



CULTURES POLITICS IDENTITIES

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Gendered Reading of the City of Belgrade

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Research Supervisor and Project Coordinator:

Prof. Jelisaveta Blagojevic, PhD

Chief Researcher:

Slavcho Dimitrov, MA

Research and Project Assistants:

Kornelija Sabo and Aleksandra Petkovic

A high-angle, wide shot of Belgrade at sunset. The sun is a large, bright, irregular shape in the upper left, casting a golden glow across the sky and the city. The Sava River flows horizontally across the middle ground, reflecting the sunset light. Several bridges are visible: a large cable-stayed bridge on the left, a long bridge with many piers in the center, and a smaller arched bridge on the right. The foreground is filled with the dense, multi-story buildings of the city, their roofs and windows catching the low light. The overall atmosphere is hazy and golden.

Introduction Belgrade, 2013

Introduction

During the Socialist period, state property appeared to belong to the people, as it was claimed by the state, but public places have increasingly lost their function over time as well as their political and democratic role and power, they embodied and represented.

Nowadays, access to public space has become a privilege granted to the powers of capital(ism), therefore, to those who possess capital and can afford buying or renting the commons of politics and democratic life, while re-appropriating it for means of profit and capital gain. Severe and non-transparent processes of privatization, as well as predominant communication, participation, exchange and circulation among citizens within the logics of commodity consumption have eroded the core and necessary democratic premises for the viability of politics, public space and active citizenship.

The problem becomes even more complex when considered from another source. Namely, collective participation and action of state property does not irreversibly and unilaterally make democratic politics possible, but, more importantly, explains what politics brings about, making participation and action possible or rather impossible. Politics and the democratic government are means to organize the equal distribution of resources and recognition, including the conditions that support those actions. The material resources for action are not only part of the action, but rather the fought after, especially in cases when the political struggle becomes about food, employment, mobility, access to institutions, struggle against gender based violence, discrimination, social exclusion and sexual equality and visibility of sexual minorities.

A prior condition is needed for the city to become a possible site for action, thus projecting a collective human endeavor as well as becoming a product of democratic reflection, deliberation and expression of citizens' needs and energies.

That condition can only be met, in the current political constellation, by prior political and governmental actions and measures, which foster, under the rule of democracy, equal conditions and distribute, on the grounds of equality and freedom, resources available for all citizens, thus empowering them to enact their democratic and political potential for action, deliberation and organization of the common public space and the common goods.

This condition has in many ways been severely eroded in the transition period. Firstly, the organization of the city has been intersected with already existing power relations, effectuating its organization in many ways, including: a) symbolization of the public sphere in accordance to the nationalistic cultural political projects, b) segregation and ghettoization by positioning social marginality at a safe distance (like the displacement of Roma population and their settlements, or segregation of poor population and suburbs), c) imposition of social rules, norms and expectations regulating selectively the regimes of appearance of certain bodies instead of others (the heteronormativity of public spaces excluding sexual and gender minorities, insidious violence and harassment enacted over certain women's bodies), d) normalization of violence and violent behavior in public spaces marked by masculinity and nationalism, e) regulatory and exclusionary orientation of sensory and perceptual information (by legitimating only certain forms of public images, information, or social recognized 'life-styles' and forms of social and individual lives), f) organizing familial, social and sexual relations by dividing cultural life into public and private domains (according the patriarchal political logic), g) geographically dividing social positions that individuals and groups occupy (on the grounds of class, ethnicity, race), h) division of the city in accordance to the binary logic of center/periphery as being always marked as class division and unequal distribution of symbolic, cultural and political capital etc.

Finally, human rights activists have made significant efforts in intervening and resisting the dominant politics of exclusion, discrimination and inequality by means of practicing a variety of strategies and methodologies of action. However, a great number of actions conducted by the civic sector are still predominantly oriented towards legislative changes, various advocacy and lobbying mechanisms, negotiations with governmental representatives and ruling parties, etc. Unlike many activists worldwide, who have, through the last decade, exemplified successful strategies and actions, the activists in Serbia have underemphasized the potential of cultural politics and direct activism and interventions in public spaces, addressing the insidious violence and inequalities inscribed onto state property, consequently demystifying the 'perverse' affective manipulation of political conservative elites.

Gender, including the concept of sexual difference, becomes one of the most important categories for analyzing, reading, mapping and rethinking the city, as a space, thus being the starting point for a different, democratic enactment of public property and politics. Gender is an analytical category that subsumes different forms of marginalization and discrimination, a category that includes something more than just gender identity, thus comprising in its analytical capacity every social, political and cultural form of otherness, minority and non-normativity. Gender provides the potential for reflecting the difference, non-existing in the concept of hegemonic or dominant order of both, the political and public spheres. It opens the space for transformation of the existing urban and public landscapes, expanding their limits and creating counter publics as the necessity of democracy.

In accordance with the above elaboration, we distinguished several major needs that seemed necessary to address for the purposes of introducing democratic principles, as a foundation for urban landscapes, decision making and developing a just city. They include: 1. lack of understanding, reflection and discussion on the concept of active citizenship; 2. passivation of citizens and consequent lack of direct actions in public spaces that would lead to active participation in modeling the city in accordance to their needs; 3. exclusion of marginalized communities from the democratic processes, in general, and the effacement of their distinctions and cultures from public property, hence, the homogenization of democratic pluralism in accordance to the hegemonic majority, and 4. the lack of scholarly and analytical reflection of the problems addressed that could lead, strengthen and foster wider public deliberation and debate.

The principles of active citizenship and participatory democracy have been affected as never before. Citizens participation in the decision making processes and common wellbeing has been negatively affected by many factors, including: the heritage of the social past, marked by the 'protective hand' of the paternalistic state model; the transitional period of economic devastation of entire populations and 'slow death' of the most affected ones; the permanent social and political crisis causing states of fear, anxiety, isolation and a lack of social trust among citizens; a new model of neo-liberal individualism and competitiveness; the fundamentalist religious and nationalistic claims which compensate for the symbolic vacuum created after the fall of the alleged omnipotent paternalistic state and the ideal of socialism; and political struggles based on diffused identity.

In this context, there is an exigent need for analyzing the reasons and consequently raising discussion on the importance of active citizenship as the core principle underlying democratic processes and decision-making related to common goods and social welfare. This need includes the necessity of conducting research that would provide insight into the variety of obstacles obstructing the practice of active citizenship, offer information on cooperation of municipalities and citizens in terms of their involvement in decision-making, make publicly available the needs citizens have, the problems and obstacles they face in realizing these needs and the possible solutions they see in addressing these needs.

On the other hand, we find it necessary to increase public dialogue, thus paving the way for collective and public democratic reflection on the topic of active citizenship. Therefore, the importance of these issues and the way they determine our common political life would come into light and would be more present.

The 'right to the city' as the right to access various city and public resources and networks is marked by a long-standing political history of exclusion and discrimination, perpetuated on structural, as well as on everyday social bases across different vectors of power and many places within the social field, effecting most severely sexual minorities (LGBT), women, ethnic minorities (Roma), poor populations, discriminating citizens on the grounds on health (people living with HIV, drug users) and other conditions. Hence, the general need for fostering citizens' active participation in processes related to organization of public spaces and access to their 'right to city', should be more profoundly addressed, taking into consideration the problems and discrimination of various marginalized communities in the general national imaginary (nejasno) and political community. The longstanding exclusion from political and human rights of marginalized communities insidiously affects the way public sphere and public spaces are being organized, which is to say the apparently neutral, yet deep inscription of the needs forms the habits of the majority in the public spaces. This leaves marginalized communities completely absent, not only from the formal legal register but from everyday organization of living and dwelling in the city. Considering this, there is a strong need for raising discussion and fostering critical reflection about the way in which social and political exclusion and discrimination are being directly engraved into the city's 'body' and the way in which it affects those that have been excluded from its official limits and imaginary contents, here is an urgent need

to include minorities in the process of decision making, addressing their specific needs in practices of remapping city's boundaries, while creating space for their cultural practices and social life. This will create an environment more unbiased to all the communities living in the city, creating direct communication and solid networks based on democracy, pluralism and equality.

Finally, the problems were not only neglected on the political level but in the scholarly, academic and political domain. Therefore, our aim was to provide an initial study of the problems related to active citizenship, public spaces and social exclusion/inclusion of marginalized communities, including research based analysis and theoretical thought on the already existing problems.

Our main goal in this initial research is to provide research-based information on the current situation of the decision-making practices and their relation to city/urban planning including both, needs and problems of different population and marginalized/vulnerable groups in relation to public spaces.

Methodology

Our initial goal in the research process was to identify the existing mechanisms and practices of decision-making in relation to urban planning, organization and transformation of public spaces. Additionally, the availability of public spaces to citizens, the impact of the quality of their participation on adopted strategies, documents, plans and their lives. In the research we also tried to investigate the problems citizens face in accessing public spaces and experiences of their participation in decision-making. Specific focus in the research was set on collecting data on the needs, problems and difficulties different marginalized and vulnerable communities/groups face in relation to affordability and availability of public spaces in accordance to their distinctive cultural and social specificities, as well as their perceptions on hegemonic forms of organization of public spaces.

For the purpose of achieving our research goal we used two methodological frames, organized in two phases.

The first method includes detailed desk review of:

1. Already existing analyses, studies and research on the subject (covering the territory of Belgrade). The goal of this review was to gather all necessary existing data and research studies that could update our analyses in the process and to provide us with initial information that could be used as future ground for organizing our interview questionnaires;
2. Major policy documents, strategies, plans, and laws related to urban planning and development, the goal of which was to select all important legislative and policy documents that frame the decision making processes and regulate the participation of citizens in urban planning processes, on one side, and, as in the case of the Master Plan of Belgrade 2021 and the Strategy for Development of the City of Belgrade, contain urban planning information and design that was submitted for analyses, according to our research interests;
3. Reports, analyses and research conducted by human rights groups working in the field of gender, sexual minorities, Roma and other marginalized groups, for the purpose of accessing already existing data, reports and documentation on different problems marginalized and vulnerable groups have been facing in the course of previous years, in the city, with the local administration and in public spaces.

The second method we used in the second phase of research included semi-structured interviews with:

- a) Human rights activists (organizations)

We addressed and attempted to access 15 organizations working in the field of human rights for women, Roma, LGBT and other marginalized communities. We encountered great difficulties in receiving either reply or setting up interviews with the majority of organizations. In the final phase, before making the analysis and writing the report we received written answers to submitted questionnaires by following organizations: Centar za razvoj inkluzivnog društva, Beociklizacija, KC "Grad", Ženski fond "Rekonstrukcija". We managed to conduct and record two more

interviews, which were subsequently transcribed, with Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) as well as a civil society organization Ministarstvo prostora (Ministry of Spaces). All relevant data related to Roma people were gathered in the process of desk review.

The questionnaire addressed to CSOs aimed at receiving information on several issues, including:

- In which ways marginalized groups perceive and experience public spaces in terms of inclusion/exclusion, safety and normative violence;
- Incidences of violence, discrimination and harassment in public spaces;
- Position of municipalities in Belgrade and the city of Belgrade regarding these issues and whether they address adequately the problems of marginalized communities in public spaces and in the city;
- What kind of initiatives, measures or actions have been undertaken by the city and the municipalities so far that would protect rights of marginalized communities and promote equal inclusion in the public life and infrastructure of the city;
- Are there specific initiatives from public city authorities that aim at promoting Roma culture and foster public activities related to rights and equality of marginalized communities (e.g. artistic and other interventions in public space, cultural activities, creative use of city spaces, monuments/sculptures etc.);
- Existence of initiatives by the city/municipality authorities that aim to improve distribution policies related to marginalized communities, especially in terms of social help and employment;
- Accessibility of public amenities to marginalized communities;
- Provisions and actions undertaken by the city authorities in regards to social housing targeting Roma communities, or space provision in need of women or LGBT population;
- Extent to which activist groups use public spaces for political interventions and activism; the participation of activist groups and citizens in preparation and monitoring of implementation of urban planning policies, local strategies for sustainable development of the city and other city strategies related to public life and spaces and their inclusion in public debates and participatory decision-making;
- Specific needs and interest of marginalized groups related to public spaces, amenities and goods; etc.

b) Representatives from local municipalities and the Urban Planning Institute (UPI)

In the research project preparation phase it was initially intended to target three municipalities as case studies for the research goal. However, due to difficulties in accessing the municipalities and the city of Belgrade, the initial design of the research had to be modified, and we drew back the idea of focusing our research on three pilot municipalities. We have encountered great difficulties while trying to arrange interviews with the designated representatives of the elected city municipalities and city institutions throughout our research.

With requests for interviews our team addressed the Municipalities of Savski venac, Palilula and Novi Beograd, as well as the Secretariat for Urban Planning in Belgrade and the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade. Everyone listed was addressed firstly by e-mail requests for interviews, where the goals and objectives of our research were explained in detail. E-mail addresses were found on the official websites of the above-mentioned institutions, and not getting any replies, we tried contacting them by telephone. For over a month our attempts to contact person(s) in charge of urban planning and public spaces in municipalities ended in vain, being passed around from office to office, ending up that only the presidents of the municipality were competent enough to answer our questions. Then, the calls directed to the presidents' offices ended up with similar answers – either busy, in a meeting or on a business trip. E-mails were written directly to the offices of the municipalities' presidents, requesting interviews, but again without success.



During the course of our telephone conversations, we received general answers to the questions asked, among all institutions, and were often told that questions asked are not in their jurisdiction, referring us to other institutions in the city, which also subsequently did not give us any answers.

The only response from the contacted municipalities was after the request was sent to the Office of media and public relations of the Municipality of Palilula. They responded and offered to set up a meeting with the Municipality of Palilula president's assistant Mr. Nenad Djurdjevic, not directly responsible for issues of urban planning and use of public spaces, but who was willing to help us to get answers. In the Municipalities of Savski venac and Novi Beograd we have not received any response after two months of trying.

