



UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO

School of Doctoral Studies

Doctoral Degree in Intercultural Humanistic Studies

XXX Cycle

SSD: L-LIN/10 LETTERATURA INGLESE
M-DEA/01 DISCIPLINE DEMOETNOANTROPOLOGICHE
L-LIN/21 SLAVISTICA
M-PED/04 PEDAGOGIA SPERIMENTALE

TITLE

**HERITAGE RE-INTERPRETATION AS A TOOL FOR
RETHINKING LAYERED IDENTITY ISSUES**

Belgrade: Confluence-Encounter of East and West

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Doctoral Thesis

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Academic Year 2016/17

Dedicated to Belgrade, my hometown



Acknowledgments

Without a doubt, my gratitude goes first and foremost to my mentor, Rossana Bonadei. Her careful criticism and unwavering support guided me through the various phases of my work from the first day to the last. Were it not for her, I most probably would not be where I am.

I would also like to mention my co-mentor, Stefania Gandolfi, whose kind words of support and praise encouraged me after each of our consultations and motivated me to continue confidently towards my aim.

I am very thankful to all those who participated in this research one way or another. In particular, Maja Curčić, my friend and collaborator, with whom I started an early project that illuminated the direction of my research. The assistance of historian Dr Dragan Bakić proved invaluable during archival research. Words of sincere gratitude also go to all the interviewees that generously offered their time and expertise: their contribution to this dissertation was essential.

Although I know my friends would think this is unnecessary, I would like to thank them as well. I am unable to single out any one of them, but I am sure they will recognize themselves. Daily doses of laughter and support coming from Belgrade, Bergamo, Paris and San Francisco, constantly kept me positive and in a good mood, serving as the wind beneath my wings.

Finally, and just as important... Constant love, support and pride provided by my parents throughout my entire life, have meant even more in the past three years, as, although geographically separated, we stayed together the whole time.

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1. General Introduction

1.1 Research ground

The present dissertation, positioned in the broad interdisciplinary framework of cultural studies, aims to offer a fresh view of specific cultural dynamics that involve the perception and interpretation of heritage in the Balkan region, with particular focus on Serbia and Belgrade, my home city and territory. Cultural and Heritage studies during the Master program in tourism provided the necessary background and general outline for the research that followed.

While the presence of the two rivers Sava and Danube has long been recognized as immediately relevant to the development of Belgrade as a city “at the crossroads”, I submit that *The Belgrade Confluence*, together with island known as the Great War Island, mark in fact a crucial spatial setting for the configuration of Belgrade, not only geographically but also culturally and historically. The meaning of this “crossroad” characterization will be investigated in the following chapters. What matters now is to point out that once I came to terms with the far-reaching ramifications of natural and cultural heritage studies, I felt the need to interrogate heritage sites that surrounded me my entire life and to delve deeper in the intricate network of relations that heritage has with issues of past, memory and identity. As I was writing my master thesis, I repeatedly came across the issue of Serbian “hybrid” identity, which drew my attention. And while a conclusive understanding of Serbian identity is arguably impossible to reach, a critical and interdisciplinary approach to the issue might add new perspectives and inspire further investigations.

The initial reason for choosing this area as a case study was the perception that although *The Belgrade Confluence* is vaguely acknowledged as the place of birth and growth for the entire city, the interpretation of its heritage sites remains largely inadequate or virtually non-existent. This first-hand impression comes from the absence of any kind of narration-based materials on tourist heritage site in the area (be they on-site info-boards,

printed brochures or even online pages). The purpose of the present study is to test the working hypothesis based on my initial impression by using a multidisciplinary approach that brackets empirical analysis, field examination, archival research and theoretical studies.

1.2 Research statement

Since the initial thesis statement asks whether natural and cultural heritage in Belgrade is adequately interpreted, the scientific hypothesis will necessarily address the issue of heritage interpretation. Both natural and cultural, material and immaterial types of heritage will be taken into close consideration, partly as a way to reflect on the importance of their symbiotic relationship.

And the issue of heritage is inevitably tied up with the issue of identity, be it the identity of a city or the identity of its citizens, so that analysis will have to touch upon both as dynamically connected, rather than self-enclosed, features. In this specific case, identity is explained, among other things, through the historical records of the city, the architecture of certain neighbourhoods, the relation of citizens with the urban environment, and their use of existing facilities and services. In broader terms, the city's identity may be said to depend on the narratives people build around it, as also recently acknowledged by the European Union through a specific set of policies.¹

Another facet of urban identity partially addressed by this study is the multicultural, collective identity of Serbian people, here more specifically narrowed down to the identity of the citizens of Belgrade for the restrained practical purposes of the present investigation. If we start by asking “Would appropriate re-interpretation of natural and cultural heritage in Belgrade raise its citizens’ awareness of their and/or their city’s layered identity?”, we assume that the interpretation of the above-mentioned heritage is presently lacking or missing. This in turn implies that most citizens of Belgrade are not

¹ See www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/qe-01-16-463-en-n.pdf.

fully aware of its layered character. These are issues that this study attempts to tackle by using a set of theoretical tools linked to urban theory, and by combining formal and informal discourses, with the aim to bring into sharper focus the relation between heritage interpretation and identity understanding.

1.3 Methodology of research

The interdisciplinary character of my study relies on a wide range of methodologies and tools which I attempt to combine and coordinate: from history, cultural and heritage studies to social anthropology, from content and discourse analysis to quantitative/qualitative analysis.

Geo-historical data and territory maps were mostly researched and collected in the Historical Archive of Belgrade with the help of historian Dr Bakić from the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts. Encyclopaedias and other literary sources, original archival documents dealing with urban development and planning, legal and other similar materials, provided an insight into the multi-layered setup of “old” Belgrade from the XVIII century onwards.

On a different note, the theoretical framework for the socio-anthropological segment of the thesis was based mostly on leading theoretical studies of identity, namely those centred on the *self/other* dynamics that is of crucial importance when speaking of Serbian identity, to try and make sense of the various foreign influences which have in the course of time contributed to its layered character.

Another part of the thesis, based on readings that came to my attention mostly during the master program Planning and Management of Tourism Systems at the University of Bergamo, is the relevance of areas such as landscape and heritage studies to the issues of territorial interpretation I am posing in this research.

As for the empirical part of the research, a careful review of possible options led me eventually to focus on newspapers and on governmental records. The theoretical background I rested on was inspired by, but not limited to, Foucauldian and Fairclough

discourse analyses, and more specifically by the idea that discourse is a culturally constructed representation of reality. And a qualitative assessment was ensured by adopting the format of semi-structured interviews, which provide ample space for a comfortable analysis of the collected answers. The proposed theoretical research and empirical analysis are ultimately consistent with the project I designed. In my view, these two aspects are inseparably “responsible” for bringing about a model that combines an interdisciplinary approach and discursive tools for reinterpreting *The Belgrade Confluence*.

1.4 Dissertation layout

Starting from the theoretical premises and socio-anthropological issues regarding Serbians’ identity, along with geopolitical explanation for understanding the causes of certain impressions about it, we come to the analyses of various concepts, both academic and the ones based on social practices that might provide a clearer image of the current situation in Belgrade when it comes to the heritage interpretation. By way of conclusion, a possibility of transforming *The Belgrade Confluence* into a heritage product will be separately examined.

The first part of the study offers a historical and theoretical background for understanding Belgrade in terms of a “crossroads” settlement. In this chapter, we look at several interpretive perspectives on the presence of different peoples and cultures in the area of *The Belgrade Confluence*. Special emphasis is placed on the two prevailing empires in Belgrade’s history (Ottoman and Habsburg) and their influence on its culture and heritage. The analysis of heritage sites that resulted from the interaction and encounter of Western and Eastern cultures (i.e. Christianity on the one hand and Islam as a crucial feature of Serbia’s historical development over the centuries on the other) is based on reading signs that bear witness to the dramatic transformations the city space underwent in the course of history. For the purposes of the present research, the Habsburg and the Ottoman dominations and the influences they exerted over the peoples in the Balkan region are fundamental issues. In the case of Belgrade, self-identification has been

made more difficult by the convergence and the co-existence of religious (Christianity and Islam) and political (East and West) encounters, which obviously reverberate across various levels of heritage culture: in language, literature, music, and gastronomy.

The second part of this chapter tackles socio-anthropological questions. Starting from the assumption that Serbs are neither completely aware nor proud of their multicultural identity (an issue being extensively examined here), we endeavour to explore the ways in which these people have constructed and transmitted their perception of themselves, of their territory and particularly of the signs and narratives that underlie such perception.

Recent scholarship has pointed out that “as the consequence of discrepant historical contexts as well as of the mainly Western symbolic geography, the image of the Balkans has remained full of dichotomies” and that “it is a misread, forgotten and isolated region, the “other” rejected Europe, the periphery – and it is adored, incredible phantasm of Orient with passion, colours and emotions.” (Šešić and Mijatović 2014, 1). Statements like these, inspired as they are by Edward Said’s seminal study on “Orientalism”, lead to expect a key role for the concept of *otherness* in this analysis. The intention is to address this concept and its related issues by zeroing in on more specific contributions on the subject, namely Todorova’s *Imagining Balkans* and Bakić-Hayden’s *Nesting Orientalism*.

The second chapter of the thesis consists of strategies and methods that might be useful for the illumination of identity through heritage. As mentioned before, what is being researched is the context of two rivers confluence in terms of cultural/natural sets of heritage interpretation. Attention will also be paid to the type of heritage mapped around the confluence, to the effect—if any—of such confluence on an understanding Belgrade’s multicultural identity, and most importantly, to the sort of individual or collective experience the confluence provides in the local practices of remembering and forgetting, of memory and amnesia.

Accordingly, the following section explores the methods and concepts that might be applied in order to improve or change the heritage re-interpretation around the confluence, thus rebranded as *The Confluence*, in the form of heritage product. Due to the variety of historical symbols and the specific setup of that area, I have chosen to explain

the ways in which seeing heritage—in form of landscape—and hearing heritage—in terms of soundscape—might provide an effective set of tools for reading the signs and symbols time has engraved onto this place. When endowed with a specific range of meanings, a simple space becomes in fact a place of great interest, rebranded and immediately recognizable. At this point, the *tourist gaze*—to use John Urry’s expression for a ‘foreign’, more ‘innocent’ gaze—becomes a good arbiter for evaluating the re-interpretation of the above-mentioned heritage. The relations between heritage, past, memory and identity are then in the spotlight.

The theoretical framework built in the previous chapter serves to ground the empirical phase of research. On one hand, the methodology employed in the last two chapters refers to discourse and contents analysis, recorded and detected in the following sources:

- Serbian newspapers (from 2003 to 2013), useful to analyse contexts and frequency of the keywords mentioned in the articles, the keywords being chosen according to the case study objectives, i.e.: Sava, Danube, Belgrade rivers, *Belgrade Confluence* and the Great War Island.
- Websites and printed materials of the institutions and organizations relevant to the subject: namely, *The Belgrade City Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments*, *The Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia*, *The Tourist Organization of Belgrade* and *The National Tourism Organisation of Serbia*.

These materials are analysed in order to understand the attitude and approach that the mentioned institutions have towards the researched area.

Newspaper analysis should offer valuable insights into the daily life of Belgrade and its citizens, and provide data about the general perception they have of their city heritage. On the other hand, materials and websites from the above-mentioned institutions—which convey the official representation of Belgrade—will be of great importance in shaping the impressions and expectations of visitors.

The next part of the empirical research will rely on semi-structured interviews, with eight selected institutional actors who receive and evaluate comments on some previously analysed contents and discourse. These may be used to either support or

challenge the initial research question and hypothesis. These interviewees, all living and working in Belgrade, are directly or indirectly involved in the fields of culture and media, and of heritage and tourism planning. Thus, their opinion or criticism is here of primary importance.

The fifth and final chapter provides an overview of a project proposal already completed and submitted to a selected number of national competitions and bids (evaluation forthcoming). The interdisciplinary framework ensures the project has unique value, especially thanks to the rich, diverse and solid network that was set up since its initial design and development. The project's main objectives are 1) the mapping of heritage sites on the mentioned territory; 2) the implementation of innovative and effective tools for its presentation (including educational workshops, online presentation, guided tours, etc.) and 3) the development of a final product in the form of an audio-visual exhibition.

2. Relevant discourse foundation

2.1 Geo-political settings

2.1.1 Multiple perspectives on Belgrade's historical events

“Only the ignorant and unreasonable ones can consider the past dead and eternally divided from the present by a wall. On the contrary, the truth is that everything that the man has felt, thought and done has been inseparably embedded into what we feel, think and do today. To invite the light of scientific truth into the past means to serve to the present.”

Ivo Andrić, writer and Nobel Prize winner

The scope of this research will be better understood after a general outline of Belgrade's historical and geographical setup. Given Belgrade's long and complex history, this can be achieved through a selective and multi-perspective approach. The following chapters will show that the case study focuses on the area of Belgrade around the confluence of two rivers—*The Confluence*—, a strategic starting point for the city's development by virtue of its topographical and natural features.² The concise chronological survey of Belgrade's history zeroes in on the period between the 15th and the 19th century, since the two empires—Habsburg and Ottoman—had the most recent and in many respects the most lasting influence on the traceable and/or visible heritage

² This location has been mapped for the purposes of a project proposal (empirical part of this thesis that is presented in the last chapter) according to materials in the Belgrade Historical Archive with assistance of historian Dr Bakić, member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and the collaborator on the proposed project. The purpose of this mapping was to prove the significance of the mentioned territory as initial area of Belgrade's development.

of Belgrade.³ Historical research was conducted primarily by collecting and analysing materials in libraries, especially in the Historical Archive of Belgrade. However, a wider range of works such as travelogues written in and about Belgrade, novels, media reports and articles, educational literature and certain textbooks were also consulted with a view to providing a thicker descriptive model.

Belgrade is located in the north of the Balkan Peninsula, precisely on the transition from lowlands to highlands. The area of the city is marked off by two transnational rivers – the Sava and Danube (Image 1)—a peculiar geographical position which has earned Belgrade the common epithet of “crossroads city”. The rivers’ confluence and several islands capture a vast area in the heart of present-day Belgrade. While the adjacent territory was mostly swampy, higher elevations around it provided ideal places for various settlements. The rivers rich in fish and the vast fertile plains beyond the swamps eventually attracted a large number of settlers.



Image 1. Relief map of Serbia and surrounding area

3 For a detailed review, see Appendix A.

Prehistoric and antique periods of Belgrade

Although remains of Neanderthal humans on the territory of Belgrade date back to 50.000 years B.C., archaeological excavations showed that this area hosted neolith settlements, around 5250–4250 B.C, generally identified as the *Vinca* culture. The *Vinca* occupied most of the Balkans over the territory covering mainly present-day Serbia, but also some parts of Romania, Bulgaria, Bosnia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Greece.⁴

Various epithets have repeatedly been used to describe Belgrade through history, firstly on account of its topography. Among these: “Bastion of Europe against Ottomans”, “Bulwark of Christianity”, “The gate of the Balkans”, “The key to Hungary.” We will later look at epithets that soon turned into stereotypes and labels that placed the Balkans—together with Belgrade and Serbia—within a certain cultural and ideological framework (Samardžić et al. 2014).

The first written records of ancient Belgrade lead to Latin and Greek writers that speculated about the presence of Celts on its territory in III century BCE. The Celts settled around the confluence of the Sava and Danube and named it *Singidun*. This settlement apparently occupied the territory of the present Belgrade Fortress, although the hill where the fortress is located used to be much higher and steeper at that time. Besides geographical position, specific and favourable relief attracted peoples to this particular place that was a well-defended spot, located on a hill, surrounded by rivers from three sides with a perfect outlook. A fortress and other infrastructures were built early on. Centuries of human activity strongly influenced the transformation of this place to its present-day form (Popović 1991).

After the Romans defeated the Celts, they settled in Belgrade for the next four centuries and named it *Singidunum* (Latin). Belgrade gained the first contours of an urbanized entity during this period. The Romans built roads and settlements around and through Belgrade, which were later used by all the following conquerors. Those roads had transnational significance, since they once connected most parts of Europe. One of

4 <http://virtuelnimuzejdunava.rs/serbia/cultural-heritage/archaeological-map-of-danube/vinca.vinca-.348.html>

these roads was the *Via Militaris* or *Tsargrad road*, that would become one of the busiest European roads in the Middle Ages. It led to Tsargrad⁵ (Radic 2011).

The Sava and Danube, along with their tributary rivers, have always represented an extraordinary network for trade and travel: peoples interested in Belgrade were aware of this and used the waterways for many purposes. The Danube flows through ten present-day countries: Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine. Also, its drainage basin touches upon nine more countries: Poland, Switzerland, Italy, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Republic of Macedonia and Albania. Romans used most of this river network for trade, conquests, and water supply (Petrović 2008). In the 3rd century, a critical period for the history of the Roman Empire, Singidunum was one of the most important border-towns. Throughout the 4th and 5th centuries the Roman Empire was repeatedly torn up, until it was finally divided into the Eastern and Western empires. Furthermore, in the 5th century Singidunum was conquered and sacked by the Huns who dominated Europe at that time: that is when Singidunum started to lose its Roman character and to gain Byzantine features. Singidunum formally belonged to the Byzantine Empire in the 5th and 6th centuries, although it did suffer several other conquests by various tribes and peoples who did not settle long enough to leave any significant trace or influence (Petrović 2008).

Medieval Belgrade

Historical records on Belgrade in the next several centuries are scant and imprecise. However, we know that nomad tribes, the Avars and the Slavs, were present on the territory of Singidunum between 7th and 9th century. In the 9th century, written records mention *Belgrade* for the first time as the new name for Singidunum. That was another significant period for the city, since at that time the demographic setup around *The Belgrade Confluence* changed. The North of Belgrade fell under the domination of the Hungarians and the Eastern part of the city fell under the Bulgarians (Purković 1997).

⁵ Tsargrad is a Slavic name for the city or land of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman Byzantine Empire, and present-day Istanbul in Turkey (Angold 2014).

The itinerary that Crusaders followed on their way to the Holy Land made Belgrade an unavoidable crossroads and a strategic spot on the cultural map of Europe. The first significant group that passed through Belgrade around 1054 on the way to Palestine wrote about it in their travelogues (Petrović 2008). They described Belgrade as the transition between low and highland (Image 1). They also mentioned the vast area (the surroundings of Belgrade) under the Bulgarians, who were described as brigands and violent people. Forty years later, another major group of Crusaders passed through Belgrade, which at that time represented the border between Hungary and Byzantium (Petrović 2008). Crusaders named the Hungarian part of Belgrade (now called Zemun) “evil town”, since they did not know its real name and they perceived its inhabitants as unwelcoming. Crusaders stayed in Belgrade shortly, looking for shelter and food. However, dwellers did not appreciate their arrogance and refused to help them. In retaliation, Crusaders burnt Belgrade to the ground. In the Crusaders’ travelogues, the river Sava and its crossing is mentioned many times as an obstacle along their way.

In the following period (starting from the 12th century), the Serbian State began its development. The stronger the Serbian State became, the more intense were its attempts to become an independent and sovereign state. Serbians, Hungarians, Bulgarians and Byzantium had long been enemies and Belgrade—a town bordering several regions—found itself right in the middle of conflict. However, the situation drastically changed when the Ottoman Empire advanced towards Europe and the Balkans as well. At that point, all former rivals decided to unite in order to protect their territories from those who were perceived as the new and powerful enemy (Popović 1991).

When the Hungarians gave Belgrade over to Despot Stefan Lazarević—the Serbian head of the State—one of the most thriving periods in Belgrade history began (1404-1427). Despot Stefan Lazarević renovated the fortress and the town, developed craft and trade (especially in cooperation with the Republic of Ragusa—Dubrovnik), and repopulated the town with his protégés – the Serbs. Most of the records about this period derive from archaeological excavations, from writings of Despot Stefan Lazarević’s biographer Constantine the Philosopher, and from the French pilgrim Bertrandon de la

Broquière. From these sources⁶, we gather that Belgrade's fortress was built to make it impregnable: it was protected from possible attacks coming from the inland, and the rivers were closely guarded both by the Serbs and the Hungarians.

Despot Stefan Lazarević's sudden death stopped the development of Belgrade in every sense and the town was immediately handed back to the Hungarians as previously agreed. This is the time when Belgrade gained the telling epithet of *antemurale christianis*.⁷ Once the centre of the young Serbian state, Belgrade became the most important fortress for the defence of the south Hungarian border. Belgrade was attacked in 1440 and 1456, soon after the ruler's death, but good strategy and robust defences kept the enemies at bay, and the attacks were unsuccessful (Samardžić et al. 2014).

A culturally diverse city throughout its entire history, Belgrade emerged in this period as a distinctly multicultural settlement, with foreigners and even temporary inhabitants playing a crucial role in the life of the town. Some of these people even determined its destiny at specific junctures:

- 1440—Jovan Talovac from Dubrovnik led the army that defended Belgrade from sultan Murad II.
- 1441—The Ottomans attacked Belgrade and the Hungarian Hunyadi János (the most prominent military figure in Central and South-eastern Europe in the 15th century) defended it.
- 1456—Mehmed the Conqueror attacked Belgrade and once again the Ottomans' siege failed, this time thanks to a well-organized army that consisted of warriors from Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia together with Italian and German Crusaders (Samardžić et al. 2014).

⁶ <http://www.istorijskabiblioteka.com/art:bertrandon-de-la-brokijer#toc>

⁷ *Antemurale Christianitatis* (*Bulwark of Christianity*) designated a country (or in this case a town) that marked the frontier between empires and a "defence" of Christian Europe from the Ottoman Empire (Jezernik 2010).



Image 2. Siege of Belgrade 1521 (Illustrated history of Serbs)

Belgrade under the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires

The first time the Ottomans succeeded in conquering Belgrade was in 1521. The attack was successful when young sultan Suleiman the Magnificent led the army and circumvented the Hungarians in the north, attacking Belgrade from the rivers. The main attack was conducted by cannons from the Great War Island⁸ at the confluence of the Sava and Danube.

The Ottomans' conquest completely changed Belgrade's status and destiny: it was no longer a border city with a key military position. Once Belgrade (the last stronghold before the vast Pannonian Basin) had been defeated, the Ottomans could easily progress

⁸ The Great War Island represented the strategic point in Belgrade's history. When it showed up at the beginning of the XVI century as accumulative alluvial formation, people named it *Danube Island*. Today's name proves its strategic importance - it was first mentioned in 1717 when Habsburgs and Ottomans fought over it. Over time, it changed the name according to its purpose into *Gypsy Island*, *Horse Island* and the *Island of the Poor*. Between two World Wars this island was important for supplying Belgrade's inhabitants with food since its entire terrain was cultivated. The total surface area of 211.38 hectares was placed under the government protection in 2005. See <http://www.zelenilo.rs/zasticena-prirodna-dobra/prirodno-dobro-veliko-ratno-ostrvo>.

all the way to Wien. Since Belgrade became a city in the middle of the Ottomans' state, far away from war and battles, a new and different period of development began. Belgrade became the biggest trade centre in the European part of the Ottoman Empire: a meeting point for caravans coming from Egypt, Libya, and the Middle East. Some goods were traded there, but most of them were transported further across Europe (Marjanović-Vujović 1970).

Belgrade's appearance underwent substantial change in the 16th and 17th century, by which time it was less a fortified stronghold than a trade centre with recognizable Ottoman features (caravanserais, bazaars, taverns, inns and mosques). Among all the foreign traders that visited or lived in Belgrade at that time, people from Dubrovnik were the majority. Further, Belgrade became a centre for food and armour storing and its rivers became the main roads for supplying the rest of Europe with goods coming from the east. Bridges built along the rivers Sava and Danube at that time were numerous, as attested by archaeological findings. (Marjanović-Vujović 1970).

During Ottoman rule, Belgrade was divided into the fortress and the thriving districts around it and along the riverside. This period marked various encounters that provided fertile ground for gastronomic, linguistic, artistic and social exchange still evident in Belgrade today. Certainly, most of the vocabulary, folklore and culinary traditions that this cultural melting pot produced were modified and nowadays are often perceived as *Serbian*. This is one of the reasons why narration and storytelling are needed for understanding of Belgrade's intangible heritage, and the identity issues that underlie it.

As far as the description of life in Belgrade is concerned, travelogues written during the Ottoman and Habsburg rules offer an interesting multi-perspective approach to the matter. One of the most significant travel writers that lived in Belgrade in the 17th century was Evliya Çelebi, an Ottoman explorer who travelled through the Ottoman Empire and neighbouring lands over a period of forty years. He described Belgrade's position very thoroughly, emphasizing its importance. In 1660. Çelebi wrote that Belgrade numbered around 98.000 inhabitants in 17.000 houses. Turks lived in 38 Turkish districts and the rest of the people (Serbs, Bulgarians, Roma people and Greeks) inhabited one district each. His travelogue describes the architecture and infrastructure in

Belgrade. Çelebi's accounts show us that Belgrade had distinct oriental (the epithet used widely in descriptions of the old Belgrade) features and give us invaluable information on its law, its social order, its policies, its agriculture, but also about daily life in taverns, houses and on the streets. The various ethnic groups who lived in Belgrade were strangers to one another and brought their own craft, skills, cuisine and traditions, creating one of the biggest multicultural trading centres of Southeast Europe at that time. As Çelebi explains: "Annually, people bring various goods on camels, horses and boats all the way from Syria, Beirut, Izmir, and Arabian and Persian regions in general. Then, goods are packed and sent further to Central Europe, Venetian Republic and the rest of the Balkans. Inhabitants of Belgrade are cheerful and friendly, they all spend time in groups" (Çelebi 1967, 93.).

The Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences published a comprehensive volume about Belgrade in European traveller's writings, bringing together a wide range of extracts from diaries and letters. We are told that

"in their descriptions of Danube each of the mentioned writers did not miss one of the most important settlements on its banks and that was Belgrade. The picture of Belgrade in various accounts by the German authors, from Birken to Trost, was a reflection of the political and social situation in the city. The first mentioned author paid his attention to the history of Belgrade and its significance on the military-strategic plan. Nikolaus Ernst Kleemann described the city as a place where the Turks were the masters of life and death" (Kostić and Radenković 2003, 124).

The impressions people form while travelling or staying in one place tend to be homogenous. We can see that from the numerous travelogues that comment on the particular geographical position of Belgrade, while also referring to its social, political and economic circumstances. Since Belgrade has always been on the way to various parts of Europe, there are numerous notes from many travellers that preserved their impressions in the form of letters, diaries, travelogues, thus providing external points of view, which are very helpful for creating the multi-perspective image of former Belgrade.

After 1683, when the Ottomans' siege of Wien failed, the Ottoman Empire began to lose its hold in the area. After numerous defeats inflicted by the Habsburgs, the Ottomans started retreating, and Belgrade regained in time its strategic prominence. Although the Habsburgs succeeded in conquering Belgrade in 1688, their rule over the city and surrounding territories was short-lived (it lasted only until 1690) and the Ottoman

Empire held the area until 1717 when the Habsburgs finally defeated them. Eventually, Belgrade became the most important military outpost throughout South-eastern Europe. This victory was celebrated all over Europe as “victory of Christianity over Islam” (Jezernik, 2010).

Belgrade’s military and political standing in Europe changed again. From 1717 until 1739, Belgrade became the main stronghold of the Habsburg Empire, from which Catholicism was expected to spread East (Samardžić et al. 2014). The main characteristic of 18th-century Belgrade was the continuous modernization and institutionalization under Habsburg rule. Once the Habsburgs settled in Belgrade (along with Germans, Italians, French, Swiss, Portuguese, Spanish, Hungarians and others), Byzantine-Eastern culture was slowly replaced by Central-European customs. Prince Eugene of Savoy, possibly the most successful military commander in modern European history, brought baroque to Belgrade in the 18th century (Samardžić et al. 2014). The Belgrade fortress was rebuilt and several new military structures added. Also, mosque minarets were destroyed in order to create a “more European” skyline and mosques were replaced by Christian churches of various orders. The mosques that did survive were turned into military posts or trading warehouses. The infrastructural design of the city changed: streets were made straight and marketplaces were given new layouts. The entire Muslim community withdrew from Belgrade.⁹ As Turks retreated, Serbs, Germans and indigent peoples from Central Europe settled in Belgrade (Samardžić et al., 2014).

The Ottomans took over the city again in 1739 and another long period of their rule lasted until *The First Serbian Uprising* of 1804. The Ottomans demanded that the Habsburgs demolish everything they had built before leaving the town. Along with the Habsburgs, most of other inhabitants also left Belgrade. Only 45 Jews and 8 Serbs stayed in Belgrade, as recorded by a 1741 inventory, which also informs us that the town was divided into 6 Turkish districts – or *mahala* (the biggest one of them inhabited by 726 Turks). Besides these, a minor number of Belgrade’s inhabitants were Roma people settled along the river Sava (Hrabak 1974).

⁹ Most of the documents about Habsburgs’ Belgrade are currently preserved in the *War Archive* in Wien, where these data come from.

In 1739, after a peace treaty was signed, the new border between the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empire was defined. It ran across the centre of present-day Belgrade, along the rivers Sava and Danube and across the Great War Island. Negotiations were held in Tsargrad in what came to be known as the *Conventio Constantinopolitana*, with France acting as an intermediary. An agreement was reached in 1741, and consisted of four basic points. One referred especially to the Great War Island (Image 4), which both sides were unwilling to give up. The Ottomans' proposal was eventually accepted and the island was divided in half (along an east-west direction). The Ottomans tore down all the larger structures and destroyed the forest on their side of the island, leaving only houses and gardens. The Habsburgs, on the other hand, used the island's fertile ground for agriculture. The construction of military fortifications was strictly forbidden (Veselinović 1970).

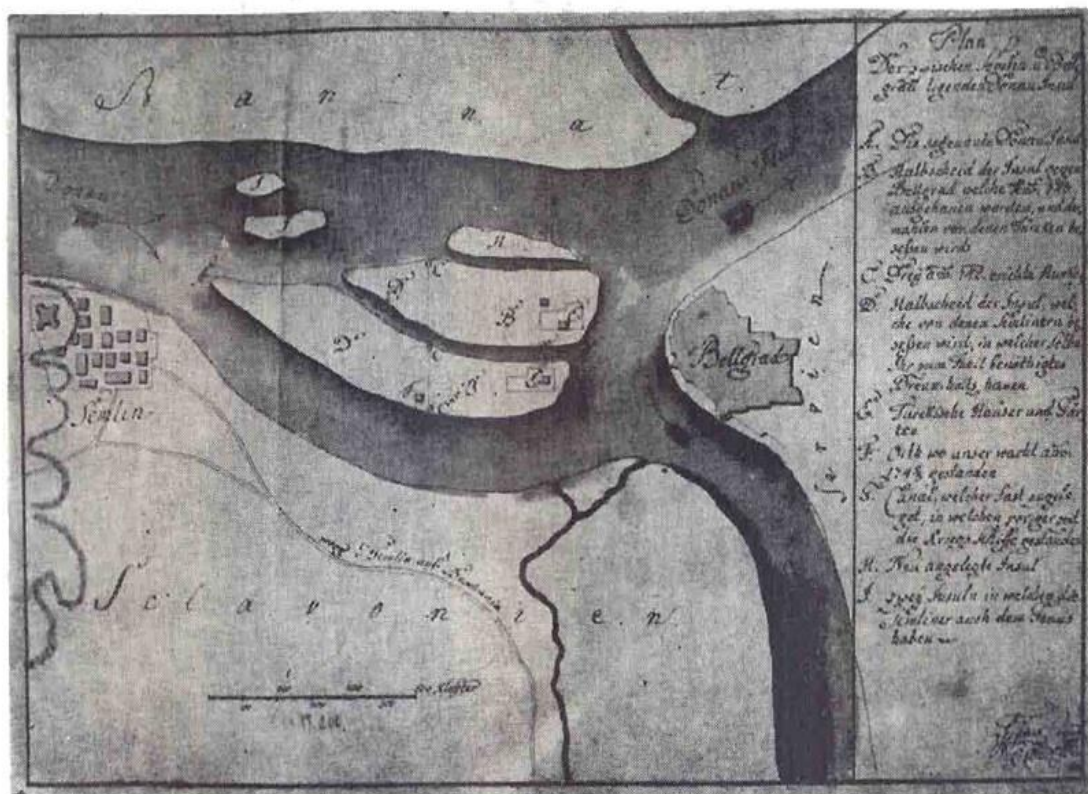


Image 3: Map of the Great War Island with Habsburg-Ottoman border

Following this agreement, the Habsburgs settled much longer in Zemun, today's municipality of Belgrade, located northwest of the confluence. This part of Belgrade was

considered Habsburg's territory from 1717 until 1918.¹⁰ Zemun underwent major development under Habsburg rule and around 1730, it became the most important border crossing point for goods and people between South-East Europe and the other territories. Besides immaterial cultural features related with trade, crafts, agriculture and the arts, which left a significant heritage in the northern parts of Serbia, most visible was the architectural impact (Nikolić, 2015).

In Zemun, the Habsburgs constructed buildings, churches, warehouses, ports, and fortresses, still largely extant: a marked contrast with those parts of Belgrade that were instead under Ottoman rule for more than three centuries (Vujović 2003). The main park in Zemun today used to be a sort of a buffer zone between the two empires—European authorities organized checkpoints and quarantine areas to screen people willing to enter the Habsburg Empire (Nikolić, 2015).

Lady Mary Wortley Montague (1689-1762) left some information about 18th-century Belgrade in letters that she wrote while in Belgrade for three weeks in 1794. She was delighted by Effendi, the Belgrade's Ottoman ruler at that time. She thought of Belgrade as of "not very large, but fair built and well-fortified town. This was a town of great trade, very rich and populous, when in the hands of the Turks". Lady Montague wrote about the firm authority Turks exerted over the town and emphasized Effendi's hospitality and refinement.¹¹

Although the Habsburgs remained in Zemun, the dual power over the city across the rivers between Ottomans and Serbs lasted until two Serbian uprisings (1804 and 1815). Officially and finally, the Ottomans left Belgrade in 1867. Until 1914, the left bank of the river Sava was foreign, i.e. Austro-Hungarian.

In the course of the 19th century, the Belgrade Fortress and the surrounding area fell into a state of decadence and disrepair, as witnessed by a number of travellers. In his book *Early Nineteenth-Century Serbia in the Eyes of British Travellers*, Pawlovitch cited extracts from the travelogues of Charles Boileau Elliott (1803-1875), a fellow of the

¹⁰ The Habsburg Empire became the Austrian Empire in 1804 until 1867, when it was renamed as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which lasted until 1918.

¹¹ Wortley Montague, 1794, letter 24.

Royal Society, Miss Julia Pardoe (1806-1862), Michael Quin (1796-1843), and others. These give a vivid and fascinating account of the state of the city in the 19th century (Pawlovitch 1962). To these travellers, and in all likelihood to most travellers during the same period, Belgrade represented a gateway to the Ottoman Empire and beyond. They all voiced rather high expectations due to what they had previously heard and read about Belgrade's particular geographical position and the celebrated renown of its rivers, but were generally disappointed once they actually got there. Elliott, for instance expected signs of grandeur and commercial activities along the Danube. He even dared to claim that the Danube could have been a river capable of accommodating the whole British navy instead of being a place where some "dirty Turks were lazily fishing under the sun" (Pawlovitch 1962, 323).

Reflecting on the fortress, Miss Pardoe noticed that it looked quite powerful and sublime seen from the water, yet its many blemishes and a general state of disrepair became apparent when it was seen up close. In fact, most of these travellers confirmed that Belgrade projected a much more "imposing appearance" to those who saw it from the rivers¹² than to those who walked through it (Pawlovitch 1962, 323). One of the rare "tourists" of that time was Francis Herve, who was traveling overland from Constantinople to Budapest, and set out to visit Belgrade as well. Herve's notes closely recall the stereotypical descriptions of the Orient that Edward Said challenged in his ground-breaking analysis of the Western perception of the East:

"I kept looking back with regret at Belgrade, as the last monument I should perhaps ever behold of Eastern climes, and felt that I was bidding adieu to those regions of romance, where civilization has not so far intruded as to crush all the primitive feature of the country, whose costumes and customs still remind us of the most interesting period, where the wild, the sublime, and the picturesque are alternately presenting their charms, where pomp and grandeur are profusely displayed."¹³

This extract from a travelogue is a telling instance of the cultural stereotypes that travellers like Herve appealed to in shaping their impression of Belgrade, both in geographical and cultural terms. Herve's description indirectly confirms the epithets

¹² This opinion is often voiced even nowadays.

¹³ Pawlovitch 1962, 329.

mentioned earlier, of Belgrade as the “Bastion of Europe against Ottomans”, or the “Bulwark of Christianity” (Samardžić et al. 2014).

