

Ivan Kucina

Commoning of the Uncommonness: Developing Urban Commons in Post Socialist City

1. The Uncommon City

Socialism lasted on a collective belief that centralized political organization has a capacity to overcome individual interests in the pursuit of common good. However, the illusion of everlasting prosperity toward social equality was brutally shortened during the '90s by the breakdown of socialist state and proceeding regression toward capitalism. The transition process that was prescribed by neoliberal economists has been defined as a shock-therapy (Harvey 2007). During this period concept of collective emancipation was stripped down and people were left without public support to find their ways to survive collapses of the institutional system, rapid privatizations of the state-owned enterprises, commodification of public services, deregulated market competition, and spectacles of globalization that were glorifying individual freedom and wealth.

Following shock-therapy, post socialist city has been undergoing a radical, paradigmatic reversal: from a space shaped by the socialist state as a focus of public political interest on human wellbeing to a space shaped by unleashed private economic interests; and from a planned city to a city where no urbanists' concepts are required (Topalovic, 2013). Short term international investments supported by long-term bank loans with high expectations for maximizing profit did not offer more than systematic disintegration of previously centrally organized city. New urban layer created by the scattered singular developments including office buildings, shopping malls, hotels, warehouses, and housing compounds started to dominate over time-worn surroundings. These new buildings appeared as aliens from the Promised Land and occupied, with no resistance, the best locations in the city transforming it from a place of collective dreamland into market battle-field where each one fights against anyone else.

Spatial disintegration and social uncommonness of the post socialist city is the result of the corrupted urban development practice where political instruments have been used to support private economic agendas. The hierarchy in this process of investment-centered decision-making begins with the developer and moves down to the city authorities, then to the planner and architect, for the sake of administrating a planning amendment and the building license. Citizens' needs and amendments are not considered in the decision making protocols since there is no one to listen to them.

In order to maximize their profit urban developers demands that they operate outside of any realm that can be scrutinized by public agencies. Given the growing economic crises, city authorities that are oriented toward private financial resources are meeting their demands rather than protecting public interest. Urban regulations thus follow profit expectations. Although it is evident that deregulated development generates uneven and unsustainable urban grow, private investments are celebrated by city authorities as political success.

Beside political benefit, investments into urban infrastructure create a financial mechanism for converting public budget into private companies controlled by the governing party members or donators. Tenders are tuned in advance for developers who accept to allocate provisions into personal funds of political elite involved in trading. In this way, post socialism has established its original system of public-private partnership. The features of such corrupted system are seen, on one side, in the use of authoritarian power-mechanisms such as top-down communication of political structure and the exclusion of citizens in decision making processes, and, on the other side,

in the abuse of a governing functions in public companies with accompanying “money laundry” procedures for personal financial benefit.

Even though outside of business partnership between developers and city authorities, urban planners and architects became corrupted through the processes of indiscriminate privatization, commodification and commercialization. They were suppressing human emancipation and social prosperity that were representing ideals of socialist urban development. In following these ideals, urban planners and architects were never fully aware of their political role, although from the perspective of political authorities they were always producing a representational screen for the system—an image of a progressive society. They were the professional, technocratic elite that had a privilege to create visions for the cities in the state that was gaining toward bright future. When, during the post-socialist transition, market oriented tendencies started to weaken their professional status, they stayed still firmly attached to the glorious narratives of their socialist past. This directly contributed to their inability to understand the complex contingencies of post socialist urban development that was transforming their emancipating role into bureaucratic and business driven activity serving developers’ private interest. Their work became irrelevant to the public sphere. Their endeavors to keep the social status of creative elite while detaching from their societal role resulted with the loss of the city as the constitutive subject and purpose of their profession.

