**Chapter 5**

**Urban Complexity through Actor-network Theory Lens**

Apart from their physical structure, cities are a summary of all citizen behaviours, emotions and value systems of all previous times and the source of prospects for the future times of upcoming generations (**?**). Social and physical structures are perpetually interacting with one another, while the historical strata of these interactions accumulate one upon another. The city, and more generally the urban, is therefore ultimately a dynamic and immensely complex phenomenon. The term urban system transitions is used in this research to bound up the continuity of its fluctuations over time. Adding the time component in terms of discrete states of past, present and future enables the contextualizing of these processes. In this research, the study will concentrate on post-socialist cities and analogous contextual processes at the neighbourhood level.

The current state of affairs in Savamala results from the deposition of the historical layers with their own explicit decision-making mechanisms of the time and its final blend with the current machinery of decision-making. Associating a spatial component to the structuralized historical deposits of data, procedures, and identities provides a background for space-time translation that have constituted the state of the elements/entities at play in Savamala. The historical component elaborated in the previous chapter is just a one-way directional vector that reaches the present. However, all human, social and technical elements and networks assemble in their current incidence in Savamala. They are actually the active agents and the actors of the on-going transitions. The present of Savamala is a time- bounded picture of localized urban system transitions.

In this research project, Actor-network theory (ANT) serves for interpreting the present state of the local context in Savamala. The most prominent characteristic of ANT is flattening the social by symmetrical treatment of human, social and technical elements that all might be actors of urban system transitions (**??**). Based on Latours argument on the new research agenda for globalization and world cities, ANT is herein applied not as a theory but as a method. A figuration of human and non-human actors through networks

makes them the agents of urban dynamics in concrete space-time and produces a complex reality of urban system transitions. The actors existence is its status in a connection or connections. According to ANT, actors do not exist if their networks are not labeled. In this way they become agents. Therefore ANT serves for structuring the data on human and non-human agents and urban assemblage networks at the neighbourhood level.

This chapter brings the first round of data analysis with Actor-network theory. First of all, it tentatively reinterprets the specificities of a post-socialist neighbourhood according to ANT logical framework and terminology. The boundaries of Savamala for the purposes of this analysis are established according to the investigation among experts and young professionals on the issue. The Savamala neighbourhood corresponds to the area between the Brankov and Old Sava bridges; from the Sava riverside to Brankova street, from *Zeleni Venac* (the “Green Wreath” market to the park in front of the Faculty of Economics. An urban assemblage map, which is laid out further in the chapter, summarizes these ANT interpretations in terms of the relational networks between urban key agents and the identified social aspects at work in the local and wider context of Savamala. Finally, the conclusion discusses the results, risks and opportunities of extending ANT in order to enable research to go beyond descriptions toward its operationalization in a particular urban setting. In Savamala, the results are summarized to address the current state of the neighbourhood and the course of its possible future developments.

# An ANT Overview of Urban Agency in Savamala

Bearing in mind that actor-network explanations give real results only in strongly defined situations, the neighbourhood level is confined but yet significant enough for the analyses to work and for the results to matter. The study applied a flattening composition of all heterogeneous (1) human/non-human actors (ANT) in Savamala. These actors (1) were identified from qualitative data collected on two different tracks: as key urban actors and within the layers of urban decision-making. Further on, the collected data are structured on 4 more levels in relation to ANT, in terms of (2) intermediaries/mediators, (3) free associations, (4) stabilizing & destabilizing agencies

and (5) urban assemblages (Table 3 ANT paper). The congregation of these categories serves to visually describe the urban reality of a post-socialist neighbourhood - Savamala.

Following the circumstances found through the in-depth case study research design, the empirical and theoretical data are structured according to five dimensions of actor-networks in the following way:

* + 1. all human and non-human actors;
    2. intermediaries and mediators;
    3. free associations;
    4. stabilizing and destabilizing agencies;
    5. urban assemblages.

## All human and non-human actors

The rough scheme of human and non-human actors is formed according to case study description. It is further completed with the data from the questionnaires (experts, young professionals and students) and the interviews.

In ANT terms, the Savamala neighbourhood is represented as a venue (urban territory/ space) with material constitutional elements (built environment - urban structures), wherein a variety of urban actors and stakeholders (individuals and groups) - interrelated to social factors (political, economic, cultural and social components of urbanity) and within a specific regulatory framework (institutional relations and records) - engage in actions.

Since it has been argued here that the rapid flow of people and information in the modern globalised world has profoundly transformed the perception of space and time, lifestyles and our sense of community and self, it must be then acknowledged that the vital cohesive force of the modern city also incorporates technical solutions (urban infrastructures) and technologies (communication and media). Graham and Marvin (2001) address these with an all-embracing term ”the infrastructure scapes (electropolis, hydropolis, cybercity, autocity)” stating that these elements invigorate urban life, fuse urban spaces and serve as mediators of transitions.

Complex infrastructural systems are nowadays also the core of human actions and institutional relations that enables its extension in space and time and produces new conditions of urban reality. The ampleness of these non-human actors as well as their intrinsic geography of places and connecting flows from splintering urbanism) bring in a new layer of actors and networks. Its specificity and volume allows for this research to exclude these actors to a certain extent, mainly for the reasons of their limited resources. However, the structure of the methodology accounts for their inclusion in future works and studies.

The main sources of human and non-human agency taken into consideration in this analysis are: (a) urban actors and stakeholders, (b) urban space and the built environment, and (c) the urban regulatory framework. Social components (the political, economic and cultural aspects) are rather considered in an integral way as contextual, post-socialist or transitional circumstances traversing these different space-time layers. Also taken into account as the bearers of non-human agency, they are figurated into urban assemblage networks as active elements linking urban actor-networks, space-time layers and the levels of decision

making with urban development prospects.

The morphology of urban decision-making tend to catalyze and hold sway over urban complexity. The layers of urban decision-making function throughout a network. They embody the relationality of urban elements and reveal the sources of urban agency. Even more relevant, the reason for this limitation of the scope of analysis lies in Friedmann’s (1992) thesis of four key determinants of urban agency: (1) governance (executive, legislative and civil), (2) polity (political organizations, social movements), (3) economy (markets, corporations, financial institutions) and (4) society (individuals, groups and associations). In this manner, the initial identification of human and non-human actors is summarized within: (o) top-down urban planning structure, (o) interest-based transformations, and

1. bottom-up participatory and urban design activities, in the urban realm of Savamala.

### Top-down urban planning actors:

The analysis of top-down decision-making in Savamala retains the structure of this layer identified through the data collection. Human and non-human actors include:

(a) the regulatory framework, (b) urban actors and (c) space.

**Regulatory framework**: These actors are divided into institutions (public administration and urban planning authorities) and records (legal framework, policy agendas and technical documentation). They are assorted on scale levels: international, national-state, regional-city and local-municipality.

Adapted to the European administrative framework (**?**), the urban regulatory framework in Serbia has hitherto followed the recommendations of the Council of Europe (**?**). The set of European strategies and programmes influence the rather general organizational flow of Serbian urban institutions and assign major directives for the adaptions of urban records. According to the local experts, the international regulatory levels do not hold direct relations to the Savamala urban environment.

On the other hand, the institutional framework in Serbia corresponds to the administrative organization of the Republic. The Republic of Serbia is divided into 29 districts and 189 communes (opstine) [including the 16 municipalities of Belgrade and the municipalities of Novi Sad, Nis and Kragujevac]. The districts act as political bodies, but they are not authorized to make their own decisions regarding spatial development. Therefore, in practice, The Spatial Plan of the Republic, Regional Spatial Plans and Spatial Plans of Special Purposes are under the jurisdiction of the National authorities. The Ministry of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure (CTI) is the key public actor at the national level in the domain which it: (1) conducts administrative tasks, (2) governs strategic construction, site-development and infrastructure equipment works, (3) carries out survey jobs, and (4) performs inspection and supervision actions in the field.

Conversely, cities and municipalities have the legal means and rights to establish their own strategies, plans, and programs, as well as local regulations and rules in terms of urban development. Urban plans consist of General Urban Plans (GUP),1 Plans of General Regulations (PGR) and Plans of Detailed Regulations (PDR).2 They cover respectively smaller territory, incorporate all sorts of innovative, strategic and up-to-date methods, and in general offer detailed solutions for issues already conceptually covered by the spatial plans. For example, General Urban Plans control development at the local level, so that they are prepared and adopted locally. Yet, as they are regarded as strategic documents (GUPs) with a certain influence at the national and/or regional level, final consent for their adaptation rests with the Ministry in competence. Local authorities adopt all urban plans and strategic documents that control urban development and comprise guidelines for the administration of their respective territories. These plans are ratified by the City Assembly.

National and city authorities, planning bodies and policy agendas are subjected to continuous pressure to solve an old issue of Belgrade’s peak waterfront area. This area is rather adjacent to or even part of Savamala, depending on the interpretations of the neighbourhood3 These initiatives date back to the 1920s. The 1923 GUP announced the relocation of the railway station. Milos Somborski’s 1950 GUP formalizes the new spatial organization of Belgrade as an integrated unity of Zemun, New Belgrade and old Belgrade, positioning the Sava river and Savamala’s coast as the central urban area. Later, the Sava subway project, which was to cut through Savamala, was included in the 1972 GUP. The 1985 GUP focused its attention on the Sava Amphiteatre on the both sides of the Sava river as the prime location for urban redevelopment with central urban functions. Finally, the 2003 GP and the Belgrade Development Strategy 2008 (BDS 2008) confirmed the importance of the revitalisation of Kosancicev Venac and the rehabilitation of Savamala in the domain of Belgrade brownfields. BDS 2008 was even more specific, marking the period for the interventions (January - June 2011)).

