

## URBAN PRESERVATION AND RENEWAL IN A POST-SOCIALIST CITY. CASE STUDY OF BELGRADE

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### Abstract

Discussions on the issue of the urban development in Belgrade are still in progress, although since 2003 the city once again has current urban planning document at its disposal, General Plan of Belgrade 2021. Nevertheless globalisation and intense transition and development of the city urge for a change of many visions within that planning document, has not been seen on time by its proper authors. Three capital issues are left out of the document, all essential for the time Belgrade lives now. One of these, Project Belgrade Underground, still stands out of official legislation, ever since it was dropped out in 1982, although Belgrade must turn back to this capital project. There is still an absence of understanding within the city and state government that spoils the area of essential directions to the metropolitan development, ever since 1992 and 2000. Second one, a network of high-speed city motorways, shall follow the underground train-network on the surface in as much as possible. And the third one, Belgrade on the northern embankment of the biggest European river, but a real Belgrade and not a “lawless” slum-city as it exists from the socialism times, shall become a capital destination for all European, world and domestic investments. Paper elaborates some other issues of the development as well, all essential for Serbian (Yugoslavian!) capital, “A City of the Future of South-East Europe”: housing and civil war immigration.

### Streszczenie

Dyskusje na temat rozwoju przestrzennego Belgradu nie ustają, chociaż od roku 2003 miasto ponownie dysponuje formalną dokumentacją planistyczną – „Planem Ogólnym Rozwoju Belgradu do roku 2021”. Dzieje się tak, ponieważ w świetle procesów globalizacji i intensywnego rozwoju miasta (których autorzy planu nie byli w stanie przewidzieć), wiele decyzji planu wymaga ponownego przeanalizowania i ewentualnego wprowadzenia zmian. Niestety ani władze rządowe ani municypalne nie doceniają wagi konsekwentnego rozwoju miasta i potrzeby racjonalnego gospodarowania gruntami, nie zmieniły tego nastawienia ani wydarzenia i zmiany polityczne w roku 1992 ani w roku 2000. Na przykład trzy zasadnicze dla rozwoju miasta problemy urbanistyczne nie zostały zawarte w pierwotnym dokumencie planu, a dotyczą zagadnień istotnych dla Belgradu już dzisiaj. Jednym z nich jest Projekt Metra Belgrad, od 1982 roku nie uwzględniany w dokumentach planistycznych, który teraz będzie musiał się ponownie znaleźć w strategii rozwoju miasta. Drugim zagadnieniem jest plan sieci podziemnych miejskich dróg szybkiego ruchu (wersja dróg prowadzonych naziemnie jest także możliwa do rozważenia). Trzecim zagadnieniem jest zrównoważony rozwój doliny Dunaju na odcinku Belgradu, zagospodarowania północnej skarpy tej największej europejskiej rzeki w taki sposób, aby powstała tam prawdziwa wizytówka Belgradu, cel krajowych i międzynarodowych inwestycji, a nie chaotyczna i powstająca bez planu dzielnica slumsów (pozostałość okresu gospodarki socjalistycznej). Ponadto artykuł przedstawia inne zagadnienia dotyczące rozwoju Belgradu, ważne w perspektywie miasta nie tylko jako stolicy Serbii, ale jako istotnego ośrodka południowo-wschodniej Europy (terytorium byłej Jugosławii), także w aspekcie kwestii mieszkalnictwa dla uchodźców po wojnie domowej.

Keywords: City; Future; East Europe; New directions; Management; Development; Urban preservation and renewal.



Figure 1.  
Belgrade from the plane

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The expectations of the city for the future and the present trends combine with a local urban history of over two millennia and necessitate a degree of preservation, repair, rehabilitation and renewal of the urban architectural substance that qualitatively and quantitatively far empowers new construction activities. This entails obvious problems of urban preservation that, however, differ substantially in their essence and function. Many dwindling social, economic, religious, cultural and some other communities more or less numbered are now unable to maintain their buildings and functions. Unlike some others, many of them established only now, in the age of transition (Kostoff, 2001).

Although Belgrade – not least because of its reach historical heritage – year after year attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists and guests from all over the world, the Serbian (and Yugoslavian!) capital is no lifeless museum piece. Rather, the lively city is inhabited by approximately 1.8 million people and offers more than half a million jobs for both its denizens and commuters from its surroundings in Vojvodina and Central Serbia (Thompson, Travlou, 2007).