Citizens' capacity to influence urban development in socialism was contradictory as well. On one side, citizens’ diversity was repressed by the political ideology that was claiming equality and homogeneity of all people, but on the other side, peoples’ rights were highlighted in the decision-making protocols as their fundamental agency. In the urban development practice these rights were represented in the form of public hearings at the end of the planning process. However, at that moment chances to change the plans were minimal – they would always receive general bureaucratic responses to any comments addressed. Being practically detached from the public resolutions, peoples’ interests were increasingly moving to the private realm where they were invested into their own prosperity. Growing socialist standard in Yugoslavia offered them enough material goods and soft loans to meet their dreams for a better life. During that time socialist society was acquiring features of consumerism with all the accompanying characteristics - diversification, segregation, individualization, while political instruments for individual engagement were becoming even more rigid. They made resentment to any intention of participation in developing projects as it could not improve them, but on the other side could make political persecutions for the ones too seriously involved. As a consequence, individuals found their peace inside their own homes and left public domain to political authorities to take care.

Individuals who were not interested to participate in creation and maintenance of public domain showed early sign of the lost belief in common wellbeing. In this way societal integrity was winding down much before the collapse of socialism. Finally, when the founding dream of brotherhood, unity and freedom was dismantled, individuals who stayed without support of their governing elite and without trust to one another became an easy prey for new businesses predators. While receiving their tempting calls to consume more that they need, they were trapped in the world of desires, breaching high demands for comfortable life with never enough resources to pay the costs. Loans that were offered as a speed lane to instant satisfaction, turned to be an instrument of XXI century slavery.

The fact that there is no trust among citizens signifies an important shift in urban development - the ultimate disappearance of community values that were determining human settlements throughout the history. Since the ancient time, city was considered both as inhabited place and community that

inhabits. Post socialist city is in fact massive urban structure that is evidently growing without community participation, and instead under constant struggles among individuals to grab its profitable resources and satisfy personal ambitions. When no one takes care about commons, urban development turns into war apparatus where everybody fights against everybody else. Under the fire, the only line of defense left could be resistance of those citizens who cannot stand violent appropriation of their everyday life. Their power can manifest itself only in relation to the others with whom they are sharing their living environment. In order to take back the city, citizens should organize themselves and start working together and by working together they could regenerate a lost sense of community and the lost sense of the city.

2. Savamala Neighborhood

The show case for the uncommonness of the post socialist city is Savamala neighborhood. It is settled on the riverbank in the central city zone of Belgrade, endowed with rich historical heritage and with an extraordinary spatial and economic potential, but it lives a devastated life of a traffic bottleneck with intense pollution, urban noise, neglect public spaces and abandoned warehouses. Being in the margins of development trajectories for ages, majority of citizens of Savamala consider themselves today excluded, forgotten and left alone to the aggressive business entrepreneurs. Such an unfriendly context, on the other hand, provided opportunities for urban transformations that are based on the engagement of small- organized cultural organizations. They strived to convert abandoned warehouses into cultural and social hubs that were mobilizing neighborhood activism with a series of participatory projects for the development of urban commons.

Savamala has been among the most important quarter of the city of Belgrade and it justified such a role as a unique area with such a plausible collision between traditional and modern and past and present, rich in tradition, history and heritage. But world wars, reluctance and negligence of city authorities, and the current economic crisis have left their deep scarfs. Savamala is economically underdeveloped and socially disadvantaged, and has a reputation as a home to outcasts, prostitution and criminality. Moreover, Savamala is also a transit area that permits heavy traffic to bypass the city center; this aggravates its already alarming traffic jam. Its citizens are continuously fighting for better living standards, only one kilometer away of the city center that does not lag behind other European metropolises in terms of its architecture and urban design quality.

Savamala lies on the eastern bank of the Sava River. Its name translated into English means "Sava neighborhood", and intrinsically, its name is derived from the Turkish word for neighborhood "mahala", combined with the name of the river whose bank it is situated on. It testifies the resolution of city authorities about two hundred years ago to spread the urban structures to the river in order to set forward its urban development.

