

CHASING THE LIMELIGHT: BELGRADE AND ISTANBUL IN THE GLOBAL COMPETITION

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The purpose of this paper is to analyze and compare main changes of contemporary Belgrade and Istanbul - two urban nodes at the crossroads of different and multileveled flows. Following the same pattern of global activation, inevitable competition and networking, these cities are trying to synchronize their multidimensional background, establish new patterns of global behavior and adjust them to the dynamism of modern life. Consequently, their historical role has been modified, urban tissue has been developed, recreated and regenerated, and the output of this process represents an attractive testimony of their global initiation.

Revealing the ambiguous nature of strong economic forces as well as a new fusion of urban cultures, Belgrade and Istanbul are structuring the globalized image with the new key-elements. However, their true potential and the real efficiency of this process should be re-evaluated - the changed physiognomy of the city could improve its position in the global hierarchy and facilitate its integration into the global community, but, sometimes, local limitations are too complex and too strong to be ignored.

INTRODUCTION

Although the process of globalization represents an ambiguous spin which integrates and segregates different space and time scales, levels and nodes, it could also be conceived as a unique mode of urban development, adjusted to the contemporary needs and the speed of uncountable flows.

Following the main course imposed by the top-global cities, urban-scapes all over the world are trying to achieve globally acceptable image as a new testimony of their economical spin-off. Twisting between newfangled global esthetic and inherited patterns of local cultures, virtual openness and real limitations, cities are struggling for the best position in the global hierarchy that should facilitate their initiation in the worldwide city networks. However, this cruel but inevitable competition could bring to the urban surface an amazing, creative and vivid patchwork of hidden symbols, signs and forgotten meanings that represent a starting point for the reinvention of urban attractiveness.

Belgrade and Istanbul, two interesting examples interlinked by specific historical circumstances, have decided to apply this logic for the future development. Although different in their size, structure, organization and cultural context, these cities share the similar position - placed at the crossroads of multiple inherited and newly created flows, but mostly considered as a global periphery. Facing the difficulties caused by specific political and economical situation, they are trying to establish an alluring image for the future using their own potentials and guidelines of the city branding.

REPOSITIONING THE CROSSROADS

As one of the oldest cities in Europe, Belgrade shared the history of Thracian-Cimmerian and Scythian tribes, as well as Celts and Romans. It was the target of Ostrogodos, Avars and Slavs, and an important frontier stronghold of Byzantium (during the 11th and 12th century). It became a Serbian town in 1284, its capital in the beginning of the 15th century (under Despot Stefan Lazarevic) but Turks captured it in the 16th century. During the next two centuries it was of great strategic importance

for the Austrians and the Turks, and both conquerors 'molded' the city according to their own cultural and military needs. From the 19th century, (1867) Belgrade expanded rapidly and finally (after 1918) became the capital of the newly founded Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians. However, during the Second World War, the city of Belgrade suffered inestimable damage caused by German occupying forces, being also a target of the Allies' bombing that destroyed all the bridges on the Sava and Danube, and demolished many residential areas.

Although Belgrade lost in this war more than 50000 citizens and faced great poverty, it slowly started to recover becoming the important international political, economic, cultural and sports center in Europe. For more than 30 years (especially between 1960s and 1990s), it had been the place of important international meetings. Just to mention the most important like: the First Conference of the Heads and Governments of the Non-aligned Countries in 1961, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe /OSCE/, the UNESCO Conference, annual meetings of the

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the 6th UNCTAD. Belgrade was the organizer of various cultural, sport, and other events. Today, after numerous political changes and NATO bombing in 1999, Belgrade, now the capital of the Republic of Serbia modifies its urban essence. Trying to regain its lost position in the global networks and to recreate its international spirit, the city and its local government emphasize its advantages as symbols of the future development.

Similarly, Istanbul has a very attractive geopolitical position at the junction of two continents. Because of its distinctive situation and its preserved topography and harbor, the city had been settled by different tribes and colonies since the 7th century B.C. In this century, Megara tribe, which had escaped from Dorian attacks from Greece, established the first settlement - a city named Byzantion. The city was captured by Persians, Macedonians and Romans became the capital of East Roman Empire (in 395 A.C.) and changed the name from Byzantion to Constantinople. It had a status of the capital city of two world empires in the Mediterranean Basin - The Byzantine (East Roman) and Ottoman - until the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1923. In the meantime, when conquered by Ottomans in 1453, Constantinople finally became Istanbul.