The more dynamic rhythms of housing and work correspond to those of any other western world metropolis: more and more single person households with increasing demands concerning flat size. Families get

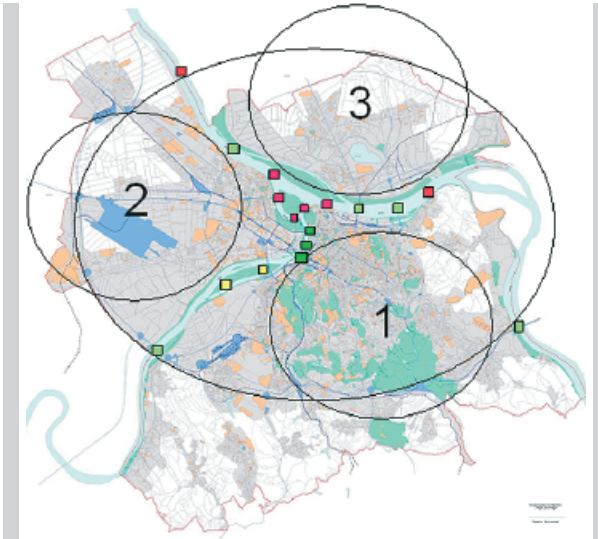
smaller and smaller. There are every day more and more high-tech workplaces in the tertiary service sectors and fewer and fewer jobs in industry and trade. A more and more secular society of different philosophies and religions resembles less and less the so-called communist stronghold of the anti-reformist society of the socialist past.

Less than ninety years ago, Belgrade was considered a city of truly inferior housing quality. After the First World War, in the new established first Yugoslavia, a very important step has been made to improve the state-of-the-art. Just before the Second World War the city has had no more than 200.000 inhabitants. After all demolitions in that war Belgrade has begun almost from the real beginning. Just before the second Yugoslavia disappeared, the city has had more than ten times more inhabitants. That all happen in just a little bit more than fifty years altogether, and it was not easy and thrillingless. One room was shared by up to ten persons.

Lots of housing units were built up in so-called socialist period with maximum density, in all parts of the city. Some of them were less valuable by the quality of construction and structure, but by their size and usefulness too.

Affordable housing for all inhabitants in socialist state was the rule rather than the exception in the lives of most Belgrade citizens. It has never reached

its full grade, but the majority of the inhabitants have had certain benefit from such a social rules and regulations. That majority enjoyed such a solution, but minority was actually forced to take care of themselves, finding their ways to survive and get their place in a rapidly growing city.



**Figure 2.** Belgrade's three parts: first one in Šumadija (South East), second one in Srem (North West) and third one in Banat (North), with necessary bridges across Sava and Danube Rivers (planned-green color; not in plans-red) and tunnels beneath the river beds (yellow); (Source: Author)

That is how and why lots of big and densely populated squatter settlements (so-called «lawless» building, constructed without legal approval) were built, all around the city fringes, and inhabited by hundreds of thousands of citizens. Flats in Belgrade are today mostly properties of their inhabitants, although the number of those in a proper of state, city or some of still existing state owned enterprises and/or companies and institutions stays still substantial. What is generally needed today is a more up to date legislation and regulation, that would enable not only better use and maintenance of housing units and settlements, but also better and more massive housing construction as well, whatever the nature of property in question. That includes building housing units and settlements by the city itself too (Slatis, 2004).

With this background, Belgrade opted long ago for «gradual urban renewal» involving users at an early date instead of risking the formation of new social ghettos and the crowding-out of old tenants or incurring inhabitants' protests by insisting on «scorched earth» rehabilitation and similarly «tough» methods

of urban renewal, although, the necessary clear and productive legal frame is still missing. And the required framework is above all a legal one. As a capital of a democracy once again, the majority of Belgrade territory and hundreds of thousands of houses built on lots are principally private property, although the current socialist law still considers building areas/lots all and everywhere within the city frame a city proper only.