Lastly, a very influential travelogue that involves Belgrade is *Eothen*, by William Kinglake, written in 1834/1835 while he was travelling to Cairo. The book was an instant success and was immediately translated into German, Italian and French. Kinglake describes at some length the differences between Zemun and Belgrade and considers the border between them. He underlined dissimilarities not only in architecture but also in the people and their lifestyles. Some of his remarks deserve to be cited in full: “People living in Zemun would not even dare going across the river and mingle with that strange race” or “going through the Ottoman part of the town, you pass piles of garbage, lots of dirt, wild dogs, etc.” (Kinglake 1948, 26). Such vivid descriptions epitomize in narrative form the perceived cultural differences between two sections of Belgrade.

Even though Serbia and Belgrade were involved in conflict or invasions in the 20th century as well (think of the Balkan wars of 1912-1913; The First World War of 1914-1918; and The Second World War of 1941-1945), these did not arguably mark lasting cultural contributions to Belgrade’s heritage as considered from the perspective of our research. To be sure, the post-communist and post-socialist periods and movements are of the utmost relevance for the social history and geopolitical heritage of Belgrade, but go well beyond the limited confines established for the present study.

2.1.2 Which history for the Balkans?

From time immemorial, it has proven hard to preserve peace among the countries and the peoples of the Restless Balkans: periods of warfare, as we have seen, are probably longer than periods of peace. And even in time of peace, peoples in the Balkans tend to focus on blaming each other for their unfavourable historical and geographical predicament or simply for the “bad luck” over everything that happens to them. These are deeply rooted individual or collective responses and attitudes, unfortunately quite familiar to most of the governments in the Balkans to this day.

To conclude on a multicultural note, I would like to consider the *Joint History Project* by the Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in Southeast Europe (CDRSEE), which may be taken as an effective attempt to overcome a subjective approach to the perception of history in the Balkans. The project was launched in 1999, with the idea of providing history-teaching materials designed from multiple angles, meant to encourage critical thinking and debate, to promote the appreciation of differences and to boost the recognition of a shared history in the region.¹⁴

So far, the *Joint History Project* has issued four different textbooks: *The Ottoman Empire, Nations and States*, *The Balkan Wars* and *World War II*. The scholars who took part in the creation of this project thoroughly analysed school textbooks, monitored public opinion, and decided to launch the project based on the following facts:

- “The different curricula and the ethnocentric bias of the teaching of history, which are common in all countries;
- The fact that changes in history textbooks in most countries of Southeast Europe depend upon the ministries of education, which exercise a tight control over the content of school curricula and books;
- The desire of educators to renew their teaching with aids to which they would have easy access;
- The view that it is not possible to compile a uniform, homogenising history of Southeast Europe in a single textbook which could be used in all countries.”¹⁵

Starting with these assumptions, the authors involved in the project issued the following set of basic recommendations for promoting what they see as a long-overdue change in historiographical approach:

- “National history to be taught in schools should not be nationalistic history. Taking as a given fact that the dominant form of history in schools is national history and that the history of neighbouring peoples is also taught from an ethnocentric viewpoint, we do not propose to replace national history but rather to change the way it is taught.
- The regional history of Southeast Europe cannot be seen as self-contained, but as part of European and world history. This means also that the notion of the

14 See <http://cdrsee.org/projects/education-projects/joint-history-project>

15 Kuluri 2009, 9.

“peculiar” historical evolution of the Balkans is rejected from the outset as stereotypical and biased.

- The history of each nation separately, and of the region as a whole, is not treated as a continuous, homogeneous and harmonious process. The divisions, conflicts and different perspectives are emphasised to the same degree as the common, unifying elements. Instead of trying to paint a false picture of harmony, we prefer to indicate ways to teach about differences and conflicts”¹⁶

A subjective, ethnocentric and nationalistic approach to history is not only counterproductive but possibly even dangerous. Even though heritage is not history (Schouten 1995), a thorough understanding of history is essential to adequately perceive and interpret heritage. This initial awareness could be seen as a first step towards a fuller appreciation of heritage and a more articulate analysis of its multiple features. These issues will be discussed and analysed in the chapters that follow.

2.2 Socio-anthropological settings

2.2.1 Theoretical studies on the question of Serbian identity

The term *identity* itself is notoriously complex and controversial. Depending on the context in which it is found, the term can take on different senses, and hence different uses. Although people apply this term with ease in everyday language, when it comes to academic literature, we encounter a plethora of conflicting and possibly even contradictory notions of identity (Fearon 1999).

For the purposes of this research, the main one in this thesis is how Serbian people perceive their national identity and namely if there is any awareness of its hybridity or stratifications. We have already outlined relevant historical events that help us make sense of the multi-layered nature of Serbian identity. The focus here is on the geopolitical

¹⁶ Kuluri 2009, 10.

considerations based on a multidisciplinary approach of the kind championed by Ellen Churchill Semple, who keenly observed that “all historical problems ought to be studied geographically and all geographical problems must be studied historically” (Churchill Semple 2005).

The particular interest lies in features that may be said to have had a lasting influence on the construction of identity among the people of Belgrade, and more general Serbian people. My attempt is to show how Belgrade’s unique geographical position (as we have seen, the confluence of two prominent European rivers – the Sava and the Danube) triggered a turbulent series of historical events which gave rise to various forms of heritage, some of which short-lived yet still readable between the lines of Serbian culture, others immediately present in the forms of sites that can be visited or examined). Finally, I will argue that a fresh interpretation of both natural and cultural heritage sites can be used at the same time to gauge and to boost the awareness of Belgrade’s inhabitants about their history and collective cultural identity.

The understanding of Serbian identity has long been a delicate matter in scholarly research, and notably in the field of history. And of course the issue of Balkan identity came forcefully to the fore in politics at the time of war across the territory of former Yugoslavia (although former Yugoslavia represents only a part of the Balkans, that war was often called *Balkan war*). The Balkans were in the spotlight during much of the nineties, and that led the media and scholars to engage once again the recurrent issue of Balkan identity in an attempt to find reasons for the ongoing conflict. As historical scholars have recently stated:

“The redefinition of cultural identities has been an important constituent of the transition processes in all countries of South-eastern Europe (SEE).” More specifically, “the interest in cultural and national identities in SEE was particularly strong and very openly pronounced during the 1990s. The search for cultural and national identities and their very dynamic changes in the last decade of the 20th century has become crucial for the establishment of the new states, as well as for the systemic transformation and transition from socialism to capitalism. In such a context the notions of national and cultural identities have been intertwined, mixed and marginalized or directly misused in political discourse and cultural life.”¹⁷

17 Milohnić Švob-Đokić (2011, 3).

Peoples in the Balkans still have difficulties in making sense of the events that happened centuries ago and in coming to terms with their geopolitical consequences. So distant historical memories inevitably intertwine with recent events to create a puzzling tangle. 20th-century developments are still too close for an impartial assessment, and that makes the issue of Balkan identity even harder to tackle.

While the Ottomans' invasion of Europe and the Balkans has not been labelled as colonization, I would claim that some issues discussed in postcolonial studies can be suitably applied to this matter. In particular, I refer to the question of hybridity, thoroughly addressed by Homi K. Bhabha, and to the question of *orientalism*, that will be explored in the wake of Edward Said's well-known discussion.

According to Bhabha, the process of (self-) identification might be described in terms of three necessary conditions:

- "To exist is to be called into being in relation to others.
- The very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting.
- The question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a self-fulfilling prophecy—it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (Bhabha 1994, 63-64).

In consideration of this, it should come as no surprise that, spread as they were along multiple foreign borders, exposed to many invaders and to the perpetual influence of other cultures, Serbian people should find it problematic to define their identity without somehow relating to their own perception of "the others." *That* identity, created in the frequent cultural intertwining of peoples, is the blurred identity Bhabha mentions: the identity constructed in the splitting zone and often defined as a "hybrid" by numerous scholars. However, I would like to retain another characteristic for describing the Serbian identity and that is stratification.

2.2.2 Reflections on identity construction in Geographical and Environmental studies

The focus on geographical configuration of Belgrade is at the basis of a scholarly narration based on a “determinism”, whose major source traces back to Jovan Cvijić, the so-called founder of geography in Serbia. His major contribution came after 30 years of fieldwork all over the Balkan region. Cvijić was under the strong influence of anthropogeography and ideas deriving from the Austrian and German schools that generally had a strong impact on development and orientation of Serbian sciences.

J. G. Herder’s assertions that history is nothing else but a geography of time and people on the move (in other words, “history is geography set into motion”), influenced Carl Ritter’s, Friedrich Ratzel’s and Franz Boas’ studies, which in turn reached Jovan Cvijić, shaping his own academic orientation.

In ways that recall the destiny of his contemporary Friedrich Ratzel (when he introduced the term “*lebensraum*”¹⁸), Cvijić’s work was distorted to justify the politics and territorial claims of “*Great Serbia*”, thus fuelling controversy in certain academic and political circles (Palavestra and Milosavljević, 2015). The expression “*Great Serbia*” has in fact unclear roots, most probably dating from the 19th century. It represents the nationalist ideology of certain Serbian parties and individuals (often misusing Cvijić) who define it rather vaguely as a territory that includes Serbia and the surrounding regions populated by Serbs. (Gartner and Ortag 2009).

In her influential book *Imagining Balkans*, one of the key references for the present work, the Bulgarian scholar Maria Todorova mentions another contentious matter regarding Cvijić’s work. She explains that the term *Balkan* rapidly gained a marked political connotation at the beginning of the 20th century when a “famous Serbian geographer Jovan Cvijić used it in his work about this peninsula although he was aware of this term’s inaccuracy.” (Todorova 2006, 88). Given that Cvijić was a sociologist and

¹⁸ “*Lebensraum*” is a term by Friedrich Ratzel that originally referred to a factor for biological change and the relationship between living species and their environment. Afterwards, it has been used as a term explained as an additional territory considered by a nation (Nazi Germany) to be necessary for national survival or for the expansion of trade (Woodruff, 1980).

ethnologist, he was also very interested in researching the so-called *Balkan mentality* and the anthropo-geographical and cultural relations that constructed national and regional identities. An in-depth investigation of these controversial issues fall outside the scope of this research. What matters to us is instead to keep in mind Cvijić's highly influential research as conveyed in his book *Balkan peninsula*, where he discusses the geographical prerequisites for defining peoples' settlements and migration directions, in my view crucial for the present case study.

Another applicable area of study that suitably leans on geographical determinism is geo-culture. If we consider that natural prerequisites predetermined Belgrade's geopolitical and geo-historical framework in the past, then accordingly, in modern and peaceful times, geo-culture and geo-economy have been and will be the defining structure for development in the Balkans. This is mostly valid for the relations that the Balkan countries created among each other through history, but especially after the war in the nineties (Mitrović 2002). Priorities have changed. Now, when speaking about South-eastern Europe, cultural and economic positions are mostly defined by advancements in the European integration process. It means that Serbia's geo-cultural definition derives from the collective cultural identity which influences the nation's positioning in its relation to the rest of Europe, and in particular to its neighbours. With regard to cultural development in the Balkans (especially in former Yugoslav countries), it must be stressed that globalization, transition and regionalization are determining processes for these countries' journey towards modernization and European integration (Mitrović 2002).

Coming back to Cvijić and his geo-cultural notations, I would refer here to his book *The Balkan Peninsula* where he claims that there are three different types of geographical impacts: direct impacts on the environment; indirect impacts; and geographical features that affect peoples' movement and migrations. Rivers, their navigability, banks, flora and fauna as significant features for determining human's material and social life are the natural geographical spotlights he mentions. He further explains that these natural factors (unquestionably among many others) define types of settlements, occupations, lifestyle, communication types, and social relations (Cvijić 2013). According to this perspective, all of the above-mentioned claims might be considered crucial if trying to understand how and why Belgrade's geographical position determined its "destiny".

In *The Balkan Peninsula* Cvijić mentions prehistoric civilizations that used Danube for migrations from the Black sea to the Central Europe; while the Romans used Sava and Danube (when speaking about South-East Europe) for reaching places of their interest, in particular, mines. Another dominant civilization in this area was Byzantine (Eastern Roman Empire) that also used natural features of the territory as the most important indicators for determining their settlements' locations. Consequently, these natural resources were places of clashes and encounters of peoples, leaving that way what we now consider heritage: bridges, fortresses, settlements' remains, buildings, religious places, but also stories, gastronomy, language, folklore, etc. (Cvijić 2013). This analysis refers to Belgrade as a case study as well, and links its geographical configuration to the notion of *crossroads*, the recurrent metaphor used to describe Belgrade. Cvijić's study corroborates my preliminary assumption that Belgrade's geographical position played from the very start an essential role in creating, developing and shaping the city into its present-day form.

Three series of factors are identified as essential for an assessment of ethnographic and anthropo-geographical phenomena in this region: historical events, civilization zones and migrations. Momentous ethnic changes occurred in the Balkan region, and Cvijić highlights these by distinguishing events that occurred at the beginning and at the end of the Middle Ages: the migration of Slavs (especially in the 7th century) and the invasion of the Ottoman Empire in the 14th century (Cvijić 2013).

Cvijić also speaks of heritage, claiming that the Balkans' heritage provides ample evidence of the presence of several civilizations that spent a sufficient or significant amount of time in the Balkans to leave traces of their rule. These traces survive in layers, which record intertwined cultural influences across the whole region, even though it is also relatively easy to find geographical areas where one civilization clearly prevailed, leaving behind more traces than others. Serbia has been a symbolic crossroad of numerous peoples' minorities or majorities: Romans, Byzantium, Serbian, Austrian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Slovene, Croatian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Greek, Turkish, Albanian, Roma, Jews, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs, Vlachs, to name just the most representative. Further, closeness to Dubrovnik and to the Venetian Republic ensured that Serbia could at the same time maintain a strong connection and exchange with Western cultures. (Cvijić 2013).

Chronologically, the first archaeological findings point to ancient Greece, followed by a Hellenic period and a colonization of some areas of the Balkan Peninsula. The first time the whole region was politically united was at the time of the Roman rule (Todorova 2006). Afterwards, being closely tied to the Byzantine Empire, the Serbs seem to have largely embraced Christianity and the different forms of inheritance that came with it. Both material and immaterial aspects of life, notably the lifestyle of the higher classes in towns and along key roads such as Belgrade-Tsargrad and Belgrade-Thessaloniki were noticeably shaped by Byzantine influences. People in small villages in the Balkans lived in relatively confined political communities, with a strongly grounded local culture that remained “hidden” from other external influences. Byzantine domination brought a long-lasting political and religious order which ensured continued cultural guidance. Unlike Ottoman elements, Byzantine heritage (and more specifically religious Orthodoxy) tended to be perceived as native, and such perception led to the undisturbed construction of religious and national identities for most of the Balkan region. Common Western narratives on Byzantium evoke a distant entity that was decadent, outmoded and undeveloped in the fields of science and the arts and yet wrapped in mystery and charm. Western attitudes to Byzantium could perhaps simply be described as “ambivalent” (Dragičević Šešić & Rogač Mijatović, 2014). The first Serbian state was established in the first half of the 9th century, but its development was hampered by waves of unrelenting invasions: the Bulgarians, Byzantium, the Hungarians and finally the Ottomans. And such lack of continuity is arguably the one feature of the Balkans that sets the area quite apart from the rest of Europe.

The main difference between the Ottomans and other invaders was that the former imported a new cultural element which eventually seeped into the ethnographic and anthropological outfit of Serbs and other peoples of Balkans: a new religion—Islam, together with a new layer of culture—“oriental” culture. The Ottomans induced widespread religious conversions¹⁹ over a territory that had never before experienced Islamic influence at all (Cvijić 2013).

¹⁹ *Devshirme* was a systematic collection of non-Muslim children from rural Christian populations of the Balkans, practiced by Ottomans, in which every three or four years 300 to 1000 healthy boys and young men had to be taken by force to Turkey, converted to Islam and educated for military profession or religious disciplines (<https://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/primary-sources/464>)

As we come to terms with all these intricate encounters, it might be interesting to reflect on M. L. Pratt's concept of *contact zone*. In her work *Arts of the Contact Zone*, Pratt mentions cultures in contact, especially referring to language and communication, using this phrase "to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they lived out in many parts of the world today" (Pratt 1991, 34). Hence also the concept of *transculturation*, which seems applicable to the case of the Balkans. Pratt succinctly explains the term as what occurs when one group's identity is assimilated into another (Pratt 1991). Again, she especially refers to the use of language, which should work for to the so-called "Balkan languages", since they are the transcultural condensation of the many languages of diverse social groups.²⁰

Other scholars who agree with Pratt's studies approve the idea of the Balkans as a "contact zone":

"A rough and mountainous region that forms a peninsula bounded by the Adriatic Sea on the west and the Black and Aegean Seas on the east and south, respectively, the Balkans have constituted a crossroads for speakers of many different languages since at least the second millennium BCE. The interrelations among speakers in the Balkans in ancient times are of considerable interest since clearly various sorts of cross-language transfer showing the effects of language shift (substrata) and borrowing must have occurred."²¹

Although language is only one segment of the shared heritage in the Balkans, it is unsurprisingly one of the strongest and widely shared cultural bonds, undoubtedly an expression of heritage itself. With regard to the Balkan languages, 2017 saw the circulation online of an unusual and controversial claim, made by some organizations, academics and celebrities from the former Yugoslav republics, aimed to reinforce the idea that the languages of these countries should be perceived as one. What is proposed is the

20 Five distinct branches of the Indo-European languages Albanian, Hellenic (Greek), Romance (Romanian, Aromanian, Megleno-Romance and Istro-Romanian), Slavic (Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian) and Indo-Aryan (Romani). "For Schaller (1975), Albanian, Romanian, Bulgarian and Macedonian are Balkan languages of first degree, Greek and Serbian – Balkan languages of second degree, while Turkish is a Balkan language of third degree" (Tomic, 2006).

21 Joseph 2010.

final suspension of all the restraints—legal, educational, artistic or otherwise—which still preserve strict divisions between these languages.²²

The multidimensional or multi-centric idea of Balkan languages takes us back to the notion of *ambivalence*, a term used by scholars Dragičević and Rogač. In their research, they claim that the unique geographical position of the Balkan region, which “connects the incompatible”, makes its hybridity even more pronounced. In addition, they suggest that tourism might be one of the best channels for a fresh re-interpretation of the Balkans’ “dissonant heritage” (Dragičević Šešić and Rogač Mijatović, 2014). That may be achieved, however, only after steps are taken to make sure that local people acquire the necessary knowledge via targeted educational projects, become aware of the heritage that surrounds them, and learn how to use the tools for interpreting it (Dragičević Šešić and Rogač Mijatović, 2014).

2.2.3 Identity dynamics. *Self and other*

While, as we have seen, features of Byzantine heritage in Serbia have generally been perceived as native, Ottoman heritage seems to have been viewed with suspicion, as an external, unwanted influence. In other words, Ottomans embodied the notion of *others*. The question, made even more complex by the ambivalent and dualistic characteristic of Serbian identity, may best be understood in the light of studies by Said and Bhabha, who worked on the concept of *self and other* and on the sort of diversity produced by cultural intertwining.

In his influential book *Orientalism*, Edward Said discussed at length what he considers the cultural politics of the Western perception and approach towards the East. The period Said researched coincides with the time when the Ottoman Empire covered the territory of the Middle East and the Islamic world. And while Ottomans themselves are barely mentioned by Said (Bryce, 2013), his work and his lengthy discussion of *oriental* culture provides undoubtedly a solid theoretical support for our own line of

22 See <http://jezicinacionalizmi.com/>

research. Said used the classics, travelogues and political texts of European literature to shed light on the causes and the consequences of unequal colonial relations, in a study which may rightly be said to pave the way to post-colonial studies. Said's four main dogmas in studies about the Orient and Islam (2008, 399) deserve to be quoted.

- “Absolute and systematic difference between the rational, developed, human and predominant West and aberrant, undeveloped, inferior Orient.
- Notions about Orient always have advantage comparing to evidences about it.
- Orient is eternal, homogeny, incapable of defining itself; therefore, it is eligible that West defines it by using general and systematic vocabulary.
- Orient is something that the West is supposed to be afraid of or to be under its control.”

Said maintained that, once the Ottomans' invasion started, the idea the Europeans formed about Ottoman culture was invariably negative and marked a sort of trauma. Until the 7th century, the “Ottoman scourge was lurking” across Europe as an impending danger to Christianity (Said 2008, 83). More interestingly, Said claimed that European perception and representation of Muslims, Ottomans or Arabs, were somehow modes for controlling the “terrifying” Orient. The most frightening product of this “terrifying” Orient was Islam, and the fact that—both culturally and geographically—it was threateningly “so close” to Christianity (Said 2008, 84).

Bhabha expresses similar views. Although he never defines Ottoman rule as a form of colonization, he points out that their six-century-long presence in the Balkans must have added quite a few layers to the construction of the Serbian identity (Howard, 2017). To extend expressions borrowed from Bhabha's *Location of Culture*, and given striking similarities in circumstance and relations as we deal with a nation “on the border”, we could use the term *colonizer* to refer to the Ottoman Empire and *colonized* to refer to the Serbian people. Bhabha's main contribution to the identitarian debate is his notion of the *hybridity* of colonial identity, which shows how cultures come to be represented by processes addressed to an *other*. More specifically, his research refers to the state of being at the border of two cultures, a state he describes as “double consciousness” or “in-betweenness”. Its outcome is a hybrid:

“The discriminatory effects of the discourse of cultural colonialism, for instance, do not simply or singly refer to a dialectical power struggle between self and other, or to discrimination between mother culture and alien cultures. Produced through the strategy of disavowal, the reference of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different—a mutation, a hybrid” (Bhabha 1994, 159).

If projected on the present case study, this assertion could be understood as follows: Ottoman culture reached the Balkans and dominated over the region for several centuries. This produced a mingle between indigenous culture, tradition, and language and a variety of foreign notions and suggestions, mostly from Asia Minor. These cultures (to stay within Bhabha’s research scope) did not remain independent or untouched, but rather intertwined or at least were layered together, leading to a new mutation, a hybrid, different from either “mother culture” sharing elements from both (Bhabha 1994). It is quite clear that Said’s model of otherness is a crucial tool for grasping Serbian identity and making sense of its layered and hybrid nature. In our case, the concept of otherness could be used effectively to trigger and promote a more variegated understanding of one’s identity among Serbs (Bhabha 1994).

However, other scholars disagree with the identification of *self* only in relation to *other*. For Stuart Hall, a noteworthy post-colonial scholar, the idea of defining *self* in terms of the proper, missing piece to be found in *other* is rather disturbing, since he claims that identities are constructed through and not outside the difference (Hall 1995). While it could be argued that Bhabha’s and Hall’s reflections on the self are antithetical, I would prefer to think of them as two complementary perspectives, equally useful for an analysis of Serbian culture even beyond the issue of identity: we should keep an idea on both self-oriented and other-oriented features of Serbian culture.

It has been variously noted in the past that a number of recurrent features be found in Serbian identity despite all the mingling brought about by invasions and rule changes: the legacy of the Nemanjić dynasty, the Serbian Orthodox church, the Serbian language

and the Kosovo myth.²³ These Orthodox and ethnic factors would have ensured the development of a distinctive national consciousness for Serbs in the Balkans. Orthodoxy, in particular, even more than language, allegedly set Serbians apart from other Slavs (Popović 2007). And, in the words of Dragičević, all this meant that “the inner self-identification narrative includes values related to traditional culture, such as bravery, honour, freedom-loving, and hospitality, pride, as well as overemphasized emotions, passion and energy temperament” (Dragičević Šešić and Rogač 2014, 3).

The problem with this sort of monolithic model of Serbian identity is that it does not seem to account for the variations one detects when confronted with real people and everyday practices. Said (1993, 336) had issued a warning in along these lines in *Culture and Imperialism*:

“No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim, or American are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixture of cultures and identities on a global scale. But its worst and most paradoxical gift was to allow people to believe that they were only, mainly, exclusively, white, or Black, Western, or Oriental. Yet just as human beings make their own history, they also make their cultures and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural geographies, but there seems no reason except fear and prejudice to keep insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life was about” (Said, 1993, 336).

Said’s statements seems particularly suited to the Balkans, where layers and hybrids of cultures, languages, traditions, and customs have long been underestimated and misjudged by those, scholars or otherwise, who insist on the above-mentioned boundaries, on separation and distinction.

In our case, the *self and other* dichotomy is mirrored in the relation between the Europeans and the Ottomans. At the beginning of the 15th century, Europeans started identifying Muslims with Turks or the Ottomans (Jezernik, 2012). As explained by Bieber (1999, para 33):

“From the national position, Muslims can only be presented as “aliens” to a limited degree. When national rhetoric is supplemented by religious arguments, however, this enables the nationalists to represent the Muslims as being completely alien and

23 In 1389 the Serbs were heavily defeated by the Ottomans and this battle gained enormous significance in Serbian history, literature, culture, and art.

oriental. While national arguments can at best mentally displace Muslims to Turkey, religious arguments can alienate them to places as far away as Iran or the Arab world”

The presence of an “alien” religion such as Islam in the territories where only Christianity existed since paganism certainly did complicate the reception and perception of the “new neighbours”. Before the Ottoman invasion, Islam was associated with distant lands as Bieber says. However, national rhetoric cannot be limited to religious characteristics or differences since there are other cultural features and criteria for accepting the *other* (Bieber 1999).

Italian humanists must be held partly responsible for circulating negative narratives about the Muslim invaders, depicted as a threat to European Christianity. More specifically, Flavio Biondo²⁴ and Pope Pius II²⁵ played a key role in popularizing this hostile account of Ottoman culture. (Konrad, 2011). Narratives of this kind *de facto* set up a *self/other* dichotomy between Europeans and Ottomans, the latter described “uncivilized, cruel, barbarian.” The underlying goal was to present the Ottomans as the “archenemy” of Rome, Christianity and Europe in general (Konrad, 2011).

Against these accounts, we do find in European history instances of “friendly” counter-narratives, at least among politicians. In 1699, in the city of Karlovac, for the first time an Ottoman representative was invited to participate in an official, international gathering occasioned by the signing a treaty. In 1856, the *Paris Peace Treaty* acknowledged the Ottoman Empire as a legitimate part of Europe, and even recognized the importance of “the Independence and integrity of Ottoman Empire” for maintaining peace in Europe.” The fact remains that, apart from these isolated cases, the Turks continued to be perceived as a “cultural treat” (Jezernik, 2010, 17).

Božidar Jezernik’s *Imaginary Turk* reflects on the perception Slovenian people had of Turks and the Ottoman Empire. He provides several examples of how people across the Balkans perceived and reacted to these supposed invaders, and even outlines

²⁴ Flavio Biondo (1392-1463) was a Renaissance historian and author of the first history of Italy that chronologically provided a notion of the Middle Ages (Konrad, 2011).

²⁵ Pius II (1405-1464), was an outstanding Italian humanist and politician who (during his reign as pope, 1458–1464) tried to unite Europe in a crusade against the Turks at a time when they threatened to overrun all of Europe (Konrad, 2011).

responses to what was seen as the Turkish threat in a wider area. When discussing the relation between the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empires—of particular interest for this thesis—Jezernik notes that it was expressed as the very encounter of East and West, Islamic Orient and Christian Occident. And he also mentions the expression *antemurale christianitatis*, to explain how even inhabitants of modern 20th century nations—Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland—still represent the border to themselves as the bulwark between two hostile cultural entities (Jezernik, 2010). In the 19th and 20th centuries, the widespread mythical narrative for peoples in Central and Southeast Europe was that they were the “victims and ones who carried the burden of protecting the West and Christianity from the Eastern, Islamic invaders” (Jezernik, 2010). And given their specific ties to the Ottomans, the Serbs were seen as the primary embodiment of this myth. Serbian perception of the Ottomans is so profoundly complex and deep-rooted that it survived even in the 20th century events of the war in Bosnia, when the nationalistically oriented Serbs fought the Bosnian Muslims as if they were fighting Turks, in a sort of retaliation for the events that had occurred centuries before.

2.2.4 *Balkanism*

In the wake of Edward Said, Todorova and Bakić-Hayden investigated the idea of self and others in Serbian culture, and more exactly the way in which Serbs perceived Ottoman invasion, its influence and heritage. Although Said claims that Orient was “weaker” than the West in these relations, the long-lasting rule of the Ottoman Empire over the West cannot be neglected. One of Said’s statements, essential for this thesis, is that human identity is not natural and stable, but rather constructed or even invented (Said 2008).

Referring precisely to Said’s work, Todorova introduces the term *balkanism* which she compares to *orientalism*, in order to analyse and define the stereotypes about the Balkans produced by the inhabitants of this region but detectable also in the rest of Europe and possibly the world. Todorova distinguishes the role of imperialism in the tabooization and stigmatization of this region on the basis of literary, ethnographic,

historiographical and socio-psychological premises. She somehow confirms Cvijić's geographical determinism principles when she says that the liminal position of the Balkans irreparably shaped the complex identity of its people (Todorova 2006).

While the issue of Serbian identity versus the Ottomans had long been present, Todorova claims that starting with the 17th century the issue gained unprecedented prominence. In particular, after the First World War, the term *balkanization* came to be used to characterize negatively any divisive or unstable set of circumstances analogous to the social and political upheaval of the Balkans (Todorova 2006). A fresh perspective on the disparaging term beyond Todorova's and Bakić-Hayden's seminal studies is found in other recent scholarship, which has attempted to clarify its uses in different contexts.

According to Milica Hayden Bakic, the Balkans are other for the rest of Europe in both cultural and religious terms, the same way Byzantium and Ottoman empires once were. After the Second World War, this dichotomy re-emerged as the contrast between a liberal, capitalistic West and a totalitarian, Communist East. In religious terms, the West is said by some to have been associated with Protestantism and Catholicism, while the East to both Islam and Christianity (West 1982 in Bakić-Hayden 2006). This is not a view shared by Cvijić, who instead that the Balkans should not be tied up with the Middle East. In his opinion, this conflation was favoured by the expansion of Islam into this region and the connections the Balkan countries had with Asia Minor and North Africa (Muslim countries). According to him, these encounters and interferences, especially after extruding the Byzantines from the scene, contributed to the creation of the image Balkans gained, which is *other* for the rest of the Europe (Cvijić 2013).

2.2.5 Relations between identity and heritage—The Balkans' case

As we have seen, the basic research question is clear: “Would an appropriate re-interpretation of natural and cultural heritage in Belgrade contribute to its citizens' awareness of their multicultural identity?” To address this issue, a preliminary understanding of the relation between identity and heritage is needed, but will be developed more specifically in the following chapters, once the concept of heritage has

been tackled and explored. Here it will be mentioned only in relation to the Balkans. Places of historically important and defining events are transformed into sites, often representing or hosting the heritage of the local community or evoking the national or even transnational heritage situated around it. Once these places become heritage sites (a complex process to be examined at some length in the next chapters) people associate themselves with them, developing a sense of belonging or ownership that can support or question identity.

One of the crucial factors for defining the relations between identity and heritage is the time of heritage creation. If we consider heritage as something in the present directly related to the past, it means that the past which is projected onto the present through heritage or history enables a perspective-based construction of identity. This occurs through a set of practices such as naming, memorialization, and interpretation, itself part of a multi-disciplinary process since it often includes fields such as geography, history, museum and heritage studies, archaeology, art history, anthropology, and media. As soon as the past becomes heritage, it delivers knowledge, understanding and guidance for those who identify themselves with it (Howard and Graham 2008).

According to Todorova, there are two main interpretations of Ottoman heritage in the Balkans. The first one insists on the intrusion of religious, social, institutional and even racial elements into supposedly autochthon Christian, medieval societies in the Balkans. The core of this interpretation lies in the claimed incompatibility between Christianity and Islam, that is between an old, settled civilization in the Balkans on the one hand and the nomad civilization of newcomers on the other (Todorova 2006). However simplified, this interpretation seems justified to Todorova: in spite of the exaggerated, romantic and upsetting stories about the persecution of Christians under Ottoman rule, it is true that Ottoman Empire was an *Islamic state* with a strict religious hierarchy that classified non-Muslims as second-class citizens (although certainly specific attitudes varied from period to period and from region to region). Ottoman heritage and culture have thus always been perceived as external, as belonging to someone else. Even more, politicians in the Balkans have often depicted Ottomans as a demonized “other”, that way fostering orientalism in its most negative form, and considering it quite legitimate to blame the Ottomans and Islam for whatever is amiss in their own society (Todorova 2006).

The second interpretation Todorova mentions sees instead the Ottoman heritage in the Balkans as a complex tangle of traditions: Turkish, Islamic, Byzantine and Balkan. It derives from the assumption that centuries of coexistence must have produced mutual heritage, regardless of religious, social and other differences. According to this understanding, the Ottoman period ensured the flowering of post-Byzantine culture, by creating a space in which such culture could survive for centuries in ecumenical dimensions (Todorova 2006, 339). For Todorova, both of these interpretations tend to be rigid and would greatly benefit from a more detached and emotionally balanced approach, which seems rather difficult when discussing identity. She points out the philosophical, political or methodological motives that underlie the strict choice of one interpretation over the other (Todorova 2006, 310-316). Since Ottoman rule in the Balkans was long-lasting and intense the interpretation of its heritage is needed (Todorova, 2006). As previously explained, the way the Ottoman cultural heritage - material and immaterial- has always been perceived as *other`s*, it is not difficult to trace the motives for its neglect and, not rarely, for its demolition.

Another strong influence by a dominant invader was the Habsburg`s (therefore Austrian and Austro-Hungarian as well), particularly if speaking about culture and heritage in Belgrade and north of Serbia. Serbian attitudes and perceptions of Habsburg`s domination and influence is also quite complex, but on a different level if compared to the Ottoman`s. Serbia has already identified its archenemy—the Ottoman Empire—therefore some Serbs perceived the Habsburg Monarchy as the force who might save them from that enemy. The development of Serbian identity could therefore be related to the Habsburg`s support for Serbia`s national awaking and its desire for independence from the Ottoman Empire (Komlosy and Hofbauer, 2011). After the Serbian revolution at the beginning of 19th century, the situation started to change. The more independent Serbians became, the more intensely they perceived and portrayed the Austrian Empire (i.e. the Habsburg Empire) as a rival or even as an enemy. This was a period when, after its liberation from Ottoman rule, the new Serbian state started to flourish, yet was still rather fragile. Because of this, the Austrians exerted a strong influence on its political formation and identification. This undercurrent of tension between Serbia and its northern neighbour surged in 1878, when the Austro-Hungarian Empire occupied Bosnia and

Herzegovina and culminated in 1908, several decades later, when its formal annexation was finalized (Komlosy and Hofbauer 2011).

In terms of culture and science, Serbia had benefited from its northern neighbour, and this might be one of the reasons why Serbs and other former Yugoslav citizens did not reject Austrian influences outright as they did instead with the Ottomans'. The living standards ensured under the Habsburgs in the Western part of Yugoslavia have always been emphasized, while in the rest of the country, Ottoman heritage was made to carry a burden for anything negatively connoted (West, 1982 in Bakić-Hayden 2006). However, the more Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia grew dependent on the Austro-Hungarians for trade, industry and politics, the more antagonistic they became. This underlying rivalry culminated in the First World War and the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Gavrilo Princip (Komlosy and Hofbauer 2011).

The definition and analysis of the Balkan Peninsula, Balkan mentality or Balkan culture has always come from multiple perspectives, across generations of artists, scholars, journalists, historians and politicians. Depending on their nationality, schooling, religion and other factors, their writings and studies have variously affected the collective perception of issues. Despite differences, however, most of them agree that the Balkan is a special sub-region of a wider, South-European or even Mediterranean space, if only for the fact that its inhabitants describe themselves in these terms. Bakić-Hayden confirms these ideas when she notes that the Balkans are uneven: they lack any kind of geographic, cultural, or theoretical homogeneity. Even Balkan rhetoric, she claims, is not independent, but permeated by orientalism (Bakić-Hayden 2006). Co-authors Dragičević Šešić and Rogač (2014, 9) add to Bakić-Hayden's explanation in more extensive words:

“Usually, three interfaced metaphors are used to describe and explain the essence of the Balkans: the BRIDGE, the CROSSROAD and the BORDER/BOUNDARY. Although opposite in their meaning, these metaphors depict well all the controversies, positive and negative stereotypes regarding the Balkans as a place where the East and the West, the Orient and the Occident, the Muslim and the Christian world, the Latin and the Byzantine tradition meet/divide; a place which is at the same time an encounter and a separation of different worlds.”

