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Plural city: layered singularities and urban design: case of Belgrade City (RS)

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Abstract

A growing urban population, a new social dynamism, and fast-changing urban contexts, together with a lack of urban planning, lead to intensifying contradictions that threaten to harness urban prosperity, cohesion, and sustainability. All this creates a need for reframing the perspective on the city and its management. By analysing connecting concepts to the plural city in literature, the paper offers new ways of understanding and reading the city. We describe plural qualities of an inclusive city from the perspective of urban design—a city as a plurality of unique places and subjectivities in time—i.e. the plural city. Following the case study methodology, we critically discussed and evaluated the case of Belgrade as a plural city due to its lasting diversity and heterogeneity in both urban matrix and social tissue. As a result, we defined the elements, relationships, and plurality of views within the plural city in multiscale. Based on 18-years of experience gained through the Public art & Public space program, we have shown that public art strategies can be used as a method and tool to initiate spatial transformations and offer different ways of experiencing the urban landscape.

Keywords: Urban design, Placemaking, Public art, Public space, Plural city

Introduction

During the last decades, rising urban populations and increasing migrations are producing new social dynamics and fast-changing urban contexts (United Nations 2019). As the world's urban population grows, cities become spaces where increasingly diverse people negotiate such differences as language, lifestyles, citizenship, class and wealth, ethnicity and race, etc. (Moroni and Weberman 2016). Increased contradictions, growing inequality and marginalization threaten to take advantage of urban prosperity, cohesion and sustainability (The British Academy & The National Institute of Urban Affairs 2019).

At the same time, global development strategies that challenge new social dynamics, emerging urban complexities and spatial transformations centralize the social dimension of space and cohesion politics (Ramsden and Colini 2013; Chaline and Coccossis 2004; Monno and

Serrelì 2020). Thus, increasingly urbanized and multicultural existence and its spatial structures and complications require us to reexamine social and political categories and concepts—i.e. citizenship, justice, rights, legitimacy and democracy (Moroni and Weberman 2016)—and diminish equity in public spaces (Harvey 2009; Zukin 2010).

Despite a growing body of literature and widespread use in the study of space, politics, and society, the terms 'plural' and 'plurality' have remained broad and ambiguous. Some authors question political conceptions and rights while reconfiguring the contemporary model of citizenship (e.g. Purcell 2003). Some other authors focus on urban segregation as a complex mechanism that causes inequality in several dimensions of urban life—from deficient urban access, services, or infrastructure to social isolation, safety issues and lack of economic opportunity (Rawls 1971/1999; Espino 2015; Blanco and Nel-lo 2020). All the authors prevalently have a background in social sciences (e.g. sociology, urban geography, etc.), and their starting hypothesis

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relay on the concept of a plural society, which promotes respect for diversity, whereby diversity itself becomes a public good.

Defining cities as places of contrast, plurality and interactions, global e-debate by UN-Habitat (Rio de Janeiro, 2010) challenged urban policy to recognize culturally heterogeneous cities, including diversity within a given culture of the many in a city. The debate focused on being able to respect personal cultural belonging while living together in a society where ethics and common values are guidelines. Accordingly, urban development is rooted in the mutual obligation of individual choices and collective compromise.

We can note that the political conception of multiculturalism and cultural pluralism are foundations for both academic research and global urban policy. These researchers examine concepts and terms as open/close society, diversity, inclusion, justice, rights, and plural society to explain the plurality of the city as a space of tolerance. However, we wondered how urban design research, theories and practices, could give rise to a public sphere and a plural city. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to discuss and reframe the concept of the plural city—the plurality of views in public space practices and urban design.

The research departs from a literature review on place theories in urban design, plural urbanism, the public dimension of space and connecting concepts to plural city. We understand urban design as both the process and product of inextricably entwined and layered subjectivities, which represent the qualitative dimension of public spaces. Without ignoring the high potentials of the concept, we explore the plural city as a dialogue and encounter between own and shared commitments of being/existing and living in a specific place.

Without lapsing into prescriptive conclusions, the paper aims to reshape existing and offer a new perspective on the plural character of the city as a possible method for reading the city—i.e. an inclusive way to respond to the need for developing new ways of understanding, imagining, and governing the city.

The city of Belgrade (Republic of Serbia) is an ideal context for exploring the plural city due to its lasting diversity and heterogeneity in both urban matrix and social tissue. We used theoretical research to review the issues of plural perspective on the city. Following the case study methodology, we critically analyzed the case of Belgrade to (1) define the elements and relations, which constitute the plural city, (2) examine the public art strategies as a method and tool to govern the spatial transformation in a plural city, and (3) to examine how experience and plurality of views interact with space, form the urban quality, and affect the plural city. As a result, we identified the

potentials of the plural city in the process of understanding, imagining, and governing the city.

Analyses of the case study base on 18 years of experience and some previous findings gained through the Public art & Public space (PaPs) program founded in 2003 at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade. PaPs is an international, multidisciplinary, scientific, research, and educational program of artistic design of public spaces. A wide range of PaPs's activities produces positive changes to places and people, improving the public spaces by making small but significant steps toward active citizenship. However, in this paper, our focus was not on the outcome of the projects themselves. We selected projects that used public art as a strategy and demonstrated positive urban transformations while examining the diversity of elements and relationships within a plural city.

Urban design and place as a strategy for the plural city

Written in the form of a manifesto, a recent publication by Brent (2017) even proposes the “plural urbanism” as the new discipline, namely “The Largest Art”. He reframed urban design as a discipline of multiplicity (scale, time, property, agency, form) based on three principles of change, incompleteness and flexible fidelity. Bharne (2016) explains that pluralism in urban design comprehends singular act of various disciplines, which ensure various aspects of the city, as well as differences between and within cities (e.g. mechanisms, cultural differences, etc.). Defining urban design as city-making, the author explains that plural urban design includes agencies, processes, products, and physical things.

