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# Marija Maruna, Jelena Radosavljević: TRANZICIJA KOT SPODBUDA ZA RAZVOJ INOVATIVNE METODOLOGIJE POUČEVANJA TEORIJE NAČRTOVANJA TRANSITION AS A STIMULUS FOR INNOVATIVE TEACHING METHODOLOGY IN PLANNING THEORY

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## IZVLEČEK

Teorija načrtovanja predstavlja velik izziv za poučevanje na magistrski študijski ravni. Planerske šole in avtorji po svetu se tega lotevajo različno, pri tem pa imajo težave glede izbire znanj, ki naj bi jih ponujali – praktičnih znanj in znanj, povezanih s kompleksnostjo družbenopolitičnega konteksta urbanističnega načrtovanja. Dodatno vprašanje, ki se poraja v državah v tranziciji, je, kako poučevati urbanistično načrtovanje v pogojih privatizacije zemljišč in nenehnih sprememb v zakonodaji, predpisih, postopkih in procesu vzpostavitve nove paradigme načrtovanja. V luči teh izzivov predmet Teorija planiranja na Fakulteti za arhitekturo Univerze v Beogradu predstavlja pedagoški model, ki temelji na analizi spornih primerov v sodobni urbanistični praksi v Beogradu. Inovativno metodologijo smo zasnovali prek več raziskovalnih korakov, ki vključujejo zbiranje in analizo javno dostopnih podatkov, vključno z mnenji deležnikov, vključenih v proces urbanističnega razvoja. Članek se osredotoča na opazovanje odnosov med informacijami, vrednostmi in razporeditvijo moči, kot ključnimi izzivi pri razumevanju procesa prostorskega razvoja. Raziskava predstavlja rezultate uporabe te metodologije v šolskem letu 2015/2016 na primeru »Beograda na vodi«, največjega, a tudi naspornjšega razvojnega projekta Beograda v zadnjih 25 letih. Glavni cilj raziskave je predstaviti, kako lahko inovativna metodologija prispeva k izboljšanju določenih načrtovalskih znanj: komunikacije, pogajanj, odločanja in kritičnega razmišljanja o sodobnem urbanističnem razvoju.

## KLJUČNE BESEDE

tranzicija, metodologija poučevanja, kritično mišljenje, načrtovalska znanja, Srbija

## ABSTRACT

Planning theory can be perceived as a great challenge in teaching master's-level studies. Planning schools and authors throughout the world have developed diverse approaches to address this problem, drawing attention to the issues of what skills to offer – practical ones or skills related to the complexity of the socio-political context of urban planning. An additional question that arises in countries in transition is how to teach planning theory under their specific conditions of land privatisation and constant changes to legislation, regulation, procedures, and the process of establishment of a new planning paradigm. Following these challenges, the Planning Theory course at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, presents a pedagogical model based on analysis of controversial cases in contemporary urban planning practice in Belgrade. An innovative methodology is conceptualised through multiple research steps that entail collection and analysis of publicly available information, including all statements of the stakeholders involved in the process of urban development. The paper focuses on the observation of relationships between information, values, and power imposed as key challenges in understanding the process of space production. The research presents the results of applying this methodology during the 2015/16 academic year on the case study of Belgrade Waterfront, the city's largest and most controversial development project in the last 25 years. The main goal of the research is to present how an innovative methodology can contribute to the improvement of specific reflective planning skills: communication, negotiation, decision-making, and critical thinking about contemporary urban development.