Only recently certain number of real estate owners in Belgrade has made some success fighting arbitrary ways, orders and interventions by the Republic and the City of Belgrade in the decision-making issues within the ownership sphere. That is due to the legislation based on traditional Roman law and hence on the basically unlimited right of owners to dispose of their property, that is still in expectation. Urban renewal and preservation must create a regulatory framework corresponding to these standards. Within this context, the city does not favor compulsory measures but prefers imitation effect generated by buildings perfectly rehabilitated in a neighborhood, the balance of interests between owners and users, and assistance measures extended to both tenants and property owners.

Legal entities such as companies, churches and public bodies are placed at least formally, if not substantially, on the same footing with private citizens.

The current, typical structure of Belgrade dates back to the previous century, partially from the period of Kingdom of Yugoslavia but mostly from the decades of socialist state, the era of maximum urban growth up to now. Quite a number of all Belgrade house-



**Figure 3.** Danube Amphitheatre. This “Danube Waterfront” or “Belgrade Docklands” stretches all the way from Dorćol Marina down the stream to the village of Višnjića, some 7 km altogether. Unlike Sava Amphitheatre, on the other side of the downtown, this amphitheatre is very rarely mentioned as it is, not at least because it is pretty equal if not bigger importance. Potentially very important space, not for harbor, industry and commerce only, but for residential and entertainment use as well





Figure 4.

Sava Amphitheatre in 1940 (background right) and 1990 (middle right). Another of two broad areas placed near both rivers of Belgrade, equally crucial for urban renewal and city's development. Its importance has been noted long ago, but there is still the same expectation of changing general circumstances in the economy and society to get its metamorphosis finally on move



Figure 5.

Old Trade Fair in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, later concentration camp made by Croatian Nazis in the Second World War, for Serbs and Jews mostly. Just across the river from Sava Amphitheatre, and after some very substantial proposals and projects worth thinking but action as well, stays still waiting to get its final urban stamp, that would mark historical and current importance of the place very properly

holds today are situated in quarters built in those days. Thus it is a matter of public interest to lay down standards to define which of these many buildings are actually worthy of preservation and renewal.

Even these standards are subject to a certain dynamic change in the course of time, for while the concrete utilization of urban space, the social realities of a city and its use are permanently evolving, our knowledge in different specialized areas is growing as well.

Urban renewal and preservation in Belgrade are largely implemented by three institutions, their staff and instruments: City Institute for the Preservation of Cultural and Historical Monuments of Belgrade, a division of the Municipal Department for Communal and Building Affairs and Infostan (an authority that concentrates on the properties in so-called public sector, focused on housing issues as well). They are

assisted by the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade and Directorate for Construction of Belgrade, but occasional donations and sponsors as well. All these institutions are instruments of the City of Belgrade. They are active on different levels both with respect to the urban tissue and its users (European Commission, 1995, 1997).

Unlike many of Central European cities similar in their importance and size, also still in transition, Belgrade still does not have its own Urban Preservation and Renewal Fund at its disposal, that would also be carrying for lots replacement.

According to current legislation in Serbia, «monument» is an object whose preservation is of public interest due to its artistic, historical or other cultural significance, e. g. its function as a witness to specific historical events (Cullen, 1990).





Figure 6.

Aleksandar Bugarski: Royal palaces in King Milan Street, 1881-84. Beautiful ensemble resembles Michelangelo's Capitol in Rome, still waiting in its central part to be fully reconstructed after its demolition in the Second World War: a palace that would be closing it in the direction to the Royal Gardens and the Parliament of Serbia (Yugoslavia)



Figure 7.

War Island and the Old Downtown, just before it. Both these immense spaces are still mostly out of daily, but nightly lives of Belgrade citizens and their guests too. Does the first one really need stay to a nature reserve forever, middle of Serbian Metropolis, or it deserves something else, probably similar to the solution existing in Budapest? Does the second one deserve proper way and grade of revitalization as well?



Figure 8.

Kosančić Crescent and Sava Harbor. Final remodeling of this part of Belgrade Centre, in as much as River Sava Embankment stays still one of prime tasks of all who are responsible for its development

This primarily encompasses all public buildings owned by the Republic of Serbia and the City of Belgrade. Under this definition, international architectural monuments in Belgrade are royal palaces and their gardens as well as the city centre. Interestingly, any new structure fulfilling the legal requirements may be likewise protected. However, normally monuments are at least fifty years old before coming under protection under this law. Monument protection covers works of all disciplines of the fine arts and basically is to be “everlasting” in the sense of preserving the monument unchanged for future generations.

