

CUI '18

VI. INTERNATIONAL

CONTEMPORARY URBAN ISSUES CONFERENCE

Conference Proceedings

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CONTENTS

DERIVING A NARRATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE FROM COMMUNITY STORIES IN FAMAGUSTA WALLED CITY	
JASON MURRAY WINN	Hata! Yer işareti tanımlanmamış.
INFORMAL MORPHOLOGY OF PUBLIC SPACES IN MIGRANT LABOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD, DUBAI	
LIYAH MARIAM GEORGE	23
MORPHOGENETIC PROCESS OF AN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT ON THE HILLS OF DELHI, INDIA	
ISHITA CHATTERJEE	37
INTERSECTING URBAN IN/FORMALITIES	
HARSHAVARDHAN JATKAR.....	52
HOMELESS VEHICLE: AN ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVE TO EXCLUSIONARY DISCOURSE OF URBAN POVERTY	
ZEYNEP SOYSAL.....	67
URBAN PLANNING AGAINST POVERTY – WHAT ALTERNATIVES FOR SOUTH CITIES	
JEAN-CLAUDE BOLAY.....	78
IMPACT OF URBAN GEOMETRY AND OUTDOOR SPACING ON THERMAL PERFORMANCE IN NEW ASWAN CITY	
HATEM MAHMOUD	88
THE IMPACT OF URBAN PROBLEMS ON EGYPTIAN GRADE CROSSINGS, CASE STUDY (AL-HABASHI GRADE CROSSING)	
AHMED OUF, AYMAN MOSTAFA, SARA ALI.....	105
QUALITY OF LIFE IN URBAN VILLAGE: A PILOT STUDY IN ALOR SETAR, MALAYSIA	
MOHAMAD SHAHARUDIN SAMSURIJAN, R.B. RADIN FIRDAUS, MAHINDA SENEVI GUNARATNE .	130
FROM FORMAL TO INFORMAL: RESILIENT URBAN INDEX FOR HOUSING TYPOLOGIES IN NEW URBAN COMMUNITIES: (6 TH OF OCTOBER CITY)	
SARA ALI, MENNATALLAH TAWFIK	138
PLACE MAKING STRATEGIES IN ORGANIC INFORMALITY:ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT IN ASALPHA HILL SETTLEMENT, MUMBAI	
DIPON BOSE.....	155
THE CITY LAB JOINVILLE IN SOUTHERN BRAZIL: AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH FOR ADDRESSING SUSTAINABILITY IN THE MOBILITY SECTOR	
MARIELISA PADILLA, VLADYSLAV LATYPOV.....	175
RAGI KANA: A CASE STUDY ON THE INTERACTION OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL MARKET ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH	

PADMINI RAM, AJAY KUMAR, SIDRA ZAFAR	189
INFORMALITY AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE IN BELGRADE RIVERSIDE	
JELENA RADOSAVLJEVIĆ, ALEKSANDRA ĐORĐEVIĆ, MILOŠ KOSTIĆ	201
URBAN VITALITY AND THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF PUBLIC SPACE	
JULIANA MORAES ARAÚJO, ALINE PEREIRA DA SILVA, TERESA CRISTINA ALMEIDA DE FARIA, LUCIANA BOSCO E SILVA	216
URBAN RESISTANCE AND CREATIVE ACTIVISM. TIRANA CASE	
LEIDA RUVINA	225
ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING THROUGH YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP	
SHELLY DALY	226
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROVISION FOR SOCIAL EQUITY – AN APPLICATION OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE EQUITY INDEX IN GUANGZHOU	
LIU XUAN, ZHU ZHANQIANG	227
TOWARDS A TAXONOMIC UNDERSTANDING OF INFORMALITY ? A CALL FOR RESEARCH COLLABORATION	
VANESSA BOANADA FUCHS, ANTHONY BOANADA-FUCHS.....	228
THE CITY AS AN INFORMAL VIRTUAL COMMUNITY	
PIOTR SIUDA	229
WALKABILITY IN “FORMAL” AND “INFORMAL” NEIGHBOURHOODS	
EBRU CUBUKCU, CIGDEM HOROZ, BURCIN HATİP, GOZDE CETİNTAHRA, K. MERT CUBUKCU	237
BALANCING DEVELOPMENT WITH THE NEED FOR GREEN SPACES: SPATIAL PLANNING IN SAN ANTONIO AND ISTANBUL	
ANGELA HARTSELL	238