**Urban space**: According to the technical documentation and policy agendas, the Savamala urban space is treated unilaterally or it may be eventually separated from its coastal area. Urban heritage in Savamala is also covered by the legal framework, policy agendas and present in technical documentation. Moreover, the pre-socialist past is still present in Savamala with reference to the architectural and cultural heritage of the period after the liberation of Belgrade from the Ottoman Empire and before WWII. Serbian rulers persistently attempted to fight substandard living

1GUDP present long-term strategic commitments and land use propositions at the city level.

2PGR and PDR are operational documents and they are prepared where applicable.

3According to the data from questionnaires (ref Annex B), there are several interpretations of what the borders of Savamala are: either a large area from Gazela bridge to behind Concrete Hall (*Beton Hala*) and to the Gavrila Principa in the north and along the Waterfront in the south, or several different smaller territories including the one adopted in this study. These varying ideas of the Savamala borders are also widespread among experts, professionals and citizens.

circumstances in this neighbourhood and to develop a commercial and artisan town quarter and administrative centre there. Various traces of these initiatives are still present in Savamala public spaces and the built environment’s infrastructure. For urban plans and strategies addressing the Savamala neighbourhood that are currently in force, consult the table below (¡hlTable X)

**Social aspects**: Documents on urban development (development strategies, spatial and urban plans) serve to define public interest in cities. Yet, the singular initiative for technical urban documentation (plans) usually comes from the investor (private or public) and is drafted based on the investor’s interests and guidelines by a public or private enterprise certified for urban planning practice (**?**). The initiative is submitted to local authorities (e.g. the Secretariat for Urbanism, Urban Planning Institute, Municipality Planning Departments) for further procedures.

The design of spatial and urban plans is under compulsory supervision of the Planning commission on the corresponding level (national, city, local). The commission validates the subjugation of the plan to urban legislation and to the planning documents of higher authority, as well as to the feasibility study of the plan and its accordance with the results of the public review (javni uvid). Public review is a

filing objections process during 30 days with an open-to-public session where objections are discussed by the Planning commission. However, the report over the review of the general public and the final decision is made in a closed session by the Commission. When the procedure is over, the decision is published in the local gazette.

Based on local experience (citizens, civil sector, urban planning professionals), political interests have hegemony over urban planning decisions in Serbia. Civil

and public interests are being neglected and diminished by the non-transparency of the planning process and pertaining corruption - in terms of supervisions, inspections and public hearings. Local authorities also emphasize that the lack of financial institutional capacity (means and resources) contributes to poor public participation (**?**).

Centralized decision-making is even more often conducted through political dominance than by the legal framework itself. This is the case because the central decision-making body in practice is not the national authority, but the political party in power -- more precisely, the Prime minister or the President, depending on how important and influential they are in the political realm in Serbia. Such administrative hierarchy extensively subdues any legal, professional and financial jurisdiction of local authorities to the National authorities, making the scope and the management of their activities unstable and difficult to strategize (**?**).

The high politicization of institutional relations contributes to the growing imbalance between the social goal of public spending (public social services) and its developmental role (market-oriented). In the case where political interests are often tied to individual interests of economically powerful actors and to investors’ financial power, the issues of the budget (all levels), public procurement and public tenders become the means of an unregulated urban economy (questionnaire data: experts post-socialist framework q13). Coupled with a flawed taxation system, broken property structure and inadequate land use indemnity and land rent, the prolonged regulatory gap in terms of investments has led to inadequate and even illegal construction practices, an overload of the infrastructural systems and an overall lowering of urban conditions in Serbian cities.

The majority of these social issues are linked to the multifaceted circumstances of post-socialist urban development and the prospects of transition toward a capitalistic social order. Post-socialist backtracking refers primarily to the present of Savamala, but in reference to the past and the characteristics of the socialist regime which are fading away (but not yet completely and not without leaving traces):

* state control;
* public ownership;
* hybrid market circumstances.

Transitional prospects refer more to what the future brings. Transition actually means marking the processes of change towards:

* a democratic political system;
* privatization and the dominance of private ownership;
* a market-led economy and market mechanisms;
* clear class division and uneven distribution of resources.

The confusing overlap of these conditions has especially aggravated the economic order, producing: (1) low economic growth, (2) high public debt, (3) a high unemployment rate and (4) poverty germination. Such as the case is, the overall social situation is represented by rather spontaneous urbanization, ad hoc definition (or merely formalization) of public interest and the institutional adjustments to prevalent illegal construction and occupation of space (**?**).

**Urban actors and stakeholders**: Strategic behaviours and political power relations are identified as the pillars of top-down urban planning practice. They aim at enabling dialogue between: investors, citizens, local authorities, and planning bodies (**?**).

Even though the sole purpose of the political structure, authorities, and political bodies is to define and protect public interest, this usually is not the case. More often than not,

political actors act on behalf of political parties, movements and leaders, lobbysts or in the worst case of real estate investors (**?**). Consequently, in Serbia urban planning professionals are those who handle and balance various interests. Unfortunately, as a result of biased institutional relations and an emphasized institutional hierarchy, they usually serve only as a technical body, the staff to pursue investors’ wishes. Therefore, it is important to establish a two-way, meaningful dialogue between: investors, citizens, local authorities, and planning bodies.

In this respect, the key top-down actor and stakeholder groups active in Savamala are :

* Municipal authorities;
* City authorities;
* National authorities;
* City planning departments (architects, town planners, engineers, public administrators);
* Ministry of Construction, Transportation & Infrastructure;
* Professional associations (architects, town planners, engineers, artists);
* Universities and educational institutions;
* Public enterprises;
* Public-private enterprises;
* Private enterprises;
* Citizens.

### Interest-based real transformations

**Social aspects:** As it was already elaborated above, the transitional reality is a thriving

ground where planning very often serves as a supportive mechanism for uncontrolled

privatisation and wild marketisation. These circumstances bring to the fore large (mega) projects instead of strategic programs. Furthermore, influential business stakeholders and

corporate bodies profit from *ungrounded institutional formalizations*, *inconsistent institutional procedures* and *flawed institutional processes* and above all from *vertical clientelism* in the institutional framework to cater for their profit-oriented interests.

**Urban actors and stakeholders:** As practiced today, the public interest is defined by the most powerful social class (enterprises, services, corporate business, politicians and ruling elites, landlords, banks, Trade Negotiations Committees) - in the brace between political and economic elites (**?**). In the local context, these private interests are also promoted through national and local media (publicly and privately owned newspapers, TV and radio stations) and some of the mainstream intellectuals (**?**).

The human engine of interest-based real estate transformations consists of :

* Private investors;
* Private investment funds;
* The media.

**Urban space**: Powerful investors use their economic and political dominance to gain a good bargain in buying the highly profitable waterfront area of the Serbian capital and to ensure that its future development serves their needs. This battle for land started even before the official fall of socialism in SFRY.

In the late 1980s, national authorities promoted the ”Town on the water” project, which addressed the entire area of the Sava Amphiteatre integrally with its counterpart on the New Belgrade side (**?**). Later, the infamous Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic supported the CIP Europolis project as part of the electoral campaign for local elections (gradski izbori) in 1995. The project was based on an international competition for the urban design of the Sava amphiteatre (**?**).

After 2000, the most important project hitherto active in the extended area of Savamala are:

* Lamda Development investment for Beko factory renovation;
* The ”City on water” project by the Belgrade Port Company (*Luka Belgrade*);
* An international competitive bidding for the architectural design of the Beton Hala Waterfront;
* The Eagle Hills and Belgrade Waterfront Project (BWP).

According to the current state of affairs, the crucial interest-based intervention in Savamala’s space occurred in 2013 when the investor from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) [*Eagle Hills* Company] bought the National Shipping Company and all its land. Slowly but surely afterwards, the company set in motion a range of legislation and planning document changes to accommodate the investor’s interests within the *Belgrade Waterfront Project* (BWP).

The exact area of intervention in these project phases varies in scope, starting from Gazela Bridge and extending to the far end of the Dorcol marina or even includes the New Belgrade riverbank. The common denominator for most projects is the coastal area on the right Sava riverbank. The majority of the projects have also advocated for the relocation of the bus and railway station. 4 Furthermore, the recent Belgrade Waterfront project also targets several architectural heritage buildings. According to the agreement signed between: (1) 4The bus terminal and railway station are actually outside the area which is referred to as Savamala in this

research. But as they are very close to Savamala, as well as in a busy urban hub, they are still important generators of urban functions, activities and urban actors in Savamala.

The Republic of Serbia (The Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure), (2) Belgrade Waterfront Capital Investment LLC (Mohamed Ali Alabar), and (3) Belgrade Waterfront d.o.o. (acting director) and Al Maabar International Investment LLC (Mohamed Ali Alabar) Serbian national authorities have committed to concede several protected buildings in Savamala for the investor’s purposes without any financial compensation. The agreed upon the investor’s right to choose buildings for reconstruction and lease without a fee from the list of non-contributed ones in the area. The listed buildings are: the Belgrade Cooperative, Bristol Hotel and the ”Simpo” building inside Savamala and Railway station headquarters, the Paper Mill, Train Turn Table and Post Office outside Savamala. The buildings of the Belgrade Cooperative, Hotel Bristol, and ”Simpo” are examples of architectural heritage of national and city importance.

### Bottom-up participatory and urban design activities

**Social aspects**: A most important particularity of Savamala is the rise of the civil sector and non-formal organizations, rather more typical of western European cities than of post-socialist ones. Namely, their arrival rests on the idea that, with the lack of efficient institutions and official strategies, the protection of public interest occurs through non-institutional, non-governmental organizations (**?**).

