

## Bottom-up Urban Development in Action

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### 1. Introduction

The conceptual framework explained herein examines the blurred and askew structure of neglected urban neighbourhoods in post-socialist cities. This requires innovative, small-scale, dynamic proposals in order to overcome the rigid administrative procedure of urban development and to transform the negative side effects of imitating and lagging behind the conventional urbanisation model and those of the accelerating globalisation into a development impetus suited to these environments. In this highly competitive international economic and political arena, transitional countries experience severe consequences due to the paucity of practical experience within this new context of a market economy and decentralised political and administrative powers, a lack of resources, the scarcity of general international investment and scant interest in seeing dramatic shifts in all aspects of social organisation and urban transformations. The alternative strategy could be put forth through bottom-up spatial production of all the urban actors and stakeholders involved as a common denominator of a non-intrusive platform for the active representation, assessment and management of urban conflicts as a range of iterative “inter-states”.

Belgrade, with its one and a half million inhabitants, is the capital of Serbia. It is the only large European city situated on the confluence of two great rivers, the Sava and the Danube, waterways that throughout history marked a border between two of the most powerful European empires - Ottoman and Habsburg. Its picturesque position and historical mixture endowed Belgrade with vast spatial potential for creative urban development. In fact, as the former capital of the socialist state, it underwent remarkable economic, social and cultural damage during the nineties, a decade of wars and national turmoil in the former Yugoslavia and which had insurmountable consequences as regards uncontrolled urban growth. The expansion of bottom-up informal building that followed the explosion of a grey economy has taken over all its free spaces as well as the existing buildings both in the centre and on the periphery of the city. Conversely infrastructure inherited from the socialist period, but with its low institutional capacity, with the Belgrade has continued to be the centre of economic growth with a variety of services' expansion, building innovations and urban conflicts.

Beside the effects of the war economy, the urban growth of the Serbian capital has been determined by dramatic social, economic and political deterioration, as has been the case with the other post-socialist transitional cities in Central and Eastern Europe. The abrupt shift from a communist regime to that of a neo-liberal economy hindered urban development in Serbia and led to political instability, convergent socio-economic forces and inconsistent planning systems. Inherited from the communist era, top-down urban planning procedures and strategies, were rendered inefficient in addressing urban conflicts at all spatial levels. In addition, the failure to successfully replicate more advanced models of western neo-liberal economies made it clear that a fragmented, small-scale approach to spatial and social conflict could achieve more long-term consistent and far-reaching results. For this reason, the focus of the study presented here evolves from individual informal development to citizen participatory practices, which are both an essential prerequisite of social integration and an inter-medium for addressing urban issues in a broader context.

A case study of Savamala, a devastated urban quarter of Belgrade, represents the research and action that has been identified as an exploratory analysis of the interactional process involving the various urban actors in a socially and spatially constrained urban environment.

It is taken as a testing ground for the implementation of an innovative tool for “action and learning by doing”(Lydon 2012) in the urban planning of transitional post -socialist cities.

The first part of this paper provides an overview of spatial and historical circumstances and their transposition which designate Savamala neighbourhood as a suitable environment for instigating efficient bottom-up urban transformation. Then, we will present how an experimental learning tool for bottom-up urbanism is adjusted and applied to the context of Savamala. Its alternative urban development model is based on the combination of a participatory approach within the principles of tactical urbanism through the transposition of obvious urban conflicts and clandestine social potential and spatial capacities in urban development opportunities. Participatory activities are rounded up in an urban transformation programme named Savamala Civic District and in the Urban Incubator project activities. Finally, the aim of this paper is to indicate a chance for urban change through an iterative process of small-scale citizen interventions. The resulting urban state of Savamala will eventually expose economic, political, cultural and spatial transformations elicited therefrom and explicate the initial step in building an urban development model appropriate for urban environments in post-socialist cities.

## **2. Savamala neighbourhood**

### **2.1 Location**

Savamala is a neighbourhood in Belgrade situated on the southern bank of the Sava River and belongs to the central city zone known as the Savski Amphitheatre. Its name translated into English means “Sava neighbourhood”, and intrinsically, its name is derived from the Turkish word for neighbourhood “mahala”, combined with the name of the river whose bank it is situated on, which testifies the resolution of city authorities about 100 years ago to spread the urban structures to the river in order to set forward its urban development.

The neighbourhood of Savamala is among the most important landmarks of the city of Belgrade (apart from The Kalemegdan Fortress, Knez Mihailova Street and Kosancicev Venac urban neighbourhood) and it justifies such a role as it is a unique area in Belgrade with such a plausible collision between traditional and modern and past and present, rich in tradition, history and heritage. But world wars, authoritarian rule and the current economic crisis have left their marks.

