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2ND INTERNATIONAL
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**REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT,
SPATIAL
PLANNING AND
STRATEGIC
GOVERNANCE**

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DANUBE STRATEGY IN SERBIA: EDUCATION-BASED RESEARCH OF THE POTENTIALS OF SERBIAN TOWNS ON THE DANUBE

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Strategy of Danube Region of European Union¹ is one of new European development initiatives and documents on regional development. Its central element is the Danube, which is the main European river and one of the key transport corridors of Europe. This is the reason why it is inevitable element of future development of the EU.

Serbia is one of central states in the Danube region with long flow of the Danube. In accordance with this the importance of Serbian cities and towns on the Danube is visible for its future development and competitiveness and its integration in the wider, “Danubian” region and EU. All these towns have extraordinary position as a potential, but they also have many local characteristics and differ notably in numerous fields. Therefore, the implementation of the “global” actions and priorities of the strategy can be the challenge on local level in Serbia. Finally, it is questionable how the strategically proclaimed integral approach can be used in so different cases in Serbia.

These questions were the fundament for education-based research in the course at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade. The theory of regional and urban planning was the keystone for the structuring of the course aims and process. The phases were organized to achieve the permanent relation between global/regional and local/urban level. Accordingly, course participants had two roles; all of them had one Danube town as a “research field” and everyone was the part of the team with responsibility of making networks between towns. The result of the course was the set of actions, options and models of both development of the towns separately and the development of whole region in Serbia. This paper aims to present how the research can be good illustration for “real” planning actions, where the main focus is making of connections and networking between global/regional and local/urban level.

¹ Hereinafter: EU.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DANUBE IN CONTEMPORARY PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1. The importance of the Danube in contemporary EU context

Being the second longest European river with the flow through the centre of Europe, the Danube has extraordinary importance for Europe. It has been the important “spin” between the West and the East of Europe. The Danubian basin is one of the most dynamic parts of Europe. This is especially visible after the forming of Rhine-Mohan-Danube water corridor in early 1990s (Pregled, 2011). The river represents international water today, linking 14 European countries and 4 European capitals. This position of the Danube made it become an unavoidable element of future development of the EU.

But, the Danube has been often more “a border” than “a link” through centuries. Good example is that it has represented a marker between Central and Southeast Europe since Roman times. This was the most perceptible during 18th and 19th century, when the central part of the Danube was border between Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires. This position has directed two different ways of development of its sides. Contemporary spatial development trends show divergent trends similarly (Giffinger and Suitner, 2010). Therefore, this “historical” dichotomy is visible today and it makes obstacles to faster and more intensive development of the Danube region.

This has been a reason why the integration of Danube region has been settled as one of major aims in many important development documents of the EU. Good example is European Spatial Development Perspective², which is one of important documents of the EU. In accordance with this the Danube is one of the “good examples where integrated approaches are required to tackle common issues, strengthen common assets and promote greater spatial cohesion” (European Commission, 1999, p. 56). Similarly, the Danube, as a key internal water of Europe, is labelled among Priority axes and projects of the EU (European Commission, 2009, p. 9).

The key step was forming of special strategy related to this region. Finally, the EU adopted the final document of the European Strategy Union Strategy for Danube Region³ with Action plan on December 8th 2010. The strategy gave four “main pillars”, which are related to connection, protection of environment, prosperity and strengthening the Danube Region (European Commission, 2010, p. 6). Further, all “pillars” are elaborated in the Action plan in more operative distinct fields of action.

² Hereinafter: ESDP.

³ Hereinafter: Strategy.

The implementation of the strategy is very significant element of the whole process of development of the Danube region. The main aim of the Strategy: “is not about funding, it is about closer cooperation” (EUSDR, n.d.). Separate fields of action have been the foundation for priorities. They directed concrete projects and initiatives on “micro-level” cooperation. The strategy is designed as flexible, so it is adaptable to fast changes in wide context. This stance gives opportunity to accommodate actions in time and place. At the end, the Strategy is more the starting point of huge planning and strategic framework than sole and separated planning document.

