

CLEANING THE MEMORY OF THE SMOKE

*life of Belgrade's industrial heritage before, during
and after their stage of in betweenness*



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Research Plan for graduation studio Methods and Analysis of Imagination

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Background

During my course of study at TU Delft, I have developed a personal fascination, which implies the possibilities for an inclusive reflection of identity in architecture and the aim to counter erasure. In my design researches, I have observed different types of erasure taking place on multiple levels. On the one hand, I have seen the neglect of aspects that makes an object continuous. something I have explored during Msc1 for Public Building when I co-designed with Matteo Armenante and Alina Paia a forum in The Hague. This forum gathered the re-assembly of the demolished materials and memories of buildings as a 'rescue mission'. On the other hand, during my Msc2 history thesis, I have encountered the failure to recognize memories left behind by the decaying physical object. I tried to understand the importance of cultural heritage for the black community in a township in South Africa by analysing a demolished Rondavel. The way it used to serve as one of the few representations of this community taught me the importance of archiving history in order to save its memory.

As for this research, I would like to explore further the intersection of identity, continuity and memory in architecture. This is an ongoing personal process in order to define my position and contribution to this discipline, which is essentially one that aims to be democratic, tolerant and diverse.

Table of content

Background	2
Table of content.....	3
Introduction	4
Framework	6
Method.....	7
Research method diagram.....	9
Part I: Memory.....	10
Part II: In-betweenness	12
Part III: Modernity.....	18
Preliminary conclusion and reflection	21
Bibliography	22
List of figures.....	24

Introduction

In contemporary Belgrade, the fast transition of ideologies occurring in the city have resulted in the multiple layering of identities. While Belgrade has undergone multiple regimes, the built environment is used and adapted to transcend the (often conflicting) ideologies. Belgrade's most recent defined transition towards a post-socialist societal identity is strongly characterized by deindustrialization which mostly occurs around the redevelopment of the waterfront areas.¹ This transition is leaving an increasing amount of industrial buildings vacant,² while the waterfront renewal is in the process of replacing the industrial past of Belgrade for its new identity. Since these areas are new, clear spaces, they are used as the new, clear and visible spaces to transition and convey a modern identity.³

However, these buildings are seen as vital for the historical cultural expression of Belgrade.⁴ Since, even if they are in a state of decaying, these vacant buildings still serve as the physical reminder of industrialization and its aftermath. (Figure 1) Even if the transitions would ideally replace the past memories created, the hauntedness of the ruins still unconsciously affects the future memory the place.

De Certeau would describe the phenomenon of these haunted ruins as something that "(...) burst forth within the modernist, massive, homogeneous city like slips of the tongue from an unknown, perhaps unconscious, language."⁵ The practice of neglect and/or even leading demolition of these industrial buildings could therefore end up being an act of erasure of its multiple identities. In the case of the Belgrade

¹ Branislava Simic, "The Spatial Transformation of the River Waterfront through Three Historical Periods: A Case Study of Belgrade," *Journal of Contemporary Urban Affairs* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 2020): 27–36, <https://doi.org/10.25034/ijcua.2020.v4n2-3>.

² Natasha Jankovic and Ana Nikezic, "Rethinking Spontaneous Transformation" *International Journal of Cultural Heritage* 1, no. v (April 2016): 25–32, p. 26

³ Mirjana Roter-Blagojević and Marko Nikolić, "Dilemmas and Problems in Active Reuse of Belgrade Industrial Architecture - the Case Study of the Sava River Area," *Protection and Reuse of Industrial Heritage: Dilemmas, Problems, Examples*, 2017, 25–35. p. 27

⁴ Aleks Eror, "Battle for Belgrade: Why Activists Are Pushing Back against Serbia's Loss of Cultural Space," *The Calvert Journal*, April 28, 2017, <https://www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/8148/battle-belgrade-activists-serbia-cultural-space>.