Savamala today is stuck in a long-term process of decay. It is also a transit area that permits heavy traffic (trucks, trams, cars) to bypass the city centre; this aggravates its already alarming traffic jam. Therefore, this neighbourhood, endowed with an extraordinary spatial and economic potential and rich urban history, is now a traffic bottleneck with intense pollution and urban noise whose obvious spatial conflicts are neglected by both the authorities and professionals (“Urban Incubator Belgrade” 2013). Moreover, Savamala is economically underdeveloped and socially disadvantaged, and has a reputation as a home to outcasts, prostitution and criminality, while its citizens are continuously fighting for better living standards, only one kilometre away of the city centre that does not lag behind other European metropolises in terms of its architecture and urban design quality.

### **2.2 History**

Savamala is the first Belgrade city quarter to be erected in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for the Christian population outside the Kalemegdan fortress during the reign of Austro-Hungarian Empire. Urbanisation in the manner of a European city started after 1833, when Serbian authorities gained control over Belgrade and decided to make the Savamala neighbourhood an elite commercial and cultural urban quarter. Therefore, Savamala exhibits a rich heritage of valuable historical buildings from the 19th and early 20th centuries and a few relics from the Ottoman period.

Over the centuries, the river Sava was the border between the Hapsburgs and the Ottomans. As they fought for the domination over the city, it consequently suffered continual instability, shifting from demolition to rebuilding. During the short peaceful periods, Savamala grew up as a trading centre adjacent to the river ferry border-crossing. During the late 19th and early 20th century, following the pace of modernisation of the independent Serbian Kingdom, new national cultural institutions were established next to the trading services. For a short time, Savamala became the site for massive building projects, considered to be of the greatest cultural and historical significance. However, in the course of the destruction during World War I and the subsequent establishment of the Yugoslav Kingdom that shifted the border far from the riverbanks and focused the development of the city centre in uptown Belgrade, Savamala lost its attractiveness and fell largely into a state of decay. The streets were not maintained, inconspicuous warehouses were stuffed into empty plots, buildings were partly abandoned and occupied by the urban poor, and the area repeatedly suffered major floods.

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

### *2.3 Contemporary*

After the major political shift in the year 2000, post-socialist transition has started opening up the possibility for private capital to enter the privatisation process and to dispose of property. In such an economic constellation, Savamala has a potential to become an attractive urban area for investments. The situation has also been recognised by a combination of corrupted public authorities and powerful private developers, who have been aiming to maximize their profit by usurping public spaces and built infrastructure. Consequently, very little room would be left for any other form of urban development (such as socially and culturally sustainable development would be) apart from seeing it as an asset for gaining political influence and as an abundant source of profit.

Despite the ownership change, Savamala has been saved from this newest development trend mostly because of its long-term decay that is making it a far too complicated case for the limited investments with short-term turnovers that are dominating in Serbia. In addition, the recent European debt crisis that has been largely created by speculation in the real estate business is postponing any financial injection to the construction industry in Belgrade until the distant future.

In the meantime, taking advantage of this long gap in development, a number of small-scale public initiatives, as well as creative services, have found their place in Savamala, infusing sparks of new life into the area. In the absence of an overall urban development strategy, independent cultural entrepreneurs supported by the local municipality Savski Venac have started to transform unused warehouses and craft shops into spaces that are open for public participation and social production. What today might seem not more than a sum of ephemeral activities has a potential to become a driving force for a possible urban future of Savamala. For example, KC Grad – an independent cultural centre, Magacin – an NGO culture cluster, Mikser House – a creative association, Nova Iskra – a young designers incubator, and “Urban Incubator” – a Goethe Institute initiative, all of which have finally introduced the opportunity for an alternative strategic gateway to influence the future development of this devastated but promising neighbourhood (“Mikser Festival” 2012).

### 3. Strategic Gateway

The alternative model for urban development of Savamala is based on the conceptual idea of extending the urban life of Belgrade down to its riverbanks by infusing small-scale cultural practices and crowdsourcing activities, creative industries, urban manufactories, and cooperative economies. This conglomerate of individual initiatives strives to physically transform the Savamala neighbourhood and to influence the long-term process of urban transformations that are based on social interest rather than on real estate speculations. In the long-run it will change its urban image in these ways: converting abandoned warehouses into socially productive facilities, activating riverfront usage, encouraging local community participation, attracting new visitors to the neighbourhood (professionals and general public, both local and global) and finally revalorizing and repositioning the Savamala neighbourhood within the physical and functional scheme of the whole city of Belgrade.

<i>Social potentials and spatial capacities</i>			
<i>Economic</i>	<i>Political</i>	<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Spatial</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade and artisanal area</li> <li>• Location: close to city centre</li> </ul>	Participative and self-organisational initiatives (KC Grad, Mikser, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage</li> <li>• Tradition: crafts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location: river bank close to the confluence Sava-Danube</li> <li>• Spatial resources: abandoned buildings and empty plots</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Categories of social potentials and spatial capacities in Savamala

This model of urban development combines such an approach of tactical urbanism with participatory actions in order to set forth urban transformations. According to Mike Lydon's paradigm of tactical urbanism, pop up projects operate with local ideas and respond to local challenges in such a manner that they bring positive changes and develop social capital and organisational capacity through low-risk, iterative approach (Lydon 2012). In terms of an urban development model, the process of urban change for Savamala is to be built through 4 phases:

1. Identify urban conflicts and brainstorm capacities of Savamala neighbourhood – explanation of an urban context, a deliberate, iterative approach to instigating change
2. Congregate ideas and set up a common vision for Savamala's urban transformation – focus on local ideas as a response to local challenges
3. Try to resolve urban conflicts by instant actions – agility and value of short-term projects based on the development of social capital and the building of organisational capacity
4. Build low-risk scenarios and introduce a non-intrusive, bottom-up strategy of urban development for Savamala neighbourhood

#### 3.1 Urban Conflicts, Social Potentials and Spatial Capacities

In order to identify and elaborate how participatory activities influence urban development in Savamala, it is essential to transpose the current state of its urban environment into factors which could denote such positive impetus. Namely, contemporary urban development aims to correlate all of the elements of a modern urban environment (urban actors, social practices, space, built environment, infrastructures) which are influenced by economic, political and cultural factors in order to improve living conditions and facilitate positive social interactions. However, the interaction and interconnections among these key agents in an urban environment not only incite and develop social potentials and spatial capacities, but also evidence production and the challenge of urban conflict.

<i>Urban conflicts</i>				
<i>Economic</i>	<i>Political</i>	<i>Cultural</i>	<i>Spatial</i>	<i>Technical</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive location for private investments</li> <li>• Lack of systematic investments in constructing industry (debt crisis)</li> <li>• Poor population in the area</li> <li>• Criminal activities present in the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of regulatory framework</li> <li>• Powerful economic actors with strong political influence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marginalised groups living in the area</li> <li>• Disintegration of heritage (fragmented approach to renovation and revitalisation projects)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition area (heavy transport)</li> <li>• Abandoned and ruined buildings and empty plots</li> <li>• Deteriorating industrial area</li> <li>• Noise and pollution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of data about the state of physical structures</li> <li>• Lack of data on social structure in the neighbourhood</li> </ul>

Figure 2: Urban conflicts in Savamala categorized according to defined factors

Benefitting from these social potentials and spatial capacities (Figure 1), as well as addressing urban conflicts (Figure 2), involve the continuous reviewing of how the collision among these positive and negative influences actually produces a variety of contextual resources. In this case, the conceived locational, spatial and cultural resources of Savamala are those that aspire to generate a set of actions for building a model of urban development that achieves common viewpoints, goals and priorities among all urban actors and stakeholders (Figure 3). Knowing that this urban development model renders qualitative urban change, it is crucial to determine the beginning and end state of factors that indicate such a change, i.e. economic, political, cultural and spatial characteristics re-imagined in terms of urban conflicts, social potentials and spatial capacities.

<i>Contextual resources</i>		
<i>Locational</i>	<i>Spatial</i>	<i>Cultural</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible,</li> <li>• Close to city centre</li> <li>• Close to the river</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abandoned buildings and empty plots currently without interest from powerful economic actors because of financial crisis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rich in tradition and cultural heritage</li> <li>• Aroused interest for this neighbourhood from cultural and artistic groups, individuals and organisations</li> </ul>

Figure 3: Contextual resources in Savamala indentified after the analysis of urban conflicts, social potentials and spatial capacities

### 3.2 Urban Transformation Programme: Savamala Civic District

Savamala Civic District was originally envisioned as a set of participatory activities supported by the Mikser Festival, common denominator of which was building a platform for all urban actors and stakeholders to engage in changing their immediate surroundings, even though neither the wide variety of these actors, nor exact steps end state in this process, were to a great extent clarified beforehand. Therefore, the priority goal of the project was to create a sort of civic district as a long-term participatory realm for taking the most of a range of opportunities for non-institutionalised, flexible and dynamic urban transformation programme through various levels of sharing:

- *Knowledge-sharing* (Hess and Ostrom 2007) – the educational aspect of an urban transformation process

1. Capacity-building – regenerate community and strengthen the exchange of creative ideas where everybody needs to have an understanding of the personal and public relevance of urban transformation and then make their contributions irrespective of social status. Urban transformation offers an incentive to invert any negative feelings into collaboration in order to generate new standards of living and working.

2. Knowledge-building - continual production of new knowledge through knowledge exchange. Interaction between devastated places and advanced practical and academic professional knowledge plants sparks of a new life in people's minds that could be injected into the paralysed urban body, suggesting the way for the new approach to urban development

- *Experience-sharing* – an interactive system for continuous social exchanges

3. Collaboration-building - in an innovative and inspiring manner, encourage a wide variety of urban actors to join the network and contribute their talents, and to present and incorporate their social and cultural particularities to the emphatic culture of exchange

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

- *Vision-sharing* (Meroni 2007) – creative participation to instigate qualitative urban change

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

6. Vision-building – a series of common projects develop a vision of urban transformation by adding up sequences and unfolding the experiences of the community that is using and building it - plot by plot, building by building, and street by street. Collaboration among different actors produces a diversity of projects and increases opportunities for a variety of proposals.