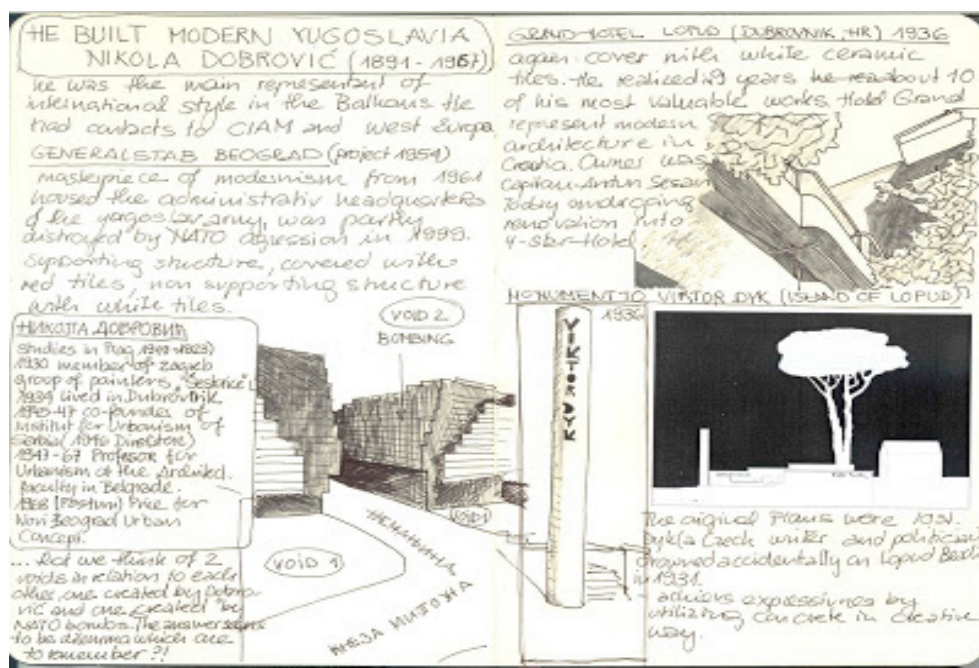
Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade (UPI) submitted their response to the questionnaire by e-mail, signed by Žaklina Gligorijevic, MA.

The Secretariat for Urban Planning in Belgrade did not provide us with any response to this day.

c) One expert in the field of urban planning

We tried reaching three independent experts in urban planning. Unfortunately, we received a positive response only from one - Ivan Kucina, who is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade (Serbia) and a Visiting Professor at the School of Design Strategies, Parsons The New School for Design / New York, Polis University / Tirana (Albania), KTH School of Architecture / Stockholm, DIA, Anhalt University / Dessau and the Faculty of Media and Communication, Singidunum University / Belgrade. Ivan Kucina was selected on the grounds of his academic work and expertise, focusing on the processes and phenomena of transition in modern architecture and urbanism; and he is currently writing his doctoral dissertation dealing with the impact that transition has on contemporary transformations of Belgrade. His research is orientated towards formulating concepts based on the informal building strategies and uncontrolled processes of urban transformation.

The goal of the interview with individual experts was to gather information and consider their insight on: the existing practices, mechanisms, techniques, models of inclusion of the citizenry in decision-making processes and preparation and implementation of urban plans in the city of Belgrade; the context in which the citizens and citizens associations are included, meaning whether in preparation of strategies, policy papers, action plans, urban planning; the phases of urban planning in which citizens are involved - are they invited only in the process of initial debating and problems mapping, or are they actively participating in the evaluation of initial versions of plans; are they invited in the processes of monitoring the execution and implementation; and if citizens are involved in consultation activities, or are they actively participating in the creation of the content of plans and other strategies/documents; the extent to which the adopted and prepared plans and strategies for urban development are open to change and transformation and who decides on this and the basis of criteria; the urban planning strategies and activities undertaken and considered in the planning process in order to assist historically and socially disadvantaged groups in achieving access to opportunities in housing, education, employment, cultural production, and use of public spaces; whether the urban plan of Belgrade and its municipalities implement specific measures and urban reorganizations that would foster safety, prevent violence and protect vulnerable groups' safety; if there is a gender sensitive urban planning practice; the extent to which the city/municipalities invest/s and promote/s diversity in urban planning projects, strategies for sustainable development and other actions; etc.



The Sketchbook
Nikola Dobrovic

I. Urban Planning and Models and Practices of Citizens' Participation

“We, European local elected representatives, share the belief that the inhabitants of our towns and cities cannot experience fully their town or city without also being responsible, active and informed citizens. We believe that urban democracy, having for a long time been a school of national democracy for many politicians, can revive the public spirit of our citizens and their appetite for democracy.”
European Urban Charter (II)

The existing model, which is being used in the process of planning, incorporates the participation of citizens in a significantly weak pattern of collaboration and deliberation. Namely, citizens are included in the last phase of the planning process in the frames of making the Plan available to public insights, whereby the final plan is being presented and the experts included in the preparation of the plan are obliged and responsible for providing written responses to all objections and comments made by citizens. The Law on Planning and Construction (Zakon o planiranju i izgradnji) obliges local municipalities to include citizens in the process of preparation and adoption of plans, at least through the procedure of public insight. The procedure includes the announcement by local city officials and the dates/place of the public insights in the Media. The announcement further includes the place/date of the public session of the Planning Commission, whereby citizens' participation is also encouraged. The citizens can attend the public insight sessions and submit their comments and objections in written form. The public insight is held open for 30 days.

The Law on Planning and Construction does not provide definite and detailed measures and rules in accordance to which the planning process would foster and include citizens' participation, in particular not in terms of gathering sources and public opinion from different interested stakeholders and groups of citizens. The only provision the Law provides, and which has been followed by the Local self-governance administration and the planners is stated in article 50, whereby:

“The elaboration of the planning document to the public is done after a professional expert control has taken place. The elaboration of the planning document to the public is published in a local daily newspaper for thirty days from the day of publishing. The elaboration of the planning document to the public is taken care by the Republic Agency for Spatial Planning, i.e. a body of the local self-government competent for activities related to spatial and urban planning.

The competent body, i.e. the planning commission, prepares a report with information about the public insight of the planning document, along with remarks and decisions on each observation made.

The report referred to in paragraph 2 of this Article is forwarded to the entity that elaborated the planning document who shall act on the basis of the decisions contained in paragraph 2 of the Article within 30 days from the day the report is submitted.”¹

Experts from the Urban Planning Institute have offered us, in the course of an interview², several examples of adopted documents that have included citizens in the process of preparation. The Strategy for Development of the City of Belgrade has been offered public monitoring in all phases of its preparation, by being continuously published on the City's web site. The concept, draft and the proposal of the Strategy has been offered to be accessible to a wider public during the period of three years, and the space for the discussions about it has been left open. The procedure has also included questionnaires with representatives of different city's municipalities and respective administrations, covering all topics considered to be significant for the Strategy under procedure. As the official Strategy document states: “consultations were held with stakeholders of the city development, so that the conclusion would be based on objective grounds, along with four prominent international experts from Vienna, Dresden, Budapest and Thessaloniki. In addition, respondents were citizens whose attitudes contributed to a more realistic assessment and conclusion on the development of the city of Belgrade and priorities of municipalities.”³

The document, in its brief elaboration of the methodology used for the purpose of preparation of the Strategy

1. Zakon o planiranju i izgradnji. "Službeni glasnik RS", br. 72/2009, 81/2009 and 24/2011

2. Interview with MA Žaklina Gligorijevic, Urban Planning Institute, Belgrade

3. Strategija razvoja grada Beograda: ciljevi, koncepcija i strateški prioriteti održivog razvoja. Urbanistički zavod Beograda i PALGO centar, Beograd 2011.

describes rather imprecisely the technique for citizens' inclusion in the process. It also specifically stipulates the aim to invest great efforts in "developing awareness on the importance, use and development of public spaces and public goods, promoting the idea that the city as a whole is a public good, important for all who live and work in it"⁴ and to "achieve consensus and support of stakeholders and citizens on important development projects."⁵ However, it does not provide any detailed account on the specific measures and paths in this methodological endeavor, nor does it elaborate the content of the opinion poll and the questions included. Finally, it does not present the comments, needs and opinion of the citizens involved by this methodology, including the way they have been incorporated in and influenced the final version of the Strategy document.

Further on, the Master Plan of Belgrade 2021 in the period of its preparation from 2000 - 2003 has been also exposed to the eyes of the public, as claimed by the Urban Planning Institute. The Plan's concept has been presented in "specially organized presentations in all 10 municipalities that were the subject of the Plan; printed concept of the Plan was distributed to all stakeholders to review and comment, so that the ones who worked on the Plan in the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade have enough information and comments to form the draft."⁶ Similar procedure has been used for the draft Master Plan of Belgrade 2021, whereby all graphic annexes have been submitted to public insight. The public session of the Planning Commission for this Plan has been held in several terms considering the complexity of the Plan. Besides the public sessions of the Commission, closed sessions have been held for several months, whereby representatives of different organizations and institutions have been also invited to participate⁷. According to the official document of the Plan, preparation procedures have been organized along four phases, including different stakeholders, namely:

- "Working on a basic set of professional activities which gave the hypothesis, the concept and the draft plan;
- evaluation of the report made by the Master Plan professional expert council, politicians, experts and citizens;
 - cooperation with citizens and municipalities, as well as the professional and cultural part of the public;
 - cooperation with secretariats, bureaus, JKP (Public Utility Companies) and the Belgrade Land Development Public Agency
 - cooperation with foreign traffic consultants;
 - cooperation on two separate tasks simultaneously done with the preparation of the Master Plan – the Spatial Plan of Belgrade and the Regulation Plan of the Central Zone – Spatial Unit of Municipality Vracar."⁸

Although the document explicitly states the participation of citizens and other interested parties, much greater and dominant role has been delegated to the expert public, further confirmed in the Plan when the core sources for the conceptualization of the plan are elaborated. Thus, the Document states that most relevant sources used in the definition of the plan and its thematic orientations are "A number of activities related to planning and organizing the city, elaborated on many professional and scientific meetings have also been taken into consideration in this paper. Apart from domestic sources, we used the most important documents from the conferences "Habitat II" and "Istanbul plus 5", which offer the most important doctrines regarding understanding the development of the city in the following period. We also used the European charters and directions regarding city treatment, such as the European Urban Charter or the documents of specialized professional organizations."⁹

In the process of preparation of the Study of the natural nucleus of Belgrade, the river and the river banks, including parts of the open spaces of residential areas and both business and industrial zones, more direct citizen participation has been applied, according to our interviews from the Urban Planning Institute (UPI). For this purpose a phone questionnaire has been conducted with 1000 citizens, selected on the basis of a random sample, written questionnaires with other experts, interviews and meetings with representatives of more than 30 institutions dealing in various manners with areas under consideration. However, the mentioned example by the Institute, we should emphasize, reflects a different kind of document, namely, a study, and does not directly effect the preparation and adoption of planning or sustainable development document.

Criticizing the already existing mechanisms of democratic decision making in the field of planning, our interviewee Ivan Kucina claims, "public debate today is rather compromised because planners have learned to hide behind disciplinary rules and bureaucracy, as well as to give general answers to the objections of citizens." The representative from the Municipality of Palilula also made a similar remark in the interview, by emphasizing that the form and content presented to citizens for public insight is organized in a technocratic and experts' style

4. *ibid.*, 22

5. *Ibid.*, 23

6. Interview with MA Žaklina Gligorijevic, Urban Planning Institute, Belgrade

7. *ibid.*

8. Generalni plan Beograda 2021. "Službeni list grada Beograda", br. 27/2003, 25/2005, 34/2007

9. *Ibid.*, 22

and form which makes it even more inaccessible to common citizens who would express interest and attend these Insights.

This procedure and its democratic potential is further complicated when taking into consideration the reproduction of already existing power relations. Although part of public discourse, strategy adoptions and preparation of new laws (including expert groups and other interested parties) become “heavily influenced by political parties and informal interest groups that operate inside the institutions, made up of corrupted professionals.” That in turn leads such a discussion into a game of power where the ones who win already have the power and simply wish to enlarge it.”¹⁰

Although there are no official legal provisions that would regulate the concrete mode of inclusion of citizens in the planning process, the techniques used by city officials and planning experts, as elaborated above, are opinion polls/questionnaires – a way of accumulating insights of citizens, their needs and interests, as well as public insights announced once the draft Plan is finished. Kucina summarizes these techniques as inefficient, further claiming that “in classic opinion polls/questionnaires people give answers that are expected, and can thus serve as a support for planning ideas. To conclude, existing forms of participation became meaningless and useless for city development.

The documents set under scrutinization here, as well as the data gathered from our interview with UPI, clearly demonstrates that the urban planning processes in Belgrade is based on a top-down approach setting experts, governing political bodies and decision-makers at the core position in determining the directions, concepts, priorities and contents of the planning processes. There is a salient lack of a deliberative and communicative model of decision making that would prioritize the active, dynamic and equal participation of those most concerned, namely the citizens. This way, the process is even more complicated because even in those instances when the citizens are included, it is mostly a formality or their simple participation in the ending phase of an already prepared plan. This represents a presupposed determinant of the ‘citizen’ as a universal category, neglecting and avoiding structural differences among different discriminatory groups and involved parties. Thus, citizens are formally being included in the final phase of the experts-driven planning process, hence overshadowing the democratic and deliberative dimension of the entire process. Even more, another gesture of exclusion is being performed by eluding the different needs, problems, interests and social conditions of different social groups as being effectuated by deeply engrained and structured practices of exclusion and discrimination.