INFORMALITY AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPE IN BELGRADE RIVERSIDE

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Abstract

By considering regulations defined by laws, plans and decisions on different levels related to urban development of Belgrade riverside, specific conditions of privatization of land, changes in legislation and insufficiently defined planning procedures have been recognized, which reflect the informal practice of land use development.

The example of such coastal areas can be found along the Sava and Danube riverside, including the illegal appropriation of the aquatory, which are regarded in this research as a specific practice of creating a unique cultural landscape. This practice reflects a spontaneous urban development of the riverside through the formal and informal establishment of temporary and permanent housing, numerous commercial and recreational activities in different scale along the 200km of Belgrade riverbank.

The shaping of the cultural landscape of Belgrade riverside will be analyzed through the comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to the ongoing riverside urbanization, which manifest the complex linkage between formal institutions, and members of the local community. The importance of closer examination of cultural, economic, environmental and spatial aspects of this process is in the recognition of indigenous building regulations and relations to the natural resources. The main goal of the research is to understand different levels on which this informal practice persists and to outline the possibilities for the improvement of the current planning of Belgrade riverbank through their institutionalisation.

Introduction

In line with World Heritage Conventions, the notion of cultural landscape as an integrated approach to the development and preservation of the landscape has been globally accepted and institutionalized. Additionally, the present-day paradigm of sustainable development enabled a broad consideration of the cultural landscape as a concept applicable in different areas aiming to preserve tangible and intangible values resulted from specific relations between man and the

environment. These relations change over time but are constantly influenced by the socio-political context.

As a result of the transition from a socialist to a neoliberal model of governance and planning in Serbia, spaces with specific values that are recognized and can be regarded as a cultural landscape are exposed to major transformations. Such areas are at the constant risk of uncontrolled urbanization and unplanned development. Having in mind the fact that in the urban development of cities, cultural landscape has been recognized as one of the central topics in the debate on governance changes, this paper will consider the process of transformation of the cultural landscape in the context of sustainable development.

In the territory of Belgrade, the specific development of the river islands has been recognized, as a representation of human relationships through time with the natural environment. This is evident through specific typology, the technology of construction and the treatment of open spaces developed according to constraints and potentials of the natural environment and the activities that take place on these areas. Even though Serbian regulatory framework does not perceive the cultural landscape as a category of heritage, the issue of recognizing and preserving the cultural landscape is addressed by the signing of the European Landscape Convention (ELC). Having in mind that ELC is based on a comprehensive approach to the preservation of the cultural landscape as well as the inclusion of the concept of a cultural landscape in governance and planning policies in different areas, we consider that the research of the relations between informality and river islands in Belgrade, can be significant for the Serbian planning practice. In addition, comparative research of transformation of the cultural landscape from economic, environmental, spatial and social aspect is of particular importance for the understanding of whether some of the aspects are crucial for the sustainable transformation and preservation of the specific values of a place.

In this paper, we will present our research in six sections. After the introduction, section two explains the theoretical notions of cultural landscape, its constituting values and the way how it is regulated. Section three provides an overview of the dilemmas concerning cultural landscape in Serbia. This overview is followed by section four in which formal documents and informal practices are further described. The fifth section provides a detailed analysis of three case studies that were chosen based on the river island origin, level of plan realization and existence of housing activity on the river. The goal of these four sections is to provide theoretical ground for withdrawing criteria for the case study analysis. The goal of section five is to provide an understanding of individual cases and comparative analysis regarding economic, environmental, social and spatial aspects of the process of creation and transformation of the cultural landscape. In the last segment, we will sum up what has been achieved with this paper and point to possible further research concerning river islands and cultural landscape in the city of Belgrade.