In order to test this program an international group of experts who work on innovative models for bottom-up synergies among the social, cultural, infrastructural, ecological and economical aspects of an urban development gathered in Savamala during the Mikser Festival in 2012. The event included a series of meetings, debates, collaborative works and public space installations taking place in Savamala neighbourhood. The intention was to explore how the urban transformation programme could be triggered through cultural activities and creative interventions. In order to meet this goal seven parallel workshops addressed the status and development of Savamala from different perspectives, such as:

- Unheard Stories of Savamala (SIMKA and Ana Ulfstrand, Stockholm)

This artistic workshop promoted an ethnological approach towards research that could interpret the urban devastation – from collected documentation, interviews, and observations.

- Urban Body (Alexander Vollebregt, Rotterdam)

While struggling to find a true resilience and prosperity in the contemporary condition of Savamala, participants have to learn to use the full potential of their minds and bodies to develop an enhanced urban comprehension.

- 5 Obstructions for Urbanism (Todd Rouhe and Lars Fischer, Common Room, New York)

Several onsite installations have been built according to creative methodology articulated by the Five Obstructions: 1. Appropriate the everyday: elevate the ordinary 2. Never finish: making and using architecture are interconnected 3. Share space: negotiate and overlap. 4. Include differences: redefine boundaries and be inclusive. 5. Don't be new: don't be new for the sake of the new.

- Butong Installation (Lars Høglund, Stockholm and Benjamin Levy, Paris)

Installation made of Butong, material that was created in 2009, served as a convertible eco barrier in order to protect the public space from the aggressions of heavy traffic.

- Urban Bundle (James Stodgel, Santa Fe)

A temporary public space installation that provides an initial condition for citizen gathering, meeting, debating, and collaborating in the process of creating and maintaining their social and urban environment.

- A Sense of Place (Ljubo Georgiev, Maja Popovic, Failed Architecture, Amsterdam)

The workshop took place in one of the courtyards of Karadjordjeva Street transforming it from a place of conflict into a place where neighbours gathered together. The habits of local people were learned in order to find out how to reinforce their sense of belonging to the place and to upgrade the space they are forced to share.

- City COOP Web Platform (Ana Lalic, Vancouver)

Students were designing a wireframe storyboard that will serve as a draft plan for creating the website platform that will build a social network of citizens, experts, developers and institutions to exchange ideas and opinions related to the urban transformation of Savamala.

### 3.3 Project Urban Incubator

Generating Savamala Civic District from the bottom up becomes apparently feasible through the enabling of direct interaction between urban space and civic life. Hence, the revitalisation project Urban Incubator, supported by the Goethe Institute Belgrade, aims at visualising the urban future of Savamala as a network of places where all urban actors and stakeholders can meet to share their respective cultural merits and urban experiences. All the actions inside this project rely on communication among individuals, self-organised associations, public services and private enterprises as equal participants in the societal realm which will demonstrate its influence by performing spatial changes as social exchange and eventually boost urban transformation.

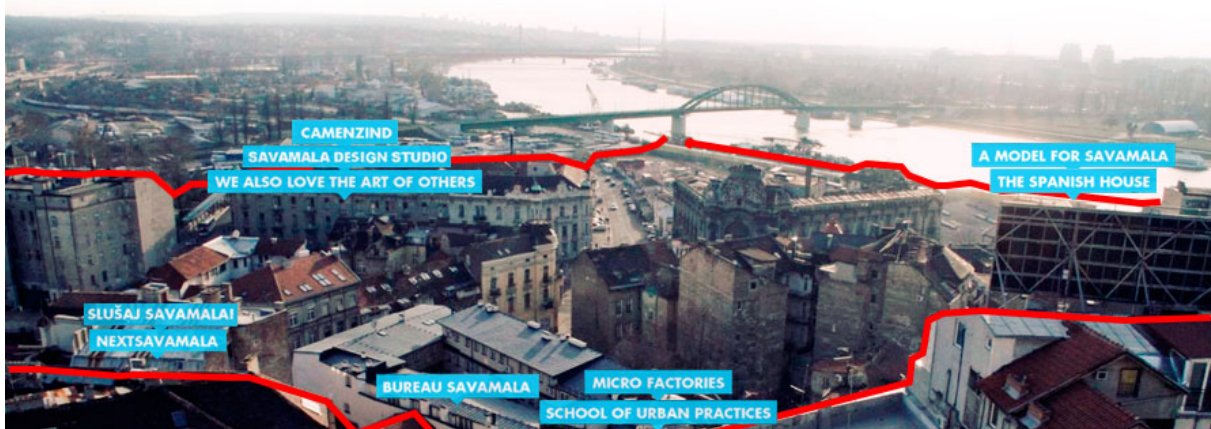


Figure 4: Spatial distribution of Urban Incubator activities in Savamala neighbourhood

Urban Incubator reflects the urban future of Savamala through ten site-specific parallel project activities (Figure 4). These activities are divided into three groups depending on what they address: the developing infrastructure for social change, systematic collaboration within the network of civic engagement and pop-up events and instant actions for the reconstruction of everyday life:

#### 3.3.1 Building ICT infrastructure for social exchange

Based on the fact that new technologies and mass-media are an omnipresent reality-builder and an essential social glue in a modern networked society that extends spatial essence of urbanity via technical resources (Amin 2006), the idea was to use online social media and web 2.0 technologies as informational, communicational and educational tools to first assemble and then spread around perceptions of space, time, lifestyles and a sense of

community among urban actors and stakeholders of Savamala and further expose them to the criticisms and influences of the general public. In this way, intellectual and social networks are created, that stretch from obvious spatial proximity, constitute a synergy on the basis of knowledge and information and represent the core stimulus of applied creativity, all of which are essential structural elements of qualitative urban change.

#### Nextsavamala – Crowdsourcing a City Vision

This activity is based on its successful application in Hamburg, where these instruments have been developed and tested. It represents a web-based public forum and workshops for collecting and filtering citizens' visions and discussing, developing and pitching ideas that can be later on implemented in actual planning processes for Savamala neighbourhood.

It incorporates two manners of networking: online (not only for urban actors and stakeholders from Savamala, but for all interested in urban planning and development topics) ("Nextsavamala" 2013) and offline communication (workshops, conversations, and a post-box for residents of Savamala). So, the online platform and social network serve for recognising urban conflicts (input data) as well as gathering and discussing ideas for urban transformation and implementation (projects, scenarios).

In its essence, it is a sort of citizens' agenda which contains the practical answers of how citizens envisage the future of Savamala. Moreover, through a careful decoding and mapping process this agenda could also provide us also with possible manuals of how to organise participation if there is a lack of adequate structures and traditions, as it is the case in post-socialist countries, where there is no practical experience of public participation, but a recent trend of promoting involvement in the public realm.

#### **3.3.2 Network of civic engagement**

It encompasses systematic collaboration for building and disseminating knowledge about the urban situation, providing data, gathering information according to these data and informing the public on current urban conflicts, promoting urban development, and setting up modules for active participation in articulating urban development strategy for Savamala. This set of activities considers accumulating social capital through non-intrusive, sequential small step initiatives within an overall interactive and educational process of forming a critical society – trained populace, dynamic interdependence and mutual development of both city and citizens. Human capacity within such a society is able to produce its own space with a strong impact of and on culture and ideology.

#### Spanish House

This is a temporary pavilion made inside the ruined building of an old captaincy which forms part of the cultural heritage of Savamala. The building is almost completely devastated; only the outside walls have resisted the ravages of time. A set of actions inside Urban Incubator aimed firstly at symbolic revitalisation of the building by crowdsourced human and social resources and then made it a communication venue for accessing general information about the project and all events organised within the project. It serves functionally and programmatically as a "space of enablement" that symbolises "a public space to be" in Savamala, where its emptiness emphasises the importance of spaciousness of public spaces, freely grown weeds envision the need for public greenery and sculptural residual concrete elements invigorate the urge for public art ("Spanish House" 2013).

#### Bureau Savamala

This symbolic institution figures as the critical commentator of the whole "Urban Incubator" project. It focuses on critically monitoring and analysing the contribution of artists, any creative projects and creative capital in general on the socially sustainable development of Savamala as a venue for social niches allowing alternative lifestyles which are very attractive to creative individuals. The result of this activity is a sort of record on mapping how this



neighbourhood changes and how the perception of locals and the broader public has changed accordingly (“Bureau Savamala” 2013).

#### *We Also Love The Art of Others*

This symbolic name denotes fostering a network among the artistic scene of Belgrade and beyond, whose members are all of different origins. These artists enter into dialogue in this neighbourhood and are motivated as a group to engage in artistic research and interventions in a forgotten place, where all the artistic work is adjusted to the current context. In other words, artists become socially active; they are projecting their vision of the world in a particular social context, investigating the meaning of the “utopian space” of their imagination as an enclave inside a social discourse today. The goal is to re-vitalise the traditional role of Savamala (as a place for trade, international exchange & encounters) through site-specific artistic work with the emphasis on the use of new media in order to best combine networking and innovation as basic engines of contemporary progressive society (“We Also Love the Art of Others” 2013).

#### *Model for Savamala*

This component comes from an architectural practice that has set itself a goal of building an 1:200 model of Savamala on the basis of collected local knowledge (“Model for Savamala” 2013). This 3D representation of physical structure will incorporate soft data, namely the social structure of this neighbourhood, which is not based on aesthetics, but on information. So, the information implies the tracing of all urban spaces and structures by creating a passport for each and every structure inside this area. This will comprise two parts (Lee, Yaniya 2013):

- Objective: fact-finding (i.e. height of building, type of roof, façade, number of units, age of the building)
- Subjective: the historical layers, social structure and general impression of the structures

The initial idea is to put these valuable pieces of information next to one another and form a certain sort of knowledge base. Henceforth, it will serve as a core common element of a platform for participation and collaboration. Such exhaustive database is an inexhaustible source of new appreciation and the creation of a new awareness that will continuously attract different people, stakeholders or developers to gather around so as to talk and search for the solutions of – in such a model – well represented and acknowledged urban conflicts.

