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## **Art Practices and Urban Promenades: Focusing on Belgrade's Knez Mihailova Street and Dionysiou Areopagitou Promenade in Athens**

We dedicated the topic of this issue *Art practices and urban promenades: focusing on Belgrade's Knez Mihailova Street and Dionysiou Areopagitou Promenade in Athens* to the celebration of 30 years of Knez Mihailova Street as a pedestrian zone in 2017, the jubilee year.<sup>1</sup> In this way, it represents our little gift to the city of Belgrade through putting Knez Mihailova Street in the centre of the interest of this research. The Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts is located in this street, as well as the Institute of Ethnography, which celebrates the 70th anniversary. The Faculty of Philosophy is nearby with the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology and the Museum of Ethnography, too. Therefore, Knez Mihailova Street can be viewed as a certain kind of a „yard“ for ethnological and anthropological research through which thousands of home and foreign visitors pass, together with many ethnologists and anthropologists.

In Serbian and Greek ethnological and anthropological researches, for many years, especially from the second half of the 20th century until today, studying urban environments from different aspects has proved to be very interesting (See for example: Meraklis 1989; Erdei 1994; Vučinić 1999; Loukatos 2003; Žikić 2007; Prelić 2008; Radović 2008; Lukić Krstanović 2010; Kouzas 2012; Radović 2013; Radović 2014; Varvounis 2014; etc.). Nevertheless, no significant attention has been paid to the capital's pedestrian zones, especially from the aspect of art practices (Blagojević 2011).

The aim of this thesis is to present to the scholarly and wider public the first part of preliminary results of the international sci-

1 This paper is the result of Project no. 177027: *Multiethnicity, Multiculturalism, migrations – contemporary process*, by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia and the international scientific project *Art practices and urban promenades (pedestrian zones). Comparative ethnological and anthropological study of Belgrade Knez Mihailova Street and Dionysiou Areopagitou Promenade in Athens*, which is realised in cooperation with the Institute of Ethnography of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and The Laboratory for Folklore and Social Anthropology, Department of History and Ethnology, Democritus University of Thrace.

entific project research which began in early 2016 and was called *Art practices and urban promenades (pedestrian zones). Comparative ethnological and anthropological study of Belgrade Knez Mihailova Street and Dionysiou Areopagitou Promenade in Athens*, and which is realised in cooperation with the Institute of Ethnography of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts and The Laboratory for Folklore and Social Anthropology, Department of History and Ethnology, Democritus University of Thrace, created by senior research associate of the Institute of Ethnography SASA, Gordana Blagojević, PhD.

Dr. Gordana Blagojević, the manager of the project, together with two more colleagues from the Institute of Ethnography SASA, Dr. Milesa Stefanović-Banović, Research Associate and MA Nina Aksić, Research Assistant, participated in the realization of the first stage of the project. On the Greek side, participants were Prof. Dr. Manolis Varvounis, the manager of the Laboratory for Folklore and Social Anthropology, Dr. Nadia Macha-Bizoumi, a lecturer of the Department of History and Ethnology, Democritus University of Thrace and an associate of the Laboratory for Folklore and Social Anthropology, Dr. Georgios Kouzas, also an associate of the same Laboratory and a coordinator of the project on the Greek side.

Public spaces and in particular the pedestrian zones in the central parts of urban settlements diachronically represented places for a wide array of artistic expressions. The central theme of the project is comparative ethnological and anthropological study of urban public space where there is a variety of artistic practice, based on two case studies – pedestrian zone Knez Mihailova and Dionysiou Areopagitou. These two streets were chosen as the central pedestrian zone in two capitals – Athens and Belgrade, which attract a lot of artists from different fields, who practice their art in public. Besides, these two walkways are connected with the fortresses, i.e. Acropolis of their cities. The research includes contemporary and diachronic aspects and the semantics of space.

Knez Mihailova Street is the main pedestrian and shopping zone in Belgrade, and is protected by law as one of the oldest and most valuable landmarks of the city (Škalamera i Jakovljević 1964, 15). After the implementation of the 1867 city of Belgrade regulation plan by Emilijan Josimović, the street soon gained its current look and architecture (Škalamera i Jakovljević 1964, 6-8). Houses were built there by the most influential and wealthiest families of the Serbi-

an society, most of them merchants. Knez Mihajlova Street got this name in 1870, two years after the assassination of Prince Mihailo Obrenović. The city authorities officially named the street – Ulica Kneza Mihaila (Prince Michael Street), instead of Delijska Street (Janković 1938, 398; Škalamera i Jakovljević 1964, 15; Radulović 2004, 201-202; Radović 2014, 61). This is one of the rare Belgrade streets which has not changed its name from the beginning (Škalamera i Jakovljević 1964, 15; Radović 2014). In 1987 there was a major reconstruction of Knez Mihailova and its transformation into the pedestrian zone. After six months of construction works, the street was open on 20 October 1987 (Radulović 2004, 202; Stanojlović 2016).

Dionysiou Areopagitou Street is approximately one kilometre long promenade stretching on the south side of the Acropolis in Athens. It was originally created in 1857 and got its contemporary look in 1955. It became a promenade in 2003. The Museum of Acropolis and a quart of luxurious buildings are situated south from it (Mas-sahou 2013). The Dionysiou Areopagitou promenade is an integral part of the so called Great Promenade which starts at the Panatanaikos Stadium (Boulevard de la Reigne Olga) continues to St Paul's Promenade and the merchant zone in Ermou Street (Unification of Archaeological Sites of Athens 2016).

When visiting a city, tourists mainly visit the central pedestrian zone, as in the case of Knez Mihailova Street and Dionisiou Areopagitou's promenade. Artists who they can come across, even though unintentionally, make impressions on them and form a picture of the city which they will bring home. Artistic practices and their actors, artists as well as recipients of the message, passersby, are seen as a medium for the contemplation of a wider network of social, economic and political relations. There is a question about reception of the artist, art, local and global identities. What do different practices of street art say about us?

People who live in the city are also exposed to the influence of artistic practices which they can encounter while taking relaxing walks. However, people who daily listen, to buskers especially, have a different perception, whether they live in Knez Mihailova Street or come to work there. Colleagues from the Institute of Ethnography SASA who listen to live music on the street every day can testify to that.

Besides street performers/buskers, this research includes a large number of arts, such as visual arts, applied arts, dance, performances, etc. We are in the first place interested in those art practices where the artists are present. So, in this phase of the research we do not investigate graffiti or applied arts objects if the seller is not the artist. In some cases, works are created in front of the eyes of passers-by, as crochet hand works in Knez Mihailova Street Souvenirs are an especially complex theme since they represent certain materialized memories. The question is which souvenirs tourists purchase when they wish to have something to remember Belgrade and Serbia/Athens and Greece by. Or what things people from Belgrade/Athens give their guests to remember them by. There is a wide range of things, from those sold by artists themselves to those which were made industrially. There are also artefacts with the folklore, religious, historical and political symbolism. Thus, someone might want to remember a visit to Belgrade by a jumper from Sirogojno, a T-shirt with the image of Putin or Tesla or handmade earrings. There are those who would buy a painting or a graphic.

It is very important to investigate spatial mobility of the artist, the influence of migrations, both internal and external, multiculturalism. Artists who work on the street are also „displayed“ in a way. There is a connection between them and passers-by, the audience, and mutual feedback effects. While comparing the situation on the ground and doing detailed in-depth research we will try to look at world's global macro processes through the events on micro level.

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