2.2. The importance of the Danube in contemporary planning context of Serbia

As it is mentioned, Serbia is one of central states in the Danube region with long flow of the Danube. The most important cities of Serbia, Belgrade and Novi Sad, are situated on the river, which makes extraordinary economic potential of this region of Serbia. But, the Danube has also been generator of many great natural and cultural/historical sites, so it is real “asset of Serbia” (Pregled, n.d.).

Serbia has been included in whole process of forming and implementing of the Strategy, from early beginnings. Many actions in Serbia have been developed in accordance to the Strategy. Real evidence of this activity is the adoption of the Strategy in 2010 (The Government of Serbia, 2010).

Serbia has also prepared and adopted its own documents concerning the issue of the Danube at the same time. Many of these documents belong to the field of spatial and urban planning, such as new Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, which sets up the importance of the Danube as one of two main transport corridors through Serbia (RASP, 2010, p. 5). The main planning document is certainly the specific spatial plan for the Danube region in Serbia⁴, which is being developed at this moment.

The implementation of all these documents and plans is a huge challenge for Serbia as a country in the process of transition, because there are extreme differences between areas and settlements of Danubian region of Serbia. This is also presented in the Plan, especially in the case population distribution and the development of settlement network (RASP, 2013, p. 46-47). All these settlements have position at the Danube as an extraordinary advantage, but their local characteristics are different in numerous fields. This complex situation can be imperative for professionals; How to make links between general principles and aims of upper-level plans, strategies and other development documents and concrete actions and measures on community level, “in situ”.

⁴ Full name: The Spatial Plan for the Special-Purpose Area of International Water Corridor E80 – The Danube (Pan-European Corridor VII); Hereinafter: the Plan.

3. THE CONCEPT OF ACHIEVABLE VISION AS A METHOD OF RESEARCH

Setting the implementation of same planning objectives in different local context as a key methodological problem of the research in this paper, it is also important to realize method of research. The method also needs to be suitable for the conditions of transitional Serbia, which means to be adaptive to contemporary challenging times. Many scientists and researchers have observed this problem. Gunder said that planning was treated as a kind of the illusion that the can provide necessary solutions for harmony and future development courses (Gunder, 2003). "All planners and much of the public know that this is a fantasy; plans need constant revision, but planners and the public continue in their faith that their plans will be successful, and so planners and those "planned" have the belief necessary to carry on planning". (Gunder, 2004, p. 301). This is completely opposite with current process of spatial and urban planning in Serbia, which usually results in determined plans.

This situation is also an opportunity to trace different approaches and to create new methods. The CONCEPT OF ACHIEVABLE VISION is one of the planning methods which try to fulfil mentioned gap. The concept is developed by Miodrag Ralević, PhD, professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade. The fundamental propositions of the concept are (Ralević, 2006, pp. 59-75):

- Instead of existence of two separate tracks – planning design and plan implementation, it is necessary to realize entire process of planning as a complex PROCEDURE of multiple/continuous steps that make the chain of interconnected relations of continuous planning;
- Instead of planning the STAGE, it is necessary to pass to planning the PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT, which is closer to the planning of changes, as the postulate of development;
- Instead of plans that give restrictions create plans that detect POSIBILITIES, so that planning process becomes the ACTIVATOR of development of community (Fig. 1).

Responding to the changed demands of planning ambience, concept of achievable vision settles a method of planning, which is based on the principles of timeliness, effectiveness and balance. Baseline elements of concept are (Ralević, 2004, pp. 24):

- Creation of wider scale of OPTIONS for urban development, which results in higher flexibility to adapt unpredictable circumstances and adequately react to them;
- Creation of the way towards the desired but ACHIEVABLE VISION. Through options the rut towards desired aim is more attainable, and easier to achieve;
- It uses the model of TIME-OPEN REGULATION, which responds to changes in urban dynamics, while at the same time keeping the values and quality of space.