In a recent talk show wittily entitled “Europe is Kaput. Long live Europe!”, renowned Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek provocatively submitted that nobody wants to be part of the Balkans. He began by quoting Slovenians who claim

that the Balkans start from Croatia, then mentioned that the Croats say the same thing for Serbia, while the Serbians say the same for Bulgaria, and so on. Then he turned to Central and Western Europe, “moving that border” across Austria, Germany and France, all the way to Great Britain, by quoting British: “All Europe is big Balkan with Brussels as new Constantinople, besides us”.²⁶

Žižek’s challenging comments may be said to epitomize the negative image of *Balkan identity* Balkan inhabitants currently have. People in this region carry the burden of ethnic, religious, national and cultural differences that affect their awareness of a hybrid or layered identity. According to Bazić, national identity may be defined as an ethnic model of identity consisting of the same religion, culture, language, tradition, history, nationality, myths, and legends. From its very onset, however, the Serbian state has projected an image of Serbian national identity riddled by incoherence and clearly deviant with respect to this pure model. For Bazić, Serbs have changed their own cultural values, and these transformations have had a direct influence on the national state of mind. Throughout history, he claims, Serbs have mistakenly taken the position of East in the West or West in the East; they have alternatively merged, linked, or discarded features that belonged to various civilizations, religions and cultures. Bazić sternly claims, having formerly been one of the most highly developed people in the Middle Ages, Serbs at the beginning of 21st century found themselves backward and marginalized (Bazić 2007). Such turbulent and confusing transformations of Serbian identity may best be considered in terms material heritage. Many cultural monuments bear witness to their history by presenting the most obvious traces of experiences and creativity. Yet, the unfortunate fact is that such monuments were not given a suitable place in cultural policies, especially in the light of recent historical events. For Bazić, culture in Serbia after the war of the 1990s was eventually replaced by an *anti-culture* (Bazić 2007).

Although Bazić’s study might be considered disputable, it still reminds us that, while the Serbs in fact have a rich cultural heritage, adequate policies able to interpret it and maintain it effectively are sorely lacking. This bears a direct influence on the development and definition of a Serbian national identity, and more widely of a European

²⁶ Slavoj Žižek on “How Nobody Wants to Belong to Eastern Europe”, Balkans, 2016.

identity. That is why coordination between cultural heritage and the construction or reconstruction of national identity's is a complex process that requires and call upon a set of well-organized networks among all relevant public institutions in charge of urban planning, tourism and cultural development (Bazić 2007).

When we are born, we receive and perceive the existing heritage around us. However, in the course of our lives, we should be able to interact with that heritage (be it natural or cultural; tangible or intangible) and save it for future generations, not only through policies of preservation, but also via adequate practices of conservation and interpretation. It is in fact solely through daily interaction with their heritage that people can become more aware of who they are and what their ancestors were. To conclude, it is highly important to stress once again that Serbian heritage is a complex notion, not made up exclusively of Serbian or Orthodox features. We need a set of cultural policies capable of implementing and promoting effective ways of making sense of all the cultural and heritage features found among all the peoples who now live or in the past lived within the variegated territory of Serbia.

3. Theoretical concepts in context

3.1 Heritage as a tool for elucidating identity – Strategic issues

The earlier outline of history and of identity issues across the Balkans and Serbia provides a much-needed basis for further research. The content and discourse analyses in the next chapter (along with the interviews with experts in the field) will enable us to look closely at other modes of perception that either help or obstruct a (re-) interpretation of heritage in Belgrade. At this point, we turn our attention instead to methods and concepts that we deem useful for approaching Belgrade's natural and cultural heritage. I am not of course implying that such forms are unknown or have remained untapped so far in Belgrade, but rather that a fresh insight on well-known issues might be welcomed.

The first part of the chapter introduces cultural heritage as a key term, a field of study and an essential cultural tool, explaining its significance particularly in relation to collective identity. Memory, identity, experience and interpretation are basic concepts we need to come to terms with the whole context in which heritage exists. In addition, a number of strategies and policies regarding heritage protection, promotion and development, will be immediately examined. The second part of the chapter explores the idea of landscape as a concept for defining the area around the confluence of the Sava and Danube, also with regard to the range of space-place connotations, with the aim to enhance the appreciation of the natural and cultural features of the area. Along these lines, we will be looking at the city as a structure and attempt to sketch possible cultural policies and urban planning solutions for Belgrade as a metropolis. The underlying goal here is to set out and explain a number of basic concepts useful for re-reading *The Belgrade Confluence* and its heritage. Only after the content analysis and the interviews with the professionals from the relevant sectors, we will have a wider picture of the specific circumstances in Serbia, analysing the situation accordingly.

The word 'heritage' takes on different and varying connotations across languages. While certain scholars rightly point out that the term defies simple explanations, it is still

possible to pin down a core meaning. One of the problems for its definition has to do with the very subject itself: what we consider ‘heritage’, who owns it or who consumes it (Harvey 2001; Schouten 1995; Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). The most common understanding of heritage is that it represents something the previous generations have created, preserved and bequeathed, in the assumption that it would be preserved and in turn passed on to future generations. This implies that heritage is one, stable and thus easily recognisable entity (Timothy and Boyd 2003). Yet the matter is far more complex than that. Culture and time determinations affect the perception and identification of heritage and its value, so that one generation may not necessarily be in tune with the previous or the following generation. Also, political and ideological assets can change, even dramatically, thereby blurring the past and denying its relevant heritage. This might be one of the reasons for many different senses of heritage. The definition given by Ashworth and Tunbridge (1999, 105) seems adequate here:

“Heritage is the contemporary use of the past [...] The interpretation of the past in history, the surviving relict buildings and artefacts and collective and individual memories are all harnessed in response to current needs which include the identification of individuals with social, ethnic and territorial entities and the provision of economic resources for commodification within heritage industries.”

Further, due to the inherent complexity of the term, there are several contexts where it is misapplied, for instance when heritage is equated with history or used as a synonym for any relic, cultural or artistic product of the past. We should keep in mind that “history is what a historian regards as worth recording and heritage is what contemporary society chooses to inherit and pass on” (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1999 quoted by Timothy and Boyd 2003, 4). A more articulate analysis of the term is given by Hall and McArthur (in Timothy and Boyd 2003, 13), who list four different types of heritage:

- “Economic – Mainly through tourism. In this case, heritage sites can benefit the local economy
- Social – Refers to the personal and collective identity people construct on the basis of their surrounding heritage (this particular significance of heritage will be examined further in this chapter)

- Political – Depending on what is being preserved as heritage, how and to whom it is interpreted and who owns it, heritage is definitely characterized as having a political significance for a certain society
- Scientific – when sites and objects use the interpretation process to impart information and knowledge to visitors.”

These four main types give us a measure of the importance heritage has for society, but the reasons why heritage (both natural and cultural) should be conserved may be more clearly summarised as follows (Timothy and Boyd 2003):

- Industrialization/modernization – In the era of fast technological development and modernization, preserving the past gives people comfort, familiarity and a sense of identity.
- Nationalism and collective nostalgia – Heritage sites and objects are coming from the collective past of some people, that way creating the emotional and physical linkages among citizens, through the construction of a mutual, national identity.
- Scientific and educational relevance – As previously mentioned, heritage can be used effectively to impart information and knowledge
- Economics – the growth of heritage tourism can boost local economy and bring benefits to the locals at various levels.
- Artistic and aesthetic values – These values are the ones that actually attract visitors to the sites.
- Environmental diversity – Since heritage is a non-renewable source (both natural and cultural), its environmental sustainability and conservation are crucial.
- Heritage as a functional resource – heritage sites or structures are flexible and can be repurposed as needed, which often happens.

The significance of heritage for society, particularly in the social and economic sphere, is succinctly explained by scholars of the Europa Nostra project on *Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe* (2015):

“In areas directly related to heritage (services, catering, and works) most countries show that several thousand jobs have been created directly by the heritage sector. The second approach relates to broad view of the economic impact of culture: heritage as an attraction for tourists and residents. The third, extended, approach, meaning heritage as a

source of innovation and creativity for other sectors, suggests attracting representatives of the creative class and investors.”²⁷

Still on the subject of heritage, we owe to Timothy and Boyd (2003, 108) an in-depth description of the conservation process as consisting of several stages: identification of the site/object, research and classification, policy setting, designation and protection, restoration and development and the final phase- management and interpretation. Their research also lays out the different possible types of heritage conservation: preservation (maintaining the site in the existing state), restoration (reconstructing the site to a previous condition), renovation (changing the site while preserving some of its original character) and regeneration (a combination of the three types of conservation above).

While the initial phases of heritage conservation around *The Belgrade Confluence* have been explored—namely the identification and classification of the site and objects, and a brief analysis of the policy framework—not much seems to have been said on heritage interpretation, the final step of conservation according to Timothy and Boyd.

3.1.1 Cultural heritage

The most prominent and globally influential organization that deals with heritage is UNESCO, which in its 1972 Convention defined cultural heritage as follows:

- Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

²⁷ https://issuu.com/europanostradocs/chcfe_report_executivesummary

- Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites, which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.²⁸

The present case study refers to a natural site (Sava, Danube, their confluence, and the Great War Island) with human artefacts (either extant or destroyed heritage in the mentioned area). While the site is not protected by UNESCO, UNESCO criteria and policies, together with other relevant global and European organizations may provide useful guidelines for Belgrade authorities involved in its conservation.

Each country, of course, besides the UNESCO World Heritage Site, does have its own specific criteria, regulations for defining and implementing the protection of natural and cultural assets. Schouten, for instance, in his book *Managing visitors. Helping the frail to prevail* (2005) quotes the Australian Heritage Commission's definition of heritage sites, as "those places with elements of the natural and cultural environment which have a distinct aesthetical, historical, scientific or social significance and are of special value for the current community, as well as for future generations." This is the sense I believe best applies to the entire area of *The Belgrade Confluence*.

During the research, I also came across the *Creative Cultural Heritage (Creative CH) Cooperation Projects* toolkit. Their main idea is the cooperation and mutual innovation between organizations in the field of digital cultural heritage, science and technology, cultural and creative industries. Since their discussion of the value of heritage seems a very telling example of theory translated into practice, it deserves to be mentioned. Heritage has:

- historical value: the historical character and content provide connection with the past and a sense of continuity (this could be directly applied to the case study due to the aforementioned historical significance of *The Belgrade Confluence*)
- symbolic value: the symbolic meaning and power of certain places and objects adds to people's cultural identity (*The Belgrade Confluence* is, as we will see further, often taken as the symbol of Belgrade. Its photos and pictures are often used as Belgrade's official logo).
- spiritual value: the place or object may promote insights in the meaning of religious, sacred and transcendental practices and experiences;

²⁸ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

- aesthetic value: the aesthetic quality of the cultural object often is an important element for its enjoyment and may inspire new artistic creativity (the natural beauty of *The Belgrade Confluence* is widely recognized and emphasized. Its views are a favourite stop in Belgrade, for both tourists and locals.
- social value: the place facilitates connections with others and the shared social experience (e.g., “pride of place”) can help promote local values and social cohesion (a feature clearly lacking in our case study).²⁹

To paraphrase Johnston (1992, 6), as we seek to understand social value, we are looking at the essence of ourselves—our cultural traditions (past), our cultural identity (present) and our cultural aspirations (future) create and give meaning to our environment. The idea of social value, of people being attached to heritage sites is also central to the strategic and educational practices recommended by the Australian Heritage Commission above. According to guidelines given by the AHC, the attachment between people and sites might lie unconscious until they are made aware of potential threats. Apparently, the success in protecting a certain heritage site often depends on its value, that is, on how much locals care or are willing to act to support and ensure such protection. However, it is Johnston (1992) who reminds us once again that the process of heritage conservation and interpretation is not only social, but political, historical and cultural. I would agree that heritage is a matter of choice and a prominent political issue, and I would add that heritage interpretation is a dynamic process, impossible to fit within the strict margins of definitions, rules and time.

In the following part of the chapter, I look at the rapid and thriving growth of citizens’ activism in Belgrade over the last few years. In the case of Belgrade, one of the drawbacks has to do with the rigid centralisation of power, which means that both citizens and professionals are rarely involved in decision-making for projects that concern culture, heritage and urban development. And such lack of intersectional cooperation on a large scale is clearly reflected on daily procedures and their implementations. The question is especially urgent if we think of the proposals and guidelines set out by the European Union, where a bottom-up approach and citizens’ participation emerge as necessary steps towards the sustainable protection and development of heritage. Since all forms of

²⁹ See <https://creativech-toolkit.salzburgresearch.at/heritage-values-creative-and-socio-economic-uses/>

heritage are non-renewable sources, a sustainable approach is a critical consideration in heritage conservation. Certainly, this depends on various factors, such as national and local policies, circumstances around the particular heritage and the responsible bodies' awareness about it (Timothy and Boyd 2003).

3.1.2 Relation between heritage and past

The chapter that outlines the history of Belgrade was intentionally placed to emphasize the unbreakable chronological connection between heritage and past. Although heritage, as we have seen, is constructed by a person or a group, to label something as “heritage”, a certain time span is inevitable. And of course, our perception of the past changes with and depends on time. As Lowenthal (1985) pointed out, our own perception of *The Second World War* now cannot be the same as the perception of the same event for people in the 1950s. This time dimension is important to understand a historical process endlessly shaped and re-shaped with the passing of time. Inasmuch as it depends on the political milieu and on social and cultural contexts, heritage is thus not a given fact but a product, subject to different processes of justification and interpretation, mostly due to a time-bound change in public attitudes (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996). In the case of Belgrade, the city has been a capital of four states only in the last three decades, and the issue of time-induced change is therefore conspicuous.

The fact is that time is not solely a helpful variable in defining heritage. Its impact can be negative. As time goes by, objects or sites may become damaged or ruined due to various external factors, or, in a less physical meaning, time can deteriorate or weaken the cultural value once attached to certain heritage elements. And the only remedy to this problem is awareness (Timothy and Boyd 2003).

Against the widespread notion that heritage has to do almost solely with physical sites, Harvey, in his *The History of Heritage* (2008, 1) brilliantly positions heritage in the wider context of people's lives:

“Heritage itself is not a thing and does not exist by itself – nor does it imply a movement or a project. Rather, heritage is about the process by which people use the past

– a ‘discursive construction’ with material consequences. As a human condition therefore, it is omnipresent, interwoven within the power dynamics of any society and intimately bound up with identity construction at both communal and personal levels.”

In other words, if we think of heritage simply in terms of objects or sites, we will fail to comprehend it (and comprehension is only the first step towards effective management). As Harvey radically states, even a single object—a small piece of heritage—is somehow interwoven with a family, community, region or nation, at multiple levels: moral, emotional and even scientific. In this wider sense, we should say that heritage is chronologically defined: it originates from past, exists in the contemporary context and is being intended for the future.

In a similar vein, Schouten (2005) explains the relation between heritage and history. He insists that heritage is only in relation with history when processed through mythology, ideology, nationalism, local pride, romantic ideas, or plain marketing, into a commodity. Certainly, it is difficult to imagine that a simple object, building, sound, or story may hold a value for an individual or a group of people unless they are somehow attached to it. When however, after a certain time span and possibly on account of other factors, such object becomes a memory, a cause for nostalgia, or a political ideology then it can be regarded as heritage without such direct attachment.

Hall agrees with Schouten when he points out that not all the past is heritage or culture. Only after “potential heritage” is seen through many collective lenses—religion, ethnicity, nationality, class—or personal lenses—one’s gender, one’s individual past or attitudes—does it acquire meaning and value. As he rightly puts it, “it is us – in society, within human culture – who make things mean, who signify. Meanings, consequently, will always change, from one culture or period to another” (Hall 1997, 61). People’s relationship with their past has always been an elusive matter, and choosing which segments of the past are to be preserved for the future generations and how, is even harder to achieve. What needs to be stressed is that the awareness, attitudes or perception individuals or groups have in the present are inevitably based on what happened in the past. Lowenthal (1985, 185) adds that the awareness of the past is in myriad ways essential for our well-being.

In her book *Readers in Cultural Criticism – Reading the Past* (2000), Spargo mentions Hegel’s discussion of historical events. In Hegel’s lectures, Spargo notes, less

importance is given to the historical event itself than to the way it is interpreted. This quotation could refer both to the interpretation of history and of heritage as its product, so people should expect historical narrations to appear simultaneously with historical events. Schouten (2005) confirms and expands Spargo's intuition by claiming that history is less static than dynamic, due to its endless transformation across time. History is arguably nothing but the perception of contemporary people.

We could apply similar considerations to heritage: as a concept or an idea it has always existed, albeit under different forms. That people reflect upon the past and project those impressions in the present and future is certainly not a recent privilege. Harvey (2006) explained this as retrospective memories, which build up a sense of destiny for the future, a concept endorsed by many prominent scholars who, despite their differences, agree on the idea that heritage is selective and constructed of those elements from the past that society wants to keep for the present and future (Timothy and Boyd 2003).

This brings us to consider the notion of "contested heritage". While the phrase refers mostly to the recent past—and strictly speaking lies outside the focus of this thesis—a brief mention is in order. It stands to reason that probing into the past may have negative outcomes on the present, if only in the form of reviving past, painful events, of refreshing recollections of past violence or past humiliations. Nonetheless, in the persuasive words of Kisić (2016, 32) "conflicts between nations, regions and communities embedded in contested interpretations of the past, can be overcome by proper governance of the very same heritage, which, over the long-term, has the potential to create a situation of peace and stability based on common heritage and shared narratives". For Assmann (2002), unwanted, contested heritage, by default implies dichotomies of ideas, and consequently of values and meanings. This claim seems reasonable if we keep in mind the processes of creating heritage outlined above.

We should perhaps pick up the suggestion offered by Smith (2006), who says that it is crucial to consider heritage (therefore to protect it and adequately manage it); yet not only the heritage of which we are proud of, but also the one we are ashamed of. Only then does heritage receive its due value, which is not only informative, but also moral. Smith's suggestion works well, I believe, for the present case study. One of the possible reasons for the neglect of *others`* heritage in Serbia, hence also in Belgrade, is the fact that this

other conjures for the most part an Ottoman past which, as we have seen previously, is a cause of great embarrassment to some Serbs. Undoubtedly, this is a thorny issue, not limited to Serbia or Serbs: we witness neglect, misuse or even the actual destruction of heritage sites throughout the world, especially in places where questions of identity among people who share a given heritage are unresolved or still mired in conflict.

Milena Dragičević Šešić, an expert in cultural policy and management for the European Cultural Foundation, the Council of Europe and UNESCO rightly insists on the fact that the cultural heritage of former Yugoslavia was the factor most used for reconstructing the emerging identities of republics. She speaks about the “heritage of others” that was neglected, disapproved of or even destroyed during the war and sporadically to this day (Dragičević Šešić, 2014). I stand with those scholars who insist on the necessary and proper interpretation of the past, no matter how undesirable it was. The key word here is *proper*: therefore, what matters is not only to interpret the past, but to keep track of how that interpretation is achieved. The first step in this direction might be to promote a heightened awareness of historical events; the second would consist in accepting the truth even if undesirable and a third and final step could see the professional contribution of the authorities and experts. Public opinion should also be made to ponder ethic, legal, academic and political factors. This is all part of contemporary heritage studies and marks an inevitable step in its current development (Božić Marojević, 2015). As keenly summarized by Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996), “the past is what happened, history is an attempt to describe, understand or reconstruct it on the bases of preserved materials, while heritage is a product of the present, purposely developed to satisfy contemporary needs or demands.”

With regard to the problem of contested heritage, the case of the former Yugoslav republics seems relevant to the present study. Having shared culture, art, heritage, and language for many decades or even longer, after the conflict in the 1990s, six new countries have had to come to terms with reality—with issues related to the ownership, interpretation, conservation, perception, and valuation of the heritage they once shared. This refers to the cultural assets of Ottoman, Habsburg, Communist, Orthodox, Muslim, Catholic, Socialist and other categories of heritage. Following momentous legal and political changes in all six states, official attitudes—and consequently public attitudes as well—changed, especially due to the fast and forced urge of creating the new,

independent identities, different from the previous, Yugoslav identity. The perception of “enemy’s” heritage became inappropriate and was eventually excluded, while many sites and pieces of heritage became simply objects for claiming power over it (Lennon and Foley 2000).

3.1.3 The symbiosis of natural and cultural heritage

The Sava, the Danube, their confluence, the Great War Island and the including flora and fauna are the nucleus of Belgrade’s natural heritage. The very rich vegetation of the Great War Island provides shelter for the nesting and reproduction of a large number of internationally valuable bird species (ferruginous duck—*Aythya nyroca*, yellow wagtail—*Motacilla flava*, little grebe—*Tachybaptus ruficollis*, squacco heron—*Ardeola ralloides* and many others), a situation which led the State to pass legislation to protect the island in 2005. The fish fauna consists of species that live in both rivers—the Sava and the Danube.³⁰ The 1972 UNESCO Convention defines “natural heritage” in these words:

- Natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;
- Geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- Natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.³¹

Of course, to cast *The Belgrade Confluence* as area of outstanding universal value in terms of its biosphere would be questionable at least. However, I maintain that the site’s natural significance combined with the features of human interaction hold a striking

30 <http://virtuelnimuzejdunava.rs/serbia/natural-heritage/landscape-of-outstanding-features-veliko-ratno-ostrvo.veliko-ratno.476.html>.

31 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

heritage value which should be better appreciated and acknowledged than it currently is. In other words, the authorities' involvement in this area seems to be limited to the above-mentioned conservation of the Great War Island's flora and fauna.

The so-called "hydro civilizations" like Egypt or Mesopotamia prove the meaning and significance of big rivers and their tributaries for the existence and the development of entire civilizations. Rivers have always had a double effect on the societies around them: the vital power of life and the presence of destructive features. Rivers should not be perceived only as research objects of physical geography, fluvial geomorphology, hydrology, or ecology. Since rivers have always represented natural, political borders, obstacles, but also links, they might be defined as cultural structures and imaginative constructions that affect the shaping of a society (Brazzelli, 2013).

The confluence of the Sava and Danube may not quite compare to other ecosystems—the Nile in Egypt or the Tigris–Euphrates rivers—on which local inhabitants directly depend. However, the Great War Island was an important agricultural territory for Belgrade until the Second World War and now is home to numerous species of fish and birds. The Sava and Danube are quite rich in fish and the citizens of Belgrade have always seized this opportunity. The confluence, as we saw, served as a border between many different states. The rivers represented important roads for conquest and defence, or as they still do—for travel and trade.

As previously emphasized, the significance of the Sava and Danube for Belgrade is far from simply a natural significance. I have tried to provide evidence that present their historical, geographical and cultural significance for Belgrade and its people. As we will see, the idea is to define that area as a *landscape* – the integration of natural prerequisites and human features. However, it is important to underline that this area is occasionally labelled by the generic word *landscape*, which does not convey the concept that might be studied, applied and used as a signifier for this area.

Anthropologists have been analysing the nature-culture dichotomy for the last forty years. Structuralism and symbolic anthropology have been using this dichotomy as an instrument for investigating various processes rooted in nature, in particular myths and rituals. In medieval Europe, people perceived themselves as an integral part of nature. People's connection with the nature was so strong that their perspective towards it was

inner rather than external, making them a part of nature. As the end of the renaissance period approached, the style of painting focused increasingly on the cognitive and spatial research, putting human activities at the centre of the natural context. That is when nature became a three-dimensional creation appreciated by humans (Descola and Palsson 1996).

This anthropological approach is especially urgent nowadays. We are facing the final warning that nature is sending us, but it does not seem that we care enough. Industrialization, modernization and globalization have brought us to a stage of such an exploitation of natural resources that there are hardly any left. The arrogant attitude humans have towards nature today is utterly different from the one people used to have, of nature as something greater, unknown, and frightening. Descola and Palsson define three different types of human approach towards nature: environmental orientalism (people are masters of the world), paternalism (humans are masters, but they protect nature) and communalism (which rejects the division between nature and culture and insists on the reciprocity between both). These are relevant to our research. The Sava, Danube and their banks are increasingly becoming polluted (which is paradoxical due to the raise of ecological awareness globally), for several reasons. Besides the lack of policies or the lack of application of existing policies, the connotation of rivers in Belgrade is rapidly changing from the public into a private connotation. In the neighbourhood where I live, citizens cannot see the river from the promenade because of the countless floating rafts owned by private stakeholders. This problem, as many others regarding the misuse of public space in Belgrade, needs urgent attention. These floating rafts have completely blocked the view over the rivers and have produced an enormous amount of waste that ends up in the water.



Image 5: Promenade along the Sava river with numerous floating rafts

This situation has raised many issues: ecological, due to the waste that pollutes waters, legal—wrong or even illegal use of the public space, cultural—complete neglect of any sort of cultural context that these promenades and rivers might offer to their citizens. In other words, there is no sign of sustainable and planned use of the natural resources and the human interaction is limited solely to the negative connotation. There is no doubt that facilities and light infrastructure are welcome in any sort of natural settings. However, there should be rules about the size, position (a minimum distance between the rafts should be defined in order to leave the possibility for the strollers to enjoy the view), waste management, etc. As I was browsing the Historical Archive in Belgrade I found a striking note. In one of the documents from 1728, I came across a proclamation saying that the promenade construction along the Danube was about to start and issuing a special warning that houses along it must not exceed one floor height in order to provide the view over Danube to those behind them.



Image 6: Floating rafts are practically attached to each other with no space between them

The way nature is connected to religion and spirituality is also worth considering. For instance, some Asian religions such as Buddhism and Shintoism (the latter one in particular) are completely oriented towards the nature unlike Western religions that believe in an absolute God. “The ancient people of Japan honoured sacred spirits that they recognized in nature, manifesting in mountains, rocks, rivers and trees. As communities grew, they began erecting shrines where they could worship these deities, and the shrines became centres of regional life and culture”.³² People in Japan live in a harmony with

³² <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2013/05/16/arts/seeing-where-shinto-and-buddhism-cross/#.We8ho2iCzIV>

nature; they calmly accept everything that nature delivers, although it has never been gentle with them (deadly tsunamis and earthquakes).

In his famous book “The Past is a Foreign Country” Lowenthal (1985, 211) provided a perfect explanation of how and why nature and culture (humans) should be considered as an entity. He wrote: “Voiceless nature has also had a historical career. Stones, trees, animals have a knowable past, but no history, thought Vico, because no conscious purposes animated that past, yet historical understanding subsumes the past of non-human entities. Historical zoology, botany, geology, and astronomy lack the motivating agencies of human history, but the past they disclose is nonetheless ‘historical’”

3.1.4. Memory and Identity in relation to heritage

Memory

Memory, identity and heritage are three inseparable segments in the wider context of time, which is a crucial factor in defining the reach of memory due to its dynamical characteristic – it is evoked in the present about something that happened in the past and it views the future. As Lowenthal (1985) explained, all awareness we have about the past and its events is founded on memory, thanks to lived or imagined experiences. In fact, we distinguish yesterday from today based on what we have experienced and remembered.

Scholars define types of memory differently, mostly depending on the context of their research, but the following qualifications recur: official, unofficial, public, private, collective, communal, local, national, societal, historical, emotional, literal, etc. (McDowell 2008). However, the type of memory that is researched here is collective and national. These two types of memory intertwine with political and social contexts and depend on them strongly. They are also explained as “fluid processes” that are not defined only by political and social contexts, but also by “mediators” like scholars, media, cultural and heritage institutions and organizations. Commonly, national memory is somehow a representation of public attitudes and values, since it is created by the public. The group

that shares defining symbols like religion, ethnicity or nationality and shares events and experiences from the past, also shares memories that way, having powerful relationships that bring to the formation of collectiveness and identity (McDowell 2008). These memories are selective as well, since groups of people within the same nation or ethnic group can have different collective memories, which implies different modes of behaviour. However, what all these types of memories have in common are time and space that define the particular event and its narration (Assmann 1995).

When speaking about collective memory it is interesting to introduce Halbwachs' theory, as he was one of the original developers of that study. According to him, collective memory may be described by three main characteristics: the specific connection to the time and space; the concrete reference to a group; possibility for reconstruction that might be understood as narration as previously mentioned (Halbwachs 1950). With reference to our case, I would argue that space – the place around *The Belgrade Confluence* is somewhat forgotten and that collective memory about it should be refreshed by the reconstruction of its narration, or its heritage re-interpretation. The place in this case might be understood as a *lieu de mémoire (site of memory)*, a concept introduced by French scholar Pierre Nora (Nora 1989).

Aleida and Jan Assmann have conducted significant research on the cultural memory theory. According to Jan Assmann, memory can be illustrated in two ways, in terms of cultural and communicative memory. Apparently, cultural memory leans on heritage (both tangible and intangible) as a link that connects it to the past and gives meaning to the events that happened. It is a long-term memory and it presupposes a certain knowledge. On the other hand, Assmann describes communicative memory, limited to a recent past—80 to 110 years—which implies several generations. This type of memory is not institutional, supported by education or official interpretation. It is rather constructed through daily conversations and relations, which is the main reason why it is limited to a number of generations (Assmann 1995).

As far as cultural memory as a concept is concerned, although it mostly refers to a recent past, I believe it can apply effectively to our research. In particular, cultural memory forms identity and relation to the past through science—as Assmann suggests—by the processes of neglect, forgiving, inventing and transmitting. In that sense, it is

similar to the concept of political memory, although this one implies narratives in media and management regarding culture and heritage in the forms of renaming streets, squares, removing or erecting monuments, national holidays and symbols (Božić Marojević 2015).

Although the concept “places of memory” mostly refers to recent and painful memories, it touches upon our study. If we consider commemoration and memorialization as the principal processes applied to the places of memory, landscape, place and space may be said to be the main instruments for their realization (here referring to the area of *The Belgrade Confluence*). A balanced and appropriate focus on this place is necessary, in order to achieve the evocation of a dynamic and shifting memory. Thus, we could consider a city as a topography of memory with multiple pasts and a dynamic remaking of memorial sites (Howard and Graham 2008).

Practically all contemporary countries have been created after some sort of conflict. Numerous countries carry burden of past times that left scars on people, history or heritage. No matter if we talk about victims or aggressors, these places trigger unpleasant emotions either due to the memories or due to the ideology regarding the events that occurred there. Certainly, the shorter the time span, the stronger the emotions involved are (Božić Marojević 2015).

Applying the concepts of memory and amnesia to the case study, I would start by recalling Dragičević Šešić and Rogač Mijatović:

“Belgrade might be perceived as a place and space of memory. Its streets, edifices, monuments, squares, parks, river’ banks, bridges and factories speak to a careful observer about various stories of its development’s complex past of destruction and reconstruction. Similarly, Belgrade is an example of the place of interrupted memory because its authorities never had a coherent memory politics. That way, city’s symbols cannot communicate to its citizens or tourists through a coherent narrative. Numerous untold stories, events and even some existing monuments become forgotten”³³

Many layers of the city have remained undefined, untold and unappreciated. Perplexed contexts and the missing layers of Belgrade’s structure and its interpretation await an urgent solution.

33 <http://www.protivzaborava.com/wallpaper/od-sporne-proslosti-do-zanemarene-sadasnjosti-kulturna-politika-secanja-beogradskog-starog-sajmista/>

Identity

Schouten has taught us that “heritage is the outcome of a melting pot of value systems”, consisting of cultural and personal systems, traditions, expectations, attitudes, memories, and ethnicity. Precisely these elements are the ones that can influence the creation, conservation and interpretation of heritage. According to him, all these components converge into four defining aspects – four types of identity: a collective identity – cultural identity, an individual identity – nostalgia, an identity of events – history and objects’ identity – authenticity. Each of these identities has its own values that function individually. However, if we think of all four aspects intertwining and influencing each other, we can get closer to understanding the very complex concept of heritage and its enormous significance for a person, a society, or a nation (Schouten 2005). Other scholars insist on the relation between heritage and identity. On a national level, heritage objects and sites (which are constructions of events, traditions and attitudes of the communal past within a nation) are the essential elements for the creation of patriotic spirits and national identity (Timothy and Boyd 2003).

The relation between heritage and identity is multifaceted and dependant on various elements, in particular time and space. This complex relation is defined by the set of practices as well and it demands a multidisciplinary approach which brackets geography, history, culture, archaeology, art history, museology, and heritage studies. Only this holistic approach can provide an appropriate perception and comprehension of the relation between heritage and identity. In addition, the perception of cultural identity is rather ambiguous since it can be perceived both by those to whom it belongs and by the foreigners (Howard and Graham 2008).

Another important factor must be included at this point into the relation between the past and identity and that is narration. Since we cannot be witnesses of the events that happened before our time, we introduce narration as a mediator. That is when we can describe memory as an instrument by which the relation between the event and its reconstruction is negotiated (King 2000). Narration is a rather complex and influential practice, that should be assigned only to experts of the field. Its great responsibility lies in the fact that narration can shape people’s opinions and that way define their attitudes

and acts. Wrong or subjective narration about the “dark” events from the past create complex relations between countries and peoples that participated in them. Certainly, this refers to a somewhat recent past, simply because the more time passes, the more we forget. Tosh has argued that for any social grouping to have a collective identity, it has to have a shared interpretation of the events and experiences which have formed the group over time: ‘Sometimes this will include an accepted belief about the origins of the group, as in the case of many nation states, emphasis may be on vivid turning points and symbolic moments which confirm the self-image and aspirations of the group’” (McDowell 2008, 41).

Serbia as a nation state lacks continuity and cohesion, not only with respect to national identity creation, but in practically any sort of development. Therefore, the identification of historical and cultural meaning and values has always been challenging, since they directly refer to the past and a sense of continuity. Narratives are an important instrument according to European institutions as well. According to them, individual and collective identities are defined by the narratives people circulate about them. This is an important premise that could be found in various cultural policies of the European Union.³⁴

A statement that corroborates the importance of national identity narratives is given by Hall, who explains that national narratives in literature, media and everyday culture are links between stories, landscapes, events and tradition, that way representing the common experiences, perspectives and attitudes of the nation (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, and Liebhart 2009).

To conclude, I would like to emphasize the idea of identity being a very dynamic and constructed concept by citing Sassatelli (2006, 18):

“the analytical concept of identity has been reformulated recently as something that is multiple, fluid and, above all, constructed. Current approaches tend to shift the emphasis from a check-list of essential elements, drawn from the past that can easily lead to conflict and exclusion to the active process of construction, to its subjects, their strategies and rhetoric.”

34 <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/qe-01-16-463-en-n.pdf>.

3.1.5 Managing heritage

As we have seen, for something to become defined as heritage, quite a complex process is inevitable. However, once that process is finished, another one begins: the process of managing heritage. Several practices include serious studies, analyses and work in order to manage heritage with all its contents. These include conservation, preservation, restoration, renovation, urban renewal/regeneration and interpretation. All of these must tackle numerous challenges, such as lack of funds, environmental pressures, modernization, colonial legacy or lack of public interest/awareness (Timothy and Boyd 2003).

The lack of public interest is a major issue in this research. It has to do mainly with the low standards of living and the dire economic conditions in certain countries. Citizens are so poor there that their only interest is surviving, and reasoning on culture is certainly not one of their priorities. Interest is raised only if there is the possibility for some kind of a financial benefit (Timothy and Nyaupane 2009). According to Timothy and Boyd, proper education of the inhabitants is the first step towards explaining the significance of heritage, and consequently, towards the construction of respect and responsibility towards it (Timothy and Boyd 2003). Although Serbia may certainly be taken as an instance of a problematic country, I tried to prove that economic situation is not the only reason for the lack of certain heritage interpretation. It is difficult to believe that inhabitants of Belgrade are “simply not interested in the heritage and culture that surround them” when possibly the state has not provided the necessary tools for perceiving and appreciating it.

For the purposes of this thesis, the interpretation of heritage is a process that needs special attention. It is not a recent phenomenon; on the contrary, it has always existed through the stories of hunters, anglers, pilgrims, warriors, and later travellers and philosophers. More than half of century ago, Freeman Tilden formulated a useful definition of heritage interpretation, as “an educational activity which aims to reveal meaning and relationships through the use of original objects, by first-hand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information” (Tilden 1977, 8). Although it was written sixty years ago, Tilden’s definition continues to have a

strong impact on heritage studies: he was obviously aware of the significance of interpretation for coming to terms with heritage issues or the cultural/natural dichotomy. In particular, Tilden's six principles of heritage interpretation (1957, 9) are still applicable, although he wrote them when mass media communication and the Internet with its digital and informational possibilities were merely taking shape:

1. Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile.
2. Information, as such, is not Interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information.
3. Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
4. The chief aim of Interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
5. Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole man rather than any phase.
6. Interpretation addressed to children (say up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

These principles, among others, will be used in the proposal of the project (in the last chapter) as a sort of manual for the sustainable and proper re-interpretation of *The Belgrade Confluence*. Certainly, the interpretative tools have changed and technological innovations must also be accounted for. However, the main principles of an adequate interpretation remain the same and should be used as a basis for any sort of upgraded interpretation. In a similar vein, Schouten (1995, 21) also underlines the function of interpretation in terms of provocation rather than simple instruction:

“The past is to most visitors not an aim in itself, but a starting point from which they depart on discovery-tour. A journey that will tell them as much about the history, as it will tell them about themselves. Provided they are prepared to listen and look carefully, and provided the story is communicated properly, giving the facts, but leaving at the same time space for imagination, wonder, and curiosity.”

This confirms that the method of interpreting heritage is more important than the intention itself. We currently witness countless wrong or misused attempts at heritage

interpretation that do more harm than benefit. On the other hand, numerous modern, technologically supported, innovative, and creative types of interpretation exist and have led to the creation of satisfaction criteria to be applied by tourists or locals.

