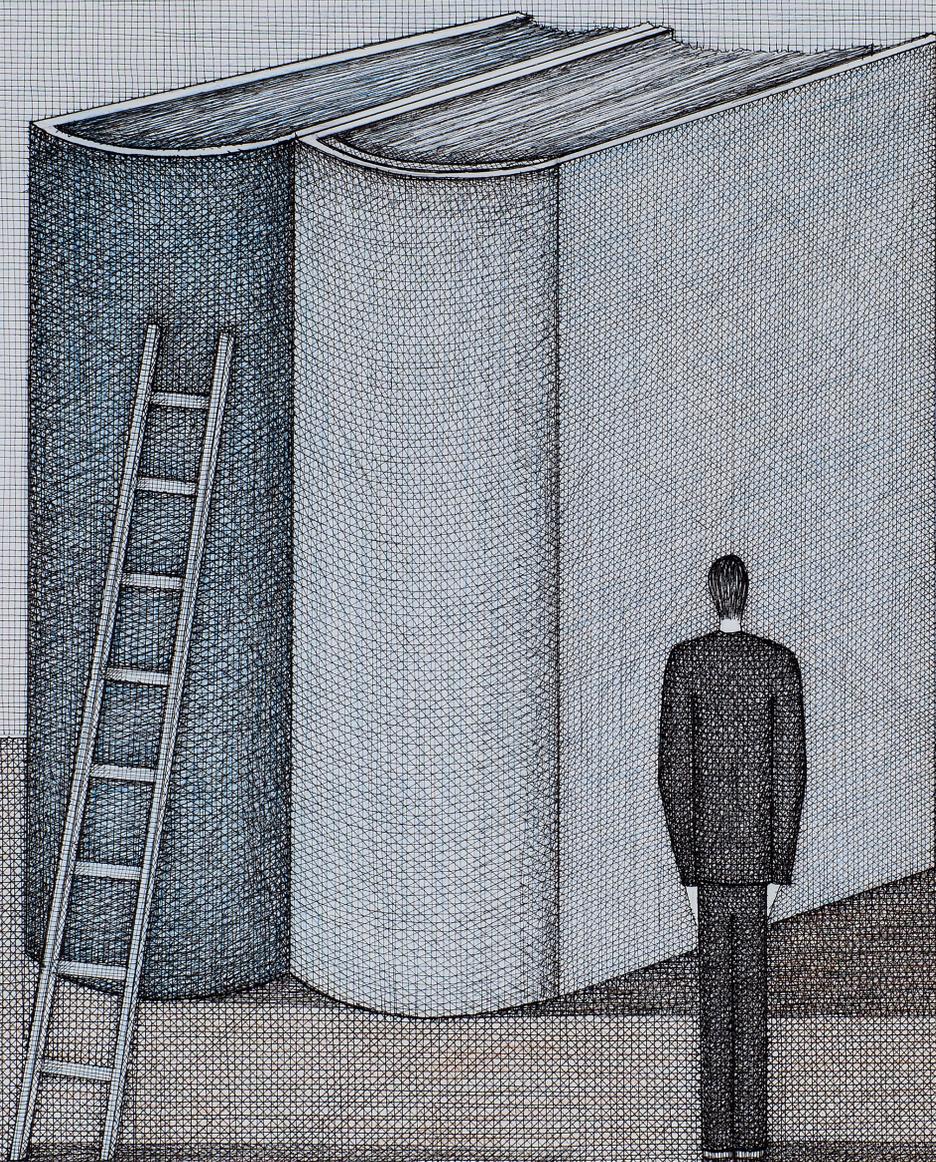


# The Role of Cultural Institutions and Events in the Marketing of Cities and Regions

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# From city identity to city branding: artivistic initiatives or top-down urban regeneration?