In play in the Serbian context are the cultural and behavioural patterns inherited from 40 years of socialism: (1) a predominantly middle class society, (2) *suspicion, lethargy and ignorance* toward social participation, (3) a top-down approach to spatial and social development and (4) *ideologically-framed civil rights* (**?**). These circumstances entail significant resources (time, knowledge, human capital, networking) which are required for those activities to work (**?**). What is more, it is also essential for the organizers and participants (citizens) to have at least a vague notion of whom they might confront.

**Urban actors and stakeholders**: Having identified the transitional capital of Savamala in the local context, a number of small-scale public initiatives and creative services have found their place in Savamala from 2008 onward (**?**). In absence of an overall urban development strategy, these independent cultural entrepreneurs, supported by the municipality Savski Venac, have started the transformation of unused warehouses and craft shops into spaces open for public participation and social production. These associations and private initiatives have finally introduced an opportunity for an alternative strategic path to influence the urban development of the neighbourhood and have made it well known on a global scale as one of creative clusters in European metropolises (**??**).

The bottom-up actors and stakeholders identified as active in Savamala are confirmed through the questionnaires and interviews in the qualitative data collection process:

* Citizens;
* Local NGOs;
* International NGOs;
* The local community;
* Artists and cultural workers;
* National cultural institutions;
* International cultural institutions;
* National and international educational institutions.

A detailed description of the bottom-up participatory activities in Savamala is provided (Chapter 4, pp. XX). Taking into account their number, but also the similitude of their activities, those that signify as poles of urban agency within this analysis are: (1) Cultural Centre Grad (*KC Grad* ); (2) the Old Depository in Kraljevica Marka Street (MKM); (3) *Mikser* multidisciplinary platform; (4) *Nova Iskra* design incubator; (5) the *Urban Incubator Belgrade* project (UIB); (6) *Ministry of Space* Collective; (7) *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* initiative (NDVBGD); (8) *My piece of Savamala* – a participatory urban design workshop; (9) *The game of Savamala* – a participatory urban planning workshop; (10) *Savamala, a place for making a* participatory project; (11) *Streets for Cyclists* NGO; (12) Common space in Kraljevica Marka 8 street (*KM8* ).

**Urban space**: These civic activities have also aimed to profit from abandoned and empty spaces in Savamala. In this respect, most of the spaces were obtained for a temporal use or for use over a non-determined period by the Municipality of Savski Venac. However, some are also rented from the private owners under market conditions. The very first established place was the Gallery Magacin (MKM), a space on Kraljevica Marka 1. It was under the supervision of *Dom Omladine* (a Belgrade Cultural Institution) and it hosted the activities of the independent cultural platform in Belgrade. However, the crucial step in making Savamala a home for the non-formal civic and cultural scene was when KC Grad moved into the old building at Brace Krsmanovic 5. This was followed by setting the Mikser Festival on the streets of Savamala and renting the old storage at Karadjordjeva 46 to accomodate Mikser House. Later on, Urban Incubator Belgrade (UIB) activated several spaces for their programme in the broader area of Savamala: (o) the Spanish house (Brace Krsmanovica 2), (o) KM8 (Kraljevica Marka 8), (o) C5 (Crnogorska 5), (o) Bureau Savamala (Svetozara Radica 3, and (o) Nextsavamala (Gavrila Principa 2). It is also important to mention Nova Iskra, a private co-working space and platform for cultural activities. It is located at Gavrila Principa 43, a building at the very edge of what is in this research assumed as the Savamala neighbourhood.

## Intermediaries and mediators

Starting with ANT and its open approach to comprise whatever may be an element of a complex urban system and the loose definition of actors relationality, the actors’actual influence on site was rather straight-forward and indicative. It has been realized that their human/material nature should be acknowledged as it unmistakably designates their roles in urban development processes. Therefore, this wide conceptual field has been shrunk to the category of an actor nature. This tells us whether the human/non-human element serves as intermediary or mediator. In this respect, the researcher differentiated its figuration as human, entity, artifact, or event, and indicated whether it is an individual or group element (set of elements). So to speak, the nature of an element defines whether it actually bears or merely changes meaning - in one manifestation they do, in the other not.

**Individuals:** The distribution of roles in the Serbian regulatory framework is substantially dependent on the individual human and group actors who are assigned certain position.

Namely, the institutional structure is more often than not encumbered by tripled representation of functions for certain positions [i.e. Prime Minister]: (1) the official administrative scope of the institutional role assigned to an individual, (2) the symbolic significance assigned to the role based on the historical dominance of the individual approach over the institutional one, (3) the individual human agency of the person who holds the position.

This is especially evident when the official engagement of the institution in local networking depends on the role of its executive officer. For example, the activities of the Urban Planning Institute are often molded according to the predominantly managerial or professional approach of its lead, in which sense the entire duty of the institution varies from consultative to managerial tasks at the city level.5

However, another important figuration is the parallel decision-making structure installed in the Serbian institutional framework through the individuals of a political party who perform certain institutional duties. The political party usually sets its own party staff at high public positions, so that they, as public officers, make important decisions in the public domain. But, on the other hand, they are subordinate to the party interests through the party hierarchy and they introduce their political party reasoning into public-interest decision-making. 6 Another layer of importance for human agency is added by an overlap of jurisdictions from local and international professionals. New market conditions have brought in international corporate capital with their own business conduct and rules, and installed them into the local market in Serbia. Namely, there is a substantial subordination of tasks from international to local personnel. While foreign architects, engineers, project teams perform all 5According to an interviewee, based on the attitude of its executive officer, the Urban Planning Institute may take an active role in directing interventions and advising the city authorities on strategies and

plans

6An interviewee gave the example of the public money spent to accommodate private interests, while the financial structure of political parties in Serbia is still non-transparent and there is no legal means to investigate it Kucina interview 2013.7.

designs, calculations and decision-making, Serbian enterprises and professionals primarily work to adjust those to local requirements and standards with significant restrictions even in this domain8 BWP interview. Even more important, it appears that different business model traditions [the socialist ”to have the work done” among local professionals compared to profit-oriented approaches from the foreign professionals] influence their respective financial and managerial arrangements with the investor and in this manner direct the course and the implementation of projects.

**”The politicians in Serbia become blinded by power and benefits after less than a year of working as party staff in the public domain” (Interviewee X)**

**Documents:** An additional interventionist role in terms of ”localizing the global”

Latour

2005 is put to work through different approaches to the implementation of agreements and projects in the Serbian setting compared to that of others. For example, the Serbian urban framework does not recognize the legally binding role of a Master plan. Without discussing the political and economic articulation in the local context, the Belgrade Water Project obviously features as a source of new urban regulations. And as such, it extensively influences land use and property management in Serbia.9

The issue of a new Spatial plan for the Special Purpose Area, Lex specialis and changes in the General Urban Plan of Belgrade set up a new order of priorities, allowances and restrictions in the local planning ecosystem. An interviewee with a background in architecture pointed out that construction indexes, once raised, will never be lowered again and that will surely change the recognizable Belgrade veduta interview DAB.

**Spaces:** Furthermore, the widespread network of civic engagement brings to the fore the mediatory function of the newly established spaces for culture and arts in Savamala. Dozen of local sites in the neighbourhood (Spanish house, KM8, Magazin, KC Grad, Mikser House, Galley Stab, HUBG12, Nova Iskra, C5, Svetozara Radica 3, Miksaliste) lodge various local, national and international organizations and actors, tourists and clients in overlapping time-frames (Figure X), while being extensively covered by local and international media (**?**).

In this manner, this continuous communication of entities from different backgrounds promotes an active role of the local towards the global, compared to the passive role of construction industry professionals in BWP. An engaging example is the quick reaction of Mikser house to establish a centre for the middle-east refugees passing through Belgrade on their way to Western Europe. The promptness and efficiency of their [Mikser House] 8The valid BWP agreement contains an article that obliges RS to adjust its laws and regulations if they

prevent smooth implementation of the project.

9BWP is also included in the Spatial plan for the Special Purpose Area of the Sava Waterfront. Namely, the project is part of its title - The Spatial Plan for Special Purpose Area ”for the Belgrade Waterfront Project”. As local experts have argued, this is an official benchmark for high urban planning authorities to accommodate the needs of a single project.

response placed them quickly into the international humanitarian aid network and their work acknowledged by the international actors in the domain (Mikser interview).

**Events:** Finally, the multifaceted nature of events organized in Savamala and their multi- scale character practically intertwine local interactions and global structures in order to:

(1) regionalize culture and artistic production in the Balkans, (2) set a local life cycle of design, (3) promote cooperation strategies for multidisciplinary activities and international projects (Mikser interview). Some of these include: the Mikser festival and Mikser house [established the Balkan Design Network, , Miksaliste refugee assistance and Info Park aid - humanitarian work]; City guerilla association and Urban incubator (UI) association [brought international artists and organizations to temporarily work in Savamala]; Hub, Stab and other galleries [exibit international artworks as well]; KC GRAD [international funding and collaborations]; Magacin gallery [incentives for the national cultural scene and international collaborations], Bike kitchen, Streets for cyclists, ”Beograd Vlograd” festival [international visibility] etc. (Q15 students questionnaire Savamala).

The process of associating agency to human and non-human actors without leaving to social forces to endow it with meaning is under constant threat of a reductionist approach to uncertainties and controversies about who and what is the actual source of action (**?**). In this, the interpretation of intermediary/mediator role depends on ”localizing the global”, ”redistributing the local” and ”connecting” within a zero-value map of ”local interactions to other places, times and agencies” (**?**). Based on the empirical data, the crucial distinction between the source of action of an individual, documentary or event actually determines the local or de-localized10 nature of interventions in Savamala. What is more, this is also the way to place into networks what may in other prevailing conditions be determined as uncertain, controversial or, in general, the social.