Riverbanks in Belgrade were abandoned territories for centuries before since the Sava River represented the border between two hostile European empires – Habsburgs and Ottoman. As they fought for the domination over the city, it consequently suffered continual instability, shifting from demolition to rebuilding. During the short peaceful periods, Savamala grew up as a trading center adjacent to the river ferry border-crossing. During the late 19th and early 20th century, following the pace of modernization of the independent Serbian Kingdom, new national cultural institutions were established next to the trading services. For a short time, Savamala became the site for massive building projects, considered to be of the greatest cultural and historical significance. However, in the course of the destruction during World War I and the subsequent establishment of the Yugoslav Kingdom that shifted the border far from the riverbanks and focused the development of the city

center in uptown Belgrade, Savamala lost its attractiveness and fell largely into a state of decay. The streets were not maintained, inconspicuous warehouses were stuffed into empty plots, buildings were partly abandoned and occupied by the urban poor, and the area repeatedly suffered major floods.

Beside the damages from bombardments during World War II which led to the intense deterioration of the area, after the war, Savamala was disregarded as the legacy of the capitalist era, and its main transversal street Karadjordjeva – once among the most beautiful city avenues – was turned into a crowded, noisy and polluted transit roadway surrounded by poor warehouses and manufactories that replaced the bombed palaces. Furthermore, Savamala also hosted the enlargement of the state major traffic infrastructure, including the nearby main train station, the bus terminal, the river terminal and two of the city's main bridges connecting the city center to New Belgrade, newly constructed capital of a socialist Yugoslavia that has been built according to the concept of modernist urban development.

Savamala had a potential to become an attractive urban area for investments during post socialist transition that opened up the possibility for private capital to enter the privatization process and to dispose of property. However, it was mostly saved from this development trend mostly because of its long-term decay that is making it far too complicated case for short-term turnovers that are dominating in Serbia. In addition, the recent European debt crisis that has been largely created by speculation in the real estate business has postponed any financial injection to the construction industry in Belgrade until the distant future.

In the meantime, taking advantage of this long gap in development, few years ago a several civic organizations, self-organized cultural and educational centers have found their place in Savamala, infusing sparks of new life into paralyzed area. In the absence of an overall urban development strategy, and without major capital investments, independent cultural entrepreneurs supported by the local municipality Savski Venac have started to transform unused warehouses into spaces that are open for public participation and social production. These new cultural infrastructure has been developed partially by KC Grad –European center for culture and debate, Mikser House multicultural association, Nova Iskra –designers incubator and co-working place, Urban Incubator and City Guerilla

–activists' organizations, Collective– architecture center. Their concentration in the neighborhood has influenced bottom up transformation of Savamala and introduced the opportunity for an alternative strategical gateway. What might seemed at the time as not more than a sum of ephemeral activities, shortly became a driving force for a better urban future of Savamala.

By converting abandoned warehouses into public facilities and by encouraging citizens' activism and crowd-sourcing events, this conglomerate of citizens' organizations has strived to influence the long- term process of social and physical transformation of Savamala. Initial capital for that kind of transformation was hidden in proactive people that were ready to invest themselves in converting socially deprived space into civic places. They provided a network of opportunities where people could meet to share their respective merits and faults as equal participants in the societal realm. It is the economy of social exchange that became continually contributing to the development of Savamala.

3. School of Urban Practices

Strategical guidelines for the transformation Savamala has been created and performed by the School of Urban Practices, an educational agency engaged in the transdisciplinary between academic research and urban activism. School of Urban Practices has been launched as a satellite of my

Architecture Design Studio at the Faculty of Architecture University of Belgrade in order to provide 'learning by doing' environment. Being part of the neighborhood and being part academic framework have provided facilities for students of architecture to help frustrated citizens to seek the ways to design and build their common spaces. Activities of School of Urban Practices included new public policy, mediation, city making and architecture design and building - all in a form of design led programs that engage citizens from the very beginning of the project. Mobilization of the citizens in the projects aimed to revitalize neighborhood relationships by making urban commons. The participatory process applied helped to strengthen connections between citizens and awareness on mutual dependence. Collective work on improving everyday environment raised the sense of solidarity. Collaboration between architects and citizens revealed an opportunity for urban planning and architecture to reestablish their social relevance. Contemporary urban planning and architecture just need to develop a new sense of commonality in order to become influential in today's society.