The City Institute for the Preservation of Cultural and Historical Monuments of Belgrade determines and supervises the protection and preservation of monuments. When planning preservation and renew-

al works, every owner of a protected building or monument in Belgrade is legally bound to cooperate with, and obtain the approval of the Institute and its team composed of architects and art historians.

Normally, monuments must be restored or renewed using traditional craftsmanship techniques and materials. Apart from permanent on-the-job training in these techniques and their documentation and publication for the domestic and international architecture and art history public, the important share of the Institute concerns the necessary counseling, information and sometimes even training of the owners. Over the past twenty or so years, it has been gradually recognized that those elements of a building which normally are not considered worthy of protection, such as masonry, plasterwork, timber or glass, may also negatively reflect on the general outlook if replaced by modern materials.

In our era of fast and hence often superficial visual orientation, one of the primary concerns of the Institute is the fight for the preservation of three-dimensional objects as they are, i.e. including their normally invisible components, such as historically valuable roof frameworks (Krier, 1991).

Our age often does not manifest interest for the real-life facade of a building but merely for its photographic, filmed or Internet image. But these images often do not much to the built reality, or at least they do not show that reality correctly. For example, modern synthetic sprayed rendering applied to a Classicist building, is by any means interesting, still unusually beautiful and modern, but techniques like that severely damage the outlook of the actual structure (Neskovic, 1986).

Often the public interests of monument protection run counter to the interests of most property owners. From the viewpoint of architecture and art history, long-term profitability and fiscal amortization of a building are irrelevant. The same refers to the improvement of its potential yield, e. g. by adding new stories or totally refurbishing the interior of a structure to permit a more profitable use. However, the Institute is ready to approve of noninvasive adaptations that do not impair the historic substance, or of necessary renewals done in a contemporary architectural style. Many exceptionally valuable monuments of international and national range in Belgrade were saved upon these grounds. Otherwise they would be decayed and left to crumble, as it has already happened to some of dilapidated buildings.



**Figure 9.**  
Slavia Square. Transition and final opening of the country toward capitalist world that now surrounds Serbia, may enable final refurbishment in this part of the city centre as well. It is waiting to be completed almost from its first beginnings



**Figure 10.**  
Dragiša Brašovan: State Print in Vojvoda Živojin Mišić Boulevard, 1933-40. Looking actually very industrial but gleaming in the city centre, yet a building that every metropolis would like to have. It needs to be permanently preserved, and kept alive



**Figure 11.**  
Nikola Dobrović: Federal Ministry of Defense in Kneza Miloša Street, 1954-63. Another excellent architectural but urban creation too, that decorates Serbian Capital, standing still partially demolished by NATO-bombing in 1999. Military headquarters once again, or better luxury hotel resembling Semiramis's Gardens of Babylon once upon a time? That is what we shall see





**Figure 12.**  
Milorad Pantović: Trade Fair in Vojvoda Živojin Mišić Boulevard, 1957. One of the first and prime actions and attractions in urban renewal after the Second World War, a representative example for now and ever



**Figure 13.**  
Mihajlo Mitrović: Apartment Block in Braće Jugovića Street, No 10, 1973-77. An extraordinary example how a very valuable building can stay self respected but with full respect to its surroundings too

To prevent this sad end, all involved historical buildings must go for identification of modern uses. Institute's budget permits small grants to facilitate architecture/art-historical preservation works. However, property owners will find it easier to ask the municipal administration for financial assistance. This of course does not mean that the same owners are free of their own responsibility, and especially financial, to preserve and renew their own buildings as much as possible by themselves first, because the city budget is much more needed for certain critical issues in health, and education, where there is not much of private ownership to this end, hence not much of private responsibility as in housing.

Currently, every year the city grants subsidies to certain number of selected building tenants/owners of flats inside the building to preserve and renew their

properties. These eligible properties often do not belong to the city at all, not even partially, except for the fact that, according to still valid socialist legislation on building lots almost everything in Belgrade is built upon the land that belongs either to the city or to the state. The fact that all these lots still stay in hands of state or the city, and not in hands of their former (from the capitalist era of Kingdom of Yugoslavia) or some other private owners, makes the processes of urban preservation and renewal in the Capital at least much more if not very difficult.