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Every society, and even each city individually, has developed throughout history its own system of values, lifestyles and everyday life patterns, with which they gained worldwide recognition-fame. These specific city identities have often been supported by the artistic narratives, hence the majority of people came to know about them indirectly, through literature, theatre film... Paris became (the) “Paris” during the time when few people were able to travel there and personally confirm that all that had been written about Paris was true. The few had the opportunity for the first hand experience brought by the travel journals and chronicles of the privileged — who had described and given scenes from a different type of life of their own. These lifestyles of “world cities“ can be the object of respect, desire, curiosity, but also of contempt, ridicule, fear even (the fear of vice, and hustle and bustle of the metropolis).

Nevertheless, it is these lifestyles of the locals that give the primary colour, primary tone, to the city and so they give the cause why the cities with similar urban and architectural structures are defined through different identities.

Paris as a “moving holiday” in the twenties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hemingway), New York and San Francisco in the age of contra-culture, London with its Carnaby street in the 60’s, Tokyo or Seoul, the cities we get ‘lost in translation’ even nowadays, despite all the EXPOs, Olympic games and festivals held there; Italy of the slow food movements, or Serbia and nightlife — all of these are the environments recognisable in their various yet appealing lifestyles, the lifestyles, which attract people all around the world.

Thus, it is the issue of branding the city not only with its cultural heritage, but with exactly the lifestyles essential for the development of tourism on the one hand, but for the development of the economy (investments) on the other hand (it is important to develop the identity of the city that is favourable for the lifestyle of economic elite<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> Glasgow the capital of culture in 1990 had specifically this task.

Thus, the issue will be — how to communicate different life practices and life styles present within certain city culture to be understandable and acceptable in a wider world? How to enable the newcomers or tourists to experience the difference and enter in the local life-style? Exciting, experiencefull cities, but also eventful cities become life, and not tourist destinations!

The aim of this paper is to explore possibilities of development of city identities, not only through top-down policies of urban regeneration, but also through bottom-up art activism and community and neighbourhood engagement in re-creating new urban faces, new city identities, based on „civic urbanity“. „Urbanity and being urbane has a proud history. It is important to recapture its best features. The tradition of urbanity, as conventionally understood, is by origin European. It focuses, to use a modern term, both on ‘the right to the city’ and ‘responsibility for the city’ (Landry, 2012).

## 1. The everyday life and the role of culture in the process of city branding — building identity

The identities of European cities have predominant basis in their geopolitical position, but they are (re)constructed in the diversity of forms of social practice and in the web of constructed meanings of such practices: the culture of memory (Athens, Auschwitz); education (Cambridge), economy (especially the creative industries: fashion, design) and finances and business (Milan, Frankfurt), nightlife (Belgrade), political decisions (Brussels), architecture (Barcelona, Vienna), sports, science, tourism, religion, and so on. However, since the entire continent bases its own identity on the idea of “collective culture“, many of the European cities take cover for their identity precisely under their cultural heritage. When it comes to the tangible cultural heritage, it could be stated that almost every bigger European town can offer a story about a specific symbol barrier: cultural monument, artefact, site, monument, building... Having this in mind, when it comes to the sheer number of narratives of memory, the striking examples are surely European centres Paris or Rome.

More to the point, it is important to emphasise that any social practice or a group of social practices make the framework of the identity of a city — therefore, be it architecture, entertainment or education, its image is always mediated by cultural and media texts. The authors Katia Pizzi and Godela Weiss-Sussex in their introduction to the compendium *The cultural identities of European cities*, write about the so-called banks of collective images and of collective webs of cultural and historical texts, which form the identity of a city, showing that the identity of a city „is dependent on the distinctive heritage of a given city, on a network of historically transmitted cultural resources. The network consists just as much of the political history of the city as of its literature, film and music, of its myths, street names, architecture and even of the way it is represented by the media. Our knowledge of this ‘collective image bank’ or ‘archive’ of urban images, channels and mediates, whether we are conscious of it or not, our perception and experience of a city — and as such it is just as ‘real’ as the built environment in which we move. By delving into some of the major European cities ‘archives of images’ we set out to expose the ‘interpretive grids’ through which we perceive them (Pizzi & Weiss-Sussex, 2011).“ Culture — be it high or popular culture, or subculture practice, opens up a field, in which

a web of constructed meanings is being made and reproduced i.e. the field which filters, activates, conceals and reveals specific "archive of images".