Setting planners to have a central role in the process of urban planning and development, as experiences in other cities throughout the world have demonstrated (Yiftachel 2006), can easily imperil the need of publicly guided transformation and organization of space, consequently, affecting the decision making process, making it less transparent at the same time reducing public participation and deliberative processes to ‘lip service’ (ibbid.:213). These models can further very easily end up in ‘regressive’ planning practices which deepen intergroup disparities, inequalities and undemocratic hegemony (Yiftachel 2001: 117), instead of fostering their progressive potential for enhancing and sustaining equity, equality and justice, namely improving people’s living conditions.

This lack of communicative approaches is also evident in the final content of the Master Plan, which predominantly reflects spatially biased planning with an incomparably greater focus set on land-use management, zoning, town planning schemes and so forth (Dauskardt 1996), while neglecting dynamic, people-driven and integrative models (Bremner 1998) which could have contributed to a more socially responsible and sensitive content of the Plan. The latter model (e.g. a more dynamic and increased level of participatory forums with different interested parties) enables that relevant citizens’ needs could be identified and prioritized, as well as, that implementation and delivery would be monitored (e.g. urban planning theorists have analyzed the model Porto Alegre where citizens have been transformed into active agents of social change, and thus, transformed the previously technical planning-driven process).

Paradigmatic example for the inefficiency of the currently still dominant model of planning is the case with the ‘Fifth park’ (Peti park) in Belgrade’s municipality of Zvezdara, where local residents have been protesting and struggling for three years with the city of Belgrade in order to keep the green area/park and children’s playground in their neighborhood, which, according the plan, has been sold to a private investor, who has already started with the construction work on the lot. The conflict has not only arisen between the local residents and the city of

10. Interview with Ivan Kucina

Belgrade, but also between the municipal and city authorities, which further shows the lack of communicative procedures in the planning process.

After the citizens won their struggle and the city administration made a decision to withdraw and stop the construction and reestablish the green zone, the municipal president, Milan Popovic, said: "It wasn't the investor's fault as they had all the paperwork, but of urban planners who allowed the construction of the fifth building in between four large buildings, destroying the green area". This decision will be a good reminder to the authorities to be cautious in making plans and not to be guided by money, but rather the quality of life." He further concluded that this example can be a turning point which can change the future role of citizens in the planning process, namely: "After this, the interest of citizens for public access to detailed regulation plans will increase. They will want to take a greater share in it because they don't believe state authorities ... and thus the risk would be less for similar things to happen elsewhere in the city."¹¹

It has also been emphasized by the representative of the Municipality of Palilula that there have been difficulties in coordination between municipalities and the administration of the city of Belgrade, when budgeting, in relevance to public spaces and green areas.¹²

The case of the "Fifth Park" has also been mentioned in the interviews we made with the UPI and Ivan Kucina, where it has been described as good practice between citizens and local authorities, although missed mentioning the failure in deliberative participation in the planning process that has led to years-long series of conflicts and incidents outside institutional procedures.

The technical, administrative and expert-driven dimension of urban planning in the city of Belgrade is also dominant in the provisions and regulations in the Master Plan related to the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the Plan and the delivery of set goals. The MP document states that the Master Plan, being a governing instrument of the city, is set under analysis, maintenance and preparation in continuum, for the purpose of its permanent improvement, possible to be executed on a one year, four years and ten years basis. However, the document states that "on account of providing continuity and accuracy of the plan and planning solutions, the competent city services and the entrusted expert organization shall, every year, submit to the City Assembly, an evaluation on the implementation plan and proposals for its change or amendment, i.e. technical corrections for its further promotion. The procedure for changing the Master Plan on the basis of continual planning can be permanently opened, however the procedure of its adoption is executed according to law."¹³

The Law on Planning and Construction regulates the openness and transformability of the Plan by reproducing the formal procedure already set in the initial process of preparation of the plan, and states in Article 51 that: "In case when upon the presentation of the design of the planning documents to the public, the competent body, i.e. the planning commission concludes that the adopted remarks substantially change the planning document, it shall make a decision to order a new design or concept planning document in a period no longer than 60 days from the day the decision was made."¹⁴

There is an inefficiency of available mechanisms for opening the planning process to direct and substantial intervention by the citizens, as to provide them with an active role influencing public interest, especially in terms of possibilities in introducing changes, either on the occasion of Public insights or afterwards, it has been confirmed by our interviewee Kucina. He, therefore, said: "There is a formal possibility for changes in public debates, however it rarely occurs since the presented plan is usually an expression of coordinated attitudes of interest groups which influence it informally during its elaboration process. Therefore, the changes citizens want are very difficult to adopt since this would mean re-initiating the process of informal coordination. Hence, there are almost no changes. The only way to change a certain injustice is for the citizens to organize themselves by physically defending their interests, as well as in the media, as was the case with the Fifth Park."¹⁵

The convergence of the formal, technocratic and top-down procedures prescribed and enacted by Law and Planning process, bring us back to our remark made earlier, that planning leadership is being reduced to bringing, non-transparently presented, stakeholders around a particular planning content, instead of being sensitive and considering different points of convergence or antagonism, whereby no matter what the positions of partic-

11. <http://www.pressonline.rs/info/beograd/48779/peti-park-opasan-presedan.html>

12. Interview with Nenad Djurdjevic

13. Generalni plan Beograda 2021. "Službeni list grada Beograda", br. 27/2003, 25/2005, 34/2007

14. Zakon o planiranju i izgradnji. "Službeni glasnik RS", br. 72/2009, 81/2009 and 24/2011

15. Interview with Ivan Kucina

ipants would be within the already existing social-economic hierarchy, no groups' interest would be left to dominate (Fainstein 1999; Healey 2006). It is not our aim however, by making these claims, to point out that planning experts are the core source of the problem. This responsibility is definitely shared and sets the burden even more on local administration, including the transparency of their budgeting initiatives and their relation and collaboration with investors and the business sector, as the case with the Fifth Park clearly demonstrates.

On the other side, initiative for introducing changes in the legal framework, regulating urban planning as such, that would include joint and collaborative advocacy engaging different interested parties and actors, seems more than necessary. This should all be considered while examining the shortfalls in the Law on Planning and Construction, in terms of inefficient and not detailed legal regulations of the procedures for active citizens' participation, in all phases of urban planning. The introduction of changes in the legal framework can be further set as a direct obligation to local administration and planning experts to foster, encourage and mobilize public deliberation in a more active, dynamic and participatory manner in the preparation, finalization and monitoring of the plans.

This problem has been further pointed out by some of our other interviewees as well, including Nenad Djurdjevic from the Municipality of Palilula and the representative from UPI. Mr. Djurdjevic has emphasized the lack of systematic and organized procedure and regulations that would regulate the process and method of citizens' participation in decision making as well as citizens' initiatives of different activities and the articulation of their demands related to everyday living and needs in public spaces.¹⁶ The representative from UPI made this point when discussing the monitoring of the implementation of plans, claiming that: "Unfortunately, this procedure does not go through institutions of the system and especially not through citizens' organizations. In this part, Serbia needs to establish processes and procedures modeled on more developed countries. This type of conclusion is being made in a period of changes and elaboration of new plans for the same territories, or when the legal provisions of the local administration oblige them to align the plans with the new laws."¹⁷

Kucina has made the same remark in his interview by emphasizing citizens associations as the crucial actor in initiating advocacy actions to introduce legal changes. Thus, he stated that "with the support of experts who are already present in the citizens' initiatives, they should, first and foremost, influence the changes in the legal framework. The new framework would contain mandatory cooperation between the institutions and the citizens' initiatives, which would further influence the changes in the planning model, to change from centralized to distributive, and from totalitarian to incremental."¹⁸

Furthermore, by underlining the lack of collaborative, participatory and deliberative procedures in the process of urban planning we caution against the risk of ending up in another formalistic and technocratic simulation of consensual participation of different groups and actors just for the sake of plurality and democratic procedures. For the purpose of building a city for the benefit of the public, in particular for non-elite and structurally discriminated and oppressed groups, it should be taken into consideration that this vision and process requires empowering those who are excluded not just from discussion but from structural positions that would allow them substantive influence. As the advocates for 'just city' claim, "even where relatively powerless groups may prevail in individual instances,



[...] they still suffer from systematic bias and typically end up with meager, often symbolic benefits [...]. Ability to participate is a resource in the struggle for power, but it must be bolstered by other resources including money, access to expertise, effective organization, and media coverage" (Feinstein 1999: 7, 18).

The lack of mechanisms for collaborative, participatory and inclusive urban planning has also been evident in the course of our interviews. None of the interviewed organizations expressed confidence in the potential for practicing their "right to the city" and intervening in public spaces in accordance with their needs and the groups they represent, nor have they ever participated in any public discussion or have been invited to contribute in processes of urban and development planning. Some of them also confirmed that they have no transparent information on the mechanisms and procedures through which they could make direct initiative in local and city administration, while others repeatedly emphasized the complexity and lack of transparency in relevant institutions when initiative is being proposed or submitted. In these later regards, they pointed out a crucial problem, namely the constant cross-referring they experience through the bureaucratic labyrinths, and how municipalities, the city administration and other responsible institutions refer responsibility and transfer it to other instances and institutions.

On the other hand, existing and available mechanisms for citizens' initiatives include either direct address by the citizens in the municipality's office or e-communication, without any guarantees, meaning that the outcome and the processing of the initiative is left upon the 'good will' of political decision makers in the relevant institution. The web sites of municipalities or the city of Belgrade do not provide any sufficient information that could guide citizens and civic associations through the procedures when initiatives of this kind are to be submitted nor is there an interest of making one. Exception from this are the public announcements and tenders posted in gazettes or media related to the use of working/business spaces.

Another problem identified through this research in the process of desk review and the interviews is the insufficient information or the lack of information related to the number, location, use and availability of public spaces and buildings owned by the municipalities and the city. Initial study has been conducted by the UPI for the needs of urban planning in 2009, but this study, although detailed in analyses, made up of different aspects, is limited since covering only analysis of the public spaces in Stari grad.¹⁹ Municipality of Palilula has also conducted inventory and analysis of two hundred green areas and parks on its territory, but has not covered other types of locations. The Municipality of Palilula pointed out their good practices and examples undertaken as a reply to citizens' demands. Most of them are related to the arrangement of parks/green areas, children's playgrounds and recreational areas, further to preventing school violence or providing civic associations working in the field of supporting people with disabilities and children with autism. The municipality provided working space, as well as equipment and other logistics. Good practices have been also reported by our interviewee from the UPI, although without mentioning specific examples, claiming that "city municipalities have a lot of initiatives for development and organization of public spaces in direct communication with citizens. The Faculty of Architecture, Belgrade Association of Architects and UPI, participated and organized several public architectural and urban competitions for these spaces, in order to obtain the best solutions."²⁰

In the Strategy for Development of Belgrade, in the thematic section on Governance, particular focus has been set on problems related to transparency and citizens' participation. The goals and priorities of the Strategy clearly regulate the question of authority and competence of all relevant departments and sectors for the purpose of establishing a more transparent and direct communication with the citizens. Further in this context, the Strategy expands the authority of city administration and proposes the adoption of regulations and protocols that would control the implementation of the Law on Planning and Construction, and thus, overcome the problems of interpretation of this Law and the lack of regulations in this Law related to urban and planning procedures.

The Strategy also announces the building of the Urban Information System of Belgrade (BUrIS) by the UPI with the goal of creating a data base of information related to all relevant plans, programs and projects. As stated in the Strategy, "this project forms the operational and comprehensive information system that should provide easy access to the data from approved urban planning documents to the institutions and enterprises of the city of Belgrade, like the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade, Belgrade Land Development Public Agency and the Secretariat for Urban Planning and Construction. Realization of BUrIS provides a possibility for monitoring and coordinating City's short-term and long-term plans and projects, some of them still being developed, making decisions on priori-

16. Interview with Nenad Djurdjevic, Municipality of Palilula

17. Interview with MA Žaklina Gligorijevic, Urban Planning Institute, Belgrade

18. Interview with Ivan Kucina

19. Studija javnih prostora Beograda za potrebe urbanistickog planiranja: Prva faza - analiza javnih prostora Starog grada. Urbanisticki zavod Beograd, 2009.

20. Interview with MA Žaklina Gligorijevic, Urban Planning Institute, Belgrade

ties for investment in equipment, reconstruction and construction of parts of the network utility and transportation infrastructure, or locations of the interest of the city.”²¹

In the forthcoming years, the Strategy obliges the City to include all city municipalities into the preparation process of important documents, plans and strategies, while advising them to actively engage civic communities in these processes, in order to identify existing situation, needs and problems.²²

The Strategy specifically underlines the importance of developing mechanisms for increased participation of citizens in the decision making process “with regard to the needs of the population (surveys and other instruments, public debates etc.), presenting them in a simple manner, with an explanation for the solutions proposed, their effects and alternatives, and with detailed information on the price and expenses for every solution. A wider transparency as well as openness for cooperation of the City’s institutions provides better control of their work, which leads to optimization of the institutions and their services while increasing the trust of the citizens in both, the city’s and municipal bodies.” The support of citizens’ participation in the Strategy is projected in the field of citizens’ initiatives, forums and referendums, and by developing a model that would guarantee their participation in all phases of preparation of plans, “and not only while making final decisions on spatial and urban planning and other documents of public interest.”²³

Another good practice that has been pointed out by several of our interviewees, in terms of participatory urban development, is the project Urban Incubator²⁴ in Savamala, initiated by the Goethe Institute, and involving collaboration of many actors, including the Municipality of Savski venac and the City of Belgrade, as supporters, professional associations and institutions, citizens associations and local residents. Series of activities aiming at actively involving citizens and raising their awareness on the importance of deliberation, transparency and participation in urban planning processes have been initiated by the Urban Planning Institute as well. As they reported: “In this aspect, we organized exhibitions and visits by professionals from Barcelona in 2007, Biennale exhibition for the best quality European public space in 2008, initiated and implemented a Study of Belgrade’s public space and a Study of Belgrade’s natural lake, different presentations and promotions of Vienna practice examples (for instance, social residences in Vienna etc.). On each of these projects there has been an open exchange with the citizens, as we are open for their initiatives even though the Institute is not a part of the city administration since other institutions and bodies of the City of Belgrade are competent for these activities. In conclusion, within the framework of our activities we deal with promotion of the citizens’ participation within the limits allowed by the elaborator of urban plans.”²⁵

II. Urban Planning, the City and the ‘Others’

The strategic document for the development of the city of Belgrade, in accordance with the methodology developed, sets as its field of thematic interest - the urban development and preservation, sustainability, promotion and political action oriented towards the nurturing the identity of Belgrade, making it a city that provides the place and conditions for all of its citizens, equally belonging to the public and collective space. The urban development and preservation of the identity of the city means, amongst other things, the political and collective investment in promotion, preservation, renovation, development of spaces and locations in the city that are already recognized as representing the uniqueness of the city’s identity.