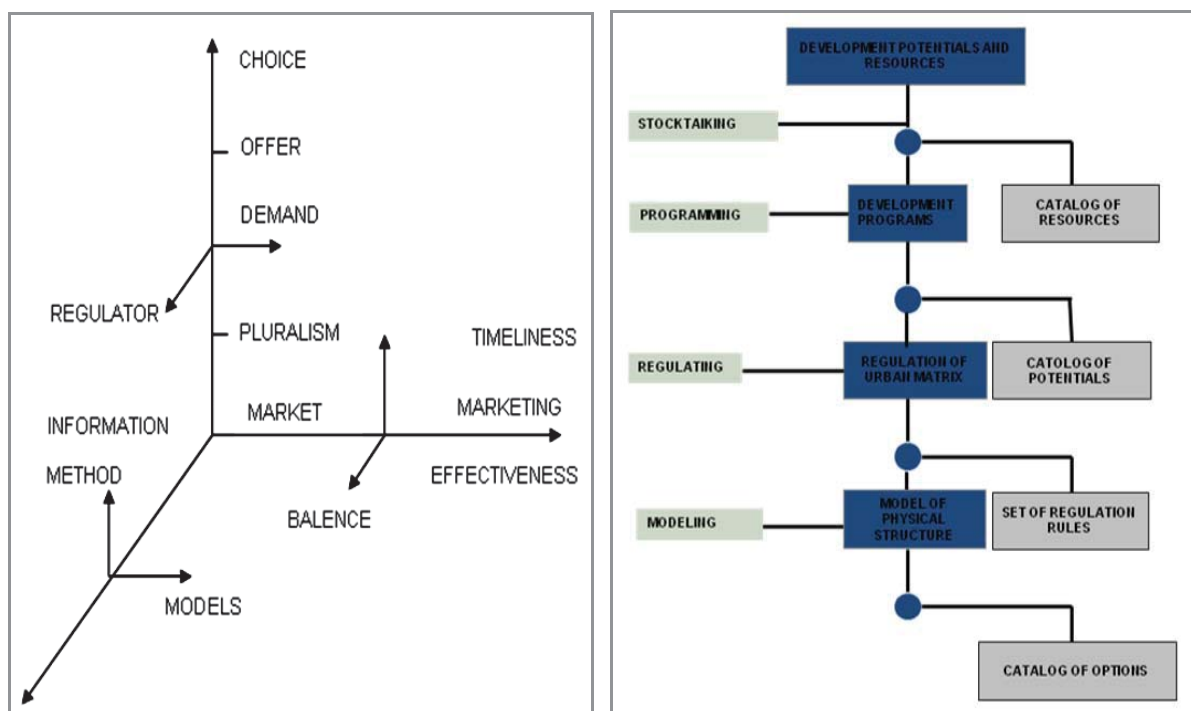


Figure 1. Matrix of management functions of urban planning (Design: S. Simunčević Radulović)
Figure 2. Phases of planning by the concept of achievable vision (Design: S. Simunčević Radulović)

These principles directed an OPEN PLAN with several phases. Each phase gives the planning results (not only the final solution). These results present a set of alternative offers, from which new alternatives can be developed. Consequently, feedbacks are easily possible after every phase. These “algorithm” of the process is presented above (Fig. 2).

4. THE STRATEGY OF DANUBE REGION AS A FUNDAMENT FOR EDUCATION-BASED RESEARCH

Education process is often the reflection of wider, socio-economic context and it hardly takes attention to newest trends. Majority of programmes and courses, which are oriented to spatial and urban planning, follows this “routine”. Planning schools teach students to be knowledgeable technocrats with planning powers (Booher and Innes, 2002). This situation makes urban and spatial planning more familiar to goals than to process, which limits the area of influence and strength of the planning.

This stance can be noticed in the case of Serbia. Besides this, the specific issue of Serbian planning schools is that most of them⁵ are linked with architecture. The practice of architecture, which is strongly related to final work instead of process, certainly has

⁵ This the case with 5 of 7 schools in Serbia with programmes/courses oriented to urban and spatial planning.

influences to planning-oriented education at these faculties. This is in full contrast to previously elaborated methodology.

The Faculty of Architecture of the University of Belgrade is the only faculty in Serbia with independent master programs of urban planning⁶. This position gives outstanding opportunity to be more oriented to different and more modern approaches and methods of urban/spatial planning.

