ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Remote Spatial Investigations: Constructing the Virtual Map of Belgrade

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• Abstract (300 words):
In this paper we will present our experiences from teaching remotely the Borders&Territories (B&T) MSc2 design studio at TU Delft Faculty of Architecture in the 2020 Spring semester. Particularly, we will emphasize the clear distinction between the primordial intent of a studio set in Belgrade before the COVID-19 pandemic, and ultimate results achieved using “remote” research and pedagogical methods imposed by the circumstances.

Originally, the studio was set up to investigate *in situ* a set of trajectories through the city where an array of highly contested spatial conditions can be encountered. The focus of attention in these *actual long walks* supposed to be the spatial manifestation of the ongoing urban transformation of Belgrade, as well as the overall radicality of the border conditions in the city's fabric—mapped with the immediacy, precision, factuality and tangibility of being “on-the-ground”.

Under the current circumstances related to the corona virus, however, such walks had to be made from a distance, online and a little more haphazardly. Students therefore conducted “virtual” walks (so-called “virtual dérive sections”), using digital means (such
as Google Earth) to traverse locations in the urban fabric where tensions have mounted and conflictuous juxtapositions have emerged. In the exercise titled “Walking of Virtual Dérive Trajectories”, students engaged into distant investigations of complex spatial relationships, by scanning and charting the conditions and spatial practices where a variety of spatial regimes are superimposed. With this form of architectural experimentation, B&T studio tried to give answer whether these “remotely detected” spatial conditions can still be the starting point of an architectural design intervention?

The ultimate results of the studio showcase that this, indeed, is possible (Fig. 1). This “distanced gaze” revealed other aspects of Belgrade, namely, an even more distant, observant interpretation of the city. Even as not-informed, or rather, “remotely” informed “readers” of Belgrade, who had almost nothing to confirm, resist, challenge, critique, or verify our readings, we had the opportunity to introduce the engaged look of an outsider to reflect on the current state of affairs in Belgrade. This trailblazing pedagogical approach employed by the B&T program therefore offers valuable insights that can serve as a template for similar situations in the future.

Fig. 1 - The Collective Virtual Map of Belgrade

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Aleksandar Staničić is an architect and Assistant Professor at TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, the Chair for Methods and Analysis. Previously he was a Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at TU Delft, research scholar at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies, Columbia University, and postdoctoral fellow at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. Aleksandar’s work stems from two book projects, *War Diaries: Design after the Destruction of Art and Architecture* (coeditor, University of Virginia Press, 2020) and *Transition urbicide: Post-war reconstruction in post-socialist Belgrade* (sole author, forthcoming). His is recipient of multiple grants and
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