School of Urban Practices has been continually engaged for the last four years in developing urban commons through a serial of participatory projects organized with citizens from Savamala and in collaboration with local cultural organizations. In all these projects, School of Urban Practices uses a blend of methods derived generally from design user-centered research (Laurel 2004), participatory action research. For students, citizens were in the best position to address, research, analyze, and respond to the situation as it unfolded. In the language of participatory action research, citizens were respected as the bearers of the knowledge.

Four overlapping projects will be elaborated in details in the following pages: Urban Transformation Program developed with Mikser House to host international conference, debates, workshops; Project C5 developed within Urban Incubator residential program by Goethe Institute Belgrade in order to create common space in the basement of one residential building in Savamala, Urban Cooks Platform granted by EU Culture fund to transform abandoned construction site named Spanish House into neighborhood commons, and the ongoing participatory project done in collaboration with City Guerilla and Mikser Festival, My Piece of Savamala for the transformation of one and only green public space in Savamala into urban commons.

3.1 Urban Transformation Program

In order to generate urban transformation of Savamala, international group of academics and researchers who studies innovative models for bottom up commonig were invited by the School of Urban Practices to participate in Urban Transformation program at Mikser Festival in May 2012, for the first time taking place in Savamala. This festival is an annual cultural event organized by Mikser House, self-organized multicultural center which is placed in transformed warehouse in Karadjordjeva Street, main transit artery of Savamala. Mikser Festival wanted to initiate changes in Savamala through a number of multidisciplinary programs including competitions, workshops, installations and performances that are organized in cooperation with local and international experts and artists. Within the festival, Urban Transformation program included a series of meetings, debates, collaborative works, community projects, and constructions o the temporary places forgatherings in the public space. The intention was to explore if the urban transformation of Savamala could be triggered through cultural events which is providing chance for citizens to start sharing knowledge, actions, and visions.

School of Urban Practices, initiator of the Urban Transformation Program, aimed to install a platform for social exchange between people engaged in improving their environment. It is through the process of social exchange that the citizens create an opportunity to work together. Therefore, the priority was to create and facilitate a lasting sense of commonness through various levels of sharing, such as:

Knowledge-sharing (Hess and Ostrom 2007) – strengthening educational aspect of urban transformation

1. Capacity-building – regenerates community and strengthen the social exchange in order to develop an understanding of the personal and public relevance of urban transformation. Possibility of urban transformation offers an incentive to invert mistrust into collaboration that can generate new standards of living and working.

2. Knowledge-building - continual production of new knowledge through knowledge exchange plants sparks of a new life in people's minds that could be injected into the paralyzed urban body, suggesting the way for the alternative model of urban development.

Actions-sharing– developing relational system for continuous social exchanges

3. Collaboration-building - using the form of the internet interface as a gathering, communicational and educational tool to encourage exchange and collaboration, and through this, to bring together a vast number of projects, writings, and researches.

4. Reality-building - a serial of civic activities and events that are working as a booster for social exchange in order to enlarge production of urban energy needed for running community services and cultural practices in the course of future development.

Vision-sharing (Meroni 2007) - stimulating participation to instigate qualitative environment

5. Facility-building - inauguration of diverse minuscule common spaces (urban bundles) for group gathering, meetings, debates and collaborative work. These small spaces represent a kind of hot spot, buzzing with energy, exchange, invention, and dedication to a better life.

6. Vision-building – a series of visionary projects that are compiling researches, designs, and interventions focus on developing common spaces. They are distributed throughout the neighborhood as sequences that are added one to another with a high level of emergency.

Urban Transformation program defined the future of Savamala as an open ended process of urban transformations that is gradually upgrading itself through permanent social exchange. Sustainability of this process is depending on passionate individuals who are ready to invest themselves into realizing their visions, as well as in their openness for sharing and collaboration.