In accordance to this opportunity Professor Miodrag Ralević accommodated previously explained concept of achievable vision to master-education level. He implements the concept as a research method in urban planning studio in 3rd semester of Master studies of the faculty. This studio is the last studio work before final or diploma semester, so it is one of the most important courses for the students of the urbanism-based master studies.

The topic of the Danube strategy was in focus of the urban planning studio with 19 students-participants in autumn 2011. The theories of regional and urban planning were the keystone for the structuring of the course aims and process. The studio work was organized in several steps by the adopted method, where the topic of spatial and urban planning was combined and sometimes alternated. This method is necessary for physical integration of space on different levels (Ralević, 2006, p. 16-17). Every student had two roles; everyone had one Danube town as a “research field” and everyone was part of the team with responsibility of making networks between towns. This possibility enabled to achieve the permanent relations between global/regional and local/urban level.

The main aim of the studio was to make open and adaptable process of planning. Likewise, every step needs “self-monitoring” by the student and “auto-monitoring” from other students. The role of monitoring was “forehand tracking of process to avoid negative consequences” (Ralević, 2010, p. 74). The explained combination and alteration of spatial- and urban-planning steps placed the role of monitoring as an important element of whole education process.

4.1. Step 1: Analysing context(s)

Step 1 was the “input” into studio work. The main aim of the step was collecting of data related to Danubian cities and towns in Serbia. Because they are spread across pretty huge area with different characteristics, the research was organized in way that each of 19 students got one city/town as “research area”.

Aiming to fulfil high results of the research, the first step was prepared to be more complex than usual student work at the starting phase. The priority of process designing widened

⁶ There are 2 urbanism-based master programmes at the faculty.

the meaning of the term of “context”. In order to this term of “context” didn’t have only “physical side”⁷, but in also included (1) institutional and planning context and (2) e-context. The first one considered the research of existing spatial/urban plans and strategies. The meaning of e-context covered the research of e-data, such as internet presentations, e-brochures, forums and blogs connected to research area. Considered together with research “in situ”, this comprehensive research led students to acquire complex and multifaceted image of research area. Final products were the catalogues of resources for each research area.



Figure 3. The catalogue of resources of BEOČIN and vicinity (Author: M. Gvozdić)



Figure 4. The catalogue of resources of “Old” Belgrade and vicinity (Author: A. T. Žeželj)

4.2. Step 2: Making networks

The importance of networks in contemporary urban planning theory can be seen as the linkage between urban and regional level. The development of networking is civilization phenomena and it is considered as one of most global processes today (Ralević, 2006, pp. 93-94). Due to the second step of studio research was settled early than it could be expected. The process of network making was in the centre of the interest of students in this step. Students formed groups with various thematic fields⁸ as a subject for research. The outputs were spatial matrixes as a reflection of the density and relations of spatial potentials.

⁷ This means: *collecting present data „in situ“*.

⁸ For example, natural resources, transport, population patterns, production, etc.