These subsidies have permitted the restoration of



**Figure 14.**  
Railway Station Center in Prokop, project, 1986. When finally completed, hopefully, the fact how crucial that structure is for entire complex of urban preservation and renewal in the city of Belgrade will be very clearly shown. That includes both Danube and Sava Amphitheatre, above all



certain number of buildings per year, and the results have been very visible on the “face” of Belgrade for some time. Subsidies are granted for preservation and rehabilitation measures that benefit either monument protection or – and much more frequently – the preservation of the cityscape, i.e. the outlook of a building or monument. These subsidies are covered by the municipal budget.

Every single grant is based on an individual resolution of the City Council. Grants may amount up to one hundred percent of the cost of the renovation or restoration of a building and are – not always but very often – non refundable. In the city which is still not rich, some of its inhabitants are getting richer and richer, day by day, after fast and irreversible end of socialism. More or less easily, i.e. by higher or lower prices, they all became partial or even full owners of their (i.e. there is still no new legislation in the area of restitution) real-estates. And for their healthy and beautiful condition pays somebody else: their city and the rest of its inhabitants through the budget in which all employees pay, and not property owners only. Belgrade is really the place where certain part of its population gets so much for free, and that part is the richest one, the one that still enjoys the results of its socialist past today.

The fact that local governments of the non-transitional cities like Vienna or Stockholm similarly help to renew these cities and their buildings does not necessarily mean that Austrian and/or Swedish Capital must be ready-made and by-no-means useful examples for Serbian Capital, because the decision-making and whom to help in these cities is actually socially determined.

In Belgrade, similar social criteria could be justifiably applied to, for instance, Savamala, Dorćol, Krnjača, Kaluđerica, Mali Mokri Lug, Ripanj and/or Altina, much before central city areas that are normally an object of such an attention. City centre is still inhabited by rich and richest members of society, living in their own (own?) real-estates, which constitutes one of the most visible elements of socialist “heritage” in this sphere. That is, of course, due to different ways of “sophisticated” corruption between government structure and the citizens.

Yet, it proves somewhat difficult to determine, in simple and clear-cut figures, how much the City of Belgrade actually spends on urban preservation and renewal per one year only. Without considering the various available protection measures for chosen buildings, owners are principally obligated under general building legislation to keep their properties in a satisfactory condition.

This means that a large share of the regular building construction volume as well as of private money spent on additions and refurbishments, renovation and rehabilitation projects – whose number exceeds by far official monument and architectural ensemble protection activities – would have to be added to the official monument preservation budget.

That is why with very cautious estimates it may only be assumed what total sum of subsidies was granted in the past years for such a purpose to the building owners in Belgrade, even for the last 5 years. Requests from the municipality in this sense are growing bigger and bigger, going far beyond the capacity of the city budget. Certainly, under such circumstances, the budget would not have been even much bigger than actually the bottomless sack. That can be avoided only if the city changes its politics of helping preservation and renewal to those of the property owners who are able to make the same activities on their own expense, being wealthy enough. And that is what the law actually says.

Each subsidy granted is first analyzed as to price and value performance. With the exception of sacred buildings, it is difficult to define standard subsidy rates. Projects to renovate sacred buildings, which are classified as all-round works of art, generally receive a subsidy amounting up to two thirds of the required rehabilitation budget.

Yet there is an atmosphere of attraction that substantially grows in Belgrade every day. That growing and world-famous «rough but gentle charm of Belgrade», the atmosphere of local structures of the cityscape, do not only stem from artistically important individual objects. Rather typical vignettes of Belgrade are created by a square, a small lane, a street, an architectural ensemble, a slum-like docklands along the rivers, an old village centre. While the individual architectural components per se may be of limited art-historical value, their arrangement and dimensions, their position and interaction within usually restricted space create the impression of a tradition worth preserving. Astonishingly, this concept is a relatively recent approach for Belgrade. It was only in the late 1970s, when neighborhoods characterized by an old and low building stock were threatened by demolition to make place for new structures, that the city, independently of monument protection, created and defined urban protection zones and thus saved them from demolition or deformation.