## KEY-WORDS

transition, teaching methodology, critical thinking, planning skills, Serbia

UVODNIK  
EDITORIAL  
ČLANEK  
ARTICLE

RAZPRAVA  
DISCUSSION  
RECENZIJA  
REVIEW  
PROJEKT  
PROJECT  
DELAVNICA  
WORKSHOP  
NATEČAJ  
COMPETITION  
PREDSTAVITEV  
PRESENTATION  
DIPLOMA  
MASTER THESIS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, as Serbia abandoned the socialist governance model and re-oriented itself toward a neo-liberal one, changes occurred in the country's institutional, legal and planning framework. Neo-liberalisation of the market limited the economic power of the state that had already been politically and financially vulnerable, whereby significant emphasis was placed on the private sector, not only for (physical) action in the urban space, but also in terms of decision-making affecting it. The privatisation of the complete socially-owned housing stock, as well as of erstwhile socially-owned corporations and their real property, highlighted the problems inherent in the attempts to achieve complete privatisation, which also entailed privatising development land, public enterprises, and public services (Petovar, 2010). In the time of new socio-economic conditions, clear differences can be observed between the power of the state, the private sector, and the community, but these have not been reflected in planning documents (Lazarević Bajec, 2009). In that regard, Serbia's comprehensive planning system, inherited from socialist times, leaves out the tenets of a neo-liberal governance and planning system, which include the plurality of interests and the open market. Transition has led to confusion in spatial development, accompanied by the lack of communication between planners and decision-makers. Although a new communicative-collaborative planning paradigm has been mooted, according to Petovar, a traditional planning system has remained operational in practice but, unlike under socialism, when professional planners played a leading role, it now favours the interests of politicians and the private sector (Petrović, 2009).

These changes, brought about by transition, have created a multitude of challenges and given rise to complex questions and problems that demand new research in all fields, and in particular in education. What is the role of the university in studying and reacting to the changes? How will the practice of education alter under these new conditions? Planner education poses a particular challenge, since changes to the socio-political system affect the value framework and the development of pedagogical models that must be considered a part of the developmental context that alters old patterns of planning work and the role of planners in community development (Milovanović, 2015).

In this context, specific importance ought to be accorded to the position and structure of curricula for subjects dealing with the theory of planning, a key segment of planner education in a variety of schools (ECTP-CEU, 2016). As this subject-matter is based on values, the question arises, on the one hand, of the knowledge and skills that students should acquire, and, on the other, of how that knowledge and those skills are shared (Frank, 2002). The prevailing view is that 'practitioners have little use for planning theory, students find it a diversion from learning how to do planning and a requirement to be endured, and planning academics, on average, tolerate it' (Beauregard, 1995, p.163). Friedman and Klosterman feel that planning theory should be a theory of good practice, not only a critique of existing practice, whose primary objective is to improve and support the practice of planning (Friedman 1995; Klosterman, 2011). On the other hand, Olesen (2018, p.25) believes that planning theory should be 'more concerned with how to understand the nature of planning and the role of the planner, than prescribing

guidelines for how to do planning ... which seek to raise students' awareness of their own theory of planning and help them reflect on their own values'.

The course in Planning Theory<sup>1</sup> at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade was first introduced in 1990 and has been offered ever since. In view of the complex interplay between the planning system and the socio-political context in Serbia, accompanied by the relinquishment of a comprehensive planning system and the preference for introducing a communicative-collaborative planning paradigm, the principal research question is: how should planning theory curricula be re-designed to accommodate a better understanding of complexity of the post-socialist context? Drawing on Nancy Frank's argument that 'planning theory is about process, not substance' (Frank, 2002, p. 322) allows us to identify the key problem in studying planning theory: students expect to acquire practical skills, whereas teachers aim at developing critical thinking and encouraging future planners to adopt a reflective approach (Olesen, 2018) and understand the relationships between information, values, and power.

This paper does not aspire to answer these questions: rather, its goal is to stimulate discussion about challenges to the study of planning theory in master's-level courses in an environment of post-socialist transition by presenting an innovative pedagogical model tested on the case study of the Belgrade Waterfront development. This demonstration aims at illustrating the opportunities for and means of enhancing specific planning skills that, according to Milovanović, include 'creativity, dialogue, inclusivity and critical thinking, but also a willingness and determination toward effective communication and collaboration' (Milovanović, 2013, p. 75). An examination of the actual steps taken to apply this methodology to the analysis of Belgrade Waterfront, the largest development project launched in the past 25 years, allows a clear understanding of the characteristics of the Serbian planning system and its hallmarks of opaque decision-making, precedence accorded to particular interests, and changes to procedures and regulations.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Given the characteristics of the Serbian planning system and the new challenges in the process of space production in a time of transition, the Planning Theory course, part of the master's programme at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, was prompted to develop an innovative methodology based on a study of controversial cases of construction in Belgrade. Controversial cases were chosen for research as they offered a wealth of information to assess local developmental processes in which issues and problems of contemporary planning practice intersect. Media reporting served as the key source of information: news constituted the largest publicly accessible database of material about the cases analysed.