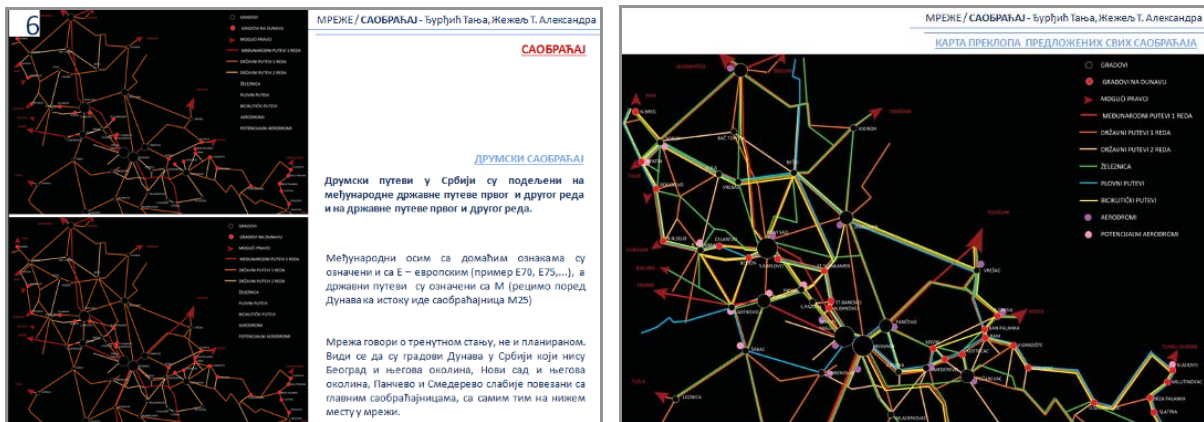


Figure 5. The network plan of one thematic field (transport, authors: T. Đurđić, A. T. Žeželj).
Figure 6. The summary plan of all thematic networks.

4.3. Step 3: Trajecting through the region

Next step was connected to the spatial programming of planned development. It was strongly related to the term of “territorialisation”, by which the density and character of all spatial relations and separations was defined (Ralević, 2006, pp. 9-12).

Students had to realize the meaning of territorialisation in this step. This included the spatial organization of functions and facilities as clusters with their differentiation and hierarchy. Due to they had to find appropriate ways of representations of this complex matter. Most of them chose the way of upgrading of situated networks in more achievable way, giving them spatial and temporal component. The final output was the forming of the catalogues of development programmes with trajectory maps.

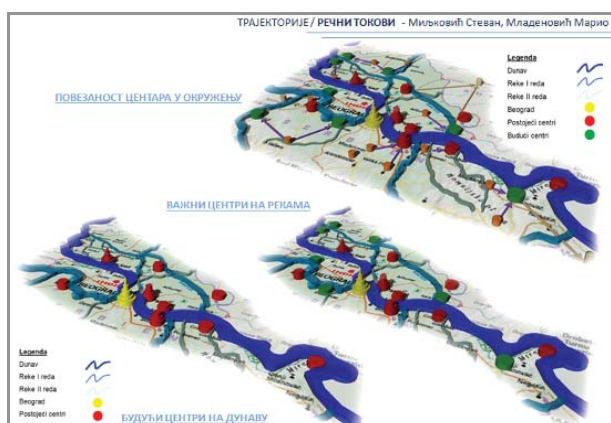
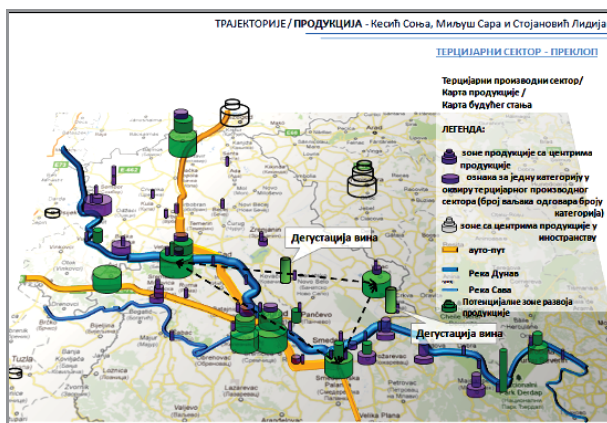


Figure 7. The trajectory map of tertiary sector (authors: S. Kesić, S. Miljuš, L. Stanojević).
Figure 8. The trajectory map of water systems and ports (authors: S. Miljković, M. Mladenović).

4.4. Step 4: Being a visionary

Step 4 meant forming a vision of each research area, so it was more “local/urban”. Every student defined the vision of his/her own research area. Every vision had to have two parts; first part was more general and comprehensive; second part was elaboration of first part and it was consisted of set of different and more operative aims. Accompanying element was “vision map”, where the these aims started to form planning “patchwork” as the first ideas and directives of concrete spatial development.

