework reached by modification of the Master Plan for Belgrade 2021

BW project construction area of 1.8 million square meters and 140 000 square meters shopping mall

14 000 new residents, 8 hotels, 250 000 square meters of office spaces

For its proponents BW project development is bringing a new life to under-utilized site with its mixed-use quarter on the riverside and will represent new city hub (commercial, business and technological center)



BW project has drawn strong criticism both in professional and general public in Serbia that was excluded from the planning process

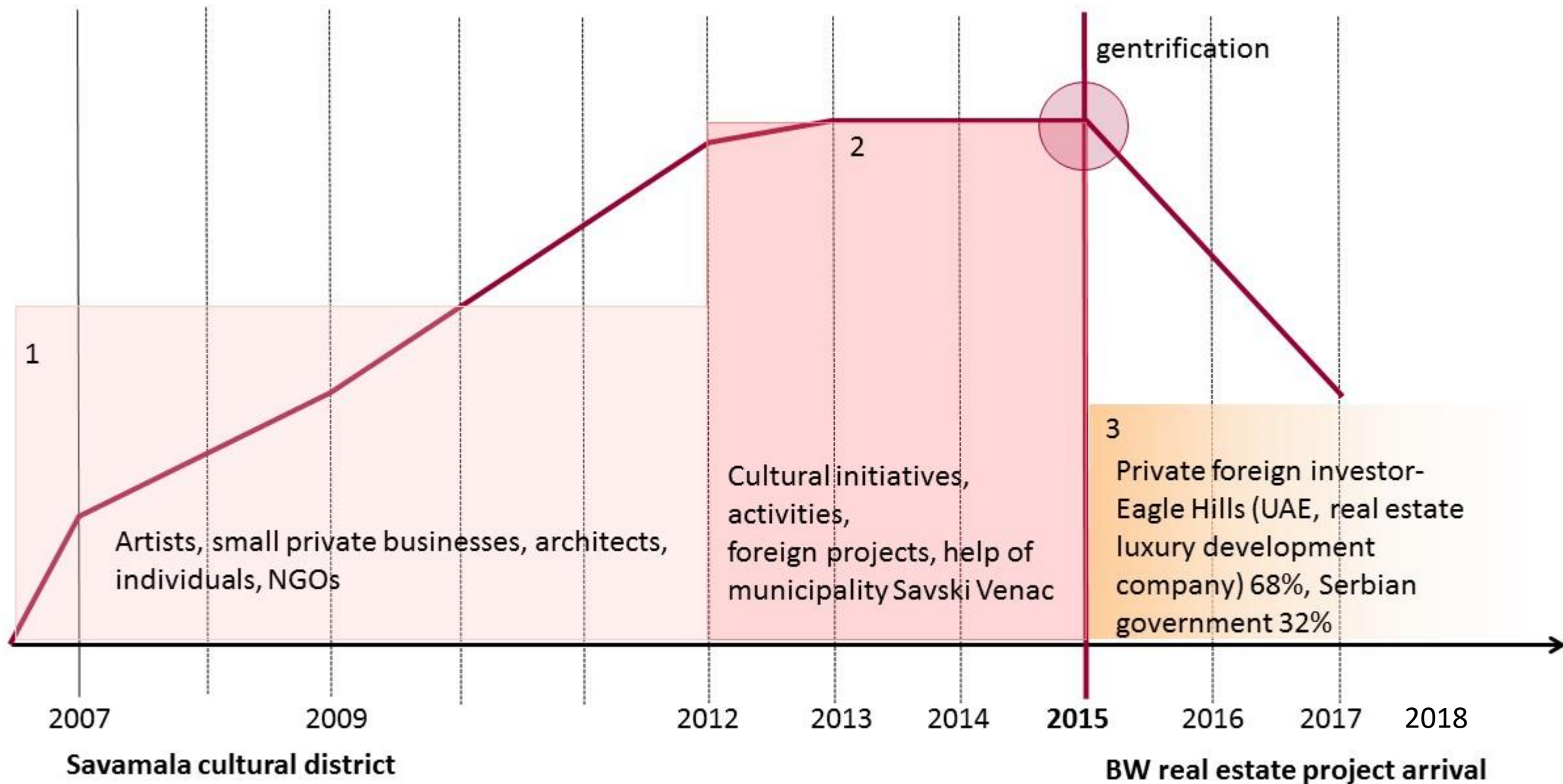
Strong political connotation

Threat for creating extraterritoriality

Lack of transparency and support

"A spaceship that landed on the riverbank" (Dobrica Veselinovic, leader of *Do not drawn Belgrade*)

Reframing urban policy on institutional and governmental level





Protest
Belgrade, 2016

Open questions

Top-down/ bottom-up?

Democratization/
participation?

New identity/ extraterritoriality?

Public space/ privatization?

Socio-economic and political change led to urban regenerations on Belgrade riverfront

Both projects are consequence of the adopted idea for urban development aiming to achieve economic growth, new flows of capital, international recognition and new identity, but had different implementation

Homogenization and standardization in urban context is a threat for local identity

Image of the city is being created by economic trends and branding

What matters the most is how it will affect inhabitants and how it is integrated in local urban context

Soft interventions, citizens' participation, active street fronts and public events as a solution?

Findings

- From the beginnings of human settlements, water has a crucial role in establishing the balance between the natural, urban and social life in the city; functional and aesthetical value: visual, audial, tactual, psychological, climate and recreational welfare
- Specific spatial meaning as the particular open place where built and natural meet forming a specific urban landscape
- In ages of heavy industrialization, cities have turned their back to the waterfronts, leaving them as irrelevant “backyards” and excluding from their identity and public life
- In the context of the 20th century, with the increasing urban density, industrialization, bad living conditions and urban expansion, the presence of green areas restarted being desired in the urban environment. The idea of nature in the city was connected to health, well-being and commodity. Water elements and urban waterfronts sights present a major potential for creating blue-green belts and might affect in that way to a more healthy and quality living
- Riverfront projects offer a standpoint from which processes happening in the city could be observed, they testify the complexity of urban challenges and demands of the local context
- Place in the city is produced by flows of global capital: waterfronts are frontiers (Dovey, K., 2005)
- This research showed so far:
 - **Positive effects:** urban innovations, new design, improvement of water quality and ecology, provision of new housing and job opportunities, increase of the real estate property and new economic investments and finally reinforcing the relation between the city and the water through the new type of urbanity
 - **Risks:** loss of identity due to the standardization of the interventions for all contexts (adoption of the model), the lack of correspondence between the initial idea and realized solution, the appearance of extraterritoriality due to creation of exclusively commercial and tourist functions, loss of public space, gentrification and prioritization of profit over urban quality of the project
- The successful urban transformations are shown to be those that recognize the different potentials of the changes, include the concerns of the citizens when planning, understand the local character

**“The waterfront isn’t just something unto
itself. It’s connected to everything else.”**

Jane Jacobs



Thank you!
Questions

