

Continuity and Change: Lively Streets along the Outer wall of Belgrade

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Introduction

The presentation is segmented in four parts following the structure of the research plan and progressively unpacking the title of the project. Firstly, the section *Posed Problem* defines the terms of continuity and change. Then, the *Research Question* introduces the concept of the lively streets and studies how others have addressed it. It is followed by the *Design Proposal* which brings the discussion back to the Outer Wall of Belgrade. I will finish off with some closing remarks in the the section *Reflections*.

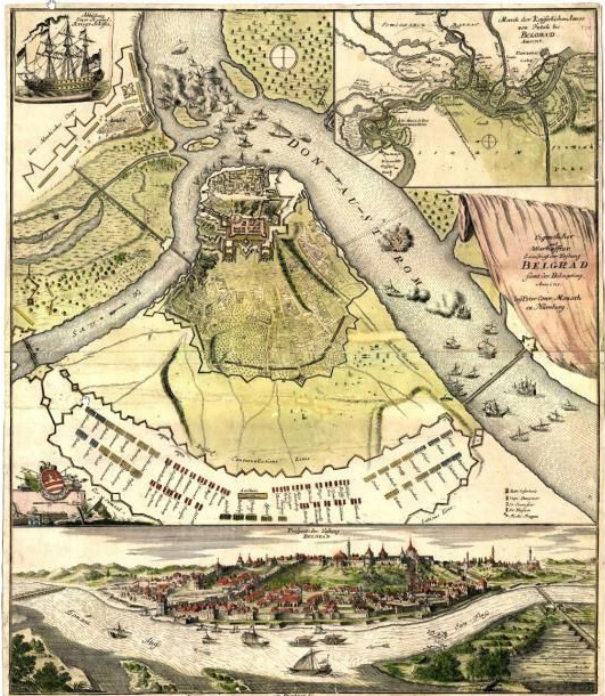


Figure 1: (Cover) Schematic urban plan of Belgrade

Figure 2: Turkish conquest in 1717. From staribeograd.com



Examples of Progressivism

Figure 3: Emilijan Josimovic, 1867. From Marta Vukotic Lazar.

Figure 4: New Belgrade, 1950-60. From architectuul.com

Figure 5: Waterfront Project, 2014-ongoing. From Jordan Lockhart Cameraville.

Posed Problem

Current and past urban developments in Belgrade provide much needed modern change yet they have come at the cost of the continuity of preexisting site conditions.

Belgrade is no stranger to events of massive urban destruction. The repeated invasions of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires across the last millennia entailed repeated destruction and reconstruction of the city. [Figure 2]

Interestingly, these forms of urban destruction with little public participation have perdured into the modern age. The first masterplan of Belgrade was executed in the late 19th century and entailed major demolition and rebuilding of the city inside of its outer wall. Similarly, New Belgrade in the 20th century and the Waterfront Project up to the present day share similar ambitions. [Figures 3-5]

These examples strived for what I will refer to as modern change, which relies on performance aspects such as access to light, views, and the street; effective multi-modal transportation, sanitizing conditions, and waste removal; low energy and material consumption; etc.

Taken to its extreme, as in the examples below, modern change falls into the pitfall of progressivism, with its characterized destruction of historical artefacts, naïve functionalism, and total planning.

I oppose the concept of modern change to that of historical continuity which recognizes the need to



Examples of Historicism

Figure 6: Studenica Monastery, UNESCO Site.
From [tripadvisor.se](https://www.tripadvisor.se)

Figure 7: Spanish House, free-standing façade.
From [behance.net](https://www.behance.net)

Figure 8: Generalstab, perduring damage of NATO bombings.
From [Novosti.rs](https://www.novosti.rs)

preserve the material, identity, and memory of a place.

When historical continuity is made operative and taken into its extreme it turns into historicism, where the building is turned into an archeological object which freezes it in time. The Generalstaab, the Spanish House, and the Studenica Monastery are examples of buildings which have stopped being inhabited spaces with contested usage. [Figures 6-8] Instead, they have become objects of contemplation: like Aldo Rossi would say, these buildings have been mummified.



Examples of Lively Streets:

Figure 9: Outer Wall Belgrade along Skadarlija

Figure 10: Moats at Kalamegdan Fortress

Figure 11: Outer Wall Belgrade along Sremska Street

Research Question

How can the city provide modern change while retaining historical continuity, all while avoiding the determinism of progressiveism or historicism?

Progressivism and historicism both are defined by top-down moralism which aim for the permanent, finished, and prescribed.

Conversely, I am proposing lively streets as their alternative. My hypothesis is that because of their transformable and unscripted character, lively streets are the location where the negotiation of the city's historical continuity and modern change occurs.

Therefore, I propose Lively Streets as being the force that can engage with Historical Continuity and Modern Change simultaneously, sidelining the issue of a single future by opening the possibility to multiple ones.

Let us take a closer look at what I mean by Lively Streets. I define them as those that are in a constant process of transformation that is not dictated nor fixed but rather that allow for change and redefinition. Lively streets open the field to discussion without assigning them a prescribed fixed meaning.

There are many examples in Belgrade where this is occurring. As a group we studied the fortress and its moats, and identified that their transformative use from a military fortification into a modern park. Similar transformations have occurred in the Bohemian Quarter and the streets along the Outer Wall of



Belgrade, a historical artefact that I will be engaging with closely later in this presentation. [Figures 9-11]

My fascination with the transformative qualities of the historical object can be traced back to at least 2016 when I went on a travel fellowship that I entitled “Spolia in Dubrovnik, Split and Venice”. In the photograph you can see the fortified wall of the Diocletian’s Palace turned into residences of the modern inhabitants of the city of Split. [Figure 12]

This issue of how to reconcile the past with the future is not a new one in the architecture discourse. I have taken three major literary works and unpacked their contributions to the meaning of lively streets as those that are transformable and unscripted. From each of these theories, I have taken a main take away that will be directly investigated in the design proposal.