Although the concept of the plural city could have a lot of potential, this research does not aim to reframe the discipline. Nevertheless, we strongly encourage, support and promote multidisciplinary research; the mix of disciplinary backgrounds of authors' in this paper include an architect, a landscape architect, an urbanist and a philosopher.

Urban design is a process and a product of designing and shaping the physical features of artificial environment by creating connections between people and places, nature and built fabric, movement and form. As a multidisciplinary activity of shaping and managing artificial environments, it is “interested in both the process of this shaping and the spaces it helps shape” (Madanipour 1996, p. 117).

Although historically there are two broad traditions of urban design, namely “visual-artistic” and “social usage” tradition, in recent years they became blended into a third—“making places” tradition. With a purpose of making places for people, this urban design approach simultaneously refers to urban space as an aesthetic

entity and as a behavioral setting (Carmona 2003). Uniqueness of place—i.e. singularity of place—is understood as the result of layering of build forms and infrastructure, natural ecosystems, communities and cultures. Therefore, urban design—together with the society, economics, politics, and drama that surround, inform and create it—captures the moment of the plural city while involving all elements of the unique place. This precious moment informs us about the current condition, contextualize our imagination of future and conditions its governance in a certain degree.

Slightly different from making places, the placemaking is a complex and multi-faceted approach to planning, design and management of public spaces. Practiced within the PaPs program, placemaking is a process of making public space a living place through artistic place design and recognition of experiences that produce all sorts of consequences on daily life. It is a process of creation of place and philosophy of acting in it—the art of living. Placemaking is a tool for authentic space production, with the specific character of the location—sense of place (PaPs 2003).

Therefore, in the context of applying the plural approach to the city, and based on understanding urban design both as a process and a product of placemaking, we argue that the plural city is a possible way to respond to the need for developing a new way of understanding, imagining, and governing the city.

Publicness and plural city

Aiming to describe plural qualities of an inclusive city from the perspective of urban design, we understand the plural approach to the city not as a new theoretical or practical understanding. Indeed, Aristotle said “The city is composed of different kinds of men; similar people cannot bring the city into existence” (Aristotle, cited in Sennett 1970, p. 13). The city by its nature is heterogeneous, and composed of many singularities that each person brings by its being. City unites a certain people to ultimately improve the quality of life of every person. Diversity aspects of the just city relate to the capacity to welcome and embrace a variety of people with differing cultural and personal views and practices, as well as land uses (Montgomery 1998). In these terms, the city is a socio-cultural system or “projection of the society on the ground” (Lefebvre 1974/1991), and public spaces are the manifestation of the public realm.

Various public space qualities closely associate with some aspects of the just city and its public realm: diversity, equity, and democracy (Fainstein 2010; Griffin 2015). Studies on public space and urban lifestyle indicate the primary area of theorization, theorisation and research on the ‘public’ of public spaces—i.e. public domain, the

public sphere, and publicness. The public sphere is the space of civil society (Arendt 1985/1991; Habermas 1962/2001). It is ‘an atmosphere of democracy’ based on the existence of a life in common and it enables the formation of public opinion, which takes place through discussion and deliberation at publicly owned space (Habermas 1962/2001; Young 1990).

City as a complex and dynamic system is the place of manifestation of the urban phenomenon that continually transforms under the influence of many factors and over different periods. Plural city does not merely seek to enrich the human dimension by harmonizing social relations and cultural pluralism. Indeed, it represents the plurality of “spaces of place” as “a locale whose form, function, and meaning are self-contained within the boundaries of physical contiguity” (Castells 2000, p. 453). Shared, unique, identifiable meanings and images of spaces of place are acquired by virtue of the built form, cultural or political function, way of life, or other characteristics (Castells 2000).

“But the city is never singular; it is never a place, an image, a representation, a public.” (Alcubilla Troughton 2003, online).

Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space reminds us that, to address the urban, we must think of its spatiality as a simultaneous dialectic of the spatial triad—conceived, perceived and lived space. In this position, city is an immoderate oeuvre, a daily-lived struggle, an opportunity for inhabitation. Explaining space as a social reality, Jane Jacobs argued that public space is a stage of everyday life or “sidewalk ballet”. For such a performance, she states, spontaneous social interactions are enough—e.g. simple greetings, or just seeing and being seen. Hence, we, each of us individually and all of us together, daily imagine, inhabit, contest, subvert, colonize and impose our meanings, values and uses on space.

Departing from Lefebvre’s theory, De Certeau defines the city as a plurality of temporalities and subjectivities; city is a product of memory, present awareness, and foresight. Arguing cautiously against thinking of the city as the “creation of a universal and anonymous subject”, he states that city is, instead, the product of the “microbe-like, singular and plural practices” of its inhabitants (De Certeau 1984, p. 94 and 96). Harvey (1990) explains that the city is the “swarming mass” of pedestrian movements—a system of singularities—that constitutes and activates the city.

Moreover, Radović argues that “Everything about us is *au pluriel*, and thus about the relationships between various, and variously interacting subjectivities.” (Radović 2014, p. 13). The urban, for him, is an essential theatre of co-presences where we constantly face the otherness of the other subjectivities. This situation is an irrepressible

complexity that makes the city in which we have the right for the difference. And, our presence alone gives us that right because we relate to the space, people, and environmental context by our presence.

Therefore, the plurality of spaces of places—or the places—composes the plural city, which is between subjective and collective still subjective, which pleads to be objective. In other words, heterogeneous and unique places and different subjectivities at different levels make the plural city so that it is inclusive by its nature. Otherwise, it would be an oxymoron. A plural city represents the capacity of the community to maintain the continuity of urban values versus the individual capability to change them.

Belgrade city

Belgrade is the capital of the small European state of Serbia and by far its largest city. The population of Belgrade makes 24% of the total population of Serbia. The population density of 513 inhabitants / km² is five times higher in Belgrade than in any other region. Still, economic dominance of Belgrade is the most visible indicator of its high development comparing with the national context. Belgrade is also political, administrative, tourist, commercial, industrial, transport, financial, cultural, scientific and educational center (Đukanović and Živković 2017).