### ”Even in the legal framework, in Serbia everything is left to an individual” (Interviewee X)

* + 1. **Free associations**

From the qualitative data (expert questionnaires, workshops, interviews and documentation), it has been realized that classical urban categories (the social, structure and scale) cannot be fully undermined, though they are used not as explanations, but as associations of performativity and enactment (the network of influence and socially functional categories) (Figure 6). Thus pertaining artifacts are also converted into actors. In other words, these association-based actors actually operationalize urban concepts and categorize actual forces and actions.

**Structure networks:** To answer the how question of actors’ activation in networks also involves the character of their agency within local boundaries. Institutionalized

10In Latour’s (2005) terms, de-localization does not serve to de-spatialize the action, but to indicate that it has been disconnected and re-connected to some other place. Namely, under certain circumstances, it has been globalized.

urban planning structure is under the top-down, supreme jurisdiction of the Ministry of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure, which makes it the supreme regulatory, planning, administration, control and verification body in the urban domain.

However, the city of Belgrade planning institutions manage to gain certain authority in the national discourse. First of all, they produce massive amounts of general and detailed regulation plans which equals the production of the rest of Serbia together. Then, they hold a special role in the national scope as the city legally has a special status11 . Finally, various regulations were once pioneered in Belgrade, like that of the Planning commission, instated in Belgrade through the City Statute since 1974 and legally introduced at the national level with the 2003 Planning and Construction Act.

On the other hand, private initiatives are actually the pillars of transformations in Savamala. The case of the Belgrade Waterfront Project exemplifies that even though the Master plan is not a legally binding document in Serbia, but a simple statement of the investor’s wishes, its rules and decisions are implicitly assigned as an obligation to be incorporated in the Detailed Urban Plan for the area. The master plans in this manner become legalized and legitimized.

Similarly, even though the activities of the first Mikser Festival and later of Mikser House, aimed at culture, art and design at first, the actual implementation went into a more fair-like and consumerist direction. In this respect, the other cultural workers in the neighbourhood have said that Mikser attracted attention to Savamala as a neighbourhood for partying and easy money and, in the long run, paved the way for night clubs, cafes and restaurants to local there.

Finally, the wide range of activities instigated by the civil sector in Savamala provide evidence of an informal collaborative network that involves local and international actors and addresses the spaces in Savamala and other places. Their engagement revolves around local implementation for: (o) promotion of urban culture, arts, design, architecture and urban design; (o) support for strategic project management, education and practice-based research; (o) humanitarian and fund-raising actions; (o) empowerment of citizen participation and local community bonds; and (o) the incorporation of a certain number of commercial, entertainment and leisure activities (students questionnaire Savamala). Their potential to move around the city12 under the unsupportable threat of the local megaproject (BWP) indicates the resilience of the constituted network.

**Network of influence:** According to the detailed analysis of the decision-making structure in Belgrade and in Savamala , it is conspicuous that there are several scales of the distribution of agency in the local context throughout different layers of decision-making.

11For example, for central city municipalities there is no need for a Regional spatial plan and Detailed Urban Plans as they are regulated with the General Urban Plan; even though GUP 2009 is only a strategic

document, while 2003 GP included the articles on implementation as well (Sekretarijat interview).

12Several interviewees from the cultural sector mentioned the possibility of Mikser House, KC Grad and the Galleries (Stab and HUB) deciding to move from Savamala in the very near future.

In urban planning discourse, the issue of internationalization is present to a small extent in the adjustment to the European Union urban legislative. As the pace of the joining process is slow, slow become the change of the system as well (ref). However, a certain confusion in the local context is produced by continual shifts of jurisdiction on certain issues from top-down and then from ground-up through the hierarchy of the regulatory framework. With a lack of insight into the judiciary structure, citizens, stakeholders and investors usually resort to individual sources of authority in public institutions. On the other hand, in the historical overview of real-estate transformations after 2000, the influence of international corporate actors and investors has been indisputable (e.g. Beko Factory, BWP etc.).

Finally, in the so-called bottom-up network of engagement, international actors usually serve as source, support and manager of local actions. Even though their role is usually described as empowering and/or leading, the management strategies of international organizations in the civil sector are also indicated as manipulative in how they formulate the actions and adjust them to their own goals rather than inquire about and investigate what the [goals] of the local population are. The local distributors of international actions are the Goethe Institute Belgrade, KC Grad, Mikser House and Urban Incubator, while citizens, young professionals and students become mere participants/clients of these also top-down built agency networks. The only real bottom-up actions may then be small-scale and sporadic initiatives of several citizens to either help minorities in their neighbourhood, or renovate parts of common spaces, or to contribute something that the neighbourhood is in need of (a tap with fresh water in the waterfront area) at their own expense .

This further deconstruction of the actor roles serves to reveal rather an internal networking than an external one. Namely, the structure and scale internalized in the social manifestation of the analysed actors offer a possible perspective on how they engage in networks and bring up certain social constellations (urban development prospects).

## Stabilizing and destabilizing agencies

In general, the actors were identified according to their social function/action in the urban realm, and accordingly ”flattened” and re-addressed from an ANT standpoint. According to the qualitative data collected, mainly through non-structured interviews, it is apparent that analyzing functional and supportive agency brings an additional layer of explanations of urban reality. Apart from intermediary/mediator roles and associations, this interpretation brings in another type of internal networking.

In fact, the differentiation of functional and supportive networks indicate the possibility that actors change their roles by altering their internal network engagement. Socially functional networks indicate the social category of actors in reference to general categories of the politico-economic social order (political role and the system of finance). The notion of supportive/secondary networks is laid out more as a significant subset of the actors’ agency

already figuring in any of structural networks. However, secondary networks explicate their bipolar character and their presence in more than one internal network simultaneously. As a primary role is associative within structural networks, a secondary role might be stabilizing/destabilizing and it figures within supportive networks.

**Socially functional networks:** The most important issue of these networks is to (re)- distribute actions across the local social realm. Of special importance is the fine tuning of a range of public actors: polity, public institutions, urban authorities, public enterprises and public utility companies. The data on these socially functional networks are extracted from the questionnaires among senior and young experts and young professionals in urban planning and architecture.

An interesting example is the case of Urban Planning Institute. Even though it is the most important consultant of the city authorities upon urban development and the major planning body in the city, it is no longer financed directly from the city budget. According to the informant and publicly available data, the Urban Planning Institute is financed from public procurement at the city level and from the financial means of the Belgrade Land Development agency for public sector engagement at the city level. Moreover, the institute also acts as a private company, engaged by the public sector through public procurement at the national level, as well as competing for other privately financed jobs on the market (UZ interview). The procedure is the same, with the client either a private company or a public institution, while the conduct may vary depending on the clientele relationships within the institutions.

A special place is devoted to the rising agency of public-private partnership: BWP, public transportation in Belgrade, ”the Dom Omladine” cultural institution; as well as those in prospect: Sava Center congress hall and Airport Belgrade. While private enterprise is a sole metaphor of private interest, the agency tracking within networks indicate that it is very common that public-oriented actors actually pursue private interests through their activities.13

The representatives of the civil sector include both formal and informal organizations. The informants indicated a wider range of categories [i.e. national authorities, cauthorities, municipal authorities, the Ministry of CTI, city planning departments, research institutions, universities and education, professional associations, public enterprises, international NGOs, the local community, local NGOs, the media, political parties, public-private enterprises, private investment funds, private investors and citizens) than had been aggregated to the distinct public, private or civil agency of actors.

An example is the importance of public enterprise and public utility companies for local planning, namely on the scope of physical and practical constraints they set on spatial interventions and building. An interviewee from the public sector stated that, during the plan preparation procedures, the Urban Planning

13This is especially evident in the agreements and activities of the authorities around the Belgrade Waterfront Project.

Institute usually has to consult between 50 to 100 public institutions regarding their requirements and constraints for planning and construction. In the case of BWP, the right bank of the Sava in Belgrade is of substantial interest to several public enterprises (Javna Preduzeca) and public utility companies (Javno-komunalna Preduzeca), such as:

* + - * Coastal services: Serbia Water-management company and the Directorate for Inland Waterways;
      * Railway transportation company;
      * Belgrade waterworks and sewage;
      * Belgrade Land Development agency;14

The very important question is their articulation in local networks and the discrepancy between the real and formal role they take in the cycles of urban planning and implementation.

**Supportive/secondary networks:** Another very important issue in terms of stabilizing and destabilizing agency in urban space is the actual relationship with space which is in itself incorporated in the actor’s nature. The extended list of urban functions was identified in Savamala through the qualitative inquiry15. Apart from primary functions, which in this case may serve as secondary, the secondary networks are summarized separately and also involve: urban related, space related, data related, non-governmental, infrastructural, services and transportation related issues. In addition, these added

categories are a significant stabilizing/destabilizing source of agency in Savamala.

In these circumstances, it is crucial to mention how the rising global trend of practice- based research and education, which is coming from outside the formal institutions, have also entered Savamala through the initiatives of the Goethe Institute (international actor), Mikser House and KC Grad (national actors). These actors gather cultural workers and associations, young academics, architects, designers, and young people in general around methodological (School of urban practices), educative (The game of Savamala), participatory (My piece of Savamala), practice-based (Urbego), and urban related activities.

Moreover, the relationality to space in Savamala was kept above all as a question of resources - either for alternative culture, artists, social organizations, service-oriented entrepreneurs16 or even for local residents. They have all been in need of space for their rather diverse interests). In this respect, the actions of the non-governmental sector

14as the financial management office for real estate in the city

15These function are: culture, transport, commercial, abandoned areas, leisure, residential, educational, public services and industrial

16The founder of a bike tour company indicated that Savamala was the perfect place for his business,

because of its location and the density of tourist-oriented urban activities in the neighbourhood.

has been marked as limited as it was not participatory enough nor enough bottom-up - the activities were not coming from the local community and did not represent local needs (). The framework of what were initially announced as bottom-up actions were actually rather imposed from the top- down by international actors and local action distributors.