As a unique coastal city with the location on the trade routes, Istanbul was a strong political, administrative, trade, religious, scientific and cultural center and the most populated European and Middle-East city in the 17th century, with 800.000 inhabitants (Ana Britannica, 1993). During these centuries, city expanded in glory with the long-lasting peace and richness. During the Ottoman hegemony, the city gained a very lively urban society in which various social groups, as well as diverse activities, spaces and monumental buildings of different areas integrated. However, in the 19th century Istanbul was overthrown from its pedestal by some western European cities with flourishing industrialization and its decay was also influenced by the policies of incapable administrators and regression process of the Ottoman Empire. However, Istanbul's population continued to increase because of the immigration flow from the Balkans caused by the collapse of the Empire.

After the transfer of national administration to Ankara, the situation slightly changed, but, after 1950s, the new economical policies influenced an impetus with a dramatic change in size, density and facilities due to the increasing activities of industrialization and international trade. Since 1990s Istanbul has become the host town of the international economic and political meetings such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (KEI) meeting in 1992, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements-II (Habitat-II) in 1996, the 17th meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 2004, as well as numerous sports competitions (Class 1 World Offshore Championship in 1999, the 32nd European Basketball Championship for Men in 2001, Istanbul Formula Grand-prix in 2005).

Today, Istanbul has different problems generated from the contradictions of urban life but, at the same time, it is trying to achieve the best possible position on the global platform integrating the fundamental history with the needs of contemporary urban life.

Obviously, the inherited/historical role of Belgrade and Istanbul are transposed into a new system of values and their positions are now (re)questioned in accordance with different empirical data that could illustrate diversity among them. Measuring and analyzing their power and connectivity and categorizing them into the new hierarchical system(s) these two urban nodes have to 'insert' themselves into a new geography of globalization that only 'identifies' cities with evidence of world city processes. Therefore, it is not surprising that Istanbul found its place among high connectivity gateways (Taylor at al, 2002), as a node of principal component clusters in Europe (Taylor, 2001) and/or as a cluster nucleus (type I) of band II Arenas (Derudder et al. 2003). Belgrade, owing to its decade long political and economical isolation, still has to be 'registered' as a globally accepted urban node. However, a new political atmosphere has influenced its presence on the global scene and now it is also included in numerous databases dealing with global civil society/global governance (Taylor, 2004), media networks (Kratke, 2003), advertising, accountancy, NGOs and international banking systems.

Both cities were candidates for the Olympic Games: Belgrade (before its stagnation, for 1992 and 1996 Olympics) and Istanbul (for 2000 and 2008), but although their location and sport facilities were considered as their advantages, they did not get this chance for economical and media spin-off. For example, although Istanbul's motto for 2008 Olympics was "The Meeting of Continents", its symbolical position of the crossroads of Asia and Europe was not sufficient for election. As the main 'contra' argument the political and seismic instability were stated, but the main reason actually was the important competitive advantage(s) of Beijing - the financial guarantees from the government and the commercial potential of the huge Chinese market that will be entered by the international, globalized capital.

THE GLOBAL ACTIVATION VS. LOCAL LIMITATIONS

The Belgrade metropolitan region, with its 1,6 million residents, has always been considered as the gate to the East and the door to the West. Therefore, it is now trying to benefit from its position of the communication hub of the SE Europe and its new connectivity is based upon two international rivers (Danube, as the European corridor VII, and Sava) and a section of the European corridor X (highway network). Belgrade is also plugged into the European network by an international airport, the international railway system, two ports and four railway stations. Additionally, its integration is oriented towards other important urban nodes in SEE (Bucharest, Sofia, Thessalonica, Sarajevo, Zagreb) and Central Europe (Ljubljana, Budapest).

