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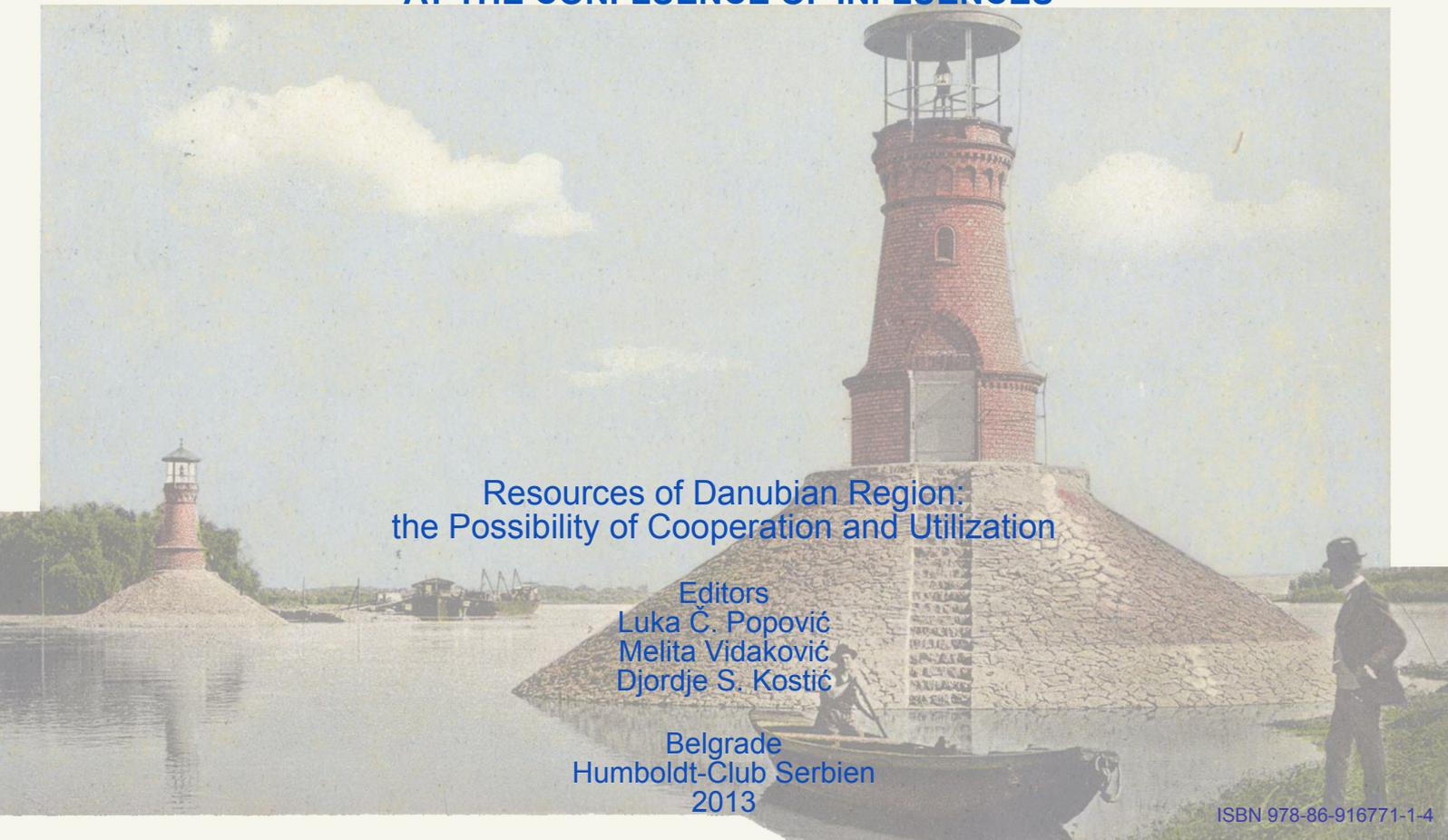
**BELGRADE  
AT THE CONFLUENCE OF INFLUENCES**

Resources of Danubian Region:  
the Possibility of Cooperation and Utilization

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## Donau

**Abstract.** The story in which a city begins is most frequently a part of a myth. The myth is the very beginning of everything, the basis of civilisation. How does a city come to be? Where is it conceived? In which civilizational moment of the development of society does it take over the function of the city and how is it different compared to lower rank settlements? Why does it arise on rivers and in vales and why does it last through time? What is determined by and what does it anticipate itself, as the amalgam of things, occurrences and influences? At the beginning of the 3rd millenium just like at the beginning of the 20th century Belgrade is dealing with huge urbanistic issues. It came to be as a city on the collision of alluvial planes, on the hill above the position where the river Sava flows into the Danube and it represents the „gates of the Balkans“ as well as the „gates of Central Europe“ with which it is connected via the most significant European waterway.