Cultural landscape – notion, constituting values and regulatory framework

The complexity of the concept of a cultural landscape, as Naveh pointed out, originates from its multidimensional and multidisciplinary characteristics and results in a variety of definitions dependant on the applied approach and purpose of the landscape assessment (Naveh, 2001). The

prevailing view among most of the definitions considers that the majority of landscapes are cultural in the sense that they represent the result of human activity in the natural environment throughout history.

The significance of the landscape characteristics to its inhabitants is of the great importance for the understanding of the transformation of the cultural landscape. According to Stephenson, Bauchop and Petchey, this significance is not only related to the physical environment, but also the culture, practices, traditions, the narrative and connection between man and land (Stephenson, Bauchop and Petchey, 2004). Rapoport claims that people shape landscape using formal and informal, written or unwritten rules that provide a framework in which seemingly independent decisions make sense (Rapoport, 1992). As one of the aspects of culture, the rules are fundamentally related to lifestyles, values and norms, as well as worldviews, making the system of rules specific in relation to groups and communities. Following the system of rules, a homogeneous group within a localized area usually produces a distinctive cultural landscape (Rapoport, 1992).

Criticizing the concept of cultural landscape, Scazzosi (2004) states that both cultural and natural meaning can be read in every place, and because of that, it is impossible to make a common theoretical distinction between cultural and natural landscapes, since they could simply be regarded as “landscapes.” On the other hand, certain scholars claim that the cultural landscape cannot be exclusively regarded as the sum of physical components with cultural or natural characteristics, but on the contrary, it is a result of the relations which people build through manifestation of values about their use of space, which makes social and cultural aspects essential. The ways in which the various understandings and meanings of environment values are shaped by people through practice, tradition and relations between man and land (Stephenson, Bauchop and Petchey, 2004) consequently create specifics of the cultural landscape. The manifestation of the interaction between human and nature can be understood as a definition of rules and constraints in the development of urban policies, and also as informal cultural practices and institutions that are established for using and preserving specific places.

In understanding the space that has the characteristics of the cultural landscape, what is especially distinguishable is the appropriate local knowledge that is at the heart of the creation of cultural landscapes throughout history. This knowledge can be treated as the ability of the local community to respond to long-term needs using resources from the environment and creating a functional territory, rich in identity and symbolic meanings (Berte, Panagopoulos and Zanon, 2013). Additionally, the creation of policies needs both the expert knowledge that supports the development adapted to the perspectives, attitudes and capacities of local actors while the local community can contribute to this process with their specific knowledge and skills (Thorell, 2013). This interdependence of actors and the local community is important for governing the urban development of cultural landscapes. In order to understand the potentials and limitations for the establishment and development of cultural landscapes as areas for action, it is necessary to consider their specific institutional dimension (Rohring, 2011). Gailing and Kilper emphasize the existence of a dual role of contribution to the concept of a cultural landscape that in one sense includes preservation, and in the other development and active formation through development policies (Gailing and Kilper, 2009). This is supported by the European Spatial Development Perspective

(ESDP) and the European Landscape Convention (ELC). ESDP includes socio-cultural aspects of cultural areas, where the originality of cultural areas contributes to local and regional identity (ESDP, 2000).