In order to interpret heritage properly, long and thorough planning is necessary. In the volume *Heritage Tourism*, we can trace seven elements as essential for this process: liveability, efficiency, amenity, flexibility, minimum harm, optimal resource use and local population's involvement in the decision-making process. (Timothy and Boyd 2003). Regarding the present case study, the involvement of the local population might be thought-provoking, due to the fact that large number of Belgrade citizens feel they are excluded from any sort of decision-making when it comes to urban and cultural planning. When speaking of citizens, I also consider the various citizen associations and groups that on a local level try to interfere or take part in the interpretation and narration of their own neighbourhood or city. These initiatives should be much more appreciated, especially because they favour a bottom-up approach that is always considered welcomed. These deductions are based on the evident situation in Belgrade, visible through social networks, some media and on the streets, in a form of protests and initiatives.

3.1.6 Policies and strategies

Theoretical concepts are a starting point (as education ought to be) for defining, analysing and understanding the whole context of heritage with its complementary tools. However, when it comes to the implementation of these concepts into practice, cultural policies are immediately called for. That way the whole picture of the situation in Serbia might be clearer.

The policies and treaties of UNESCO and of the European Commission could be the basis for culture and heritage implementation strategies. Particularly interesting for the present discourse is the *Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (2005) since its principles seem reasonably applicable to our case study. The Faro convention emphasizes the significance of heritage in the light of human rights and democracy. It is specific because it deals with the question “why preserving the heritage”

rather than “how to preserve the heritage”. It deepens the relationship between heritage and society. The focus in this document is not on heritage itself, but on the meaning and values people assign to it. This confirms the fact that heritage might be considered as a benefit for social cohesion and the so-called sense of a place, rather than just having its own independent value. Another important perspective is that heritage must not be perceived only as an aspect of tourism, but as a part of the everyday life of people (Fairclough, G, Dragičević Šešić, M, Rogač Mijatović L., Auclair E. and Soini, K, 2015).

If we consider the idea of heritage as a part of our everyday life, then it should not be referred to as the only preserve of professionals or governmental bodies. The inclusion of locals is necessary as a bottom-up approach that could provide an insight into people’s needs and ideas about their own heritage. After all, they are the ones who pray in the local church, visit the local museum, sit on the bench in front of the local monument, and so on. By including locals into the process of heritage management, the first step towards its sustainability is achieved.

Even the contestation of heritage can be perceived positively, as an engine for constructive dialogues, for connecting people who share it or simply as another reason to take care of it (Fairclough, G, Dragičević Šešić, M, Rogač Mijatović L., Auclair E. and Soini, K, 2015). Some of the articles from the Faro Convention that are significant for this research are worth citing in full:

Article 4 – Rights and responsibilities relating to cultural heritage

The Parties recognise that: everyone, alone or collectively, has the right to benefit from the cultural heritage and to contribute towards its enrichment.

Article 7 – Cultural heritage and dialogue

The Parties undertake, through the public authorities and other competent bodies, to: encourage reflection on the ethics and methods of presentation of the cultural heritage, as well as respect for diversity of interpretations.

Article 11 – The organisation of public responsibilities for cultural heritage. In the management of the cultural heritage, the Parties undertake to:

- promote an integrated and well-informed approach by public authorities in all sectors and at all levels;

- develop the legal, financial and professional frameworks which make possible joint action by public authorities, experts, owners, investors, businesses, non-governmental organisations and civil society;
- develop innovative ways for public authorities to co-operate with other actors;
- respect and encourage voluntary initiatives which complement the roles of public authorities;
- encourage non-governmental organisations concerned with heritage conservation to act in the public interest.³⁵

Further, in order to clarify the link between sustainable heritage management and the current situation in Serbia, I am quoting articles from the *Strategy for cultural development in Serbia, 2017-2027*, published in June 2017 and promoted by Ministry of Culture and Information. The text gives a description of the Serbian cultural identity:

“Dimensions of Serbian culture that we recognize and cherish are: Slav, Byzantium, Old-Balkans (with an important component of oriental-Islamic culture), heroic (the one that puts spiritual values before material ones providing society’s self-protection from existential and identity issues. It is not only our Middle ages’ culture, but also the culture of our ancestors, farmers, warriors, those from the First Serbian Uprising, the First World War, those who defeated Ottoman occupation and fought in anti-fascist battles and later defended freedom and other values of their own and other heritage.), enlighten-European, democratic (Live culture is not consisted of institutions in which capital’s elite is having fun, but of institutions that support and recognize artistic projects by people from all social layers) and contact/open one.³⁶

In a country in which cultural sector’s resources are limited to less than 1% of the republic annual budget, this sort of a discourse provoked a wave of negative reactions from the press and the academic world. It has been described as ethno-nationalistic and pretentious. In addition, “Serbian culture” seems to some people as a bulwark for the protection of Serbian identity. It was criticized for offering a dangerous, self-isolationist, regressive type of culture based on victimhood and with no contact with real, contemporary, cultural needs.³⁷ However, one of the major problems with this Strategy is

35 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/0900001680083746>

36 <http://www.kultura.gov.rs/docs/dokumenti/nactr-strategije-razvoja-kulture-republike-srbije-od-2017--do-2027--nactr-strategije-razvoja-kulture-republike-srbije-od-2017--do-2027-.pdf>.

37 <http://pescanik.net/strategija-regresije-kulture/>

that it has been written from the top-down approach, completely neglecting the expertise from the civic and private sector.

Further, the Strategy analyses the current situation in Serbia, which will be discussed further with the interviewees:

“Current situation regarding the cultural heritage protection in the Republic of Serbia:

- Rich archaeological excavations in Serbia are faced with risk of destruction due to the increasing number of construction and infrastructure projects, frequent weather hazards, numerous illegal excavations and trade and insufficient awareness of society about the archaeological significance.
- Immovable material heritage in Serbia is under the protection of 353 employees, from which 65% are experts and 41% are people that will go to the pension in the next 10 years. There is an obvious lack of young professionals and necessary equipment.
- Currently, republic institutions that take care of immovable material heritage is consisted of numerous institutions, scattered around the country, but without a proper network created among them.
- The present law regarding the cultural heritage in Serbia does not recognise the concept of immaterial cultural heritage. Since 2010, Republic of Serbia ratified the UNESCO convention for the protection of immaterial cultural heritage that opportunely allows the protection of the mentioned heritage beside the missing argument in the law.³⁸

In December 2013, the Serbian Government enforced a law that forbids new employments in the public sector and continuously works to ensure its enforcement (at present, this law is supposed to be applied until the end of 2017). One of the weaknesses in the cultural sector when it comes to public institutions is precisely the shortage of young professionals (as mentioned in the Strategy); therefore, this law seems problematic:

“Strategic aims in the sphere of research, protection and use of cultural heritage in the Republic of Serbia:

- Strengthening the institutional framework
- Cultural heritage transformation into development resource

³⁸ <http://www.kultura.gov.rs/docs/dokumenti/nacrt-strategije-razvojakulture-republikesrbije-od-2017--do-2027-/-nacrt-strategije-razvoja-kulture-republike-srbijeod2017--do-2027.pdf>.

- Improvement of education, specialization and training of employees
- Raising the awareness of the citizens about the surrounding heritage
- Creating and strengthening the network between sectors and institutions.³⁹

According to statements released in a number of anti-regime newspapers or on social networks, numerous academics, journalists and other cultural agents believe that the Ministry of Culture and Information does not sufficiently support the non-governmental sector, not only because it provides poor financial aid for projects in the public bids, but also because it aggravates bureaucracy. In fact, the strategy for 2017-2027, seems to overlook the needs of this sector, while emphasizing the importance of implementation of European funds and projects, although their beneficiaries are mostly coming from the non-governmental sector with a rich experience in international context.⁴⁰

Another magazine, *NIN*, argues that the proposed Strategy is oriented towards the past, without any clear vision towards future and lacking the explanation regarding cultural policies and their genuine function.⁴¹ To conclude, I wish to quote from an interview given by Dragičević Šešić. When asked to comment on the position of culture in Serbia, she said:

“In my long and international experience, I have realised that, paradoxically, in countries in which nationalism flourishes, the awareness about national culture, art and heritage is poor, while on the other hand, where nationalism is less expressed, that awareness is greater. Serbian educational system has not provided the basis for this awareness realization. Some of the problems are the facts that intersectorial cooperation is on very low level in Serbia (in this case if we speak of Ministry and other bodies of education and culture) and that politics lack coherency.”⁴²

39 <http://www.kultura.gov.rs/docs/dokumenti/nacrt-strategije-razvojakulture-republike-srbijeod-2017--do-2027--nacrt-strategije-razvoja-kulture-republike-srbijeod2017--do-2027-.pdf>.

40 <http://pescanik.net/strategija-regresije-kulture/>

41 <https://www.facebook.com/ninonline/posts/1418919651511711:0>.

42 <http://bif.rs/2009/10/milena-dragicevic-sesic-fdu-izigravanje-kulture/>

3.2 Methods and concepts applied

3.2.1 Landscape – Seeing heritage

The following paragraph offers an insight for contextualizing one of the thesis' proposals, which is to label the area of *The Belgrade Confluence* as a *landscape*. This cannot be taken for granted; it is needed to recognize the basis that could make this classification possible in both conceptual and practical terms. First, I will trace the initial notions of landscape as a term and then observe it as a cultural process. The notion of *nature* might be one of the most complex in English language since it has been part of the political and socio-cultural context. The appearance of the term *landscape* between 16th and 19th centuries coincides with the origins of anthropology, which contributed significantly to the introduction of landscape into the Western world. The term *landscape* emerged at the end of 16th century when Dutch painters used it to define paintings whose subject was mainly a natural scenery (Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995).

In her, *Paesaggio con figure* (1996), Bonadei provides an interesting perspective on landscape, saying that people, individually or as a group, conduct a series of procedures while transforming the world into a landscape—measuring, segmenting, and setting up functional relations. In this sense, the subjective image of a landscape is being delivered from the eyes to hands and written on the ground of a certain culture or society. This way, a landscape is dominated by optical and political metaphors (Bonadei 1996, 16), a concept articulated by Urry (1990) in his famous contention that there is no innocent *gaze*. In addition, Bonadei cites Berger who claims that people see only what they look at, while *looking* is a matter of choice. People never see only the object of looking, but the object in relation to themselves. “When we *see* landscape, we situate ourselves in it.” (Bonadei 1996, 17). In other words, the observer becomes observed to a certain extent, that way creating an individual context between him/her and the landscape.

Seminal for the present discourse is also Carl Sauer's famous research about the morphology of landscape (1925), whereby “the cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group”. Sauer's work was grounded on geography as a unity formed by physical and cultural elements of landscape. These elements are complex

and even considered to have an organic quality. This is particularly interesting if we think of a landscape within a dynamic context, changeable in time and space. In addition to this, Sauer explains landscape as entity in the interaction with other landscapes. In fact, time and space are crucial in understanding the concept of landscape especially if we think chronologically—the transformation of some area by human impacts and consequently its appropriation for their use. It is currently very hard to find a natural area in its genuine form. Humans have practically reached all the corners of the planet and have left certain marks. These influences and transformations of natural landscapes have brought to the creation of cultural ones.

In a similar vein, Darvill (2003) connects space, time and social action in relation to landscape. He claims that these are necessary elements for a powerful landscape in the present, which may be seen also in its past, mostly through archaeology. For Darvill, “landscape is a time-dependent, spatially referenced, socially constituted template or perspective of the world that is held in common by individuals and groups and which is applied in a variety of ways to the domain in which they find themselves.” (Darvill 109).

As a key concept for understanding the relation between humans and nature, landscape is difficult to define, since it “refuses to be disciplined” (Benediktsson and Lund, 2012). In recent years, landscape gained the characteristics of a text that can be “read”. Some scholars even mention a ‘conversation’ with landscape, explaining that it can “speak”. Because of this, a strict dichotomy human/nature is avoided or softened (ibidem). As Ingold (2012) brilliantly puts it:

“Landscape is a multi-layered concept: it includes nature in the meaning of earth, water, plant and animal life, biological and geological diversity; it includes human-made objects, buildings, roads, sculptures, the products of culture; it also includes movements and action. But on top of all these visible phenomena, landscape includes the invisible. The invisible relationship which emerge in people’s actions, movements, speech, thoughts, imaginations and narratives are intertwined with the visual; they emerge in an interaction with the visual.”⁴³

43 Ingold (2012) in Benediktsson and Lund (2012, 114).

The interference of humans into natural context raised the question of objectivity/subjectivity in terms of understanding the landscape.⁴⁴ From a postmodernist perspective, there is no environment, only landscape. However, it is important to understand that “our” perspective of landscape is “Western”, it is a *Western gaze* which implies an Enlightenment notion of the land seen by a seemingly disengaged observer (Bender, 2003). Over the last few years, studies on landscape have become very popular, which brought to increased interest in cultural heritage as a part of environmental studies around the world. Bender (2003) offers a severe perspective on the above-mentioned *Western gaze*, by explaining it “as a particular, historically constituted, way of perceiving and experiencing the world.” For Bender “It is a gaze that skims the surface; surveys the land from an ego-centred viewpoint; and invokes an active viewer (the subject) and a passive land (object). This active viewer is equated with culture and the land with nature and viewer/culture are gendered male, land/nature are gendered female. Finally, the Western Gaze is about control.”⁴⁵

However, another notion on the *gaze*, by Urry was one of the starting engines for this dissertation in terms of *seeing heritage*. His influential book, *The Tourist Gaze* (1990) provides an insight into the understanding of tourists’ expectations, experiences and impressions once they *see* the place they are visiting. Urry claims that people gaze at what they encounter, constructing their gaze on the basis of a crucial opposition—non-tourist social practices at home vs. tourist practices. Two characteristics of Urry’s *tourist gaze*, seem especially important for the present case study:

- “The tourist gaze is directed to features of landscapes and townscapes which separate them off from everyday experience.
- The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs. When tourists see two people kissing in Paris, what they capture in the gaze is ‘timeless romantic Paris’”⁴⁶

In my view, these are the crucial points when it comes to seeing heritage, or a site. A semiotic reading of the signs needs to be involved in creating or developing an object

44 ibidem

45 Bender in Layton and Ucko 2003, 31.

46 See Urry 1990, 3

to be gazed upon. Pure attraction is no longer sufficient for present-day tourists. Thus, landscape can be physical and cultural, and can be reasonably perceived as a social phenomenon due to all the filters that we observe it through (social, cultural, political). The same landscape can be seen and understood differently by different cultural groups due to the different “filters” they own (Schama 1995). Therefore, culture is an inevitable component of a landscape: “culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result” (Denevan and Mathewson 2009).

Interestingly put and immediately applicable to this thesis’ discourse, is the idea of cultural landscape as the product of the countless transformations by previous human generations in order to actualize their ambitions, aspirations, vanities and to cease the weaknesses (Sudjić 2006, 326 in Galway, 2015). If we speak about city governance, every government leaves visible and invisible marks on the city according to their politics. However, these visible marks usually stay forever and change the city’s appearance. As we will see further, the current Serbian government is changing the area of *The Belgrade Confluence* by massive projects that might change its form and meaning forever. This confirms the notion that the representation of landscape is never detached from politics, but very much embedded in a sense of power: landscapes are created or destroyed within a certain ideological context and linked to a particular place and time (Darby 2000).

Exploring the many-faceted concept of landscape, we come to Warnke’s 1996 book on political landscape and the significance of military constructions in the history of landscapes. He explains that there is no construction with such a political connotation as fortresses and bridges. Numerous attractions belonging to present-day landscapes were once military installations, which is also the case with Belgrade. Warnke claims that this notion is so frequent that fortresses might even be considered as the genuine elements of landscape construction: the fortress relying on the city, the city depending on the fortress (Warnke 1996). This is particularly true when we think of the fact that citizens of Belgrade often identify its confluence with the Belgrade Fortress and vice versa.

As the interviewees, will confirm, Serbia does not have a proper law that recognizes and protects landscape as a concept, although Serbia signed and ratified the European Landscape Convention in 2011, that way joining other 38 European countries and committing to protection, management and planning of the landscape. The European

Landscape Convention was adopted in Florence in 2000 and ratified in Serbia eleven years later. The convention is supposed to be applied to the entire territory of each country that is, to natural, rural, urban and suburban areas. It implies mainland, its waters and seaside areas and can be applied to the areas that are labelled and considered exquisite, as well as ordinary and degraded.

In the first article of the convention, the main concepts are defined:

- “Landscape” – a particular area, the way people see it and experience it, which is the result of human work and of the interaction between natural and human factors.
- “Landscape Policy” – the main principles, strategies and directions, defined by the authorities that enable certain measures regarding the protection, management and planning of the landscape.
- “Landscape quality objective” – authorities’ formulation of citizens’ tendencies towards the landscape characteristics in their surroundings.
- “Landscape protection” – processes of protection and maintenance of significant or specific characteristics of the landscape.
- “Landscape Management” – processes of regular and sustainable maintenance of the landscape, aiming at social, economic and environmental changes.
- “Landscape Planning” – long-term and sustainable procedures for development and recreation of the landscape.

This convention proves the significance of landscape for society in cultural, environmental and social sense. It influences economic activity—also via the creation of jobs—and political activity—by setting networks among countries and by improving bilateral relations. Landscape as a concept influences the formation of local cultures that are the basis of European cultural and natural heritage. This certainly contributes to well-being and the awareness of cultural identity.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/1680080621>).

3.2.2 Soundscape – Hearing heritage

The idea of including another sense into the experience of observing heritage is not only creative and innovative, but important as well. The sense that we use constantly when it comes to observing, remembering and preserving daily experiences seems in fact rather neglected. Maffei (2008, 2) describes this predicament in clear terms:

“For centuries, human beings have been forced in perceiving the environment through the visual sense. Architects and urban planners have designed cities, spaces, buildings only to impress the visual aesthetics. The sound of a place has been poorly treated and primarily related to noise control matters, strictly connected with the advent of mechanical sounds.”

Once we find ourselves in the new environment, we want to taste new food, smell new fragrances and touch new textures. However, most of all, we look around and listen. This is why sounds are significant—they help in the creation of the meaning and production of the effects (Fina 2017).

For the purposes of our study, two kinds of sounds are especially interesting: 1) sound recorded from the environment; and 2) sound artificially processed from an online base. The main idea is to transform sound audibility into sound experience. The main difference between these is that audibility is physical, while experience is psychological. In other words, audibility might be understood as a physical property, according to which every sound possesses its own constant, physical characteristics that are equal for all listeners. Instead, sound experience belongs to the psychological and emotional realm, according to which different listeners might experience the same sound differently. What differentiates these psychological impressions is the previous experience and knowledge every listener possesses (Stojanović 2014).

Dealing with these and similar matters, we come to the concept of *soundscape*. Soundscape, as defined by Schafer, the composer and sound theoretician, is “the study of the effects of the acoustic environment on the physical responses or behavioural characteristics of creatures living within it” (Wilcox, Dovercourt, and Palassio 2004). Studies on soundscape are multidisciplinary and belong to various spheres: acoustics, psychoacoustic, otology, art, tourism, ecology, human geography, engineering, etc.

According to Shafer (Wilcox, Dovercourt, and Palassio 2004) soundscapes can be divided by time determinations:

- The first soundscapes (those referring to the natural environment that has not been influenced by human industrialization),
- The post-industrial soundscapes (the ones regarding the natural environment that experienced industrial and electric revolution, therefore the sound ambient has been transformed).

According to Stojanović (2014)—an artist from Belgrade whose doctoral dissertation “The sounds of Belgrade” has evident links to the present research—the soundscape of Belgrade, as every metropolis, is dynamic and heterogeneous. He divided it accordingly

- General sounds of the city (these are the sounds that can be traced in all big cities on a daily basis: rain, wind, cars, aeroplanes, tools from construction sites, etc.)
- Authentic sounds of the city (those sounds that are specific to Belgrade in this case: specific language on the streets, particular sound of the bells of the Saint Sava temple, etc.)

In Stojanović’s view, the authenticity of each city’s soundscape is actually the symbiosis of both general and authentic sounds.

Although delving deep into the technicalities of sound and related studies is beyond the scopes of this thesis, a brief outline is needed, in order to understand the concept of soundscape. Three sources of sound create a symbiosis that is perceived as soundscape. These are *geophonies* (produced by natural resources), *biophonies* (represented by organisms in nature and *anthropophonies* or *technophonies* (these ones are produced by human-made sounds). Depending on the environment, the percentage of each type’s involvement differs – in urban areas *anthropophonies* or *technophonies* are dominating, while in the natural environment, *geophonies* and *biophonies* are the ones we can mostly hear. The combination of these three types of sounds is heterogeneous and changeable in time and space (Farina et al. 2014).

Besides the benefits of sound and its conserving, recording and studying, there are negative impacts as well. Acoustic pollution is a serious problem we are facing and it is constantly becoming worse. Although awareness of the damage that noise creates is rising, and various forms of soundproofing have become available, technological and industrial

development is growing and making the whole process of noise prevention difficult (Farina et al. 2014).

Coming back to the concept of soundscape, we might reflect on the landscape and trace a connection between these two concepts. Landscape might be perceived as “seeing the heritage” and soundscape as “hearing” it, which implies that they are firmly interrelated. As we will see in the project proposal later on, the existing sounds of *The Belgrade Confluence* combined with evoked sound could possibly improve the experience and stimulate collective memory. Both soundscape and landscape are concepts that could be applied to the area of *The Belgrade Confluence* as methods for its “reading” and “understanding”. Soundscape is a landscape of sound perceived by individuals and groups of people through the sense of hearing rather than just seeing. Accordingly, knowing or reading a place becomes more holistic and that way “sensing a place” as an experience is improved.

An interesting project entitled “Imprint of Danube”, supported by the European Union to bring together experts from different spheres, such as acoustics, engineering, and art history might be an interesting example to reflect on. The project starts from the consideration that human history is mute, since its sounds are forever lost although they have always played a major role in people’s surroundings and experiences. Sounds characterize places, spaces and activities in form of *audio signatures*. Collecting, preserving and recreating these *audio signatures* is part of the contemporary concept of soundscape.⁴⁸ Having in mind that some sounds are forever lost (old trains, ships, horses on cobblestones and so on) it does seem reasonable to preserve them somehow in order to evoke memories or to narrate history and heritage. The specific proposal of this project is to recognize, collect and gather the sounds of Danube and to discover if there are any shared sounds, even though the river passes through ten countries. The aim of the project is preserving some of the sounds as immaterial cultural heritage.⁴⁹

This project is particularly interesting as a good practice for the proposal that follows in the last chapter of this thesis. Hopefully, the experience and network created

48 <http://euinfo.rs/zvucni-otisak-dunavskog-regiona/>.

49 *ibidem*

during this project will be of use to this thesis proposal. Of special interest is the multidisciplinary character of this project, that links art history and heritage on the one hand, and technical sciences on the other. This cooperation is necessary if we think of humanities as the theoretical basis and of engineering as an instrument for translating theory into practice.

Another useful suggestion for the project proposal might be the one coming from a lecturer in the philosophy of art and modern art history—Stefan Beyst, who has been working on the concept of *mimetic soundscape*. Humans produce these sounds, as a sort of an aural architecture that creates an imaginary world aside from the real one (Beyst 2004). The mimetic soundscape will be developed further in the project description as a possible instrument for evoking collective memory and consequently raising the awareness of collective identity.

Professor of Environmental Studies Kumi Kato (2009, 83-85) explained the significance of sound in four points:

- Sound is a mean of connection and knowing a place. ‘Being in a place’ is a whole-body, as well as spiritual experience where one is embedded in the landscape.
- Sounds can be means of forming a community. Both human and land. Listening to a place is to identify sounds unique to the place where community is recognized. Sounds may represent natural, cultural, and historical features of a place, and/or related knowledge, skills, and spirituality. In some cases, sound resides in memory (lost sound).
- Sound can be a carrier of ethics and spirituality. Sounds can carry traditional and historical knowledge of living in place and communicate the complexity of knowledge, ethics and connectivity to those outside of their world. Sounds also carry social memories about place and people.
- Sound can be a mean to a creative expression. Sounds can highlight the importance of creativity and imagination as expressed in many environmental sound-works.

In Kato’s view, sound should be perceived as intangible heritage and managed accordingly. Sound is interactive and dynamic: it seamlessly contributes to the environment, interacting between nature and culture, present and past. This way sound contributes to the promotion of a personal and group sense of identity and develops cultural creativity and diversity (Kato 2009).

In 1980, UNESCO recognized the significance of sound through *The World Day for Audio-Visual Heritage*, which was adopted at the 21st *General Conference, of the Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images*. It is supposed to raise awareness of the significance of audio-visual records:

“Audio-visual archives tell us stories about people’s lives and cultures from all over the world. They represent a priceless heritage, which is an affirmation of our collective memory and a valuable source of knowledge since they reflect the cultural, social and linguistic diversity of our communities. They help us grow and comprehend the world we all share. Conserving this heritage and ensuring it remains accessible to the public and future generations is a vital goal for all memory institutions as well as the public at large.”⁵⁰

Although there are various initiatives, artistic performances and studies on this topic, hearing as a sense is not applied nearly enough as it is significant. In tourism, for instance, the use of audio-guides is growing. Yet, the potential of sound as an ambient experience and sort of an instrument for heritage re-interpretation is still neglected. Hopefully, rapid technological development and globalization will make the importance of sound more immediately apparent and boost appreciation. This is confirmed by Feld and Basso who say that the sensuality of place can be animated both by soundscape and landscape (Feld and Basso 1996).

3.2.3 Space, place, cities

“The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.”

Italo Calvino, Italian writer and journalist

⁵⁰ <http://en.unesco.org/events/world-day-audiovisual-heritage-2016>.

This section deals with the concepts and methods that could possibly explain how and why the researched area can be perceived, re-interpreted and re-narrated. This implies an understanding of the entire context in which that area is located—the space that has been transformed into a place (as I argue, in a form of a landscape)—and finally, a comprehension of the city per se. For our purposes, the place is the confluence of the Sava and Danube and the city is Belgrade.

Space and Place

In discussions about place and space as geographical elements, Schlögel is immediately called upon. Schlögel's remarks come in the wake of studies by Ratzel and Soja, who attempt to avoid the rigid historical and geographical narratives by placing them into a multidimensional perspective. Schlögel claims that events “take place” and that history happens not only in time but also in particular spaces. He develops Ratzel's concept of a multidimensional world in which space can be read through time, and combines it with Soja's hermeneutics of space in order to provide a thorough interpretation of space. Schlögel's explanation of Walter Benjamin's perspectives towards places is intriguing: he says that *La Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris has a triple significance for Benjamin, as a place of inspiration, a place of remembrance and a place of commemoration (Schlögel 2003). I strongly recognise this perspective when it comes to my choice to research the confluence of the Sava and Danube.

In addition, his work on the places and strata of memory is crucial here, due to the historical connotations of the landscape in question: *The Belgrade Confluence*. As discussed previously, collective memory is a pillar for the construction of cultural identity. |And studies on the connection between memory and place could prove useful to locate this pillar in space and to provide suitable instruments for its interpretation. During one of his lectures in Bergamo, Schlögel explained this concept through a chain of ideas or associations: history of memory, places of memory, strata of memory. Quoting from him directly:

- “History of memory—stands for the far from trivial and often forgotten insight that memory itself has a history, a historical place. To understand this encourages us to be cautious and modest.
- Places of memory—stands for the fact that all memory is attached to places where history took place. This insight teaches us an attitude and perception appropriate to the concreteness and complexity of the world.
- Strata of memory—is the term that brings both of these together, place and time, as a “chronotope”, to quote Mikhail Bakhtin, which can be exposed and explored in a quasi-archaeological procedure.⁵¹

Again, time is a crucial element in the construction of a place. Experiencing or living a place transforms it into a palimpsest (Nora 1989). The layers of events are constantly re-evaluated as feeling and meanings related to experiences. The role of memory is crucial in the construction of a place because of the existing experiences that cannot be erased from people’s minds, but rather used for the future decisions and actions.

Along similar lines, Aleida Assmann introduces the difference between the concepts of space and place. According to her, a space can be reshaped and transformed, while a place is a more specific entity that contains information about history. Assmann explains that a place is packed with people’s memories, experiences and destinies, whereas a space seems oriented towards the future, with a potential of planning and developing (Božić Marojević 2005). Certainly, if we think of a vast and empty space that the area of *The Belgrade Confluence* once represented, then it is clear that due to the interventions and actions of people, it has been transformed into a particular place with a special value and a given set of meanings.

The relation between the space and society also leads us to Lefebvre, who explained it by introducing three levels of space: spatial practice, representation of space and representational space. The third level—representational space—is the most interesting for the present research since it is designed by imagination and usage, which means assigning different meanings to a space through public and institutional encrypting (Lefebvre 1996). A space might be perceived as a multi-layered place, where layers are

⁵¹ <http://www.eurozine.com/places-and-strata-of-memory/>

created by human interventions. Nevertheless, places also attach themselves to humans and leave traces on them, that way influencing their sense of identity. Personal or even collective identity is strongly supported by a sense of place—place being the central element of embodied experience, the synthesis of self, space and time (Feld and Basso 1996).

As I have argued, the significance of *The Belgrade Confluence* is such that we might consider it as a sense of place, the initial and crucial point for the birth and development of the entire city. However, as we will see further, although the confluence is always mentioned as a symbol of Belgrade (both officially by the authorities and by citizens), the emotional and memorable attachment of Belgrade citizens to it is rather questionable.

Rivers

As far as studies on rivers are concerned, they are mostly focused on the natural characteristics of rivers and less on the cultural ones; therefore, we speak about physical geography, fluvial geomorphology, hydrology, sedimentology and ecology. However, I agree with Edgeworth when he claims that rivers are entanglements of both. In this sense, rivers as cultural objects are researched within the studies on townscapes, landscapes, archaeology, etc. (Edgeworth 2011).

If we think of all the interactions between rivers and humans, the previous statement seems rather rational. From ancient times, people have artificially changed flows of rivers in countless ways, built bridges across them, enjoyed their flora and fauna, used them to travel, to settle along them, etc. On the other hand, rivers influenced people's lives in negative ways as well, when they have flooded the settlements bringing destruction. Therefore, rivers should be studied in a multidisciplinary perspective – as a combination of history and archaeology and the previously mentioned natural sciences (Edgeworth 2011). Most importantly for this research, rivers represent part of landscapes, once again confirming the idea of the cultural/natural value.

The natural and cultural importance of rivers Sava and Danube for Belgrade has already been explained. The entire area of the confluence of two international rivers, the Great War Island along with numerous smaller ones, the flora and fauna in the surrounding area create a natural entity significant for the citizens of Belgrade. On the other hand, history that occurred in that area because of these natural characteristics has defined the destiny of Belgrade.

Having 211 hectares of big island in the city centre is, in my view, quite a significant characteristic for an urban area and it deserves more attention. Natural spaces are becoming more and more acknowledged and appreciated due to the global rise of the pollution worldwide and of the rapid urbanization of spaces. Urban studies are focusing on the green areas in the cities, emphasizing their importance. One interesting example of the relation towards the urban islands is found in Helsinki. Although their geologic origins are different, I find it somewhat applicable to the present case study as well:

“The urban islands are also the arenas for identity transformations – spaces, where characters undergo a spiritual or mental awakening. The dynamics between the city and the islands along its shores depict the fundamental tensions between community and individual, between the self and the world.”⁵²

This rather literary view of the urban islands has a certain value I find necessary for the relation citizens might have with the natural resources that surround them. It explains the sense of a natural place and the notion that islands are somewhat different from the rest of the city.

Another issue that is increasingly gaining attention from the urban studies is the development of waterfronts. According to heritage researchers Timothy and Boyd, waterfront development practically always focuses on heritage and its interpretation (Timothy and Boyd 2003). However, this notion seems neglected in the ongoing project *Belgrade Waterfront*, which I will argue further in the following chapters. During the last three years of my research, situations and circumstances in Belgrade have changed, in particular considering urban planning. In addition, most of the major changes are located

⁵² <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/urbannarratives/2017/03/08/helsinkis-islands-in-literature-urban-archipelago-as-heterotopian-space/>.

in the area of this research case study, hence it is inevitable to mention them and analyse them.

The current government's proposals are "The Confluence Park"—the vast green area across the Great War Island that will be refurbished into a new, modern park- and the big Serbian flag that will be located in that park. The park does not presuppose a single info board with the explanation of any historical or cultural fact from this area (at least according to the existing plan available to the public). The flag will be 120m high and the size of a football court. Its position is explained as necessary since the confluence of the Sava and Danube represents "the core of Belgrade". However, there might be some issues with these projects and I will emphasize only the one that stays within my academic interest. As previously mentioned, the question of collective identity is rather delicate for Serbian people. Precisely, that location is relevant to numerous identity layers for all the peoples that have travelled, fought, traded in Belgrade; but in my view (and we will see empirical proves for that in the next chapter), these layers are not sufficiently or adequately interpreted. Therefore, glorifying Serbian identity by such a colossal flag seems rather questionable, since interpretation of all other layers in that area is skipped. In addition, glorifying the cult of the flag without previously dealing with it properly through the educational and institutional system seems rather reckless.

However, the major project that is currently ongoing is *Belgrade Waterfront*. This project is very controversial and under the spotlight since the very beginning, both by locals and by international media.

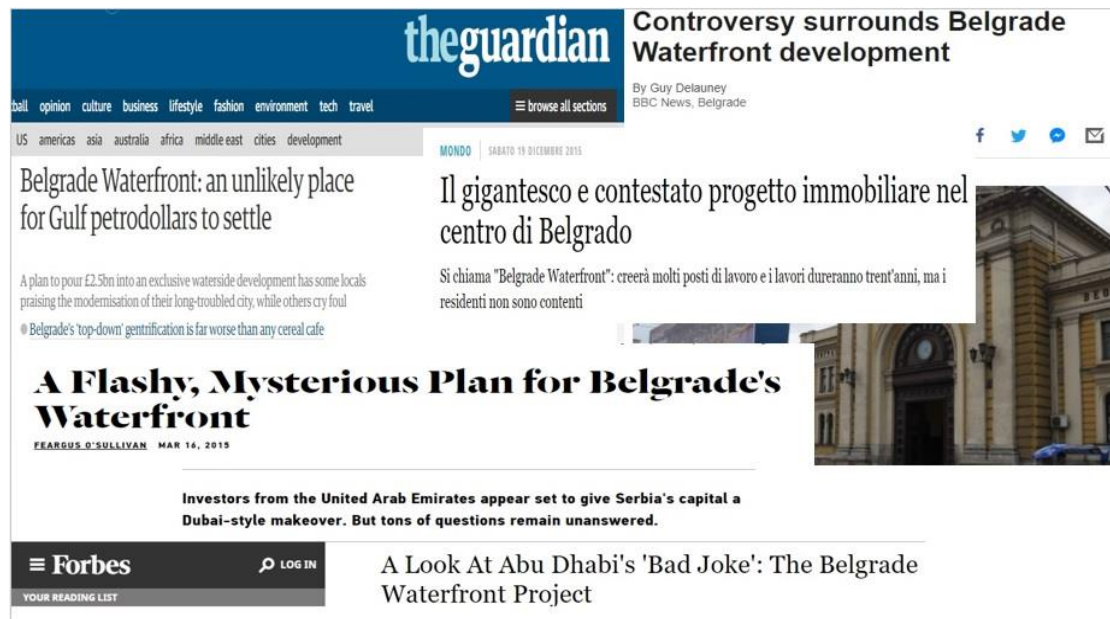


Image 5: Foreign newspapers headlines about the project *Belgrade Waterfront*

The area planned for this project—Savamala—is located on the right bank of the river Sava, just a kilometre from *The Belgrade Confluence* and it is one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the city. A lot of history happened here and many cultural layers define this area. Although Savamala is historically very significant for Belgrade and it is located in the heart of the city, it has always been considered hideous because of its old and ugly facades, unregulated infrastructure and illegal housing. This area has been an eyesore for decades, practically for all Serbian governments. There has always been the idea of “Belgrade on the water”, but it has remained just an idea until the current Serbian government revived this proposal in 2014.

To stay within the scope of this thesis, I will not go deeper into analysing this project from an economic, legal or political point of view, but will limit myself to academic and civic considerations. This very large, public area, which is the historical core of the city, will definitely not be hideous anymore, but it will emphasize the commercial, business and residential features, almost completely neglecting the recreational and cultural necessities for the citizens of wider Belgrade. The main problems may be said to have to do with a lack of transparency, the scanty involvement of citizens in decision-making, and a general lack of concern for the dissatisfaction of citizens. What is more, even the opinions of numerous NGOs and professional associations of urban

planners, architects and other experts involved in sustainable city development are largely ignored.⁵³

The project proposes the construction of skyscrapers literally next to the river, which might be problematic for several reasons. First of all, land there is unsteady and not suitable for supporting heavy infrastructure. Secondly, dense structures will change the microclimate of that area. Finally, the famous skyline of Belgrade from the rivers will be blocked from view and vice versa, the river Sava will not be visible from many points of the city, for instance, from the “Terazije Terrace” which has been preserved for more than a century, emphasizing the importance of having a view over the river.⁵⁴



Image 6: Projects *Belgrade Waterfront* and “Big Serbian Flag” (top right corner)

The Confluence Park, The Big Serbian Flag and *Belgrade Waterfront* are three projects located at the very confluence of the Sava and Danube. None of these projects

⁵³ See Prof. Ivan Kadić: Faculty of Architecture, Florence. <http://www.newsweek.rs/srbija/80647-newsweek-predstavlja-strucno-misljenje-beograd-na-vodi-vs-bratislava-na-vodi.html>

⁵⁴ ibidem

deals with the narration or interpretation of the history and culture of that area. Instead of recovering missing layers, such projects suggest new ones that seem perplexing and misleading. Public space around historic Belgrade lay neglected for decades, and now will be refurbished solely according to commercial, business and residential concerns. The striking fact is that authorities explain the need for these projects using terms such as *attractive* and *grandiose*: adjectives targeted for tourist experiences. However, even this use of tourist language is problematic, since potential tourists would find it hard to what Belgrade was and is in the absence of historical and cultural interpretations.