This endeavor of the Strategy turns out as complicated, especially taking into consideration the vagueness, generalization and universal pre assumptions implied in the neutrality of the notion of the citizen founding the orientation and commitments of the document by the means of which the city’s identity is instituted and assumed. That is to say, the spaces, locations, objects and social interactions producing the city landscape are a priori assumed as neutral and non-differentiated, as a given notion with no political or social history, and with no politics of exclusion and hegemony.

The lack of participatory and deliberative preparation in drafting the most important urban planning and development documents of the city, as well as disregarding analyses and recommendations already conducted by a number of CSOs working in the field of human rights and marginalized communities brings this problem to the core with even greater emphasis.

21. Strategija razvoja grada Beograda: ciljevi, koncepcija i strateški prioriteti održivog razvoja. Urbanistički zavod Beograda i PALGO centar, Beograd, 2011, 106.

22. Ibid. 107

23. Ibid. 109

24. See more on the project’s website: <http://www.goethe.de/ins/cs/bel/prj/uic/enindex.htm>

25. Interview with MA Žaklina Gligorjevic, Urban Planning Institute, Belgrade

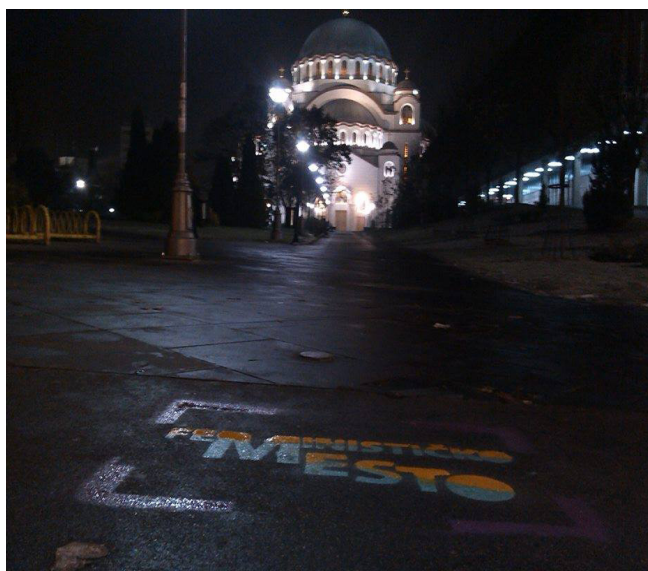


IPAK.Centar project Kissing Area (Mesto za ljubljenje)

The great deal of efforts oriented towards increasing competitiveness, economic growth, self-employments, technological and creative innovation, increased the so-called choice in public services, set in the Strategy for Development, further brings into question the ideological address of the document and its alleged neutrality because it does not analyze the possible implications these orientations can have in terms of creating new barriers and reinforcing existing divisions between those who have choice resources (knowledge, time, instrumental competitive values, capital and income leverage) and those who are not in position to compete with public amenities or who value ethics of care, solidarity and non-consumer commitments (Jarvis et. al 2009). The neoliberal and biopolitical apparatus is thus strongly evident in the Strategy for Development of the City of Belgrade, whereby historical, social, political and structural problems of inequality and violation of justice are assigned as a private problem. One that could only be solved by means of fostering and stimulating personal will and engagement on the market, personal adaptation to the principles of competition, flexibility and investment in one's own human capital. Thus, while setting the basis for social development, the document reads: "The absence of tougher competition along with the existing inflexibility and inefficiency in the organization of activities in different service sectors causes stronger professional challenges and exclusion of primary levels. Favouring active attitude towards one's own life and creating the necessary context for its realization (via civil activities, volunteering, employment and self-employment), which is of particular importance for the elderly, people with physical or intellectual disabilities and the Roma population."

Furthermore, the assumed neutrality and universality of the notion of "citizens" prevents the Strategy for Development, and even to a greater extent this is salient in the Master Plan 2021, from taking into consideration the: various experiences of all different groups of citizens, social classes and minorities in the urban landscape of Belgrade; the history of exclusion, discrimination and oppression of marginalized communities; the spatial and social organization of the city; the heterogeneous ways in which people mentally visualize and imagine the city, including the differently distributed experiences of everyday infrastructures comprising institutional and emotional structures of constraints and possibilities (across the lines of gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, health, disability etc.).

The most evident yet least recognized form through which the urban landscape, infrastructure and the urban fabric of social interaction is structured in accordance with hegemonic patterns of performance of certain human body types and forms of living, is the materialization of the urban landscape in accordance with the human body capacities of the 'ables' and their modes of mobility and dwelling. Apart from the municipality of Novi Beograd, to a certain extent only, public spaces in the city and its municipalities are hardly accessible to people with different forms of disability. Only a few spaces, due to the natural characteristic of the terrain, such as the sidewalks in the city center, accommodate specific needs of persons with disability. The majority of public spaces and sidewalks in the city, are still considered as being inaccessible to people with disabilities, in particular to people using wheel chairs. Most of the city spaces are considered unsafe for people with disability, especially certain streets and pavements, which do not accommodate all



IPAK.Centar project Kissing Area (Mesto za ljubljenje)

needs of movement types, most noticeable in some parts of municipalities, such as Zvezdara, Mirijevo, and some less developed municipalities, such as Grocka. People with sensory impairments are facing different kinds of problems when taking into consideration the system of signs and presentation of information that would help them move around in traffic and throughout the city. Even more, in many ways public institutions have not yet accommodated their facilities for the needs of people with various impairments, so that they are mostly left to the good will of service providers and employees in these public amenities, in order to get their way. People with visual impairment share the same problem, although there are few tactile tiles on the sidewalks in the main streets. People with mental disabilities find it almost impossible to walk alone throughout the city because of the inadequate naming of streets, direction of movements, etc.²⁶

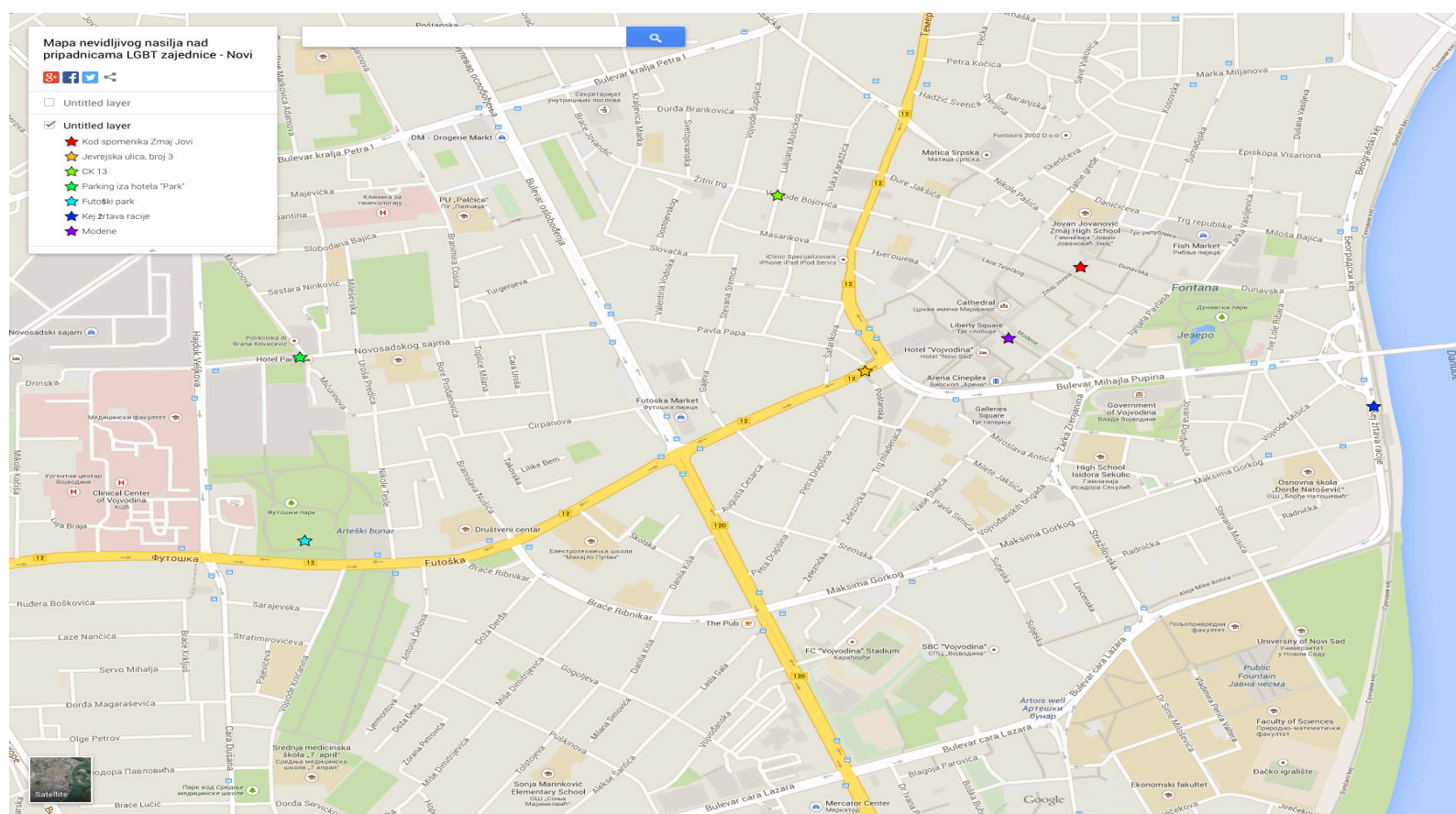
The City and Gender

The problems elaborated above showcase their significance even more when we take into consideration the data gathered from interviewed persons or organizations, claiming that safety in public spaces is unevenly distributed across the axis of gender. The main target of sexual harassment and assault in public spaces are women. Sexual harassment of women is most evident in public spaces such as public transport, elevators, alleys, clubs, coffee bars, streets, etc. However, throughout the research process we did not manage to access any study done so far, by international or local women's organizations, or any public institution, that would address in detail and analyze the establishments, streets and time, as well as forms of gender based violence in public spaces. Similar study has only been made in Macedonia (from several countries in the region that we overviewed) with the support of UN Women.

This kind of study could be very important when taking into consideration the international comparative experiences showing that gender based violence in public spaces (especially sexual violence) is usually under reported, yet serious everyday problem faced by many women and girls, especially those suffering multiple forms of discrimination (Roma women, sex workers, lesbians, trans women, etc.) Physical appearance of environment determines also to a great extent the feeling of safety among women and girls, including darker vs. lit spaces, open vs. enclosed spaces, etc. In the

26. Information acquired in an interview with representative from the Center for Inclusion

study mentioned, for example, women point out the following spaces in the city as unsafe: parks, underpasses, small and hidden paths, parking lots, constructions sites, cafes, clubs and public transport.²⁷ In addition, this kind of study could offer a great deal of research based insight and knowledge for future policy making in urban planning, considering it could provide the analysis of the multiple factors intersecting and constituting the perceptions, cognitive maps and affective geographies of women dwelling in urban public spaces. Thus, the study claims that “access to public spaces for women is limited due to the circulation of the narratives that they are more vulnerable and results in fear from potential abuse. Such narratives are shaped by those using the public space (for example, drug users) as well as the kind of activities/actions that take place in the specific spaces (e.g. prostitution), the context (outcries of public violence), sensationalistic reporting of brutal cases of violence by the media, personal experiences with violent attacks and a general feeling of vulnerability. Thus, women’s reactions to violence in public spaces result in their restrained mobility (constricted to places/spaces they feel safe in) as one of the main self-defense mechanisms, which they combine with various others.”²⁸ Deficiency in this kind of studies and analysis in regard to the city of Belgrade shows the lack of attention paid to issues related to urban planning and gender sensitive readings of urban public spaces as a field of political struggle and activist intervention on both sides, among activists and among policy and decision makers. It can finally lead to further perpetuation of the normalization, non-recognition and lack of sanctioning of different forms of insidious and more or less overt gender based violence in public spaces, such as rude comments, unwanted sexual attention, staring, whistling, touching, pinching, physical violence, sexual violence, maltreatment, harassment, and even rape, etc. As per our interviewee from the Women’s Reconstruction Fund²⁹, the problem of gender and urban planning and public spaces is even more complex considering other social and personal characteristics and attributes among women; and apply intersectional analyses, showing that sexual orientation, class, race and nationality introduce differences among women and the ways they are exposed to violence and harassment.