Regardless of the abundance of tangible heritage of a city or its financial success, one could say that the initiator of a narrative of a city is definitely its specific experience — that is to say, the idiosyncrasies of means of life and lifestyles, the one thing that is elusive and invisible, its specific rhythm and spirit — the emotions and the atmosphere. The experience of a city is, actually, based on its intangible cultural heritage, and with this in mind, it is no wonder that the most up-to-date projects of city mapping are precisely focused on recording the intangible heritage (sound maps, oral history projects etc).

The customs and values construct identities of many cities: Amsterdam is famous for its marijuana consumption and liberal culture (therefore it dispenses invitations to the individuals and groups of friends), Venice is famous for its gondola rides and pigeon feeding as a "honeymoon practice" which is accompanied with the visit to the bridge of sighs. The identity of Paris is founded on the stories and legends of bonvivants, bohemian life and falling in love, whose models consist of biographies and the works of the impressionists, avant-garde artists, modernists, and equally the famous French such as Baudelaire, Renoir, and foreigners such as the American writer Henry Miller or Norwegian painter Edvard Munch. One must not forget that the image of bon vivant Paris, that is its bohemian quarter, has been moving into a series of other cities which wanted to adopt the image of Paris of that time.

Further more, many cities of Europe and world are trying to present themselves as the world capitals of certain types of dancing and songs. Lyon, for example, the city of dance, is famous for its institutionalised dance and street dancing traditions like 'Le Défilé de la Bienalle de la danse', in which a group consisting of 180 locals that dance across various locations in France. Another instance is Vranje, the little town in Serbia, which is traditionally famous for its Roma music and belly dancing, and the list goes on Buenos Aires, Havana...

Culinary products and cuisine are also an important parts of intangible culture, which can be the *differentia specifica* of a city, thus and so Naples is famous for its first and best pizza baked on wood fire, Bari is famous for its special type of pizza — *focaccia*, and certain types of dishes got their name by the cities they originated from: Vienna steak, Parma ham, Paris ham, Moscow cake, spaghetti Bolognese. On the other hand, fast food and its restaurant chains, as much as they are a symbol of globalisation, they are also a symbol of American small town — where KFC and McDonald's are the main locations for meetings, socialising and communication.

In a larger sense, the way of socialisation (in everyday life), or celebrations and commemorating important dates — commemorative practice (Connerton, 1989) may also be defined as the identity of a city — for instance, Irish cities are famous for drinking beer in pubs where an entire pub becomes a "single table", a community; or Greek cities distinguishable for their quirky festivities, their weddings where plates are smashed, even the crazy celebration for the people who come to them for tourist purposes. Numerous films offer narratives of memory, which are imprinted in the consciousness of those who have never visited Greece ('Mama mia' film)

Specialised crafts and work processes participate in the construction of cities identity: Venice is famous for their craftsmanship of masks and items made of Murano glass, Florence for its handmade footwear, or various leather items, Sarajevo was once famous for its goldsmith shops in Baš čaršija... Istanbul, in its numerous quarters, still holds the memory, if only just in highlights, of craftsmanship of old (though, many of the manufacturing shops are replaced by Made in China shops).

All those types of behaviour, concerning the intangible cultural heritage, described in novels, films, plays, depicted on photographs or videos, all of them are pivotal participants in the developing of images of cities. More and more they are being museumed and archived: from the Museum of Innocence in Istanbul, to the Museum of Severed ties in Zagreb, many are the institutions, which strive to preserve the memory of former everyday way of life, the traditions of love, socialisation, work, memory...

The other instance important for the role of culture as a mediator for the city's image, regards contemporary art, whose significance is considerable in the process of (re) defining the cities of disrupted identities (Dragičević Šešić, 2013), or the cities, which strive to symbolically reposition themselves, especially after the ravages of war (Vukovar, Sarajevo, Mostar). Problems regarding the use of contemporary art in such a process boil down to the question: Who tells the story of a city or: Who holds the 'right to the city'?