Cultural landscape in Serbia

The issue of the cultural landscape in Serbia was actualized in 2011 by signing the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000) and the adoption of the Law on the Confirmation of the European Landscape Convention. The parties committed to integrating the landscape into spatial and urban planning practice, including different policies, from cultural, social, economic, environmental and other fields that are important for the development and transformation of the landscape. According to the convention above, the landscape in the broadest sense encompasses a certain area, as people see and experience it, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and human resources, especially emphasizing the natural and cultural components of the landscape. As Vasiljević and Radić (2016) state, "the Convention promotes a unique approach, regardless of whether it is an "exceptional" landscape (protected natural or cultural property), "ordinary" landscape (natural, rural, urban and suburban areas) or "degraded" landscape (surface mining, refineries, etc.)". They further state that the objectives of the Convention are to preserve the diversity of the area and the unique character, to improve the existing quality of the region, or to create new values (Vasiljević and Radić, 2016). This confirms the importance of researching the concept of a cultural landscape and encourages the development of mechanisms for the management and planning of certain areas to protect local values from the dynamic transformation process as the basic characteristics of the landscape as a whole.

The signing of the European Landscape Convention was followed by the Study of the Typology of Belgrade's landscapes for the implementation of the goals stated in the convention (Cvejić, Vasiljević and Tutundžić, 2008). The typology of landscapes in the territory of Belgrade was developed according to various physical, social and ecological influences recognized in each type. Important for our research is the character of the landscape - type 4 alluvial plow in which two subject areas can be enlisted, while smaller river island of Ada Medica is located in its immediate surrounding. The mentioned study and characteristics of typology do not include the aspects of the cultural area that are considered by the literature as important in the process of managing and planning the space of specific landscape characteristics.

Observing the formal planning and laws, the Law on the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia from 2010 to 2020 (Zakon o prostornom planu Republike Srbije od 2010. do 2020. godine, 2010), defines the cultural landscape as a part of the combined action of nature and man, emphasizing the distinction between rural and urban cultural areas. Within them, the plan recognizes the objects of cultural and historical heritage in the following categories: designed cultural landscapes, organic and relic cultural landscapes, and associative cultural landscapes. The categorization of the cultural landscape in the spatial plan is in line with the operational objectives for the implementation of conventions on world heritage, in which cultural areas are categorized in the same way. The Spatial plan of the Republic of Serbia (The Spatial plan RS, 2010) recognizes a region of exceptional qualities,

referring to the categorization of the area defined by UNESCO. It lacks the overall approach promoted by the European Landscape Convention, aimed at highlighting the social aspect and promoting the experience and a unique character of the landscape.

In this respect, we consider that it is important for the research to highlight the spatial, environmental and cultural aspect of sustainable development according to the criteria that are based on a comprehensive approach to the preservation and improvement of existing, or the creation of new values of cultural landscapes. Additionally, formal documents and informal activities that guided the development of river islands and influenced the creation of a unique cultural landscape in Belgrade will be traced in the following section.

The cultural landscape of Belgrade riverside in between formality and informality

The beginning of the construction and "urbanization" of the river islands is related to the socialism in which the process of urbanization was one of the most visible phenomenon of modernization in Yugoslavia, where the complete housing and economic fund developed from 1945-1989 became a part of the social and state property, including river islands. The main promoter of urban development in the socialist socio-political system became the State, while the decision-making was limited only to the public administration. In this respect, the land management and the construction process concerned to a large extent the right to use social property. If we look at the development of Belgrade in that period, the most important planning documents that gave the guidelines for spatial development were the General Master Plan from 1950 and 1972. The planned development of the river islands did not exist until 1972, when the General Urban Plan of Ada Ciganlija, including the territory of Ada Medica in the plan of recreation and greenery, was planned as a city recreational center (Belgrade General Master Plan 1950, 1951).

At the beginning of the 1990s, following the abandonment of the socialist governance and the shift towards the neoliberal model, the changes in the institutional, legal and planning framework of Serbia occurred, which had their spatial manifestation in the overall urban structure of Belgrade, "moving towards the metropolis dominated by private ownership in a built environment" (Petovar, 2010). The given period is characterized by numerous amendments to the Law on Planning and Construction from the moment of adoption, which contributed to the amendments to the General Master Plan and Regulatory Plans as well, guided by the ideas and interests of private investors. As a result of the constant change of plans and private interest, many public areas became occupied and the jurisdiction over the rivers in the city was often shifting.