At the same time, Belgrade is recognized as a promising node for locating the business - the idea supported by the Serbian government and Belgrade Authorities. Therefore, the commitment to the integrity and security of foreign investments has been emphasized, as well as the new tax incentives and the lowest income tax rates in the region. Consequently, Belgrade was awarded the name "City of the future in Southern Europe", which is the outcome of the competition organized by the specialized edition of the Financial Times for foreign and direct investments, FDI Magazine. This title has

a great importance for the future development and investments because it represents the result of the evaluation based on various criteria - economic potential, cost effectiveness, human resources, IT and telecommunications, transport, quality of life and FDI promotion.

Being aware of the inherited infrastructure problems, during the last 5 years Belgrade improved its road and telecommunication network and renewed its infrastructure. At the same time, the reconstruction and extension of the Belgrade International Airport (with a future cargo center and a railroad connection) has started in order to achieve the level of alternative sub-regional UAC (according to the Air Traffic Infrastructure regional Study for SEE by Nordic Aviation Resources AS). There are also four important projects facilitating Belgrade's inner connectivity and efficiency - the Belgrade light rail system, the Interior City Ring Road, the new cable car route that will connect two parts of the city across the river Sava and island Ada Ciganlija and, finally, a new bridge over the river Sava which should solve traffic problems in the central city area.

In accordance with the Master plan of Belgrade (2003) and the new Regional spatial plan (2004), the activation of urban potentials is using a global recipe that favors images of open, dynamic, vibrant cities. Therefore, the urban development has accepted the environmental protection and sustainable development as a global goal, aiming at:

- the old city center as a place of cultural identity;
- New Belgrade as a new alternative city center suitable for business and commercial activities;
- the riverbanks (with existing industrial and railroad structures which should be removed) - as a future multipurpose centers with marinas, recreation and leisure activities;
- the city suburbs - as a new industrial and commercial areas.

Following the basic guidelines and strategies given by its Master plan, Belgrade metropolitan area and its local government intend to stimulate future urban development, which have to reveal new perspectives for our society, to revive its cosmopolitan spirit and to create

an urban environment attractive for the new techno-elite. In the meantime, 13 sites have been leased (for construction up to 99 years) to the foreign investors - Merkator (Slovenia), Airport City (Israel), Meshulam Levinstein (Israel), GTC (Netherlands), Durst (Austria), Cappoto Build (Lichtenstein), Expo center Eastern Europe Ltd (Great Britain, Cyprus), National brands (Russia), Veropulos (Greece), ABD (Israel) and Montmontaza (Croatia).

The globally recognizable urban face was also made-over by several new public facilities - the Belgrade Arena (hall 'Limes'), Sveti Sava temple, the business center "Usce", the new Drama theatre and numerous projects of reconstruction (old theatres, parks, residential buildings, museums etc.). The Gallery "Zoran Djindjic", a new Opera, the Belgrade Marina, a new Aqua park and the tower on Avala will round a new phase of transformation and activities and all of them should become new/renewed landmarks.

In the case of Istanbul, the political changes in the national government in 1980s, oriented towards the global comprehension of trade and market, were indicated in the urban life of citizens and urban landscape. The GaWC inventory of world cities also noticed this progress and pointed out Istanbul as a "gamma" city according to the most prevalent firms taking place worldwide (Beaverstock, V. J., Smith, R. G, 1999).

Today, Istanbul has more than 12 million inhabitants living in its metropolitan region located just at the water/land/air transportation crossroads of Europe, Asia and Africa comprising a huge hinterland beyond (Southeast Europe, Black Sea Region and Middle East). Beside its excellent position and significant labor force, it also profits from its effective historical, cultural and business connections. Simultaneously, Istanbul metropolitan area is directly attached to the main global networks by two international airports (Atatürk International Airport with a capacity of 20 million person/year and Sabiha Gökçen International Airport with a capacity of 3.5 million person/year with 90 thousand tone cargo), two main seaports (Haydarpaşa - Karaköy seaports) and two international motorways (E5 - TEM) connecting Europe and

Istanbul with Ankara. On the other hand, the city has rail connection to Europe ("Sirkeci" station) and to Anatolia and Middle East ("Haydarpaşa" station) but this network is not in a good condition because of the governmental policies supporting the road and air transportation since 1950s.