## **2. Contemporary art and possibilities of repositioning: urban regeneration, bottom up and top down approach**

Although the holistic principle of urban regeneration implies focusing on the development of a specific social area, it could be noted that the culture — defined as a way of life, and not as a facultative activity — may present a field, in which urban change starts. To discuss the issues concerning the role of culture in urban regeneration and in creating new identity, we will use the study of three cities: Berlin, Skopje and Belgrade.

Surly the best example for the commencement of urban regeneration and symbolic repositioning through culture is offered by Berlin, the city which owing to the development of culture, has changed its image of a poor divided 'eastern' city in a very short period of time, to become one of the leading world centres of culture (especially alternative creativity and art), creative industries and tourism. This aside, it is notable that Berlin offers an example of cooperative planning of cultural development, which begins with the decision to become open and to completely give room for individual artistic initiatives.

Skopje also represents an example of a city where culture is used as a means of urban regeneration. However, the transformation of Skopje has been done with a completely opposite, 'non-inclusive', 'explicit', 'totalitarian' top-down approach, which ignored the opinions of the local community and representatives of civic society organisation (Georgievska-Jakovleva, 2014). This regeneration is a part of a larger process of constructing Macedonian identity as an ancient identity.

And finally, there is Belgrade, the city of its tenants who want to liberate their city from its negative image created during the nineties; it is a city of artistic and activist initiatives designed to reshape the identity of the city, which, nevertheless, change the face of the city sporadically or only in some of its quarters. Good illustration of synergy, but also the illustration of conflict between different public policies and approaches — activism, the politics of encouraging bottom-up artistic initiatives and totalitarian top-down 'investment' approach, is presented in the case of regeneration of the city quarter of Savamala.

## 2.1. Synergy strategy: the Berlin case — creative occupation

„Since it didn't have financial, corporative or industrial advantages compared to the other global cities like Paris, New York or London, the biggest emphasis was put on turning Berlin into a creative centre.“ (Markin, 2010).

Despite cuts in the budget for culture, after the fall of the Berlin wall, Berlin came into the focus of attention of young artists, and culture and arts became foundations of its national and international image. Paradoxically, the cause of this sprouting of city's cultural life can be traced back precisely to the lack of funds for culture, as well as to voluntary and involuntary mobility in the time of new cosmopolitanism: „Berlin was cheap for renting flats and life expenses, and it contained various city facilities where young artists would come, they would develop them, they would come and go.“ (Wöhlert, 2009) Certainly, political decision to turn the disadvantages into advantages was crucial, as well as the decision to use the symbolical capital for redefining Berlin through culture. According to the recent report on culture industries, they represent 20% of gross domestic product, and the cultural policy of Berlin strengthens this trend by developing creative cluster mostly through the promotion of culture and art, which has resulted in constant increase of public city budget and ever-growing investments into culture. „Five out of six reasons for visiting Berlin is based on the image of a culture and creative city centre.“ (Wöhlert, 2009).

Once a point of conflict between the East and the West, yet nowadays it is their meeting point, by developing the culture sector, Berlin strives to acquire the status of a global city. During the nineties, the strategies of presenting Berlin as a global city and the international headquarters of culture, they were in friction between positioning the new cultural identity and commemoration — acceptance, re-evaluation, and distancing away from the negative heritage of the past. In the transitional position of European or global, 'eastern' or 'western' city, Berlin entered the market race of the cities for the title of the Capital of Culture with the intention to become a global centre of culture. This endeavour was marked with being freed from the negative political image attained during the world wars, that is through the development and creation of the culture of memory, but also by making the room for alternative cultural forms, and by tending to cultural diversity, caring for the integration of socially marginalised social groups, which is especially noticeable in the city's infrastructure (art and museum districts, parts of the city marked by cultural heritage, squats and so on). The creation of culture clusters, urban design, the organisation of international cultural events, especially the prominent biennale of arts, they all contribute to the creation of global cities where intercultural meetings are held, and Berlin is a typical example of the implementation of urban regeneration with emphasis on culture. The promotion of cultural diversity, reinforcement of social cohesion, re-evaluation of political history, the creation and fostering of its culture of memory, they all present the priorities of city's culture policy whose goal is to create a multi-cultured and globally open city.