### **3.3.3 Energizing everyday life**

This line of activities envisions pop-up events and instant actions for clarifying common threads and differences of the socio-spatial model of Savamala which incorporates local knowledge, integrates the customs and needs of citizens, and activates their cultural identities. All the incorporated activities exemplify a strong tie-in between theory, practice, arts and crafts in order to indicate provisory, flexible and dynamic milestones of an urban policy for guiding the urban transformation of Savamala through the practice of social activism and an experimental learning approach.

#### *Listen Savamala*

This sound-art project traces urban changes through sound recording in order to justify that it is not only a visual phenomenon. A challenging concept behind it is that an urban change is not only a visual phenomenon and that it is also stimulating to hear the change in a city. The basic work consists of collecting sounds and feeding newly generated ones back into urban spaces in formats such as installations, concerts and radio programmes (“Slušaj Savamala” 2013).

### Camenzind

This is a Serbian edition of the Swiss magazine with the same name. It is an outcome of the exchange of Serbian-Swiss-German knowledge on the built environment through four issues of this new Serbian journal covering architectural issues and urban public events, and report collected local knowledge in and about Savamala. It involves critically and creatively reporting on the progress in Savamala and on the Urban Incubator project through printed material (Camenzind magazine) and radio coverage ("Radio Savamala") ("Camenzind" 2013). In a truly participatory tradition, this activity motivates all urban actors to write and read about architecture and urbanism in Savamala. Gaining such knowledge will also give them confidence to be more actively involved in the urban transformation process through an open platform for debates, lectures, discussions, workshops, and salons.

### **3.3.4 Upgrading the Urban Environment**

Designing the urban environment does not only improve its aesthetic qualities, but it also involves a social dimension and creates social value. In other words, its high priority is giving the residents a voice in development as well as teaching them to participate and become politically active.

### Savamala Design Studio

In this manner, the aim of the Savamala design studio is to establish a participatory design practice that creates new relationships among various urban actors and stakeholders with an emphasis on encouraging Savamala residents to join to find advice and active support for their own design and construction demands and requirements. The two main parts of this practice are ("Savamala Design Studio" 2013):

- Creation of a toolbox, toolkit (toolbox = toolkit) and a manual of local knowledge, practices and cultural values: through a series of workshops with residents, other urban actors will learn from them and map their everyday practices (i.e. preserving food, recycling waste, barter economy, illegal building construction)
- Establishment of a "Public design support" agency: Experts, practitioners, artists and young professionals will work together in attempting to identify Savamala's own design, construction demands and requirements and to promote new intercultural exchange concerning construction and aesthetical principles of architecture, urbanism, arts and crafts.

### School of Urban Practice

The School of Urban Practice conducts advanced educational, research and activist work that redefines design, architecture and urbanism as a field of transformative activities ("School of Urban Practice" 2013). Participants seek the way to improve the everyday environment of Savamala, whether through creating public policy, mediation, urban planning and architecture design, or any other form of design that involves citizens from the very beginning of the designing process. By working for the public interest on the site and by exchanging aspirations with local community entrepreneurs, the School of Urban Practices develops innovative concepts based on critical engagement with contemporary issues of urban commons ("Weblog Project Basement C5" 2013).

### Micro factories

These small and new production facilities in Savamala, as the name says, strive to identify small suitable spaces in Savamala and attract participants in order to define and tap into a creative production process that transforms local knowledge, capacities and ideas into innovative design products. Participants collect local materials (usually from abandoned apartments or other places) and work on the design of products that reflects what they find in Savamala and its tradition of small craft workshops (i.e. carpentry). The aim is to make a social network and technical support, and re-connect the talent and experience of locals to their living environment. These new small production facilities are intended to be

microeconomic structures which shape the intense street life of a vivid neighbourhood with local pride and identity through the established relationship between urban space and industrial production (“Micro Factories” 2013).