By adopting the Law on the Capital City from 2007, the city of Belgrade became responsible for constituting public company that will be in charge of water management activities and facilities that are in the jurisdiction of the city of Belgrade. Additionally, this law provided a legal framework for integrated water management and use of water as a public good. At the contrary, an amendment to the Water Law from 2016 (Zakon o Vodama, 2010), abolished the aforementioned jurisdictions of the City of Belgrade over the rivers and transferred it to the republic level. In present days, city jurisdictions are mostly related to the spatial distribution of the vessels regarding issuing permits for

the placement of vessels, as well as the control over the use of the venue for placement of vessels in riverfronts.

In addition to the formal activity defined by the planning and legal system, the formation of a specific cultural landscape in riverside is mostly guided by the informal practices of the local community. The activity of the local community on the river islands and one part of the coast is reflected in a specific type of typology and technology of building dwellings. In terms of water space, along the river, landscape is predominantly comprised of different commercial facilities - cafes-restaurants, nightclubs, hostels and sport courts, all of which are formally registered as vessels based on the Plan of spatial distribution of the vessels in the coastal and water area on the territory of the city Belgrade (Plana mesta za postavljanje plovila na delu obale i vodnog prostora na teritoriji grada Beograda, 2007)). Along the river banks and on the river islands there are temporary and permanent dwellings that differ about the position of the site, provided infrastructure, the existence of the planning documentation and the local groups, or the citizens' associations. Most of them are used for temporary or permanently housing.

Case studies analysis

The case selection was based on the criteria of river island origin, level of plan realization and existence of housing activity on the island. On this ground, three river islands were selected in the inner city area (Figure 1).

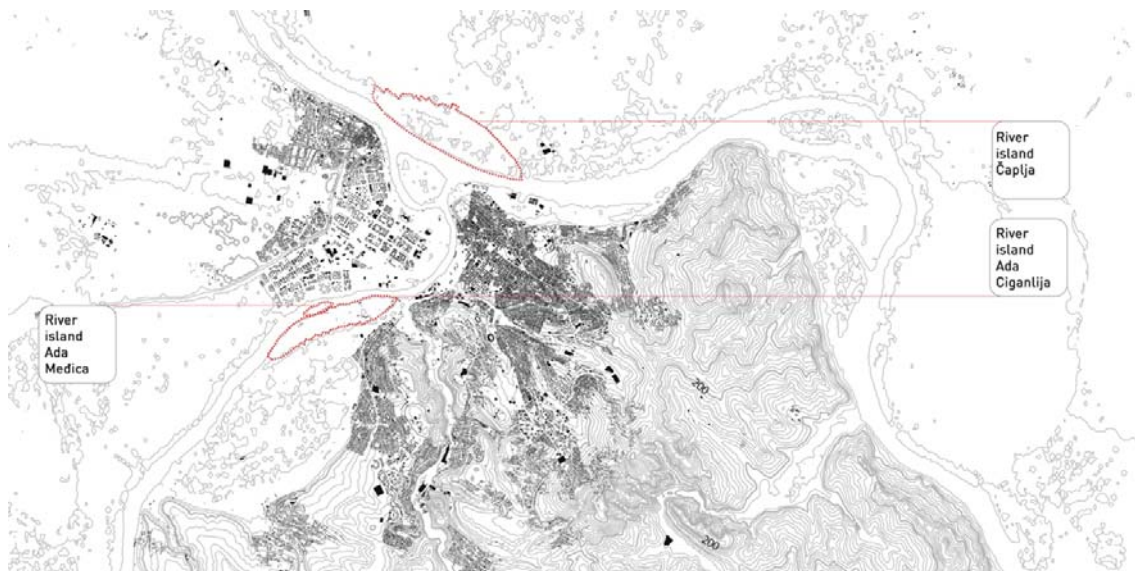


Figure 1. River islands in Belgrade – Selected cases: Ada Medjica, Ada Ciganlija and Čaplija

The first, Ada Međica, naturally created river island, with formal plots for weekend housing dwellings. The second case is Ada Ciganlija artificially created as a city recreational area, with formal weekend housing that transformed into the informal settlement. The last case is planned river island Čaplja, which will be formed with the realization of Belgrade 2021 Master plan, but already occupied by illegal individual weekend housing units.