Firstly, from Aldo Rossi’s *The Architecture of the City* comes the concept of adaptive reuse. For Rossi this involves giving new uses and meanings to unchangeable forms. Rossi views the architect as a participant in both the collective memory emerging from the past and the collective will-making the future. [Figure 13]

From James Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* comes out the tenant of diversity. She describes four operative design points for them, which I will be alluding to later in my design proposal. These are neighborhoods with more than one function, short blocks with corners, variety of

Figure 12: fortified wall of Diocletian’s Palace turned into residences of the city of Split, 2016



Figure 13: Aldo Rossi
The Architecture of the City
1966

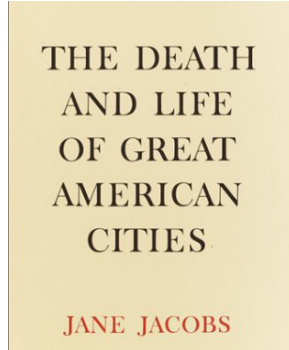


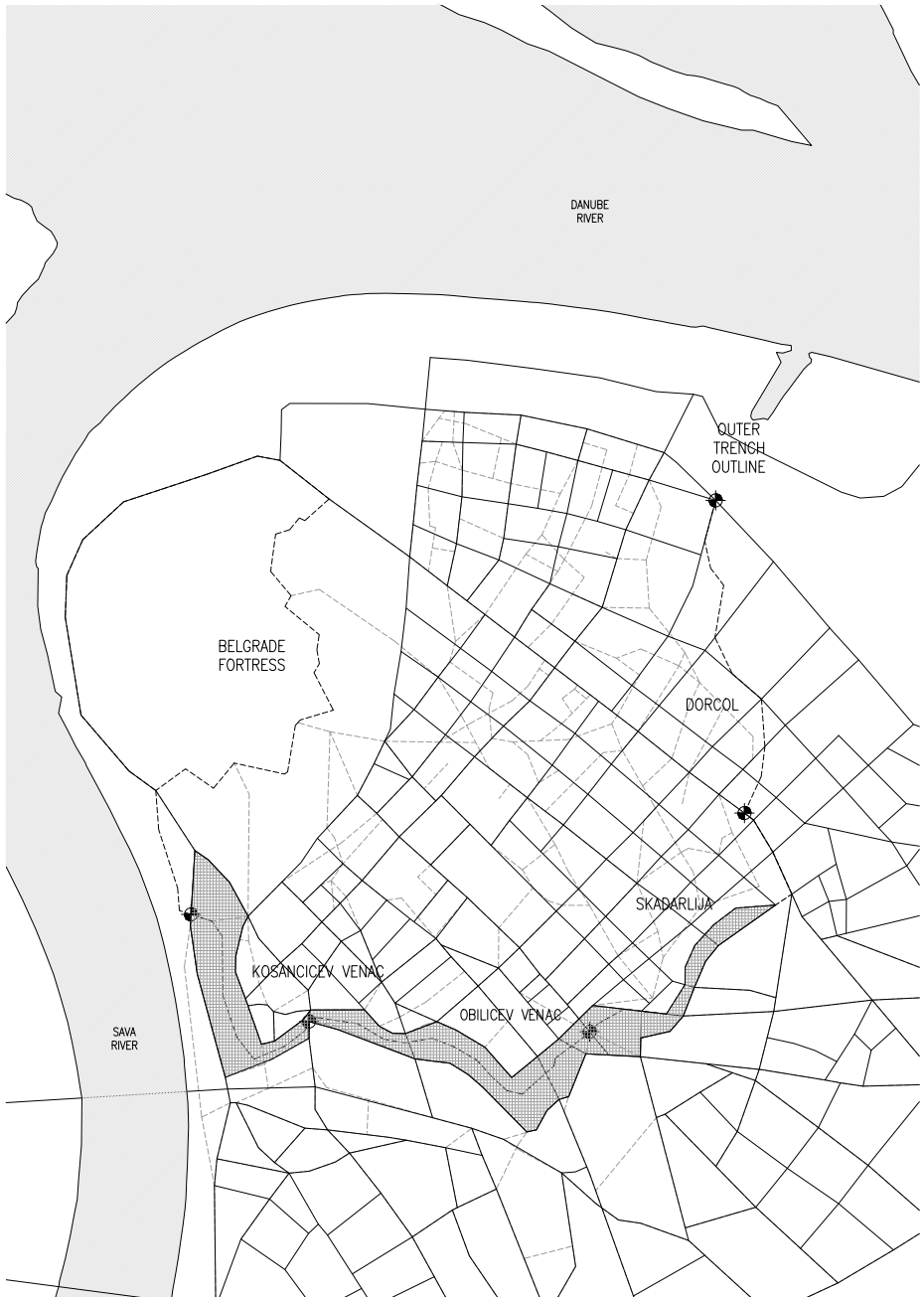
Figure 14: Jane Jacobs
The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 1961



Figure 15: Esra Akan
Open Architecture
2018

buildings of different ages, and sufficient concentration of people. [Figure 14]

Finally, Esra Ackan's Open Architecture stresses the importance of Collaboration. She studies the architecture competition of the IBA, which reshaped much of West Berlin in the late 1980s. The IBA competition briefing aimed to "stay away from the stale historic imagination on the one hand and on the other the over-enthusiastic search for the new for its own sake..." (Ackan, 55) Ackan's account is particularly insightful for she has the perspective of time to assess the success and failures of the competition which I aim to learn from, particularly on her main concern on collaboration. [Figure 15]



Design Proposal

To rely on adaptive reuse, diversity, and collaboration to set the stage for a lively street, one that voices the testimony of the past conditions and yet is transformable in the future.

We say the farmer grows plants. Truth is it that plants can only grow on their own. At best the farmer can create the right conditions to allow for this growth to happen. The burden of the project therefore is to set the right conditions for the lively streets to occur. Keeping with the metaphorical analogies, I intend to set a stage, or crate the right conditions where change can occur. The adaptive reuse, diversity, and collaboration are key components to achieve this.