3.2. Project C5

Manifestation named Urban Incubator which was initiated and supported by Goethe Institute in Belgrade in 2013, reflected the urban transformation of Savamala through a network of site-specific project activities and places where international artists and architects could meet citizens of Savamala to work together in developing commons. This set of activities considers accumulating social capital through non-intrusive, sequential small step initiatives within an overall interactive and educational process that is regenerating local communal values.

One of the projects of the Urban Incubator Belgrade, C5 by School of Urban Practices aimed to convert unused basement and courtyard of the residential building in Crnogorska street nr. 5 into a common space. Making a common space was imagined through collaboration between students of architecture and residents while both sides were learning to respect each other and to share responsibilities. Although designing such a small task may seem an easy work, it is becoming complex by the many conflicting interests that need to be facilitated. Original participatory design method that was applied redirected design process into negotiation, not only between students and residents but among the students themselves, among the residents themselves and then between

architects and the residents on one side, and official institutions on the other. We hope that participation in the design process would strengthen relationships between the residents

and ensuring awareness to the mutual dependence and solidarity that is necessary to build the commons and to maintain its future. It has been assumed that once it is established, commons could become a role model for many similar cases in which unused space could be transformed. In the most preferred scenario, positive contamination could then turn Savamala into an unstoppable series of commoning.

At the beginning of the participatory process students were questioning the residents in order to create a group profile, a complex personality that bears the most vital and often the most contradictory attributes that are considered important for defining the elements of the projects. The questionnaire was used as an instrument to detect what the residents could not formulate or express: unmet needs, motivations, triggers and symbolic capital of the community and other variables (Laurel, 2004). Students' interpretations of the residents' answers were as important as the answers themselves. In the following stage, based on this group profile, students began to map out what spatial, programmatic, social and functional properties the common space needed to assume in order to serve residents. To visualize the project to residents, 3D provisional model was made, still without fixing its final shape and size. This working model served as a means for discussing the project in joint workshops involving students and residents. Agreements were always achieved through discussions that were articulated in such a way to allow the residents to question each other, and to question the process as a whole. The plan was to summarize discussions in a form of proposition that would serve as a catalyst for making decision upon the features of the project they all agree.

School of Urban Practices was ready to provide project documentation in order to get the building permit, and to start fund raising for the construction. However, the project was compromised by some residents who suspected that there is a hidden agenda behind the commoning process.

Majority were afraid that some of them could appropriate space for personal purpose. School of Urban Practices in collaboration with Marijetica Potrc's studio Design for the Living World from Hamburg made a series of actions in order to encourage the residents to re-join the discussions. These actions included personal invitations, cleaning of the courtyard and Sunday morning coffee meetings, but they all failed in their intention. Residents' mistrust and refusal to collaborate with each other was stronger than good will of the students. Moreover, group of residents managed to organize petition that was delivered to the mayor of the municipality in which they asked the School to leave them alone. This petition in which they, paradoxically, managed to self-organize has placed the Project C5 on standby until further notice.

The postponement of this project is a consequence of general frustration of citizens caused by long-standing political and economic crises. A life shaped by everyday struggles and loss of faith in institutions resulting from overwhelming corruption has left deep scars in peoples' minds. Treated badly by the authorities who were supposed to protect them and robbed by business developers, citizens believe that everyone who is approaching them has a hidden motive. After so many years of self-protectiveness they have lost the ability to distinguish good intentions from evil ones. They would rather believe in unrealistic theories of conspiracy than the evidence in front of their eyes. All of this could reasonably threaten collaboration in making commons which nevertheless seems to be the only way left to turn mistrust into constructive endeavors.