Finally, the issue of infrastructure (connectivity) and transportation (accessibility) in technical terms is marked as a materialization of the level of urbanity of a location. In this manner, Savamala has high importance and high rank in the city, but according to the artificial market conditions17 in the real-estate market in Belgrade, the actual value of land and building stock does not always correspond to the real, material value (ref).

**Stabilizing and destabilizing agency of functional and supportive networks:** While tracing interactions and interconnections among actors collected through participatory action research methods (Table 3), it was revealed that various social manifestations of these actors have a double effect. They can either work stabilizing (practice-based urban related research) or (de)stabilizing (public utility companies in planning, non-governmental actions in Savamala). In both ways they offer another ”reading” of the social world in Savamala.

Research activities taken up by the non-governmental sector and international actors provided an elaborated picture of what can be found on the ground and how it can be put into action with minimal financial means. An example is *The Model of Savamala* project within the Urban Incubator which provided detailed data on the physical and social structure of five streets in Savamala. The physical model presents the area and saturates the represented built structures with parallel data on social structure and local information and knowledge about the quarter. The Model was exhibited to the public for about two years with the aim to expose local knowledge and provide a time-space-data vision of the neighbourhood. With such activities, Savamala’s vivid cultural present was supported with a layer of verified data and elaborated knowledge.

On the other hand, public utility companies directly influenced by the BWP chose to stay quiet about the actions that threatens their property and activities and, in general, endanger the public interest. The voice of the coastal services has not been publicly heard in the case of illegal coast fortification. Similarly, the railway transportation company did not react over Lex specialis and the land offered to the foreign investor, a large part of which is the property of the railway company. While this is not the usual behaviour of these actors, in this case they contributed to destabilizing the procedures of how planning is administered and managed in Belgrade.

17The approach to urban land regulation in Belgrade and Serbia is more administrative than market- oriented, yet construction land management takes place according to real-estate market rules (**??**). The series of instruments work in favour of the real, functional real estate market rules: conversion of land-use rights, leaseholds on urban (construction) land, no taxation of land rent etc. (ibid.).

## Urban assemblages

After illustrating the Savamala urban environment through the actors, their figuration and agency, the complexity of its urban development was interpreted through node-link reality. Taking into account the post-socialist context, significant pressure from private investors and the articulation of civic initiatives and participation in Savamala, the network of translations were identified to refer to different layers of decision-making.

These translations consider the centrality of actors and the nature of the links among them. In this sense they represent an ”assemblage” process of agency dissemination. These overarching urban assemblage networks are: management, verification, consultation, administration, planning, construction, regulation, control, finances, implementation and social aspect networks. They encompass a significant number of humans and non-humans, their actions, agencies and forces. They all have a figuration in Savamala, which allows the outlining and tracing of the distribution of any political, economic and cultural repercussions among them.

As a result, the full congregation of urban assemblage networks in Savamala reveals different orders of things/actors. From Latour’s perspective on how the social may be reassembled, there is a certain redistribution of the decision-making layers in this case study (**?**):

1. ”localize the global” (governance)

Interestingly, the main agents in setting up the real environment of the new transitional circumstances (the neoliberal market, democratization of the social realm) in Savamala, do not originate locally, but come from either powerful international investors/investment funds intervening in the real-estate or from international formal/informal organizations and NGOs engaged in what is popularly known as bottom-up activities. The engagement of these actors, even though different in its actualization (real-estate and bottom-up) is in fact effectuated through the same networks of conduct: financial, managerial and implementation. In reality, these actors also act as supreme decision-making bodies, as a type of top-down authority instating the issue of the network of influence as the important question in the local context.

1. ”re-distribute the local” (operationalization)

Recognized top-down urban planning actors are active in the planning, regulatory, and consulting urban assemblage networks. Instead of instating urban strategies and distributing tactical operations and interventions in urban space, the pillars of urban regulatory framework in Serbia, in the case of Savamala and the Sava waterfront, took a completely subordinate position and acted as an executive body of private interests defined elsewhere.

1. ”connecting sites” (actualization)

Finally, what happens on site in Savamala is the fragmentation of spaces at different levels. This far-end decision-making is actualized in terms of Belgrade Waterfront construction activities (assemblage network) or it is the local administration of projects, events, and activities prepared away from and unaware of citizen opinions and needs (citizen interview). In both cases (real-estate transformations and bottom-up

activities), there are certain controversies raised from the amenability of urban assemblage networks through the networks of influences (international-state/national-city/regional- local), or, in other words, directional subordination from top down.

Urban assemblage networks, when approached in their totality, represent a processual construction of the Savamala neighbourhood through the ANT lens. Namely, the combination of external networks (assemblages) and internal ones (the nature of the actors) holds in itself the actualization of the social relations of power, influence, class and capital, rather than having that as a starting point. From this perspective, ANT analysis of the Savamala neighbourhood contains answers to how and why certain urban development prospects of this post-socialist neighbourhood have come into being.

# Urban Assemblage Map

At the final stage of ANT analysis, the contribution of this research project is the translation of what has been perceived through the 5-step ANT framework of Savamala urban complexity onto its visual map of ANT relations.

Data are collected from context-based information and knowledge and also traced from relevant influences, interests and interpretations of Savamala. The agency and relationships of the human/non-human actors chosen here are tracked by their associations within different levels of decision-making (top-down urban planning, interest-based transformations and bottom-up participatory and urban design activities) in a visual manner. The resulting actor-network map is a node-link illustration of the present day urban complexity in Savamala. The visualization strategy in terms of categories comes from the adopted ANT elements: each node is a human/non-human entity (category: nature of actors) visually interpreted through mediator, association and agency properties (nature of networks and networks of influences) while the number and quality of links (nature of assemblages) represent the type and number of urban assemblage networks they contribute to.

First of all, the potential of such illustration of actor-networks at the local level is in its strong relationship to ”the global”. Moreover, this type of visual map of actors and the relations they build contain information loaded associations (nature, type, primary & secondary function, scale of influence). While actors are nodes whose form depends on their intermediary/mediatory role, their size indicates influence, the fill and outline represent their primary and secondary function, their location in the cycle corresponds to their social function, and their proximity to the center is their network of influence. The connections between them are assemblages.

Yet, such an interpretation could not bias the potential reader, as it is without any notion of value or meaning initially inscribed in it. Namely, the networks might be interpreted differently according to the interpreter’s background and interest, but still keeping the minimal amount of information already inscribed in how the networks are visualized. Another quality may be its data saturation and contingency and its capacity to contain the complexity of the social world.

The introduction of qualitative tuning for nodes-actors gives this diagram a self-containing character. Namely, its advantage to other ANT diagrams is that this one embodies internal networks (the nature of elements) as well external ones (assemblages). Moreover, this diagram aims at keeping the relation to spaces as well by making concrete spatial references of the social distributions (actor-networks) to the exact places on the map.

In sum, the combination of such traits facilitates the digitalization of the diagram and keeps it strongly related to reality. Digitalizing the diagram may enable adding a 3rd dimension to it and visualising the time component through the stack of parallel layers. Even though piled, these time-space realms of the social are also interconnected. Therefore, it is also essential to overcome such intersecting and represent the social as a continuity, what it actually is in reality.

## Mapping actor-network distributions in urban decision-making

Bearing in mind that the initial actor/actor groups are identified through the morphology of urban decision-making, this extensive ANT analysis has argued in favour of representing its amenability/conduct in terms of the overlap and collision of different urban assemblage networks.

Most of the preexisting methodological approaches in urban development studies consider certain socially bounded explanations such as the dichotomies of importance-influence, impact-priority, power-interest, support-opposition, and constructive-destructive attitude as self-containing explanatory categories for mapping actor and stakeholder engagement in the social realm (**?**). However, the ANT approach starts from the other end, flattening the social unity of all human and non-human actors. Only afterwards, do the generating networks in themselves contain information on the social world. In this manner, the ground-up ANT analysis performed herein provides the answers on how urban decision-making is processed in Savamala and enables an argumentation for why these social dichotomies are still at stake in post-socialist neighbourhoods.

Table 5 incorporates the listing of many actors (vertical and horizontal), in the reference to space in Savamala and their distribution through the morphology of urban decision

making (columns). Through the table, the main agency of action is associated with the actors of the urban regulatory framework (rows). Moreover, their interconnections with other actors through urban decision-making layers are also characterized by the social effects they produce within these actor-networks (political, economic and cultural aspects: 1-22).

### Biased Regulatory framework

The most obvious and even self-evident factor of local urban planning is contained within the agency of regulatory framework actors. However, a significant space fragmentation in their approach must be admitted. Namely, their interest and action are almost exclusively oriented towards the highly-attractive waterfront area, without taking into consideration the potential and development status of the already established civil and cultural agency in the upper Savamala.

As Vujosevic (2012) states - urban decision-making in Serbia in general is rather the combination of crisis-management, supporting privatization, the market-oriented and project- led conduct of technical issues than a critical overview of local factors and global methodological shifts in planning and the acknowledgment of stakeholder collaboration and strategic governance. While the 2003 Planning and Construction Act, as well as the 2009 General Plan of Belgrade 2021 show an improvement in terms of a strategic approach to urban development, their loose connection to implementation networks produce certain regulatory gaps when it comes to public administration and city planning authorities.

As more than one informant explained the situation - city planning authorities are used to approaching urban planning as a procedure embedded in the legal framework, so that any less deterministic attempt ends up either in perpetual adaptations of legal documents and technical documentation or in arbitrary decisions on priorities and projects. In this case, most urban planners and public representatives have not shown enough vigor, interest and professional necessity to expand their knowledge over new global trends in planning and the radically changed circumstances of transition.