Let us take it back to Belgrade. Above you can see the schematic plan of the city prior to the urban redrawing done in 1867 by Josimovic. Compared to its current condition, the site of the outer wall of the city indicated with a darker line, stands out for its high degree of permanence. [Figure 16] This is particularly the case along the shaded area which, incidentally, also corresponds to some of the liveliest parts of the city as shown in the earlier examples.

Moreover, the permanence of the outer wall seems to be linked to the degree of elevation change across the city since the outer wall is best preserved in the segments where the elevation change is most pronounced. This is the most evident in the ridge of Kosancicev Venac. Here the wall is still visible, and separates the upper street of Kosancicev with the lower one of Karadordeva.

Figure 16: Schematic plan of Belgrade showing the traces of the medieval streets.

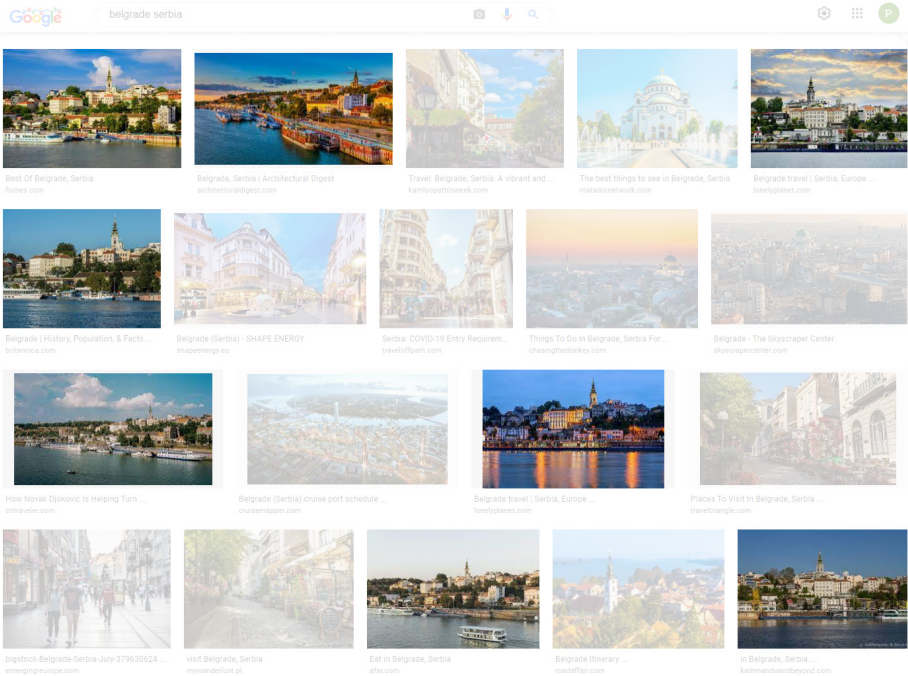


Figure 17: Google Images results for "Belgrade Serbia"

Figure 18: Sava Port, 1933 From opusteno.rs

Perhaps not coincidentally, it also provides one of the main postcards of the city. Of the top image results for “Belgrade Serbia” half are of Kosancicev as seen from across the Sava River. [Figure 17]

However, when inspected more closely, the area is not characterized by the liveliness of the other segments of the outer wall. Therefore, this is an interesting break in the causal relationship of degree of permanence of the outer wall, elevation change, and liveliness of the streets. My project intends to instill the liveliness back into the area.

Kosancicev area was once a key part of the city of Belgrade, and a stronghold of the nascent Serbian state. Its strategic importance, next to the Fortress and by the river, gave convenient access of goods from the water up into the city. [Figure 18]

After the decline of shipped goods, the site entered an era of decline that has recently started to be reversed: the adaptive reuse of Beton Hala [Figure 19] and the urban facelift of Karadordeva [Figure 20] are early signs of this. There have also been competition entries for the site I will be intervening on. And these changes have also sparked acts of suspected arson driven by speculative real state. [Figure 21]

If we look at these conditions from above, the outer wall runs along the dotted red line, and Kosancicev is the block highlighted in pink. The area is very well connected with vehicular traffic, being next to the highway and with a large parking area of