We choose the case of Belgrade for this research due to its lasting diversity and heterogeneity in both urban matrix and social tissue, which can be read in a unique city structure (Fig. 1).

Located on a fluvial border between East and West, many often describe Belgrade as the “gateway to the Balkans and door to Central Europe” because of the unique position where cultures and civilizations meet, struggle, interact, interfere—relate in space and over time.

Observing from the “eye-level”, Belgrade could seem fragmented by wounds of recent wars and multicultural character. This fragmentation, however, is indivisible because every element that might cause division simultaneously integrates the city into a single whole. On the other hand, Belgrade is very personal due to an infinite number of urban details. By walking the street, one can perceive numerous details such as daily life routines, people, textures, materials, forms, colors, smells, sounds, lights, movements, and nature. All of these details are relational in space through interaction; they overlap, superpose, and merge with plural views and over time, representing layered singularities (Fig. 2). These relations are not solely visible at the spatial level but especially at the cultural and semiotic levels, making Belgrade an exceptional case study for the plural city. For example, Old Belgrade becomes one with Zemun and New Belgrade. The high-density city rises on the Danube’s

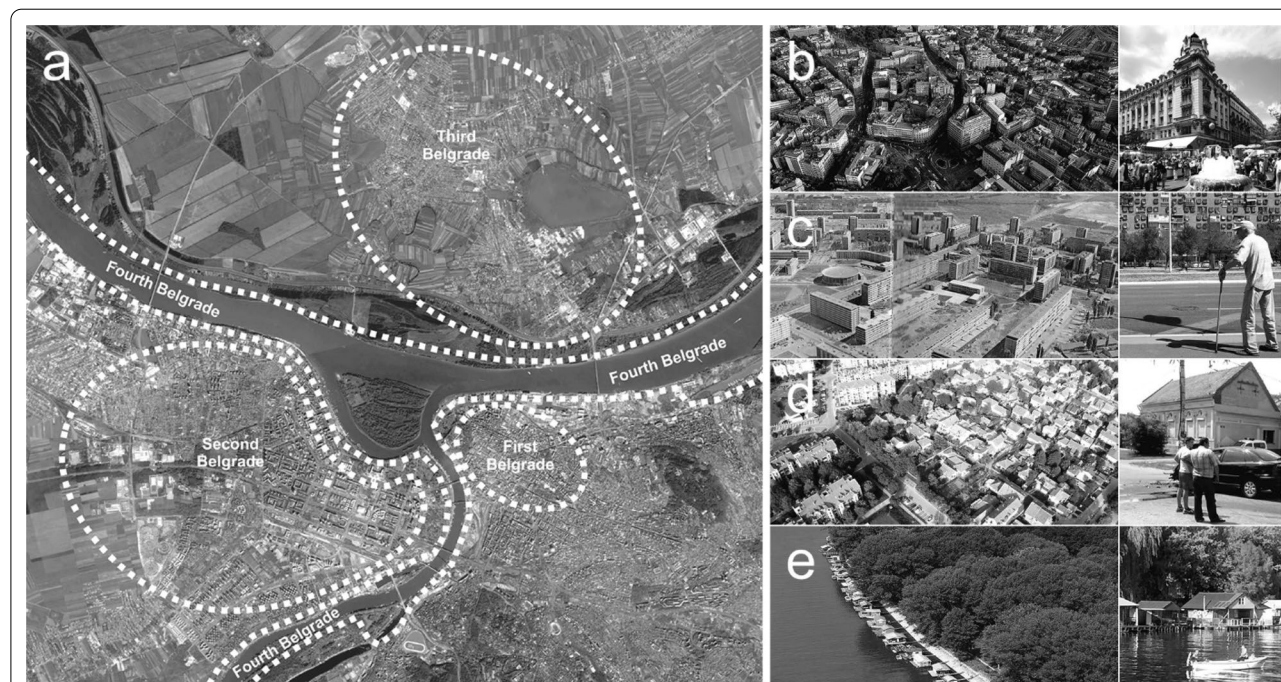


Fig. 1 Unique structure of the city of Belgrade; **a** the general structure of the city; **b** First Belgrade—historic center; **c** Second Belgrade: New Belgrade and Zemun; **d** Third Belgrade—planned, but prevalently spontaneously developed; **e** Forth Belgrade—living with the water—rivers as public spaces. Source: Authors elaboration on Đukanović and Giofrè, 2017



Fig. 2 Two illustrations of layered singularities on the example of Belgrade city. Photos by Jelena Živković

shore, contrasting the emptiness of the natural oasis of the uninhabited Great War Island on the other riverbank. Classicism and art nouveau buildings stand next to the traditional Ottoman houses. Modern high-rise glass buildings resist next to bombed ruins. Probably at the same shop, one can buy both an excellent *Sacher Torte* and Baklava or Kebab and *Wiener Schnitzel*. And so on.

Case studies selected for the discussion and evaluation

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 2005). Therefore, to discuss and evaluate elements and relations of the plural city we interpret layered singularities of Belgrade in multiscale of multiplicity as follows (1) urban whole—XL level; (2) Urban area—L level; (3) Urban ambience—M level; (4) Urban relations—S level; (5) Urban Sparks—XS level.

Scaling down from the level of the urban whole, we selected the Municipality of Stari grad in Belgrade and one of its areas—Kosančićev venac. Strategic positions and the historical and cultural importance of these spatial units allow the direct connection of the city center with rivers. Aiming to strengthen this connection, celebrate rivers as public spaces, and improve the general quality of urban spaces, we have implemented a few projects using public art as our strategy years ago. We included, in this research, three of these projects as relevant for the plural city conception, making these two spatial units an integral part of this research. Alongside lasting diversity and heterogeneity in both urban matrix and social tissue, the selection criteria for the cases were the scale and period of implementation that makes it possible to discuss the effects at a distance. The description of urban context is relative to the period of projects realization—the beginning of the 2000s.