Approximately half of the industrial corporations (45%) in Turkey are based in Istanbul. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that Istanbul is the economic center of Turkey (and its 70 million habitants) comprising the most of the national-international financial and banking associations (Istanbul Government, 2005). Istanbul also provides a linkage between the whole country and the international trade sector. Consequently intensive activities of production and distribution shape Istanbul and recognize it as a candidate for one of the global business and management nodes rather than a peripheral one.

During the last 10 years, Istanbul has been reinforcing its infrastructure and connectivity in order to make it compatible for the contemporary global needs. Unfortunately, the spreading of the road network and the construction of the second Bosphorus Bridge in 1990 encouraged the north part of the city to grow endangering the vital elements (forests and fresh water supplies). At the same time, Istanbul is trying to overcome its topographical obstacles and to manage its complicated internal communication with the metropolitan network/transportation master plan. Therefore, this plan highlights the importance of the light rail system and its synchronization with other transportation networks. Besides, there are two other projects:

- Bosphorus Tube Gate/Corridor Project (to be Marmaray) - under construction since 2004 - which will connect with a light rail system both sides of Istanbul under Bosphorus and will have a capacity of 75 thousand citizens per hour in one direction;
- Third Bosphorus Bridge Project (not approved yet) which could jeopardize the natural landscape in northern side of Bosphorus.

However, Istanbul has to take into account the benefits of being a waterfront and it should activate completely its water networks in order to unite its two sides more effectively.

Istanbul's Master Plan (1995) also underpinned its present/future role of intensive center for services, business, tourism, culture-art, entertainment and recreation while the industrial and manufacturing facilities are decentralized and moved to the outskirts. At the same time, the main directions of its development are:

- preservation of the old city "Istanbul peninsula-Galata" and other historical districts on both sides of Bosphorus respecting their cultural identity and historical morphology of housing;
- introduction of new corridors and districts for the global business activities (such as "Zincirlikuyu-Levent-Maslak" districts on the European side, "Kozyatağı" district on Asian side, projects for "Haydarpaşa World Trade Center" and "Cruise Harbor") which should become globally recognizable areas with high business towers, hotels, halls, shopping malls and other facilities;
- revitalization of the old trade harbor and the railway station on Asian side;
- rehabilitation of old and devastated industrial waterfronts into cultural, entertainment and leisure complexes like "Golden Horn Cultural Valley Project";
- rehabilitation/reconstruction and transformation of unhygienic neighborhoods according to the Istanbul Earthquake Master Plan (2004);
- decentralization of industry and manufacturing to the peripheral areas on both sides.

BRANDING THE CITY

In the competitive world, every city has to use a strategic manipulation focused on competitive advantages and local potentials. Therefore, they become the essence of urban marketing which has several phases (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; Haider, 1992):

- analysis of opportunities and market;
- formulation of goals and strategies;
- planning of marketing programs;
- organization and implementation;
- final elaboration and evaluation.

Consequently, whenever a city wants to attract investments and 'improve' its total image it should include the logic of marketing process in the urban development - addressing the global and local level of place promotion and perceiving it in a context of political economy

and/or various marketing strategies. At the same time, one of the most important issues of urban marketing represents activation of cultural potentials, their development and adjustment to the new urban needs. Therefore, it is obvious that culture and spectacle have become two pivotal points of the new city attractiveness, as well as stimulators of urban regeneration and urban economy (Bassett, 1993, Zukin, 1995).

Istanbul and Belgrade, as cities with rich historical and multi-ethnic background, started to use these elements as well. Completely in accordance with the myths of the global order, the advantages of multicultural context have been launched together with numerous identities and connections between tradition and new flows. The city space has been marked as a democratic, open, tolerant, advanced and cosmopolitan and the symbioses of culture, esthetic and symbolic became an inseparable part of economy, which was clearly visible at the field of consumption. The symbolic spatial images influenced the appearance of new urban frames and their economical importance increased. Consequently, cultural and historical values became the basic generators of urban economics directed towards the contemporary tourism, and their role has been additionally reinforced by cultural industry, introduction of mass events and spreading of symbolic cityscapes. Therefore, it is noticeable that the cultural symbolism has derived from the economical and social power of new elite simulating the act of ritual giving and establishing the complex mixture of art, politics and market. Finally, both cities gradually transformed themselves into a new commercial system of values implemented through a redefined set of tokens and symbols.