Figure 19: Beton Hala, 2012-2014, Adaptive Reuse. From bellegradblog.com



Figure 20: Karadordeva Avenue, 2018-2021, Urban Facelift. From beograd.rs

Figure 21: Karadordeva 7, 2019-2020, Arson/Speculation. From politika.rs

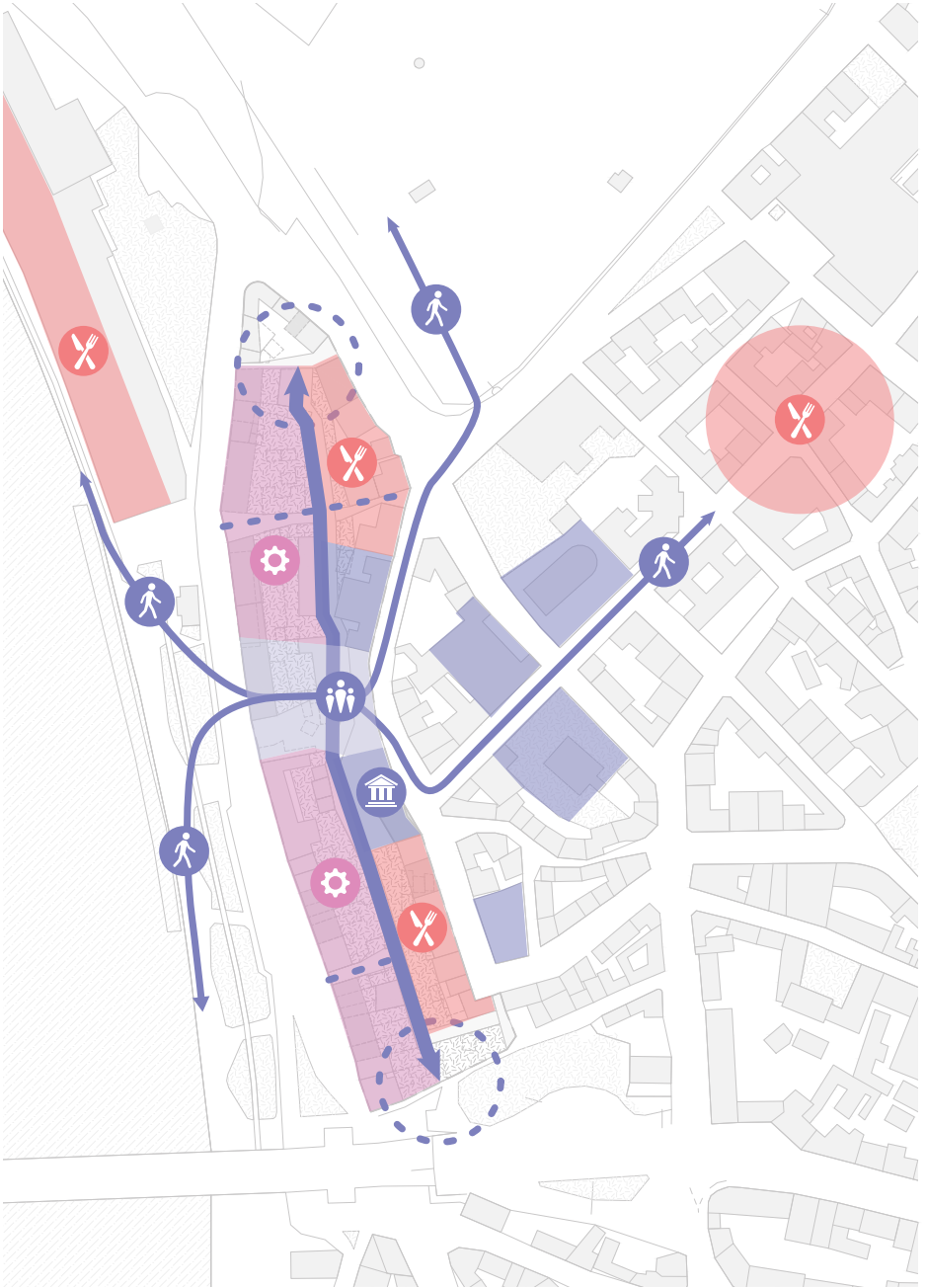
Figure 22: Site Plan of Belgrade showing the existing connections to the Sava River



Beton Hala. Moreover, the lower part of the site is connected to the city center by the tram, one of the few effective modes of public transportation in Belgrade. However, when it comes to pedestrian movement, the busy commercial streets along the ridge of the city center of Belgrade have no good access to the Sava River. [Figure 22]

My project intends to highlight the three existing pedestrian walkways to connect the city to the water. I will focus primarily on the middle one, for it is the one that with careful design will be able to connect the water directly to Kaja Petra, one of the longest and most important streets of the city. [Figure 23]

This will involve proposing a civic center at the location of the jog, as well as a pedestrian walkway that runs North to South through the middle of the block. In addition to being an urban alignment element, the civic center with its adjoining public space serve to engage with the historical



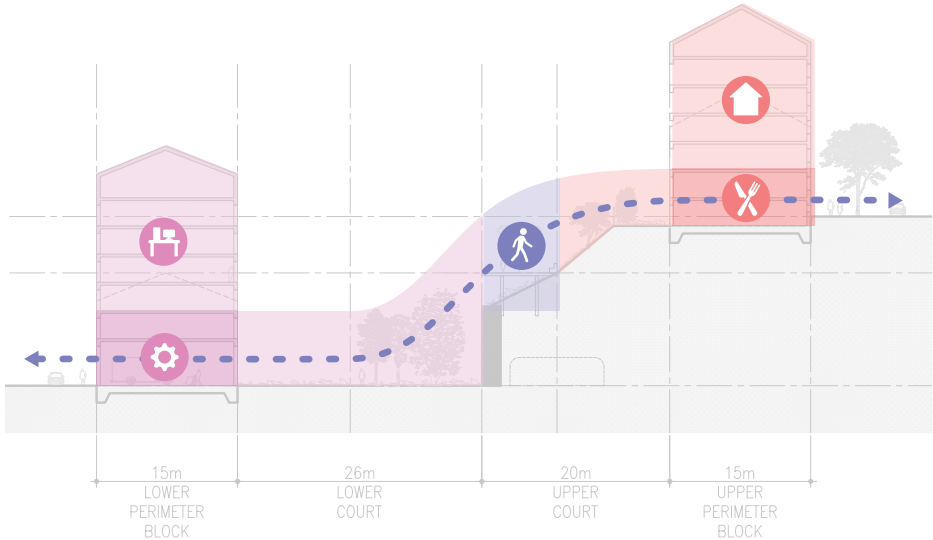


Figure 23: Site map of Kosancicev indicating functions diagrammatically

Figure 24: Site section of Kosancicev indicating functions diagrammatically

significance of the site through its built form and program, and intends to set the stage for a lively street through the previously mentioned principles.

Moreover, the project extends its reach to propose a masterplan for the area that gives needed clarity to the process of change of the urban block. The lower section of the site I propose to highlight its modern role in resonance with its historical one, giving importance to soft industry and office space that take advantage of the good connection to the tram and the highway. Similarly, the upper part of the site is reinforced as a residential area with added mixed use in the form of restaurants and small retail stores. [Figure 24]

