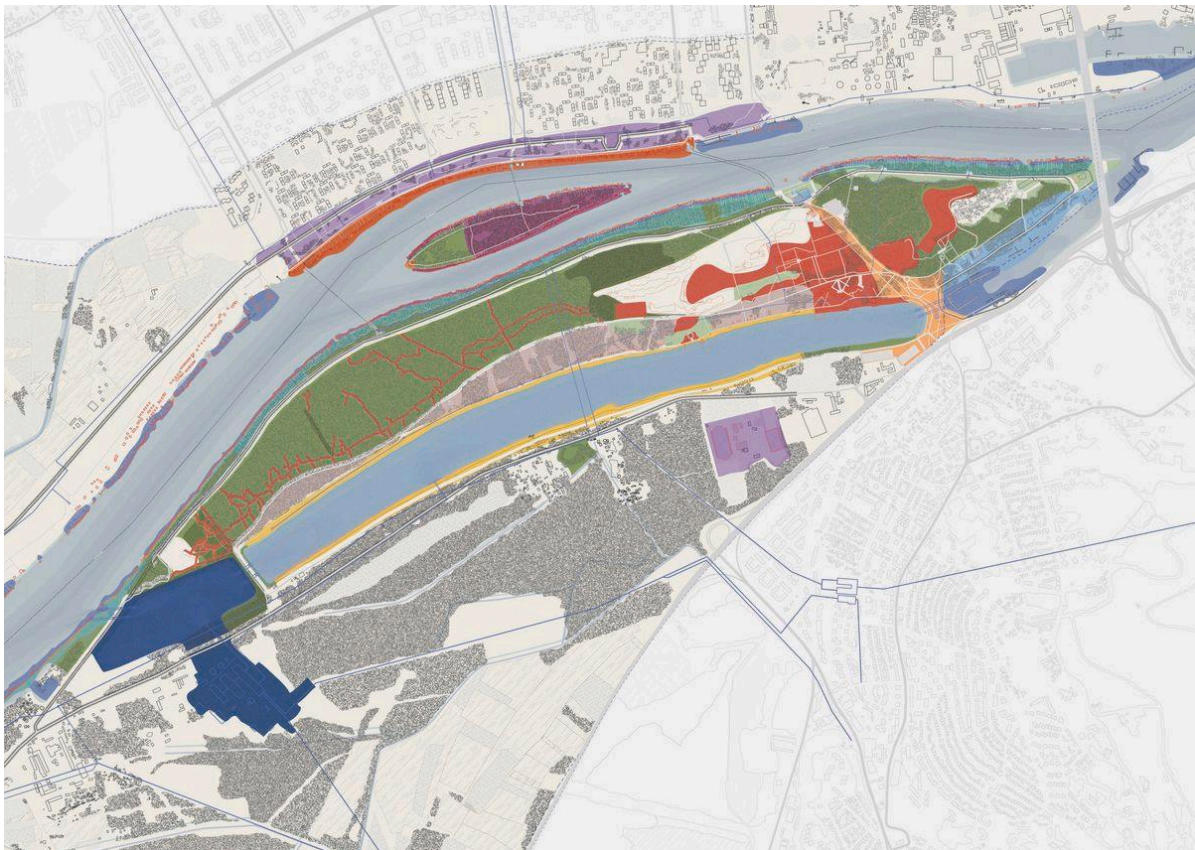


Ada Ciganlija & Ada Medica

# Sava Islands: Expanding Public Water Banks

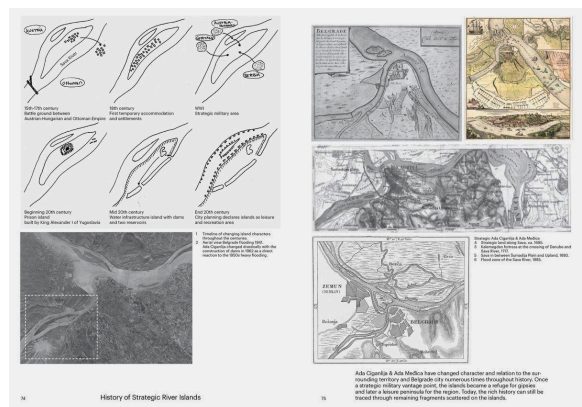
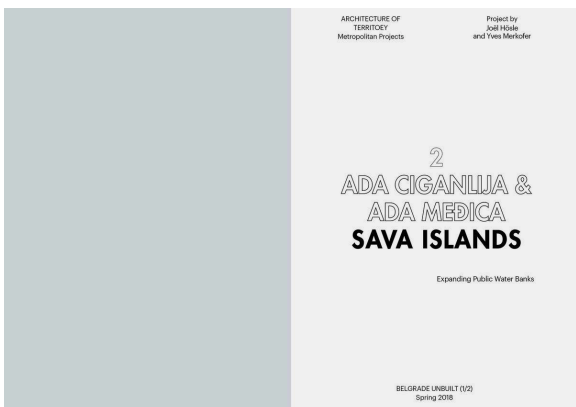
Joel Höfle and Yves Merkofer