From the institutional perspective, the sole solution is seen in the hyper production of policy agendas and technical documentation and their constant revisions without concrete and operational implementation mechanisms.18 According to the elaboration of decision- making amenability through urban assemblages networks, the urban regulatory framework in Serbia does not hold any effective means of control and verification. By confronting internal and external networks of the actors engaged in control and verification assemblages, it may be concluded that they do not go beyond mere institutional formalizations, which are either not applied in reality or their application is rather bogus/phony/artificial.

This trend is even more at play for numerous policy agendas. The conditionality of rules and strategies does not only depend on political and economic influences, but also 18Substantial changes to the once adopted 2003 Planning and Construction Act happened in 2006, 2009, 2011, 2014. As for general plans, the 2003 GP Belgrade was updated in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2014 and 2016. The most important changes were in 2009, when it officially does not comprise any prescriptions on

implementation, and in 2016, when it was redefined as the General Urban Plan of Belgrade.

on inadequate policies and instruments for its conduct and management. An example is the loss of conducting agency through the networks of implementation even though all actors of conduct were defined. The detailed Implementation programme for the Spatial Plan of Serbia 2010-2020, prescribed who (The Ministry of Finance), what (urban rehabilitation, environmental protect and tourist strategy) and how (budget) a small rehabilitation program of Belgrade waterfront areas was to be conducted. A year later, in the report the issue is marked as ”data not available”, and by the end of the first phase of the implementation plan (2015), significant demolitions occurred on the Sava waterfront, and the first megastructure arose although it was not mentioned in the strategic priority number 51 of the implementation programme just described.

These and similar practices were made possible usually by the politically biased roles of individuals within the institutional framework. The interest-based pluralist political life also sneaked into the urban planning domain. The political background of actors in the urban regulatory framework has made planning networks at some points coincide with either administrative or financial networks. However, in both cases urban planning institutions are deprived of their professional, strategic and public-interest role, and planners consequently end up deprived of binding authority and professional dignity in carrying out their public functions.

Another position of the conflict of interest may be that of the institutions when they have overlapping roles in the public domain (and consequently overlapping assemblage networks), so that all their institutional activity becomes flawed. This was the case of the Ministry of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure after the discontinuation of the Republic Spatial Planning Agency. The Ministry became the responsible body for both regulatory and executive tasks in the public domain of urban planning.

On the other hand, the Cadastre has held the position as the supreme body for defining criteria, means and methodologies for land and building assessments and the executive body for performing assessment tasks for a long time. The position of the conflict of interest on various levels is also a point of departure for introducing individual interests into the institutional framework. The still centralized structure of urban decision-making (with the Ministry of construction as the supreme decision-making body in planning, implementation, control and verification networks) and the concentration and cooperation of political and financial powers under the new demand driven economic model instate vertical clientelism and powerful economic actors as the know-how of doing business in the post-socialist cities in transitional countries.

### Powerful Private Investors

The transition from a planned to a market-based economy created a certain void in political and social practices and in the aspects and solutions of the legal and economical frameworks. Rudimentary market-based regulatory instruments enable powerful financial actors to be individually involved in the building process. Not only do building codes and regulations become defined by investor interests, but they also profit from unregulated urban economy incentives and measures and gain valuable urban land in public to private ownership transition processes.

In these circumstances, financial engagement of the public institutions (Budget of the Republic and its decision-making bodies - the Government and the Parliament) also becomes problematic, such as the growing imbalance between the social role of the budget (public social services) and its developmental role (market-oriented). The prime example of the kind is the adaptation of the urban regulative and public-private partnership built around the Belgrade Waterfront Project.

Most of the regulatory, planning and implementation processes around the project are conducted behind closed doors and have only become introduced to the public through the interventions of the Transparency Serbia NGO, the National Anti-Corruption Agency and the NDVBGD collective. A set of official decisions has been made in order to enable smooth conduct of the project: (1) The Government Resolution (Decision) introducing BWP as a project of special importance for the Republic, (2) changes of the General Plan to enable construction of high rise buildings on the Sava waterfront, (3) Spatial Plan of Special Uses explicitly formulated to accommodate the interests of the BWP investment group, and (4) Lex specialis on the property issues in the area.19

Most of these decisions were followed by inconsistent institutional procedures and mainly happened without public insight into the procedure and documentation (**?**). The approach of public institutions and urban planning bodies in this case acted without any major concern regarding the public interest in the case and what the wider space-time concerns of such projects are.

Urban planning is, in fact, deeply embedded in the context of the transition towards a service-based society, where planning law and planning practice have not yet managed to integrate physical planning, economic factors and market mechanisms into urban interventions that comply with public interest and outweigh mere growth without development actions (**?**). An example of a biased, potentially financially dangerous binding document for the city of Belgrade and the Serbian society20 is the agreement that was signed in April 2016 by: (a) The Republic of Serbia (The Minister for Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure),

(b) Belgrade Waterfront Capital Investment LLC (Mohamed Ali Alabar), (c) Belgrade Waterfront d.o.o. (acting director), Al Maabar International Investment LLC (Mohamed Ali Alabar).

The agreement was made public only three months after the agreement was signed and after terrain clearance and the construction had already been launched. 21 The Republic of Serbia 19Apart from biased legal reasons and incentives for most of these legal documents, very important is the posteriority of some of them. Namely, several decisions targeted the project, Belgrade Waterfront Master plan, but in the manner of its formulation it was obvious that these documents were also the source and

the cause of the decision (Government Resolution, BWP SPSP) **?**.

20According to the agreement, a part of the obligations of the project are transferred from the city to the national level (JVA 2015).

21The document was published on the website of the Government in September 2015- a full version in

English of 259 pages and the version in Serbian of only 69 pages. Taking into account the language barrier, the exact details and consequences of the contract are still not available to the general public in Serbia.

obliged itself in the construction, financial, regulatory and administrative conduct of the project (assemblage networks of the project).22 Above all, the agreement constrains the Serbian institutional framework to prevent any verification or control activities addressing the project or the area of its interest.

In the end, the most disturbing fact might be that national and city institutions have consequently no influence on the technical urban planning documentations for the location. The Republic obliged itself to establish a state agency for Belgrade Waterfront legal adjustment tasks at its own expense and that, once having the use permit, the investor obtains the full property right of this most valuable land in Belgrade. 23 It is not only a case of unequal distribution of resources, but a certain practice of abolishing the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity over the Belgrade Waterfront plots of land is also at play.

The strong space relation of the foreign investor’s activities speaks of the local incapacity to address and solve the issue of the prolonged regulatory gap in terms of investments. In this manner, the secondary network involvement of Eagle Hills (the initial company of the foreign investor) indicates that the representatives of corporate and international capital manage to find the weakest and most profitable point of entrance into the local market - the unregulated and still centrally governed land market in Serbia.

**Un-institutionalized culture**

The core of the analyses also include the publicly present civic and private organizations. Even though they most often pertain to either urban or NGO secondary networks, several of them have an unclear and non-transparent funding structure - while they receive some public funding, they are also partly profit-oriented (KC Grad, Mikser). Even though some of their activities are publicly funded, KC Grad and Mikser also incorporate profitable services (café-bars, shopping areas, concerts, exhibitions and other lucrative events/activities). While for KC Grad, the sponsors and partners are publicly presented on their website, this is not the case for Mikser. Nova Iskra is the only explicit privately-based organization.

22The Republic of Serbia is obliged to: (o) perform infrastructural works at the location; (o) exempt the investor of infrastructural equipment fees; (o) confer the property rights for architectural heritage buildings to the foreign investor Bristol Hotel, Railway station headquarters, Paper mill, Train Turn Table, Post Office; and the first in line to be contributed are Belgrade Cooperative (already in possession), Simpo and Iskra (from the beginning of 2017); (o) guarantee for additional loans not predicted by the contract or the feasibility study provided by the foreign investor but guaranteed by RS; (o) take loans for infrastructural works; (o) enable future conversion of property rights to the investor without compensation; (o) adjust the legal framework to ensure the rights stated in the agreement. On the other hand, the official financial binds of the foreign investor are not 3.5 billion euros as was advertised in the media (Politika XX), but 150 million euros, as a loan with no obligation or any guarantees for the project’s implementation. Moreover, the agreement gives the rights to the foreign investor to request infinite project changes and the adjustments of the legal framework accordingly. With all these contributions, Serbia remains

the minority owner of the BWP company and the future profit of the project.

23This also means the right to sell it without any influence from the local or national authorities. Even during the construction phase, Belgrade Waterfront d.o.o. was conferred the right of land use and the collection of all the profit from temporary structures and advertisement on the territory. During 2016, the company started sub-renting spaces under non-transparent conditions (Restaurant 1905, Eagle Hills and construction subcontractor offices, Savanova restaurant).

The actors’ social function is strongly connected to their level of influence in this case. All these bottom-up actors are active at the local level, less often the city level, and usually on the international level. Though their international role is rather passive and their international visibility is more in the domain of funding - several are recipients of international financial support (foreign embassies and foundations, European cultural and art organizations and programmes) or under direct supervision of international entities (Urban Incubator Belgrade was the initiative of the Goethe Institute). This character of civic activities is also the result of cuts in national and city budget spending for culture. However, there are others with a transparent financial scheme (Ne da(vi)mo Beograde initiative).