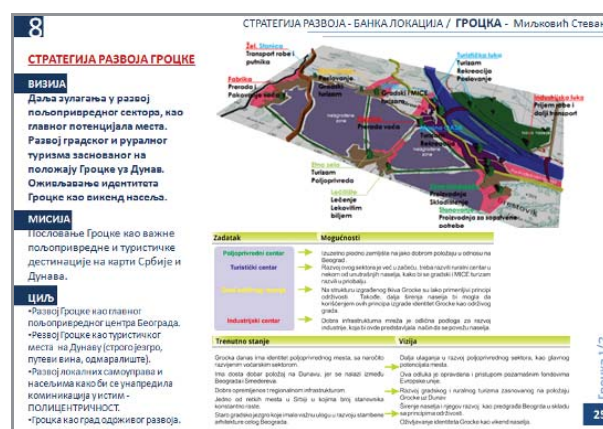
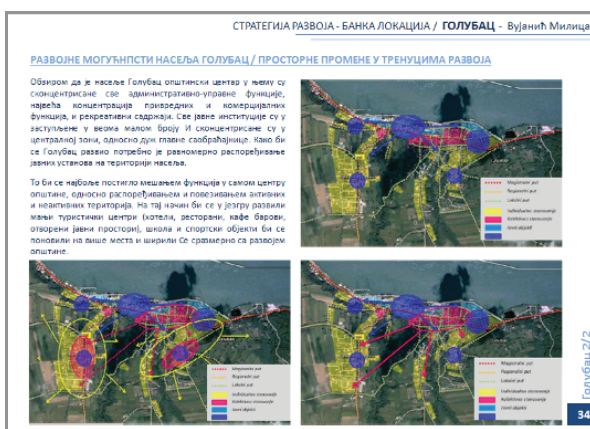


Figure 9. Vision of Golubac with vision maps (author: M. Vujanjić).
Figure 10. Vision of Grocka with vision map (author: S. Miljković).

4.5. Step 5: Forming the bank of locations

The purpose of this step is the narrowing of general development of research area (whole city or town) into recognizing particular zones and corridors as major planning grounds in every area. The main goal of this, “clearly deductive” step is the founding of proactive design solutions. Due to this is near to the concept of integral urbanism, where “integral” approach fragmentize space into parts in order to characterize each part (Ellin, 2006).

All students passed through similar process. They had to fragmentize research areas using directions and statements of their visions. Next element was the rounding of important zones and corridors. Description and definition of these zones and corridors was the crucial element of this step. This was short explanation about expected future development with main planning elements⁹. This step resulted with bank of locations for each of research areas.

⁹ Such as: surface and position of zones, links and relation to surrounding, planned facilities and functions and the typology and organization of buildings.



Figure 11. Bank of locations – “Old” Belgrade (author: A. T. Žeželj).

Figure 12. Bank of locations – Petrovaradin and Sremska Kamenica (author: Đ. Stanojković).

4.6. Step 6: Upgrading a place by modelling a space

Last step in the studio was modelling concrete locations with intention to present the feasibility of settled visions. Because this was the urbanism-based studio there were expectations from students to use both elements of urban planning and design.

Every student had to model one of listed locations from previous step by his/her own way. They got opportunity to choose mediums of expression. All students made 3D models and 2D plans and projects by recommendation. Most of them gave much interest to make the set of rules or designing codes. Some of them used tables, charts or algorithms. At the end half of them were urban designers and half of them were more urban planners.

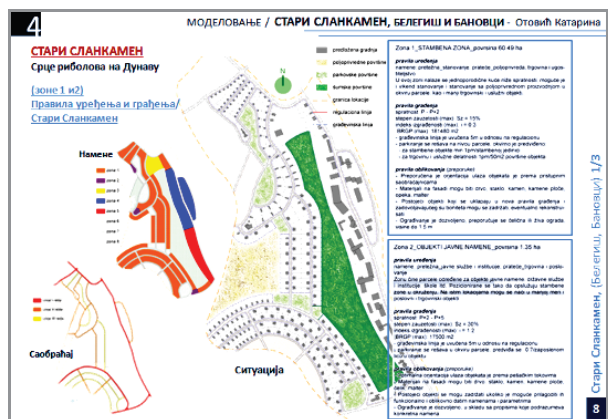
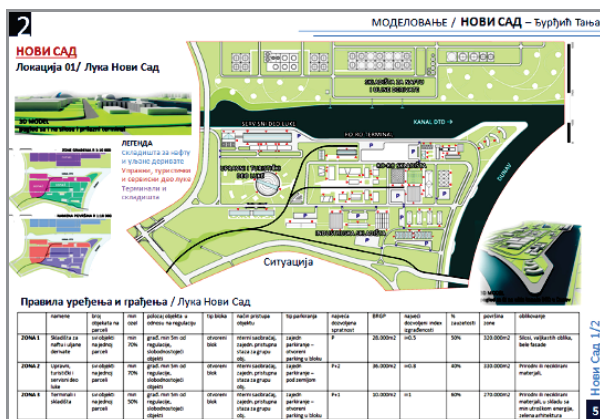