In their book, *Cultural Heritage and Tourism in Developing World* (2009), Timothy and Nyaupane discuss this issue extensively. They emphasize the danger of modernization in developing countries in terms of jeopardizing historic cores or heritage buildings. Tracing a disturbing historical pattern of unchecked development, they mention the destruction or neglect of historic sites in urban areas in favour of shopping malls, hotels and other structures that offer more immediate economic benefits. However, I am not arguing that modernization is by default a negative process for the city, but I insist on balanced modernization, in which culture and heritage contents are given at least equal attention as commercial and recreational ones.

The City

This grand city seems to have always been like this: torn and spilt, as if it never exists but is perpetually being created, built upon and recovered. On one side, it waxes and grows, on the other it wanes and deteriorates. Ever in motion and rustle, never calm and never knowing tranquillity or quiet. The city upon two rivers, on the grand clearing, bound by the winds.”

Ivo Andrić, writer and Nobel Prize winner

The city with its layers is often compared to a text, which deploys its social, political and economic connotations. Bacchini draws a parallel between the city and macro-discourse by saying that our awareness of some cities is built on the existing knowledge we have about it (Bacchini et al. 2008). In a similar vein, Roland Barthes

analyses a city as a discourse: “The city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language: the city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak our city, the city where we are, simply by living it, by wondering through it, by looking at it” (Barthes 1997, 4). Certainly, the city is a dynamic entity no matter how we define it and it is constantly in the interaction with its citizens, on different levels.

Urban studies provide interesting tools for reading the city – for understanding its citizens, events, structures and its values and meanings in all layers of its anatomy – streets, parks, squares, fortresses, and similar. Barthes confirms this idea by saying that a city or metropolis could be understood only in two modes: by experiencing it or reading it (Barthes 1997). Schlögel, for his part, explains cities as open historical books or encyclopaedias of daily lives. The cities’ squares, facades and blueprints can be decoded as a text that is rewritten, over-written, scratched, copied and again rewritten repeatedly. In his view, a city is like a fabric, an entity of structures in space, the presentation of numerous histories of people, culture and civilization (Schlögel 2003).

Bonadei also compares a city to a script/text and explains it as an amalgamation of the natural biomass with human constructions. We might thus say that the city represents an artificial organism within the natural body. Natural spaces have been progressively manipulated by humans (through art, technology, culture, history, etc.) and urbanized into the shape of the city (Bonadei 2006). This idea can be applied to the confluence of the Sava and Danube, an interesting geomorphologic example where three different elements (water, wood and stone) have over the centuries given shape to a specific urban body where humans built the fortress and other urban segments within a natural context.

And of course, urban studies take us back to the key theoretical concept of narrative, amply used in recent years, in conjunction with the notions of discourse, narration, storytelling. According to Tally (2017), there are three categories of narratives in the context of urban planning:

- pre-existing narratives of a place that include daily, cultural, artistic and historical notions of the city (narratives created by planners);
- narrative strategies and processes in the context of creative, even postmodern planning;

- planning narratives found in the interaction between city branding and locals' reaction to it.

I am convinced that, although scholars, stakeholders, citizens or media might perceive narration differently, it should definitely be part of every urban planning strategy and designed by a network of professionals. Lefebvre (2006) explained this network as usually composed of several types of people. The first one consists of architects and writers, so-called “men of good will”, whose work is emotional and people-oriented, and relies on philosophical notions and a dose of nostalgia (which in turn can lead to formalism or aestheticism). The second type are administrators who work for the state. They rely on science and usually neglect the human factor. The last group are developers whose main motive is profit. They mostly build commercial centres and are concerned mainly with consumption (Lefebvre 2006). This division is actually quite realistic, especially if we think of a transitional metropolis such as Belgrade. As we will see, most of the projects planned or happening in Belgrade are of commercial character that, in my view, speaks of its economic and political situation. As nicely put by Lefebvre, the city is the projection of the society on the ground. Everything that happens in the city leaves traces. The city is a system of meanings that sends and receives messages via a sort of semiology.

The importance of understanding, planning, and managing cities is becoming increasingly important. People live more and more in urban rather than in rural areas, hence cities are dominating the social, political and economic landscape. One of the burning issues lately has become the use of public spaces. Public spaces mean public freedom and the fact that they are increasingly gaining commercial instead of communal function is rather problematic.

Proper use and function of public spaces are expressions of democracy and freedom. European organizations and institutions are working intensively and constantly on these ideas in order to provide the instruments for the implementation of the necessary policies that could improve the quality of life in cities. The European social and economic committee has issued a document “Culture, Cities and Identities in Europe” that deserves to be quoted repeatedly. First, it provides definitions:

“By definition, public space belongs to locals and should reflect them in some way; citizens make meaning in and of their city by investing in their public space. Participatory approaches to regeneration can also lead to far more interesting and distinctive results. Increasingly, cultural policy in world cities mobilizes a broader cast of actors than ever before: the institutions of government, but also civil society organizations and movements.”⁵⁵

The reason why public space is mentioned here is somewhat connected to our initial assumption that *The Belgrade Confluence* is not managed and interpreted suitably. I argue that public spaces in Belgrade do not seem to belong to its citizens, but to the stakeholders or to the government, while being determined mostly as commercial or business spaces. On the other hand, spaces or places that still possess public characteristics are often refashioned in such a manner that they lose their value or meaning. The present Serbian government has been planning and implementing projects mostly describable as attractive and grandiose, while on the opposite side, anti-regime organizations propose alternative schemes. It seems that the layers between *alternative* and *attractive* are skipped, which demands an explanation and possible solution.

Another issue is the *decontextualization* of the city – in other words the existence of misused and perplexed layers in Belgrade’s structure, referring especially to the organization and implementation of culture and heritage in the public space (Dragičević Šešić et al. 2015). The importance of a bottom-up approach, social inclusion in decision-making and the use of culture as an engine for every city’s sustainable development is enormous, since “every society produces its own unique space(s). Cities, neighbourhoods, and public spaces are not given per se—they are socially and culturally constructed because people make places (Dragičević Šešić et al. 2015, 198).

We need to emphasize that the attention is on “people”: citizens are the ones who create a path on a meadow where it is the most suitable, after crossing it countless times; people choose their way to work, the place they like, the bench in the shadow, etc. That is why citizens should be the ones who create and tailor the places in their cities according to their needs and desires. Once again:

55 www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/qe-01-16-463-en-n.pdf, 31-32.

“From the model of the managed city (after the Second World War), to the postmodern or post-industrial city (in the 1970s and 1980s), to the entrepreneurial city, we can trace the so-called cultural turn (Mercer 2006) in the 1990s and 2000s. Since the publication of *Our Common Future* (the Brundtland Report) (WCED 1987), while the concepts of the creative city (Landry and Bianchini 1995) and the eventful city (Richards and Palmer 2010) emerged and became widely popularized, they are being increasingly replaced with the sole idea of the sustainable city.”⁵⁶

In my view, Belgrade is struggling somewhere in-between these categories although they are chronologically separated. Being labelled as a post-socialist metropolis, Belgrade has managed to take on some features of a creative and eventful city (often inappropriately likened to Berlin, in a rather doubtful comparison). Yet, in my view, it is still far away from achieving the status of a sustainable city. One of the reasons might be that Belgrade (and the entire country as well) lags behind in all the processes that other European cities are now experiencing. Ten years of wars and sanctions certainly did leave serious consequences. However, the slow and long process of the transition that Serbia is passing through definitely has other causes as well. A recent European white paper on Belgrade pinpoints some of the basic problems still affecting its development:

“The more perspectives we involve the more effective our solutions are likely to be [...] In the minds of citizens, this is a welcome change from the compartmentalized and dehumanizing thought processes of the past. Now they too can become active players with the capacity to influence their environment and their lives [...] This growing empowerment of people has received a big boost from information technology and open data [...] Treating the city as a living lab for co-creation is a progressive, iterative process. It is by no means definitive, for we learn and adapt along the way [...] It is only through design and creativity and through the active participation of all stakeholders that we may find success in creating smart cities that truly work for people.”⁵⁷

What lacks most is the creation of a city for people and a consideration of inhabitants as active players in decision-making.

56 Dragičević Šešić et al. 2015, 200.

57 www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/qe-01-16-463-en-n.pdf, 31-32.



Image 7: Citizens' protests against the project *Belgrade Waterfront*, 2016.

The *European Cultural Foundation* launched a magazine called “Build the City”, in 2016, where they explain the importance of culture for urban development and the necessity of the civic-public cooperation:

“in a broader sense, culture [...] improves the linking of artistic, craftsmanship and industrial activities and achieving global public services in cross-cutting fields such as health, education, science, tourism and urbanism. Finally, by allowing local know-how and production capabilities, inventing new trends, designing new spaces, looking to improve the quality of life, culture is a key element of innovation and sustainable urban development. In a nutshell, culture is a catalyst for differentiation, revitalization and change in the EU Urban Agenda.”⁵⁸

Numerous scholars and professionals in urban studies in Belgrade are expressing their disapproval towards the trend of poor involvement of citizens in the decision-making and lack of transparency in the same process. Citizens, their associations and non-governmental organizations and institutions should be intensively and constantly involved in the processes of planning, decision-making and implementing the projects when it comes to the areas they live in.

58 www.culturalfoundation.eu/library/build-the-city-book, 4.

One of the most obvious labels used to describe Belgrade has been in terms of a post-socialist city. Although its socialist regime was somehow liberal compared to its Eastern neighbours, socialist influence shaped one of the most prominent (and most recent) layers of Belgrade identity (Göler and Lehmeier, 2012). As we have seen so far, Belgrade's structure consists of numerous, and quite distinct layers. Each could tell its own story, but it does not. Narration of these layers is quite poor, neglected or unwelcome. Instead of reading these layers and giving them more narrative space, Belgrade is being made readable in another dimension where layers are turned into dichotomies: alternative—attractive, governmental—non-governmental, attractive for tourists – non-attractive for tourists, the biggest in Europe – the ugliest in Europe. In my view, this type of labelling is not welcome and fails to provide a sustainable development for Belgrade. A bottom up approach and long-term thinking are certainly missing as well.

Urry's comments on the postmodern architecture of the city are useful to make sense of the current situation in Belgrade. He explains the significance of *designing for the (tourist) gaze*, which is directly connected to the Serbian Government's explanations that "the ongoing projects in the city will attract tourists". In Urry's view, the location of the object, its compatibility with the surroundings, the style and the purpose are highly sensitive matters since they provoke and attract *the tourist gaze*, hence create an impression about the city (Urry 1990). To conclude, I quote a passage which describes the relation between the city and its citizens in the light of the *identity*. The identity of the city is the identity of its citizens. The identity of the citizens is the identity of the city:

"Between the three key concepts of Culture, Cities and Identity, strong interrelationships strike the eye. Cities and urban spaces are strongly influenced by the identities and cultures of the people living there, passing through and interacting with them in a physical or virtual space. Peoples' identity is shaped by the space they live in and their culture while their culture shapes the space and the city."⁵⁹

59 Pflieger 2008 in *Culture, Cities and Identity in Europe*, p.2.

4. Hypothesis testing

The following chapter introduces empirical support for the starting hypothesis that the cultural and historical significance of Belgrade's geopolitical position might be considered as not interpreted enough (or appropriately) by authorities of some relevant public institutions and by the media in Serbia as well. It consists of two main parts: the first one represents the analytical examination of data: newspaper online archives and websites of governmental organizations and institutions. The second part provides an insight into semi-structured interviews conducted in relation to the first one due to their analogy.

4.1 Corpora

4.1.1 The relevance of discourse analysis

Although the term discourse regards various meanings and is quite fashionable and used in a daily context, the one concerned here is the discourse in Foucault's view. Namely, relevant to the present research is the Foucauldian notion of discourse as a culturally constructed representation of reality, albeit not an exact copy of it. This notion allows the use of the mentioned resources to trace the image, if not the discourse emerging from the media. However, the applied analytical horizon is confined to a small portion of Foucault's theory of discourse (Foucault 2007). There is no prescribed outline for discourse analysis, and yet Foucault is paramount in focusing on the interaction of three variables: discourse, power and subject expressed through language and practices. In Foucault's terms, discourse is the one that builds knowledge, shaping it through the text and finally reproducing it simultaneously as power and knowledge. This process is impossible without social practices and regulated power relations (Foucault 2007).

In addition to Foucault's studies, an interesting insight for the present analysis is given by Fairclough. Although he insists on the idea that discourses construct social contexts, he claims that there are many other features besides the very discourse being used in that process. According to Fairclough (1996), discourse analysis is developed through three steps:

- 1) The analysis of text, which refers to formal characteristics such as vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and structure,
- 2) Discourse practice, whose analysis is directed to the creation, utilization and distribution of the discourse involved,
- 3) Social practice or socio-cultural practice that deals with social and cultural events, examine political contexts and how ideological effects contribute to social changes.

This framework leads the analyst to explore not only textual forms but also how a particular text is being used in a certain social context. In other words, the understanding a certain text provides, as well as the reaction of its readers, a discussion and interaction among them, is what creates a social context. It is only via this chain-reaction that a text fulfils its initial purpose. The present research on discourse based on the theoretical suggestions provided by Foucault and Fairclough entailed a thorough examination of an online archive that gave us an insight into all daily and weekly newspapers published in the territory of Serbia from 2003 to 2013.

4.1.2 Definition of the empirical methods for testing the hypothesis

According to Nevendorf's studies, each hypothesis is tested in a deductive way. After defining the variables for the analysis, each of them is measured, and relations between them are observed statistically in order to understand if the anticipated relation is valid or not. After presenting the analysis, it will be clear if the support for the starting hypothesis was achieved or not (Nevendorf 2002).

Newspaper analysis represents quite an interesting field for research, both for the importance of media in people's lives and for the interdisciplinary nature of the approach.

Newspapers are one of the oldest types of media with a significant role in information spreading and the shaping of public opinion. Depending on their distribution and social connotation, newspapers considerably influence the mental representations that people have and share about all the matters that surround them and beyond. Last, but not least, newspapers are one of the most accessible source materials since they are archived and available on-line.

Other resources besides newspapers were analysed in order to gain a wider picture of the current situation. In particular, a variety of materials from institutions and organizations relevant to this research was taken into account. These are the resources examined, which touch upon our line of investigation:

- Tourist Organisation of Belgrade⁶⁰
- National Tourism Organisation of Serbia⁶¹
- Belgrade City Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments⁶²
- Institute for the Nature Conservation of Serbia⁶³

The selection criteria for the above-listed institutions was defined according to the relevance and presence of these institutions in the interpretation of natural and cultural heritage in Belgrade, for locals and visitors, in a tourist perspective or in a scientific sense.

When analysing newspaper discourses, the starting point is usually the analysis by Van Dijk, which implies macro and micro levels of text analysis. However, a purely linguistic analysis is not enough; discourse and/or content analysis are needed, since both quantitative and qualitative perspectives matter in this research. The quantities of specific keywords provide a valuable insight on their frequency distribution. Conversely, a qualitative dimension delivers an understanding of the contexts in which these keywords are used. In addition, collected data can be used in grasping the ideological, political, and social circumstances that influence the creation of news (Van Dijk 1988).

60 <http://www.tob.rs/>

61 <http://www.serbia.travel/>

62 <http://www.heritage.gov.rs/>

63 <http://www.zzps.rs/>

4.1.3 Newspapers analysis

The analysis was conducted by choosing a set of keywords relevant to the hypothesis and reflected on the three different content axes:

- Chronicle
- Tourism/Cultural/Artistic Interpretation
- Urbanism/Restoration/Nature protection/City policies

These categories were chosen according to the dissertation's scope, thereby excluding all results concerning sport, ecology, crime sections, science, and similar from further analysis as irrelevant.

Chronicle refers to a kind of storytelling –articles that portray events that took place in the area of the confluence between the 15th and the 19th centuries (as we could see, the history of Belgrade is long and complex, but the focus will be only on this period). Most of the articles in this category belong to the newspaper's sections *culture* or *feuilleton* (non-political news and gossip, literature and art criticism section). The second category gathers articles related to contemporary events and situations, whether in the form of an exhibition, a tour, a festival or a manifestation. Articles in this category are mostly written for *entertainment*, *culture* or *economy* sections of newspapers. The last category of articles describes contemporary issues such as urban planning, questions of city infrastructures, monuments and historical sites restoration, natural protection and other city policies. Most of such articles derive from the sections: *economy*, *society* and *politics*.

As far as the definition of keywords is concerned, the selection was quite obviously tied to the starting hypothesis: *Sava (Sava)*, *Danube (Dunav)*, *Belgrade rivers (beogradske reke)*, *confluence (Ušće)*, *the Great War Island (Veliko ratno ostrvo)*, *Austria/Austrian/Hungarian* ⁶⁴ / *Habsburg (Austrija/austrijsko/ugarska/Habzburzi)*, *Turkey/Turkish/Turks/Ottoman (Turska/turski/Turci/Otomani)*.

⁶⁴ In Serbian language, Kingdom of Hungary (1000-1918) and today's Hungary are translated differently: *Ugarska* and *Mađarska*.

A number of issues emerged during analysis. First, due to the fact that the online archive used for this research does not recognise inflected nouns,⁶⁵ repetitions of the results came up. Therefore, each keyword was searched in all seven cases (more precisely, in four, since some cases sound the same). Here is an example of the keyword *Great War Island* declined in Serbian language through all seven cases: *Veliko ratno ostrvo – Velikog ratnog ostrva – Velikom ratnom ostrvu – Veliko ratno ostrvo – Veliko ratno ostrvo – Velikim ratnim ostrvom – Velikom ratnom ostrvu.*

A second problem has to do with an ambiguous use of the keywords *Austria/Austrian/Hungarian/Habsburg*⁶⁶ and *Turkey/Turkish/Turks/Ottoman*⁶⁷ by writers of numerous articles. Both obstacles were overcome during the research.

Regarding the time framework definition, several points were taken into consideration. First of all, the period before and during the wars in the nineties on the territory of former Yugoslavia is quite complex and difficult to research. Not just political and economic, but all daily, contemporary domains were under the strong influence of an exceptionally specific circumstance – war. And the news written in this period were as well. Second, the focus of this dissertation is Serbia and its capital—Belgrade, meaning that analysing them as a part of former Yugoslav Republic would go beyond the scope of this work. Third, the contemporary situation is being analysed here from different points of view, considering the fact that Serbia has been in the transition for more than 20 years: the post-socialist transition started in 1989; however, the most intense reforms were passed between 2001 and 2006, after which another era of slow transition started, and is continuing to this day (Hare and Turley 2013).

⁶⁵ In Serbian grammar, nouns are declined into seven cases: nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, vocative, instrumental and locative (Klajn, 2005).

⁶⁶ Habsburg Monarchy (1526-1804), Austrian Empire (1804-1867) and Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867-1918) were all present on the territory of Belgrade at certain points (A. J. Taylor, 1976).

⁶⁷ The use of *Turska* (as country), *Turci* (as Turks), *Osmanlije* (as members of Ottoman Empire), is widely spread in Serbian language when narrating that part of national history.

Results

The keywords were grouped into three umbrella categories. Since *Sava*, *Danube*, *confluence* and *Belgrade rivers* are in most of the cases mentioned together in articles, it was reasonable to define them as part of the same category. *Great Was Island* is a separate category. The third category consists of keywords such as *Austria/Austrian/Hungarian/Habsburg* and *Turkey/Turkish/Turks/Ottoman*, also due to the fact that they are quite often mentioned together in articles which describe battles or conflicts on the territory of Belgrade. All these keywords were also processed and collected separately in the database. However, for the sake of transparency and conciseness, they will be reported as previously explained.

It is essential to explain the process of articles selection. All of the articles suggested after entering the keywords were read, selected and archived according to the thesis' aim. Namely, the keywords *Austria/Austrian/Hungarian/Habsburg* and *Turkey/Turkish/Turks/Ottoman* are present mostly in texts about Serbian national history or regarding contemporary issues and news about Austria and Turkey as present-day countries. On the other hand, numerous articles regarding the rivers of Belgrade —the *Sava*, *Danube* and their confluence—had to be scanned with great care due to a large number of their occurrences in newspapers. Some of the examples are crime sections, ecology, economy, industry and other various unrelated topics where the words *Sava* (*Sava*), *Danube* (*Dunav*) and *confluence* (*ušće*) are used to name something besides their primary meaning, such as the congress center (*Sava Centar*), an insurance company (*Dunav Osiguranje*), or a shopping mall (*Ušće Shopping Centre*).

What follows is the analytical illustration of the results. Along with it, examples will be provided by selecting the most significant or interesting outcomes of the research. Another interesting point is the fact that large numbers of quotations regarding historical interpretation in the category *Austria/Austrian/Hungarian/Habsburg* and *Turkey/Turkish/Turks/Ottoman* might support the assumption that the historical significance of the analysed territory is of exceptional cultural importance.

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter										0
Balkan										0
Blic	1	4				4		4	1	14
Borba										0
Danas		3				6				9
Glas javnosti	1	3				3		2	1	10
Kurir										0
Nacional	6			1		3	2			12
NIN						1	1			2
Politika	7	4	3			6	1	5	3	29
Pravda										0
Pregled										0
Press										0
Večernje novosti	7	2				2		1	3	15
Vreme										0
	22	16	3	1	0	25	4	12	8	
	41			26			24			
								Total number of articles in 2003	91	

Table 1. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along the three axes 2003.

The total number of collected articles in 2003 is 91. In the first category, 41 results were saved and processed further. One of the first examples that supports the starting hypothesis is found in this year's database. Namely, an article published in the *Nacional* newspaper explains a period in Belgrade's history when Serbs recaptured the city in 1806, having most of the conflicts with Ottomans happened around the confluence. What is interesting is that the *the Great War Island* is mentioned here as one of the crucial battlefields, but only in one sentence. Therefore, although it belongs to two categories: *the Great War Island* and the *Turkey/Turkish /Turks/Ottoman*, this text does not mention the significance of *The Belgrade Confluence*, the island or the rivers in their historical context.

Further, in almost all the articles regarding urbanism or nature protection on and around the island, its significance for Belgrade is declared, but never explained, not even partially. There is only one article (written by a professor of tourism and geography, not by a journalist) where a concrete hallmark for celebrating the island's significance is proposed. All other articles refer to the island's unsolved issues, such as its ownership, the status, natural protection, and so on. However, the largest number of articles containing the *Great War Island* throughout the years has to do with the controversial "EHO Festival" (a music festival) that took place on the island in 2003. Before and after

it, many people were arguing whether this festival could harm the flora and fauna of the island.

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter										0
Balkan		1	1							3
Blic		2			1		1	2	1	7
Borba										0
Danas	2	1	5	1	3	1				14
Glas javnosti			1		1	1		2	2	7
Kurir										0
Nacional										0
NIN	2							1		3
Politika	26	4	4	2				3		39
Pravda										0
Pregled										0
Press										0
Reporter	1									0
Večernje novosti	6			1		2		2		11
Vreme										0
	37	8	11	4	5	4	1	10	4	
	56			13			14			
								Total number of articles in 2004	83	

Table 2. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes 2004.

In 2004, the high presence of articles regarding the Ottoman Empire is due to the 200th anniversary of *The First Serbian Uprising* (1804). Most of the related articles (37) were retrieved for the category *chronicle* since they depicted the historical moment when Serbs recaptured Belgrade from Ottoman rule. Some of them belong to the category *interpretation*, due to the numerous manifestations organized in that occasion. As far as the categories *interpretation* and *restoration* are concerned, almost all of the articles were related to two events that occurred in 2004 – a fire in the only mosque in Belgrade (the Bajrakli mosque) and the destruction of Islamic landmarks by vandals. These incidents were related to certain events that happened some time previously in Kosovo. Therefore, most of the articles were focused on the narration and analyses of the political background and not on the events themselves or their consequences.

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter										0
Balkan										0
Blic								7		7
Borba										0
Danas								4	1	6
Glas javnosti										0
Kurir										0
Nacional										0
NIN	1	1					1			4
Politika	3	1						3	3	10
Pravda										0
Pregled										0
Press										0
Večernje novosti								1		1
Vreme										0
	4	2	0	0	0	0	1	15	3	
	6			0			19			
								Total number of articles in 2005	25	

Table 3. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes 2005.

The results from 2005 are generally quite poor, but the striking fact is that there was not even one relevant result containing the *Great War Island*.

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter										0
Balkan										0
Blic			1					3	1	5
Borba										0
Danas	1					3		3	3	10
Glas javnosti								1	1	2
Kurir			1		1					2
Nacional										0
NIN										0
Politika	4		2	1	2		1	7	6	23
Pravda										0
Pregled					2			2	1	5
Press										0
Večernje novosti	5			1	1					7
Vreme										0
	10	0	4	2	6	3	1	16	12	
	14			11			29			
								Total number of articles in 2006	54	

Table 4. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes 2006.

In 2006, practically all articles in the category *Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube and confluence* described the so-called “Day of Danube” manifestation (in the subcategory Tourist/Cultural/Artistic Interpretation) and the “Venice biennale” (in the subcategory

Urbanism/City Policies) where an architectural project about developing a new part of Belgrade on the river banks was presented and discussed. As we saw in the previous chapter, the realization of this idea (after decades of fruitless plans by various political parties and stakeholders) really started in 2014 with the project *Belgrade Waterfront*.

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter										0
Balkan										0
Blic	1		1	2				6	2	12
Borba										0
Danas	1	2				2		6	2	13
Evropa	1									1
Glas javnosti								1		1
Kurir										0
Nacional										0
NIN						1			1	2
Politika	10	1	2	1		1		4	1	20
Pravda										0
Pregled									2	2
Press								2	1	3
Standard	1									1
Večernje novosti		1						1		2
Vreme										0
	14	4	3	3	0	4	0	20	9	
	21			7			29			
								Total number of articles in 2007	57	

Table 5. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes 2007.

As far as the results regarding 2007 are concerned, the largest number of them was retrieved for the category of *Belgrade rivers* and *confluence*. Practically all results regarded the “Belgrade boat carnival”, an annual event happening in August, or the “European Heritage Days” manifestation (happening annually as well, every September). This particular year, the theme for European Heritage Days was “River flows and Industrial Heritage”, mainly referring to the Danube as an important, international river.

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter										0
Balkan										0
Blic	3	1				2		7	3	16
Borba										0
Danas	3				1	3		5	1	13
Glas javnosti	2							2	1	5
Kurir		1						1		2
Nacional										0
NIN							1			1
Politika	13	1				1		2	1	18
Pravda										0
Pregled										0
Press						1				1
Večernje novosti		1						1	1	3
Vreme										0
	21	4	0	0	1	7	1	18	7	
	25			8			26			
								Total number of articles in 2008	59	

Table 6. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes 2008.

Most of the articles from 2008 discussed *Belgrade rivers* in terms of tourist cruises and commented this idea as one the biggest city`s potentials for the city in terms of tourism. However, regarding the first category, there is a significant number of articles (25) describing the daily life in Belgrade in the period that is being researched in this thesis. The majority of these articles is written in the chronicle style, retelling the history of the city.

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter										0
Balkan										0
Blic		1					1	2	2	6
Borba								1		1
Danas	3					1		5		9
Glas javnosti										0
Kurir										0
Nacional										0
NIN										0
Politika								2	3	5
Pravda										0
Pregled										0
Press										0
Večernje novosti										0
Vreme									1	1
	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	10	6	
	4			1			17			
								Total number of articles in 2009	21	

Table 7. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes 2009.

The results from the year 2009 are quite similar to the ones from 2005. The keyword *Great War Island* was found in only one relevant article. The first category showed a very small number of occurrences, as well. The *rivers* and the *confluence* were found in 17 articles related to the research.

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter										0
Balkan										0
Blic		1							1	2
Borba										0
Danas	1	1					1	1		4
Glas javnosti										0
Kurir										0
Nacional										0
NIN										0
Politika	10	2	3				1	1		17
Pravda										0
Pregled								1		1
Press						1				1
Večernje novosti			1				1			3
Vreme	2							4		6
	13	4	4	0	0	1	3	7	1	
	21			1			11			
							Total number of articles in 2010		33	

Table 8. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes, 2010.

In 2010, the number of articles containing *Habsburgs* and *Ottomans* slightly increased. On the other hand, the *Great War Island* was a keyword in only one relevant article, exactly like in the previous year. The number of articles about rivers and the confluence was stagnant.

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter								1		1
Balkan										0
Blic		2	1					3	2	9
Borba										0
Danas	1							6	1	7
Glas javnosti										0
Kurir										0
Nacional										0
NIN								3		3
Politika	2		1			2		4	3	12
Pravda								2	1	3
Pregled								1		1
Press								3		3
Večernje novosti		1					1	5		7
Vreme								1		1
	3	3	2	0	0	2	1	29	7	
	8			2			37			
								Total number of articles in 2011	47	

Table 9. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes, 2011.

In 2011, one of the Belgrade museums was opened in Nebojša Tower⁶⁸, literally on the confluence, under the Belgrade fortress. This was a significant event for Belgrade, therefore, most of the articles regarding the confluence, the rivers and history of Belgrade described this occasion. In addition, a brief history about the events related to the Nebojša Tower was mentioned in several articles.

⁶⁸ The Nebojša Tower represents the only remaining well preserved medieval building within the Belgrade Fortress. It was built around 1460. for the purpose of defending the city from the Turks. After losing its importance, Turks closed the Danube port and at the same time transformed the Nebojša Tower into the most famous dungeon of the Belgrade Fortress. The most famous captive of the Nebojša Tower was Rigas Feraios, a Greek revolutionary, killed in the Nebojša Tower in 1798. The project “Conservation and Reuse of the Nebojša Tower in the City of Belgrade and Founding of a Museum and Cultural Center” was realized with the co-funding of important bodies of the Greek Republic and Republic of Serbia (<http://kulanebojsa.rs/>)

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter	2						1			2
Balkan										0
Blic	2	1	3		1			3		9
Borba										0
Danas		2	1					3		6
Glas javnosti										0
Kurir								1		1
Nacional										0
NIN										0
Novi magazin	1									1
Politika	2	5	1		1			2	1	13
Pravda						1				1
Pregled			1		1			1		4
Press					1			1		3
Večernje novosti	3	4	1	1				2		11
Vreme		1								1
	10	13	7	1	4	1	1	13	1	
	30			6			15			
								Total number of articles in 2012	51	

Table 10. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes, 2012.

As far as the articles referring to the *Great War Island* are concerned, there were four of them in 2012. All of them discussed the fact that a documentary on the ecologic significance of the island was shot there. Further, the number of articles in the *Habsburg/Ottoman* category increased drastically, since most of them were written to comment the success of the Turkish TV show called “Suleiman the Magnificent”⁶⁹ that was broadcast on one of the most popular Serbian television channels during that year. The contradictory reactions of Serbian people were captured in newspapers articles (due to the feelings of shame or anger for the fact that Ottomans conquered and dominated Serbia and its capital Belgrade for centuries). In addition, numerous articles “refreshed” national memory with historical events that followed the story of Suleiman the Magnificent⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1848220/>

⁷⁰ Suleiman the First was the tenth and longest-reigning sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1520 to his death in 1566. He is of particular interest to Serbian people since he personally led Ottoman armies in conquering Belgrade in 1521 (Ćorović 1989).

Newspaper	Habsburg and/or Ottoman			Great War Island			Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence			
	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Restoration	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ Nature protection	Chronicle	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	Urbanism/ City policies	
Akter										0
Balkan										0
Blic										0
Borba										0
Danas										0
Glas javnosti										0
Kurir										0
Nacional										0
NIN										0
Politika	2	1						2		5
Pravda										0
Pregled								1		1
Press										0
Večernje novosti							1			1
Vreme										0
	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	
	3			0			4			
							Total number of articles in 2013		7	

Table 11. Total number of articles per newspaper and keyword analysed along three axes, 2013.

The first impression of results from 2013 was that probably the archive had not been updated for that year yet. However, the large number of overall results shows that the base did have practically the same number of articles as in previous years, but the number of the results was surprisingly small.

		2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Habsburg and/or Ottoman	Chronicle	22	37	4	10	14	21	3	13	3	10	2
	Tourist/Cultural/ Artistic Interpretation	41	56	6	14	21	25	4	21	8	30	3
	Urbanism/ Restoration	3	11	0	4	3	0	0	4	2	7	0
Great War Island	History/Heritage	1	4	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0
	Tourism/Culture	26	13	0	11	7	8	1	1	2	6	0
	Urbanism/ Nature protection	25	4	0	3	4	7	1	1	2	0	0
Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Confluence	History/Heritage	4	1	1	1	0	1	1	3	1	1	1
	Tourism/Culture	24	14	19	29	29	26	17	11	37	15	4
	Urbanism/ City policies	8	4	3	12	9	7	6	1	7	1	0
	Total number of articles per year	91	83	25	54	57	59	22	33	47	51	7

Table 12. Total number of articles per year, for each of the keyword categories and per axis.

After analysing and categorizing all the results, we can see in table 12 the total number of articles per year according to the chosen keywords. In the previous section, results that were slightly or markedly different from the average were explained referring to extraordinary events that influenced the publication of the stories.