Ada Međica

Ada Međica is a river island that covers 11 hectares of land, located on the border of two Belgrade municipalities, characterized by a specific way of life. It has 450 raft houses and 86 plots with pile dwelling houses with limited access since the only possible way of transport is by boat. This gives the island a certain amount of privacy and exclusivity, while at the same time attract a specific type of people and limits the number of dwellers and visitors. The river island is governed by the local community group "Lovers of the Sava and Danube - Ada Međica", established in the early phase of the island development which presents one of the oldest local association in Belgrade (Kočišević, 2016). The island had started to change in 1963 when local association acquired the permission over the plots for temporary usage and started to set up a raft house all around the island. Examination of formal documents reveals the inconsistency both over the land use and existence of houses and active local association.

Accordingly, in the Master plan of Belgrade 2021 the river island was treated as a green area (Službeni list grada Beograda, 2003), while the General regulation plan for Belgrade perceives the river island as a forest area (Plan Generalne Regulacije Beograda, 2016). The detailed regulation plan the wider territory treats the site as a green forested area with pile dwellings for a longer stay (PDR Ada Ciganlija, 2016). Apart from that, the plan emphasizes that river island is perceived as the area of general interest since it is located in the narrower zone of sanitary water protection, and as such requires special forms of recreation in nature and temporary stay in pile dwellings. Association is in charge of the River Island, and use formal and informal jurisdiction to direct and manage development and activities. Having that in mind, local association has its Statute and Rules for the use of space on the island and the existing natural resources (Kočišević, 2016). The rules, norms and activities created through the expression of values shared by a specific community do not only shape the existing cultural landscape but also direct its further transformations.

Annually, the association organizes the activities for the preservation and restoration of natural resources. Those activities are partly implemented in cooperation with the responsible institutions and partly with the support of numerous volunteers.

Due to the floods risk, every year after flood season, community performs a complete arrangement of the island, including plots as well as the public spaces that are in charge of the association (Association Member, 2016). There are even certain initiatives from the Faculty of Architecture, the University of Belgrade who tried to introduce cooperative GIS platform for improving resilience to household risks in the Ada Međica (Lalović, Đorđević and Radosavljević, 2017). Most owners of pile dwelling houses and raft houses use their facilities from May to September, but there are also

people who live on the island during a whole year, including several members of the Board of the association and president of the association.



Figure 2. River islands Ada Medica, source: bing

Ada Ciganlija / Partizan settlement

In General master plan of Belgrade (Službeni list grada Beograda, 2003), the whole river island is constituted by the combination of forest and green area, located in the narrow zone of water source protection. Partizan settlement has been evidenced as a weekend housing zone, thus neglecting the existence of permanently inhabited citizens. Plan of detailed regulation, legally adopted in 2016 highlighted the need to demolish all buildings and replace them with recreational and spa related activities (PDR Ada Ciganlija, 2016).

The settlement "Partizan" was built after the Second World War, based on the Mayor of Belgrade idea, when the first rentable pile dwellings for the officers of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia were built. After the construction of the sports-recreational complex on the "Belgrade's sea," the place was occupied by weekend's dwellers and "adventurers" with modest wooden 12m² houses. After a couple of years, they became ownership of a few powerful people who have afterward sold it to the working class. In the 1990s, the settlement was inhabited by refugees from Balkan region who built the houses (Politika, 2016). After the initial 50 persons who occasionally visited settlement, this settlement today covers 6.4 hectares with 253 houses with almost 1000 citizens, permanently inhabited and with no other property in Belgrade.