This concentration of culture, creativity and innovation in Savamala also results from transition toward neoliberal markets and the country’s opening to global funding, trends and guidelines. This limited scope of intervention and radical change of urban vision from ”big is beautiful” to small and private is the prototype of the non-intrusive commercialization of arts and cultures as well. Namely, the creative cluster in Savamala was not anything unique, but was rather a typical example of the current European wave of hype urban culture. Thus, the local cultural, artistic and civic scene shows signs of total dependency on global trends and guidelines, rather than on an independent and bottom-up movement.

## Mapping urban agency and social aspects

In Savamala, the identified dynamic, interactive actor-networks were articulated through decision-making mechanisms of (1) top down planning, (2) interest-based real estate transformation, and (3) co-design and creative participation actions. In this case, global and local political, economic, and cultural factors, placed in a particular spatially and socially constrained context (Serbia, Belgrade, Savamala), are the main forces of urban development and they constitute social artifacts (actors) and social aspect networks (urban assemblages). The detailed mapping and visualization of these actor-networks also accounts for contextual, post-socialist and transitional circumstances, but by avoiding explanations coming from the reproduction of the social order, power and class.

In other words, the collision of these grand narratives is present in the current Serbian context through:

* + - 1. the crisis of common social values and civic society standards,
      2. the lack of healthy investment interest and fair competition,
      3. the absence of concern for the public interest and public good,
      4. a battlefield of significant power pressures and interference of interests from authorities, business actors and civil actions.

Based on the performed ANT analysis on Savamala, urban actor-networks and their distribution within urban decision-making layers, a general summary of the urban development prospects in the neighbourhood includes the following: (1) a lack of elaborated, strategic policies in urban development and investment; (2) a cumbersome institutional structure;

(3) the distribution of publicly owned empty plots and spaces in Savamala to private investors/owners; (4) vertical clientelism in the institutional framework (**??**); (5) up-to-date legal documents and policy agendas which do not correspond to urban reality; (6) an over- powered and personalized Nation State as a key actor on the citywide scale (BWP example); (7) semi-legal institutionalizations become official practice and a pool of opportunities for future exploitation; (8) provision of instruments for powerful actors to realize their interests through controversial institutionalizations; (9) unregulated economic incentives and measures; (10) economic aspects strongly influence political aspects and actors in the post-socialist context; (11) institutionalization of the private interests of powerful economic actors and marginalization of civic initiatives and public interest; (12) ”growth without development” (**??**) rooted in the top-down approach to regulatory, managerial and financial networks; (13) privileged foreign and domestic developers in the Waterfront/ Sava amphitheatre/ Dorcol Marina Redevelopment (**??**, Stojkov, 2015); (14) political actors in Serbia have support for the replication of extreme neoliberal practices, following the Thatcher-Reagan model (workshop data); (15) housing and commercial purposes for 80% of BW spaces (**??**);

(16) spatial fragmentation and unequal distribution of resources in the Savamala - Waterfront and Upper (Urban) Savamala; (17) the lack of participatory and communication culture;

(18) the biased role of the media in advertising urban projects (BWP); (19) the apathy of the population concerning semi-legal, anti-constitutional, neglected public interest issues in BWP;

1. the lack of long-term strategic approach to cultural institutions and agendas - activities and initiatives (such as those in Savamala) are short lasting with no certain future (expert interview Petovar); (21) civil initiatives in Savamala have neither social nor political power, nor sufficient public support and funding (expert interview Petovar); (Table 5,6).

The dissemination of these important factors through the distinguished urban assemblage networks offer an overview of how the pre-socialist, socialist, post-socialist and transitional in the Savamala neighbourhood have merged into its current urban reality. Based on Table XX and Figure XX (ANT paper), the effects of these urban development prospects (1-21) within urban assemblage networks are such that:

### Managerial

The pillars of the managerial amenability of tasks at the neighbourhood level in Belgrade are the functions of the City Mayor, City Architect and City Manager as introduced by the 2002 Law on Local Governance (**??**). More generally, it is the role of the Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure at the national level. In practice, these functions have shown to be political party figures and crucial links in distributing central decisions (government, prime minister) at the city level.

For example, in the case of BWP, although the Prime Minister was the leading figure in the negotiations and deals with the Arabian investor, the agreements were signed by the Minister and the City Mayor in the name of the Republic of Serbia While taking all the credit in the media for the announced success of the project, the Prime Minister has enough power to distribute duties and avoid direct responsibility for this obviously disputable case.

Another example is the instant discontinuation of the Republic Agency for Spatial Planning, the chief national executive body of spatial planning, after its director refused to sign the questionable Spatial Plan for the Purpose Area of the Belgrade Waterfront (BWPSPSP). It was not a change of the management structure in the agency but its complete removal that, above all, figures as a manifestation of political decisionism in national institutional structures and contributes to a complete disruption of its spatial planning system.24

Therefore, in the mediatory manner, these individual roles are also the core bearers of the set of political issues instigated by political voluntarism that very present in Serbian urban planning discourse even from pre-socialist times. It may also be said that the urban planning framework and practice are deeply embedded in their societal context. While people are aware that there are troublesome laws, corrupt institutions and complicated local circumstances, they usually avoid these issues or get use to them without battling against them (Table 6 cultural aspects). Following the thesis of Stojanovic, one informant also suggested that this is the result of the Ottoman period and the Ottoman corruption model that also thrived during the pre-socialist period.

### Control and Verification

The issue of control and verification networks is an example of the formalized and provisory legal framework and its conditional and performative implementation. While public hearings and planning commissions are legally assigned bodies of verification and control of spatial and urban planning, they are either dismissed or performed without any real authority. 25 Such application of legal procedures was enabled not only by the inconsistency of legal framework formulations, but also by the irregularity of its implementation.

This inconsistency of yet formalized institutional procedures may also be interpreted as a legacy of the centralized state from socialism which is still at play, although under a different

24After the discontinuation of the agency, the Ministry of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure holds both the regulatory and executive role for all spatial planning tasks in the national domain.

25Concerning the public review and hearing of BWPSPSP and the changes of GUP Belgrade 2021, numerous remarks were artificially summarized (98 remarks of various institutions, private and public entities were reduced to 48 examples), and then easily rejected usually with superficial and evasive explanations (**?**).

political and economic regime praising neoliberal transition. The artificial decentralization and democratization is now enriched with a layer of powerful economic actors,26 who profit from top-down decision-making. They couple with political powers in order to reduce control and verification procedures and troublesome professional actors to the minimum.

### Consulting

The core element of consultation networks are research and professional organizations and international organizations through European and international capacity building programmes and funding instruments.

Citing their research-oriented colleagues, urban planning professionals in Belgrade usually approach the city as a procedure combined with a technocratic view on urban development so that their role in incorporating opportunities and possibilities to improve the regulatory and implementation phases of planning becomes rather a repetition of what has been standardized or imposed from the top-down. However, in the case of regulation changes for BWP, multiple professional organizations (Academy of Architecture, Association of Architects, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts) raised their voices against the irregularities and the endangering of the public interest and presented elaborated reports and statements, but without enough media coverage and any consideration from the side of the authorities (ref documents). In this manner, it is possible to say that a part of these networks is invisible and without any real influence in the public and regulatory domain.

On the other hand, the not up-to-date practice of urban planning in Serbia also contributes to the marketization of planning domains and the expansion of foreign influences that do not fall under any evaluating procedures. This was the case with the urban design and construction solutions for BWP. The practice of copying European documents and experiences without a critical perspective and important adjustments to local traditions and context, as well as introducing international experts directly into the local field for interventions, are very present in Serbia. More often than not, political powers directly interfere in planning and decide and communicate with foreign professionals without consulting local scientific and professional communities. Such practices contribute to controversial rather than progressive foreign influences (ref). They are not properly translated to the situation in Serbia and, in this manner, create more room for misconduct than for its prevention (**?**).

### Administration

The administrative body of urban planning at the city level in Belgrade is the City Secretariat for Urbanism with its departments and sectors that aim to proceduralize

26Not only the state as it was the most powerful economic actor during socialism.

any transformation and change introduced through urban planning instruments27

(Sekretarijat interview).

Continuous changes of regulations, conditions and authorities in charge of decision- making are reported as the cause of practical problems such as:

* relevant institutions are in conflict of interest (ref Chapter 5, pp. XX);
* institutions have a monopoly in certain domains (ref Chapter 5, pp. XX);
* institutions in practice exceed the jurisdiction they are legally assigned to

(ref Chapter 5, pp. XX);

Apart from the authoritarian hierarchy of institutional power that empowers certain institutions to exceed or bias their jurisdictions, the issue of individual responsibility is seriously taken into account in the old socialist manner. Namely, most public officers avoid taking responsibility and therefore split it among themselves. In practice, having many people signing a document usually means slowing down and encumbering the process and postponing implementation. In such circumstances, manipulation, clientelism and paternalism became the most successful strategy to navigate through the existing system, nurturing multiple institutional zombies from previous socialist times (**?**).

### Implementation and Construction

Construction and implementation networks are associated together as construction is a practice of spatial interventions, while implementation involves both social and spatial practices. Moreover, both issues have confronted a certain de-institutionalization of their practices in the recent transitional context in Serbia, and both suffer from the over- presence of international actors at the local level - either from international formal and informal organizations or from private and corporate investors.

While Urban Incubator Belgrade and its successors demonstrate the capacity to implement at least small-scale socio-spatial projects, they also indicate significant lack of strategic development goals for cultural institutions and agendas and a limited extent of networking and collaboration at the local level in cases where it is not bonded within a larger institutional framework and financial model. This also testifies to the disappearing middle class, disempowered and impoverished by transition, as well as the marginality and incapacity of cultural and educational institutions in these new circumstances of transition (**?**).