According to the criteria previously explained, the following newspapers appeared in the results:

Daily newspapers:

- *Balkan*
- *Blic*⁷¹ (1996)
- *Borba* (1922-2009)
- *Danas*⁷² (1997)
- *Evropa*
- *Glas javnosti*⁷³ (1998-2011)
- *Kurir*⁷⁴ (2003)
- *Nacional* (2001-2003)
- *Politika*⁷⁵ (1904)
- *Pravda*⁷⁶ (2006-2012)
- *Pregled*
- *Press* (2005-2012)
- *Reporter*
- *Standard*
- *Vecernje novosti*⁷⁷ (1953)

⁷¹www.blic.rs

⁷²www.danas.rs

⁷³www.glas-javnosti.rs

⁷⁴www.kurir-info.rs

⁷⁵www.politika.rs

⁷⁶www.pravda.rs

⁷⁷www.novosti.rs

Weekly newspapers

- *Akter*⁷⁸
- *NIN*⁷⁹ (1935/1951)
- *Vreme*⁸⁰ (1990)

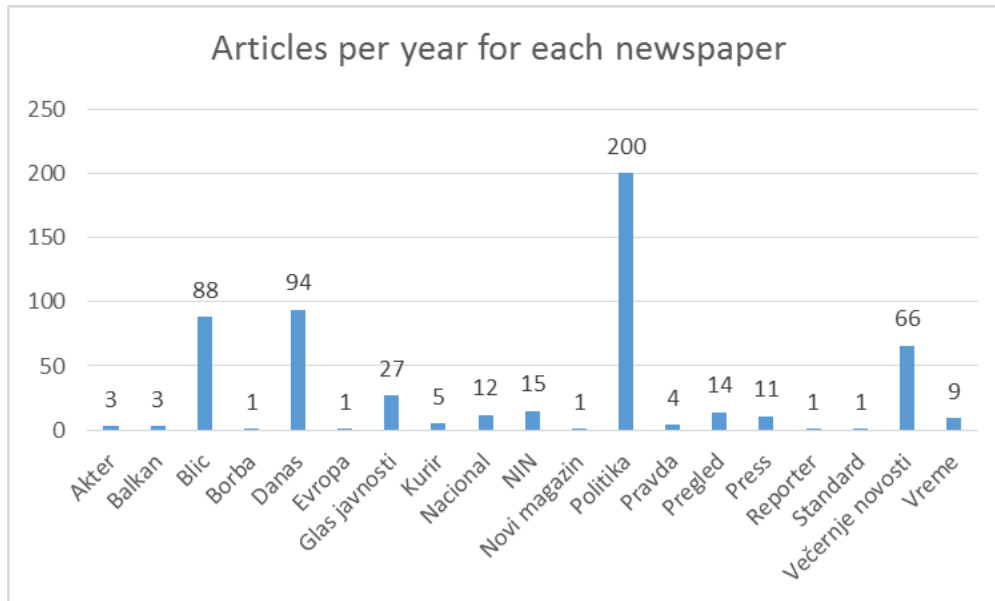


Table 13. Total number of articles per year for each newspaper

These results are not very surprising if we keep in mind the scope of the keywords, which refer to history, heritage and culture. *Politika* is one of the oldest newspapers in the Balkans and its readers are mostly middle class and highly educated citizens according to the data provided by *Research Solution Partner*.⁸¹

Readership is an important variable when it comes to the influence newspaper might have on its readers:

78 www.akter.co.rs

79 www.nin.co.rs

80 www.vreme.com

81 www.p-rs.rs

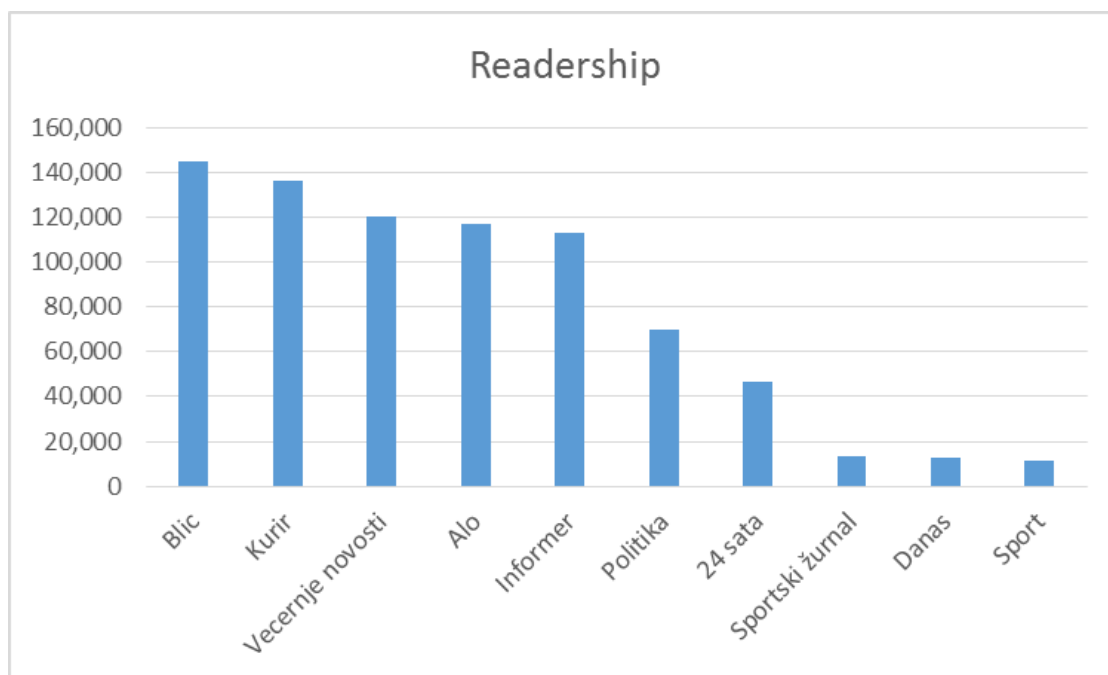


Table 14. Readership of 10 most popular newspapers in Serbia (Source: Research Solution Partner)

The *Research Solutions Partner Agency* has conducted a research on the population of daily newspapers readers in August 2016, in Serbia. The research was based on the CATI⁸² method, on a random sample of 1.170 subjects. The principal criteria for qualification was reading a daily newspaper at least once a week. It is quite difficult to determine the daily circulation of newspapers. As seen in table 14, four leading newspapers in the previous research are among the nine most circulated and read newspapers in Serbia. According to this agency's research, medium circulation sold daily is between 50.000 and 100.000 copies. The overall number of all copies sold daily is estimated to be around 500.000. There are regular and occasional readers. As far as research figures are concerned, *Blic* has the largest number of regular readers (147.000), *Vecernje novosti* (119.000) and *Kurir* (122.000) readers.

82 CATI: Computer-assisted telephone interviewing

4.1.4 Analysis of governmental institutions' policies

This part of the analysis refers to the institutions for natural and cultural heritage protection and to the public organisations responsible for tourism organization and management. Since no accessible databases exist on this, research was conducted with a different strategy. For heritage issues, the two resources examined are the *Belgrade City Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments* and the *Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia*. The responsibilities of the former are listed on the official page of the City of Belgrade:

“The Institute is engaged in the protection in the territories of all the 16 City municipalities and, as required, it participates in joint professional teams with the Republic Institute and with the regional institutes in the territory of the Republic. The experts of the Institute deal with continuous reconnaissance of the terrain, research, and valuation of immovable architectonic, sacral, and profane buildings/facilities, archaeological sites, facilities of the traditional local architecture, cemeteries, public monuments and, physical sites. “⁸³

In September 2016, I was given access to the Institute's library and archive to find the material that might refer to my line of research. However, no results were found since this institution deals only with built, immovable heritage, such as buildings, churches, monuments, and similar. Therefore, pieces of built heritage that once existed but were destroyed are no longer under their jurisdiction, nor is intangible heritage (as in the case of storytelling or narration). This also refers to the riverbanks, the confluence area and the Great War Island, perceived purely as “natural resources”.

The next step was to access the library at the *Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia*, with very modest results. Only one document was found, “Management plan for the Great War Island”, that mentions the cultural and historical significance of the island for preserving “the well-known landscape of Belgrade”. However, no explanations or historical support was given.

⁸³ <http://www.beograd.rs/cir/discoverbelgrade/202324-belgrade-city-institute-for-the-protection-of-cultural-monuments/>.

As far as the *Tourist Organization of Belgrade* and the *National Tourism Organisation of Serbia* are concerned, current websites were examined, as were the various Tourist Info Points scattered around the city. Downloadable and printed materials are practically the same, and the ones I collected and analysed date from the years 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016. Unofficial interviews with employees at the mentioned Tourist Info Points confirmed initial findings and impressions. These two organizations are official, public tourism organizations that manage not only foreign visitors, but also numerous events for inhabitants of Belgrade and Serbia. In a way, they represent a “window” of Belgrade and its overall offer.

On the web page of the *Tourist Organization of Belgrade*, neither the Great War Island nor the *Confluence of the Sava and Danube* are listed among the *Attractions* or in the *Green Belgrade* sections.⁸⁴ However, they are mentioned in several places on the website that describe Belgrade more generally:

“Exciting view of the confluence of the Sava and Danube”; “take a photo of Belgrade Rivers”⁸⁵

“The Confluence of the Sava and Danube is a natural oasis in the heart of a modern city, and that very spot next to the Victor statue is the most beautiful lookout in Belgrade. Riverbanks never sleep: on boat restaurants and cafes, visitors can have a cup of coffee, eat a fish specialty, listen to music and have fun.”⁸⁶

These examples show that the Sava, the Danube, the *Belgrade Confluence* and the Great War Island, are only briefly and descriptively mentioned.⁸⁷

A slightly better explanation may be found in the section entitled *Location*:

“Belgrade is located in South-eastern Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula, at the crossroads of Eastern and Western Europe. The city lies on the Danube River, the aquatic route connecting the countries of Western and Middle Europe to the countries of the South-eastern and Eastern Europe. Its harbor is visited by ships from the Black Sea, and with the deployment of the Rhine-Main-Danube channel it found itself at the center of the most important aquatic route in Europe: Northern Sea – Atlantic – Black Sea. Due to

84 <http://www.tob.rs/not-to-be-missed-in-belgrade>

85 <http://www.tob.rs/belgrade-sightseeing-tours/belgrade-walks>

86 <http://www.tob.rs/tourist-organization-of-belgrade/special/belgrade-city-break>.

87 www.tob.rs

its position, it was rightfully named “Gates of the Balkans” and the “Doors of Middle Europe.”⁸⁸

Belgrade info guides provide similar information. Here are representative examples of the retrieved material:

“River Banks the Danube and Sava, two big and exciting rivers, frame the portrait of Belgrade and finish the painting of its character. They are also the mirror over which this city every day brings its diverse faces. The banks of Belgrade rivers are full of promenades and cycling treks, rafts with cafés and restaurants and clubs, sports centers, beaches and playgrounds. And people, of course. Day and night.”⁸⁹

“Belgrade sits at the confluence of the Sava and Danube Rivers, and this vantage point is without doubt the best position to take in this majesty. We whole heartedly recommend heading here for the sunset, as there really is no more romantic way to herald the end of the day.”⁹⁰

What is striking is that any interpretation of historical and cultural significance is missing from these descriptions. Like in the rest of the website, in these guides neither the confluence of rivers nor the island are listed and mentioned as Belgrade’s cultural attractions. The issue here is not the concept of *Attraction*, but the fact that these sites are not presented nor interpreted as sufficiently significant.⁹¹

The only section where the rivers, *The Belgrade Confluence* and the island are mentioned and interpreted is the one devoted to guided tours. Namely, on the boat tour “interesting stories about this area” are provided.⁹² However, employees at the *Tourist Info Points* around the city confirmed (in an informal conversation) that there are no tours offering a narration about the historical and cultural significance of *The Belgrade Confluence*. I personally tested a tour on the Great War Island, organized by the Municipality of Zemun and what I found out is that the island is left in a state of disrepair: very few signs, untidy paths, no bins or benches and practically no information in terms of the cultural and historical significance of the island.

88 [http://www.tob.rs/tourist-organization-of-belgrade/about-belgrade/belgrade -location](http://www.tob.rs/tourist-organization-of-belgrade/about-belgrade/belgrade-location).

89 <http://www.tob.rs/download/TOB%20-%2096%20sati%20u%20Beogradu%20-%20engleski.pdf>.

90 [http://www.tob.rs/download/BIG%2005%20s .pdf](http://www.tob.rs/download/BIG%2005%20s.pdf).

91 <http://www.tob.rs/media/download>.

92 <http://www.tob.rs/belgrade-sightseeing-tours/sightseeing-by-ship>

As far as the *National Tourism Organization of Serbia*'s website is concerned, two sections are interesting for this research. One refers to Belgrade in the section regarding *Cities as destinations* in Serbia and another one is the Great War Island in the *Protected landscape*. In the text about Belgrade, its unique geographical position is mentioned in passing. However, the period between 1403 and 1841 is described in only one sentence: "Belgrade was later ruled by the Turks, and the Austrians also attacked and conquered the city", even though this period is crucial in terms of the heritage left during Austrian and Ottoman rule at that time.⁹³

The text about the Great War Island describes solely its natural characteristics, not mentioning any of the historical events or facts that occurred there. This website also does not mention the Great War Island, the rivers or the confluence among Belgrade's cultural and historical landmarks.⁹⁴ On the other hand, the section *Protected landscape* has a whole page referring to the Great War Island, but only in the context of natural landscape, that is, explaining its flora, fauna and nature protection zones.⁹⁵

To conclude, an analysis of *The Belgrade City Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments* and *The Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia* confirmed one of the dilemmas about the approach towards the interpretation of the area studied in this work. There is obviously a sharp distinction between a natural and cultural interpretation on the part of Belgrade's relevant institutions. Revising this distinction might be one of the first steps to undertake in order to improve the significance of *The Belgrade Confluence* in historic, cultural and subsequently tourist and urban sense. Another sharp distinction lies between material and immaterial heritage interpretation.

The Belgrade Rivers, the Sava, the Danube, *The Belgrade Confluence* and the Great War Island are mentioned mostly as records: there is actually a lack of articles supporting the contemporary or past existence of interpretation of the Belgrade rivers, their confluence and the island in a historical and cultural perspective. This deserves further insight, considering the fact that the government's "Strategy for development of

93 <http://www.serbia.travel/destinations/cities-and-municipalities/Bograd.a-18.692.html>.

94 <http://www.serbia.travel/destinations/cities-and-municipalities/Bograd.a-18.692.html>.

95 <http://www.serbia.travel/nature/protectedlandscapes/Vliko-ratno-ostrvo.a-246.627.html>.

Belgrade 2011-2016” (an official document available to the public), emphasises the significance of this area by mentioning it in the section *Urban development and identity*: “The capital symbol of Belgrade’s European identity is his *natural core* – The confluence of the Sava and Danube with the Great War Island.”⁹⁶

In her book, *Exploring Media Discourse* Macdonald discusses the four roles of the media within discourse and critical thinking. These may be summarised as follows: media reflect reality; media represent reality; media operate discursively; media offer simulations (Macdonald 2003). Taking this and similar notions into consideration, the conclusion might be that Serbian newspapers’ discourses reflect reality to a certain extent. The interpretation of this area is poor or completely missing, both in terms of tools (Info Boards or signs around the area) and of narration of any kind.

	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II	I	II
Austrian/Habsburg	18	790	26	870	6	601	8	674	4	689	7	704	1	663	7	474	3	698	13	705	2	431
Turks/Ottoman	35	1158	35	1197	5	1175	8	1188	7	1042	17	1154	3	1040	0	?	7	1149	26	1051	2	497
Great War Island	26	319	13	119	0	57	11	66	7	105	8	117	1	88	1	78	2	109	6	99	0	14
Belgrade rivers, Sava, Danube, Cofluence	24	869	14	860	19	935	29	960	29	959	26	965	17	972	11	?	37	969	15	977	4	832

Table 15: **I**—Number of analysed articles; **II**—Total number of articles found by given keyword; **?**—Missing data

Table 15 shows the overall number of articles in which the selected keywords appeared (column I). Column II lists the number of articles relevant to this research.

Previous results confirm the initial hypothesis. However, many other resources might be analysed in the future to endorse these findings, such as school programs and other media sources (TV, radio, Internet). The analysis I have conducted so far shows that the printed or published material created by newspapers and governmental institutions on

⁹⁶ Institute for Urbanism of Belgrade and Palgo Center, 2011.

the area is incomplete or insufficient. This will be researched further in the form of semi-structured interviews with professionals in the field.

4.2 Semi-structured interviews to relevant actors

4.2.1 Definition of the empirical methods for interview conducting

In order to complete the first part of the research outlined in this chapter of the thesis, experts from the fields taken into consideration were interviewed and their answers analysed against the initial hypothesis that “natural and cultural heritage in Belgrade is not adequately interpreted”. The used format is the semi-structured interview, a qualitative approach that provides enough room for a comfortable analysis of the answers received or for an open discussion.

The aim of this type of approach is to research and analyse the interviewee’s personal perception of a certain subject. This approach includes a detailed and systematized method referring to a small number of examples (in this case eight). During the (mostly) informal conversations with the interviewees, I had an opportunity to touch upon various questions besides pre-set ones. This provided an insight into issues and circumstances of which I was previously unaware. In a semi-structured interviews, we can enter delve deeper into the problem, focusing more thoroughly on the interpretations and perspectives the interviewee provide (Sladović Franz, Kregar Orešković and Vejmelka 2007). Thanks to the structure and format of this method, the scope of discussion is broadened, thereby promoting a better understanding and clarification of the matters under scrutiny. This detailed enquiry of the interviewees’ individual perspectives makes semi-structured interviews one of the most common methods in qualitative research (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Also, since this method brings us closer to individual and thorough perceptions, it is usually effective for gaining a grasp of matters that are not immediately or superficially perceptible, and consequently a more articulate view of the wider picture (Laforest 2009). Another reason for the frequent use of semi-structured

interviews lies in the possibility to conduct the analysis in many ways. The conversation between the interviewer and interviewee changes directions during the interview, which allows improvisation and the revelation of new sub-topics and issues (Viligi 2016).

4.2.2 Presentation of the interviewees and paraphrasing of interviews

In the following section, eight paraphrased extracts from interviews are provided, along with brief presentations of the interviewees and the institutions, organisations, or associations they are employed in. All the interviews were conducted and recorded in April 2017, and their paraphrased versions were translated into English.

(NOTE: **Q** = question; **A** = answer)

Saša Mihajlov is an art historian and an expert associate at the *National Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments in Belgrade* (the institution whose materials were examined in the previous part of the research). She is a PhD candidate in the History of Art at the Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade. Mihajlov has been involved in numerous manifestations regarding cultural heritage promotion and management in Belgrade. She is a member of various teams and associations that work for the protection and promotion of heritage in Belgrade.

The National Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments in Belgrade was founded in 1960, as a city cultural institution with national significance. There are 333 immovable cultural assets under the protection of this institute (cultural monuments, physical cultural and historical sites, archaeological sites, and sights). The Institute is engaged in the protection of all the 17 municipalities in Belgrade. Occasionally, it participates in national projects with the *Republic Institute* and with regional organisms. The activities on the protection of the cultural assets within the Institute are performed by associates like historians of arts, architects, archaeologists, ethnologist, lawyers,

draftsmen, specialized construction workers, and by other administrative and technical services.⁹⁷

Q. What do you think about Sava, Danube, Belgrade Confluence and their significance for Belgrade in cultural and/or historic sense?

A. The rivers, their confluence and the Great War Island are inseparable from the Belgrade Fortress in a historical sense. That geo-strategic position was the reason why the fortress was built there in the first place. This integration is the recognizable Belgrade landscape, which has not only cultural, historical and aesthetic value, but social value as well, since it is present in a daily contemporary context. It is mentioned in both heritage and tourism promotional materials as a visual identifier of Belgrade and as a sort of a toponym.

Q. Are the materials regarding the history of the area around the confluence present in your institution?

A. They are present, but only insofar as they refer to the Belgrade Fortress (a Monument of Culture of Exceptional Importance since 1979). *The Belgrade Confluence* is mentioned indirectly in these materials due to the fact that the Belgrade Fortress stands above it. However, in the perspective of natural heritage or landscape it is not mentioned at all. One of the reasons is that Serbian law does not recognize landscape as a legal form. However, our institution, which takes care of the material heritage of the Belgrade Fortress, refers to the riverbanks and the confluence because they create the famous visual identity of Belgrade.

Q. Do you think that the area of *The Belgrade Confluence* is clearly interpreted in a cultural-historical sense?

A. Yes, I think it is. However, I do not think that there is an integrity, a synergy between natural and cultural elements, probably because we still do not recognize cultural landscape as a concept. Certainly, when interpreting material heritage, we look back at

⁹⁷ <http://www.beograd.rs/index.php?lang=cir&andkat=beo&info&andsub=202324%3F>.

the natural features and vice versa, but there would be many more benefits if this synergy were recognized. Unfortunately, the present law and policies are making that impossible.

Q. How do you see the roles of your institution and of the State in this matter?

A. The State could change the legal framework that could empower this synergy. As far as our institution is concerned, we are doing our best to enable and promote cooperation among institutions. In fact, all of us recognize in practice *The Belgrade Confluence* as a cultural landscape, but since it does not have official legal status as such, this classification is not applied and exploited as it could be.

Q. What about the interpretation of foreign cultures that left traces in the area of the confluence, is it appropriate, sufficient?

A. For instance, the Ottoman heritage is not neglected at all. On the contrary, in the last several years, numerous contracts between Serbia and Turkey have brought to the improvement of that situation. The most significant Ottoman heritage is protected on the territory of Belgrade, especially thanks to a strong connection and good cooperation with the Islamic community. The heritage of other cultures is also well protected and managed. Unlike Vojvodina,⁹⁸ Belgrade is not a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic place, therefore the answer cannot be complex as it would be there.

Q. Are you familiar with the “Strategy for the development of Belgrade 2011-2016”, which emphasizes the significance of this area by mentioning it in the section Urban development and identity as follows: “The capital symbol of Belgrade’s European identity is its natural core – The confluence of the Sava and the Danube with Great War Island”? Can you comment on that?

A. I am familiar with that strategy, but not with that particular statement. However, I know that this strategy emphasizes the significance of both natural and cultural heritage for the development of Belgrade.

Q. How would you comment on the idea that the natural core of Belgrade represents its “European” identity?

⁹⁸ Vojvodina is an autonomous province of Serbia, located in the northern part of the country, in the Pannonian Plain.

A. I agree with it since Belgrade was “born” on the confluence of rivers Sava and Danube due to these natural prerequisites. The Belgrade Fortress is the “first Belgrade”. In addition, Danube is a European river that connects many countries and is a central topic for numerous European, transnational projects.

Q. So, you think that Belgrade has a clearly-defined identity?

A. I think so. Besides the confluence area with the Belgrade Fortress (we must not forget the Victor monument located there), there is mountain Avala with the Monument to the Unknown Hero and Avala Tower. These are the symbols of Belgrade that identify it.

Q. Are you familiar with the proposals of the following projects: *Belgrade Waterfront*, *Ušće Park*, *The Big Flag and Funicular*, all located around the confluence?

A. I am, particularly because they are presented in the media as something practically certain to happen.

Q. Do you think that these projects could confirm or change the existing identity of Belgrade?

A. As far as cultural heritage is concerned, these projects could drastically change the skyline of Belgrade. In particular, the *Belgrade Waterfront* will change the skyline of the entire city, not only of the neighbourhood where is located. Belgrade will not be visible as it used to be due to the size of the *Belgrade Waterfront* structures. The *Funicular* will aesthetically change the picture of Belgrade but it will not influence it conceptually. *The Ušće Park* will only modernize and renovate the existing green area and will not change the identity of Belgrade by no means.

To conclude, the aesthetics of these projects is something that can be discussed or not: they will influence the skyline and the views of Belgrade, but not that much the identity of the city itself.

Q. We come back to the concept of landscape. Serbia signed and ratified the *European Landscape Convention* in 2011. However, you mentioned that policies do not recognize it; can you comment on that, please?

A. We all (experts in this field) recognize this convention in practice; our institution even organized a conference entitled “The cultural landscape” in 2016. However, “to call things by their proper name”, we need to wait for legal procedures (currently ongoing) to be completed. In addition, since Serbia is striving to join the European Union, we will have to adjust legislation accordingly, so I think that this one, regarding the recognition of landscape will be applied as well.

The problem is that our basic concepts differ from the European ones in terms of types of cultural heritage for instance. Therefore, our laws and concepts will have to be adjusted and identified with those issued by Europe if Serbia joins the EU. I definitely agree that natural and cultural heritage should be interpreted as a unity, in cases where they interact (as the example of the confluence).

Q. If this occurs and cultural landscape becomes recognized as a legal form, will there be a need for a new institution to manage cultural landscape as a concept, or some existing one could deal with it?

A. Definitely: existing institutions would do. The *Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments* and *Institute for the Nature Conservation of Serbia* could be the main actors. Although I guess it will be challenging with this particular area because it could be managed by a number of various institutions.

Danijela Filipović, MA in Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology. She is a curator and coordinator for the national cooperation and education in the *Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage of Serbia*.

The Centre for the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Serbia was established in the Ethnographic Museum of Belgrade in 2012. The Centre has based its activities upon the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, adopted in 2003 (a convention ratified by the *Assembly of the Republic of Serbia* in May 2010). The goal of the Centre is the achievement of better status for intangible cultural

heritage as an important resource within the project, in the field of social and economic development.⁹⁹

Q. What are the symbols or characteristics of Belgrade in your opinion?

A. Definitely Kalemegdan¹⁰⁰ with its fortress, and Skadarlija¹⁰¹.

Q. What do you think about Sava, Danube, Belgrade Confluence and their significance for Belgrade in cultural and/or historic sense?

A. Belgrade's geographical position and natural setup defined the development of the city in every sense. One of the main characteristics of Belgrade is its geographical position.

Q. Are materials related to the interpretation of this area (in a natural, cultural and historical sense) present in your institution?

A. Maybe, but barely. Simply, it is not our focus.

Q. To what extent is an interpretation of this area (in a natural, cultural and historical sense) available for locals and visitors?

A. A cultural-historical interpretation is generally more available than a natural interpretation. Numerous guided tours explain historical facts without referring to environmental features, in particular if we speak about the Great War Island. In addition, I think that the symbiosis between natural and cultural aspects is not taken into consideration.

Q. What is the role of the state in that interpretation?

A. First, the biggest problem is the fact that interpretation is fragmented (natural and cultural aspects are separated). Heritage in Belgrade is observed and managed separately and not as an entity, which I find problematic. We have fragmentation even

⁹⁹ <http://www.nkns.rs/en>.

¹⁰⁰ Kalemegdan is the oldest the city park, founded in 1870. It is a green environment within and around the Belgrade Fortress (<http://www.tob.rs/what-to-see/green-belgrade/kalemegdan-park>).

¹⁰¹ Skadarlija is the "bohemian quarter" of Belgrade with numerous taverns, restaurants, bars and quaint inns. This is one of the Belgrade's key attractions (<http://www.tob.rs/what-to-see/attractions/skadarlija>).

within the same categories: for instance, some institutions deal with material, others only with immaterial cultural heritage. This is something that cultural policies could change and improve.

Q. Are you familiar with the “Strategy for development of Belgrade 2011-2016”, which emphasizes the significance of this area by mentioning it in the section on urban development and identity in these terms: “The capital symbol of Belgrade’s European identity is its natural core – The confluence of the Sava and Danube with the Great War Island”? Can you comment on that?

A. I do not think that this statement is applied in practice. I am familiar with several individual, non-governmental initiatives that attempt to apply it. However, they are not co-ordinated or harmonized, and usually are short-term.

Q. How would you comment on the idea that the natural core of Belgrade represents its “European” identity?

A. Belgrade has its own identity, which is a mixture of European and Oriental elements. In addition, if the European identity of Belgrade is the one being emphasized, I do not see that being done sufficiently.

Q. Are you familiar with the proposals of the following projects: *Belgrade Waterfront, Ušće Park, The Big Flag and Funicular*, all located around the confluence?

A. Yes I am.

Q. Do you think that these projects could confirm or change the existing identity of Belgrade?

A. Well, I think that these projects lack co-ordination (I think that this is one of the most serious problems in our profession in general).

Q. Serbia signed and ratified the *European Landscape Convention* in 2011. Could it be applied to *The Belgrade Confluence*?

A. I believe so. However, this convention is not fully implemented within our legal framework and there is some necessary work to be done in order to achieve that.

Q. If this convention becomes fully applied, and cultural landscape becomes recognized as a legal form, will there be a need for a new institution to manage cultural landscape as a concept, or some existing one could deal with it?

A. No, there will be no need for new institutions. I do think that existing institutions need to change their perspectives and approach to various matters. There is no need for new institutions when the capacities of the existing ones are not exploited as they could be.

Q. Can you tell me something about the interpretation of cultural heritage that cannot be classified as material since it no longer exists (for instance, significant structures – churches, mosques, bridges or similar that were destroyed and have left behind no visible traces) or about the interpretation of historical events, again a measure of immaterial heritage. Can these segments of heritage be interpreted by *storytelling*?

A. Some colleagues use storytelling as a test for the creation of new tourist products. In fact, storytelling might compensate for the missing interpretation of artefacts that are no longer visible. It would be great if materials from libraries, archives and museums could be collected and used for this purpose.

Q. Does your Centre ever use storytelling?

A. No, I do not think so. On the institutional level, *storytelling* is not used in Serbia. Maybe just on the local level, in some private initiatives, and non-governmental organizations.

Jasna Dimitrijević has held leading roles in cultural/tourism institutions and the public sector for the last thirty years. She was general manager of the main public institutions in Belgrade, like *Sava Centar*, *Dom Omladine*, and the *Tourist Organization of Belgrade*. Currently she holds the same position at the *Kolarac Cultural Foundation* in Belgrade. Her main interests are art, culture, heritage and cultural tourism.

Q. What are the symbols or characteristics of Belgrade in your opinion?

A. Ambient areas that symbolize Belgrade are *The Belgrade Fortress*, *Ada Ciganlija*¹⁰², *Knez Mihailova*¹⁰³ and *Skadarlija*. As far as the cultural zones of the city are concerned, *Vasina Street* with all its institutions, theatres, museums and universities comes first. The second one is *Savamala*, a district along the river, the third one is *Dorcol Platz*¹⁰⁴ and the fourth is *Cetinjska Street*¹⁰⁵. Two other zones of Belgrade worth mentioning are *Senjak* and *Novi Beograd*.

Q. What do you think about the significance of the Sava, the Danube and their confluence for Belgrade in a cultural and/or historical sense?

A. I think that a story about them might be very interesting both for foreigners who do not know Belgrade and for locals who know it. It is a story about the view over Belgrade, dating back to the Ottoman rule. That area in fact embraces several sites and activities: underground Belgrade, cruising the Belgrade rivers, visiting the “oasis” in the middle of the city. From this vantage point, the entire history of the city could be reconstructed. Cultural offers that include two galleries, underground spaces and a cycling path along the rivers would be very attractive for visitors.

Q. Do you think that the area of the confluence is well or enough interpreted in a cultural-historical sense? Apart from the *Belgrade Fortress*.

A. I do not think that this interpretation is available. The only narration about this area is the one that refers to the contemporary context, in terms of relaxation, nightlife and recreation. I have participated in most of the guided tours and a narration of the cultural-historical significance of *The Belgrade Confluence* is absent. There is definitely

102 Ada Ciganlija is called “Belgrade Sea”. It is an artificial lake with long beach around it and vast green and forest area, which people use for sport, recreation and relaxation <http://www.tob.rs/what-to-see/attractions/ada-ciganlija>.

103 Knez Mihailova is the pedestrian zone and commercial centre. Knez Mihailova Street is protected by law since it is one of the oldest and most important monumental urban environments <http://www.tob.rs/what-to-see/attractions/knez-mihailova>.

104 Dorcol Platz is an area in the historic part of Belgrade, transformed into a cultural/artistic centre, whose members are trying to promote awareness about the ecological, technological, cultural and artistic significance of sustainable development (<http://dorcolplatz.rs/en/about-us/goals/>).

105 Cetinjska Street is the new nightlife district in the heart of the previous industrial zone

little awareness of the historical significance of the rivers, their banks and the Great War Island.

Q. How do you see the role of the State in this matter?

A. The role of the State is reflected in the *Tourist Organization of Belgrade* and *Tourist Organization of Serbia* as two main public organizations that deal with tourism and the interpretation of natural and cultural elements in Belgrade. That means that someone needs to work on that area and transform it into a tourist product, that way starting to work toward raising awareness about the historical significance of the rivers and confluence.

Q. Are you familiar with the “Strategy for development of Belgrade 2011-2016”, which emphasizes the significance of this area by mentioning it in the section on urban development and identity in these terms: “The capital symbol of Belgrade’s European identity is its natural core – The confluence of the Sava and Danube with the Great War Island”? Can you comment on that?

A. First, I perceive the idea of Belgrade’s identity through its people. I think that during the nineties, when Serbia was in isolation, we were unable to define our identity as European. However, starting from the year 2000, we got it back through communication with people who came to Belgrade, left Belgrade or stayed in Belgrade, as well as through the reconstruction of its infrastructure. As far as an emphasis on the confluence in that strategy is concerned, I think that the only thing that is applied in practice from that statement regards the infrastructure of that area: reconstruction of some objects, construction of the cycling paths, etc. As we said, there is no interpretation of that area, although it is emphasized in the Strategy.

Q. Do you think that the citizens and visitors of Belgrade are aware of the city’s layered cultural identity?

A. I believe so. Locals more or less know which areas or sites in the city belong to which culture (Ottoman’s, Habsburg’s, and so on).

Q. Are you familiar with the proposals of the following projects: *Belgrade Waterfront, Ušće Park, The Big Flag and Funicular*, all located around the confluence?

A. Yes I am.

Q. Do you think that these projects could confirm or change the existing identity of Belgrade?

A. I think they can strengthen the existing identity of these places. These new symbols will create stories that are missing in the tourist offer of Belgrade. Tourists do not seek historical facts, but attractions. However, if these projects do not provide a certain experience, story, or narration of particular historical events or facts, tourists will not be satisfied. Our tourism lack stories.

Q. Serbia signed and ratified the *European Landscape Convention* in 2011. Could it be applied to *The Belgrade Confluence*?

A. Yes, because it possesses all the necessary elements to be defined as cultural landscape.

Visnja Kisić is an art historian, curator, museologist, researcher and cultural manager, whose interests focus on heritage management and interpretation on one side, and activism, social and human development on the other. She holds a PhD in Strategic Heritage Management as a model for generating societal values. She received the *Cultural Policy Research Award* in 2013 on cultural policy tools related to dissonant heritage. Visnja is a Secretary General of *Europa Nostra Serbia*, initiating and managing several heritage-related initiatives in the South East region of Europe.

Europa Nostra Serbia is a non-profit and non-governmental organization established in 2007 in Belgrade, dedicated to raising awareness of cultural heritage as a basic right of every citizen. They are a Country Representative of the biggest pan-European heritage network, *Europa Nostra*, which represents more than 250 non-governmental organizations, 150 associate organizations and 1500 individual members from more than 50 European countries dedicated to safeguarding the cultural heritage and landscape of the continent.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ <http://europanostra-serbia.org/en/>

Q. What are the symbols or characteristics of Belgrade in your opinion?

A. The most important characteristic about Belgrade is its layered heritage. For instance: *Kalemegdan*—medieval Belgrade and a place on the confluence where Belgrade started to develop; *Dorcol and Kralja Petra*, with numerous layers, from mosque to church, the synagogue around the corner, cobblestone streets; present multicultural Belgrade, in particular, 19th century Belgrade with its various communities and cultures; Urbanized Belgrade – *Terazije* and *Knez Mihailova Street*. Finally, communist-socialist Belgrade.

Q. What do official, relevant organizations recognize as significant in Belgrade, in your opinion?

A. Rarely can we hear in their guided tours or routes information on what used to exist in Belgrade and is now gone. We never hear how a given site speaks about its history by the absence of features (of layers, structures, etc.). I find this relation between a place and its previous (and present) significance very important. Over the last two centuries, it has been easy for us to destroy (or others have done it through bombings) and rebuild, without looking back to what was there previously. One of the examples is the *Belgrade Waterfront* and other grandiose projects currently ongoing. We do not have appropriate respect for the past.

Q. What do you think about Sava, Danube, *The Belgrade Confluence* and their significance for Belgrade in cultural and/or historic sense?

A. I spent a lot of time on a small boat, floating down these rivers, so in time I have developed a completely different perspective on Belgrade from the rivers. I find the fact that in the centre of the city we have such an oasis as the Great War Island fascinating. The natural feature of the confluence is much closer to me than the cultural/historic one, until I start wondering about what happened there, about the borders, the name of the island, etc.

Q. Are materials regarding the cultural-historical significance of the area around the confluence present in your institution?

A. The online platform *Beopatrimonium*¹⁰⁷ gives everyone a chance to interpret the city heritage, by mapping locations of their own choice. When we were thinking about the site's logo, we decided to use the image of *The Belgrade Confluence* as the most recognizable image of Belgrade.

Q. Do you think that the area of the confluence is interpreted well or enough in a cultural-historical sense?

A. It is not interpreted at all, although I cannot guarantee that some tourist guides perhaps interpret it somehow. However, on a general level, we did not do anything to interpret that area.

Q. Who is responsible for that?

A. First, the *Tourist Organization of Belgrade*, the *National Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments*, the *Institute for the Nature Conservation of Serbia*, and various institutions and organizations that deal with these matters. Citizens associations could intervene with smaller, non-intrusive projects, but governmental institutions are responsible for a long-term interpretation.

Q. What about the interpretation of foreign cultures that left traces in the area of the confluence? Is it appropriate, sufficient?

A. It is inadequate. There is some awareness about the previous presence of the Ottomans and Habsburgs, but all the other peoples who left traces (and there are many) are not mentioned and interpreted at all. If we take the confluence simply as a conjunction of two rivers, it loses its historical and cultural value that certainly possesses. We need to work on its valorisation.

Q. Are you familiar with the “Strategy for development of Belgrade 2011-2016”, which emphasizes the significance of this area by mentioning it in the section on urban development and identity in these terms: “The capital symbol of Belgrade’s European identity is its natural core – The confluence of the Sava and Danube with the Great War Island”? Can you comment on that?

107 <http://www.beopatrimonium.com/>

A. First, I do not like the idea that the natural core could represent the European identity of Belgrade. It seems to me that we like to insert European identity everywhere, even into elements that are unburdened of the need to be identified as such, for instance some natural heritage site. It would be better if this statement was narrowed down and explained further by historical facts or notions. In its present form, I find it quite problematic. In addition, I think that city policies do not recognize and apply this statement at all. City authorities promote that area as the nightlife hub of Belgrade with floating rafts around it, and seem very proud of it. The problem is that other key attractions of that area are not emphasized as much as the floating rafts are.

Q. What do you think about the identity of Belgrade?

A. I realized (with the help of others that pointed that out to me) that I always emphasize Belgrade when explaining where I come from. Mentioning Serbia comes after. I tend to think of Belgrade as the metropolis, the capital, the epicentre. Another impression that comes to my mind when you ask me about Belgrade's identity is negligence and constant lack of proper urban planning.

Q. Are you familiar with the proposals of the following projects: *Belgrade Waterfront, Ušće Park, The Big Flag and Funicular*, all located around the confluence?

A. Yes I am, apart from the *Big Flag*.

Q. Do you think that these projects could confirm or change the existing identity of Belgrade?

A. Well, I see these projects as quite distinct. First, all of them seem very intrusive. It seems that these projects lack any kind of understanding of landscape in its geomorphological, aesthetic and meaningful sense. In addition, people who propose these projects do not seem to care about the past and the values that these places possess in a cultural or historical sense. They emphasize national features, glorify Belgrade as a capital and support capitalism. I find this frightening for the development of Belgrade. It seems that all these projects are just positioned in some space/place without providing any real contact with it.

Q. Serbia signed and ratified the *European Landscape Convention* in 2011. Can you tell me something about the use of the concept *landscape* in Serbia?