„During the last two decades, the exhibitions have become vital mechanisms of representation of Berlin on the city, state and international level. This is the case with the Berlin fair of architecture in Postbahnhof, 'Inner City Plan' publication, Berlin digital plan of reconstruction and the Berlin biennale.“ (Janet, 2004). The transformation of Berlin into a global city is dominantly done in media space; the advertisements, tourism, web portals which offer information on Berlin urban culture, „they all have become the means of constituting Berlin as a virtual multimedia exhibition, and the Berlin biennial represents this trend.“

Since the Berlin Biennale presents the systematic and consistent implementation of cultural policy concept of Berlin, the contribution of contemporary art to the recreation of city's image can be easily analysed on its case. The international Berlin Biennale was founded in 1996 with the intent to create a match for the Biennale of Venice. Its founder KW Institute for modern art, which is one of the most important German institutions for contemporary visual art, along with a group of collectors, they all had a goal to help the efforts to create a profile of Berlin as a world capital of contemporary, alternative, and experimental art. In one of the photographs, used to promote the Biennale, "Welcome to Berlin/Welcome to Venice" the goals of cultural policy and the competitive strategy of Berlin and the Berlin Biennale are clearly outlined: opposite the sophisticated, *oldfashioned*, and elitist Venice, stands the 'inverted' liberating Berlin, the place of intense intercultural contact, the place of alternative and experimental urban culture.

The Berlin Biennale experienced a complete expansion the year when the Polish artist, Artur Żmijewski was invited to be the curator and when the slogan of the Biennale was: Occupy Berlin. In his professional work, Żmijewski deals with the issues of the relationship between politics and art, the social power that art possesses, the ethics and the representation of state power, and the conception/idea of the Berlin Biennale in its form (in organisation) and in its contents came out of his artistic interests. Along with Żmijewski, there were also the participants such as Polish artist Joanna Warsza, the curator who shares with Żmijewski almost identical interests and political views, as well as the Russian anti-war and anti-capitalist organisation Voina (meaning "war" in Russian).

The idea of Occupy Berlin entails the occupation of the space of the city, politicization of its territories, spreading the public debate; including the camp, with the purpose to exhibit works and hold lectures, tribunals, conferences, there was a considerable use of additional city infrastructures — museums, galleries, cultural centres, churches, institutes, and one of the most striking artistic interventions done in the public space was the planting of 320 trees of famous Polish birches from Aushwitz all across Berlin. Invited by Hilla Menzer, a teacher in a Berlin school for civic education, and led by the Biennale's motto: 'Poland is not a Jewish cemetery', Polish artist Lukasz Surowiec planted trees in the parks and schools of Berlin, also in certain places that have connection with the Holocaust. The mission of the project 'Berlin-Birkenau' is „to give back to Germany a part of its historical heritage“ (Żmijewski & Bajović, 2011). Under each birch tree a plaque was installed stating that the trees came into Germany with the help of Berlin Biennale.

Considering the 'occupy movement' — it should also be noted that "more recent research posits that creative occupations are also a fundamental, but overlooked, driver of innovation. Theory also suggests cities are important for both creative industries and occupations, with urban environments helping firms innovate" (Lee & Rodrigues-Pose, 2014), which means that the Biennale's artistic concept was strongly linked to the economic development strategy of Berlin.