The media also provided a direct illustration of the state of spatial development in transition, characterised by unregulated urban development that planning is merely one component of. Although media outlets do offer

<sup>1</sup> The Planning Theory course was created as a stand-alone course by Professor Dr Nada Lazarević Bajec in 1990 as an elective specialisation that formed part of the Faculty of Architecture curriculum before the adoption of the Bologna Process.

information about construction activities for a variety of purposes – information, education, popular entertainment – their reporting is shaped by editorial policy, which permits the quality of the source and content of the information to be evaluated.

Media coverage of projects was used as the primary research material for the case study. The methodological approach entailed monitoring day-to-day media reporting to understand the socio-economic logic of the development of the city and the structure of spatial governance stakeholders, recognise key urban policies and their purposes, identify primary stakeholders, and acknowledge interests and power dynamics, with particular reference to how the planning profession responded to evolving changes affecting the planning system.

The selected case study, Belgrade Waterfront, is the largest and most controversial urban development project in the last 25 years. This is evidenced by the high visibility of the scheme in the media over the six years since the current governing party first took power. It is situated in a riverside location in the historic urban core of Belgrade and so holds major potential for the future development of the city as a whole (Perić & Maruna, 2012). Nevertheless, the case of Belgrade Waterfront illustrates how formal planning procedures were usurped and experts ignored in the development of plans (Maruna, 2015). This project is the outcome of significant changes made to Serbia's planning system to allow it to be constructed. The changes were made opaquely and without the involvement of planning professionals, and included both amendments to legislation and alterations to the hierarchy of the planning system and decision-making powers.

## 2.1 An innovative pedagogical model for analysis of controversial cases in urban development

An innovative pedagogical model was designed with reference to the general learning model, which entails working in small and large groups and acquiring particular skills and knowledge through both individual and group work. The general learning model comprises two stages: 1) working in small groups (teams of between 4 and 6 students) to produce summarised reports of conclusions; 2) in-class workshops in large groups (involving the entire annual intake of some 40 students) to allow shared reasoning and learning. The course is focused on analysing a single case, with the key objective being to facilitate communication within both small and large groups; collect and exchange publicly-available information; and draw conclusions at a number of junctures. This learning process promotes skills required for assigning responsibilities in large and small groups; intra-group organisation; and presentation of individual and shared conclusions. Key knowledge obtained through the general learning model includes understanding the task; understanding responsibility; and recognising different approaches to research, as well

as to the adoption of individual and shared conclusions.

The course comprises four steps, and each represents a different stage of research with clearly defined results and knowledge and skills that students should acquire: 1) Becoming acquainted with the case; 2) Understanding the socio-political context; 3) Identifying urban development stakeholders; and 4) Reviewing development policies.

Diagram 1 provides a detailed step-by-step structure of the pedagogical model. The four columns show research steps, tasks, knowledge, and skills. Each step assumes clearly defined assignments and activities that should be undertaken to appropriately present conclusions made by the small and large groups. The tasks are sequenced so as to allow the complex matter of urban space production to be mastered gradually. Understanding of a set of aspects gained in one research step provided the basis for research in the next one. The same principle was applied to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which followed the steps of research and drawing conclusions.