A. I do not think that landscape as a concept is much recognized and used here. That mostly depends on the employees in the institutions that deal with heritage, natural, cultural and urban areas. It depends on their understanding, motivation, innovation and inter-sectorial cooperation. I doubt that there will be any results. There are just a few good examples where public institutions recognize the significance of landscape as a concept and put some effort into its implementation (I am thinking for instance of *Gostusa*¹⁰⁸ village). The most important public institutions (*Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, National Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments, Institute for the Nature Conservation of Serbia, Institute for Urban Development*) are often limited by legal obstacles. I do not understand the reason for that, when they are the ones that create frameworks for the protection, sustainable promotion and interpretation of heritage and no one is stopping them from cooperating and acting on a higher level.

There are numerous projects and funds from the European Union and not only, that actually support this kind of cooperation and initiatives, but it seems that people here like to stay and work within old frameworks they are accustomed to. There is a lot of apathy in our institutions, where the easiest thing is to justify everything in terms of legal obstacles. On the other hand, when there is a strong political will, there is no problem to overcome legal tangles or to change the level of protection or valorisation of certain site or territory in order to transform its use. The big issue is that citizens and their associations are not involved in decision-making at all.

Q. Could that convention be applied to *The Belgrade Confluence*?

A. Yes, it could be applied to many other places in Serbia as well, but on the confluence particularly.

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.europanostra.org/serbia-conservation-study-village-gostusa-receives-european-heritage-award-3108/>

Andrija Stojanović, MA in Cultural Management and Media, University of Arts, Belgrade. He is the co-founder of the association *Tačka komunikacije*. Andrija's focus is primarily on themes of cultural heritage and cultural tourism.

The *Tačka komunikacije* association was founded in 2011 by a group of cultural management professionals and cultural theorists. Their activities focus primarily on themes of cultural heritage and cultural tourism. By making use of new media tools, they work on collecting, archiving, presenting and promoting the heritage of local communities. The aim of the organisation is to raise awareness of these themes and engage the public in the preservation and reproduction of social history. This is one of the rare associations in Belgrade actively involved in these topics.

Q. What are the symbols or characteristics of Belgrade in your opinion?

A. Belgrade has several symbols, also in a form of memorabilia (for instance the *Dzivdžan* Sparrow). However, if I need to say what Belgrade is.... Belgrade is its rivers. In my opinion, the iconic image of Belgrade is its confluence; it is a view you can have from *Kalemegdan* looking at the rivers. In fact, the basic symbol of Belgrade is its position.

Q. Do you think that the Sava, the Danube and their confluence are significant for Belgrade in a cultural and/or historical sense?

A. I think they defined history of Belgrade. Their significance is much bigger in a geo-political than in purely natural sense. At present, rivers are no longer systematically used in the everyday life of Belgrade. Rivers as resources are not exploited as much as they could be. They are becoming available only to people who live near them, or to those who have the money to exploit them. On the other hand, there are still some untouched oases with practically wild features.

Q. Do you think that an interpretation of this area is available to citizens and visitors of Belgrade?

A. No, I do not. I believe that public institutions should be the main actors in that interpretation. I do not see that they are doing it (at least from a professional point of view). I definitely believe that the state should have this area in focus; I am not a fan of creative industries. The state should be the carrier of inter-sectorial cooperation, both among governmental and non-governmental actors.

Q. Speaking about that, can you comment on the situation among sectors working in the field of culture, heritage and tourism? Are they strictly separated or not?

A. I think there is a big problem with stereotypes and wrong perceptions. People here tend to think someone outside the country is financing the non-governmental sector. On the other hand, some believe that the governmental sector is doing nothing except enjoying their privileged positions. Therefore, we come to the situation where public institutions are not creative and innovative as non-governmental institutions are, but they do not want to acknowledge that. In addition, among public institutions, in particular because of this lack of vision, we have fragmentation and a lack of cooperation. Public authorities are not motivated by a long-term view. The State is retreating from culture (everywhere, not only here).

Q. What about the interpretation of foreign cultures that left traces in the area of confluence? Is it appropriate, sufficient?

A. There is a presence of other cultures in Belgrade. However, I think that they are not interpreted, at least not enough. The citizens of Belgrade are not aware of that heritage.

Q. Are you familiar with the “Strategy for development of Belgrade 2011-2016”, which emphasizes the significance of this area by mentioning it in the section on urban development and identity in these terms: “The capital symbol of Belgrade’s European identity is its natural core – The confluence of the Sava and Danube with the Great War Island”? Can you comment on that?

A. This statement is not applied in practice at all.

Q. What do you think about the identity of Belgrade?

A. I understand the mentioned European identity as multi-cultural or inter-cultural, which is now undergoing a crisis in my view. I can tell you what I find “European” in Belgrade—the modernization of it, in particular after the Second World War. Belgrade does not have the characteristics of a pure South European, East European, Oriental city, etc., but rather some traces of them.

Q. Do you think that the citizens and visitors of Belgrade are aware of the city's layered cultural identity?

A. They have an intuitive idea about it (in particular thanks to the obvious, visual layers of the city – architecture and urban features), but not a clear one definitely. For instance, lately there is an idea about Belgrade as a “new Berlin” because of its “lifestyle” and nightlife. However, I think that this is wrong and confusing.

Q. If you are familiar with the proposals of the following projects: *Belgrade Waterfront*, *Ušće Park*, *The Big Flag and Funicular*, all located around the confluence, can you comment on them?

A. First, the idea of these projects and the way they are being implemented do not demonstrate that rivers and their banks are available for everyone. For instance, the *Big Flag* Project is absurd; I really do not understand the need for such an emphasis on nationality. I find this idea a pure spectacle and show of power. People who support these projects tend to consider those who oppose them as people against modernization, which is wrong. Everything is black and white here; people should be involved in decision-making. The process of “moving” Belgrade towards its rivers should be long and thorough. There are numerous good examples where governments organize referendums on such big decisions.

Q. Serbia signed and ratified the *European Landscape Convention* in 2011. Can you tell me something about the use of the concept *landscape* in Serbia?

A. I have never encountered this concept in any project here.

Tanja Kukobat is Head of the *Office for Local Economic Development*, Municipality of Zemun, Belgrade. She holds an MA in Environmental Protection in Agriculture. Kukobat's main interest is the protection and the promotion of the Great War Island's natural characteristics.

Q. Do you think that the citizens of Belgrade are aware of the facts about the Great War Island?

A. Definitely not, not even people from Zemun (Great War Island is located in Zemun). We are trying hard to “spread the word” about the Great War Island, primarily because we are afraid that some investor will show up and authorities will allow construction on the island.

Q. Are there any Info Boards that interpret the island to its potential visitors or strollers?

A. There are some Info Boards on the island regarding its protected areas and environmental information. However, there are no Info Boards across the rivers, on their banks.

Q. Who is responsible for the Great War Island?

A. The Great War Island is under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Zemun, but City of Belgrade finances it.

Q. Is the Great War Island interpreted in a cultural-historical sense somehow?

A. Not at all. I must admit that has never crossed my mind until now, but I completely agree that it should be.

Irena Jerković is a graduated journalist with an eight-year-long experience in TV journalism, currently working in the sphere of public relations. She has been working for the national *Avala* and *RTS* television channels as a director and journalist in several educational and informative programs. Her main interests are nature and public interests.

Q. What are the symbols or characteristics of Belgrade in your opinion?

A. If you are asking me about the official politics that Belgrade as a city runs towards its identification among other cities, I do not think there is any. In my opinion, authorities are not doing well their job in creating a particular, pure Belgrade identity. There are many souvenirs that are being sold on the streets, but these are the symbols of Serbia, not Belgrade exclusively. There was an attempt with the *Dzivadzan* Sparrow, but it failed. Actually, speaking about that, birds might be symbol of Belgrade since they use

the Great War Island as one of the favourite places in Europe for nesting and mating. Therefore, I would definitely say that the rivers and *The Belgrade Confluence* are a symbol of the city (together with the Victor monument).

Q. What do you think about Sava, Danube, Belgrade Confluence and their significance for Belgrade in cultural and/or historic sense?

A. They are very significant. Belgrade is one of the rare capitals situated on the confluence of two international rivers (one of them – the Danube, being the second longest in Europe), whose geographical position completely determined its cultural and historical development.

The fight for riverbanks has completely defined the history of Belgrade to this day. Once, this fight represented defence from the great conquerors who wanted to rule over Belgrade. Now, it represents the social fight of citizens against those in power who want to seize the riverbanks and transform them regardless of their cultural and historical value.

Q. To what extent is an interpretation of *The Belgrade Confluence* present in media? Both in a natural and cultural-historical sense?

A. It is not present as nearly as much as it should be. As far as a natural interpretation is concerned, people can mostly hear news regarding the bird conservation area on the Great War Island, and nothing else. This happens thanks to the associations for environmental protection that are working hard to raise people's awareness about the natural significance of that area. In addition, I have noticed this recent improvement because I am a nature lover, so I am particularly interested in these topics. As far as a cultural-historical interpretation is concerned, practically it all comes to the Belgrade Fortress and its history, to the complete neglect of what happened on the other side of the rivers, in Zemun, or precisely on the confluence and the Great War Island.

Q. Is the interpretation of foreign cultures that left some traces on the confluence, adequate, sufficient or insufficient (in media)?

A. It is neither adequate nor sufficient. Occasionally, we hear about the influence of the Habsburg/Austrian/Austro-Hungarian rule for the architecture of Belgrade and Zemun particularly. The same goes for Ottoman influence. I am certain that a small number of Belgrade citizens knows something about the ancient *Vinca* culture or that they

visited this archaeological site. Some TV programs and newspaper articles are trying to bring these topics closer to Belgrade citizens; but unfortunately, the scope of the educational program in media is drastically decreasing and serves only to fill in the gaps between political and show business topics.

Q. Are you familiar with the “Strategy for development of Belgrade 2011-2016”, which emphasizes the significance of this area by mentioning it in the section on urban development and identity in these terms: “The capital symbol of Belgrade’s European identity is its natural core – The confluence of the Sava and Danube with the Great War Island”? Can you comment on that?

A. I support this statement, but I think that it is not applied in practice.

Q. Does Belgrade have a clearly defined identity?

A. I do not think so, especially as far as its tourist offer is concerned. Unfortunately, usually Belgrade is promoted as a cheap destination with a diverse and dynamic nightlife (which is a part of its identity, but not in that superficial sense). However, so many historical values are not promoted enough. One of the reasons for this might be the fact that museums, monuments and culture in general are not taken seriously by the State. The annual budget for culture is decreasing every year; museums are closed, and monuments are in horrible conditions. That is a shame for Belgrade and Serbia, and major flaw for the cultural-historical offer of Belgrade.

Q. If you are familiar with the proposals of the following projects: *Belgrade Waterfront*, *Ušće Park*, *The Big Flag and Funicular*, all located around the confluence, can you comment on them?

A. I am familiar with these projects. They are promoted in media as projects that would strengthen the identity of Belgrade. However, I do not agree with that. In particular, the *Belgrade Waterfront* will confirm the impression of Belgrade as a destination unable to properly use its unique geographical position (since this project offers shopping malls, luxury apartments, business complexes that will make this part of the city unavailable for citizens who cannot afford this kind of lifestyle). Aesthetically, this project will erase the most beautiful skyline of the city. The strongest impression about these projects is that

they neglect cultural and historical values of the confluence area and that authorities are not planning them in a transparent way.

Q. What is the role of media in this?

A. In my opinion, the media is being censored and therefore not objective and critical at all.

Miloš Nicić has lived in the area of confluence since he was born. Hence, his perspective as a local might be useful for this research. He holds a BA in tourism and hospitality management from Singidunum University and MA in Cultural studies at the Faculty of Political sciences, both in Belgrade. Miloš is currently pursuing a PhD in Cultural Studies at the same faculty, where he acts as a teaching assistant. His main interests are in heritage and tourism studies, post-socialist transformation and ideology.

Q. What are the symbols or characteristics of Belgrade in your opinion?

A. *Kalemegdan, Knez Mihailova Street, Victor Monument, Ada Ciganlija and Dorcol* are symbolic places of Belgrade in my opinion.

Q. Do you think that the Sava, the Danube and their confluence are significant for Belgrade in a cultural and/or historical sense?

A. Definitely. Especially because this area connects natural and cultural features of the city. We are constantly being reminded that Belgrade is the city on the confluence of two rivers. This area connects various contexts, such as natural, cultural, recreational, artistic, etc.

Q. Are you informed about the cultural and historical values of *The Belgrade Confluence*?

A. I believe so, although I could always know more of course. Considering that I live in that neighbourhood, I did not spend much time on the rivers, so I guess I lack that perspective of Belgrade. I must say that I know much more about the *Belgrade Fortress* than *The Belgrade Confluence* itself.

Q. What are the sources that you learned from about the history of this area?

A. Simply, since I was born and raised there, I learned about *Kalemegdan*, the *Belgrade Fortress* and the surrounding area through daily activities (walking, playing, spending time there), from family and teachers who used to take us there. However, everything was limited to *Kalemegdan* and the *Belgrade Fortress*; the rivers seemed far away, especially because the infrastructure along the banks was unsafe, unmarked, and in a state of disorder.

Q. To what extent is an interpretation of this area (in a natural, cultural and historical sense) available for locals and visitors?

A. I do not know what tourists are told during guided tours, but it seems to me that this interpretation is not available. For instance, in the infrastructural sense, it is not available: there are no info-boards or anything similar that provides explanations.

Q. Is the interpretation of other, foreign cultures that left some traces on the confluence, adequate, sufficient or insufficient?

A. I believe this interpretation is not sufficient. I repeat, for us, people who live in this neighbourhood, these traces have been more available, but that is another context, it is our local heritage. I do not think that *The Belgrade Confluence* was neglected because something else was in focus. However, it should be more emphasized, definitely.

Q. The “Strategy for development of Belgrade 2011-2016”, which emphasizes the significance of this area by mentioning it in the section on urban development and identity in these terms: “The capital symbol of Belgrade’s European identity is its natural core – The confluence of the Sava and Danube with the Great War Island”. Your comment please.

A. I think that statements like this need to be worked out in context: practice must be done on them. In a morphological sense, with regard to terrain, this is probably the most important point in Belgrade. Mainly because the city was born and developed starting from there.

Q. Does Belgrade have a clearly defined identity?

A. I am not sure about this. First, it depends on who is observing it. Second, we cannot compare the identities of Belgrade during the nineties, before, after, now...

However, I do think that Belgrade is a European city. Moreover, the *Belgrade Confluence* is a strong pillar for this, similarly to rivers in other European cities that were built on waterways.

Q. Are you familiar with the proposals of the following projects: *Belgrade Waterfront*, *Ušće Park*, *The Big Flag* and *Funicular*, all located around the confluence?

A. I am familiar with all, apart from the *Ušće Park*.

Q. Do you think that these projects could confirm or change the existing identity of Belgrade?

A. I think these projects could definitely change the identity of the city if they become realized. It depends on the contexts in which they will be used.

Q. What is the role of the State in this?

A. The city's authorities are very active in these space transformations. Another question should be if their role is integral in the revitalization of the awareness about that space.

4.2.3 Analysis of the interviews

Although questions for the interviewees are not identical, most of them focus on the same issues. This selection was made according to the professional sectors these people come from. All eight interviewees are employed in sectors relevant to this research; however, there are differences in their interests and job descriptions. In order to analyse the answers, questions have been grouped according to topics:

1. Symbols of Belgrade
2. The significance of *The Belgrade Confluence* (The Sava, The Danube, their confluence and the Great War Island) in natural and cultural terms
3. The interpretation of the natural and cultural significance of *The Belgrade Confluence*

4. The interpretation of foreign cultures that left traces in the area of the confluence.
5. The *Strategy for development of Belgrade 2011-2016* and its statement regarding the confluence as the natural core of Belgrade that represents its European identity
6. Belgrade's and its citizens' identity
7. Proposed projects: *Belgrade Waterfront, Ušće Park, The Big Flag and Funicular* and comments on them, with special regard to their influence on the city's identity.
8. The 2011 *European Landscape Convention* and its implementation in practice.

Practically all of these groups of questions were included in all the interviews. The only interview that is different from the others is the one with Kukobat, an expert in ecology and environmental matters, interested in the Great War Island's natural features. The reason is that she is employed in one of the municipalities (Zemun), and works in a completely different area than the rest of the interviewees, hence, she is not familiar with the all matters researched here. However, she provided significant information, specifically regarding the Great War Island. In the analysis of the answers, I will include the sub-questions as well, which differ depending on the interviewee, due to the necessary improvisation inevitable in conversations. A transversal analysis of the categories that are common to all (or virtually all) groups of questions—categories—will follow accordingly.

1. Symbols of Belgrade

If we gather all the answers to this question, we could create a “database” of practically all the places in Belgrade that are mentioned in the brochures, websites and guided tours as its symbols. The most common answer to this question is the *Belgrade Fortress/Kalemegdan*. The historical street (pedestrian zone) *Knez Mihailova* follows, and afterwards *Skadarlija, Dorcol, Ada Ciganlija, Novi Beograd* and the rivers Sava and Danube with the Confluence. An interesting response to the question regarding the characteristics of Belgrade came from Kisić, who said that according to her, Belgrade symbols would be the layers of various heritage. By this, she emphasized the idea of Belgrade as a multicultural city, with numerous visible and hidden layers of previous cultures.

I also find Jerković answer striking because what she says about the issues preferred by the Belgrade authorities to create or preserve a coherent symbol of city seems reasonable, especially in a tourist perspective. She claims she realized this during numerous interviews with locals and foreign visitors that she was conducting while working as a journalist.

2. The significance of *The Belgrade Confluence* (The Sava, The Danube, their confluence and the Great War Island)

The answers to this question are affirmative and confirm that *The Belgrade Confluence* is significant for Belgrade. Most of the responses mention the geographical position and natural prerequisites as features responsible for the “birth” of Belgrade and the fact that the entire city started to develop in this area. An interesting impression that Nicić shared is the fact that people from Belgrade are constantly being reminded that Belgrade is the city on the confluence of two rivers. The area, a site repeatedly highlighted for decades as one of the main features of the city, has however never progressed concretely, in terms of its interpretation or of attention received from experts and authorities.

3. The interpretation of the natural and cultural significance of *The Belgrade Confluence*

This question is one of the most sensitive ones, since it represents the hypothesis of this research. An interesting result of the interviews was the fact that public institutions had somehow opposite opinions from the interviewees employed in the non-governmental sector.

First, Mihajlov, from *the National Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments*, claims that *The Belgrade Confluence* is well interpreted. However, she confirms that materials about this area, in the institution she works in, are limited to the historical facts regarding the *Belgrade Fortress*. Although she thinks that the history of this area is well

interpreted, she adds that there is no integration or synergy between natural and cultural elements. Mihajlov believes that the reason for this is the fact that Serbian cultural policies do not recognize landscape as a concept, which could be a solution for the mentioned lack of synergy. She concludes by saying that in practice, there is a recognition of landscape and intersectoral cooperation. However, the State could help by changing the legal framework and facilitate related legal issues.

Similarly, Filipović thinks that there is some cultural-historical interpretation, but no symbiosis between natural and cultural aspects when it comes to the interpretation of *The Belgrade Confluence*. On the other hand, the rest of the interviewees think the opposite. In their opinions, *The Belgrade Confluence* is not properly interpreted (someone even thinks that it is not interpreted at all).

The former general manager of the *Tourist Organization of Belgrade* offers an interesting perspective on this question. In her view, the only narration that refers to the Confluence is the contemporary one that implies nightlife, relaxation and recreation. She confirms the absence of a cultural-historical interpretation about rivers, the Great War Island and *The Belgrade Confluence* and mentions the *Tourist Organization of Belgrade* and *Tourist Organization of Serbia* as the responsible, public institutions.

In a similar vein, Kisić and Stojanović claim that *The Belgrade Confluence* is not interpreted at all in the terms we are discussing here. They both argue that the state and its institutions —the *Tourist Organization of Belgrade*, *Tourist Organization of Serbia*, *National Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments*, *Institute for the Nature Conservation of Serbia* —should have this area in focus. They both mention small, non-governmental associations and organizations who could help in improving this situation. However, they also agree that for the interpretation of this area, the State with its institutions should be the main actor.

Kukobat, who observes the Great War Island only from an environmental point of view, seemed surprised (in a positive sense) that this island and the surrounding area might be interpreted in cultural-historical terms. As previously mentioned, Kukobat is not familiar with the cultural policies, studies and instruments that could be applied to this area, therefore, her surprise is reasonable. She was responsible for the guided tours on the Great War Island (until 2017) and is very familiar with its protection and promotion.

Therefore, she claims that there is no mention of any sort of cultural-historical narrative regarding the Great War Island.

The perspective that Jerković offered is quite important in its conclusive remarks. She explains that the cultural-historical interpretation of *The Belgrade Confluence* is limited to the *Belgrade Fortress*, with a general neglect of the riverbanks, the island and the opposite side of the confluence – Zemun. Narratives about the natural features of the area refer solely to the bird conservation area on the island.

Nicić confirms the complete absence of any sort of infrastructural interpretation of the area in the form of Info Boards or similar.

4. The interpretation of foreign cultures that left traces in the area of confluence.

The intention of this question was to find out whether foreign cultures that left traces around the area of the Confluence are properly interpreted, according to the experts interviewed. First, Mihajlov claims that this interpretation is appropriate. She elaborates on this by explaining that Ottoman heritage in particular has been well protected lately particularly due to a strong connection between the Belgrade authorities and the Islamic community.

On the contrary, in Kisić view, the presence of foreign cultures is not promoted and interpreted, although there is some awareness of the Ottoman and Habsburg rule over the city. Stojanović confirms Kisić's opinion in virtually the exact same words. Jerković thinks that the presence of foreign cultures is not properly interpreted as well. From a journalist's point of view, she explains that one of the major problems is the lack of educational programs on TV and articles in newspapers. She believes that educational programs have drastically decreased, so now they serve only to fill in the gaps between political talk shows and fiction. She also confirms that people can hear every now and then about the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, but not nearly as often as they are supposed to. Nicić explains that for him, as for the other neighbours of the area, *The Belgrade*

Confluence with all its traces (from both foreign and local cultures) is familiar. However, he believes that in any other context this interpretation is not sufficient.

5. The Strategy for development of Belgrade 2011-2016 and its statement regarding *The Belgrade Confluence* as the natural core of Belgrade that represents its European identity

This question gave rise to two lines of discussion. One was directed towards the idea of the natural core of Belgrade representing its European identity and the other one focused on establishing whether this statement is applied in practice. Although some of the interviewees supported the idea of the statement and some did not, all of them agreed that this statement is not applied in practice. This represents an important result that I would like to underline. The reason why I have chosen this statement for discussion was because it sounded pretentious in my view, particularly because I could not recognize it as applied anywhere in practice (from point of view of Belgrade's citizens).

Dimitrijević and Kisić claim that this area is somehow interpreted, but not in the light of the Strategy's statement. In Dimitrijević's view, authorities have worked on this area solely in terms of its infrastructure (reconstructing some artefacts, designing cycling paths). On the other hand, Kisić sees the interpretation of this area in promotional terms of nightlife and floating rafts hosting restaurants and night clubs.

The issue of European identity is best viewed together with the question about the identity of Belgrade and its citizens, below.

6. The identity of Belgrade and its citizens

Mihajlov agrees with the idea of Belgrade's identity being European on account of the Confluence and its natural prerequisites. She traces the connection in the numerous European projects between the countries crossed by the Danube as a natural and cultural symbol of Europeanness. Filipović supports this statement partially, claiming that Belgrade has its own identity, which is a mixture of the European and the Oriental identity.

Dimitrijević claims that the identity of Belgrade should be perceived through the people (both locals and visitors). In addition, she believes that locals are quite aware of their multicultural identity, and supports this by saying that they more or less know which sites, artefacts or structures belong to a certain culture, for instance the Ottomans' or Habsburgs'.

On the other hand, Kisić finds the idea of a natural site being used as an instrument for the identification of Belgrade as a European city problematic. In particular, because she feels that there is a tendency to “insert European identity everywhere, even into elements that are unburdened of the need to be identified as for instance some natural heritage sites”. She identifies Belgrade with a metropolis, a capital and an epicentre. Her comment as to the negligent character of Belgrade's identity is worth noting. Stojanović accepts the idea of Belgrade's identity being European if it refers to its modernization and multicultural aspects. However, Stojanović thinks that Belgrade's citizens do not have a clear idea about their identity, but rather an intuitive one (in particular thanks to the obvious, visual layers of the city – its architecture and urban features). His statement might be somehow near to the one given by Dimitrijević. Jerković thinks that city's authorities are creating an image of Belgrade as a “cheap destination with a diverse and dynamic nightlife”, which she perceives as a kind of identity, though in superficial and misleading terms.

In Nicić's view, Belgrade can be perceived as a European city, especially thanks to its position on the rivers, side by side with other European cities having similar characteristics. However, he adds that the notion of identity depends on the observer and on the political/historical moment.

7. Proposed projects: *Belgrade Waterfront*, *Ušće Park*, *The Big Flag* and *Funicular* and comments on them, particularly regarding their influence on the city's identity

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the issue of proposed projects, especially the *Belgrade Waterfront*, have sparked controversy, to the point of being left unmentioned in certain circles. On the other hand, in academic circles particularly, this topic is in the

spotlight. The main motive for posing the question regarding these projects was not to expose or attack someone's political attitude, but to understand the academic opinion about facts that could influence our present research, for instance the influence of these projects on the existing identity or image of the city. All the interviewees are familiar with the proposed projects, particularly with the *Belgrade Waterfront* due to the enormous media attention it gained.

Mihajlov mostly discussed the aesthetic influence these projects could have on the city. In her view, the famous skyline of Belgrade would change drastically. However, she believes that the very identity of the city would not be changed. Dimitrijević thinks that these projects could strengthen the existing identity of the area where they are planned since they would provide a measure of attractiveness that is now missing. However, she believes that tourists would not be satisfied with the purely attractive character of the offer unless they were also given a context, narrative or experience about the history of these places.

On the other hand, the other interviewees believe that these projects would change the existing identity of Belgrade for the worse. First, Kisić finds these projects very intrusive, although she considers each differently. For her, these projects ignore the importance of landscape in a geomorphological, aesthetic and meaningful sense. What strikes her most is the impression that proponents of these projects do not seem to care about the past and the values that these places possess in a cultural or historical sense. Stojanović and Jerković are strongly against these projects as well and share a similar opinion about them. They both believe that the *Belgrade Waterfront* demonstrates an improper use of public spaces along the rivers; that the famous and symbolic skyline of Belgrade would be marred; that these proposals lack transparency and do not involve citizens in decision-making at all; that the cultural-historical context seems non-existent, while commercial and consumerist considerations prevail. Nicić believes these projects would definitely change the existing identity of the city, although he believes this depends on the context.

As for the *Big Flag* project on the Confluence is concerned, Kisić, Stojanović and Jerković perceive it as an exaggerated emphasis of the national features, a need for spectacle and a needless demonstration of power.

8. *The 2011 European Landscape Convention and its implementation in practice*

Considering that the label *Belgrade Confluence* as *cultural landscape* is at the core of this research, the answers that interviewees provided on this topic were of special significance, since they are professionals in that field and therefore possess first-hand knowledge of the issue. The most important result regarding this question is that all interviewees strongly believe that the concept of landscape should be applied to *The Belgrade Confluence*.

Mihajlov claims that the mentioned convention is recognized among her colleagues and collaborators. On a certain level, they apply it when needed. However, she says that the problem for its full and official implementation in practice is the unsuitable legal framework. Mihajlov adds that this is not the only instance of legal obstacles and that this might be solved once Serbia has joined the European Union. She believes that in situations in which the natural and cultural heritage should be interpreted as a symbiosis (as in the case of *The Belgrade Confluence*), the State should intervene in order to face these issues.

Filipović confirms that the obstacle for the implementation of this convention is an incompatible legal framework. Kisić and Stojanović (both coming from the non-governmental sector) think that legal obstacles should not be an excuse for the fact that landscape as a concept, although ratified and accepted in the convention, is never applied in Serbia. Kisić emphasizes the lack of motivation, understanding, innovation and cooperation as the reasons for this and similar situations (although she mentions a few examples of good practices). Substantial European funds provide the kind of financial and technical support that could be used for solving these problems. This could be useful even more if the public institutions recreated the frameworks for the protection, sustainable promotion and interpretation of heritage, since no one prevents them from cooperating and acting at a higher level. Stojanović claims that he has never encountered the concept of landscape applied in any project in Belgrade and its surroundings.

Another interesting notion gained through the interviews is that storytelling as a concept is not applied on the institutional level at all, although it might compensate for the missing interpretation of invisible heritage.

Summary

The interviews paraphrased and analysed above seem to provide a solid confirmation or conclusion to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of the research. Being born and raised in Belgrade, studying in the Serbian education system for more than sixteen years, spending much time next to the Belgrade rivers, monitoring media on a daily level, talking to foreign and local strangers and friends I have become acquainted with, I have formed lasting impressions on issues that called for testing and research. The result of this is laid out in the present study. The content and discourse analyses I conducted in earlier chapters have provided valuable insight into the present situation in the media—namely in Serbian and Belgrade newspapers—an initial but important step towards the corroboration of my initial hypothesis.

Semi-structured interviews with people who work on these matters daily has offered another set of valuable perspectives, first for the conclusion of this research and secondly for isolating possible reasons that make sense of the present lack of interpretation of natural and cultural heritage in the area of *The Belgrade Confluence*.

As I write these lines, one of the few Serbian sites recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (*Stari Ras* and *Sopocani*) is being threatened off the list because of inadequate management and protection. This confirms the serious issues that underlie the present research, especially with reference to the fact that cultural policies in Serbia do not support long-term, sustainable, and socially responsible approaches in the fields of cultural and heritage studies and management. Another crucial issue, in a way prior to this one, is also the fact that *The Belgrade Confluence* is still, so to say, in its pre-cultural phase, not even being recognized as a site worth interpreting and managing in terms of protection, narration and sustainable development.

5. “Belgrade Confluence – Encounter of East and West”- The project

5.1 Theoretical background of the project

Although deeper issues related to Serbian layered identity might prove forever elusive, in the present study I have tried to isolate a few threads of this intricate cultural tangle by analysing a number of identifiable contexts and events. To briefly recapitulate: Belgrade’s citizens seem deprived of the interpretation referring to the complex heritage surrounding them. A great political responsibility lies in the educational system and in the paucity of information, or better still, in a general attitude fostered by governmental institutions that have managed it and somehow complacently embraced the superficial and compliant narratives of national/local media. The past cannot be changed. However, the present and future generations may soon gain a better insight into these vital issues.

Having been frozen for more than a decade, during and after the wars that raged over the territory of former Yugoslavia, Serbia’s cultural development has not just stalled but has begun deteriorating. Political and economic sanctions until six years ago made travelling from and to Serbia very difficult. This is arguably one of the most serious obstacles for any kind of progress, including a cultural development. Although Serbia has not joined the European Union yet and is still striving to overcome the outcome of 30 years of deterioration, it is high time for radical changes and for finally leaving the past behind.

In methodological terms, issues of value and valuing (which are crucial to heritage interpretation and promotion) are likely to be tackled in terms of technical solutions. Rather, they are embedded in a mesh of cultural and social relations that is constantly changing. The practical goal of appropriate heritage interpretation is not just to search for one, simple, or best option. It is rather the focus on generating knowledge and offering relevant information that would increase the transparency and meaningfulness of the process. To achieve this, an interdisciplinary approach is recommended. This empirical section of the research describes a specific tool for heritage interpretation: an audio-visual

exhibition that will also be the final product of the proposed case study. Concept and proposal are explained in the paragraphs that follow.

As anticipated above, one of the first images that comes to mind when describing Belgrade's characteristics is the *crossroad* taken in a historical, geographical, cultural, political, religious or ethnic sense. However, what really sets Belgrade apart from other cities with similar traits is the fact that for centuries it has straddled multiple political and cultural borders, a very specific and certainly challenging sociocultural predicament. The case study here proposed focuses on the reinterpretation of heritage in Belgrade, trying to read it not only from the traditional viewpoint of an encounter between Western culture and Eastern culture, Europe and Asia, Christianity and Islam, but also in terms of an amalgamation of these opposite trends in a process of mutual interaction—a crucial feature of Belgrade's (and Serbia's) historical and cultural development over the centuries.

This will be done by applying a geopolitical approach and concepts suitable to read the signs that speak of an evolutionary space dramatically transformed through time: that is, a reading of historical periods and sequences of events within the context of their geographical location. Schlögel's ideas of history as *spatialization* and the fact that time shapes spaces and places are central to this research, as explained in the previous chapters. And Schlögel (2003) also recalls Friedrich Ratzel, and his insightful claim that the world is multidimensional, that we read time in space. If this is applied to the present case study, it becomes obvious that what matters most is to find a set of adequate instruments for reading those signs; signs that have changed over the course of several centuries around the confluence of the Sava and the Danube.

Any discussion on the interpretation of space must also go back to Soja's spatial hermeneutics and its basic concern with creating critical access for connecting time and space, history and geography, epoch and region, sequence and simultaneity. Schlögel himself underlines Soja's claim that we need to reformulate rigid practices of historical narration in order to leave the temporal prison of language and historicism constructed by conventional theories. That could create the space for a human, interpretative geography – and for space hermeneutics (Schlögel 2003).

As we have seen in earlier chapters, cultural values, like their historical counterparts, belong to the concept of heritage. There is no heritage without cultural value.

(Schlögel 2003). Belgrade is undoubtedly relevant to the above-mentioned perspectives and needs a thoughtful approach when considered in terms of possible development or reputation strategies. Being directly or indirectly the centre of the political, economic and military actions in the region, in the last 30 years Belgrade has taken on cultural marks and a reputation that are hard to modify. Anholt (2010 138-139) brilliantly summarised the serious issues faced by scholars of urban reputation in these terms:

“Places with a reputation of being poor, uncultured, backward, dangerous or corrupt find that everything they or their citizens try to achieve outside their own neighbourhood is harder, and the burden is always on their side to prove that they don’t conform to the national stereotype [...]. For the travel and tourism industry, these questions of the national image are fundamentally important. Put simply, a destination with a powerful and positive image needs to do less work and spend less money on promoting itself to the marketplace, because the marketplace already believes what it is telling them. It merely has to help buyers find and purchase the product.”

Certainly, the increasing annual number of tourists in Belgrade proves that concerted efforts over time to change Belgrade’s undesirable reputation have been effective. However, there are risks in this process. For one, as a city is transformed into a tourist destination, local inhabitants and their needs should not be neglected. Also, a misguided eagerness on the part of authorities to transform the city into a popular destination might lead social and cultural agents to skip crucial steps in order to “achieve the goal as soon as possible”. And lastly, disproportionate efforts may lead to the creation of a fake or pretentious ambient that informed tourists could easily detect.

This research stems from an attempt to tackle the issues regarding the mentioned identity of Serbian people. The natural and cultural heritage in Belgrade, both tangible and intangible, needs to be redefined and re-interpreted, exposing and narrating it to the public as a way to select, to give sense and to shape people’s opinions.

The theory of the *tourist gaze* as developed by Urry (1990) and discussed previously, combined with an analysis of the impressions that foreigners record after visiting Belgrade may be seen as complementary approaches to the question of a re-visualization and re-identification of Belgrade’s cultural landscape and its potentials for tourism enhancement. The layered identity of Serbian people, and the way it is being transmitted to tourists, cover a central portion of this research, although the issue of local perception remains arguably the most important.

As Urry has taught us, the *tourist gaze* is not objective but related to opposites, which influence the way a certain heritage is accepted and understood. We gaze upon different scenes that we encounter; we curiously look at the environment when we travel. However, people never see one thing only but experience the whole context in relation to themselves. The concept of the innocent eye is a myth, if one only pauses to consider the set of pre-existing memories, ideas, skills and expectations one already owns. In the tourist market today, professionals help local communities construct and develop their gaze upon the model of the tourist gaze, with the aim to rethink places as destinations. This renewed attention confirms the importance of narration for the interpretation and explanation of certain sites (Urry 1990). If it is true that tourism initially means *sightseeing* (as Englishmen, allegedly the founders of modern tourism, called it), then the narration of places, both by locals and visitors, is a crucial tool in the semiotic destiny of a place—including its good or bad reputation for present and future times—and of course in the establishment of durable stereotypes (Bonadei and Volli 2003).

The starting point and the general objective of the proposal will be an attempt to raise the awareness of locals about the heritage that surrounds them. The focus of attention will be on a trait of Belgrade's heritage that is considered strategic regarding the re-narration of the city's complexities: the confluence of two international rivers—the Sava and the Danube. Unfortunately, until now it seems that this geographical position has occurred through Belgrade's history mostly in negative connotations, in dividing and imposing borders. The rivers connect various peoples and cultures, but they also represent elements of separation: borderlines. The Sava and the Danube are a good example of this since they have been the natural border for centuries between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empire. However, these rivers have always favoured the linking of various peoples, attracting them to their confluence and creating a unique place that has in time stood simultaneously for division and for connection. In the powerful words of Mauch and Zeller (1966, 1):

“Sources of both abundance and destruction, life and death, rivers have always had a powerful hold over humankind. They run through every human landscape, whether mythical or actual. Over the centuries, rivers have often become identified with the societies they supported. Can one think of China without imaging the Yangzi, of ancient Egypt without recalling the Nile, of Caesar's Rome or Dante's Florence without picturing the Tiber or Arno?”