⁵ Michel De Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Vol. 2 (Minneapolis ; London: University Of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 133

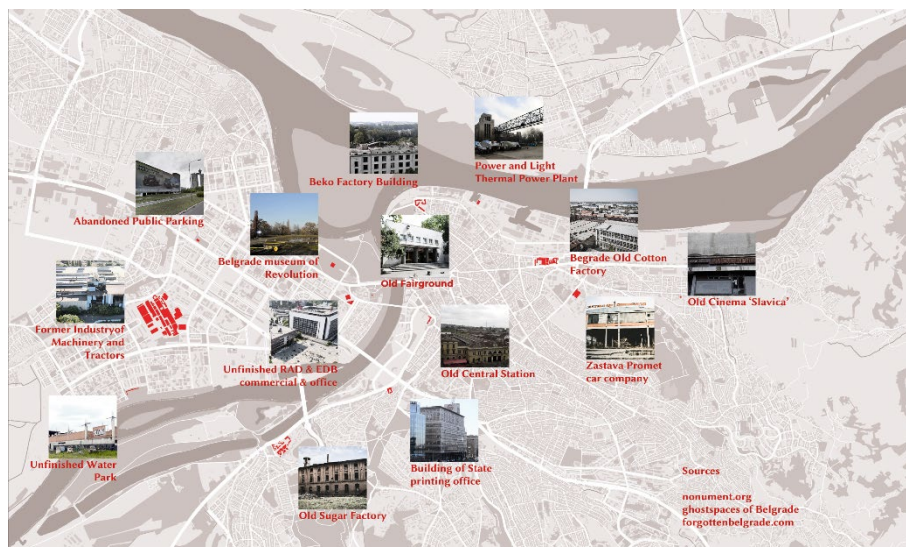


Figure 1: Map of the undefined industrial heritage of Belgrade at the Waterfront. Source: Ghost Spaces of Belgrade, Nonument Group, Forgotten Belgrade. Image modified by author.

Waterfront project, this practice was done undemocratically, eventually leading to demonstrations.⁶

These different levels of continuity, even after being in ruins, are something that I have observed during the first quarter of graduation (P1) together with Ana-Maria Vasilache Lucie Castillo-Ros and Matteo Armentant. Using the case study of the Old Sava bridge, we have identified the multiple aspects that allow for the existence of that object to be continuously appropriated and adapted. As a way to counter the erasure of the object, the analysis of its continuity can lead to an active recognition and potential strategic integration in the future. In the case of the industrial heritage situated at the waterfront of Belgrade, this leads to the following question:

What are the possibilities for the ghosted industrial heritage of Belgrade's to move forward from its status of in betweenness?

Keywords: haunted spaces, erasures, in betweenness, industrial heritage, industrial ruins.

⁶ Ivana Jovanovic, "Thousands Protest Controversial Demolitions for Belgrade Waterfront Development," www.intellinews.com, May 26, 2016, <https://www.intellinews.com/thousands-protest-controversial-demolitions-for-belgrade-waterfront-development-98344/>.

Framework

As a means to grasp the theoretical idea of objects and their physical continuity, the research done for P1 on the Old Sava Bridge offered a framework of analysis which allowed the research on continuity and its different aspects. This occurs through the reinterpretation of Lefebvre his triad on the production social space,⁷ the cycles of *form*, *representation* and *use*. The research ended with our personal reflection to the question of “what is the end of the object its continuity?” Moving forward to this idea, we speculated on possible, imaginary narratives to this question. This left us to openly question and discuss different possibilities on this matter “Is monumentality of the object the end of its physical continuity?” “Is the replacement of the object its form, representation and/or use the end of its physical continuity?” And at last, “Is the memory of the object what allows the continuity of the object beyond its physicality?”

These questions could be integrated within the broader field of research on what is actually the identity of an object and when does this identity end. I will propose, as a way to grasp these abstract notions, the analysis of the physicality in the present. At this moment, the objects transitioning is in a state of *in-betweenness*. In this research, the *in-betweenness* will be regarded as its own state of being. The definition and understanding of this *in-betweenness* can only take place if two distinctive ideas of one object its continuity are defined and juxtaposed. All three stages will be researched within in the same field of continuity as being the form, representation and use of an object.