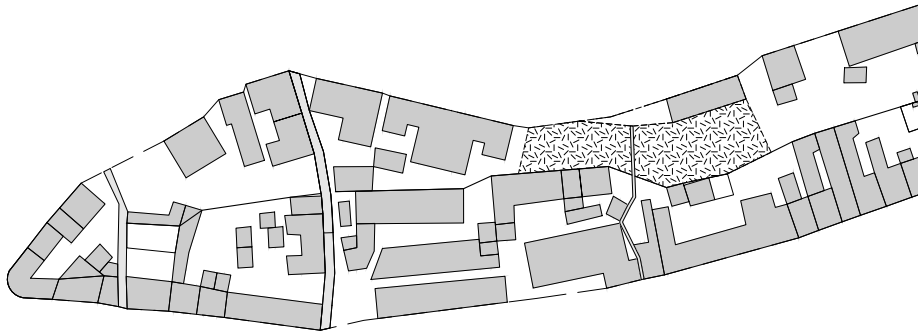
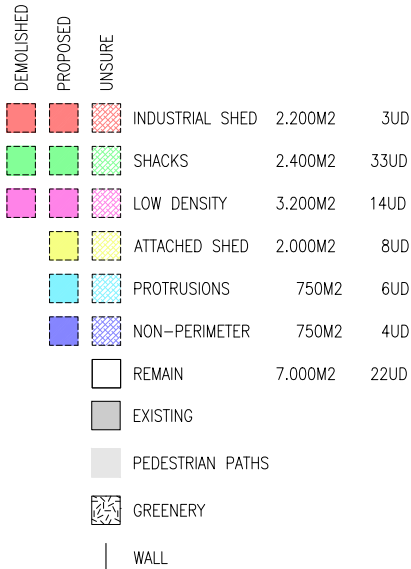




Figure 25: existing condition of Kosancicev

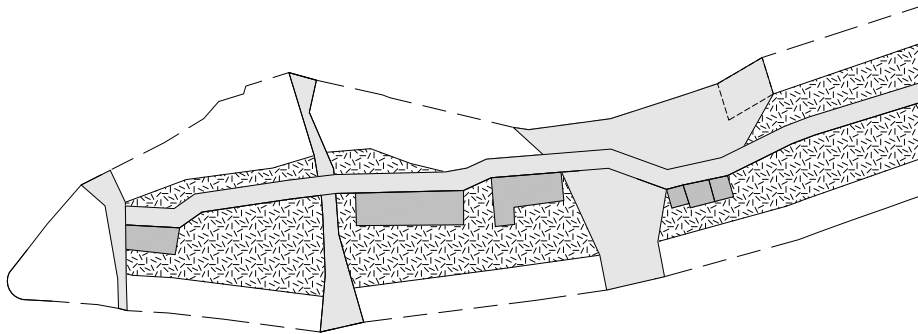
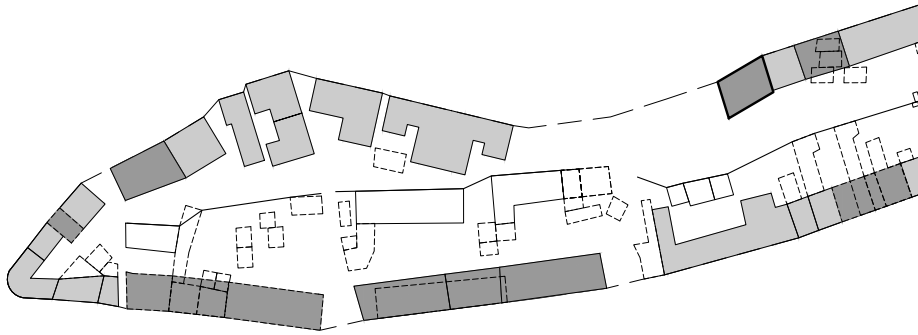
Figure 26: proposed removal and modification



The masterplan relies on a dense perimeter block with mixed uses to engage the street and follow the principles of diversity set out by Jane Jacobs and the IBA competition. The process of densification results in a block that uses 30% less ground space while increasing the usable floor space by 30%.

Part of the intervention therefore entails removing some of the buildings on the site. More precisely, and after undergoing an itemized study of every building on the site, the proposal involves keeping roughly a third of the buildings as they are, a third are adapted, and a third are removed. [Figure 26]

The criteria for these changes follow defined principles for both Historical Continuity and Modern



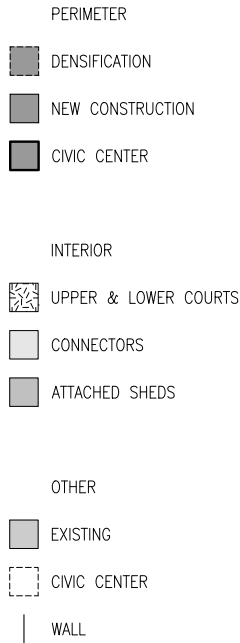
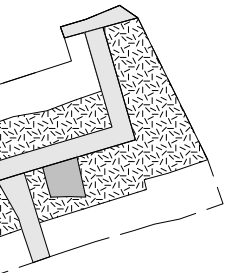
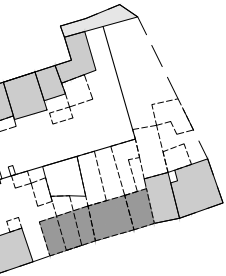
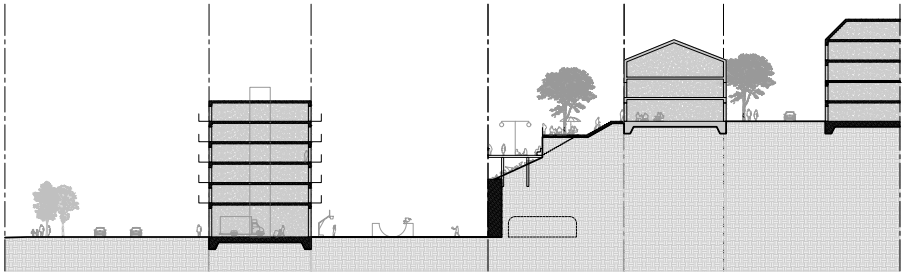


Figure 27: proposed perimeter block

Figure 28: proposed inner yard

Change. The former evaluates the age of the building, its historical significance, and the quality of the construction. The later considers access to light and the street, the expected high density of use, and appropriate building performance.