Part of the project “Map of the Invisible Violence over the LGBT Community” (Mapa nevidljivog nasilja nad pripadnicama LGBT zajednice) by IPAK.Center, supported by Heartefact Fund. The map shows places in Novi Sad in which the unreported acts of violence occurred. These places were marked as “kissing areas” (mesta za ljubljenje). Visit the map at: <https://mapengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=zQnsgYiWMDjY.kWr5hqxRQvUs>

27. Scoping Study on Gender Based Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Gils in Urban Public Spaces in the City of Skopje. Reactor - Research in Action. 2012, Skopje.
 28. ibid. 10
 29. Interview with Mirjana Miroslavjevic , Women Reconstruction Fund

Roma women, for example, are to a greater extent suffering different kinds of attacks in public spaces, including discrimination in public institutions, such as social welfare centers, hospitals, etc. In 2000 a 13 year old Roma girl, Gordana Jovanovic, was attacked in front of a school in Belgrade by minor skinheads. The girl was attacked with a knife and suffered 17 wounds. A Roma woman from Belgrade, Radmila Marinkovic, working as a public transport officer, was attacked in 2002 in a trolleybus while gathering tickets. She was also attacked, insulted and humiliated by a skinhead in front of all other passengers, none of whom had reacted to the incident.³⁰

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, at its 38th session, also warned Serbia of the problem of discrimination against Roma women who lack access to education and health care, shelter center and insufficient statistical data on vulnerable groups of women, including Roma women.³¹

Roma women have been particularly vulnerable to human rights violations and deprivation of basic housing condition in cases of forced eviction of non-formal Roma settlements, when girls, older women, pregnant and sick women, in the period of 2009-2012 in a series of 17 forced evictions, have been displaced in segregated and isolated locations which only further worsened the situation of many Roma women with no personal documents and citizenship status.

Many Roma women don't possess personal documents – a problem affecting in particular the refugees, IDP's and returnees, further being an obstacle in the exercise of basic social and economic rights. The gendered dimension of problems faced by Roma women is consistently denied in national policies and strategies aiming to improve the situation of Roma people.³²

Lesbian women are also differentially exposed to violence and suffer multiple forms of discrimination.

Women with disability are especially vulnerable considering the fact that in many occasions they are not even able to escape, call for help or protect themselves in cases of attack. Also, in Serbia, there is no shelter for women victims of violence accessible to women with disabilities.³³

The violence and harassment of women in public spaces is just an extension of the historically determined partnership and family based violence, which is still taking problematic proportions in Belgrade and the country, without there being developed a comprehensive and systematic response of protection. In the period from 2007 to 2010, the proportion of women in the total number of victims of serious homicides increased from 28 to 43 percent. Data of the network Women Against Violence shows that in 2010, 26 women and in 2011, 29 women were killed by their family members or partners. There is no official data, since state statistics do not disaggregate data by relationship type (family ties) between victims and their offenders.³⁴

Local and state authorities have also been refraining from developing programs that would create conditions for women after leaving situations of violence. No plans are available that would provide integral support in social and health protection, employment, housing or child care, although throughout 2012 several women's organizations have initiated proposals for introducing changes for this problem at local level.³⁵

Public services are also not gender sensitive when it comes to the gendered nature of different forms of violence and the consequent needs they raise in terms of treatment and resocialization of victims. Thus, women's organizations point out that there is a complete lack of protocol that would regulate "the treatment of rape victims, neither are they specialized, free of charge services for victims of rape and other sexual offences."³⁶

SOS lines established by women's organizations such as Autonomous Women's Center or Roma women's center DAJE from Belgrade provide support to women who suffered violence, including legal and psychological help. These organizations create spaces where women receive aid and support regardless of their class, race, ethnicity, sexuality or other status. However, these endeavors and commitments of CSOs are easily undermined considering the hardships organizations face when it comes to financial sustainability of their programs and the lack of support of local administration and authorities for their programs.

In local documents, the most needed services for victims of violence, represent those already supported by local authorities, such as services provided by shelter centers, counseling offices and mobile teams, while, for example, SOS phone lines have not been identified as a necessity, although data from the network Women Against Violence



claims the opposite.³⁷ The inefficiency of these assessments, as women's organization have identified, lies in the mechanisms of assessment of the social needs of local communities, presented in reports and plans of the Center for social welfare (CSW) submitted to local governments. This way, only the needs of those who have already used the services of CSW are taken into consideration, while the needs of all other categories of citizens are excluded and not recognized by the system.³⁸

Women's organizations have also pointed out the problems identified with the freedom of assembly, when in 2008 a peaceful march and performance planned for the 8th of March were forbidden. Women in Black, however, did organize the march a week later with the solidarity of 50 organization titled as "Deferred 8th of March - Enough prohibitions, violence and fear! Free citizens, never subordinates!". Lesbian and transgender women have also experienced the violation of their freedom of assembly through the continuous banning of the Pride Parade (2009, 2011 and 2012).

Apart from all identified problems, as well as the experience, expertise and autonomy of women's organizations built in the course of several decades, they are still being marginalized and ignored in the key procedures and decision making processes, as it was also confirmed in the Open letter to the Directorate on Gender Equality signed by 44 women's organizations. It reads: 1. Years of work and expertise of women's organizations is being ignored in relation to questions concerning the improvement of status of women and gender equality, 2. their participation is only fictive with no real influence, and 3. influence of women's organizations on state structures is noticeably reduced.³⁹ The experience of collaboration with the local mechanisms of gender equality also shows negative trends, varying between "being totally or intensely ignored, facing refusals when asked for financial support for the services these organizations have provided for years, to favoring those civil society organizations that are „more loyal“ (i.e., whose members are close to political structures or local institutions). This phenomenon is mostly ignored by the donors, including UN agencies (e.g. UNDP and UN WOMEN), who avoid active support to women's organizations.”⁴⁰

Weakest level of collaboration and participation of women's organizations has been identified in the processes of urban planning and development strategies, whereby there is a fundamental lack of inclusion of interested parties in developing a gender-sensitive urban plan. None of our interviewee has ever been included in consultations and deliberations in the planning processes, nor have they been informed of any other CSOs taking participation



in the processes. The Master Plan 2021 exemplifies a complete ignoring of issues related to gender and consequent implications gendered perspective could have on planning processes and visions of the good life in the city. Not a single paragraph or section in the Plan is devoted to gender issues, nor is there any analysis of problems related to gender equality. Declaratively, principles of equality are introduced in the beginning of the Master Plan, whereby it is claimed that: "Belgrade should be a city for all people without regard to their origin and race, education and material status, age and sex, religion and beliefs."⁴¹ However, this initial commitment of the Master Plan is not elaborated anywhere in the document, nor developed and transformed into specific measures and interventions.

Our interviewee Kucina, when asked whether the city planners and authorities make analyses that would lead to a comprehensive implementation of gender sensitive perspective in the planning process and documents, answered: "According to my knowledge there are no such analyses except on the level of statistical data from the census, nor are there development strategies to substantially develop gender equality. On the highest level it is considered that the law guarantees gender equality and that everything else is implied, which of course is not the case. In my opinion, in a situation when the institutions are weak and the system of planning corrupt, the only way to include the question of gender equality in the system of planning would be for the citizens dedicated to this question to organize themselves and practice constant pressure on the institution making the decision and planning every single situation. This is also valid for all other citizen's initiatives, since they only receive lip service and no actual institutional support."

The Strategy for Development of the City of Belgrade, although prepared with no reference to direct participation of interested parties working in the field of gender equality, includes gender equality in its priorities and goals for social development. In our interview with the representative from the UPI, discussing the ways in which and whether the city authorities and planning experts make any special analyses of gender aspects in processes of urban planning and development strategies/policies, we were referred to the Strategy as well, namely the gender equality sections covered in it, while no information was given on prior preparatory analyses or consultations with and participation of interested parties in the process of drafting and preparing the Strategy.

Among its priorities project, the Strategy document presents two projects in the field of gender equality. The first project is related to the 'Development of a program for prevention and protection from family violence - A Belgrade model of protection from violence'. The realization of the project is based on good practices of other municipalities (Lazarevac and Zvezdara) and its goal is to develop a comprehensive and all-encompassing system of interdisciplinary and inter-sector cooperation between the institutions and organizations on the territory of the municipalities in the city of Belgrade. The project goals are: coordination of the activities of professionals and services, structuring of the processes of information exchange, planning and efficient interventions, monitoring and assessment, active measures for prevention of violence etc. The project should commit to include all relevant actors, specialized teams and services, as well as women's organizations working in the field of family violence and gender based violence.⁴³

The second project on the priority list of the Strategy is addressing the "Introduction and Development of Mechanisms for Advancement of Gender Equality", namely the contribution of the city of Belgrade to an active policy of gender equality by the means of the Commission for Gender Equality. The Commission, according to the document is committed to "develop active politics of equal opportunities and monitor the achievement of equality based on sex in all fields of social life with the application of international standards and the rights guaranteed with the Constitution; to propose, consider and actively participate in the creation and giving opinions for the proposed decisions and other acts regarding the achievement of equality of sexes and their influence on the level of the City of Belgrade; to participate in the creation, propose, consider and give opinion regarding specific measures that the city undertakes in the framework of its competence for the purpose to promote equality of sexes in certain areas, particularly to promote equality of people discriminated on more grounds, as well as employment; participate in the creation of indicators and follow the execution of the census, strategic documents and effects of the specific measures and mechanisms necessary for realization of equality of sexes; organize and actively participate in the general public on promotion of the gender equality principle, overcoming stereotypes and developing gender sensitivity; to propose programs, organize and actively participate in the organization of permanent trainings and gender sensitive training of employees in the city services with the purpose of promoting gender equality; to cooperate with the Office for Gender Equality within the Ministry of Labor and Social Politics in the municipalities and control the realization of all responsibilities of the city of Belgrade according to the Law on Equality of Sexes; to actively participate with the municipalities in the establishment of councils, mechanisms of horizontally and vertically coordinated activities and cooperate with the purpose to promote the activities in the field of the politics of gender equality on all levels."⁴⁴

30. Romi u Srbiji. Beograd: PressNow. Fond za Humanitarno Pravo. 2003.

31. <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2136>

32. Written Comments of the European Roma Rights Centre, Bibija, Eureka and Women's Space Concerning the Republic of Serbia: For Consideration by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its 38th Session.,4. Available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/03/7C/m0000037C.pdf>

Apart from this declarative and vague commitment to gender equality as priority projects, the Strategy incorporates gender perspective in the development of its goals and objectives in the field of social protection and the presentation of mechanisms to implement an efficient system for social protection, whereby the creation of institutional mechanisms and policies of prevention that would reduce and eliminate the violence on women, and the provision of comprehensive system of protection of women victims of violence, are set as necessary means for the accomplishment of set goals.

Considering the previously elaborated remarks of the marginalization of the capacities and expertise of women's organizations in the decision making process and implementation of gender equality programs, it is important to stress that the Strategy emphasizes the inclusion of relevant citizens' associations in all processes aiming to eliminate family, gender and sexually based violence.⁴⁵

The Strategy also covers the protection and advancement of women's health and promotes gender equality in health policies⁴⁶, as well as stressing the need of establishing gender equality and an integrating gender perspective in education.⁴⁷

Very briefly, almost insignificantly, with no special attention and analysis being devoted to it, the Strategy mentions the introduction of specific measures for employment of women in order to sustain the economic development of the city. The differences and different problems and obstacles faced by various groups of women are not taken into consideration, nor were they further developed in the discussions on economic development and social benefits.

Good practices have been identified among few municipalities in Belgrade, including Stari grad, Rakovica and Palilula. The Municipality of Stari grad has implemented several projects in the field of gender equality, in particular focusing on socially vulnerable groups, such as women victims of family violence, unemployed women, women from various minority groups, etc. Twenty women have been employed as geronto housewives, five of which have been selected in the project "Action for a Dignified Life", carried out in cooperation with the CSO 'AŽC', as victims of family violence. The same municipality has organized public discussion and exhibition with Roma CSOs, for the purpose of promoting successful Roma women. The Municipality of Rakovica has opened three safe houses for women and children victims of family violence supported by several private companies. The Municipality of Palilula through the capacities of its Office for Legal Aid and Protection from Family Violence has provided help to a number of women.

The Ministry of Health has initiated a promising practice in 2008 when 75 female health mediators have been engaged in 59 municipalities in Serbia, an initiative supported by OSCE, OSF and the state program for the Provision of Advanced Services on Local Level (DILS). All of the women engaged as health mediators are of Roma origin, living in Roma settlements themselves and being mothers with basic education. Their role has been to mediate between the Roma population, their health needs and public health services, although they have been actively engaged in mediating in problems related to social and humanitarian aid, and education. Significant initial results have been achieved through the activities organized through the Local Action Plans (LAP) that have managed to address some needs of Roma women and their children.