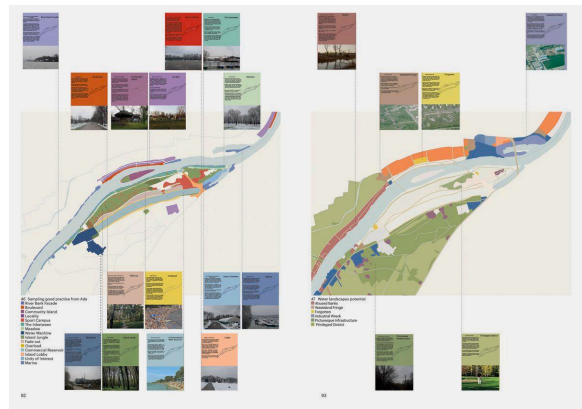
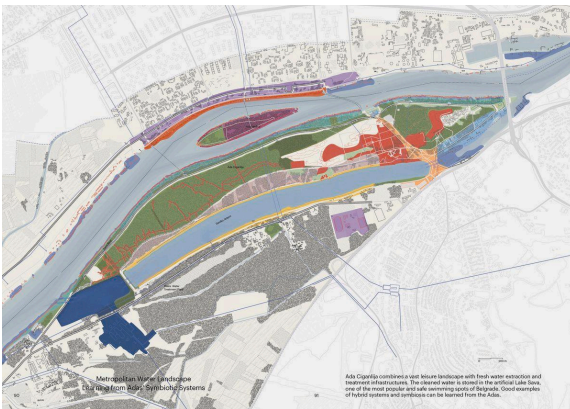
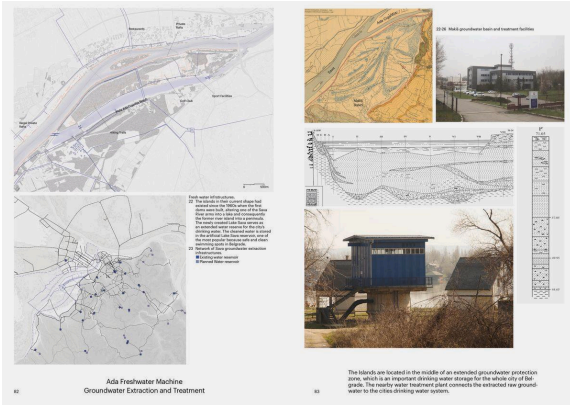
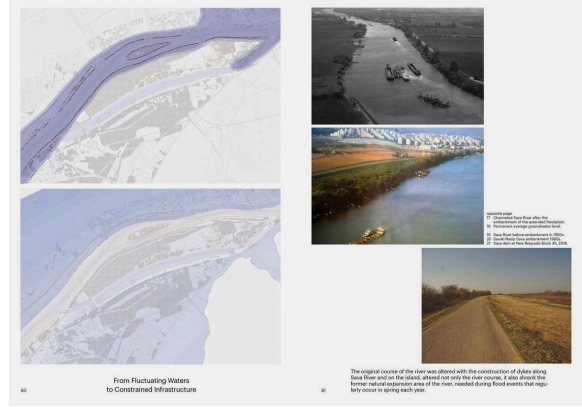
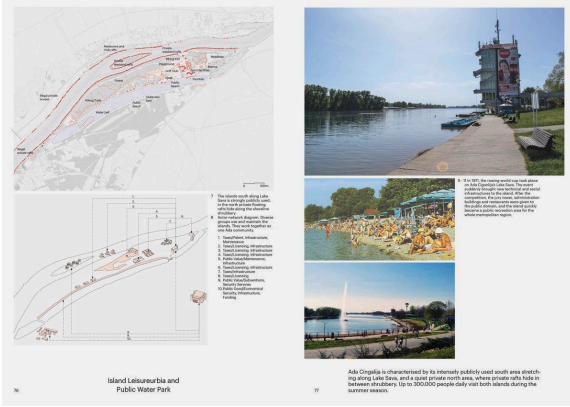