The case was studied primarily by looking at the presence of the project in the media, more specifically newspaper articles, blogs, and other sources of news, with the aim of acquiring skills needed to select information, arrange it chronologically, and fact-check it. The case was then analysed as a sequence of events relevant for the resulting change in physical structure, and their key actors and actions were scrutinised. The third research step focused on analysing statements made by stakeholders with a view to understanding the complex structure of participants in the process of space production and the logic of their activities that affected the transformation of the city (Maruna, 2013). The policy collection and review segment centred on an analysis of the Serbian planning system, identification of formal and informal policies adopted by the various levels of governance, and recognition of the developmental objectives that underlie them. All of these steps together led to an understanding of the complex structure of space production and the role of professionals in it.

## 3. RESULTS: Process of space production in transition – Belgrade Waterfront case study

The pedagogical model was tested on the intake of students for the 2015/16 academic year. There were 37 students in total, divided into nine smaller groups. Teaching was organised into four blocks that followed the research steps envisaged by the assignment. Activities in these blocks took the form of workshops, with materials prepared in advance and clearly defined agendas and expected results. The teacher moderated these workshops.

Below are the results of the pedagogical model as applied to the case of Belgrade Waterfront through the four steps that permit students' activities and assignments to be followed and reveal the results of the research.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The findings presented below are the result of research done by students Mina Vučković, Božena Stojić, Nataša Petrović, Nataša Radić, and Marina Pešić.

Diagram 1: Innovative pedagogical model (Source: Authors)

	Research steps:	Research tasks	Knowledge	Skills	
Collecting and analysing publicly available information	<b>1</b> Collecting and analysing news	<b>1</b> INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDY <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analysis of newspaper articles</li> <li>- Analysis of web sites</li> <li>- Analysis of blogs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognising different information sources</li> <li>- Telling the difference between data and information</li> <li>- Assessing credibility of information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Web research</li> <li>- Selecting information</li> <li>- Referencing information sources</li> <li>- Selecting information chronologically</li> </ul>	
	<b>block 1</b>				
	<b>2</b> Collecting and analysing events	<b>2</b> UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chronology of events</li> <li>- Concentration of events</li> <li>- Assessment of indirect and direct impacts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding the project cycle</li> <li>- Identifying events with direct impact on changes in space</li> <li>- Logic of space transformation</li> <li>- Identifying relations between events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classifying events by development phase of project</li> <li>- Selecting events chronologically</li> <li>- Fact-checking different information about same event</li> </ul>	
	<b>block 2</b>				
Research material:	<b>3</b> Collecting and analysing statements	<b>3</b> RECOGNISING STAKEHOLDERS IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chronology of statements</li> <li>- Plurality of interests</li> <li>- Role of profession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classifying stakeholders and their competencies</li> <li>- Reviewing position of profession</li> <li>- Identifying levels of governance (national, regional, local)</li> <li>- Recognising different sectors (public, private, civil)</li> <li>- Formulating interests</li> <li>- Identifying conflicts between interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classifying statements by development phase of project</li> <li>- Selecting statements chronologically</li> <li>- Identifying different stakeholders</li> <li>- Classifying stakeholder statements by governance sector</li> </ul>	
	<b>4</b> Collecting and analysing formal decisions	<b>4</b> REVIEW OF POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of spatial development policies</li> <li>- Analysis of development documents (plans, strategies, development programmes, projects, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identifying development goals</li> <li>- Recognising different procedures</li> <li>- Hierarchy of documents</li> <li>- Identifying interests in formal and informal policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Classifying decisions by development phase of project</li> <li>- Selecting decisions chronologically</li> <li>- Identifying different decisions</li> <li>- Classifying decisions (national, regional, local, etc.)</li> <li>- Classifying documents</li> </ul>	
<b>block 3</b>					
<b>block 4</b>					
Understanding the decision-making process, interests, and power dynamics					
<b>Understanding of:</b> New procedure: New spatial development policy		New institutional framework	Dominant discourse	Structure of power: Participants in the decision-making process	



Table 1: Event collection and analysis (Source: Authors)