The importance of the slogan "The Personal is Political" for the history of feminist struggles, gender equality and the women' movement has been relentlessly analyzed in the course of the past few decades by feminist scholars and activists. Crossing, deconstructing, analyzing, demystifying and exposing the power mechanisms engrained the dichotomy of private/public and its corresponding ideological mirror of feminine/masculine is surely one of the most important steps in the struggles for gender equality and justice. Conquering and claiming public spaces by women has always been an important life and political strategy that defies and challenges this patriarchic divide. Numerous examples have been pointed out in the course of our research for street activism and activism in public spaces enacted by women's activists, most paradigmatic of which are the commemorative standing in silence of Women in Black, opening thus important, although still taboo subjects in the public sphere, such as facing the past and the responsibility of Serbia for the wars. Worth remembering are also the public performances on the International Day against Violence on Women organized by ACT Women. Both of these actions have been organized on public and important city streets, the Square in the city center or in front of the state and government institutions.⁵⁰

33. Senka nad Srbijom – Izveštaj nevladinih organizacija za 55. zasedanje Komiteta CEDAW. Autonomni ženski centar ASTRA, Žene u crnom, Labris, Glas razlike. 2013. Beograd

34. Ibid.

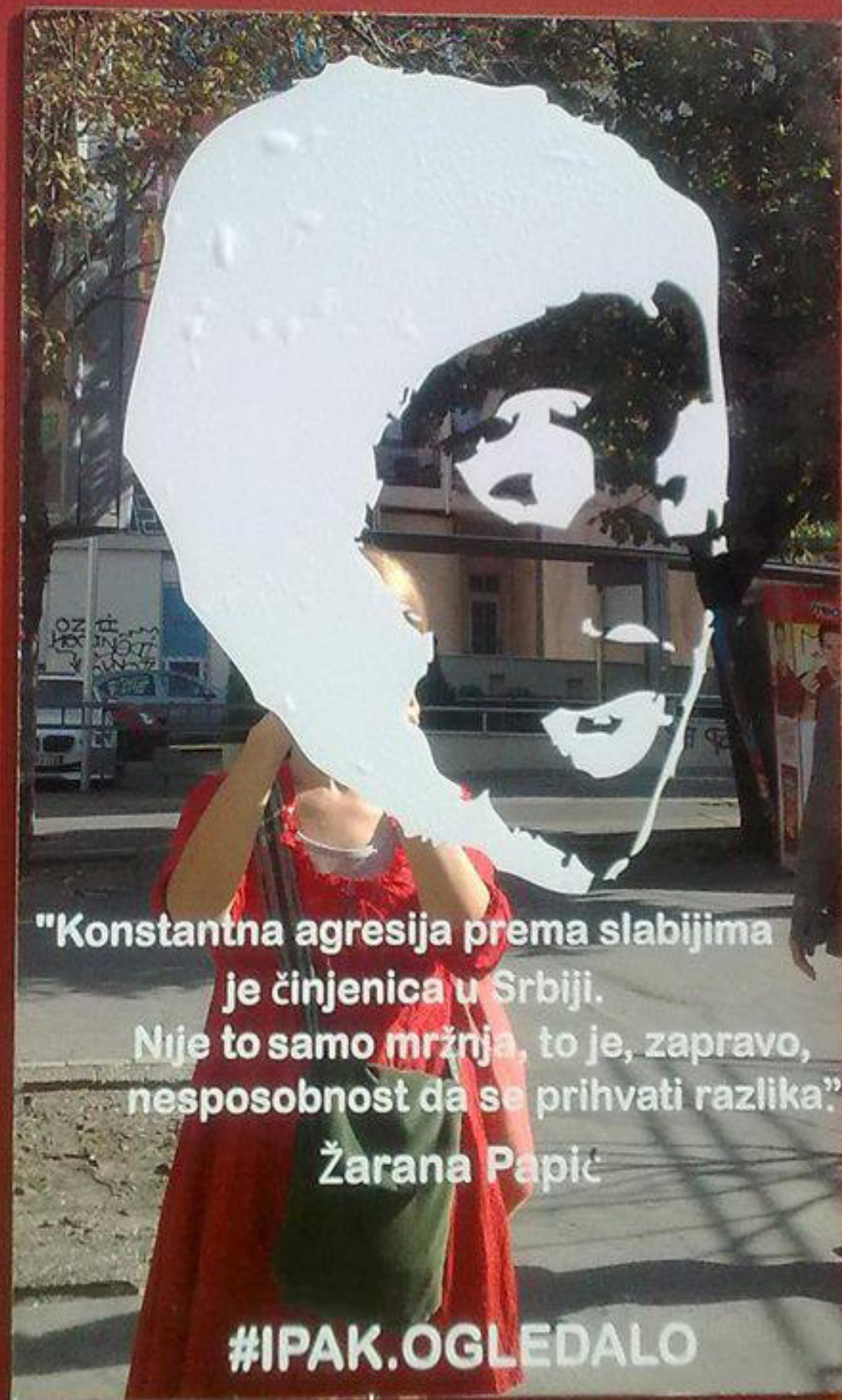
35. Ibid.

36. Ibid

37. Godišnji izveštaj Opservatorije za pracenje nasilja prema ženama 2012. Autonomni ženski centar. 2012, Beograd

38. Ibid.,25

39. Senka nad Srbijom – Izveštaj nevladinih organizacija za 55. zasedanje Komiteta CEDAW 2013. Autonomni ženski centar, ASTRA, Žene u crnom, Labris, Glas razlike. 2013, Beograd



"Konstantna agresija prema slabijima
je činjenica u Srbiji.
Nije to samo mržnja, to je, zapravo,
nesposobnost da se prihvati razlika."

Žarana Papić

#IPAK.OGLEDALO

A City for All?

On June 6, 2000 the residents of the Roma settlement Antena in Novi Beograd received an injunction to leave their homes within one day, and that the settlement would be demolished in that one day. The residents immediately addressed the local administration demanding longer time for their eviction. On the June 8, the settlement made in the 1970's (where at the moment of the injunction 126 people were living) was destroyed to the ground in presence of the police force. Several residents' cars were destroyed by bulldozers as well as their home assets and property. The twelve years old Ivan Stevanovic and Besim Osmani were physically attacked and wounded by a police officer. Although the Fond for Humanitarian Law pressed criminal charges against the police officer, one year later the charges were ruled out as unsustainable.

With the assistance of police and private security, 14 Roma families have also been forcefully evicted in 2001 from their houses in Zimunjiceva Street in Košutnjak, Belgrade. They have been given only five minutes to gather their belongings and leave the houses. Although the residents found a temporary shelter in a park close by, the communal police have informed them that within a few months they would be evicted from the park as well. No results according to international human rights law have been achieved to protect the Roma inhabitants.⁵¹ Although citizen associations made efforts in solving this problem, relevant authorities received no positive reply or collaboration. Thus, the Fund for Humanitarian Law in 2001 received a grant of 7.500 EUR from the Dutch Embassy, and tried to establish cooperation with the local municipal and city authorities, namely to provide location or gather extra funds that would secure the housing problem of those families. Since the gathered funds were not enough for buying an object at market prices, and the local authorities did not support their initiative, they were forced to return the grant to the Embassy.⁵²

A decision was made by the Sector for Communal and Construction work in the municipality of Novi Beograd, where 16 families were evicted from the settlement Stari Aerodrom, where 32 Roma families settled down, in the period of 1987-1990. The number increased after the NATO bombing in 1999, when a significant number of displaced Roma from Kosovo settled in the same area. A delegation of Roma representatives did not receive any answer on their demands from the local authorities of the city of Belgrade, meantime the settlement area was fenced. After two days of protest, the representatives of Roma community had a meeting with the local authorities, and the solution of the problem was once again evaded.

Only a few years ago, in 2009, the practice of forced eviction was continued when Roma residents under the highway bridge Gazela, settled in metal containers in the suburban areas of Belgrade, facing again resistance from local communities. The same situation was faced by Roma residents from Novi Beograd, Blok 72, evicted to the suburban areas of Makiš, Mladenovac, Barajevo and Rakovica. Roma residents living under Pancevacki most (the Pancevo bridge), were forcefully evicted, without any prior warning. Twenty families were displaced in the village of Dren, in a container settlement, with no basic infrastructure, including electricity, water supplies and sewerage system. The local authorities reacted after an initiative of a number of human rights organizations and returned the families already settled in suburban container settlements. Several families living under Pancevacki most (the Pancevo bridge) that were not settled in the container settlements have also been forcefully evicted in South Serbia. Several other forced evictions followed these incidents, where not even human rights activists were allowed to monitor the process, some being subjected to threats by the police.⁵³ Roma residents in the non-formal settlements in Novi Beograd, Belville faced the same conditions of forced eviction in 2012, being the 17th forced eviction in a row in almost two years. The eviction was executed on the grounds of a newly adopted Action Plan for Eviction of Non-Hygienic Settlements in Belgrade, adopted in 2009, with no prior consultation or participation of interested parties, Roma citizens, in the process of preparation of the Action Plan. Nor was the Plan submitted to public discussion after its adoption.

As local human rights organizations have reported, the eviction was conducted by braking many human rights standards and regulations. It was executed with no transparency and without the existence of a prior eviction action plan. The resident inhabitants were not consulted in the making of such a decision, nor have their needs and/or problems been considered. The new location allocated to the evicted residents did not fulfill the basic standards for dignified housing. They were segregated and isolated from the basic social services. No legal remedy was provided for the evicted families and citizens, and there has been no coordination with the national authorities, nor any reaction from them, especially considering the severe breaches of the human rights of Roma citizens. Eight organizations harshly condemned "severe violations of the human rights of residents in informal settlements provided by the City of

40. *ibid.*

41. Generalni plan Beograda 2021. "Službeni list grada Beograda", br. 27/2003, 25/2005, 34/2007, 20

42. Interview with MA Žaklina Gligorijevic, Urban Planning Institute, Belgrade

43. Strategija razvoja grada Beograda: ciljevi, koncepcija i strateški prioriteti održivog razvoja. Urbanistički zavod Beograda i PALGO centar. Beograd. 2011. 118

44. *ibid.* 153

Belgrade and they called the authorities to stop such actions at once, executed without any respect for human dignity and are contrary to the documents and recommendations of international organizations – above all the United Nations and the European Union.”⁵⁴

Public reactions have also been announced by Amnesty International⁵⁵ and Human Rights Watch, the first of which addressed the local authorities and the government of Serbia demanding preparation and adoption of new law that would prevent and forbid future forced evictions of Roma population from their informal settlements. The reaction of Human Rights Watch addressed to the Mayor of Belgrade, made a specific list of demands, as necessary measures for prevention of human rights violations of Roma people, including:

1. The action plan should be made public without further postponing; Roma and other communities and CSO's should be invited to speak their opinion, and their recommendations should be incorporated in the plan;
2. Every action of evicting Roma families should be undertaken after consultation with the families about available options and possibilities to seek legal aid;
3. Alternative residential solutions should be adequate and sustainable. In this context, evicting people in metal containers should not be regarded as a permanent solution. Hence, there is a necessity for a clearly defined deadline for the period during which a family would have a temporary accommodation, while arrangements for sustainable alternatives should be provided before the eviction;
4. Every temporary solution must provide the families with an access to appropriate hygienic conditions (an adequate number of showers and bathrooms), education, health and social help;
5. The possibility for earning a living should be part of the process of evicting the Roma;
6. Families with origin from South Serbia and other regions outside Belgrade should be offered an alternative to go back to the place where they came from; and
7. Financial compensation should be provided for the movable property damaged during an eviction.”⁵⁶

Besides referring to the inhumane conditions of the container based housing provided for the evicted Roma and extremely bad infrastructure and connection with central city amenities, human rights organizations have stated that by providing such housing (metal containers) the authorities have reacted as “a fascistic legal regime” being discriminatory to the Roma residents in these areas. Namely, “the City administration stated that Roma living in the container settlements didn't adopt “the rules of good behavior towards representatives of the institutions of the City of Belgrade”, and didn't have “an active attitude towards the City efforts to socialize individuals and their families” as well as that “they [Roma] had guests in the containers they lived in”, so that they could be again evicted by force from the provided accommodation. Based on these discriminatory provisions, the City administration evicted by force eleven families (44 people), as claimed by the representatives from the CSO Praxis.”⁵⁷

Despite the problems related to forced evictions, Roma citizens in informal settlements have faced severe exposure to violence by local non-Roma communities. The local community has continuously exposed Two hundred displaced Roma from Kosovo, living in Blok 45 in Novi Beograd since 1999 NATO bombing, to violence, insults and verbal threats. In November 2002 the situation got extreme and culminated with direct physical attacks when a group of minors entered the Roma settlement with guns and knives. An 8-year-old child was beaten up and the windows of a family house were broken. A displaced Roma woman from Kosovska Mitrovica has been severely injured after being attacked with a knife.

In 2013, Roma residents in the Zemun polje settlement were victims of massive threats, attack and hate speech by the local community that blamed Roma residents for the transmission of mange disease. The Regional Center for Minority Rights on this occasion reacted that the police has not taken necessary measures to react to the hate speech and violence against the Roma population.”⁵⁸

These violent practices of forced evictions, attacks, threats, discrimination and exclusion by the local non-Roma community are a part of everyday lives of Roma people living in the city of Belgrade, on different locations, especially those members of the Roma community and families living in non-formal settlements. A great number of Roma people live in illegal communally segregated settlements, without basic infrastructure and in extremely bad

45. *ibid.* 54

46. *ibid.* 49

47. *ibid.* 51

48. Tatjana Peric. Ostvarivanje ljudskih prava Romkinja u Republici Srbiji: Analiza primene postojećih institucionalnih mera. Niš: Ženski prostor, 2012.

50. Interview with Mirjana Miroslavljevic, WRF

sanitary and hygienic conditions. These conditions are persistently being worsened by forceful evictions and violent interventions of police and city authorities. The evicted Roma, whereby most likely they will be evicted again, has mostly effectuated the results of these actions by the authorities in new illegal settlements.⁵⁹

The situation is worrisome when one considers the social history of the settlements and their continuous presence in the city landscape, especially that half of those that have been recorded in 2002 date back to before 1900. The majority of them, 53 percent, had fewer than 200 inhabitants; around 30 percent had between 200 and 500 inhabitants; and only 4 percent had more than 2,000 inhabitants. Most Roma settlements are concentrated in the Belgrade area and along the Sava River. Around 70 percent of Roma settlements are considered to be informal. Half of them were spontaneously built on land not included in urban plans, while the other half were built in spite of existing urban plans. Around 75 percent of the houses in the settlements face insecure land tenure.

Around 37 percent lack access to a water supply, compared to 8 percent of households in the general population. Around 67 percent of Roma households are not connected to a sewerage system, compared to 37 percent of the majority population; and 11 percent lack electricity, compared to 0.1 percent.⁶⁰

In addition, there are severe problems faced by these communities in terms of being deprived of basic infrastructure, lack of legal security of tenure, lack of central services and amenities in their homes, including heating and insulation, sewerage system, running water, etc. These conditions are even more exasperated considering that they are far removed and not well connected to public services and educational opportunities. Their health is persistently being exposed to risk considering the housing conditions, Roma women being particularly vulnerable since spending much more time at home than their spouses.⁶¹

Besides the problems related to housing and forced evictions, Roma citizens have been facing a series of other human rights violations and threatening conditions related to their living and dwelling in public spaces in the city and while using and accessing public services.