The Berlin Biennale was founded and consistently managed in accordance with the German and Berlin cultural policy, strategies of internationalisation, media presentation of city's identity and competitive market strategies. Because of the problematic historical heritage and the migrations of the populi, cultural policy of Berlin primarily supports the projects of intercultural mediation (especially dealing with the relationship between Poland and Germany) and integration of socially marginalised groups. Competitive advantages of Berlin in comparison to other global cities hinge on its historic past and geographical location, which provokes frictions between the 'East' and the 'West', so Berlin is culturally defined as a 'western' city, which allows excessive behaviour and alternative currents characteristic to the 'East'.

„Lately, new Berlin’ has become shorthand for an under-visited European city that is cheap, fun, and up-and-coming. Ever since creeping gentrification and a massive rise in tourism have thrown into question the German capital’s status of the world’s “coolest” city, people have been racing to determine its successor. Candidates besides Leipzig include Krakow (Poland), Vilnius (Lithuania), Belgrade (Serbia), Tallinn (Estonia), and Warsaw (Poland). They share, to varying degrees, many of the elements that made Berlin famous in the 1990s: affordability, empty buildings that can be repurposed and a sizeable arts scene. But unlike Berlin, they won’t have the opportunity to develop their cool reputation slowly — and are just as likely to be ruined by the hype as they are enriched by it.“ (Rogers, 2014). As it was the case with the bohemian quarters in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, so is today the case with the fact that the image of alternative Berlin has been moving into smaller cities of Europe, especially the ones east of Berlin. It is important to underline that this image does not only reflect the urban design; it is transferred to the behavior of city residents, so it shapes their everyday life.

## 2.2. Top down policies — Case study Skopje, Antiquisation: identity building or urbicide?

In the process of providing reminders of these historical periods, the project Skopje 2014 holds the city of Skopje hostage stimulating political entanglement rather than historical illumination (Linin, 2012).

Politics of construction of new national identity by re-creating Skopje, the capital city, as a city of antique Macedonian civilization comprises several strategies and tactics: renaming toposes of the city; urban reconceptualization of the city; reconstruction of present buildings in a different paradigm; construction of new institutions in “baroque”, “academique neoantique” style, etc. Thus, it is necessary to destroy Byzantine Skopje and its memories, such as the memory of coronation of Stefan Dušan as the King of Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians and Albanians by renaming Dušan Bridge Stone Bridge); the memory of Ottoman, oriental Skopje by renaming the Old Turkish Bazar the Albanian Bazar and finally, the OLD Bazar.

By raising the new “walls” of buildings for the state administration near the banks of the river Vardar, the Old Bazar is practically isolated and became invisible from modern socialist Skopje, which left open the perspective across the river. Kenzo Tange’s simplistic, “clean” urbanism is restructured and recomposed, open public spaces are filled with Arc de Triumph, 80 monuments to different “heroes” (all men), while apartment buildings (socialist modernism) are getting “antique, baroque” facades. Even the first modernist shopping mall in Skopje, built in 1972, is threatened to be besieged by antique pillars. However, both professional architects and the population of Skopje have started protesting against this top-down urbanism which changes not only the visual identity, but also the spirit of the city.

According to different researches, one by the Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities in Skopje, and the other by BRIMA Gallup Institute (Georgievska-Jakovleva, 2014), there are huge divisions in the perception of national identity between the population and the Government. Also, this division is present when it comes to Skopje 2014 project — 45.9 % of citizens do not support the project, while 25.4% support it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> According to Lea Linin research, one sixth of the respondents characterized the project as a waste of money. Almost one eighth of the survey participants think that the project has no underlying meaning. The project was identified as a way to attract tourists by one ninth of the survey participants. One eleventh of the participants think that through the project the city loses its identity. In the rest of the responses, negative characteristics of the project outweigh the positive ones.

How did the Government come up with the idea of the project? It appeared out of the culture of humiliation (Moisi, 2009) when Macedonia was refused NATO membership in 2007 in spite of all the conditions fulfilled, due to Greece's veto. Thus, the humiliated Government was struck by an idea how to revenge themselves upon their major international enemy, to do what Greece had been accusing the Macedonian government of for years — to "steal", to take the Antique Macedonian identity and to represent it as its own. Thus, the idea for the project Skopje 2014 was created — a new city was supposed to be built, with numerous monuments and buildings devoted to Heroic Macedonian History — the first real Empire created on the Balkans.