#### 4. Pillars of the Bottom-up Urban Development Model

<i>Urban Incubator activities</i>	<i>What these activities address</i>	<i>What these activities offer</i>	<i>What they produce</i>
<b>Nextsavamala</b>	Lack of an urban planning strategy and urban development actions for Savamala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use modern technology (adjustment of urban development strategies to the modern context)</li> <li>• Enlarge participatory body (more resources, more ideas)</li> <li>• Promotion (new urban actors)</li> </ul>	Mobilise available human capacities (locally and globally) to boost urban development in Savamala
<b>Spanish house</b>	Deteriorating cultural heritage and empty plots in Savamala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote small-scale, low-budget revitalisation as beautiful, useful, productive</li> <li>• Spatial actualisation of sharing, collaboration, participation through the public space reserved for these activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting capacities, quality and beauty of Savamala’s cultural heritage</li> <li>• Integrating the local community in urban development</li> </ul>
<b>Bureau Savamala</b>	Forming “creative capital”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical approach to changes</li> <li>• Flexibility and dynamics of concepts for activities addressing urban development</li> </ul>	Mapping urban change for a sustainable urban development model
<b>We also love the art of others</b>	Deteriorating public spaces in Savamala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New urban actors - artists</li> <li>• Merging of concepts for urban development in Savamala among various national and international artists</li> <li>• New activities (artistic events) that bring new visitors to this neighbourhood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New groups of urban actors (artists and new visitors)</li> <li>• New artistic activities</li> </ul>
<b>Model for Savamala</b>	Lack of data on physical environment and social structure in Savamala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low-budget collection of data on social structure and built environment</li> <li>• Brainstorming the data through their incorporation in a spatial model</li> <li>• Engage motivation and capacities of young professionals</li> </ul>	Up-to-date soft data about this neighbourhood and its built environment and cultural heritage
<b>Listen Savamala</b>	Sound identity a noisy neighbourhood	A new perception and approach to the modern city - new layer of auditory data	A layer of soft data about Savamala
<b>Camenzind</b>	Abandoned and ruined buildings and empty plots	Glocalisation – translations of global trends and concepts in local environment of Savamala and vice versa	Representation and interpretation of collected data
<b>Savamala design studio</b>	Disintegration of tradition and heritage	Work on the definition of local knowledge, capacities, values, options and demands as well as building principles	Practical knowledge on culture, tradition and heritage in Savamala
<b>School of urban practices</b>	Weakness of regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer academic knowledge into tacit knowledge</li> <li>• Practice based on participative bottom up projects</li> </ul>	New, efficient and effective approach to step by step urban transformation
<b>Micro factories</b>	Disappearing traditions and crafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility of new production and job creation</li> <li>• Dissemination of knowledge and information</li> <li>• Improving the quality of life of local residents through production and creativity</li> <li>• Education through practice – real life context for young designers and craftsmen</li> </ul>	New activities and new urban functions

Figure 5: Analysis of Urban Incubator activities

The goal of the Savamala Civic District programme and the Urban Incubator project is to instigate qualitative urban change in Savamala that involves dealing with growing urban conflicts, fostering social potentials and benefitting from spatial capacities. In this sense, the

influence of this project is measured according to the extent it adequately answers to the current situation through the new horizons of possibilities offered by the strategy and series of activities (Figure 5). The actual results that they aim at producing in this neighbourhood are:

- Locally mobilise all available human resources to transform a crisis of aggregated urban conflicts into an opportunity for urban development: Teach the local community to benefit from the lack of institutional and financial resources for controlling and governing the exploitation of obvious locational, spatial and cultural resources in Savamala
- Globally mobilise all available human resources for a creative experiment of how the global knowledge could alter the context of Savamala and what it will bring to all the participants of this process in return: use modern mass media and ICTs as a constitutional element of urban reality in contemporary cities
- Show the efficiency and effectiveness of participation through knowledge exchange – emphasise the importance of the local community level in urban development
- Small-scale, low-budget revitalisation of public spaces and buildings – promote the transformation capacities of cultural heritage in Savamala through shared creativity of all urban actors mediated by professionals
- Build the new identity of Savamala, a new network of public spaces and a new layer of urban functions that redefine its urban structure and foster bottom-up, step-by-step urban development – a new set of cultural and artistic activities, a new group of urban actors, new pathways, and a new network of small public spaces
- Establish a strategy interpreting knowledge in flux and in context through constructing a database of up-to-date soft data about the social structure in this neighbourhood and its built environment
- Set an urban practice of “action and learning by doing” for all urban actors, stakeholders and professionals through a continuous critical reviewing of the process of urban development by the local community.

## 5. Model of Urban Development

Bearing in mind all the facts about the context of Savamala building an urban development model on these data implies analysing in which manner contextual resources (separated into urban conflicts, social potentials and spatial capacities) are treated inside the model, and what economic, political, spatial and cultural transformations result from these actions and how brainstorming such a procedure induces building a database on an urban environment (Figure 4). This procedure is based on principles of tactical urbanism, imagined as a cycle of step-by-step change through phases of ideation, building, measuring and learning that feeds back into itself to foster continuous improvement.

From the approximation of these results, it must be remembered that it is just a step in the process of urban development of Savamala, and that just as it brings forth conspicuous positive changes, so it also gives rise to a new and different set of urban conflicts (for example, gentrification). This pragmatic view combined with an experimental learning approach, will lead to envisioning such an urban development model as a helix. This spiral concept symbolises the idea of “bouncing back and forth” in the sense that solutions simultaneously initiate the generation of new urban conflicts that urge for not only different solutions but also new, advanced sort of knowledge and urban intelligence in general (Figure 6).

The model breaks down into three levels (local community, institutional and global), each of which conceptually repeats the core methodological procedure based on principles of tactical urbanism. The horizontal lines that connect the same phases of this procedure, albeit on

different levels, point out how urban development is actually happening, how it could be merged with urban planning and how urban intelligence could be eventually generated through this process (Figure 6).