Activist groups active in Belgrade have a common approach to define the stage of *in-betweenness* of buildings by archiving and researching this phenomenon. This offers a relevant framework for the research as well as its significance in terms of the relevant of today in this field of operation. The goal of the groups is to actively showcase the importance of these buildings and even propose a way of repurposing them.

⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Malden, Ma ; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

Method

This research will be separated in three stages. At first comes the memory of the industrial past of the buildings, then their current stage of *in-betweenness* and the last phase will be investigating the possibilities for their modernization. Although these stages are separated, each stage will be investigated simultaneously, as the past, the present and the future each represent a piece to the overall understanding of these buildings. All stages will look at the fields of form, representation and use however with different focus, since they all represent another notion of time.

While the Sava waterfront has been in stage of renewal already, the Danube riverfront is still in the stage of pre-transition.⁸ Therefore, it embodies the cleanest character of the research, contrasted against the Sava waterfront where (undemocratic) decisions have already been made towards its transition. Therefore, the Danube port and its heavier industrial area will be used as the case study to specifically understand and analyse the multiple stages of transition, while the Sava riverfront and its buildings will serve as the contrasting examples to the port. (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Defined abandoned industrial buildings on the Danube waterfront area. Source: Satellite image of Google Maps as of 05-11-2021. Image edited by author.

⁸ Simic, "The Spatial Transformation of the River Waterfront through Three Historical Periods: A Case Study of Belgrade," p. 32

Part I: The method used for analysing the first stage, the memory, will focus on the morphological and topological categorization of industrial heritage answering: *What is the history of the abandoned industrial buildings on the Danube riverfront in Belgrade in relation to their industrial memory?*

Part II: The second stage will focus on the current state of abandonment, exploring the praxeology of the buildings and their existence in this *in-betweenness* with the question: *What are the current states of the abandoned industrial buildings on the Danube riverfront in Belgrade?*

Part III: The method used for the final stage will focus on the transcending to modernity of the abandoned buildings with the semiological analysis to explore the possibilities of what the future of these buildings could be answering the question: *How can the abandoned industrial Danube riverfront in Belgrade be appropriated and adapted to allow for a new continuity?*

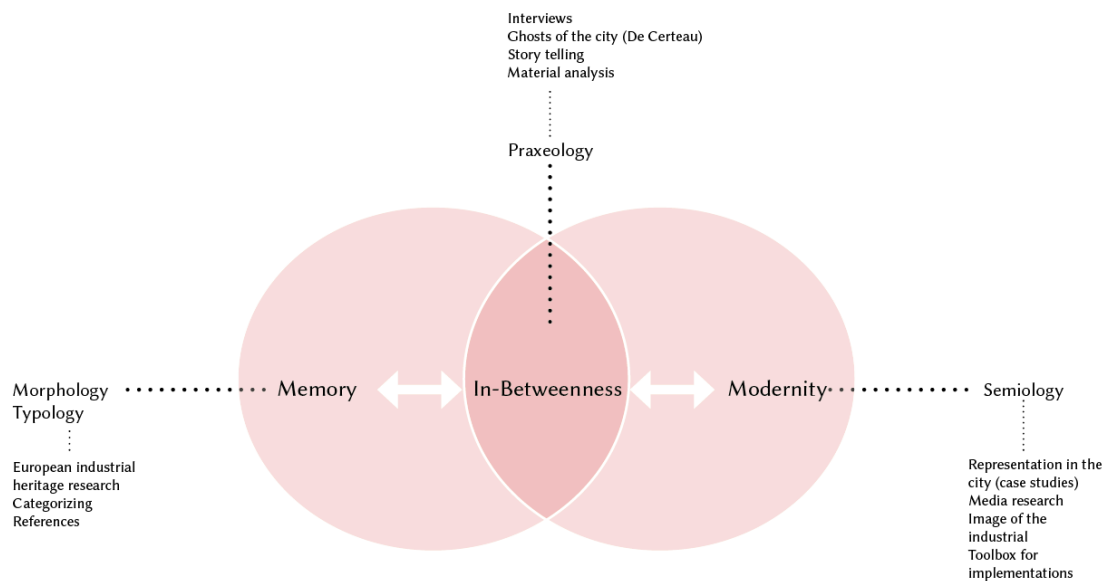


Figure 3: Diagram explaining the core of the research framework. Diagram made by author.