"Characterized as an aesthetic eyesore, the project makes use of styles which have been officially (although erroneously) referenced as baroque, neoclassicism, and romanticism. As 36a Xeroxed version of 19<sup>th</sup> century European nation-building projects, the only novelty this project offers along with a new set of 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm) is a new aesthetic style termed 'macedonianism', described as 'an eclectic mishmash of 1/2-applied, 1/4-explained, and 1/10-understood historical references' (Vilikj). In an attempt to create precedents of explicit historicity (great and important monuments) in a somewhat inverted and belated process, the project's end results seem overly amateurish, and instead of giving the city the desired historical sensibility, they embellish the city fabric with grotesqueness, a quality prominently displayed in the material symbol bearers of Las Vegas, inviting comparison between the two" (Linin, 2012).

The violent attempt to change the identity of the city through contradictory narratives of Europeanization and antiquisation, anachronistic styles and episodes whose subtext adds even more confusion (sculptures of the patriarchal family, bathers in the river), in fact, represents an attempt to heal the centuries old national trauma. But such erroneous, violent and artificial identification of the capital with the entire nation, not only does not contribute to the development of culture of remembrance, but quite the opposite, it has led to the annulment of urban identity.

### 2.3. Artivism vs top-down: Belgrade collision

Considering Belgrade in the given context, as the city which is currently undergoing redefinition of its identity and repositioning at regional, European and global level, it might be expected that memory (collective and individual) will become the key generator of its raising identity. Material traces of the city's history are mainly devastated, there is no defined public policy in the field of commemoration and marking the places of memory, while frequent transformations of its urban landscape together with the lack of systematic approach in archiving and revitalisation of its intangible heritage and the latest accelerated development of the city which implies visual uniformity and alienation of citizens, led to the non-existence of continuity in its urban development.

Thus, the activation of memory in Belgrade's development could become a driving force for revitalisation of its cultural heritage and contribute to the increasing participation of citizens in the development of the city (Memory of the City, 2011).

The process of developing a culture of remembrance and urban regeneration began in the time of transition, that is, in the period of the establishment of democracy in Serbia, thanks to the need to change the image of Belgrade in the new political environment, both in the eyes of its citizens and in the eyes of those who heard about Belgrade or were coming to it. It was initiated by arts organizations in the nineties, during the totalitarian regime of Slobodan Milosevic. At that time, since they did not have their own space, their efforts to conquer one were focused on one of the central, but quite neglected neighbourhoods of Belgrade, Savamala.

Several leading art collectives were allowed to use a common space in 2007 — an old warehouse in Kraljevića Marka Street, and in 2009, a space that belonged to the old industry was ceded to a civil association 'Cultural Front', so that they established the European Centre for Culture and Debate 'Grad' ('City'). Cultural Centre 'Grad' attracted a new young audience, tourists, young artists and creators, and participated in the formation of a new local alternative art scene, primarily of music and design, and thus began the process of urban regeneration of Savamala. Soon afterwards, many organizations were founded and many events created that were related to this neighbourhood — galleries, book fairs, festivals, one of the first co-working spaces in Serbia; the public space was renovated, and within the city festival BELEF some of the most well-known Belgrade murals were created: *Our Lady of Belgrade* by French graffiti artist Remed, and a mural of one of the world's most famous street artists, BLU. Many restaurants, cafes and bars were opened, and, in a short period, Savamala could be found on all the touristic websites and travel guides for Belgrade. In fact, thanks to the development of Savamala, Belgrade has been recognized as a possible "new Berlin".

The key projects in the process of creating the image of the city and redefinition of its identity are those that deal with the culture of remembrance (based on citizens everyday life and private history) and the use of public spaces, especially because they involve the local community in the creation of stories about common *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1984). It is necessary to recognize civic imagination as a public good — as it is definitely in the public interest to support active citizens who create their own programs and projects, and not only respond to Government policies and practices. Pier Luigi Sacco defines the cultural realm, in which a citizen is at the same time a creator (Sacco, 2011).