Figure 13. Modelling of new port of Novi Sad (author: T. Đurđić).

Figure 14. Modelling of new tourist “Fishermen” village in Stari Slankamen (author: K. Otović).

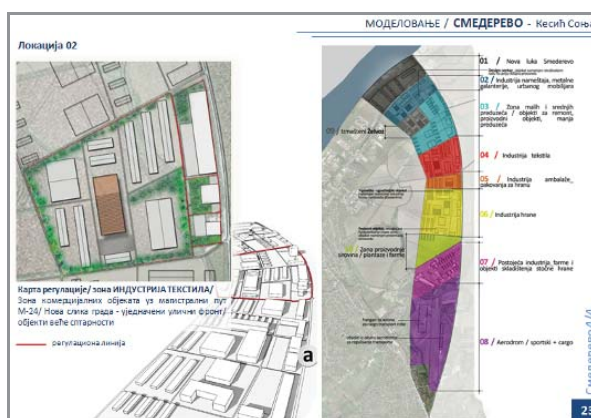


Figure 15. Modelling of new waterfront in Grocka (author: S. Miljković).

Figure 16. Modelling – New economic zone in Smederevo (author: S. Kesić).

5. CONCLUSION

The paper is arranged to present planning process “in academia” as a simulation of new approaches in urban and spatial planning methodology, such as the concept of achievable vision. In order to touch all segments and levels of planning process, the topic of the academic research was The Danube strategy, as a keystone of important EU planning framework. The Strategy is new and complex planning document with many linkages and contacts to other documents. Therefore, the academic research based on such starting point is doubtlessly an outstanding challenge for both student work and teacher leading.

Some results of whole process of the research are important and they need to be mentioned separately in conclusion:

- Firstly, the whole process lasted three and a half months, but this was barely enough for such complex matter. This caused some simplifications and limitations. For example, last step could commonly be divided in two steps¹⁰, but it was “compressed” due to time;
- Secondly, the complexity of the method and the research area influenced continual alteration between individual and team work. This feature can be seen as an advantage and disadvantage at the same time. Students were stimulated to permanent work, but some of them had the “phases of fatigue”. Similarly, some of them had problem to stand out in interconnected work, but this position made most of them more consistent;
- Thirdly, the students, as youngsters without much experience, but with huge freedom of thinking and design, had more new ideas and different approaches that it was noticed in the implementation of the concept in planning practice. Their ideas and conclusions resulted with some new elements, which have been used as upgrading of the concept since then;

¹⁰ These steps would be shared between urban-plan modelling and urban-design modelling.

- Next, the students had been primarily educated in urbanism-related subjects before they attended the studio. It was expected that they would have more problems and misunderstandings in the steps with upper-level planning¹¹ (networks and trajectories), but this hypothesis didn't come true. Some students were even better in these steps;
- Finally, whole process of research brought more work and dedication for teachers. The special obstacle was the number of different research places, which required permanent attention and fast "moving" from one place to another. This can be good reflection to the position of leaders of such huge processes and projects. There are no many opportunities to pass so diverse and multilevel projects in Serbia.

The results of the studio work of the implementation of the Danube strategy in Serbia give the clear picture of huge and complex process. Multilevel approach, which is adopted by the method, and huge and different research area certainly enable the widening of knowledge and professional views of students. At the end, true indicator of the value of the work is the award of the 21st International Salon of Urban Planning 2012. This is also a new stimulus for teachers to continue with similar challenging tasks.

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