**Key words:** The City, Architecture, The Danube, Belgrade, Serbia,



**Fig. 1.**

„Zmaj's“ first illustration, Branko Vasiljević:  
 „Belgrade – 100 years on illustrated postcards“, Belgrade, 1996.

## The story of the city

The story of the birth of a city is often part of a myth, as the very beginning of everything and the basis of civilisation. How does a city come to be? When and where is it conceived? In which moment of the development of society does it take on its function as a city, and how is it different compared to lower rank settlements? Why does it arise on rivers and in vales, and why does it last through time?

Belgrade came to be as a city on the collision of alluvial planes, on the hill above the position where the river Sava flows into the Danube. It is one of many cities along the Danube and the specific city patterns along the course of the Danube depend highly on historical occurrences, as well as on movements of populations over the European continent, and relationships realized between nations and countries. Classified as a waterway of international significance the Danube originates in the city of Donaueschingen at the confluence of the rivers Brigach and Breg. On its way to the confluence into the Black Sea the Danube is crossing 2.874 km thus representing the second longest river in Europe right after the Volga. And while it was the border zone in the times of the Roman Empire, a sort of separation zone between European tribes, it is connecting ten countries of Europe today and opening a unique perspective to them for mutual cooperation.

The cities that arise along the Danube represent some of the oldest European settlements and depending on their position and cross-section through the riverbed they are being developed along its course. A city is one of the most significant generators and the most complex of all human creations having in mind that it embraces the social, technical and economical aspects of development at the same time. What is determined by what and how does it create itself, as the amalgam of things, occurrences and influences? The city is in fact the beehive of the human community and its interaction with other forms of life, which are often both devastated and advanced by it. A city on the Danube and the Danube in the city are part of the everyday life of the inhabitants of those cities, since their emergence and the position of the Danube toward the city is a significant part of the story about the city and life in the city.

### Building Belgrade along the rivers

At the beginning of the 3rd millenium just like at the beginning of the 20th century Belgrade was dealing with huge urbanistic issues. At the confluence of the river Sava and the Danube it represents the „gates of the Balkans“ as well as the „gates of Central Europe“ with which it is connected via the most significant European waterway. And while the complete history of the development of Belgrade since its emergence until the first half of the 20th century was the consequence of powerful historical influences, Belgrade urbanism fought to deal with its natural obstacles which separated it from the rest of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy – the Sava and the Danube. It seems as if the whole doctrine of the Belgrade urbanism is based on those problems, although it is really the reaction to the position of the central city zone and the foundation of the breakthrough towards the Sava through the projects of the architect Nikola Dobrovic for the regulation of the Terrace of Terazije.

In his contest solution for the plateau of Terazije from 1929 Nikola Dobrovic noticed the natural connection and pointed out the route Terazije-Amphitheater of Sava which is positioned only a few hundred meters from the confluence of the Sava into the Danube. Kosta Strajnic wrote in the journal „Letopis Matice Srpske“ from 1929 that „the artistic personality of the architect Nikola Dobrovic had spoken in this project, who started the era in the Yugoslav architecture by bringing us directly into connection with the creative efforts of Europe of today and tomorrow“ (1). Although the first building, which had *de facto* connected the two river banks of Belgrade, was the railway bridge which was built after the decision at the Congress of Berlin, only the building of the bridge of King Alexander I and its opening for traffic in 1934 was the first gesture of „initiating the city“ on the left river bank of the Sava near the confluence of the Sava into the Danube. Both of these ideas, one of which, the idea of the bridge, was realized completely, have the quality of city affirmation on the other bank, according to which the cross-section profile of the river is smaller, but the typology of the ground is similar to the banks of the Danube. The idea of Dobrovic nevertheless had opened a significant topic of the Belgrade urbanism, the breakthrough of Terazije (2) and the activation of the part of the space which was ones called „settlement in a ditch“. The bridge of King Alexander has opened the space for the development of the part of the city called „Staro sajliste“ which represents the signal for the start of building the left river bank of the Sava.