3.3 Urban Cooks Platform

In 2014 School of Urban Practices became a partner in the EU Culture funded project Urban Cooks Platform set up by architectural collective Basurama from Madrid who is internationally respected for their initiative to transform El Campo de Cebada in Madrid into neighborhood commons. The main goal of the Urban Cooks Platform was to design an exportable toolkit to support citizen initiatives that manage and create common space. Urban Cooks seek to integrate the knowledge and the experience of architects and urban planners from Madrid, Belgrade and Skopje. Partners of the project had to implement and test an innovative methodology for citizens' initiative to create commons.

In the past cities used to have urban model based on the activities of local communities: small shops, cultural centers, community associations, etc. This model allowed generations of autonomous urban neighborhoods that developed collective values by sharing individual responsibilities to continually regenerate their urban environment. From social exchange and local initiatives cities have established what is known today as their specific cultural identity. Urban Cooks Platform aimed to re-draw citizens' relationships that were suppressed by domination of market economy, for the construction of new urban identity based on citizens' right to the city. Within this model, the common space has been chosen as a place of economic, social and cultural exchange.

Urban Cooks Platform in Belgrade was developed in collaboration with citizens' association Savamala who promotes identity of this urban district and engage citizens for its basic maintenance.

Collaborative design process that was already developed by School of Urban Practices was applied to design and build furniture installation that was used in the abandoned construction site named Spanish House which was transformed into neighborhood commons.

The Spanish House used to be a customs office, and was later turned into a navigation museum, then administrative building which has been abandoned for the last twenty years. After recent privatization, it was taken over by a private investor, who intended to have it renovated and turn into a hotel. The old inner walls were almost completely removed, and some new structural elements were added. However, the investor eventually fell into financial difficulties had to give up on his idea of a hotel. In 2013 Goethe Institute Belgrade was given a temporary license to use it for the Urban Incubator project, transforming into a hub for cultural events.

The use, materials and the form of this installation has been defined through collaboration with members of the association Savamala who indicated their unmet needs, motives, triggers and symbolic capital. Process included a series of social gatherings and dialogues that resulted with many corrections until design was accepted and approved by citizens. Achieving constructive atmosphere was a big change in itself regarding the massive economic crisis and austerity in which the project was unfolding. By the end of the process, School of Urban Practices that previously experienced fragility of participation outcomes since they depend on citizens' capacity to find agreement, finally managed to make produce modular and variable system made of five wooden elements that could be composed in many ways to service any kind of common event. During the Mikser Festival 2014, these elements were installed in the Spanish House which was from that time inaugurated as a common place for neighborhood gatherings and cultural activities.

The relevance of Urban Cooks Platform in Belgrade goes beyond temporary appropriation of the Spanish House. Belgrade has many abandoned places that could be brought back to life by small scale citizens' initiative. These initiatives could become an example of innovative social activity that may inspire other citizens to start changing their part of the city. However, these kind of initiatives are facing diverse institutional barriers that make them difficult to develop and manage. In return, it often happens that access to basic resources for the development of a citizens' initiative are solved by informal, or even illegal, arrangements. In order to overcome this problem, it is necessary to understand how collaboration with citizens could be managed both by urban planners and architects, and by the city authorities. Implementation of citizens' initiatives could generate a vast panorama of excellent practice spread throughout the city, and crystallized into a common methodology.

During the latest period of urban development the role of urban space has been emptied of social content and swapped for shopping and consumption. For that reason, creating urban commons together with citizens is tending toward greater aim than building a temporary meeting space. It has been directed toward creating capacity for overtaking urban development back to the citizens, and by doing this toward achieving new social equilibrium in the city. It is providing a new model for managing urban development in which city authorities, urban planners and architects, citizens and developers are collaborating for the good of all.

3.4. My Piece of Savamala

Regardless to this opportunity, today's authorities in Belgrade are promoting urban development based on private business initiatives rather than citizens' needs. Savamala was saved from

this trend until spring 2015 when mega project Belgrade Waterfront rendered by development company Eagle Hills from Abu Dhabi and supported from the top by the current Serbian Government emerged.