Projects *Step towards River* (2003) and *Belgrade Boat Carnival* (2004) are consecutive projects presented as cases for XL and M levels. The Study of development of public spaces in the municipality of Stari Grad (2008) was used in the description of L, S and XS levels.

Projects step towards River (2003) and Belgrade Boat Carnival (2004)

Located at the confluence of two international, navigable rivers—the Danube and the Sava—Belgrade is situated at the top of the hill, above the flat land of the Pannonia Plain, on the north border of the Balkan Peninsula. Danube and Sava, the two biggest water boulevards, define the unique structure of the city of Belgrade by separating its territory into three units and integrating the whole city structure around centrally located "Great War Island"—Belgrade's green, natural oasis (see Fig. 1).

Situated between the three visible stone-based parts of the city, there is another invisible, fragile and liquid one—the aquatic Belgrade. Unfortunately, the fourth Belgrade still does not exist in official planning documentation despite its predispositions to be recognized as a space of public life—inhabitants of Belgrade traditionally live on and with rivers. Since establishing the PaPs program, we have worked to make rivers more visible and officially recognized as public spaces. In particular, the projects *Step towards River* and *Belgrade Boat Carnival* demonstrate these intentions in areas of the Sava River and its Riverfront—Municipality of Stari grad.

Stari Grad is the central, oldest and most significant municipality of Belgrade. It gathers principal natural and cultural values, faces both Sava and Danube rivers and Big War Island. It has strong symbolic meaning, and various cultural influences, which shape the urban tissue. At the same time, Stari Grad is a place of high contrasts and hidden potentials. It is rich in public spaces of different types, including parks, squares, streets, pedestrian zones,

riverbanks, etc. Unfortunately, a few public spaces are managed well, while others are misused.

The contact with rivers is visual, and the waterfront is (was) physically inaccessible. Waterfront and its background area towards the historic center are composed of marginal public spaces that hide a potential beauty. These spaces include residential areas and post-industrial zone, which are vacant and degraded. But, these spaces could gloriously connect the historic center with the river as irregular and continuous network of public spaces and paths.

The central part of the municipality is the main pedestrian, commercial, cultural, and tourist area, which presents the principal axis of the city life—the pedestrian street Knez Mihailova and Terazije square. The level of urban activities declines by distancing from this axis. For example, Kosancicev venac or Sava mala has a low level of urban activities, which makes them passive, almost unused, and forgotten. These areas became physical and mental barriers instead of enjoyable connections between two main city magnets: the pedestrian zone and the river of Sava.

The project *Steps toward River* focuses on the connection between downtown Belgrade and the area around the old Sava port, which remained an abandoned area for decades. Beautiful but shabby facades and derelict port structures were witnesses to the waterfront's merchant and industrial past. As a part of the most attractive and the most memorable city view, it became a symbol of Belgrade's big vision—to finally descend to its rivers, creating new attractions that will lure people into taking these shortcuts between the existing public spaces. The aim was not to speed up the walk but to make it more enjoyable (Đukanović and Živković, 2015).

The success of this project led to the implementation of the Belgrade Boat Carnival a year after. The Waterfront of the Sava river was chosen as a public space to celebrate, offering a memorable experience with the river.

The study of development of public spaces in the municipality of Stari Grad (2008)

Kosančićev Venac is administrative unit of the Municipality of Stari Grad and it is the oldest urban part of Belgrade, located between Knez Mihailova street, Belgrade Fortress, Branko's Bridge, and the Sava River. Situated on the Danube slope, it historically counterbalanced the Ottoman downtown. Ottoman and Austrian influences are still visible, primarily in the shapes of streets, the bastion's pathways and their subsequent transformations. Emilijan Josimović made the first plan for this area at the end of the nineteenth century when it was the most significant part of urban life and commercial nod (Đukanović and Živković 2017).

At the time, the area was prevalently residential, neglected, degraded and disintegrated from the city center and Sava River. Many significant public buildings and institutions, such as the University of art or churches, are located there. The area is nominated for cultural preservation and has the most beautiful panoramic views on the river Sava and New Belgrade. Kosančićev venac is an urban area with a physically "empty" but symbolically "full" heart.

The area is rich in different types of public spaces, among which numerous have high, but not affirmed, environmental value and ambience. Despite this high potential and the fact that the quality design and use of public spaces present important urban quality indicators, the public spaces of Kosančićev venac are (were) usually improperly used and managed.

The Study of the development of public spaces in the municipality of Stari Grad aimed to point out the need for enhancement of public spaces. The research aimed to: a) Identify types, characteristics and conditions of public spaces on territory of urban municipality Stari Grad, b) Identify and select public spaces that have specific potential for improvement by various forms of public art, c) Research various possibilities for improvement of selected public space's by their activation and redesign through different art forms.

Method

In order to answer the research question, this study examines elements and relationships of a plural city in the specific context of Belgrade in multiscale.

This study, to some extent, continues the previously conducted research within the PaPs program for the needs of the international symposium „Measuring non-Measurable“ held in Tokyo, Japan, 2012. Searching for the qualities of the urban in Belgrade, the previous research identified some elements and relations of urban density and urban intensity.

In this paper, we applied a qualitative case study research strategy to identify elements and relationships between layering singularities of the plural city, interpreting its nature and revealing the factors that vary due to the spatial scale and different cultural viewpoints. We captured also these relational views as manageable through public art due to our experience in implementing PaPs projects over time.

Theoretical findings of placemaking and the public dimension of space allowed us to define the plural city as composed of a plurality of places. In other words, the plural city is a socio-spatial dialectic of layered singularities and an encounter between own and shared commitments of being/existing and living in a specific place.

Singularities are interpreted as vivid, qualitative category, and directly related to the culture because the quality directly depends on specific value system of the origin culture. In the context of urban design research, singularities represent perceptual dimension of space. Perceptual dimension implies the process of becoming aware of physical objects, phenomenon or social relations through senses (Carmona 2003). It involves the images, experiences and meanings that people attach to the environment; its key attributes are symbolism and meaning.