Beside the economic significance of that part of the city, „Staro sajliste“ also represented the realized urbanistic and composition totality which excelled with its looks and arrangement compared to other parts of Belgrade. (3) How important the idea of expanding Belgrade was when considering further development phases of the city from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is best shown by the creation of the General Plan of Belgrade from 1923. which was directly based upon the new social and political position of Belgrade after the I World War as the administrative and cultural centre, the capital of Yugoslavia. It incorporates the ideas and outlines of the international contest for the expansion of Belgrade, the results of which were published in the magazine „Städtebau“ in 1922/23 with the title „Singidunum Novissima“ created by Erwin Brock, Rudolf Perco and Erwin Ilz (4). These models were like Zite's „Artistic Construction of Cities“ published in 1889 in Vienna, which was sold out immediately after being published and they have pointed out the topic that Zite is defining by saying that the building of cities „should not be only a matter of technique but it should also be a matter of art in its most complete and highest sense“.

The great plans regarding the realization of the Amphitheater on the Sava were not fulfilled throughout the 20th century, but the idea of creating a new city on the other, the left bank of the Sava and the right bank of the Danube was realized completely through the project of New Belgrade and the final connection to Zemun. At the beginning of the 21st century new ideas of the Belgrade urbanism were actualized through projects for the Danube amphitheater and arrangement zones – Ada Huja, Harbour of Belgrade and the left bank of the Danube in the area of the settlement Kotez through the project „Čaplja“. The relationship between these two banks, of the rivers Sava and Danube, are connecting through a kind of psychological transversal also the two city concepts – the area of the „four corners“

settlement of Dorćol (tur. Dort Jola) which is on the Danube and the amphitheater of the Sava which is ending in the zone of the mouth of the Sava into the Danube.

### Cities upstream: Regensburg, Linz, Vienna and Bratislava



**Fig. 2.**  
Leo von Klenze's Walhalla,  
Regensburg

In other European cities the position of the Danube is playing a significant role in the creation of city centres and in marking specific buildings as well. When looking at the modern architecture and having in mind the development of fortifications in the Middle Ages which have remained the „hard core“ of new, old cities, the Danube is being treated not only as the city-forming element but also specific attention is being paid to it. The Regensburg Walhalla (1830-1842) from Leo von Klenze, who had studied under the influence of Friedrich Gilly in Berlin and worked later as an associate with Percier and Fontaine in Paris, has represented the reconstruction of the Parthenon of Athens, the Teutonic temple, the hall of fame erected to the honour of famous persons in long history of Germany in the spirit of neoclassical architecture. Walhalla is positioned right above the Danube opening thus the view to the river, but the temple is visible completely from the river becoming hence a sort of modern fortification which is with its position toward the river belonging to the medieval pedestal and with its architectural characteristics to the modern architecture of the 19th century. The position of an object of such significance within the context of the Danube represents an important indicator of the significance of the river not only

in the urbanistic but also in the architectural sense and it is the best indicator of its significance for the composition of the cities and their architecture. The Lentos Art Museum (5) from the Austrian city of Linz, designed by the Zurich architectural studio Weber & Hofer (2003) is the best indicator of such a connection between the form and the river and significance, which the architecture has in the composition of the city. The pure and coherent structure of the building spread 130 meters along the Danube, which is not closing the view at the river completely, became with the choice of material and its structure the new symbol of the city by turning to the Danube and subordinating its texture to the river. The Lentos Museum changes colours in the evening and the whole prismatic structure corresponds with the river, in which it is reflected in all its light transformations. The position of the Museum of Modern Art on the mouth of the Sava into the Danube in Belgrade of architects Ivan Antić and Ivanka Raspopović (1965) just like its form underline the joint idea of sensibility and relationship to the rivers as well as the need to give a distinguished city position to a significant building of culture.

**Fig. 3.**

Lentos Art Museum, Linz, Austria  
(<http://www.linz.at/english/tourism/4165.asp>)