Although Belgrade shows a great number of heritage sites from Christian (both Orthodox and Catholic) and Islamic culture, with high historical, architectural, cultural and artistic values, none of them fulfils the criteria of outstanding universal value as a single sample of a specific piece of history. However, their concentration around the confluence of the Sava and Danube creates the exceptional complex of a certain harmonic integrity, that speaks of commercial and social mediations, and is 'allusive' of a quite distinctive cultural flavour, a key feature that makes this place unique and might justify its significance and outstanding national and international value. Even more, the natural connotation of the rivers and their confluence increases its value as a peculiar cultural space, located in the centre of the urban context and thus a potentially powerful symbol of 'confluence' as an attractor for visitors who choose cities for experiencing urban cultural tourism.

When speaking about the ways to apply previously mentioned theoretical concepts into practice, it is important to underline that Serbia is encountering difficulties in joining the European Union; therefore, numerous obstacles exist on the way to resolving matters regarding policies, regulations and reaching the sphere of sustainable development in many senses invoked by modern communities. The problem starts on the local level, namely considering the city's development in general. For that reason, it is obvious that the situation regarding sustainable tourism development is even worse. Cooperation concerning tourism and heritage management integrated at a destination level, where both cultural and natural resources are valued and protected, is certainly strategic for accomplishing the objective. With the joint work and resources of the European and the United Nations' organizations, the local population, public authorities and development agencies, the proposal for a reinterpretation of the natural/cultural heritage symbiosis in favour of a sustainable development of tourism in Belgrade would raise awareness of the multiple cultural, social, economic and environmental values attached to it.

Recent studies have amply demonstrated that serious obstacles can surface to hinder a sustainable development of tourism: irresponsible business, inadequate reporting of media and use of technology, insufficient education, inadequate policies, corruption, unemployment, and consumerism. The point is not only to provide the city with a physical layout or services and facilities but to develop cultural and creative concepts and concerns,

creating an atmosphere of the place (*genius loci*). This is what makes a destination interesting and unique to contemporary visitors (Richards 2010).

Destination management organizations (DMOs) are becoming more and more aware of these transformations and initiatives, especially due to researchers such as Richard Florida, Charles Landry, Greg Richards and others. In particular, capital city tourism is becoming a very complex and multi-dimensional activity that needs to be managed within a larger context of policy and planning. Due to the rapidly growing number of destinations around the world, clear positioning/branding is a must (Richards 2010). The *spatial turn* as a new approach to places both in their natural and urban connotation and in its transformation through time is also crucial for understanding Belgrade and its inhabitants' identity and heritage (Schlögel 2003). What is considered the core of this heritage, i.e. the coexistence of religions, cultures, civilizations on the confluence of two international rivers, has always been neglected.

As many recent tourism scholars suggest—also in the wake of Urry's debate on curiosity and diversity as the engine of mobility—anything is potentially an attraction. It simply awaits one person to take the trouble of pointing it out to another as something worth seeing (MacCannell 1976). Alternatively, speaking of value as the result of semiotic dynamics, “one place becomes a target when it gets its value, which means by working on it, to provide attributes necessary for the eyes of the visitors” (Bonadei and Volli 2003).

5.2 Project explanation

The location chosen for the project setting has already been mentioned – the confluence of the Sava and Danube. As interestingly put in *Senses of Place* (Feld and Basso 1996), the eventful potency of places includes their cultural specificity. Time and history, the diachronic media of culture, are so deeply inseparable from them, as these same places and the culture located in them. *The Belgrade Confluence* with all its features and long, turbulent history deserves to be a “place of memory” not just for Belgrade, but

for the wider region as well. That might be one of our objectives: to transform a culturally and historically neglected place into a remembrance place (Feld and Basso 1996).

The Belgrade Confluence harbours a particular spirit for the inhabitants of Belgrade. The spirit of a place –*genius loci*—influences the whole city around it: It might be interesting to tell a story about this place, if it is true, as Thompson tells us, that “what is here now makes sense given what was here, it has a coherent narrative that connects its past to its present and could guide its future” (Thompson 2008, 219).

Certainly, battlefields are quite difficult to interpret due to their transformation, missing artefacts and physical traces. Only some of the many scattered throughout the world are still marked (Božić Marojević 2015). This is the case of the Great War Island – a former battlefield in the centre of Belgrade. However, after the examination on the field and discussion with relevant experts in the spheres of heritage protection, urban planning, tourism and culture development in Belgrade, it is certain that the area is neglected as regards storytelling, narration and natural and cultural heritage presentation (instruments that might help in solving the problem).

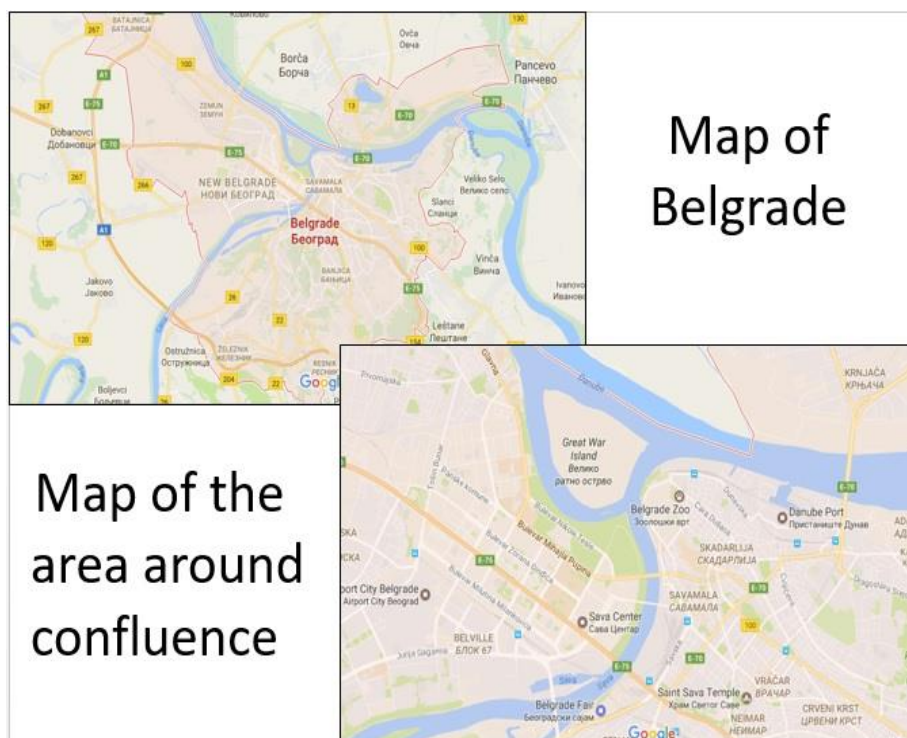


Image 8: Map of Belgrade and focus on the confluence of the Sava and Danube

As explained in previous chapters, various instruments could be applied here in order to re-interpret heritage, both cultural and natural. The idea of including another sense (besides vision) into the experience of comprehending a certain site, might be engaging, especially because of the presence of natural heritage as well. Empiricists hold that we can only gain knowledge about the world through our senses and this idea will hopefully be realized.

As Maurice Merleau-Ponty explains in his work *Phenomenology of Perception*, people first perceive the world and then they philosophize about it. We do that through our bodies; we are embodied subjects, involved in existence. Further, the ability to reflect comes from a pre-reflective ground that serves as the foundation for reflecting on actions. That is to say, we perceive phenomena first, and then reflect on them via mediation of perception, which is immediate and synonymous for us. He explains phenomenology as something that does not create empirical and theoretical facts, but explains the experienced: space, time, shape, sound, people's relations, etc. (Merleau-Ponty 2012). To continue in Merleau-Ponty fashion, and recalling Heidegger, our senses provide us with various bits of information about the environment in numerous formats. The eye specializes in the perception of spatial structure, and the ear in the perception of temporal processes. However, rarely are we confronted with sensory stimuli of a single modality; we perceive our world through all five senses. Therefore, our sense organs are not isolated from one another, since their synergetic interaction gives human beings their evolutionary advantage. Understanding and good interpretation deliver the real world to people. The process of existing is inseparable from the process of comprehension. Its hermeneutics is described by interpretative phenomenology that explains the direct experience.¹⁰⁹

109 <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>.

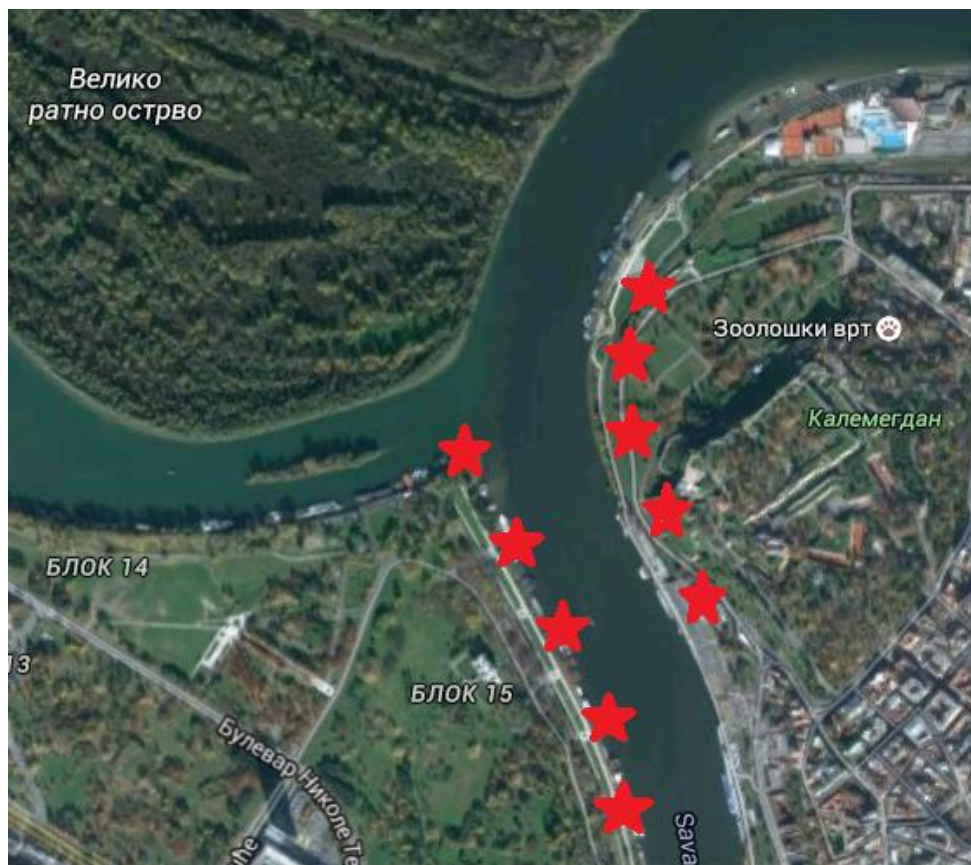


Image 9: Mapped locations for the exhibition

5.3 Project summary

A century-old story of multicultural territories and the difficulties they encounter is now becoming even more complicated than ever due to the current political and economic situation throughout the world. That is what makes this moment perfect to show how appropriate approaches to heritage interpretation can contribute to enhance people's awareness about the heritage that surrounds them. By understanding their own, local cultural heritage first, people might become more open and prepared to accept others as well. This is particularly important in an era of mass migrations, misunderstandings and increased intolerance around the world.

The challenge is to produce a proper mechanism for research, analyses, mapping and presentation of specific heritage around the most important strategic point for

Belgrade's history—its confluence. Although it represents the place of encounter of various peoples, special focus here is on two dominant and opposite cultures—the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empires and their religious, social, political and economic influence on Belgrade as it is today. Due to its unique geographical position, Belgrade has changed continually in both shape and size. Its borders have shifted with each attempt to define it and its inhabitants have been repeatedly displaced and uprooted, as competing claims tried to appropriate for one empire or the other. Belgrade represents a perfect example of how borders perform various functions and meanings, especially insofar as they generate or at least shape national identity (Zartman 2010).

The project I present here was created in collaboration with few associations and organizations, due to the demanding character of its interdisciplinary framework. The disciplines that the project involves (some more profoundly and some only superficially) are culture, heritage, history, tourism and education with all possible sub-disciplines. That is why it was necessary to create a network of experts and stakeholders both from the academic and business sectors.

One of the most important partners on the project is the Serbian subdivision of international organization *Europa Nostra*, a rapidly growing citizen movement for the safeguarding of Europe's cultural and natural heritage. Further, the *Centre for Urban Development*, the *Centre for the Promotion of Science* and the *Faculty of Engineering* (department for acoustics) are potential cooperation partners. The *Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments* (Belgrade) and the *UNESCO Chair in Cultural Policy and Management*, University of Arts (Belgrade) have supported the project.

Besides these partners and supporters, sporadic cooperation with other actors and partners will depend on the phase of the project:

- Belgrade Municipalities which would geographically be included in the project
- Belgrade Tourist Organization
- Natural History Museum in Belgrade
- Institute for the Nature Conservation of Serbia, Belgrade
- The Historical Archive, Belgrade

Due to its complexity and size, the project was divided into several working packages and phases, explained below. However, the final project result will be a multimedia installation as an attempt to reinterpret heritage and to focus on the natural and cultural significance of the rivers Sava and Danube, and the urban settlements around them. This way, the sharp border between natural and cultural heritage might be revised or possibly even erased. In particular, a suggestion for achieving these goals is an audio-visual exhibition, consisting of ten Points of Interest (POI) around the confluence of the Sava and Danube. One of the main ideas is a symbolic presentation of the two empires' cultural heritage—Habsburg and Ottoman—reflected in the waters that used to mark a border between them.

Moments from the past can easily be invoked by words, tastes, smells and sounds. However, in this case, the instrument suggested is an audio-visual composite of each POI. Thanks to the proposed balance between the visual and aural realms, the experience could be more intense or iconic. An intriguing remark by Mitchell (1986 11) helps us contextualize the importance of this iconological dimension. As he vividly explains, “eye and ear, and their associated structures of sensibility, are in this respect no different from the other figures of difference between words and images: they are categories of power and value, ways of enlisting nature in our causes and crusades.”

5.3.1 Project objectives

- Erasing/revising the border/dichotomy between natural and cultural heritage and using the symbiosis of the two in order to implement more efficient and creative models of heritage conservation and presentation. Once this objective has been achieved, the reading of signs transformed through space and their modifying influence on urban landscape should bring to the fore the key issue of multiculturalism for a more articulate understanding and acceptance of this territory.
- Developing innovative and creative concepts of heritage interpretation.

- Reviving *The Belgrade Confluence* in both a natural and cultural/artistic perspective. In other words: animating the sensory features of the site via both landscape and soundscape.
- Proposing suitable cross-disciplinary instruments for heritage interpretation on multicultural territories.

5.3.2 Target groups

- The primary target group consists of Belgrade's local people, with the aim to provide necessary knowledge for raising their awareness of its multicultural identity.
- A secondary target group includes experts from each sector, to whom this project might be of interest for developing further strategies and cooperation. This group could also include children in primary and secondary schools who would have an opportunity to acquire more articulate knowledge of their history and culture in new, creative and technologically aided ways.
- The special target group consists of all Belgrade visitors, which would hopefully draw a clearer impression about the heritage sights they visit, and possibly cooperate in bringing new and different reflections to the whole project in accordance with the *tourist gaze* theory.

As for the research material, the resources were both historical and current. Historical data were collected in public archives and libraries, while current data were gathered in the field:

Data collection consisted of four stages:

1. Preparatory (making contacts, collecting research material, preparing the exhibition)
2. Executive and performative (setting and developing the exhibition and the following extracts)
3. Research-analytical (interviews, and observations)
4. Appraisal-comparative (description, classification and explanations)

This kind of structure should ensure uniformity and a balanced development of the project. Chronologically speaking, the starting phases announce and prepare the final ones.

5.3.3 Project activities

1. Working package 1—*Project management*

- Research and collection of materials by historians and by the author of the project.
- Selection and processing of materials according to criteria set out in advance (precise historical timeframe – from the 15th to the 19th century, and geographical location – the surrounding area of *The Belgrade Confluence*).
- Definition of research results is ten points of historical-cultural value mapped along the confluence.

2. Working package 2—*Research and selection*

- Presentation of collected data.
- Transposition of materials with mapped locations onto a web platform.
- Preparation of materials for the bilingual catalogue-map and its creation.

3. Working package 3—*Presentation and promotion*

- Organization of tours and workshops for children and youth (focusing on visits to *The Historical Archive, The Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments,*

Europa Nostra Association—institutions usually inaccessible to tourists or excursionists).

- Organization of walking tours in Serbian and in English.
- Finalization of the website and possible creation of an audio-visual guide based on smartphone apps and tablets.

4. Working package 4—*Dissemination and communication*

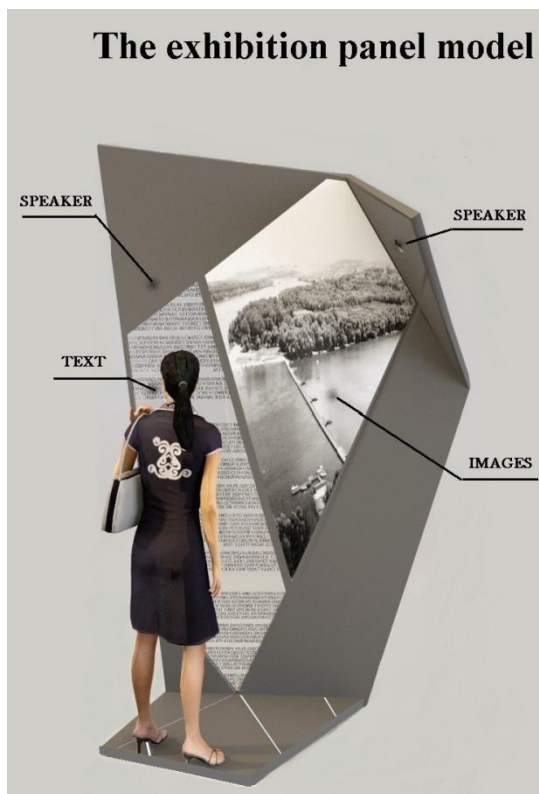
- Designing the panels for the audio-visual exhibition.
- Setting up the panels on the ten previously mapped POI.
- Audio-visual exhibition opening.

5.3.4 Project results

- Online base with informational purposes.
- Bilingual catalogue-map with ten mapped locations, created to launch the exhibition.
- On-the-spot tourist and educational tours.
- Creative workshops for children in primary and secondary schools.
- Installation of the audio-visual exhibition.

Info panels with concise text in Serbian and English would be placed at specific locations, with speakers attached to them. Broadcast sounds do not refer to the narration, but exclusively to moments in history connected to specific heritage sites. The combination of these ambient details from Belgrade's cultural history (sounds from churches and mosques, horses on the cobblestones, battles, murmur in taverns, and similar) would create a cultural atmosphere complementary to photos and text on the panels. As panels are approached, an intimate space between visitors and the installation itself could

be created, thereby producing a multi-sensory, enriched experience. This relatively unexplored method of conserving and interpreting heritage via sound was previously explained as *soundscape*, a holistic way of getting to know a place, of triggering a people/nature interaction that enables humans to experience new ways of sensing a site. Panels would be positioned so that the person who approaches them is offered a view over the specific heritage site described in the text. The experience could be further enhanced by adding magnifying lenses to the Info Board. Besides a targeted explanation illustrated by photographs, each panel would include a short explanation of the whole project and a map with other POIs (images 9 and 10).



Images 10 and 11: Design of the panel by an architect

6. General conclusion

In the course of the present research, numerous detours occurred, at times sudden and unexpected, which opened up unseen perspectives and unveiled new issues. As I was writing my proposal three years ago, I could not have imagined how some of these would influence my research on Belgrade. While preliminary theoretical models and my initial thesis statement provided a solid framework for analysis, the most significant findings came from the field and from empirical research work.

The initial hypothesis was that natural and cultural heritage around the confluence of the Sava and Danube in Belgrade are not enough and/or adequately interpreted. In my view, this was evident at various levels, which would be corroborated and confirmed in the phases of research. Another important matter was the impression that people of Belgrade have neither clear ideas nor specific knowledge of their multicultural identity. And since heritage and identity are inseparable concepts, it was clear to me that research on Belgrade had to touch upon both matters and their intersection.

First, I wanted to understand the geo-historical significance of the area around the confluence for the development of Belgrade. The archival records I analysed—from a number of libraries and especially from the *Historical Archive of Belgrade*—led to remarkable findings, which showed the historical and cultural richness of the area. After setting up a network for the project previously described, I worked with historian Dr Bakić, employed in the *Serbian Academy of Science and Arts*. Together, we mapped the territory under scrutiny —*The Belgrade Confluence*—and found ample evidence of its enormous significance for the birth and development of the entire city, particularly as regards its often-mentioned feature of being a city “at the crossroads”. Travelogues provided an equally important set of data characterized by the ‘external’ perspective of various people who had visited and had written about, the city and the area.

The conclusion is that this area can rightly be considered as the birthplace of Belgrade, and that it is highly significant for the identity and development of the city. Material analysis documented the presence of many peoples (Roman, Byzantine, Turkish, Austrian, Bosnian, Montenegrin, Slovene, Croatian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Greek,

Albanian, Jews, Ukrainians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs, Vlachs, etc.) and their influence on the growth of the city, particularly in cultural and architectural terms.

The second part of the research focused on the question of Serbian identity. The starting point for this section was the construction of a theoretical framework based mostly on the studies of Said, Todorova and Bakić-Hayden. This intersected critical approach gave valuable insight into the issue of cultural identity, which we could then apply specifically to the Balkans and finally Serbia. Many other scholars and their studies contributed to the conclusion that Serbian identity might be seen as a hybrid and/or layered identity. In particular, research by Dragićević Šešić and co-authors provided a fresh understanding of current tendencies, which are rooted in long-lasting dichotomies in the history of the Balkans.

One of the strongest premises was that Belgrade's geographical position paved the way to the construction of the identity of people who settled in that area (a crucial point brilliantly explored by Cvijić among others). This is precisely the reason for insisting on the idea that the area around the confluence should be officially recognized as a heritage product— *The Belgrade Confluence*, and should be in the spotlight of the cultural and historical interpretation for Belgrade authorities and professionals in the field.

When it comes to other peoples' cultures, Serbs have a very close relation with the Ottomans and the heritage they left. There are two main issues regarding this relation—the first one refers to the identity dynamics of *self and other* as discussed, for instance, in the seminal works of Said and Bhabha. This is the relation Serbs established with the “unknown, strange, different, non-Christian” ruler from Asia Minor. The other was the evidence that Serbian identity was constructed on various layers inherited from the cultures that were present on their territory. And since Ottoman rule over Serbia covered a period of almost five centuries, their influence is to be considered the strongest and worth of attention.

Projecting previously mentioned premises and conclusions to the present day, we come then to heritage, and the idea of heritage as a tool for understanding the identity. Through its relations with past and collective memory, interpreted heritage can better put into focus the cultural layers that underlie the construction of cultural identity of people and places.

Landscape and soundscape were proposed as useful notions for making sense of identity, although at present they are not yet applied in Belgrade (as evident from the interviews and the field work); the sensory model they offer could open up a wide scope of possibilities for innovative and creative natural and cultural heritage interpretation.

Once I started to think about the possible implementation of these concepts in the case study, I realized that new issues were to be faced: studies about place, space, and city were thus included. In my view, the transformation of space into a place with specific purposes is one of the most important issues when it comes to the idea of city itself. Belgrade, as many other capital cities, is undergoing significant transformations, and some important cultural sectors have been neglected. It seems that *recreational*, *attractive* and *grandiose* are the epithets that have replaced *historical*, *significant*, *valuable*, that way jeopardizing cultural and historical sites and structures in the city. There is a substantial gap between the cultural-historical significance of *The Belgrade Confluence* and its interpretation. This fact has been proved on the field—complete lack of any kind of info boards that could possibly explain that significance, through analysis of newspapers and materials from some public institutions and organizations and by people interviewed.

In the wake of studies by Foucault and Fairclough, I carried out a collection and analysis of all Serbian newspapers articles from 2003 to 2013. After defining the keywords and the criteria for the selection of relevant articles, I defined three different axes along which I analysed the chosen articles: *Chronicle*, *Tourist/Cultural/Artistic Interpretation* and *Urbanism/Restoration*. As thoroughly explained in the chapter regarding this analysis, the results were modest and showed an unbalanced relationship between the significance of the area in cultural and historical terms and any kind of available presentation and/or interpretation.

Another resource for analysis of the material were the institutions and organizations responsible for natural and cultural heritage protection and interpretation and for the tourism promotion of Belgrade. The analyses of materials in the *Institute for the Nature Conservation of Serbia* and the *Belgrade City Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments* was approved by their employees and conducted during the summer of 2016. The strongest data was the sharp distinction—still exiting and somehow

emphasised—between natural/cultural heritage and between material/immaterial heritage. This echoes in the fact that responsibilities toward the interpretation of the history and culture around *The Belgrade Confluence* are undefined and unclear, which brings to its partial interpretation. The work of these two institutions is obviously relevant for the inhabitants of Belgrade and the perception of their identity, but is also relevant for the tourists, who could better appreciate the cultural complexity of the city and the surrounding area and modify their views. It should be reminded that the *Tourist Organisation of Belgrade* and the *National Tourism Organisation of Serbia* are the official, public organizations for tourism promotion, therefore, the most responsible for informing tourists and narrating heritage, for shaping their first ideas and impressions. Both of these organizations only provide limited information about the above-mentioned matters, as shown by an analysis of their websites and printable materials and during informal conversations with employees in the Tourist Info Points in Belgrade.

In my view, the lack of history and heritage interpretation of this area is a major obstacle to raising the awareness of Belgrade's citizens about their layered identity. What can be inferred from the explanations given by interviewees is that the citizens of Belgrade are only intuitively and superficially aware of the presence of foreign peoples in the past and of their influence on the culture and heritage in Belgrade. As we could see, the relation between proper heritage interpretation and cultural identity awareness is unbreakable. The crucial factor in this relationship is memory, or its opposite – amnesia. The obvious lack of a coherent narrative regarding the heritage in Belgrade has paved the way to social unconsciousness or even collective amnesia. To trace the reasons for this phenomenon in the cultural past of Serbia is well beyond the scope of this thesis, but opens up intriguing directions for possible future research. Is it reasonable to say that the citizens of Belgrade suffer from some sort of collective amnesia about their history? If so, is that due to the fact that they never actually wanted to face a history that might prove painful or harmful for their identitarian integrity and self-perception? Or did the establishment actually set out to prevent people from thinking too deeply through the educational system, the media, and other social means? These questions are very complex and must be left open for other investigations.

What seems evident from the present research is that the major obstacle to an interpretation of *The Belgrade Confluence* is the lack of innovative policies, or the

inability to pursue a robust implementation of existing policies. The current political situation in Belgrade, as well as attitudes of some interviewees, suggest that the lack of suitable policies might be just an excuse and that depending on the circumstances and interest, this obstacle could be easily overcome.

Belgrade is changing rapidly and most of these changes might be irreversible, hence, some actions should be undertaken. I believe that one of the first steps could be filling in the gaps between non-governmental and governmental institutions in terms of closer cooperation, that way providing additional layers between the “attractive” and “alternative” when describing current projects developing in the city. A multidisciplinary approach, a strong network among sectors, governmental and non-governmental organizations and stakeholders could obviously be a good starting point for a bottom-up approach that I find crucial.

The mentioned project in the form of an audio-visual exhibition—the last chapter of the present research—is my ‘modest proposal’ to initiate a re-visitation of Belgrade heritage. I trust that this project, if realized, would draw attention to the value of *The Belgrade Confluence* (in its previously described cultural-natural dichotomy), both for the public and for institutions. Certainly, I believe that education is the first step in the proper perception and interpretation of cultural and natural heritage, hence in the illumination of identity issues, therefore an action addressed to the general public is crucial. The project proposal involves innovative technological methods that might replace *attractive* and *grandiose* initiatives, and thus favour a shift in cultural policies in Belgrade by highlighting educational, artistic and cultural goals. In addition, transforming *The Belgrade Confluence* and its rivers into a heritage product would help to remove the brand now attached to them as the nightlife core of the city. As theoretical research discussed in this work clearly suggested, such an achievement could rise the quality of life and sustainable growth in the city at cultural, social, environmental and financial levels.

While working on this thesis, I have created a network of (potential) co-operators and have tried to comprehend the current situation in Belgrade when it comes to the studies and matters applied in this work. My impression is that currently, no one is working on any similar project regarding *The Belgrade Confluence*, which might confirm

the urgency to undertake the necessary steps. I am aware of the fact that the complex and confused situation on the cultural scene in Serbia is tightly connected with a political transition the country is facing.

I wish to conclude by underlining the personal significance this research has. In my view, *The Belgrade Confluence* is not merely the *confluence* of two rivers. The word *confluence* (from the Latin *confluentia*) has for me a symbolic meaning: it evokes a “flowing together”, “meeting”, and “gathering at one point”. I am not here thinking only in terms of water or rivers. Rather, I see the confluence of the Sava and Danube as the meeting point of all the peoples that ever visited, settled or conquered Belgrade. Considering myself an actor in the endless interaction between what is human and what belongs to nature—a basic issue my thesis has repeatedly brought up and discussed—I feel entitled to claim that this area has in store for Belgrade an enormous richness; a richness that deserves renewed care, sustained attention, and a deeper appreciation.

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Illustrations

- *Image 1: Relief map of Serbia and surrounding area*
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Belgrade City Museum
- *Image 3: The Confluence of the Sava and Danube, the Great War Island, Belgrade Fortress and Zemun*
<http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/102101/Specijalni-dodaci/Ada-na-uscu-Save-u-Dunav>
- *Image 4: Map of the Great War Island with Habsburg-Ottoman border*
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- *Image 5: Promenade along the Sava river with numerous floating rafts attached to it*
Author
- *Image 6: Floating rafts are practically attached to each other with no space left for the strollers to enjoy the river*
Author
- *Image 7: Foreign newspapers headlines about the project Belgrade Waterfront*
<http://www.bbc.com/news/business-36576420>;
<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/dec/10/belgrade-waterfront-gulf-petrodollars-exclusive-waterside-development>;
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<http://politicalcritique.org/cee/2017/fight-against-belgrade-waterfront-project/>;
- *Image 8: Projects Belgrade Waterfront and “Big Serbian Flag”*

<http://rs.n1info.com/a278741/Vesti/Vesti/podizanje-jarbola-od-120-metara.html>

<https://inserbia.info/today/tag/belgrade-waterfront/>

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- *Image 9: Citizens' protests against the project Belgrade Waterfront, 2016*

<http://ozonpress.net/drustvo/sve-vise-ljudi-na-ulicama-beograda/>

<https://ejatlas.org/conflict/belgrade-waterfront-project-serbia>

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/live-belgrade-waterfront-protesters-stage-fresh-rally-06-25-2016>

- *Image 10: Map of Belgrade and focus on the Confluence*

<https://www.google.it/maps?source=tldsi&andhl=sr>

- *Image 11: Mapped locations for the exhibition*

<https://www.google.it/maps?source=tldsi&andhl=sr>

- *Images 12 and 13: Design of the panel by an architect*

Appendix A

Chronology of key events in Belgrade's history

Important Years in City History—Official website of the City Government

<http://www.beograd.rs/cir/upoznajte-beograd/1237-vazne-godine-u-istoriji-grada/>

Period	Event
Ancient period	<p>6200—5200 BCE: Starcevo culture 5500—4500 BCE: Vinca culture 700—279 BCE: Thraco-Dacians dwell in the region. 279 BCE: Singidūn settled by the Celtic tribe—Scordisci.</p>
Roman Empire	<p>6 CE: Aulus Caecina Severus names Belgrade Singidunum and Zemun Taurunum 86: Legio IV Flavia Felix Roman legion, is based in Singidunum, at present day Kalemegdan. 117–138: Roman Emperor Hadrian grants Singidunum municipium status. 332: Roman Emperor Flavius Jovianus was born in Singidunum. He re-established Christianity as state religion. 395: Singidunum becomes a northwestern frontier city of the Eastern Roman Empire</p>
Invasions V century	<p>441: The Huns destroyed Belgrade 445: onwards—Singidunum under the Sarmatians 470: The Eastern Goths take over the town 488: The Gepidaes conquered Singidunum 504: The Goths capture the town</p>
Byzantine rule and Slavs arrival	<p>510: Singidunum becomes part of the Byzantine Empire 535: Byzantine emperor Justinian I renews Singidunum 584: The Avars conquer the ancient Singidunum 592: Byzantine Empire regained the town VII c: The Avars destroyed and burnt down the town 630: The Slavs conquered Singidunum</p>
Byzantine/ Bulgarian/ Hungarian rule IX—XII centuries	<p>827: The Bulgarians control the fortress. The city is called by Western sources Alba Bulgarica. 878: First known written record of the Slavic name Beligrad. 896: Hungarian army attacked Belgrade 971: Byzantine Empire conquers Belgrade 1018: The Byzantine emperor Basil II seizes Belgrade from the Bulgarian Empire. Occasional clashes with Hungary. 1072: Belgrade was retaken by Byzantine Empire. 1096: Hungarian army destroyed Belgrade, but it remained under Byzantine control 1096–1189: The Crusaders are passing through Belgrade. 1127: Hungarian king Stefan II destroys Belgrade and used the obtained stones to build a fortress in Zemun.</p>

	<p>1154: Byzantine emperor Manuel I Comnenus destroys Zemun and takes the stones back to rebuild Belgrade.</p> <p>1182: Hungary attack and sacked the city.</p> <p>1185: Byzantine Empire regained Belgrade by diplomatic means</p>
Serbian/ Hungarian/ Bulgarian rule XII century	<p>1202: The Hungarians seize Belgrade.</p> <p>1203: The Bulgarians retake the city.</p> <p>1213: The city is given to Hungary</p> <p>1221: Belgrade is returned to Bulgaria.</p> <p>1246: The city becomes part of Hungary.</p> <p>1284: The Hungarians gift to the Serbian king Stefan Dragutin; this is the first time that Belgrade comes under Serbian rule.</p>
Hungarian rule XIV—XVI centuries	<p>1316: Stefan Milutin takes Belgrade from his brother</p> <p>1319: The Hungarians deprive King Milutin of the rule over city.</p> <p>1382: Enemies of Hungarian Crown, Horvat brothers, conquer Belgrade</p> <p>1386: Hungary regains it.</p> <p>1403: Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor gives the city to Despot Stefan Lazarević for his lifetime. Despot Stefan builds Belgrade Fortress anew and establishes Belgrade as the capital of the Serbian Despotate.</p> <p>1427: Despot Stefan dies. Hungary reclaims Belgrade.</p> <p>1440: The Ottoman Empire attacks Belgrade. The city endures the siege following heavy destruction.</p> <p>1456: Siege of Belgrade 1456: Sultan Mehmed II besieges Belgrade but fails to capture it.</p>
Ottoman/ Habsburg rule XVI –XIX centuries	<p>1521: Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent conquers Belgrade.</p> <p>1688: Duke Maximilian of Bavaria captures the city.</p> <p>1690: Ottomans recapture Belgrade</p> <p>1717: Prince Eugene of Savoy captures the city.</p> <p>1718: Belgrade becomes the capital of the Kingdom of Serbia, a Habsburg Monarchy province.</p> <p>1723–1736: Construction of the Kalemegdan fortress by Nicolas Doxat de Démoret.</p> <p>1739: Belgrade peace treaty between Habsburgs and Ottomans, giving Belgrade again to the Turks</p> <p>1789: Marshal Ernst Gideon von Laudon captures the city.</p> <p>1791: The Treaty of Sistova returns Belgrade to the Ottomans.</p>
Ottoman/ Serbian rule 1804–1878	<p>1806: Karađorđe Petrović captures Belgrade and makes it the capital of Serbia.</p> <p>1813: The Ottomans reconquer the city.</p> <p>1815: Miloš Obrenović started the Second Serbian Uprising and conquered Belgrade.</p> <p>1830: Sultan's <i>hatiserif</i> charter on Serbian autonomy</p> <p>1841: Belgrade became the capital of the Principality of Serbia under Knez Mihailo Obrenović.</p> <p>1867: In Kalemegdan, the Ottoman commander handed over the keys of Belgrade to Knez Mihailo Obrenović.</p>
Austro-Hungarian/ Serbian rule 1914–18	<p>1914: The Austro-Hungarians bomb and capture Belgrade, but in the same year, the Serbs liberate it.</p> <p>1915: German and Austro-Hungarian troops capture Belgrade.</p> <p>1918: Serbs, with help of allies, liberate Belgrade</p>