Year	Date	Event
<b>2012</b>	13. 03. 2012	General election called
	06. 05. 2012	Presidential and general election held: New political party takes power
<b>2013</b>	28. 03. 2013	Joint venture agreement signed in Abu Dhabi with Al Dahra, a corporation based in the United Arab Emirates
	18. 04. 2013	Memorandums of Understanding signed with the management of Al Dahra
	18. 04. 2013	Belgrade City Legislature dissolved; Caretaker Body created
	12. 12. 2013	Potential investor arrives in Belgrade
	25. 12. 2013	Investor's proposals adopted
<b>2014</b>	18. 01. 2014	Potential investor presents Belgrade Waterfront Project; presentation attended by future Prime Minister
	29. 01. 2014	Snap general election called
	02. 03. 2014	Future PM and potential investor present Master Plan for Belgrade Waterfront
	12. 03. 2014	Head of Caretaker Body presents Belgrade Waterfront Master Plan at MIPIM real estate exhibition in Cannes, France
	16. 03. 2014	Snap general election held: New PM and Belgrade Mayor elected
	01. 05. 2014	Serbian Government designates Belgrade Waterfront a project of national significance
	03. 06. 2014	Serbian Government resolves to develop Spatial Plan to Regulate a Section of the Sava Riverfront in Belgrade for the Belgrade Waterfront Project ('Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan')
	26. 06. 2014	Belgrade Waterfront LLC, a privately-held firm, established to serve as a lead stakeholder for the Government's activities under the Belgrade Waterfront project
	09. 07. 2014	Changes to the Belgrade General Urban Plan to 2021 put up for public inspection
	07. 2014	Local authority responsible for site issues temporary planning permission (limited to one year) to Belgrade Waterfront LLC for building a promotional kiosk on public land
	03. 09. 2014	Contract to develop Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan entered into with Belgrade Urban Planning Institute
	18. 09. 2014	Serbian Parliament enacts Amendments to Belgrade General Urban Plan to 2021
	29. 09. – 28. 10. 2014	Restrictions from Tall Buildings Study for Belgrade removed
	23. 10. 2014	Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan put up for public inspection
	25. 10. 2014	Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own holds panel discussion entitled 'Below the surface of Belgrade Waterfront: Plans and consequences'
	28. 11. 2014	Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences submits set of comments and suggestions to National Spatial Planning Agency following public inspection of Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan
	08. 12. 2014	Management of Urbanists Association of Belgrade resigns Amendments to Planning and Construction Law enacted
	31. 12. 2014	Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan enacted by Serbian Parliament
	<b>2015</b>	10. 01. 2015
31. 01. 2015		Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan takes effect
18. 02. 2015		Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own holds rally protesting against opening of Belgrade Waterfront promotional kiosk and restaurant
05. 03. 2015		Academy of Architecture of Serbia releases Declaration on Belgrade Waterfront
09. 03. 2015		Government of Serbia proposes special legislation declaring Belgrade Waterfront a project of national significance
12. 03. 2015		Parliamentary Committee endorses special legislation
16. 03. 2015		Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own holds rally outside Parliament
30. 03. 2015		Group of Belgrade lawyers submits motion seeking withdrawal of special legislation declaring Belgrade Waterfront a project of national significance
08. 04. 2015		Law Declaring Belgrade Waterfront a Project of National Significance and Regulating Specific Expropriation and Permitting Requirements enacted
10. 04. 2015		Serbian Parliament enacts special legislation
26. 04. 2015		Joint venture agreement signed for Belgrade Waterfront
26. 04. 2015		Civic rally in protest against joint venture agreement
14. 06. 2015		Bicycle path closed
26. 06. 2015		Protest rally by Streets for Cyclists, a cyclists' association
30. 07. 2015		Expiry of limited planning permission for promotional kiosk
15. 08. 2015		Eagle Hills Serbia incorporated
20. 09. 2015		Joint venture agreement for Belgrade Waterfront published on Serbian Government web site
24. 09. 2015	Building permission issued for first two mixed-use residential and commercial towers	
27. 09. 2015	Construction starts of first two mixed-use residential and commercial towers at Belgrade Waterfront	
27. 09. 2015	Protest rally spearheaded by Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own	
06. 10. 2015	Academy of Architecture of Serbia releases second Declaration on Belgrade Waterfront	