Singularities represent at least two fundamental spatial relations: (1) the relation between place and “me”, and (2) relation between “we”, “me” and “other” in place or urban space. First, our relation with a space is perceptual which means that it subsists of cognitive, affective, interpretative, and evaluative perception. In short, it depends on our knowledge of place. Second, the relation between “we”, “me” and “other” in place or urban space depends on both cultural and social values, and our knowledge of space.

Taking all these aspects of plural city into account lead us to the main propositions that set the frame for reading the plural city, which we used to discuss and evaluate the case of Belgrade in this research. We interpreted plural city through three main criteria: (1) Private/public interface, (2) public art, and (3) experience.

Private/public interface

The spaces of place or places are perceived spatial categories between the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the urban in which qualitative prevails. Simultaneously representing physical and psychological relations, places demonstrate how people relate in and with space—the relations between place and “me”, and between “we”, “me”, and the “other”. We examined these relations in public urban space and we interpret them as the private/public interface in which singularities interrelate while forming layered singularities.

Public art

Layered singularities are space-related; therefore, alongside describing the current condition, they give us an

insight into the possibility of change—i.e. the context of imagination and management. We interpreted those possibilities through public art interventions and strategies. In our work, public art becomes a method for examining becoming of space or placemaking—i.e. possibilities of urban seen as art of living.

Experience

Singularities depend on experience and, therefore, they are interpreted as a plurality of personal views. This specifically applies on smaller scales and it is expressed through the dialogs of inhabitants and one of the visitors to Belgrade. The dialog includes drawing expressions of Momo Kapor (writer and painter), Aleksandar Deroko (architect, writer, and pilot), Jovan Nanic (economist, who lives in Kosancicev Venac area from 1947), and Herceg Slobodan (student of Architecture), while the visitor is Sibel Bash (student of architecture from Turkey, who came to Belgrade for the very first time).

Discussion and evaluation

XL level—Urban whole: Green Heart, fluvial Boulevards and panoramic view of Belgrade

Private/public interface: This space is more symbolic than real because 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 the three main parts of the constructed city. Despite various densities and forms of built structures at the waterfront, rivers are daily-lived public spaces (Fig. 3).

Public art

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 of public life.

Experience

Inhabitant feels symbolical Belgrade, representing its green heart and panoramic view. Visitor recognizes



Fig. 3 City structure, Green Heart, fluvial Boulevards and panoramic view of Belgrade city

geographical referent points of Belgrade due to its presentation in media (Fig. 4).

L level—Urban area: municipality of Stari Grad in Belgrade city—networks of representative and marginal spaces

Private/public interface: The network of public spaces represents spaces as a flow of hubs and connections perceived by people and intensively lived on a daily basis.

Public art

Public art strategy starts with the hypothesis that representative and marginal spaces together make the network of public spaces. In the *Municipality of Stari Grad*, there is a need to strengthen connections and relations between elements of the network of public spaces.

The “Study of development of public spaces in the municipality of Stari Grad” by PaPs (2008) focused on marginal public spaces, identification and linkage of their singularities. Some of the elements include urban symbols, landmarks, unique places, differential and transitional spaces, etc. Networking of public spaces goes well beyond physical linking and accessibility. Places with different kinds and levels of meaning were merged in various degrees, producing mutual or shared values and

renewed meanings—placemaking by using public art (Djukanovic and Zivkovic 2008). In this way, the inclusion of marginal spaces in the network of public spaces by using public art and creating a new perception of people has enabled an increased intensity of urban experience (Fig. 5).

Experience

Inhabitant recognizes paths as everyday experience, enjoying intensity of change while going through known places. Visitor “reads” and experience network as it encounters new spaces, gaining meaning through repetition (Fig. 6).

M level—Urban ambience: Kosancicev Venac—between the city center and the river

Private/public interface

People’s relations in space demonstrate different meanings, intensities, and feelings of ambience and sequences of places. It includes several levels and types of separation and connections—physical, functional, visual, psychological, emotional, social, and cultural. The feeling of an ambient depends on numerous factors, such are relations between built and built structures, built and open

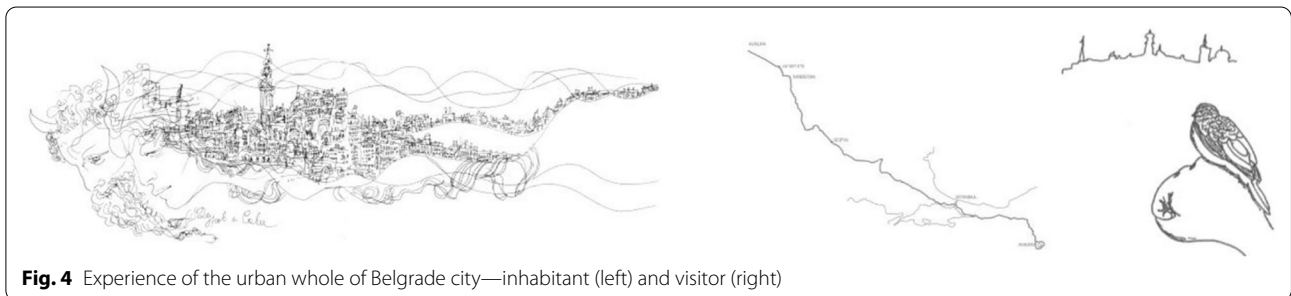


Fig. 4 Experience of the urban whole of Belgrade city—inhabitant (left) and visitor (right)



Fig. 5 Public art strategy for networking representative and marginal spaces. Case of Stari Grad