The resulting intervention of the masterplan can therefore be segmented into the perimeter block and the public inner yard. For the perimeter block, it will define three categories of varying degrees of intervention: existing buildings that stay as they are, existing buildings to be densified, and new construction. Additionally, the civic center takes part on this perimeter strategy with special attention. [Figure 27]



KARADORDEVA

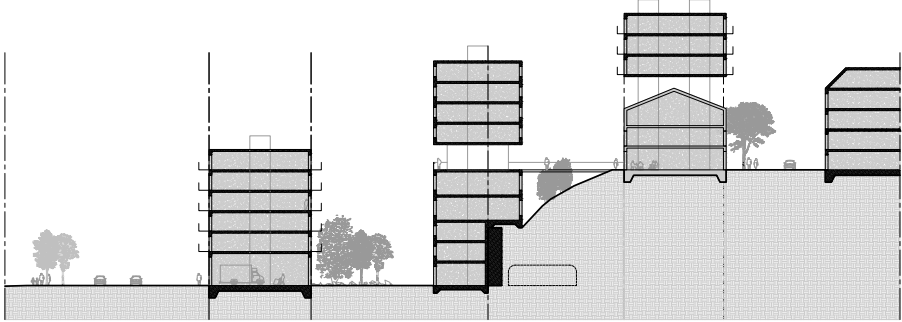
NEW CONSTRUCTION

SPORT COURTS

UPPER TERRACE

EXISTING

KOSANCICEV



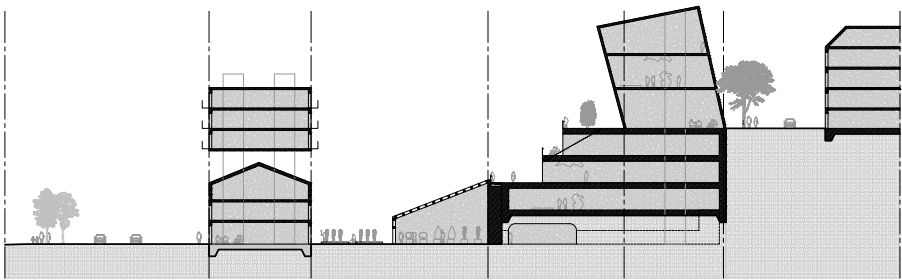
KARADORDEVA

NEW CONSTRUCTION

INNER BLOCK

DENSIFICATION

KOSANCICEV



KARADORDEVA

DENSIFICATION

HORTICULTURE

UPPER GALLERY

CIVIC CENTER

KOSANCICEV



The masterplan also intervenes on the public inner yard. It is divided in two heights which are interfaced by the outer wall and its pedestrian pathway. The resulting space is engaged by the program of the adjoining buildings. Sport courts, terraces, a market, and an upper gallery are just some of the possible uses of these spaces. [Figure 28]

Figure 29: three hypothetical sections of the site following the principles of the proposed masterplan

Figure 30: current condition of the location of the proposed civic center

The following sequence of sections show possible evolutions of the site over time. [Figure 29] This is because the resulting masterplan intends to serve as a platform for the change of the block, allowing a transformation that, unlike the Waterfront Project, densifies and modernizes the site in resonance to existing conditions. This process would be expected to occur over time and with close collaboration with