### 3.1 Becoming acquainted with the case

The first step of the assignment entailed a review of online newspapers, blogs, and other online resources referencing the selected case. All information publicly available online was researched, and each news feature was treated as a separate piece of information. The evolution of the case was simulated in class through a reconstruction of the sequence in which news were published. The objective here was for the group to come to a shared understanding of the history of the case. Sources were fact-checked in parallel with a comparative review of the collected material. After the first block of teaching was completed, students worked at home to fact-check information, arrange sources in chronological order, and practise the selected citation style. This effort involved a total of ten online newspapers, two blogs, and seven development documents, including Government documents, Spatial Plan, Urban Plan, investment agreement, and urban planning study. Also reviewed was a summary of claims advanced by Don't Let Belgrade D(r) own, the key civic group that emerged in opposition to Belgrade Waterfront.

### 3.2 Understanding the socio-political context

The second step entailed collecting and analysing events that affected the development and execution of the project. Selected information was chosen from the wealth of news available, and the sequence of events was reconstructed. The focus here was on recognising events that had a direct impact on changes in space and that essentially reflected the socio-economic and political context (Maruna, 2013). The resulting chronological summary of events, displayed in a format that included the date and description of each event, allowed a review of the entire process whereby space was transformed for Belgrade Waterfront. Events were further subdivided by calendar year (see Table 1).

### 3.3 Identifying urban development stakeholders

The third step in investigating the case study entailed collecting and analysing statements made by all stakeholders. For the purpose of this research,

Table 2: Identification of stakeholders and recognition of their interests (Source: Authors).

Sector	Stakeholder	Interest	
<b>Public sector</b> (national and local level)	Ministry of Finance	Ensuring optimal allocation of financial resources and prevention of inappropriate and illicit use of budget funds	
	Ministry of Economy	Attracting international investment and donations to execute infrastructure projects of importance for the development and economy of Serbia that constitute public interest	
	Ministry of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure	Advocating the public interest of all members of the public and ensuring greater quality of life in the city	
	National Spatial Planning Agency		
	Belgrade City Legislature		
	Mayor	Protection of shared and common interest of the local population; preservation of urban settings and tradition of the city	
	<b>Professionals</b>	Belgrade Urban Planning Institute	
		Institute for Architecture and Urban Planning	
		City Architect	Safeguarding the shared and common interest of the local population
		Sociologist, professor (retired)	Safeguarding the common good and public interest of all citizens of Serbia; advancing public welfare
<b>Private sector</b>	Head of team tasked with developing the Republic of Serbia Spatial Plan	Contributing to balanced development throughout Serbia by preparing spatial plans	
	Professors at University of Belgrade Faculties of Law and Economics	Passing knowledge on to coming generations and contributing effort and knowledge to the Serbian economy	
	Belgrade Waterfront LLC and Eagle Hills LLC	Safeguarding civil, commercial, and property rights	
	Investor	Profit	
	Serbian construction firms	Achieving a leading position in the Serbian construction industry and accessing the global market	
	Architects, lawyers, managers of Serbian construction firms	Personal and company profit; advancement through professional engagement; acquisition of knowledge and skills needed for continuing development	
<b>Civil sector (professionals)</b>	President of the Union of Architects of Serbia	Progress in architecture and urban planning	
	President of Academy of Architecture of Serbia	Advocating and promoting interests of their respective organisations	
	Head of Executive Board of Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences (Architect)	Advancement through professional engagement; acquisition of knowledge and skills needed for continuing development	
	Editor of Serbian construction-themed trade journal		
	President of Society of Architects of Belgrade		
	Architect (Activist of Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own)	Active involvement of public in development of their environment to avoid the common good and public resources becoming collateral damage	

all individuals, groups, or organisations interested in changes to space or able to influence the outcomes of processes were treated as stakeholders. As the initial collection and chronological arrangement of events had allowed the researchers to observe the set of concrete actions, stakeholders, and outcomes of Belgrade Waterfront, this step required understanding the roles played by individuals and institutions in the events and activities. This allowed the study to directly link stakeholders with their respective mechanisms of action and clarify the scope of their influence on the final outcome (Maruna, 2013). Sources assessed as reliable through fact-checking in the first step were examined to identify direct statements made by various stakeholders relating to the Belgrade Waterfront case: Mayor of Belgrade, Prime Minister, City Government, National Government, cabinet ministers, political party officers, civil society representatives, business managers, investors, activists, professionals, and the like.