This concept also extends to parts of the city's green spaces. Belgrade disposes of huge green spaces, which contribute markedly to the urban quality of





**Figure 15.**  
PTT Serbia, Umetnosti Boulevard, 1987-98. There is an urgent need for urban renewal even in New Belgrade, a part of the metropolis that has been established only after the Second World War



**Figure 17.**  
Vlada Slavica: Belgrade Arena, Španskih boraca Street, No 20, Block 25. 1992-2001. Now already one of the main landmarks in the space of New Belgrade, which still lacks such a structure and currently also goes through some sort of urban renewal



**Figure 16.**  
Miodrag Mirković: Progres Headquarters, Zmaj Jovina Street, No 8-10, 1990-96. Self determined approach to the new architecture, but of a full respect to existing urban values of the ensemble as well

of old village centers in the vicinity. As much as the property owners are concerned, protecting a zone means that they have to obtain the approval of the respective municipal department for all renovation, expansion or refurbishment measures likely to change the cityscape or the countryside in the respective location (Sharp, 1932). Such works include all visible changes of the streetscape first, i.e. the refurbishment of ground-floor structures, addition of new stories, the adaptation of attics to create housing space and modification of street fronts. Here the objective is not necessarily to preserve the architectural or visual status quo, but to create a new structure that does not negatively affect the surrounding area (Moughtin, 2005).

Yet, in the course of the past thirty or so years, this general framework of cityscape preservation was increasingly felt to be more general than acceptable. There existed and still exist relatively few basic data on the protection zones covering a stock of a certain number of thousands of houses, i.e. data on the structural condition of the individual objects, on individual features worthy of protection or their importance on a larger urban scale and context. The Institute for the Preservation of Cultural and Historical Monuments of Belgrade therefore developed new models of protection, which add to the body of knowledge and makes use of state-of-the-art database techniques to ensure public information management.

Inspired by various international models, such as that developed in Florence, Italy, it provides for the first-ever classification of the buildings located in Belgrade's protection zones divided into fully protected objects, partly protected objects and objects not worthy of protection (ICOMOS, 1987). Fully protected objects resemble objects under monument

life. There is certain number of protection zones as well, defined and monitored by law (Collins, 1994).

Urban design and cityscape preservation regards the urban organism from their own, specific point of view (Marasovic, 1985). They perceive it as a whole and take account of those areas that make up the true historical, urban and architectural character of Belgrade. This approach includes e.g. the protection

protection and thus are relatively rare. The major share of protected architectural ensembles is usually made up of partially protected objects, i.e. historical buildings with well-preserved street fronts and facade structures, original building height and corresponding cultural value. Thus what is normally protected in such objects is above all the street facade. Objects not worthy of protection do not contribute positively to the effect of an ensemble and may be modified or demolished (Group of Authors, 2003).

## 2. THE FUTURE OUTLOOK

As a result of a new protection model for Belgrade, the instruments for cityscape preservation have become supple and flexible, thus enabling rendering of the decisions about what constitutes an admissible refurbishment of or addition to individual buildings much more reliable.

But there is one more aspect of Belgrade's outlook and attraction that must be considered here as well. Most citizens are interested in the actual outlook of their flat, building and immediate housing environment. When carrying out preservation and improvement measures of these features contacts with the three institutions mentioned are more than likely to occur. Yet, everything would be much more suitable for all sides in this protection and renewal measures and activities if there is the municipal or even state institution for urban preservation and renewal closest to the local population.

A fund like that may be much more accessible to the local community than three existing institutions mentioned earlier. Area offices would be dealing directly with the inhabitants of dilapidated problem zones and their practical needs. The key renewal measure implemented further on by the fund would be the consequent rehabilitation and modernization of entire inhabited buildings. At least one fourth of Belgrade's roughly 700.000 flats are located in buildings constructed some fifty years ago, and one sixth in older. This often means miniscule dwellings without connection to the water mains, without bathroom, toilet or central heating, without lift, thermal insulation or noise-protection windows. As a first phase, an appropriate rehabilitation concept is therefore developed. Having necessary costs in mind, in a second phase, the building is partially or fully modernized and improved with the financial support of the fund. The housing standard improvements requested by the tenants are carried out, and practical measures are taken to facilitate the merging of several flats in

one, dividing huge flats to smaller housing units, or the future creation of housing space in attics and additions of proper size.

An unavoidable part of these activities must be a proper care to provide building lots in partial or complete exchange for supported housing projects, and the construction thereafter.