Research method diagram

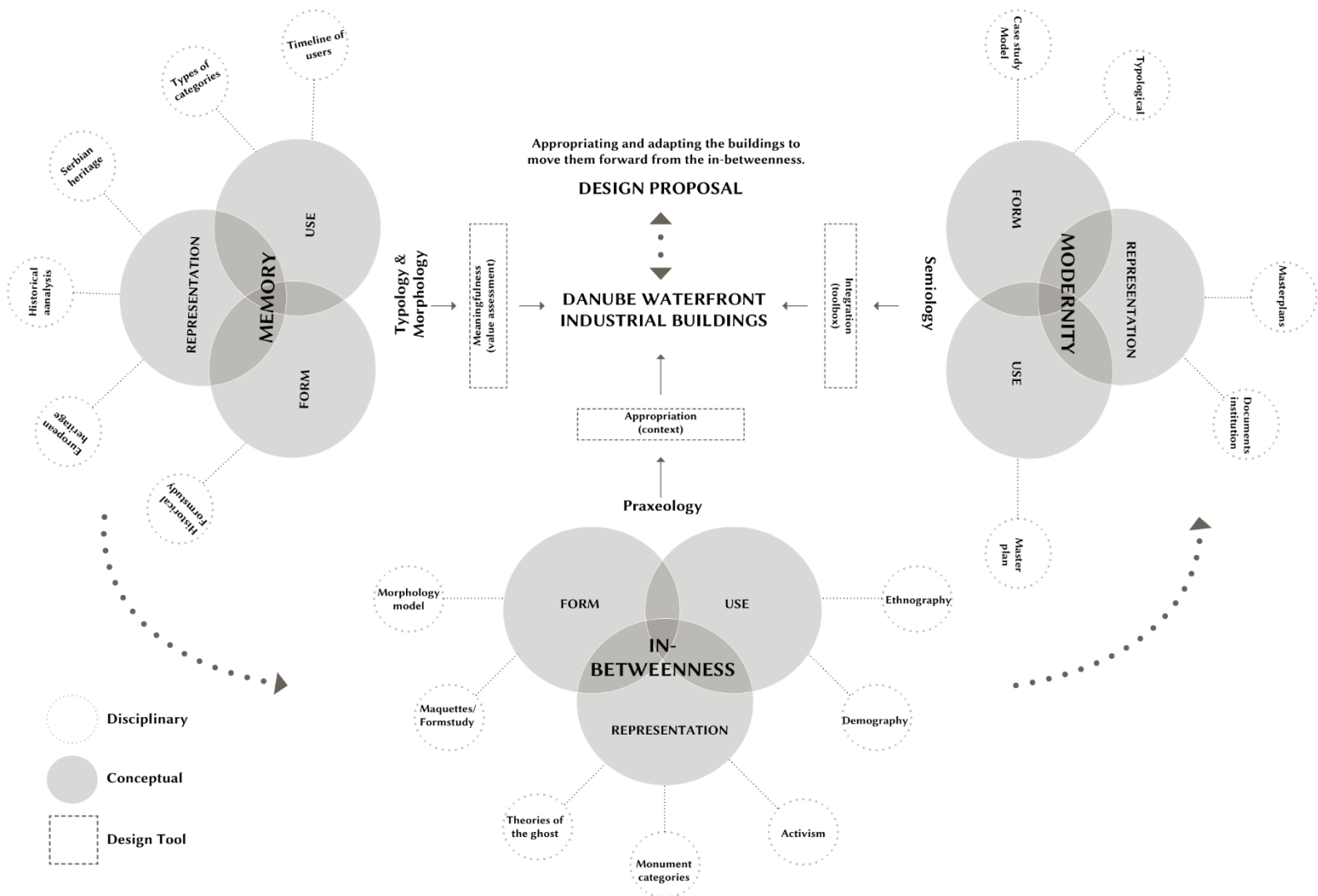


Figure 4: Diagram explaining the method of the research. Diagram made by author.