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**Fig. 4.**

Museum of Modern Art in Belgrade

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The largest city on the Danube, Vienna, has developed its urbanistic doctrine through several phases, but it is important to mention the great reconstruction which was performed during the 19th century and which had completely defined its „rings“. This reconstruction of the city core and its recomposition is, next to Paris and Barcelona, the largest reconstruction of the 19th century. It has opened a lot of questions for which Vienna is still looking for a solution by putting new goals in front of itself within the development possibilities. One of such goals is most certainly also the harbour as well as all additional contents which are opening a large economic perspective for Vienna, which is positioned at the halfway mark toward the Black See (6). The city council of Vienna, which is having significant financial means, is still developing the topic of modern architecture of the highest standard by activating public spaces and it is also taking care of the city outline on the banks of the Danube where the „Donau City“ is being built – the DC Towers of Dominique Perrault - thus giving the city a new type of urban quality. The millenium towers of Gustav Peich and Boris Podrecca, the third highest building in Austria, are ending the topic of marking the Vienna outline by joining the multifunctionality through contents in one building. The topic of one of the futuristic plans of Belgrade are high buildings coming out of the city core creating thus the scene for the city below them. In the eyes of the architect Slobodan Maldini Belgrade of the future has one quality more. It is using the existing structures of the bridges of Belgrade and adding new functions to them influencing the form of the city in an unconventional approach to the topic by lifting it toward the clouds, where the first city was created – in imagination.



**Fig. 5.**  
Slobodan Maldini .  
The Bridge over Ada - New hotel at  
the top of the pillion

The story about the city is not a story about urbanism and urbanistic technique. It has to be kept in mind what Wittgenstein says – „glorification of architecture“, but it cannot be found where nothing is there to be glorified! (7). The examples from the end of the 20th century in the construction of the Danube river bank, especially the EUROVEA project in Bratislava of Ciaran Ferri architects from Dublin are pointing to the dreams which can be realized when it comes to city construction. One idea which was born at the beginning of the 1980s has turned into reality at the moment when the preconditions for that were there. EUROVEA represents the most sophisticated project in the riverside zone of the Danube in Central Europe, which was planned in a very sensitive, protected city area. The project foresees the building of a multifunctional centre with accompanying contents which would connect the new city zone with the old part of the town with no disturbances and which would realize new contents in the riverside area of the Danube. The plan is foreseeing the development of the centre to approximately 210.000 square meters along with the change of the complete outline of the city on the river bank. (8)

### **Project „Belgrade“ or Building the future of Belgrade**

During the end of the 20th century, around the same time when in Bratislava the project of rearranging the riverside was envisioned, the ideas for the development of New Belgrade started. In 1985 an international contest was announced under the name „Future of New Belgrade“. The president of the evaluation committee, architect Bogdan Bogdanovic, mentioned at that occasion the contest from 1922 and underlined its significance as at that time „Belgrade was able to imagine itself as an European city for the first time, far above the frames of a small Balkan peasant capital...“ (9). The rewarded work under the number 20/31694 on that contest was signed by the team of Jaroslav Kachlik, Radomir Kachlik, Juraj Koben, Jaroslav Prager, Peter Vavrica with associates – and almost all of them were from Bratislava! The conclusion of the jury was that the contest was a complete success and that it „pointed to the fact that in a methodical manner it was still thought about the sequence of future events on the territory of New Belgrade...“.

The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) published with a group of authors in 1991, a few years after the international contest from 1985, a work study of a survey character, which are opening the issue and context of the river Sava itself at the position of the Amphitheater of Sava. Modell options of the „City on water“, „Ecological location approach“ were considered, the „Futuristic vision“ and the construction of the „Sava City“ was developed - a sort of Belgrade down town. The idea was to check the modells and also to have the possibility to form the space of a new and different sensibility within the existing city pattern. Within such modells the most significant contribution was given by professor Miloš R. Perović with his team in the Institute of Urbanism of Belgrade (10) through space simulations and possibilities to transfer urban patterns within different types of matrixes. Within the attempts to actualize the idea of the Belgrade river banks and during the wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia between 1996 and 1997 the international context EUROPOLIS was announced, which had, apart from its pompous announcement, no response and results but presented the attempt to activate one topic in

the times when the state and society were in serious crisis. So, unfortunately, the city became the scene of different influences and brought us back to the reality which shows that architecture is the „Politika Ultra“, as it was mentioned by professor Branislav Milenković in the book of the same name.



**Fig. 6.**

Sou Fujimoto architects – Beton Hall, International Competition, Belgrade  
 (<http://www.designboom.com/architecture/sou-fujimoto-beton-hala-waterfront-centre/>)

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In 2010 the city of Belgrade announced the international context for the concrete building „Beton hala“ in Belgrade which is positioned at the mouth of the Sava into the Danube. The first prize was shared by the architectural studio ARCVS from Belgrade and the architect Sou Fujimoto from Tokyo with his team. The idea was the activation of the attractive city space which is currently overburdened with industrial facilities and its connection to the upper city zone – the fortress of Kalemegdan. The „cloud“ from Fujimoto is solving the connection to the city with a spiral shape and its emblematics is distinguishing it from all other solutions. This whirled up structure which includes a coffee-shop,

restaurants, exhibition space and a spiral pedestrian connection with the fortress of Kalemegdan is the continuation of the philosophical exhibit of „primitive architecture“ of Fujimoto which includes the modell of natural growth in itself.