Significant exposure to violence has been reported by human rights organizations when it comes to Roma people employed as street cleaners. Private individuals have also suffered street violence on several occasions, in all of which, the police has not reacted sufficiently in order to protect their citizens.

Roma children have persistently been facing problems in accessing education. Reported problems include early leaving of schools because of feelings of not being safe, uncertainty and exclusion, resulting with massive ghettoization of Roma children in schools. Living in financial and housing hardships, a great number of Roma children are forced to leave schooling earlier than the regular programs are finished.

Displaced Roma children from Kosovo are particularly facing hard conditions,⁶² that being the result of their lack of knowledge of the Serbian language, while there is no teaching provided in the Romani language.

Significant problem is the enrollment of Roma children in schools assigned for children with disabilities or special needs, as a result of wrong testing being applied to Roma children, without considering the social environment of the children and its impact on their development.

Lack of personal identity and house registration documents needed in order to enroll in school are fundamental barriers for Roma children's access to education.

In some regular schools Roma children are segregated along ethnic lines into classes with only Roma children. In other cases, they are forced to sit at the back of the classroom, thereby physically separating them from the rest of the students.⁶³

Roma citizens have also faced a series of discriminatory experiences, being forbidden to enter places of public use, such as night clubs, clubs, restaurants, sporting centers, etc. These cases have been documented to a greater extent in places which are private property, while in those being public, this type of violation has been rarely registered.⁶⁴

The conditions Roma citizens⁷² face in relation to housing and eviction are contradicting the basic commitments and goals of the Roma Housing Action Plan from 2004, whereby specific attention is paid to: the elaboration of national housing policy and the need of upgrading the regulatory framework (laws and by-laws) in the housing field, comprehensive and sustainable reconstruction and improvement of living conditions in the Roma settlements; regulation of

51. Romi u Srbiji. Beograd: PressNow, Fond za Humanitarno Pravo. 2003. 131

52. Ibid

53. <http://pescanik.net/2012/04/konacno-resenje-2/>

54. <http://www.hlc-rdc.org/?p=19722>

55. <http://upravusi.rs/?vest=amnesti-internesnel-kritikuje-srbiju-zbog-raseljavanja-nehigijenskih-naselja>

56. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/05/24/prisilno-raseljavanje-romskih-naselja-u-beogradu>

57. <http://romskenovine.wordpress.com/2013/11/12/fasizam-dilasova-gradska-uprava-beograda-diskriminise-rome/>

58. <http://romskenovine.wordpress.com/2013/11/06/zemun-rulja-od-200-gradana-setala-uz-povike-ubij-zakolji-da-cigan-ne-postoji/>

59. Romi u Srbiji. Beograd: PressNow, Fond za Humanitarno Pravo. 2003. 129

60. Zlata Vuksanovic -Macura. The mapping and enumeration of informal Roma settlements in Serbia. Environment and Urbanization, 2012.

the property and legal status of the housing facilities in Roma settlements; displacing the settlements (slums) in which conditions are extremely harsh and cannot be covered by the improvement and reconstruction process and building new apartments at appropriate locations; training Roma settlement inhabitants for action to participate in the activities of the local decision-making bodies and setting up local self-government bodies on the territories where the Roma settlements number from 1,000 –5,000 citizens of Roma nationality, etc.⁶⁵

Further, the actions undertaken by local authorities ignore the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2009 and the subsequent action plans, which is one of the most important documents related to the Decade for Inclusion of Roma People 2005-2015.⁶⁶ The Strategy “was made a strategy subject to change and development based on results of improvement of the Roma status in Serbia, in order to offer adequate solutions. That means that the Strategy for Improvement of Roma Status is not only a document, it is a social process in which the Roma community is completely involved in solving problems of their status in Serbia as an equal partner. The Strategy had to stay politically independent, because the problem of Roma is not a political issue, but rather a problem of the state.”⁶⁷ Besides the optimistic tone in the Strategy itself, very little has been done in real life for the purpose of improving the living and housing conditions of Roma citizens.

Actions of the local administration and their non-responsiveness to the problems addressed by Roma residents in the informal settlements and the human rights organizations advocating the rights of Roma people do not adhere to the main recommendations made by the Strategy. Namely, the Strategy appeals to local administration to undertake all necessary measures that would lead to the improvement of local Roma settlements while coordinating the process with the programs in health care, social protection, education and employment.

The Strategy recommends designing of urban plans in accordance with the standards of selection of new locations in cases of eviction, carefully taking into consideration the “location size, possibility of connection to the infrastructure (water, electricity, and sewerage), proximity of public services and public transport. These locations should be in areas suitable for housing and which are environmentally healthy. The lots for new locations should be provided from the state and municipal land or through mechanisms of negotiation and compensation. These locations should enable integration rather than encourage segregation or discrimination.”⁶⁸ These recommendations have not yet been implemented in the existing Master Plan, while the Action Plan adopted in 2010 has again been prepared without the participation of stakeholders, effectuating great damages for the Roma communities.

Focusing on policies related to urban planning and development, the Master Plan 2021 and the Strategy for Development of the City of Belgrade do not offer any in depth analysis nor solutions and actions related to the problems recorded.

The Master Plan 2021 covers the problems of Roma housing within the programs for social housing, whereby it is being emphasized that social housing targets the needs and problems of socially vulnerable and marginalized groups, including refugees and Roma people.⁶⁹

The Strategy devotes inadequate attention to the problems and needs of Roma people. Declaratively the document provides some insights and makes commitments in provisions related to social protection, health services, education of Roma children and increasing literacy among adult Roma.⁷⁰ The very concept of social development in the document is based upon the principle of social inclusion and cohesion guaranteeing that: “When planning social residences, isolated and distant locations should be avoided, but this type of residences should be combined with other types of available residences (even in personal property) intended for a broader spectre of social category of users, in an environment of a more heterogeneous social milieu. Social infrastructure is a necessary condition in all variants. The fact that certain categories of social residence users have needs for additional social services hence it is important to connect the projects of social residences with the system of social protection.”⁷¹ The experiences mentioned prior, related to the forced evictions of Roma citizens from informal settlements and the poor condition of the newly built settlements with no basic infrastructure (metal containers) show the exact opposite of the objectives of this Strategy, and are more likely to resemble urban ‘gray spaces’ and ‘gated communities’ elaborated by urban planning experts (Yiftachel 2009).

Among the developmental interests of the city of Belgrade, the subventions related to housing, including the development of special programs for housing targeting vulnerable social groups, such as socially endangered residents, refugees and displaced persons have been elaborated.

61. Written Comments of the European Roma Rights Centre, Bibija, Eureka and Women's Space Concerning the Republic of Serbia: For Consideration by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its 38th Session.,6. Available at: <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/media/03/7C/m0000037C.pdf>

62. Romi u Srbiji. Beograd: PressNow, Fond za Humanitarno Pravo. 2003.109

63. Written Comments of the European Roma Rights Centre, Bibija, Eureka and Women's Space Concerning the Republic of Serbia: For Consideration by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its 38th Session.

64. *ibid.* 143



International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.
IPAK.Centar with LICE ULICE and NGO Praxis

City's Sexuality

Sara Ahmed argues that sexual orientation and sexual identity involve much more than just the sexual object of one's desire. Rather more, this direction affects many other things, involving "bodies that leak into worlds; it involves a way of orienting the body towards and away from others, which affects how one can enter different social spaces (...) even if it does not lead bodies to the same place. (...) Orientations affect what it is that bodies can do."⁷³ The structures of heteronormativity and homophobia, manifested mostly in visible acts of violence and exclusion, are rarely mapped in the everyday insidious forms of violence and oppression enacted and lived by the structural parameters of heteronormativity, even less in the everyday interactive politics of shame embedded in homosocial, microsocial and wider political structures and institutions.

The shape public spaces take are a result of the histories of repetition of certain bodily extensions and certain forms of life and relations, mainly the heteronormative ones. Their shape is provided by the iterative performance of heterosexual conduct, which is a process unnoticed by the heterosexual subject whose body extends freely in the space taken its shape already before its arrival.⁷⁴ Being comfortable means to be at ease with one's social environment to such an extent that the boundaries between one's body and the world outside become indistinguishable. In feelings of comfort, Sara Ahmed claims, "bodies extend into spaces, and spaces extend into bodies", and heteronormativity function on exactly this ground, as "a form of public comfort by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape."⁷⁵

It is no coincidence that Myslic in his analyses on gay communities as 'safe havens' and their relationship to the politics of heteronormative social space and the politics of spatial exclusion of non-heteronormative identities and sexualities argues that:

65. Republic of Serbia Roma Housing Action Plan. Belgrade 2004: http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9296_file35_ap-housing-serbia.pdf

66. Decade of Roma Inclusion Terms of Reference, p. 3, 1.10.2010.

67. Vlada Republike Srbije, Strategija za unapredjivanje položaja Roma u Republici Srbiji, Beograd, 2009, str. 52, available at: <http://www.ljudskoprava.gov.rs/propisi>; and Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2010, 6

"In nearly all public spaces... there is no tolerance for departure from a heterosexual gender-identity and its attendant patterns of behaviour. Gay men learn that in the workplace, in bars, in shopping malls, on the street, in virtually every physical or social space in which they travel, sexual orientation must never be visible. For most gay men, adapting behaviour between gay and straight spaces to hide their sexual identity becomes natural and nearly unconscious..."⁷⁶ (Myslic 1996: 159)

The majority of available public spaces in Belgrade is organized in such a way that correspond to a heteronormative model of sociality and align with family extensions, including bodily layouts of the heterosexual couples. The heteronormative organization of the city is most visible in the patterns of social interactions and the attitude towards sexual and gender difference by citizens embodying and representing hegemonic sexuality.⁷⁷ As a report by Gay Straight Alliance claims, the "majority of LGBT people in Serbia do not need research to find out how high is the level of homophobia around them – they face its consequences on a daily basis in their homes, schools, and workplaces, on the street, among friends – everywhere. They are often under pressure and unsuccessfully continue to adapt to the general heterosexual discourse, reflecting in the poorer quality of their lives. They often lose their jobs or are harassed by colleagues and superiors if their sexual orientation is disclosed or suspected, they get thrown out of their living spaces, abused by parents and family members who try to "re-educate" them, they are exposed to threats, hate speech and discrimination at all levels and are often victims of violence, both by individuals and by organized extremist groups. (...) They are constantly reminded how unwelcomed they are by graffiti threats, insults and hatred, which they pass by daily in Belgrade and other Serbian cities." ⁷⁸

The general public is well acquainted with the attempts of LGBT organizations to organize pride parades, forbidden three times up to date. Security reasons and prevention of possible incidents of violence are the most usual excuse used by city and state authorities so far in order to justify the violation of the freedom of assembly and the inability of state institutions to provide equal conditions and space to all citizens to express their demands and identities. The violence of heteronormativity has been most visible and massively demonstrated during the Pride Parades held in 2001, when many activists and supporters were brutally beaten-up on the streets of Belgrade, and the Parade in 2010, when groups of hooligans were rioting in the city center with the intention to prevent, attack and eradicate the possibility of sexual minorities to show their presence in public spaces.

The uninterrupted flow of heteronormativity and homophobia in public spaces becomes even clearer when we take into consideration the findings of opinion polls aimed in assessing and measuring the level of homophobia amongst the general population. Thus, according to the research conducted by Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) and the independent monitoring and polling Centre for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) "Prejudices Exposed– Homophobia in Serbia", the majority citizens in Serbia do not tolerate having a LGBT individual as a co-worker or employer, not to mention as high ranking officials, friends, family members or teachers. The majority of citizens in Serbia express their homophobia in an ambiguous manner, in such a way that they allegedly accept homosexuals to the extent to which they practice and express their sexuality and sexual identity in the domain of the private sphere, or as it is often popularly said 'between four walls'. Around 70 percent said they would not want a relative to display a homosexual orientation, and 64 percent disapproved of the same in the case of a friend. Further, the research reports, "although 67 percent concede that homosexuality always existed and 65 percent supports an individual's right to sexual orientation, most of the surveyed have the opinion that venues where homosexuals gather should not be allowed to exist. Almost 75 percent disapprove of gay parades, while 77 percent is against gay marriages, and only one in 20 is ready to allow LGBT person to adopt a child."⁷⁹

Non-normative sexual spaces are usually marginalized and set on the periphery of the city. The 'periphery' in this sense is very often specifically and paradoxically situated in the very center of the city, but its existence and location is marked by process of invisibilization and hiding of all signs that could indicate the presence of 'queer places'. These spaces are further marked by the persistent feeling of insecurity and clinging threat of violence, most paradigmatically exemplified by the continuous presence of police around these coffee bars and clubs, or the hidden and secretive organization of events in these places (through closed Facebook groups, private invitations, etc.). Hence, the alleged freedom these places provide for LGBTQ individuals is undermined by their marginalization, secretiveness, non-safety and feelings of fear and constant threat.

68. *ibid.* 21

69. Master Plan of Belgrade 2021, 40

70. Strategija razvoja grada Beograda: ciljevi, koncepcija i strateški prioriteti održivog razvoja. Urbanistički zavod Beograda i PALGO centar, Beograd 2011.45, 51

71. *ibid.* 58

72. *ibid.* 56-7, 60

73. Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. New York: Routledge, 2004. 145

74. Valentine, Gill. "(Re) Negotiating the 'Heterosexual Street': Lesbian Productions of Space" in Duncan, Nancy ed. 1996. *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*. New York: Routledge, 149



IPAK.Centar Project: Mirror

Another problem identified in the context of the alleged 'safe havens' clubs and bars represent for LGBTQ people is the lack of public contribution towards the establishing and maintenance of these spaces, all of which are being objects of private property. As one of our interviewee claims, even the opening of these privately owned places is faced with obstacles, mostly coming from local residents seeing the presence of gay people in their neighborhood as a threat and danger to the alleged cleanness of their area.