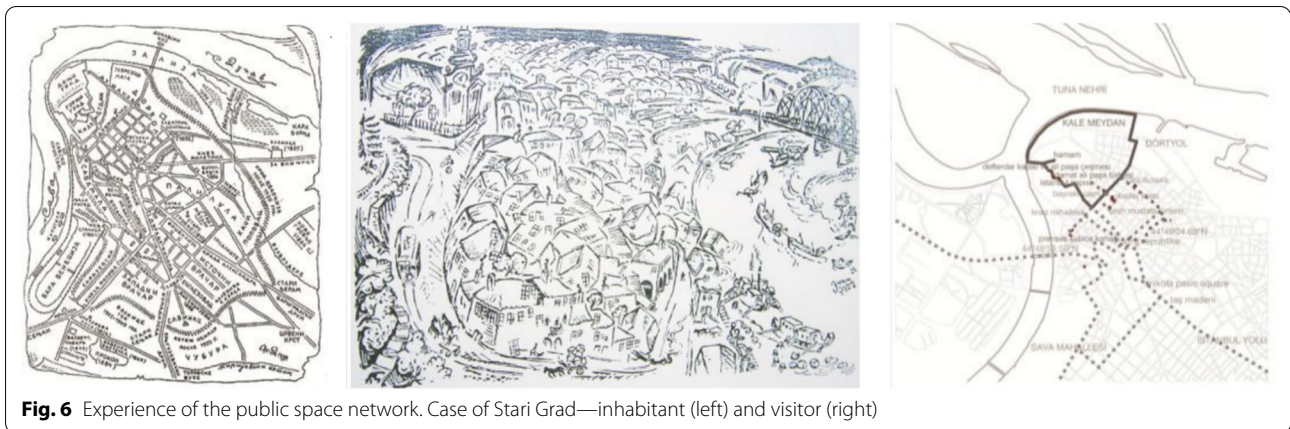


Fig. 6 Experience of the public space network. Case of Stari Grad—inhabitant (left) and visitor (right)

spaces, built and green or green and green areas, levels of use and activity, the density of memories, etc. In an urban ambience, “me” and “we” directly relate with the “other”. For this reason, the plural city requires full public participation in the decision-making process to make the ambient truthfully inclusive.

Public art

Aiming to integrate Kosancicev venac with the river Sava and city center, public art strategy is twofold and developed through two annual projects realized by PaPs: Step towards River (2003) and Belgrade Boat Carnival (2004).

The project Step towards River (2003) aimed to intensify urban singularities by densifying public art interventions in the selected area of Kosancicev venac that connects the city center with the Sava River. It used the strategy of small steps towards a big vision. This strategy used ordinary and mostly unpracticed pedestrian pathways, transforming them into a series of short distant and visual or sensorial artistic attractions. A wide range of public art installations and performances included: turf (grass) labyrinth set up on the

streets leading to the Sava river, choir concerts, theatre plays, workshops for children, redesign and reuse of local trams, video art, fashion and music shows on railway wagons in the old Sava Port, waterfront party and boat tours (Đukanović and Živković 2015). As a result, an optimal increase in the density of public art stimulated people to use targeted shortcuts and marginal spaces. By navigating people’s movements, ordinary places become more visited and enjoyed. Besides helping to re-discover and experience marginal spaces, they gained the opportunity to become unique places (Fig. 7).

The project Belgrade Boat Carnival (2004) used an inverted strategy. Instead of revealing marginal spaces it took place at the strategically most representative public space—the Sava River. Leading strategical guideline was to increase the intensity of place, at least temporary, concentrating people and activities on the river, and putting attention on its qualities. Thus, we realized a daily event, a new tradition of carnival for the Belgrade context, a memorable event that celebrated the place itself. This project was realized in full participation of all relevant



Fig. 7 A step towards river by PaPs (2003); **a** public art strategy and program; **b** realization of the project

stakeholders and has changed the meaning of place, at least temporary.

Carnival took place on 24th of July 2004 and included: daily events on the river (water jumps, sailing boats, row-boats and jet ski parade), events on the riverfront (student design exhibition, children’s theatre and workshops, boat models exhibition, fish soup cooking competition), and the final event: 250 boats in a carnival parade. Thirteen academic institutions, 24 national and 23 local public institutions, 25 institutions from the civic sector and 37 private sector participants were included in planning and delivering the project. Approximately 100,000 people attended this one-day event and it was followed by more than a hundred journalists. It was one of the most attended events in Belgrade that year (Đukanović and Živković 2015).

The event dramatically increased density and diversity of use in the area and displayed possibilities for its further development—intensified urban experience and