**Fig. 7.**

Zaha Hadid architects – Beko project, Belgrade  
([www.sinbadesign.com](http://www.sinbadesign.com))

On a diagonal position toward the concrete building „Beton hala“ another architectural studio from London, the Zaha Hadid architects, worked on a project on the position of the former textile factory BEKO in the part of town called Dorćol. It includes residential, public spaces, selling spaces, a large congress hall, a boutique hotel on 94.000 square meters in total. In accordance with the fluid forms of architecture of Zaha Hadid all these spaces are connected into one unit by moving the area of the lower part of the city. The investor of this project is the Greek company Lamda Development which has bought the existing BEKO complex in 2007.

**Fig. 8.**

Daniel Libeskind – Port Belgrade project  
 (<http://www.lukabeograd.com/GradNaVodi/Masterplan.html>)

Daniel Libeskind was qualified by his experience on international projects and projects of revitalization of the industrial riverside to develop the master plan „City on water“ which would place Belgrade in line with significant European centres with a recognizable identity and the city outline on the Danube bank. The project foresaw the complete replacement of infrastructure, but also the protection of old industrial objects of appropriate soundness. According to the development of other city centres of Europe and the world the idea was born to activate the area of the current harbour of Belgrade and to rearrange it into the modern centre of the metropolis. The project is considering the topic of a river bank, a street, a piazza, a large public park with a significant marker in the shape of a tower around 250 meters high which would correspond to the rest of the city and represent the location marker.

The urbanistic programme check of the area of Ada Huja, which is representing a sort of antipode to the Amphitheater of the Sava and which is not far away from the harbour of Belgrade, is maybe the most significant consideration of development possibilities of the Danube amphitheatre. Teams of the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade, the Association of Urbanists of Belgrade, the Association of Architects of Belgrade, the Architects' Club and the Architecture Academy thought about programme

solutions according to the conditions and goals of the future development. All works have approached with great attention the construction of this space with large potential in the future development of the city by opening a lot of questions and by also giving guidelines for future plans for the mentioned area. (11)

For the development of Belgrade on the other side of the river bank the General Construction Plan foresees potentially the creation of a new island before 2021 which would be developed on around 585 hectares with the complete preservation of the natural environment. The project would include a part of the zone between the bridge to Pancevo and the new, „Chinese“, bridge. It would include the development of sports and recreational zones which would be functional throughout the year. A team from the City Planning and Building Institute has been working on the project „Čaplja“ for a few years already in cooperation with planners from Florence in Italy. The project „Čaplja“ is probably the most subtle and most demanding city project in Belgrade, which will include the highest number of experts within the realization of the project itself.

### Conclusion

Today we can freely ask ourselves the direct question about the essence of the city itself. We can ask about its definition and we can define its dispersion and form in the complex circumstances of the global economy and the processes which are both influencing its foundation and destroying it. We are asking what does the city strive for and which generators are actually defining its CONTOURS. Are we today as well dealing solely with its position which was frequently conditioned throughout history or are influential elements far more subtle and placed within the political order and the capital sources in which the process of GLOBALISATION is playing such a significant role.

Finally, what FORMS of the city are we talking about today and in what way are we contrasting the form to the needs in the frame of such urban patterns? How much and how are these patterns able to COMMUNICATE among each other within the influences or interest zones? Is a modern society within this information exchange, in which seconds have replaced days, ready for the exchange of concrete experiences in other FORMS as well, outside of the pure coil of information technologies? Up to what extent is the city today a part of the INFORMATICS experience we perceive in fragments, as peaces of the intersectional, „NOW“ moment?

Is the city not a „living organism“ (12) as it was looked upon by Frank Lloyd Wright? Is it not a, from the other side observed, „delirious creation“ as it was seen by Rem Koolhaas: „Manhattan is an arena of the terminal state of the Western civilization“ (13) – do we want that for the „Balkan Manhattan“, as some are calling the project of the Amphitheater of the Sava and one of the possible solutions? Do we need another Manhattan in Belgrade or should we keep the essential values which it bears in itself – the „beautiful mixture of civilizations, something truly unique“ (24) and keep thus the frame that time has built for a city.

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