This diagram can be found at the end of the research plan in more detail.

What is the history of the abandoned industrial buildings on the Danube riverfront in Belgrade in relation to its industrial memory?

[illegible]

In the scale of Serbia, a connection is made between separate regions with heritage that contributed to the industrialization in Serbia. (Figure 6)

Certainly, industrial heritage knows different types and shapes of purposes, which each carried a specific different meaning to its space. The analysis of the different types, on a continental and regional scale, will contribute to the definition of the typology of industrial heritage, as well as the categorization of the different sub-types and their morphological appearance. By defining the differences of the sub-types, it will also become possible to connect each of them in order to understand how they function and collaborate in the different scales.

¹⁰ European Route for Industrial Heritage, “European Route of Industrial Heritage - ERIH,” www.erih.net, accessed November 5, 2021, <https://www.erih.net/>.

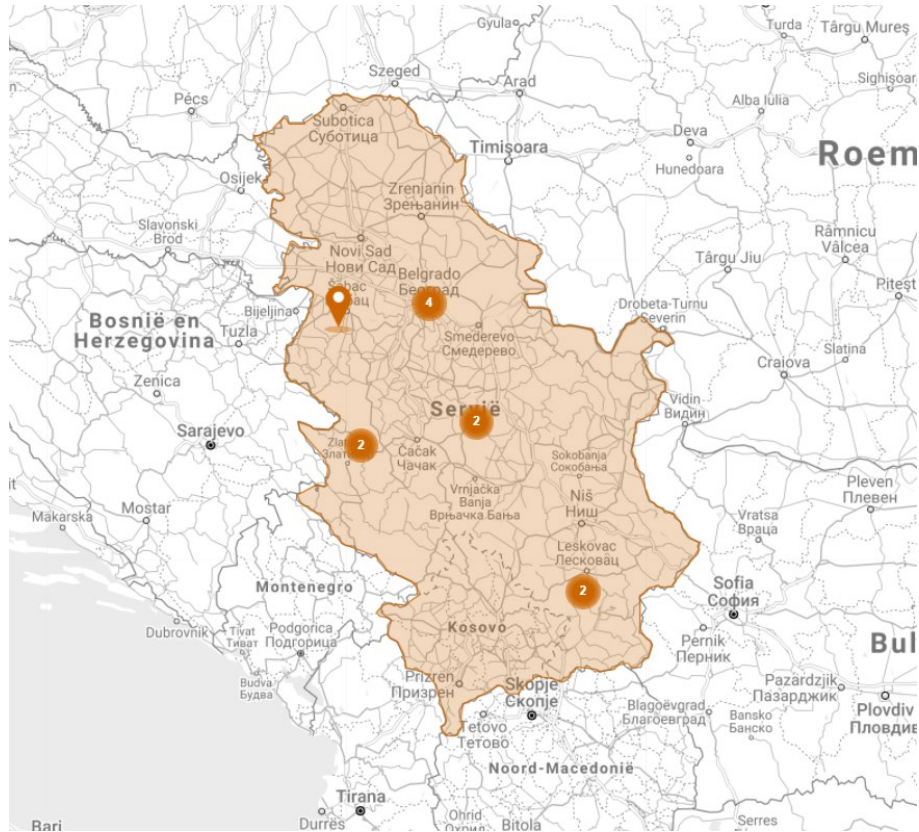


Figure 6: map of the Serbian Industrial Heritage according to the ERIH. Source: Heritage, "European Route of Industrial Heritage - ERIH,"

Subtypes according to the ERIH¹¹

- Application of Power
- Chemistry
- Housing
- Industrial Architecture
- Industry and War
- Production and Manufacturing
- Transport
- Water

The next step will be to conduct historical research by analysing archival material of Belgrade, its waterfronts and the Danube waterfront specifically. This will provide a more comprehensive narration to the continuity of the representation, form and use of the area of the case study.