In the same period, numerous initiatives of recording, archiving, shaping and recreating tangible and intangible cultural heritage occurred in Belgrade, such as Kulturklamer's projects ('Memory of the City', 'BG log: Memory Archive of Belgrade', 'Remembrance Map by Vračar residents', 'Concrete Spaces', 'Creative Recycling of Belgrade') or Dot.Com projects — 'Architecture for Locals', 'My Neighbourhood', 'Belgrade Sound Map', whose goal is to gather memories, opinions, feelings and experiences of places, of people and of events that have become, through their retelling, part of the identity of a neighbourhood or local community.

The missions of some organisations were occupying, redefining, alienating or commemorating certain urban spaces — Ministry of Spatial Planning organized public actions, debates, conferences and projects related to the use of public spaces such as 'Spacebook' — map of neglected and non-used Belgrade public spaces; civic association Microart led the Street Gallery and the Tactile Gallery projects; Inex film expedition squatted abandoned buildings of Inex film company; Cinemas — The Return of the Written-off raised public awareness and opposition to closing the city cinemas, but also intervened in the public space in response to the ongoing changes the face of the city. The examples of such activities include artistic undertaking in Tašmajdan Park, which was renovated thanks to foreign investments, and art criticism was related to the new sculpture of the donor — President of Azerbaijan, which was put in the Park.

The importance of having a strong community that promotes the idea of citizen participation in the decision-making process imposes itself when the urban regeneration is performed by using 'Skopje method', i.e., non-inclusive top-down approach, as it is the case with the latest project in Belgrade — Belgrade Waterfront. Solutions that exclude the participation of the community, professionals and experts in culture, express the inability of the community to create and maintain a shared image of the city or, in other words, mark the abolition of the right to the city.

## **Conclusion — from city identity to city branding: fostering dialogue**

This analysis focuses on those cities that have lost their economic importance and symbolic meaning within collective national memory, but have regained (Berlin) or are now trying to regain their socio-political and economic importance (Skopje, Belgrade) through cultural “investments“. The aim is to point out the difference between a top-down and bottom-up approaches to the city identity development planning and to reach the conclusion that is necessary to create a new strategic option in reconsideration of actual questions of both urban and regional, territorial planning. Using these examples, the analysis advocates recognition of a civic imagination as a public interest and public good, and a necessity to link expert knowledge with civic imagination, accepting the city as a cultural space with its own socio-political complexity.

Bottom-up policies relate to city’s everyday life, civic imagination and arts and cultural practices in the widest sense. Civil society actions, culture of memory, “collecting” individual memories and artistic projects (in situ theatre, street art, public space performances, oral histories — collecting personal narratives, city mapping and so on) are helping cities to define themselves. Thus, arts are creating stories (narratives) and images for both internal and external use (tourist organisations materials — video clips, posters, slogans, etc.). Those informal productions, which are under the radar of the conventional top-down planning institutions should be brought in; — *In from the margins*, as one famous Council of Europe book was titled.

Despite high expectations, culture of dissent from Dadaism, counterculture and radical activism of 1990’s, including “art for social change”, are not proven to be successful unless supported by other instruments of social change and official support of public policies. On the other hand, it has been confirmed that top-down policy decisions ‘distort’ the shared image of a place, which is a fundamental condition for building a city identity. Furthermore, a coherent and shared image of a city identity constitutes the basis for a successful and long-lasting city brand. Thus, the analysis is not so much about the image making and branding, as it is about creating sustainable communities through bottom-up activism and the use of civic imagination. Especially in cities, whose identity has been drastically changed through history, culture is the major part of city identity and city branding, the major appealing factor not only for tourists, but, first of all, for local inhabitants — regaining “a sense of the place” that was lost during difficult processes of post-industrial transitions.

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