In order to become globally acceptable, Belgrade and Istanbul emphasize their own easily recognizable uniqueness. Therefore, adopting the globally imposed 'urban menu' - with new office buildings, gentrified areas, regenerated river/sea fronts and old industrial areas, attractive museums, galleries, theaters, modern sport arenas, theme/leisure parks and ethnic restaurants, these two cities are also trying to complete their 'homework' in order to enhance their appearance.

Consequently, Belgrade and Istanbul started to use the same set of five basic marketing campaigns identified by Ward (1996):

- selling the frontier and early town promotion;
- selling the resort;
- selling the suburb;
- selling the industrial city;
- selling the post-industrial city.

They have been adjusting it to the local conditions, applying the same logic and channeling them to the similar audience - mainly investors, business firms, corporate headquarters, new elite, sports teams, tourists or new residents, but sometimes also to the local communities - as the future voters. At the same time, these two urban nodes (although with different starting positions in the 'wannabe world cities' race) are caught into the complex competition for different levels of command functions, spectacular world events and, above all, (un)expected urban boosterism. However, these images of the future are often limited just to a ravishing rhetoric and political manipulation, offering the utopian scenario of the urban development, with questionable outcomes.

Evidently, the sustainability of the urban development today is based upon a powerful combination of politics, media, international corporate capital and economical competitiveness. Therefore, the local elite becomes closely involved in the process of local governance and has strong impact on the city image promoting its own vision of urban growth which often clashes with the public good. The pressure of deadlines (i.e. important dates and events) also changes the planning procedures - adjustments are made according to the 'event schedules', covering the needs of different international sports, cultural, political and scientific gatherings. Unfortunately, as the triggers of the further global promotion they become more valuable for the city image than well-balanced co-existence of different local communities.

LAUNCHING THE NEW GLOBAL IMAGE

Legging behind the mainstream of globalization, Serbia and its capital became a black hole of the global networks. During the decade-long isolation Belgrade lost its position of the

recognizable regional center of SE Europe and its well known cosmopolitanism diminished by the increased nationalism. The global and local media, although using completely different perspectives, created an atmosphere of fear, isolation and threats, emphasized by the everyday reality - thousands of refugees from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, poverty and dictatorship. However, the 21st century has brought new political scenery, and one of the first signs of globalization was appearance of the famous brand names, as well as an increase of the production and consumption of symbolic goods - especially clothes, food, popular culture and sport. At the same time, this 'imported' global esthetic had a tendency to become a new, ideologically acceptable image of the new society, oriented towards European and global integration. Fortunately, the local identity of Belgrade during 1970s and 1980s has also been rediscovered, and its key elements now represent the main guidelines for the new urban attractiveness.

Although exposed to the numerous internal and external influences Belgrade government decided to support three main potentials of the city - its entertainment/cultural, sports and business capacities. Simultaneously, the motto "Belgrade always wins" (reflecting Belgrade spirit and its long history of struggles with different conquerors) and the slogan "The city of good vibrations" underline its main advantages:

- central location and proximity to the important regional nodes;
- connectivity;
- business-assistance programs;
- low costs of living;
- young and educated labor force;
- concentration of sports and entertainment facilities;
- natural amenities;
- traditional hospitality.

At the same time, several sectors identified as the most prominent tourist potentials - transit, business/congress, river and cultural tourism have the same aim to attract different European/world markets.

Recently, Belgrade also became a 'city break' destination which is the result of its new atmosphere and the interesting nightlife - in

the city center (bohemian quarter Skadarlija, pedestrian area, Dorcol - as a zone of fashionable cafes, numerous clubs, etc.) and along the riverbanks. The role of rivers in the city life has been also used as an element of global identification, as well as the position and activities on the river island Ada Ciganlija representing a unique oasis close to the city center, with excellent sports facilities (including water and extreme sports) and various entertainment and cultural events.