Eagle Hills and Serbian Government have founded for that purpose a new joint venture company named upon its only project - Belgrade Waterfront. In order to smooth the way for Belgrade Waterfront Company, Serbian Parliament passed domain statute and special law that permits the government to seize personal property and turn it over to private interests of supposedly greater economic benefit to the state. Belgrade Waterfront has been offered to global developer as the territory of prioritized national interest. Nevertheless, despite the pressure of the authorities and their media, the most common reaction among citizens, and majority of architects and urban planners, is that the project will never be built, certainly not as planned, but that someone somehow will get rich from it.

Belgrade Waterfront plans to develop a 90 hectare site into a complex of 1.6 million square meters of luxurious condominium, shopping mall, and office buildings, crowned by a 220m high multifunctional skyscraper done by prestigious architecture company SOM from Chicago.

International company RTK based in Singapore did the draft rendering; Arcadis Engineering from Holland was consulted for the riverbank and flood prevention; SWA from Los Angeles for the public spaces; COWI from Denmark for the traffic. The rendering depicts a gleaming capitalist utopia, a live-work-play space for an elite managerial class. Less than 1 percent of the square footage has been designated for public services like schools and clinics.

Concurrently to the latest top-down development of Belgrade Waterfront project, School of Urban Practices organizationally evolved by becoming a module of a newly established citizens' association in Savamala - City Guerrilla and found its new place in the converted warehouse in Kraljevic Marka street nr. 8 sharing the space with three other associations similarly oriented toward neighborhood activities. Alike Spanish house this space was activated during Urban Incubator project and is still supported by Goethe Institute in Belgrade. Another major change was that the School of Urban Practice was overtaken by its two ex-students who in the meantime graduated at the Faculty of Architecture University of Belgrade and found themselves in a mass of unemployed young architects without chance to get full time job in the recent future. They managed to gather new group of even younger architecture students and continued with the serial of collaborative project including maintenance of the Spanish House. Certainly, their reaction to the latest Belgrade Waterfront occupation of Savamala was in the spirit of the previous projects.

As a respond to Belgrade Waterfront development and in collaboration with Mikser House, School of Urban Practices applied its participatory methodology to develop a proposal for the transformation of the only green space in Savamala into urban commons. The trigger for this project named My Piece of Savamala was the discovery of the mindless proposal done by the Eagle Hills to redesign that space as an unarticulated but decorative loan.

The knowledge that was gathered through the experience in reestablishing neighborhood connections helped School of Urban Practices to run My Piece of Savamala with high authority and faith. Project started with questioning of 120 citizens about their visions for that space. By using prepared template and set of patterns which were representing possible activities in the space, the act of questioning turn itself into a public performance, since it was happening in the actual space which was during the festival used as a temporary common space. Citizens' proposals were later summarized, according to already used methodology - defining unmet needs, motivations, trigger and symbolic capital. Design for the new common space was after that developed through the serial of discussion with citizens' and experts. Final proposition has been submitted to Belgrade Waterfront Company last year and still waiting a feedback.

Previous experiences have offered the wide spectrum of tactical activities that citizens may use in negotiation with the authorities to develop their neighborhood. School of Urban Practices has been able to provide an alternative model for managing transformation of Savamala. Proposal that was offered promote synergies between city authorities and citizens, architects and developers that enforce collective participation in the continual process of urban transformation.

For now, School of urban Practices continues to counteract within the rules of the power

game. They have invited city authorities to neighborhood forums to discuss the impacts of the Belgrade Waterfront construction to local community and to give neighborhood a chance to put their concerns. If Belgrade Waterfront decides to ignore such a well-intentioned call for collaboration, it would officially declare itself as a common threat and by doing that, nevertheless help in reestablishing community relationships. If Belgrade Waterfront accept proposal they would paradoxically get an opportunity to contribute to the city with the first official common space in Belgrade.