This task entailed arranging statements in chronological order, where each statement had to be accompanied by its date, source, title of news feature, name and office of person making the statement, and the actual quotation. The assignment also required stakeholders in the production of space to be categorised by sectoral affiliation, i.e. whether they came from the public, private, or civil sectors. This step centred on an analysis of statements about Belgrade Waterfront made by experts and the recognition of their roles, or interests, which revealed the actual space available for professional action. A total of seven statements were made in 2012, exclusively by public officials; this number rose to 74 in 2015, with stakeholders from the public, private, and civil sector all represented. Professionals made 49 statements between 2012 and 2015. Stakeholder analysis also included the recognition of their formal roles and the formal interests they represented (see Table 2).

### 3.4 Reviewing development policies

The final step in researching Belgrade Waterfront entailed collecting and reviewing formal decisions relevant to the case study. The decisions were arranged in chronological order by their date of enactment. The review comprised development documents such as strategies, plans, development programmes, projects, studies, real property purchase agreements, amendments to legislation, and the like. It was also necessary to select documents pertaining to national, regional, and local policies, as well as other sectoral policies (social, environmental, cultural, spatial planning, etc.). Although the project primarily affects the area of Belgrade, its elevation to a matter of national significance, as borne out by events highlighted above, required analysis of both national and local-level decisions (see Table 3).

## 4. DISCUSSION: Understanding the decision-making process, spheres of interest, and power dynamics

The study of the controversial Belgrade Waterfront case, performed through the pedagogical model described above, allowed students to master key issues examined by planning theory (Lazarević Bajec, 1992): what planning is, how plans are made, and how planning is positioned in the contemporary context of space production in Serbia's post-socialist transi-

tion. In parallel with introducing new knowledge, the pedagogical model promoted the development of critical thinking and permitted understanding of the complexities of professional practice and the role of individuals in it.

Urban development is, on the whole, a reflection of socio-economic and political circumstances, or, more precisely, the result of myriad interests. Stakeholders' interests stem from the respective value frameworks in which they move and which they accept, and may be grouped by sectoral affiliation or type of power – political, economic, or social – that these actors represent (Maruna, 2013). The variety of interests in play often leads to conflict, which is the consequence of differences in the value frameworks of stakeholders in the process of space production. As such, physical structure, the tangible output of space production, represents the victorious set of values and depends on the power of the dominant stakeholder. As the issue is one of urban development, architects and planners play essential roles in all stages of governing the process of space production. Their roles are twofold: more broadly, they safeguard the public interest in different sectors, whilst a narrower interpretation of these roles reduces them to mere developers of plans. The positioning of the importance of plans is of the utmost importance for spatial governance: here it must be made clear whether plans are seen only as an instrument to exercise a group of dominant interests, or as a means for attaining the public interest, with clearly defined mechanisms for implementation.

The socio-political context of Serbia's transition has produced a set of circumstances wherein stakeholders in the process of space production act without sufficiently clear rules and depend on means at their disposal at any given moment to pursue their interests. This permits various types of formal and informal action within an institutional framework characterised by unclear procedures and powers, as well as an opaque decision-making process that favours particular interests.