However, Belgrade's potential for sports manifestations is not limited just to one area - different sport complexes are scattered across the city - in the city center or close to it. Consequently, different sports events are used in promotions of its new international openness. As a result, Belgrade was selected the host of the 2005 European basketball, volleyball and shooting championships (basketball - with Rome; volleyball - with Novi Sad, Vrsac and Podgorica), the World hockey championship for the II division (2005), the European water-polo championship (2006). It will also host the European table tennis championship (2007), The 9th European Youth Olympic Festival (2007) and the 25th Summer Universiade (2009).

Its multiple layers of history and culture have also been used for the tourist promotion - primarily, Kalemegdan - the Belgrade fortress with the 600 years long history, and the story of Despot Stefan Lazarevic and his medieval capital Belgrade that was the 14th and 15th century tourist town for passengers and merchants traveling by the river. The Belgrade cultural and historical heritage is also emphasized as a part of city attractions - beside numerous museums and theatres, Vinca archeological site and the Botanical Garden Jevremovac, the cultural manifestations such as BITEF, BELEF and BEMUS have become the important representatives of Belgrade's cultural international networking.

At the same time, Belgrade again activates its congress and expo facilities - "Sava" Congress Center, which is the largest congress and concert building in the Balkans with 14 halls, and the Belgrade fair complex. Finally, in 2005 Belgrade hosted the annual EBRD summit that

encouraged economic reforms and positive changes in the region.

However, the most interesting story about the connection between the urban essence and the city economy represents the case of New Belgrade. Born on the deserted marshlands between the historical cores of Belgrade and Zemun, New Belgrade represented a clear political statement of the new post-war Yugoslav society. Following a ritual pattern well known for centuries, this offspring of the Athens Charter and the huge political ambitions of President Tito, played an important role in a symbolical initiation of the newly established communist system. Apart from its comparative advantages over other parts of Belgrade metropolitan area, it was, from the beginning of its construction, the pivotal point of regime propaganda accepted with a great enthusiasm by the masses. It was a symbol of modern state, completely directed towards its progress. Unfortunately, during the years to follow, it played a role of a huge dormitory, without the necessary concentration of urban activities for creation of the planned alternative center of Belgrade.

Surprisingly, from the 1990s situation has been rapidly changing - due to its excellent connectivity, good infrastructure and available sites for large development projects, New Belgrade has become a very attractive area for local and foreign investors. Residential, commercial and business sites have been offered by the Marketing Department of the Agency for Building Land and Construction of Belgrade. Together with important facilities (such as the most luxurious hotels "Intercontinental" and "Hyatt Regency", "Sava" Congress Center, the sports hall "Limes", the new railway station, business center "Usce") they created the new City - a symbol of urban development and the important regional business node. The new tokens are implanted in the Modern urban tissue and one of the most significant and meaningful transformations is the 'resurrection' of the building of the Central Committee, which was, due to its height, one of Belgrade landmarks and a symbol of communist power.

During the 1990s, this building lost its political significance and role becoming an office

building with one of the regime's TV stations. Therefore, as a 'legitimate target' it was damaged during the NATO bombing. However, the tallest building on Balkan (134m) was not completely destroyed, but 'rebuilt' by the firm "European construction" which organized the spectacular grand opening in July 2005, under the title "From communism to capitalism". This event actually represented an initiation of a new power (power of profit), a new/old landmark and a new role New Belgrade is taking in the future.

Following the same worldwide marketing pattern, Istanbul's government promotes a vision of a regional center of the Middle East, Balkan and SE Europe with a potential for a future global city. Decided to be a creative-intelligent-production node and to compete with other world cities, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB), OECD and National Planning Association (DPT) underlined the importance of sector strategies (concerning the decentralization of industry), space management and further development promoting it as a:

- regional service center;
- regional finance center;
- tourism and cultural city;
- science and technology city (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, 2005).

In addition, Istanbul government proclaimed entertainment, international meetings/congress and international cultural activities as the main potentials for boosting city economy but it also (re)discovered the importance of international sport competitions. Therefore, during the competition for the host of the Olympic Games, an Olympic village including "Atatürk Stadium" (with capacity of 80.000 people) was constructed and it is now in use for different international events. However, Istanbul still has to resolve numerous social and infrastructure problems that present a serious drawback for the implementation of every plan and project.