4. Perspectives of Commonig in Savamala

It is evident that Savamala has been transformed from the place where no one wanted to stay to one of the most important quarter of Belgrade becoming known worldwide by the engagement of many unsolicited and uncoordinated urban actors. However, it is conspicuous that although the new network of provisional activities spread, its urban structure stayed the same with its run-down buildings, derelict empty plots and unused spaces. In order to make more significant redevelopment, a permanent platform for collaboration among citizens' initiatives and city authorities has to be established. Citizens would commit on the basis of self-organization, urban planners and architects would play the role of catalyst in implementing participation, and city authorities would provide the legal framework for governing and maintaining the processes. This procedure in which diverse bottom up citizens' initiatives meet and collaborate with the top down frameworks is imagined as a cycle of step-by-step change through phases of ideation, building, measuring and learning that feeds back into itself to foster continuous transformations.

Prior tasks in the transition to such collaborative model of urban transformation in Belgrade would be to define a legal framework for negotiations between citizens and city authorities in developing urban commons, to install a web interface for their communication and interaction, and to develop a training system for permanent education of citizens, city authorities, urban planners, architects, and developers. To carry out collaboration, all of them have to change their entrenched habits - citizens have to learn how to engage in the protocols that are addressing their urban future, urban planners and architects have to learn how to mediate participatory projects, city authorities have to learn how to implement public interest in urban management, and developers have to learn how to invest in humanly responsive enterprises. Besides, they all have to learn how to collaborate, since only through collaboration significant urban transformation could be achieved.

Collaboration embraces the creative contamination of contradictory relationship among citizens, architects, authorities and developers. Urban transformations are no longer based on any of their fantasies of order and omnipotence, but it is the staging of their discussions and collaborations. It no longer aims for stable configurations but for the creation of open fields that accommodate processes that are making it. Congestion of diverse initiatives generates instability and dynamism and inspires the creation of new opportunities. City becomes an interactive system with an unlimited potential to regenerate diverse opportunities for new rounds of social exchanges that will produce a new round of spatial interventions.

With this new logistic, urban transformation of Savamala would upgrade its capacity to integrate spatial and social aspects by connecting two relevant issues: renewal of the unused buildings and spaces, and their conversion into urban commons. Rather than restoration or simple provision of the old buildings through new usage, it would promote transformation of unused spaces into places for collaboration, sharing, collective ownership and cooperative economy. This would encourage a wide variety of urban actors to join the urban transformation and to incorporate their particularities to the platform for collaboration. A rise in urban commons hopes to reclaim the city for the public good, providing a participatory alternative to exclusive market based speculations. Instead, new civic organizations, cooperatives and enterprises have a chance to develop self-sustainable economy by working for the public interest, either by providing cohousing, public services, or by managing cultural and social production.

Simultaneously, Savamala could inspire similar participatory projects in other parts of the city. Serial of successful projects from many different citizens' initiatives connected in a network might produce an unexpected change at large. Plot by plot, building by building, and street by street,

multitude urban commons developed through the processes of citizens' participation and facilitated by the city authorities could evolve into an alternative model for sustainable urban transformation of the post socialist city.

To Do Agenda

Attached are some of my notes from the margins of the conference Citizens and City Making that I organized at Belgrade International Architecture Week in May 2015 to shape alternative model of urban transformations:

Sustainable urban transformations are providing conditions for developing just, equal and inclusive urban environment.

Sustainable urban transformations are expressing ultimate public interest of citizens, city authorities, architects, planners, and developers.

The more there are citizens' initiatives the better are the chances to reach the goals of sustainable urban transformation.

Citizens' initiatives are coordinating activities to advocate for the development of the specific urban commons.

City authorities are strengthening citizens to develop their own initiatives and to take responsibility about the outcomes.

City authorities are finding a way to put decision making process in the hands of citizens and to support the platform for negotiation between citizens' initiatives and themselves.

Architects, urban planners and everyone who feels competent are designing a platform for negotiation between citizens and city authorities and run the process of mediation.

Architects, urban planner, and everyone who feels competent, are design a vision to mobilize citizens and city authorities to collaborate as partners in participatory projects.

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