This kind of organization of public space and the pregnancy of public spaces with possibilities of violence and uncertainty creates a specific affective and intimate geographies as constitutive part of the lived experiences of LGBTQ people of the city. The intimate and cognitive infrastructure and mapping of the city by this marginalized population is marked by movements of fear, tremble and lack of safety and belonging.

75. Ahmed 2004: 148

76. Myscill 1996, quoted in Duncan Nancy ed. 1996. *Bodyscapes: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexualities*. London: Routledge

77. Interview with a representative from Gay Straight Alliance

78. *Step by Step: Report on Human Rights Status of LGBT Persons in Serbia 2010*. GSA, Belgrade

79. *This is Our Country*. GSA, Belgrade. 2008.



It is important to emphasize that the cognitive maps and the everyday affective infrastructures experienced by LGBTQ people are supported by continuously witnessed feedback loops of acts and stories of violence, a great number of which are being annually and monthly reported by human rights advocates. Thus, only in 2012, GSA has reported around 10 cases of physical attacks, some of which have been direct attempts of murder, and several more cases of assaults, life threats, public insults, spitting, harassment, etc. In the course of the years, gay clubs and bars have been on several occasions exposed to attacks by violent groups or individuals, while human rights activists (e.g. Boris Milićević and Boban Stojanović) have personally experienced violent attacks, attacks on their private property or insults or spitting in public spaces. Physical attacks targeting LGBTQ individuals have been documented to have taken place on different locations in the city and public spaces, including dark streets, parks, city center and squares, environment near gay clubs and bars, in public transport, their neighborhoods, shopping centers, etc. Human rights activists' premises have also been under attack, occasionally with activists being injured (CSO 'Women in Black'). The Gay Straight Alliance has produced a gay bashing map⁸⁰ which provides detailed insight into all attacks on LGBTQ people, presented in a chronological manner, and offering a visual and mapped presentation of all locations throughout the city where LGBTQ people have been victims of violence.

The situation is even more complex when we take into consideration the internal identity differentiation within the community. Thus, transgender people are to a higher degree exposed to violence, caused by the higher salience of the markers of their gender non-conformity or sex reassignment. The disposability of transgender persons is more salient in those cases when they are involved in sex work, especially when working outside, although transgender sex workers working in closed spaces are also exposed to threats of violence and rape. LGBTQ organizations have so far reported cases of murder, as extreme examples, whereas threats, insults, assaults, etc. are everyday life experiences of transgender persons.

So far, city authorities and local administrations have not contributed with any financial, infrastructural or logistical help⁸¹ for the purpose of providing and instituting social spaces, where sexual and gender minorities would feel safe and have possibilities for creating cultural connections and social interactions and relations. Although CSOs have identified the need for establishing a safe house that could provide support and shelter to LGBTQ people, who have faced social exclusion or family violence, this initiative has not been realized so far. Our interviewee from GSA⁸² has indicated that this initiative is part of the organization's future activities, and the city authorities are planned to be included in this process. At this point of the research no detailed data can be provided, neither can we speculate on if the city authorities will get involved.

The support from the city authorities has been assessed as being more of a declarative character. Support of LGBTQ civic association's initiatives by the city administration is not noticeable, nor are there any examples of good practice or collaboration that have resulted in actual projects and outcomes. Collaboration with city authorities has been established only in some cases of joint press conferences or promotions of annual reports related to the human rights of LGBTQ people in Serbia.

GSA has also reported⁸³ that they have filed a lawsuit against the public company Sava Centar, a congress, cultural and business center, on April 24, 2009. For the non-pecuniary damages due to breach of honor, reputation, personal rights and equal treatment by insults that were uttered by this public company's executives at the expense of LGBTQ people as well as for forbidding an organization that deals with protection of the rights of LGBTQ people the use of their public facilities. Also, the Sava Centar management did not allow GSA to hold a press conference in their center on February 26, 2009, at which a report on the human rights of LGBTQ people in Serbia was to be presented.⁸⁴

Considering the problems that sexual and gender minorities are facing in public spaces and urban life, we concluded that none of the documents reviewed for the purposes of this research addressed the issues or offered actions and solutions to problems identified by the respective community and their advocates.

The Master Plan 2021 and the Strategy for Development do not even have sexual or gender identity in the focus of their interest. There are no analyses about the problems of LGBTQ people, the public violence they suffer, the inaccessibility of public spaces for assembling (pride parades), the need of support by the city in terms of establishing safe houses or other spaces that could be used for cultural and social purposes, nor about the possibility of registering and providing assistance to victims of violence in public spaces, etc. Except for some general provisions in the Strategy covered by the phrases "vulnerable and marginalized groups", already elaborated in the section concerning Roma and urban spaces and planning, there is no actual identification of sexual minorities as being of any concern

80. <http://gsa.org.rs/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Gay-Bashing-Map-GSA.pdf>

81. Interview with a representative from GSA

82. *ibid*

83. Step by Step: Report on Human Rights Status of LGBTQ Persons in Serbia 2010. GSA, Belgrade

84. *ibid*. 27

for the development (social, urban or economic) of the city of Belgrade. Neither have any research resources or reports already produced by LGBT advocates been considered, nor has any organization working in the field of LGBT rights been consulted or invited to participate in the preparation of these documents.

It is important to emphasize for the purposes of this report that LGBT people and activists have, despite the reluctance of city and local administration to support, acknowledge and recognize their needs and demands, actively used public spaces in order to claim their visibility and equality. Thus, although the Pride parade was not allowed in 2012, the Pride week was successfully organized in the period of 30.09-07.10.2012, comprising a series of activities held in cultural spaces and institutions. In 2013, although the Pride was not allowed by state authorities in the last instance, the organizers of the Parade have, together with a large group of their supporters, spontaneously organized a protest on the streets of Belgrade without previously announcing it to the institutions or the public. There are few other actions of political actions of activists occupying and claiming public spaces and contesting heteronormativity and its neutralized and normalized hegemony that are worth mentioning. As part of the project "Together for Equality of LGBT people", GSA and several other organizations have organized in 2012 a "Demonstration of Dolls" in the cities of Novi Sad, Niš and Belgrade. There were no incidents that followed these actions. In the same year, activists from Labris and Women in Black were distributing information brochures in the center of Belgrade, for the purpose of educating the citizens on the human rights of LGBT people and the problems they face in everyday life. The action was ended with 100 balloons in rainbow colors over the city of Belgrade. Furthermore, on the occasion on the Pride Day on June 27, 2012, several organizations organized an action titled as "Silence Won't Protect Us", comprising so called "Pride Surprises". Namely, more than ten activists on the Republic Square exposed banners pointing out the conditions in which LGBT people live. On one of these banners was written "I am Not Here Anymore", indicating that because of their hard situation many LGBT people have either left the country or killed themselves.⁸⁵

Great popularity has been granted to actions performed in public spaces by a group within the project called "Kissing Area" (Mesto za ljubljenje).⁸⁶ The project aimed to challenge the hegemonic and all-present 'within the four walls' narrative, as well as the public coercive mechanisms of sanitizing and regulating the possibilities of different non-normative bodies existing in public spaces, those of sexual minorities in particular. Subverting the popular logic of "do whatever you want behind four walls", the group was drawing, on different city locations, mostly spaces marked by previous incidents and acts of violence, symbolic 4 walls where anyone could enter and kiss the person s/he wanted or loved.

Cultural events, including film and cultural festivals (e.g. 'Merlinka'), have also been manifested the engagement of LGBTQ activists within public institutions and public sphere and spaces.

III. Conclusions

- The existing model of urban and development planning process includes the participation of citizens in a significantly weak manner of collaboration and deliberation.
- The Law on Planning and Construction does not provide specific and detailed measures and regulations according to which the planning process would foster and include citizens' participation. Therefore, there still a significant lack of systematic and structured procedures and regulations which would regulate the process and method of citizens' participation in decision making, as well as citizens' initiation of different kinds of activities and the articulation of their demands related to everyday living and needs in public spaces.
- The public presentation of the form and content of urban planning documents is organized in technocratic and specialist manner, which makes it even more inaccessible to common citizens who would like to

85. Godišnji izveštaj o položaju LGBTIQ populacije u Srbiji za 2012. godinu. Labris - organizacija za lezbejska ljudska prava. 2013. Beograd

86. <https://www.facebook.com/MestoZaLjubljenje?fref=ts>

participate in the planning process and express their interests.

- The methodology for citizens' participation in the planning decision making process, by classic opinion polls/questionnaires, is compromised since it can easily lead people to give expected answers, and can thus serve as a support for planners ideas.
- Urban planning processes in the city of Belgrade are based on a top-down approach, setting experts and governing political bodies, i.e. decision-makers as the core factor in determining the directions, concepts, priorities and contents of the planning processes.
- Urban and Development Plans and Strategies presuppose a definition of the 'citizen' as a universal category, thus neglecting and evading the structural differences among different social groups, some of which have historically been exposed to deprivation, discrimination, exclusion and dispossession.
- Urban plans are still predominantly spatially biased with incomparably greater focus set on land-use management, zoning, town planning schemes and so forth, while neglecting dynamic, people-driven and integrative models.
- The preparation and implementation of urban and development plans and strategies is compromised by the lack of coordination and cooperation between municipalities and the administration of the city of Belgrade, and other political actors on national level.
- None of the interviewed organizations expressed confidence in the potential for practicing their "right to the city" and intervening in public spaces in accordance with their needs and the groups they represent, nor have they ever participated in any public discussion or have been invited to contribute in processes of urban and development planning.
- There is a lack of transparent information on the mechanisms and procedures for citizens to submit direct initiatives to local and city administration.
- There is no sufficient information publicly available on the number and availability of public locations, spaces and buildings, owned by the municipalities or the city.
- The Master Plan 2021 and the Strategy for Development of the City of Belgrade do not take into consideration and do not analyze the various and multiple lived experiences of different groups of citizens, social classes and minorities in the urban landscape of Belgrade, nor the heterogeneous ways in which people mentally visualize and imagine the city, as well as their subconscious cognition and geographies of the city, including the differentially distributed experiences of everyday infrastructures comprising institutional and emotional structures of constraint and possibilities (across the lines of gender, class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, health, disability etc.).
- Public spaces in the city and its municipalities are hardly accessible to people with different forms of disability.
- Safety in public spaces is unevenly distributed across the axis of gender.
- Local and state authorities have been persistently refraining from developing programs that would create conditions for women after experiencing situations of violence.
- Public services are also not gender sensitive considering the gendered nature of different forms of violence and the consequent needs they raise in terms of treatment and resocialization of victims.
- The experience, expertise and autonomy of women's organizations built in the course of several decades are still being mainly marginalized and ignored in the key procedures and decision making processes.

- The weakest level of collaboration and participation of women's organizations has been identified in the process of urban planning and development strategies, with a significant lack of inclusion of interested parties and of developing a gender-sensitive urban planning process.
- Not a single paragraph or section in the Master Plan is devoted to gender issues, nor is there any analysis of problems related to gender equality.
- The Strategy for Development of the City of Belgrade, although prepared with no reference to direct participation of interested parties working in the field of gender equality, includes gender equality in its priorities and goals for social development..
- Conquering and claiming public spaces by women has always been important life and political strategy that defies and challenges this patriarchic division. Numerous examples have been pointed out in the course of our research for street activism and activism in public spaces enacted by women's activists.
- Forced eviction, violent interventions of police and city authorities, assaults, threats, discrimination and exclusion by the local non-Roma community is part of the everyday lives of Roma population living on different locations in the city of Belgrade, especially those members of the Roma community living in non-formal settlements.
- Newly provided housing for evicted Roma communities are deprived of basic and rudimentary infrastructure, and marked by lack of legal security of tenure, lack of core services and amenities in homes including heating and insulation, sewage system, running water, etc. These conditions are even more exasperated, considering the fact that they are far removed and not well connected to public services and educational opportunities.
- Roma population faces severe human rights violations, discrimination and threatening conditions related to their living and dwelling in the public spaces in the city and in accessing public services.
- Roma citizens have been also facing a series of discriminatory experiences when being forbidden to enter places for public use, such as night clubs, clubs, restaurants, sporting centers, etc.
- Eviction actions undertaken by local authorities go against the core of the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia 2009 and the subsequent action plans, that represents one of the most important documents related to the Decade for Inclusion of Roma People 2005-2015.
- Master Plan 2021 and the Strategy for Development of the City of Belgrade do not offer any in depth analysis nor solutions and actions related to the problems recorded.
- The majority of available public spaces in Belgrade are organized in such a way that they correspond to a heteronormative model of sociality and align with family extensions, including bodily layouts of the heterosexual couples.
- Non-normative sexual spaces are usually marginalized and set on the peripheries of the city. The periphery is very often specifically and paradoxically situated in the very center of the city, but its existence and location is marked by a invisibilization process and hiding of all signs that could indicate the presence of 'queer places'. These spaces are further marked by the persistent feeling of insecurity and the clinging threat of violence.
- City authorities and local administration have so far not assisted with financial, infrastructural or logistical help for the purpose of providing and instituting social spaces, where sexual and gender minorities would feel safe and have the possibility to create cultural connections and social interactions and relations.

- None of the documents that have been reviewed for the purposes of this research addresses the problems identified by the respective communities or their advocates, nor do they offer any specific actions in order to solve them.
- LGBTQ people and activists have, despite the reluctance of city and local administration authorities to support, acknowledge and recognize their needs and demands, actively used public spaces in order to claim their visibility and equality.

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