Simultaneously, the huge number of citizens and the cosmopolitan life style of people necessitate multi-functional spaces with cultural, recreational, shopping, entertainment and leisure facilities adjusted to the needs of different groups. However, its present 24-hours active urban life, full of various excitements, caused the specific image of the city "which

never sleeps". Therefore, Istanbul represents a unique mixture of shopping and entertainment areas focused around characteristic streets like "İstiklal Caddesi", "Nişantaşı" and "Bağdat Caddesi" or shopping malls like "Akmerkez", "Metrocity", "Carrefour", "Carosel" where all global brand names could be found.

Istanbul, with its facilities, is also a suitable place for international meetings/congresses and cultural activities. "Lütfü Kırdar International Congress and Concert Hall", where the recent XXII Union of International Architects 2005 Congress was held, and "Atatürk Cultural Center" are the most famous, but there are also two more centers under construction - "Istanbul" and "Sütlüce" (Fuarplus, 2005). However, beside the contemporary buildings, there are a few historical spaces, such as "Yerebatan Sarayı", "Aya İrini" and "Esma Sultan Yalısı", which reflect a distinctive and mystical atmosphere of the city. The specific cultural and environmental milieu is also used for the Istanbul's candidacy for the European Capital of Culture 2010, under the motto "The City of 4 Elements".

At the same time, Istanbul, as a trade and industrial city, has already taken steps to become a regional center of financial activities. Therefore, its open economy policies enforce the construction of the global and national commerce offices and numerous computing business towers at "Zincirlikuyu-Levent-Maslak" and "Kozyatağı" districts. These areas also host the international hotels ("Four Seasons", "Hilton", "Princess Hotel", "Hyatt Regency", "Intercontinental" etc.) which are the inevitable inventory of all cities exposed to the global capital. These globalized spaces also redefine the city skyline offering a unique image made of high reflective facades of "Türkiye İşbankası", "Sabancı Holding", "Süzer Plaza", "Elit Residence", "Metrocity" and other business and residential towers taking their place beside huge religious monumental buildings (mosques-churches-synagogues).

Nowadays, while the discussions continue, the effort to build the World Trade Center also emphasizes the support of Istanbul government to attract the global corporations.

However, the historical districts and monumental buildings also reflect the magnificent

cosmopolitan and multi-religious background of Istanbul as an important tourist potential. The peninsula's hills crowned by mosques (Süleymaniye, Sultanahmet ect.), "Hagia Sofia" serving as a museum, "Topkapı Palace" of the sultans and the atmosphere of the "Grand Bazaar" with the surrounding from Ottoman period are just some of many attractions. In contrast, "Galata" and "Taxim" districts with modern buildings from the 19th century represent the new, cosmopolite spirit of the city; while the historical Bosphorus villages-mansions, museums and art galleries reveal quite different urban identity also used as a recognizable city brand. Finally, with the application of "The Golden Horn Cultural Valley Project" which will reinforce the social and urban life of "Halic" and its historical surrounding (peninsula-Galata) will increase the number of visitors and create a new urban landmark.

CONCLUSION

Using the aggressive campaigns or transforming the space and economy of a city it is possible to create a new urban outlook that could hide or totally deny negative and unattractive images. The new urban flexibility, revitalized or reconstructed downtown areas, business opportunities, advanced IC and technological development, excellent connectivity and accessibility, healthy and ecologically sustainable surrounding, as well as a great number of cultural and sports spectacles are announced as qualities which should be (re)considered, but, at the same time, they should transmit important messages to their potential users - attractive, cosmopolitan, dynamic and hospitable urban background. Relying on this logic, Belgrade and Istanbul, each in its own way, have included these elements into the wishful images and advertisements deliberately promoting new urban symbols.

Bearing their *fatum* of the millennia crossroads, they could only try to reconcile their layers of history, present and future in order to enhance their position. Therefore, they are creating a new skyline that displays new centers of power, and their urban development is channeled and shaped to attract the attention of important investors. However, it is not possible to follow

just one direction - in the world of globalization every city has to achieve its 'omnipotence' as the only guarantee of its survival.

Balancing between tradition and innovation, the city branding of Belgrade and Istanbul could solve some problems, but one question remains - are we capable to continue their urban (hi)story or will they become just one of the Orient-Express mysteries?

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