For quite a long time, another stay of urban preservation and renewal was a construction of big, mostly too big shopping-malls inside individual housing and commercial blocks within the city core of Belgrade. Filling the interior courtyards within the city blocks with such a huge structures and hectic functions proved and proves to be very inadequate to the tenants themselves, depriving them of every possibility to make use of these spaces behind their flats on their own, except for shopping together with other Belgrade citizens.



**Figure 18.** Svetislav Ličina: Jinpros Building, Kralja Aleksandra Boulevard, No 86-90, 1992-98. Good architecture, but also an example of destruction of an inner city courtyard, it is taking from the surrounding block tenants for the sake of all Belgrade citizens and just in such a way for the tenants themselves. Cases like this have been and are still possible, due to the city's ownership of all building lots in Belgrade, according to still valid regulations from the socialist past

Interventions like that are unfortunately still possible, due to the fact that the law on building lots has not been changed yet. Real owners' rights to their own properties, taken by the State or the City at the beginning of socialism, are still in hands of certain alienated centers of power where the decisions are



made. The quality of life in Belgrade as a whole may be marked as improved with such arbitrary interventions within its core, by certain part of population only. But interventions and internal huge structures like this, within the city blocks, deprive tenants in close neighborhoods of certain very substantial fea-



**Figure 19.**  
Mihajlo Mitrović: Serbian Christian Orthodox Church of Saint Basil Ostroški, Partizanske avijacije Street, No 21a, 1995-2000. An example from the sphere systematically neglected in the course of socialism. Urban renewal must deal with that fact now, because the renewal of certain space's spirit deserves always an extraordinary vision and attention



**Figure 20.**  
Branislav Mitrović: HVB Bank Yugoslavia, Raićeva Street, No 27-29, 1999-2002. Good architecture must have a ratio of its own in every single part and the whole as well. It must respect not only immediate or close neighbors, but all exceptional architectural, urban and historic values in its vicinity. The roof of this modern building does not have such a ratio, lacking to show its full respect to Serbian Christian Orthodox Cathedral behind



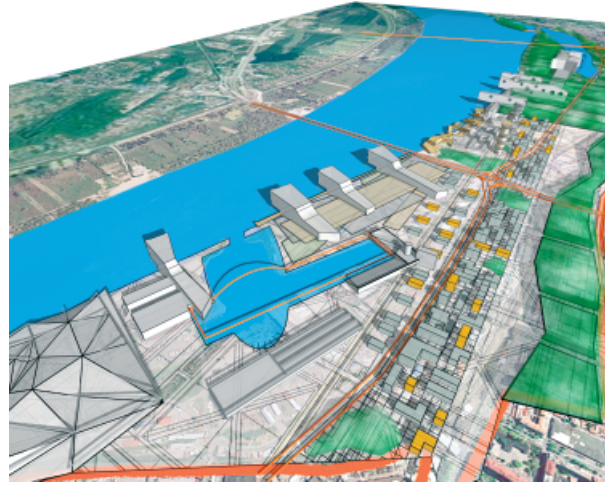
**Figure 21.**  
Kosana Rošulj: Housing and Commercial Building PFC 14, Block 62, Vojvodanska Street, 2002-04. Even huge new developments and buildings may fully respect the genius loci where they belong, their parts but wholes as well, without any losses on their part

ture of their city-living: a space for living for their kids and themselves simply. That is why such interventions should be stopped immediately, without waiting for new property law to stop radically such aggressive building activities.

An approach that must be applied is the rehabilitation of entire blocks composed of several individual buildings. The inner courtyards of these blocks are combined and greened, which decreases the extreme building density on these lots, built in the course of previous century.

Implementation of traffic-calming measures in entire Belgrade is also very necessary. The mean of prime importance is actually the construction of an underground subway-system that now exists only partially yet substantially in as much as possible. Metropolitan subways would be calming for particular neighborhoods and blocks as well. Traffic, and public and commuter transport in particular, must be redirected to the comprehensive network of subways that would be reaching all corners of the city, followed by a network of parking garages nearby every single subway-station. Existing local shops and production facilities (providing they do not disturb the environment) are involved in the rehabilitation measures as well. Project managers or block rehabilitation experts of the fund and three institutions mentioned monitor this process as mediators of the different interests of all parties concerned.