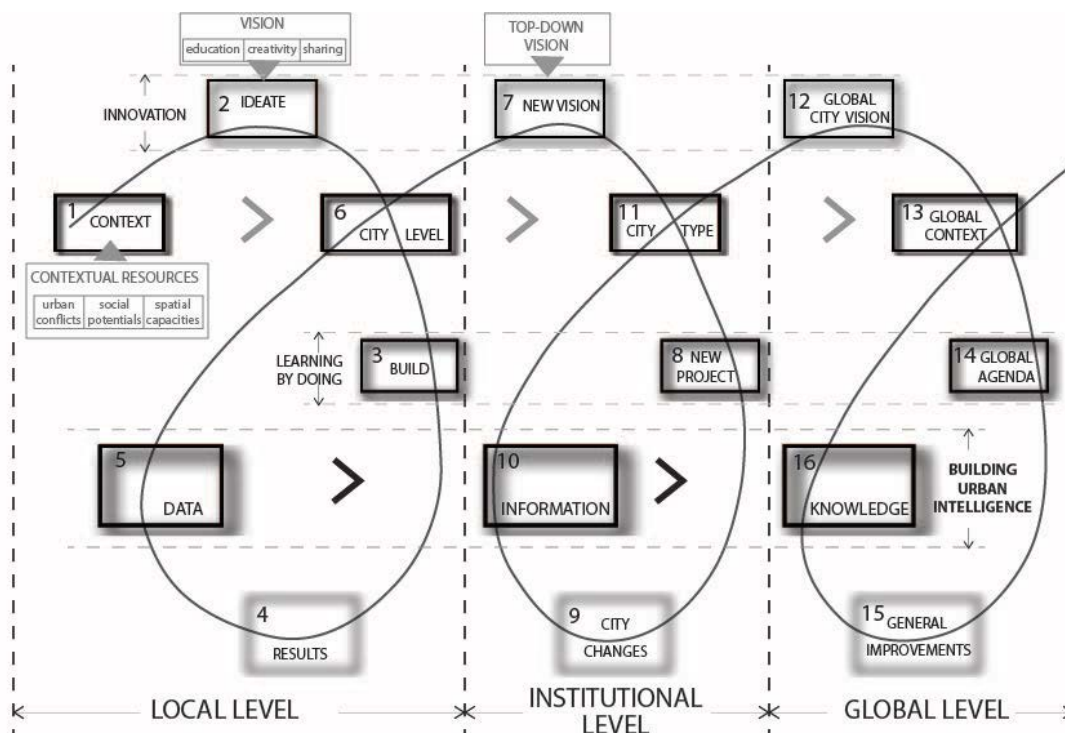


Figure 6: Model of urban development based on bottom-up activities in Savamala

## 6. Conclusion

The development of related activities in Savamala presents a gradually and spontaneously built intuitive bottom-up urban development model that will correspond to the needs, demands and resources of contemporary urban context in post-socialist city. A forward-thinking overview of the discrepancy between aggregated urban conflicts, on one side, and social potentials and spatial capacities, on the other, has shown that, being liberated from the economic and bureaucratic restraints of a prospering real estate market, Savamala has offered ideal conditions to put such alternative forms and approaches of city quarter development to the test.

The elaborated analysis of these activities set in the context of Savamala explains how times of crises are times of opportunity too. The spaces of obvious urban conflicts could be the polygons for changes, if we take the appropriate approach to instigate urban change. Combined with the exchange of knowledge and creative participation, these spaces could become the places for individuals, self-organised associations, public services and private entrepreneurs to congregate and display their productivity, their facility to be politically active and their ability to learn and act in a societal realm.

It has been conspicuous that although this new network of provisional public spaces and the creative impulse that made Savamala a very lively environment spread almost unstoppably, its urban essence within the image of the whole city of Belgrade stays the same with its run-down buildings, derelict empty plots and open spaces; plus its lack of a sustainable, clear, long-term economic model. Moreover, while the presence of activists in the neighbourhood contributes to the re-vitalisation of urban space and forms “creative capital”, it is at the same time the precondition for gentrification.

However, such new context comes as a result of this first phase of bottom-up urban development and craves for the next round of actions that will more actively involve the authorities, official planning institutions, and powerful economic actors in order to link these

bottom-up changes in the urban systems of the city to the top-down challenges and strategies by emphasising diversity and reciprocity in the nature of the on-going transformations through an overlay of different urban scenarios (according to different urban actors and stakeholders).

To sum up, it is this spiral of relations and influences between different levels and layers of bottom-up urban development and top-down planning through a kind of cross-pollination transfer of concepts and frameworks that initiates the creation of novelty and solutions that are well-adjusted not only to the local context but to global trends as well. An interactive system with an unlimited potential to originate diverse opportunities for new rounds of exchanges generates vibrant and fluid context open to permanent transformation. Therefore, this economy of social exchange is continually contributing to progressive urban development.

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