The preponderance of public-sector interests and political power in the Belgrade Waterfront project primarily reflects the interests of the governing political party. The events and decisions reviewed reveal the positions and intentions of the ruling party, resulting in decision-making about the project being reduced to only the Government and one investor, as well as in the project being assigned national importance although it is restricted to the City of Belgrade. They also illustrate the existence of formal avenues for public involvement that, however, do not facilitate the acknowledgment of comments or suggestions voiced by the civil sector, meaning that social power remains unexercised. The statutory planning process is in this case viewed as only a set of obsolete procedures, with planning transformed into an instrument to be wielded by the governing party. The role of planning institutions was only to carry out the decision to execute – legalise – the nationally-significant Belgrade Waterfront project by developing the required plan. When a group of experts, members of scientific bodies and professional organisations, and the country's highest scientific institutions, attempted to voice their opposition to amendments to plans and legislation and the enactment of the planning document for the project and make suggestions for improvement, they were met with casual dismissal.



**Table 3: Collection and review of decisions (Source: Authors).**

Year	Date of enactment	Decision
2012	13. 03. 2012	Decision to call general election
2013	28. 03. 2013	Decision to enter into joint venture agreement with Al Dahra
	24. 09. 2013	Decision to dismiss Mayor
2014	29. 01. 2014	President of Serbia dissolves Serbian Parliament and calls snap general election
	01. 05. 2014	Serbian Government designates Belgrade Waterfront a project of national significance
	26. 05. 2014	Government decision to incorporate Belgrade Waterfront LLC
	03. 06. 2014	Government decision to develop Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan
	22. 07. 2014	Decision to amend General Urban Plan pursuant to Law on Planning and Construction
	03. 09. 2014	Contract to develop Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan entered into with Belgrade Urban Planning Institute
	18. 09. 2014	Serbian Parliament enacts Amendments to Belgrade General Urban Plan to 2021
	18. 09. 2014	Restrictions from Tall Buildings Study for Belgrade removed
	08. 12. 2014	Serbian Parliament enacts amendments to Planning and Construction Law enacted
	31. 12. 2014	Serbian Parliament enacts Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan
2015	31. 01. 2015	Belgrade Waterfront Spatial Plan takes effect
	08. 04. 2015	Law Declaring Belgrade Waterfront a Project of National Significance and Regulating Specific Expropriation and Permitting Requirements enacted
	08. 04. 2015	Serbian Parliament enacts special legislation
	26. 04. 2015	Joint venture agreement signed for Belgrade Waterfront
	25. 09. 2015	Planning permission issued for first two mixed-use residential and commercial towers

Review of publicly available information through clearly defined research steps and tasks resulted in a methodical and gradual construction of understanding of the complexity of spheres of interest and power dynamics, as well as of the position of architects and urban planners in the process of space production. This methodological approach revealed the potential and means for developing research skills in future planners, understanding political processes within spatial development, and understanding dominant interests and their interrelationships. Professionals' views of and reactions to processes employed to implement Belgrade Waterfront constituted an attempt to influence the project, but, in a situation where political power dominates, their role as advocates of public interest was completely side-lined. Analysis of the news, events, statements, and decisions presented above gradually facilitated the development of critical thinking with respect to information published in the media. Reading interests, formulating them, and re-examining the difference between formal interests within each sector and information available through the media constitutes the foundation on which to build the reflexive role of future planners.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This innovative methodology in researching controversial case studies in urban development entails clearly defined steps and tasks designed to aid in understanding circumstances that are an integral part of the process of space production. Challenges to studying the theory of planning identified on the example of Belgrade Waterfront reveal the potential and means for developing critical thinking about the urban development of Belgrade and planning practices that form one of its components. The collection and analysis of information published in the media through the four steps of becoming acquainted with the case, understanding the socio-economic

context, identifying stakeholders in the process of space production, and reviewing development policies led to the gradual construction of reflexion on the circumstances in which Belgrade Waterfront is being implemented and the environment created by the media. Understanding the positions of professionals and their interests, as well as identifying the types of powers possessed by the various stakeholders in the process of space production, is of particular significance for constructing reflexion on the current state of spatial development in transition. In this regard, acknowledging political circumstances, formulating interests, and recognising relationships between interest groups and their powers within their respective sectors is seen as a contribution to creating the role of the planner in urban development. Constructing the reflexive role of the planner in processes that take place in spatial development presents an opportunity to enhance planning practice in Serbia and incorporate the views of the profession into urban development in a broader sense.

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