The settlement has been built illegally, but residents regularly pay electricity, telecommunication services and water supply. Wood as the main construction material has been changed to the concrete and brick, besides the fact that it is not possible to bring any heavy material into the river island area. The settlement has serious environmental issues, from two major floods, sewage problems but produces major environmental effects to the surrounding area as well. Illegal water

supply provided directly from the city water wells reduces the flow while the unresolved sewage system affects the soil and underground water. Citizens tried to legalize their buildings three times but without success due to the adopted planning documents such as Plan of spatial distribution of the vessels in the coastal and water area on the territory of the city Belgrade and Water and Forestry law (Službeni list grada RS, 2008; Zakon o Vodama, 2010; Zakon o Šumama, 2010),



Figure 3. River islands Ada Ciganlija, source: bing

Čaplja River island

The subject river island is located on the left river bank of Danube and is listed as a green protection belt due to its natural characteristics. The General master plan of Belgrade, describe it as an island located in the permanent green area with intentions to be transformed into the aquatic and sports centre (Urbanistički Zavod Beograda, 2009).

This island that is usually called Kožara or Crvenka, would be renamed into Čaplja after the water canal on the north side of the river island is built and the ideas of Belgrade 2021 plan are realized. Plan of general regulation from 2016 states that Čaplja river island is part of the undergoing protection areas since it is a part of the international ecological network of Danube (Plan Generalne Regulacije Beograda, 2016).

The river island is a property of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water resource management, currently used for growing poplar trees in scientific purposes and the wood procession and paper production. In specific parts of the island, import and export of construction material are evident. Houses started to appear in the middle of 20th century, first as a weekend house for fisherman and nature lovers but today it counts around 200 buildings. Although referred as pile dwellings, buildings on this site overcome typological characteristics of pile dwellings previously mentioned in Ada Međica. Besides the free ground floor, buildings are built with concrete, brick, often with more than two stories, covering large areas and appropriating open space with tennis grounds, pools, etc. Most of the newly built houses are accessible by land and river. The number of informal buildings increased in the last two decades without being demolished or even

marked as illegally built structures in planning documents. In such a manner, the ground for informal activities at the river bank was set.

Besides transforming the landscape, informal construction affects the natural habitat of seventy-four highly protected species from which eight are included into the IUCN red list (IUCN, 2013). Since the Forestry Law (Zakon o Šumama, 2010) does not predict fees for building on forest land, the number of buildings constantly increases and devastation of green area are becoming more evident.



Figure 4. River islands Čaplja, source: bing

Comparison

Based on the theoretical research and research of the unique context such as Serbian, we have defined three to four main criteria in each of the aspects marked as important for the process of creation and transformation of the cultural landscape. Thus, economical aspects will be perceived through land use changes, institutional attitude towards the specific river island area and the change of land value. The environmental aspect is analysed through the existence of physical limitations, tracing how human activities made an impact on flora, fauna and land contamination as well as the extent to which resource management and protection are practiced. The analysis of social aspect would be conducted through criteria of the existence of local unions, associations and formal and informal rules on the site, homogeneity and heterogeneity of landscape, the extent of change in landscape character caused by human activity. Spatial aspect is perceived through analysis of building typology

and through observing if the development is controlled or uncontrolled regarding a number of built objects, legal or illegal constructed with permanent or occasional housing use.