Even though certain experts state that Savamala established its identity through 27However, any spatial and social change happening on sites and not from top-down stays somehow invisible for this body. For a long time, this was also the issue with illegal construction (add exact number and year). Fortunately, there is now a separate City Secretariat focusing on this issue, the Secretariat for

Legalization.

these civic activities, others claim that these programmes were too professional, typical for either local architects or the ”genius loci” of other places - artistic and foreign trends which were not adequately translated into the local context. A similar opinion is shared by some citizens, who explain that it seems that they [foreign and local organizations] come up with already prepared solutions and visions to be implemented, but with no concern for the real needs and ideas of the local population (citizens interview).

A similar dependence on global trends and circumstances is obvious in the growing involvement of foreign investors and investments funds in real estate in Serbia. The consequences of the political treatment of property and the discrepancy between planning and implementation during socialism take its toll and are still in play through the fast-moving, profit-oriented practices under neoliberalism and transition - once built, the structures are more difficult to change, which has been the logic of BWP28

### Regulatory and Planning

The overlapping of the regulatory and planning networks is multiple and overwhelming, even more so as most of the responsible institutions behave like management agencies, rather than taking strategic approaches (**?**).

Generally speaking, in Serbian urban planning discourse the built environment is the product of the regulatory framework rather than any strategic and professional engagement that surpasses it. In this manner, the troika of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure and the City Mayor are the actual power poles in urban decision- making in Serbia. Namely, inconsistency in the legal framework and the overlapping of jurisdiction (municipality, city, republic) support parallel structures of power and parallel roles. In these circumstances, it is not the quality of legal and planning documentation frameworks, but the reliance on an individual sense of responsibility and public interest that causes problems. 29

The extended influence in the various domains of the individuals who have supreme political power follows the historical heritage in Serbia from pre-socialist (Prince Milos and Mihailo, King Alexander), socialist (Josip Broz Tito) and post-socialist and transitional times (Slobodan Milosevic and the Prime Minister today). Disregarding

28Despite the double rejection for the building permit from the Ministry of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure, the coastal fortification was finalized during 2016. It is difficult to estimate, but, having two residential towers under construction nearby, it is very unlikely that the coastal fortification will be dismantled and removed, or even adjusted to local technical requirements.

29Knowing that the Prime Minister and City Mayor are political functions and that they usually are not

experts in the domain of urban planning and architecture, the influence on the most important decisions comes from either those who advise them or those with economic means and a clear and rationally-defined criteria of their interests (Association of architects interview).

the importance of institutions resulted in the lack of operational and efficient feasibility studies, provisory reports and strategies and corrupted plans and regulations (ref). In these new transitional circumstances, authorities address the issue of the economic revival by focusing their capacities and attention on investors and adapting the regulatory framework to serve their needs, 30 while citizens are excluded from the decision-making (**?**).

While planning has been identified as an implementation tool for investors’ requirements to be effectuated in the transitional discourse [”fast line for investors” as it was explained by an informant], several experts suggest the possibility that ”investor urbanism” may be traced back to the socialist period after the constitutional change of 1974 and the introduction of self-managed public enterprises that dominated supply-demand chains in the local real estate market. Whether public (socialism) or private (transition), the instruments to exercise power might be similar, and the instruments that once served to reinvigorate housing construction and nation state economy in the public interest might also become dangerous weapons if used for individual interests and particular purposes.

Another problematic issue of the cumbersome institutional structure inherited from socialism is the lack of any official procedures to assign a regulation as outdated. With strong authoritarianism and hierarchy in urban institutions, it is very common that obsolete and inefficient structures, documents and procedures are replicated, while the public interest is usually not served and sufficient excuse for regulation changes.

In this manner, the once thriving cultural and civic activities in Savamala (2012-2013) have to date been left unregulated and uninstitutionalized (KC Grad), even though politicians often officially use them as examples of good, local practice (ref media).

### Financial

The distribution of financial networks coincides with the impact of globalization and this new context of transition from the international isolation of Serbia in the 1990s to its integrated position in Europe and in the world after 2000.

Global capital and finances have affected all layers of decision-making in Serbia: top-down, real estate and the civic sector, either by international investment banks, private and corporate investors and international organizations, embassies, NGOs and European and international funding bodies. However, the amenability at the

30Various informants and multiple reports and analysis indicate the existence of the Investor’s Master Plan

for BWP which was the source of numerous regulation changes and even more so it was used in the construction phase of the coastal fortification and towers, but it has been kept secret to this day. Several experts also emphasize that the design for the BWP urban structures was created under different circumstances and was rather an urban structure for the seaside as river-currents have different dynamics from sea tides.

local level still maintains the trends from the 1990s when pressure, money and connections were the means of local tycoons, who also were the major economic actors at that time.

Moreover, access to public funding is also an issue in Serbia. While the public debt of Serbia is growing (**?**), the budget spending of public money favours the questionable business models of several public-private companies (Air Serbia, Belgrade Waterfront), while civic initiatives in Savamala receive minor local funding and support and usually only at the municipal level.

The ANT approach to actor identification and their distribution through networks facilitates (o) logical argumentation for urban dynamics, (o) enables mapping urban complexity, and (o) visualizing actors and networks through diagrams. In order to interpret the urban development of Savamala, specific political, economic and cultural aspects are also treated as actors (social artifacts). The distribution of these networks is traced within the map through the identification of:

1. the key actors involved,
2. the levels of decision-making which it stems from,
3. the sets of social aspects aggregated together.

The key findings are articulated through a comprehensive description of on-site complexity, which these conflictive political, economic and cultural aspects produce. In this approach, the researcher maintained certain traditional concepts from urban theory and practice, but reinterpreted them in the ANT logical framework. In this manner, it was clarified what type of networks (urban assemblages) these conflictive aspects address. However, the ANT framework’s quality of offering a playground for explanations from within and below makes the task of relating and distributing agency through networks a never-ending story that also depends on the participant/researcher who conducts it. Therefore, even historical trans- positions/interlacements, roles and links through networks become ephemeral and should be put to inquiry through multiple perspectives, if possible (**?**: pp.256-257).

### ”The urbicide in Belgrade is fed by the mentalities and the logic of incom- pleteness: unfulfilled urban development plans, vane political promises and abandoned projects.”( Samardzic in Doytchinov 2015)

* 1. **Conclusion**

The ANT data analysis presented in this chapter addresses the contemporary urban reality in Savamala. Most of the pre-existing methodological approaches in urban development studies consider certain socially bounded explanations (like the dichotomies of importance- influence and power-interest) as self-containing explanatory categories for mapping actor and stakeholder engagement in the social realm (**?**).

First of all, the ANT approach starts from the other end. Its point of departure is the identification of human and non-human actors from the ground-up, within the historical deposits of data, procedures, and identities contextualized through the morphology of urban decision-making in Savamala. Thereafter, the analysis is directed toward pinning down, describing and tracing their agency and relations at the neighbourhood level.

In short, the catalyzation of urban agency in Savamala has been two-folded: spatial and social. In spatial terms, intensive real-estate transformation created an invisible division of Savamala. With complete disregard for the cultural agency active and the life and activity there in general, recent radical, profit-oriented construction enterprises at the waterfront are directing the development of the area toward what is known as a ”gated community” where upper Savamala will be only an unpleasant pass-way.

Socially speaking, the role of individuals is at the core of urban interventions. While in the regulatory framework this practice is obvious and dominant, with politicians making decisions in favour of their political parties, not their respective public whose public servants they are. On the real-estate side, it is very often said that individual international investors or domestic tycoons are the ones pulling the strings. Moreover, for bottom-up engagement, the informants usually testify that for getting a job done, powerful and persistent individuals are usually needed behind it. Taking into account the historical background, Serbian society may be described as fundamentally authoritarian. In such circumstances, both the functionality and reliability of institutions and the empowerment of bottom-up sectors can hardly happen until the approach is changed for a more egalitarian and horizontal one.

Secondly, in terms of methodology, the chosen 5-step ANT analytical framework served to fine-tune the internal and external actor-networks and reveal the nature of urban agency. The final diagram illustrates the totality of circumscribed urban assemblage networks through the ANT lens. Moreover, the visualized overlaps and the collisions of various actor-network and social aspect distributions provide extensive explanations about how urban decision-making is processed in Savamala and why these social dichotomies are still at stake in a post-socialist neighbourhood.

Enriching it with the space-time component, this ANT analysis aims at decoding the urban complexity and dynamics of Savamala from the past to the present moment. In this respect, a very important point of disruption and radical change in Savamala is the officialized procedure for the adjustment of the regulatory framework to investor needs. At this point, the future of spatial interventions in the whole city might be directed according to what here and now there a single investor prefers and requires.

Furthermore, the methodological asset of ANT is its tendency to enable explanations from within and below. Such a descriptive research practice makes the task of relating and distributing agency through networks a never-ending, researcher-based story telling. Therefore, even historical transpositions, roles and links through networks become ephemeral and with no means to address and question what will come next.

In Savamala, and even more so in Belgrade, an important spatial issue is the transformation of the city landscape according to the new regulations set to satisfy BWP requirements. The city will rise in height and most probably, as there are no zoning restrictions, this may happen in the center. While the number of people living and visiting the area will rise, the question of efficient and sustainable transport may well come up, even though it seems that professionals are not strategically addressing such a future. On the social side, the role of international actors and global trends at all levels is unavoidable and overwhelming. The question of positioning local experts, professionals, authorities and citizens therefore might be crucial. Between international influence and an intervention in the particular context, there must be a meso-layer of local urban actors and professional and regulatory frameworks.

Finally, the capacity of ANT to practically address the future from its conclusions is lame. In general, the practice-based approach in urban studies has had hardly any benefits from ANT. Earlier applications of ANT did not address operational diagnosis worthwhile for tracing urban system transitions. Therefore, the next stage of the analysis in this research focuses on a framework for a constant extension of agency and relations when the actors collide, overlap and interfere in networks.