¹¹ Ibid

Part II: In-betweenness

What are the current states of the abandoned industrial buildings on the Danube riverfront in Belgrade?

The approach for the definition on the stage of *in-betweenness* is to first define with praxeological research, the different stages of in-between. This is defined by the actor's different interpretations to the place. The analysis of different activist associations and their attitude towards stages of *in-betweenness* and their definition will contribute to highlight this side of the narrative. Besides that, the documented categories of monument in Belgrade as well as on the Danube waterfront will contribute to how these buildings are maintained and perceived today. At last, the users surrounding and at these spaces will be integrated to establish the meaning of this *in-betweenness* today, focussing on the multiplicities of narratives involved and the demographic as well as ethnographic of these places, by collecting interviews and stories.

Various activist groups aim to define their current state of *in-betweenness* through different perspectives on how they came to be. Although the multiple groups' perspectives are different, they have in common is their aim to archive and research these buildings and understand the reason for their current inability to transition. The linguistic comparison of their concept and approach is one of the ways to analyse and understand them. In this case, the groups of Ghost Spaces of Belgrade,¹² Nonument,¹³ and Forgotten Belgrade¹⁴ are contrasted. (Figure 7)

¹² Tim Edensor, "The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 23, no. 6 (December 2005): 829–49, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d58j>.

¹³ Nonument Group, "Nonument – Mapping & Archiving Public Spaces," Nonument!, accessed November 5, 2021, <https://nonument.org/>.

¹⁴ Forgotten Belgrade, "Forgotten Belgrade - Explore Abandoned Locations and Places," forgottenbelgrade.com, accessed November 5, 2021, <http://forgottenbelgrade.com/>.

Nonument group	Lost or undergone a shift in symbolic meaning as a consequence of political and social changes.	No longer suit the idea of what public space is about today,	Connected to collective memories and embedded in individual stories.	
Forgotten Belgrade	Defying time and change, not reminding of their history.	Demolition removes all traces of the previous,	Potential future	No specific reason or goal
Ghost Spaces of Belgrade	Demolition removes all traces of the previous,	Renovation often needs a new disposition,	Replacement brings totally new and erases previous history and effects on people's memories of a place,	Neglect causes just more problems and urban confusion.

Figure 7: Table of different activistic stands regarding Belgrade's abandoned buildings according to the vision as stated on their website. Table made by author.

One of the groups, Forgotten Belgrade,¹⁵ collected the material on abandoned buildings, specifically industrial buildings. (Figure 8)



Figure 8: Collection of pictures as made by Forgotten Belgrade. Source: Forgotten Belgrade, "Forgotten Belgrade - Explore Abandoned Locations and Places," Collage made by author.

For the specific site on the Danube Waterfront, the approach is to define different characters of *in-betweenness* and by doing so, applying different stages of ruins, which slowly deteriorates towards the end of continuity if no intervention is made. Those will be explored by defining different theories on abandonment, monuments and ruins while making models and using theoretical concepts, understanding about the ruin and the ghost in the city's, led by De Certeau and other post-structural theories will be used to grasp and deconstruct the idea of the in-between.

¹⁵ Ibid

First stage of ruin



Figure 9: Map and photographs of the first stage of ruin. Source: Satellite image of Google Maps as of 05-11-2021. Modified by authors. Photos taken and modified by author.

In this stage, people are guarding the place. A significant part of the structure and finishes is visible however the nature is slowly taking over. However, some people still appropriate the surroundings, and the history of these buildings is still presented in the name of these buildings, as visible on google maps.