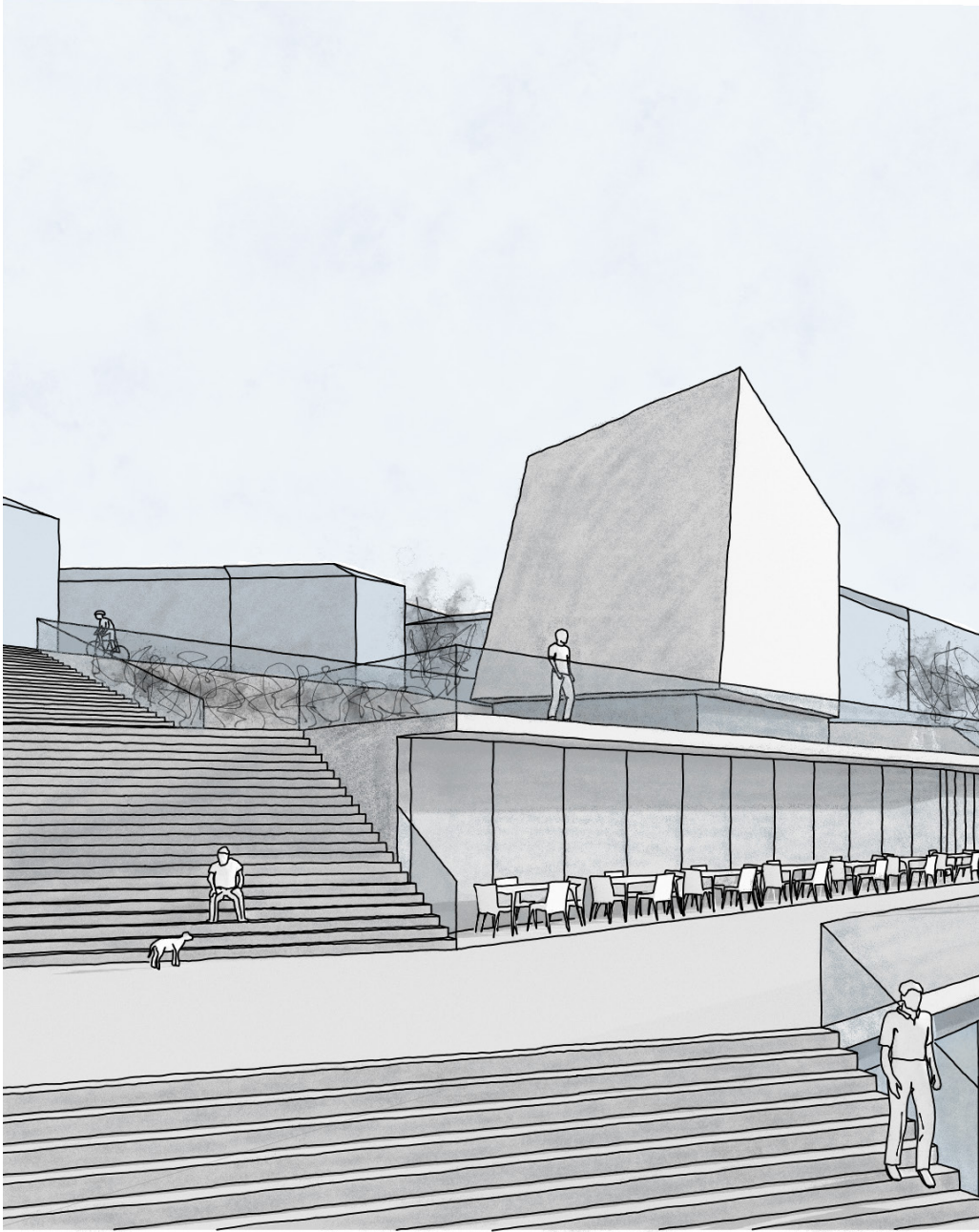


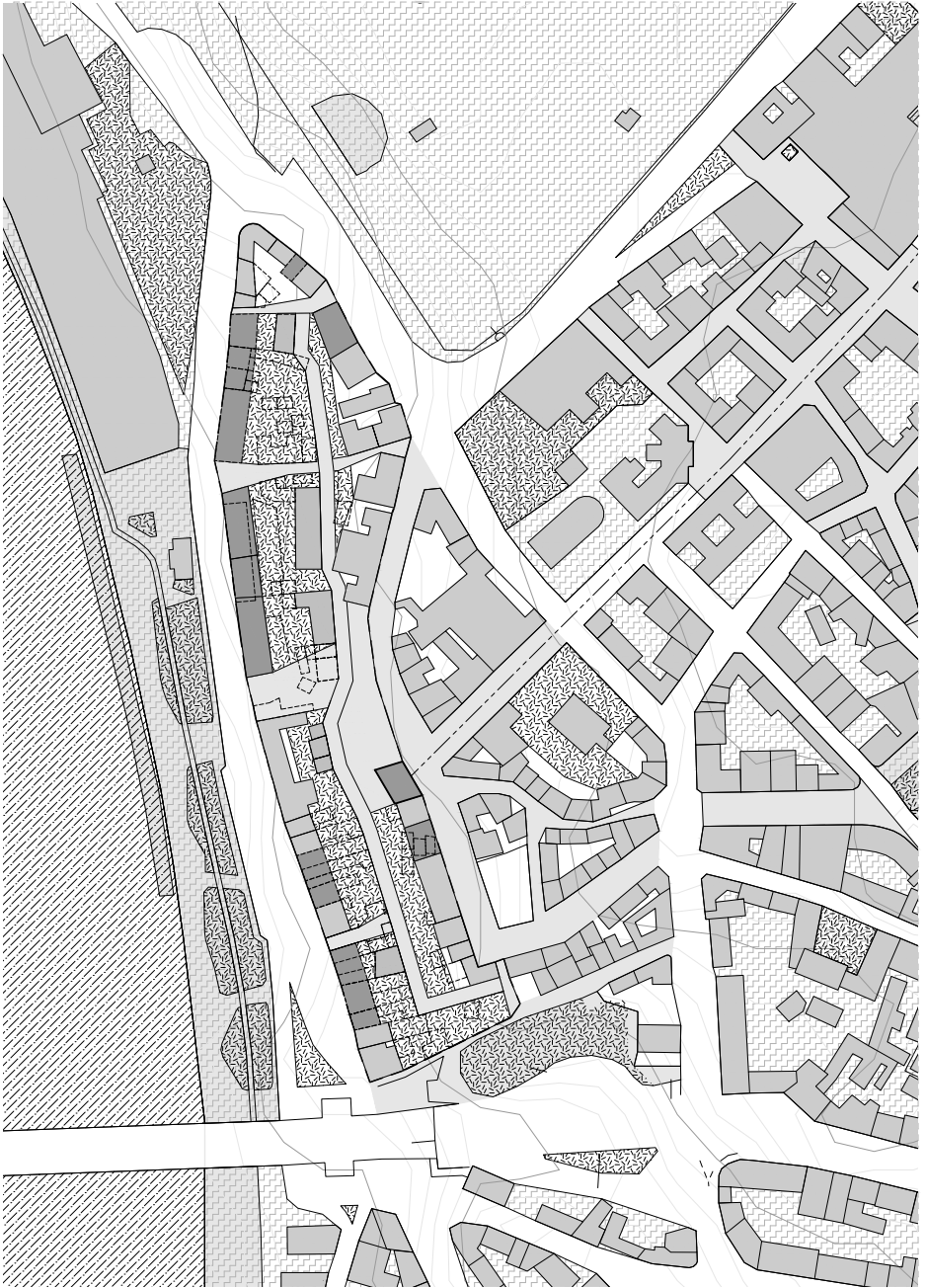


Figure 31: perspective sketch of the proposed civic center

all the agents of the site, although closer definition of these processes will of course be the subject of attention of the coming weeks.

Moreover, the civic center will be subject of a more precise architectural investigation. Its location in both the outer perimeter and inner public yard offers an opportunity to simultaneously address multiple of the issues at stake on the site.

On the screen you can see the current condition of the location of the proposed civic center [Figure 30]. The proposal simplifies the site and makes it accessible to the public. The building connects Kaja Petra from above to the Sava River below with an expressive façade and a grand staircase. Its intended program will be in close relation to the exterior space, tentatively: a historic museum for the city of Belgrade, a performance area, retail, and exhibition space, etc. [Figure 31]