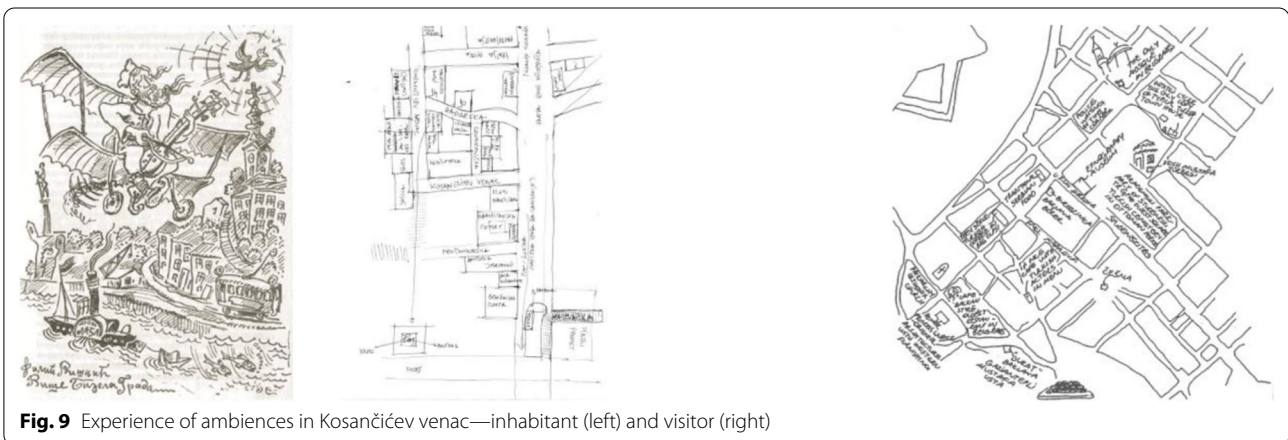
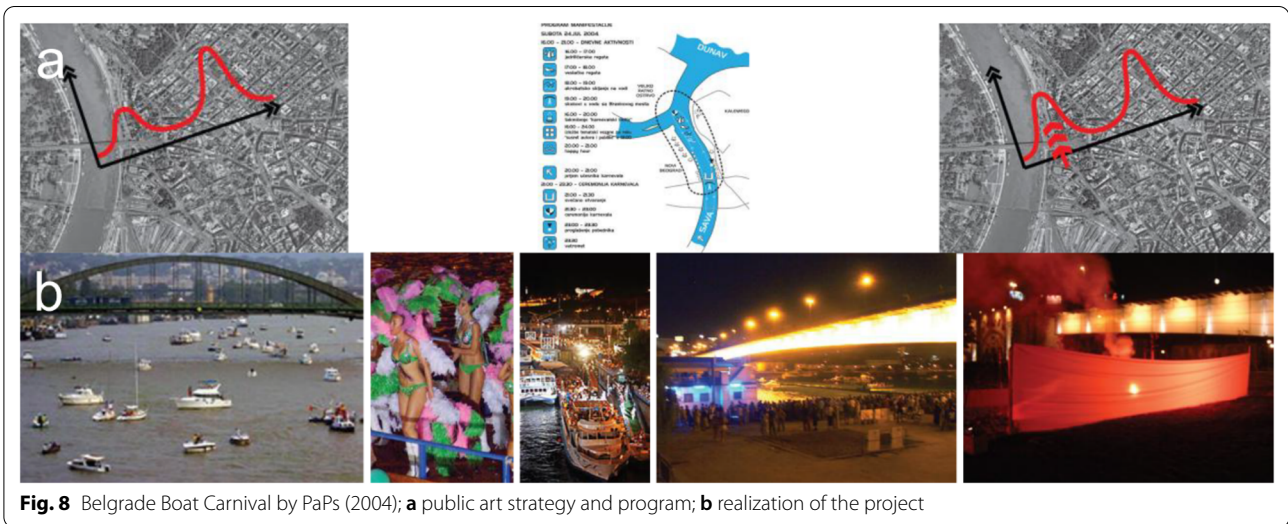
integration of spaces, including, in the first place, the riverfront and Kosancicev venac. All this led to diverse long-term spatial and social effects, and transformation continues, as the event became an official annual event of Belgrade city, held until today (Fig. 8).

Experience

Inhabitant relates to past, present, and future qualities of ambience, while the visitor relates to the present (Fig. 9).

S—urban relations: Kosančićev venac

Private/public interface: Urban elements of the Kosancicev venac are various: greenery, buildings (existing and missing), public stairs, landmarks, barriers, openings, etc. Their diversity allows numerous relations to generate—e.g. expressions of division and connection, domination, occupation, or appropriation of space, etc. All these relations constitute urban elements perceivable also through colors, textures, and signs. Thus, each constitutional part



of urban elements highlights the specific characteristic of the urban scene, generating a new meanings and uses due to our daily perception—layering singularity in time.

Public art

Public art actions change the urban scene by adding new elements to the existing ambience or changing their roles and ways of seeing (Fig. 10).

Experience

Inhabitant relates to the position of the element in its everyday scenery and reacts to the change. Visitor observes and experiences elements as they are (Fig. 11).

XS—urban sparks: Kosančićev venac

Private/public interface: In contact with urban details, their variability, and intertwined meanings, we intimately relate to the space. This relation can be based on density of details in space, variety of details, complexity of observed sequence, or intensity of a singular detail. This space is a stage for the dialog with our past, present and future feelings, thoughts, and actions. Urban sparks represent the most personal space in the city in which we form our sense of belonging based on emotional and subjective values rather than rational and objective.

Public art

Public art actions at this level aim to intensify and express relations, contrasts, or similarities between various

details—to reveal history, nature, or meanings—to connect the seemingly unconnected (Fig. 12).

Experience

The relevance of spatial elements become irrelevant for both inhabitant and visitor. Space of intimacy, personal values and meanings prevail over physical forms and functions, while inhabitant and visitor project their inner space outwards (Fig. 13).

Conclusion

From Belgrade’s experiences, we learn, first, that inclusive city must reassess what constitutes a city, acknowledging the inherent human-ness, public-ness, plurality of singularities, and dynamism of the urban environment in a particular context. Consequently, management of cities evolution does not depend on physical spatial development alone, but urban design requires an understanding, articulating and effecting the civic visions and urban realities of the city’s multiple publics. Second, in order to articulate that plurality of visions, one must take stock of the city’s multiple singularities and its individual inhabitants’ varied ways of experiencing the urban landscape. Third, plural city is about relational space and intensification of public life, and it can be managed by using public art strategies. Strategies and actions in the field of public art are different and depend on spatial scale. Accordingly, public art can be used as a method or tool for governing the relations between people and space—the relations



Fig. 10 Public art interventions at Kosančićev venac

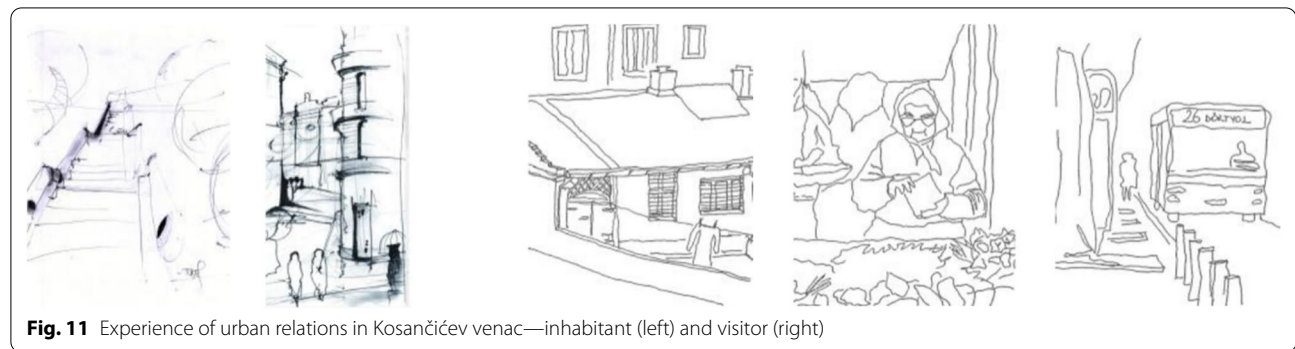


Fig. 11 Experience of urban relations in Kosančićev venac—inhabitant (left) and visitor (right)