Second stage of ruin



Figure 10: Map and photographs of the second stage of ruin. Source: Satellite image of Google Maps as of 05-11-2021. Modified by authors. Photos taken and modified by author.

In this stage, the main structure of the building is still present, but most of the aspects that once characterized the spaces are gone. The place is often found by accident, or by more daring explorers, since it is hidden away, with no clear sign of its existence. The border between nature and structure starts to become vague.

Last stage of ruin?



Figure 11: Map and photographs of the last stage of ruin? Source: Satellite image of Google Maps as of 05-11-2021. Modified by authors. Photos taken and modified by author.

In this stage, everything gone. The awkwardness of the empty space is the only reminder of what once was. The lack of any form of continuity makes these spaces haunted, which they are doomed to stay if nothing happens.

Part III: Modernity

How can the abandoned industrial Danube riverfront in Belgrade be appropriated and adapted to allow for a new continuity?

For this stage, the semiological analysis of developing and achieving a new continuity will be explored. For this purpose, multiple possible actors will be envisaged as well as similar case studies. This includes the visions for the urban masterplans and its renders for Belgrade's waterfronts, specifically the Danube waterfront. (Figure 12)

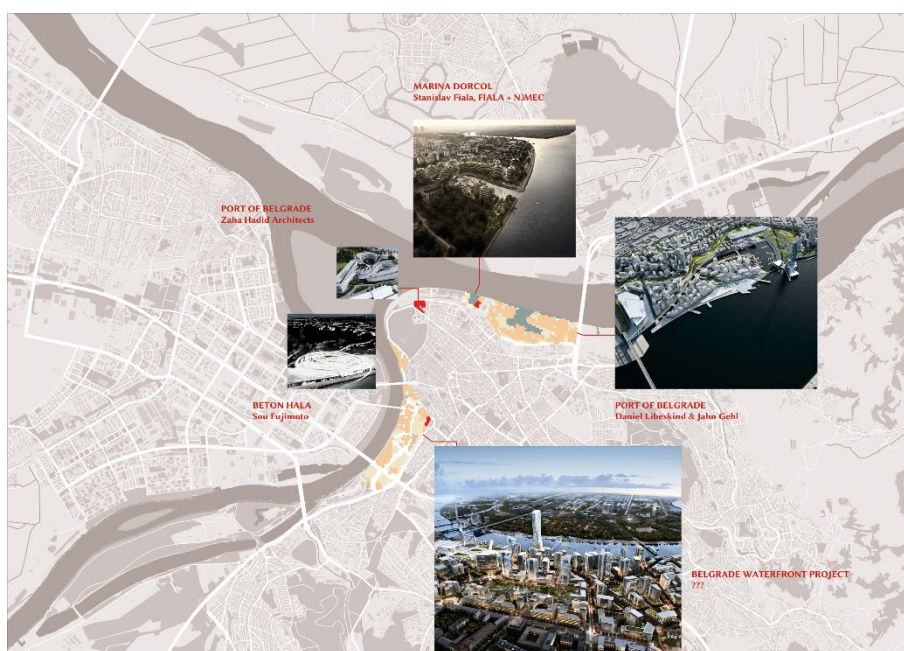


Figure 12: Map of the recent waterfront development plans in Belgrade at the Waterfront.
Source: Simic, "The Spatial Transformation of the River Waterfront through Three Historical Periods: A Case Study of Belgrade," Image edited by author.

Also, the documentations of institutional ideas and approaches to industrial heritage are to be taken into consideration. Even if there is some critique is that there is an overall "(...) lack of recognition for the importance of cultural and industrial heritage and the absence of a clearly defined cultural policy,"¹⁶ there are still documents provided that regard the inclusion of industrial heritage and their maintenance, like the following:

¹⁶ Marko Nikolić and Milena Vukmirović, "Industrial Heritage along Belgrade Waterfront in Planning Documents," *Arhitektura i Urbanizam*, no. 51 (2020): 86–103, <https://doi.org/10.5937/a-u0-28961>. <https://www.erih.net/>, p.95.