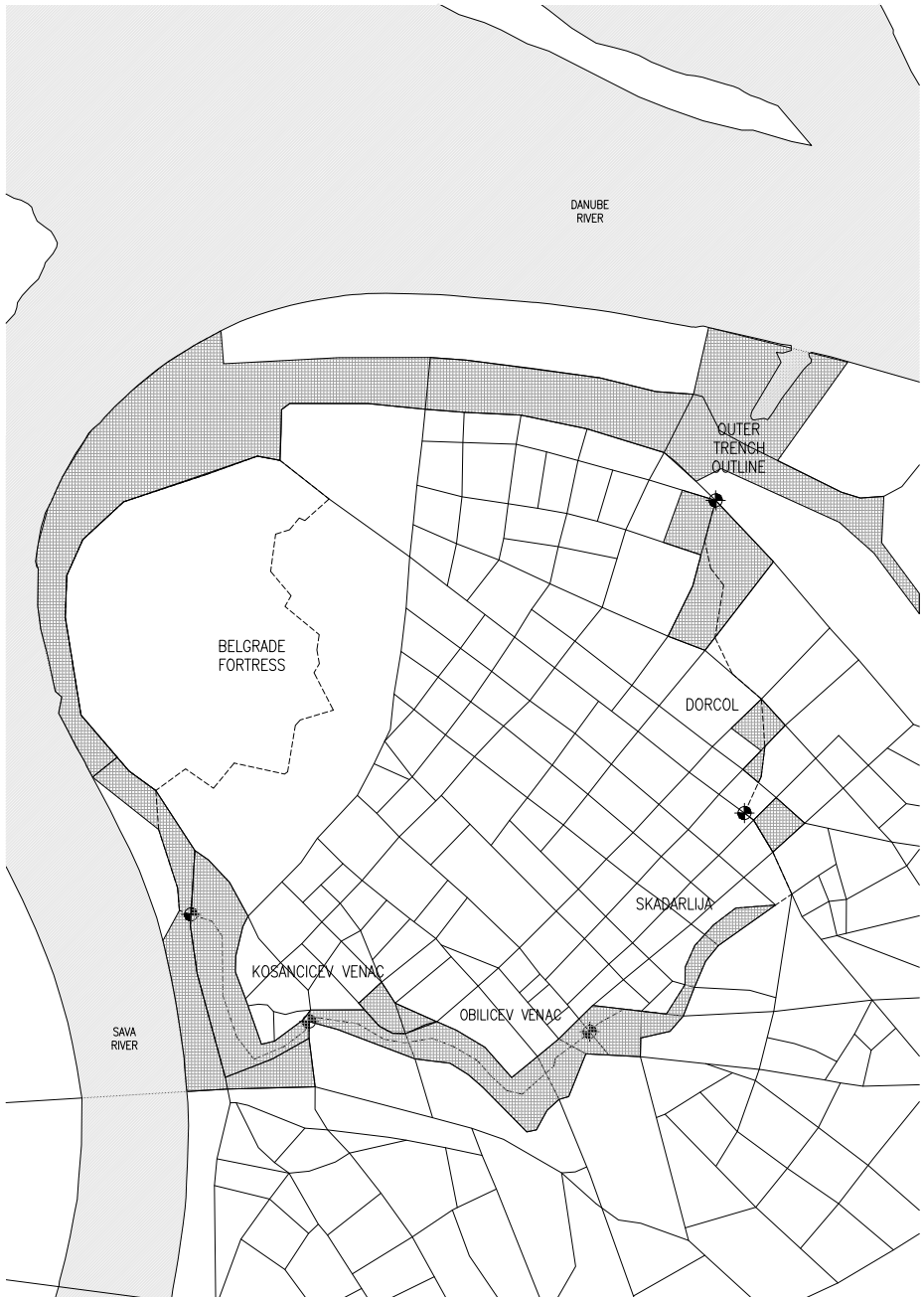
Reflection

In conclusion, the project proposes lively streets by shaping the neighborhood into an adaptive, diverse, and collaborative space of engagement. To set the stage for a lively street, the masterplan does not present itself as a finalized object but instead as one more step in the process of change. The project portrays the possibilities through which modern change can be integrated into the site while taking as premise the expectation of change and the never-finalized nature of design.

Moreover, although it sidelines the proposal for a single future, it unearths the existing conditions of the site and makes them explicit. Particularly through the resultative proposal of the civic center and public space, the project catalyzes the spatial, historical, and social continuity of the site. It gives a voice to the living testimony that is the built city, making it an active participant in the chorus of the lively street.

As seen in the diagram, an early assessment displays some of the interventions, like the new buildings, the perimeter block, and the densification, as engaging particularly with the goals of modern change. Conversely, the pedestrian connectors, the anchoring civic center, and engaging the outer wall are design elements that relate more to the historical continuity. In the coming weeks I intend to clarify the direct purpose and goal of each of the specific design elements, and how they closely relate to the design principles of adaptive reuse, diversity, and collaboration. [Figure 33]

Figure 32: Kosancicev proposed site plan



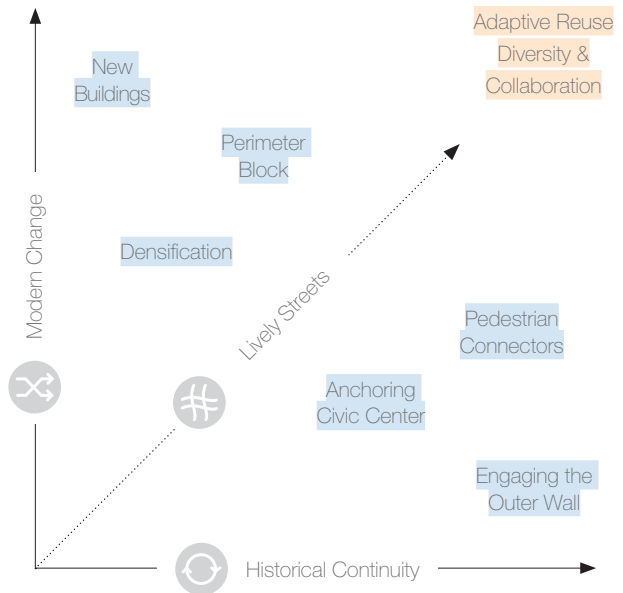


Figure 33: Schematic site plan of Belgrade showing the areas of intervention of the Outer Wall

Figure 34: conceptual map of design elements (blue) and principles (orange) in relation to the main concepts

The ambition of the project is already large, since it tackles the scales of building and city block. However, if successful in defining these principles there is an opportunity to extend their application beyond Kosancicev and along all the outer wall. [Figure 34] In doing so, the city center of Stari Grad would be clearly defined, and position Belgrade as a vibrant lively city at the crossroads of continuity and change.