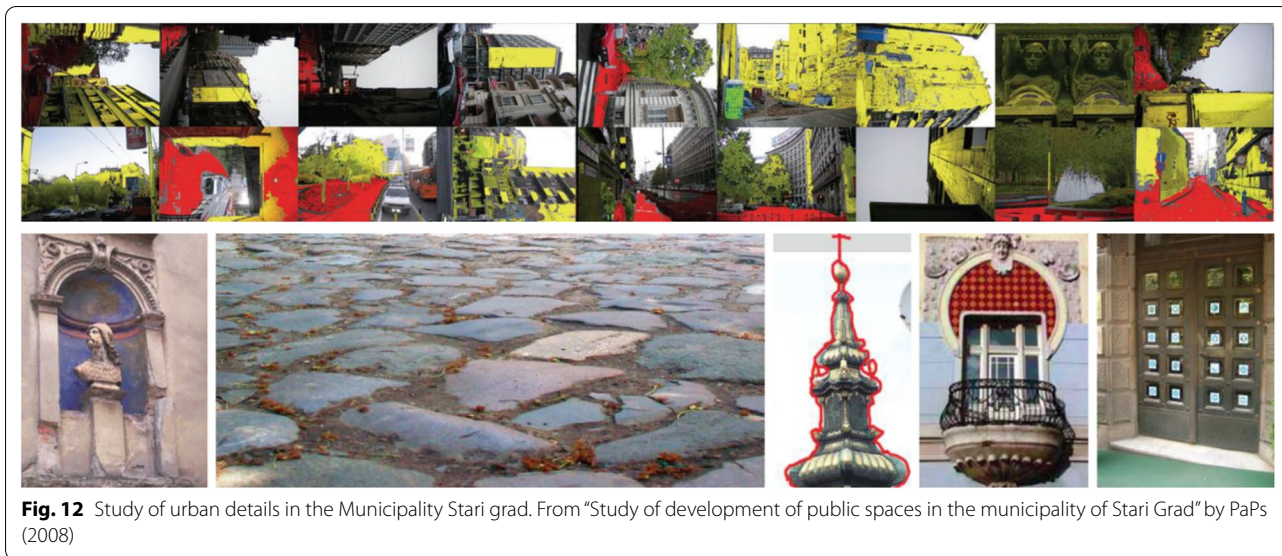


Fig. 12 Study of urban details in the Municipality Stari grad. From “Study of development of public spaces in the municipality of Stari Grad” by PaPs (2008)

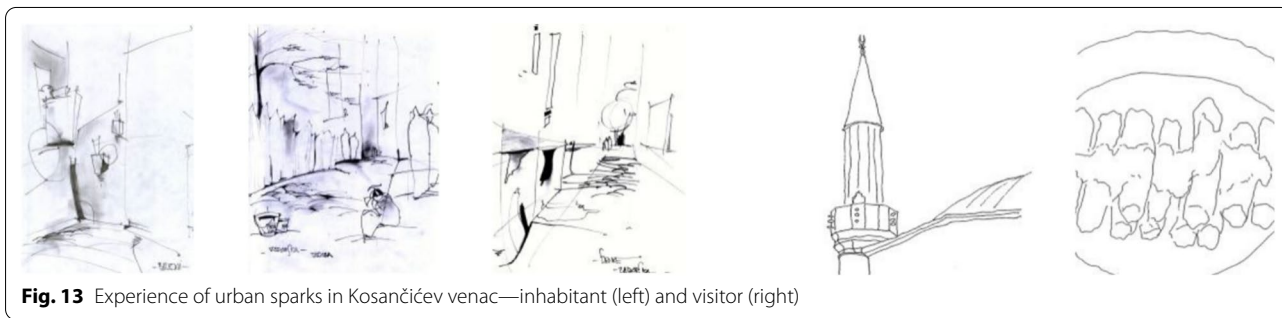


Fig. 13 Experience of urban sparks in Kosančičev venac—inhabitant (left) and visitor (right)

between place and “me”, and between “we”, “me”, and the “other”. Forth, defined through personal experience and drawing dialog, plurality of views demonstrated the direct relations between perception of space and our knowledge about it. Despite the differences in personal views and knowledge, some similarities between observers become apparent due to the spatial scale. Analysis of the opposite spatial levels—i.e. XL and XS—showed the most similar observations due to the highest symbolism of space.

All these findings about plural city opened up a possibility for new research challenges. First, we examined multilayered singularities in spatial terms from the aspect of spatial scales, but their evolution over time requires deepened research. Second, our multiscale analysis comprehend levels from urban whole to the urban detail. The scale can seem as a misconception because we are always projecting for a real, everyday life, and feeling in a scale 1:1. However, based on that very individual and subjective view, the urban quality forms at the spot where the differences between us become apparent. Showing how physical space captures a sense of place regardless of the

scale, the plural city is about contextual and relational urban design. Thus, it would be challenging to examine the concept of plural city at territorial level due to the progressive conception of territory as a complex system of cultural and social interspatial connections.

Therefore, we concentrated on understanding the plural city more than governing it. Although our experience in using public art showed that plural city is inclusive when the participation is full, we plan to conduct more research on this aspect to operationalize it. Finally, “Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody,” (Jacobs 1961, p. 138).

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Author contributions

Conceptualization: NB, ZĐ, and GC. Original draft preparation, analyses and interpretation, and a major contributor in writing the manuscript: NB.

Review and editing: NB, ZD, and GC. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Declarations

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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