Aspect	Criteria	Ada Medjica	Ada Ciganlija	Čaplja
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Economical aspect	Land use – Formal and change if occurred	Forest area – continuity in planning documents	Combination of forest and green area -	Forrest – Regional plan and Green area- General plan
	Institutional attitude towards the riverfront area	Highlighting the existence of units for weekend housing	Main recreational area of the city Expressed concerns and announced demolition of objects	intentions to build a sports center, denial of the existence of housing buildings
	Land value – location in the city and land attractively	High – Exclusive accessibility - there is no land access	High – Settlement located on the island’s isle	High – Settlement located at the mouth of two rivers
Environmental aspect	Physical limitations of the site	11ha the total river island area,	Settlement area 6.4 ha	Island area 582 ha
	Impacts on Flora and Fauna	Low – protected 9ha of forest	Medium – reducing the green area	High - numerous endangered species
	Resource management and protection	High - local protection actions continuously organized, regular reforestation	Low – Two major floods in last decades	Low – No activities on the ground
	Land contamination	Low due to the specificity of building typology	High - narrow zone of water source protection, illegal water supply and use of forbidden construction materials	Medium -
Cultural aspect	The existence of formal and informal rules on the site	Formal rulebook issued by the local associations	No	No
	Homogeneity and heterogeneity of landscape	Homogeneity	Heterogeneity	Homogeneity

	The extent of change in landscape character caused by human activity	The diversity of change of landscape on the edge and heartland of the island	High – From weekend housing to high-density permanent housing	Medium – Still not overpopulated due to the low accessibility
	Existence of local unions and associations	Yes, local association „Udruženje ljubitelja Save i Dunava - Ada Medica“	No	No
Spatial aspect	Building typology	Pile dwellings and rafts	Weekend houses and houses – low standard	Weekend houses and houses, with pools and tennis courts – high standard
	Controlled/uncontrolled development (amount of buildings over time)	Controlled - 450 rafts and 86 plots with pile dwellings	Uncontrolled - From few to 253 and 1000 citizens	Uncontrolled
	Legal/illegal construction	Legal right to use the land	Illegal construction	Illegal construction
	Permanent / Occasional housing	Occasional – 1 or 2 examples of permanent housing	Permanent	Occasional and Permanent

Table 1. Comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to the ongoing riverside urbanization

Discussion and Conclusions

As a common characteristic of economic, environmental, social and spatial aspect, we perceive the continuity of use of river islands as the area for permanent or occasional housing. The continuity of land use has been kept in all planning documents for more than fifty years even though protection of cultural landscape is not recognized by the regulatory bodies and consequently not supported by any regulatory mechanisms. In this sense, we perceive that the protection of land use by planning

practitioners and existence of local communities created the specific cultural landscape which protected local values to the greater or lower extent.

Comparative analysis also reveals that the possibilities and obstacles of various socio-political systems and their impact on the planning system do not reduce the importance that has been given to the natural characteristics of the river islands. The problem might be the exclusion and negligence of the existence of housing dwellers and local communities that are an essential part of any cultural landscape.

By overviewing formal documents and informal activities, we can conclude that social aspect is the carrier of both transformation and protection of the cultural landscape of Belgrade river islands.

On the one side, human activities transform the landscape through informal land occupation and the introduction of activities that can expose the river islands to the overpopulation, degradation of natural habitus and change of land value. On the other side, site limitations and potentials along with the formal and informal rules and norms developed by local communities and associations by collective experiences and believes can protect cultural landscape through defining building materials, construction systems, responsibility towards natural surroundings. These rules evolve and progress parallel to the planning system. Additionally, legally binding plot allotment also affects and directs future development.

Generally speaking, planning development of river Island is concerned with the development of green and recreational activities without dealing with specific community and informal activities that are undoubtedly present. The spatial development, created in this manner, is a result of constant shifts of ruling regimes, appropriation of public ownership and unclear fees and responsibilities for breaking the rules. In given circumstances, local association and communities accompanied by the responsible institutions that have formal jurisdiction, guide the further development of the river islands. We could conclude that existence of strong local community and associations can lead to the creation and preservation of a specific cultural landscape that has low or medium effects on the environment. At the contrary, acting of individuals without dealing and caring for the totality of river island, can lead to the degradation of the relation of the man and nature.

The questions that arise for some future research are how to protect specific values, meanings and knowledge if there are no specific local communities or they do not show interest for the collective action in space. Accordingly, how we can protect the cultural landscape through formal practices that can have various impacts on spatial development, as it was presented here through different case analysis.

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