Building structures are normally rehabilitated according to the urgency of such interventions. There are no state restrictions across the municipal territory. Most rehabilitation projects to improve individual city outlooks are still initiated by municipal institutions or by property owners. The object of rehabilitation must be



**Figure 22.** Danube Amphitheater, with third Belgrade in Banat as it is now, in the background. Master plan (left) and the view toward North East (right) (Source: design by Predrag Milošević and Vladan Nikolić, 2006)

that make-up too, but not the main and most important one, than only the one that comes only after architectural and urban improvement and renewal of individual building and housing units or complexes.

To assess clearly the urgency of each project and deal with the great interests manifested, future fund must develop a score system of its own that inter alia takes account of the eligibility of a building for preservation under monument protection or in the context of a protection zone. That determines the sort and the level of necessary subsidies as well. Through the fund, owners receive public funds that may amount up to one hundred percent of the rehabilitation cost. Moreover, individual improvements and preservation measures inside a building or flat may be subsidized as well. And less affluent tenants are granted individual assistance.

A city of Belgrade's size and importance should be provided with substantial money in a fund like this. If not in transition, the annual budget of the fund should amount to at least a couple of hundreds of millions Euro. But being in transition means the city needs even more. For the sake of its development Belgrade must take care of the biggest number of buildings and ensembles possible per year.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS

Dilapidated palaces and buildings prove difficult to adapt to new uses in an era of changing need for representation. On the one hand there was socialist, so called self-managing society of Belgrade past, on the other there is this transitional society, capitalist,

incorporated to the new, global world-view, born with difficulties and growing-up before our eyes. There are technically and economically obsolete workshops, factories, traffic and industrial facilities whose transformation for new purposes proves anything but simple. And there are thousands of old residential buildings whose layout and standards are not up to modern requirements. The paper explores on many such crucial issues of urban preservation and urban renewal in Belgrade: Danube Amphitheatre, Sava Amphitheatre, Old Trade Fare, Royal Palaces in King Milan Street, War Island and Old Downtown, Kosačić Crescent and Slavia Square. There are many other individual building examples as well. Most importantly, there is high priority to establish urban preservation and urban renewal foundation of the City of Belgrade.

Urban preservation and renewal in Belgrade create important preconditions for the quality of life and everything that life means in our age of transition (Stojanovski, Vučićević, Đumić 2004). The actors and instruments of continuous urban repair complement each other, and it is unlikely that their common goal will ever become pointless yet even neglected. On the one hand, the demand for preservation, renewal and improvement remains permanent and high. On the other hand, the perception of the nation's and city's history and its characteristics changes in the course of time. Despite or, more probably, precisely because of increasing globalization in the international competition of business locations and cities, local assets are gaining in importance. And as in the past, although in different circumstances and in different ways now,



Belgrade intends to play a major role in this process, not least due to its place and function as a focal point of Yugoslavian space, a link to southeast Europe, near and far East/Asia.

Such a state-of-the-art at both global and local levels makes its deep traces on spatial and urban substance of Belgrade as well as other cities in Serbia and abroad. It surely demands very properly organized planning processes in democratic frames, in as much as integral urban planning solutions. Belgrade citizens all need much more of proper landscape and environment-green bodies within a healthy urban environment, very properly maintained, preserved and renewed, but a sustainable eco-urban survival and development in its immanent metropolitan area. They all need to develop an understanding of issues of sustainable development and planning that should interact through government and community collaboration, for the benefit of all.

What is expected now is a proper answer to a range of fundamental questions of a sustainable future that were raised long time ago: what sort of the city citizens would like to have, what sort of changes they would like to support to improve their lives, what should be the main perspective of use of both built and natural resources for the people but for all other species as well, what sort of engineering and construction support to design and planning should work better for human economic, social and healthy development and sustainability. There is also a question of resilient communities of all sorts and ranges, smart and persistent application of the state-of-the-art technologies at all levels of management and government in the fields of legislation, planning and design. Having that all in mind, the mankind is already endangered by the “green house” effect and global warming produced by all negative ecological heritages grown by institutional and personal indolence, absence of cultural awareness and uncivilized relation of Homo sapiens toward his existential space that needs to be permanently preserved and renewed as a resource that is not inexhaustible. Ever since the industrial revolution up to the technological revolution of the day such mistakes harm living values and values of lives, jeopardizing both built and natural environment of the planet Earth, making it a global problem for all nations, states and cities as well.

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