- The Regional Spatial Plan of the Administrative Area of the City of Belgrade (2011).
- The General Urban Plan of Belgrade (2016).
- The Plan of the General Regulation of the Construction.
- Area of the Local Self-government unit - City of Belgrade (2016).

At last, the analysis of case studies and literature theories on possibilities to revitalise industrial heritage will provide tools to create an intersection on a broader approach towards industrial heritage and the specific, scale simultaneity of the case of the Danube waterfront area. The case studies will be operating in the realm of both permanent and temporary purposes, whereas temporary purposes can be seen a temporary relieve of the *in-betweenness* of the space.¹⁷ (Figure 13)

¹⁷ Jankovic and Nikezic, "Long Lasting Building vs. Short-Term Using Case Study: Belgrade Temporary Use of Abandoned Building," p.12.



Figure 13: Collection of potential case studies of revitalized industrial heritage in Belgrade. Pictures taken and modified by author.

Preliminary conclusion and reflection

In order to ensure continuity, it is important to understand the dynamic nature of an object. The memory as well as modernization should be allowed both to have a multi-layered level of interpretation, leaving space to grow. When the perception becomes static, it becomes a restrictive frame of thought which will not be able to change accordingly. Each intervention should allow for multiple meanings both in respect to the essence of industrial buildings and their very distinctive scale to the city, as well as the character of the various operation actors, looking for a human level of appropriation. Also, the integration of a broader plan for the purpose of industrial heritage could potentially lead to more inclusive decision making.

This research prompts me to look at the core concept of identity, as well as dive deeper into the industrial, which is relatable to my own environment however often unrelatable in terms of understanding their presence. I am aware that this research needs moments of redefinition, which will force me to make specific decision during the research to redefine the scope of the analysis, like choosing a specific type of industrial building and site. I will make the choices of redefinition simultaneously with the findings of the analysis, that will guide me to refine the research.

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List of figures

Figure 1: Map of the undefined industrial heritage of Belgrade at the Waterfront. Source: Ghost Spaces of Belgrade, Nonument Group, Forgotten Belgrade. Image modified by author.	5
Figure 2: Defined abandoned industrial buildings on the Danube waterfront area. Source: Satellite image of Google Maps as of 05-11-2021. Image edited by author.	7
Figure 3: Diagram explaining the core of the research framework. Diagram made by author.	8
Figure 4: Diagram explaining the method of the research. Diagram made by author.	9
Figure 5: Map of the European Industrial Heritage according to the ERIH. Source: Heritage, "European Route of Industrial Heritage - ERIH,"	10
Figure 6: map of the Serbian Industrial Heritage according to the ERIH. Source: Heritage, "European Route of Industrial Heritage - ERIH,"	11
Figure 7: Table of different activistic stands regarding Belgrade's abandoned buildings according to the vision as stated on their website. Table made by author.	13
Figure 8: Collection of pictures as made by Forgotten Belgrade. Source: Forgotten Belgrade, "Forgotten Belgrade - Explore Abandoned Locations and Places," Collage made by author.	14
Figure 9: Map and photographs of the first stage of ruin. Source: Satellite image of Google Maps as of 05-11-2021. Modified by authors. Photos taken and modified by author.	15
Figure 10: Map and photographs of the second stage of ruin. Source: Satellite image of Google Maps as of 05-11-2021. Modified by authors. Photos taken and modified by author.	16
Figure 11: Map and photographs of the last stage of ruin? Source: Satellite image of Google Maps as of 05-11-2021. Modified by authors. Photos taken and modified by author.	17
Figure 12: Map of the recent waterfront development plans in Belgrade at the Waterfront. Source: Simic, "The Spatial Transformation of the River Waterfront through Three Historical Periods: A Case Study of Belgrade," Image edited by author.	18
Figure 13: Collection of potential case studies of revitalized industrial heritage in Belgrade. Pictures taken and modified by author.	20