Originally popular among fishers and first inhabited by Romani nomads, the nature-made islands in the Sava River has had a turbulent history, from strategic access points to the city and prison during wartimes to a wild borderland and occasional scenic retreat for bohemian citizens. The island's microclimate allows for high air humidity resulting in lower temperatures during summer, so it is no surprise that its beaches became increasingly popular among the citizens. Connected artificially with the mainland in the second half of the 20th century it is now one of Belgrade's most prominent recreational areas and the city's drinking water reserve at the same time. Dams were built to create two basins for the water treatment systems. The constructed lakes were nicknamed "More Beograda," the Belgrade Sea, turning the island into a hub for mass sporting activity boasting beaches, swimming pools, sports facilities, hotels, a golf course, bars, restaurants, nightclubs, and a small marina. Surrounded by gravel beaches and leisure facilities, it is also one of the most popular recreational areas. Managed by the municipal government via the public enterprise "Ada Ciganlija," most of the island is owned by the public authorities. Some private entities administer businesses and recreation facilities, such as the golf course.

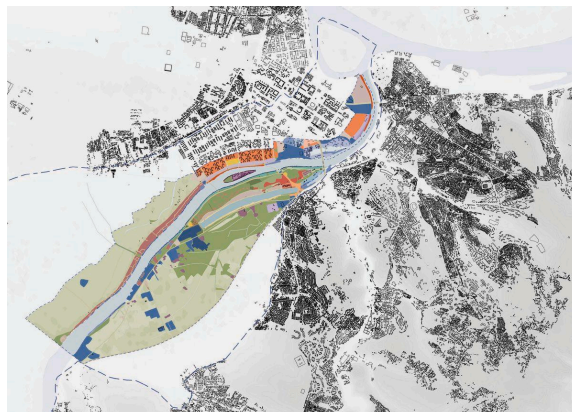
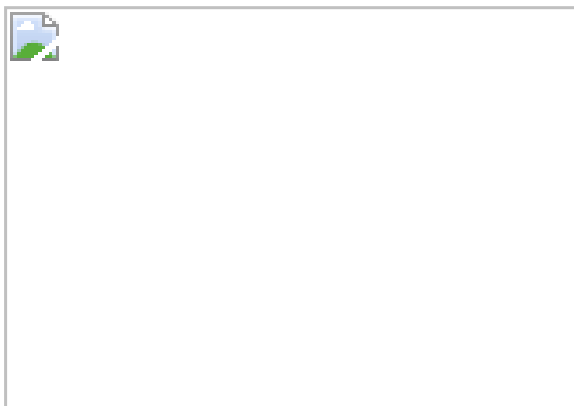


The northern shore is lined with attached floating barges or houses on the water owned by inhabitants of Belgrade as a weekend refuge. Many city dwellers come here regularly to enjoy fishing excursions, picnics, or barbecues. The smaller Ada Medica is lined with similar weekend houses on stilts but managed autonomously by the community of inhabitants instead. Self-established guidelines such as the limited size of structures, the shared solar electricity panels, or the drinking water connections keep this island functioning without public infrastructure. On the other hand, Ada Medica is prone to frequent flooding since the city authorities deem a fortification of the shoreline not to be profitable enough. The project Sava Islands: Expanding Public Water Banks explores how protective land uses can be expanded to create hybrid landscapes of leisure, water treatment, and nature protection. By comparing the two systems of organisation, formal and informal, we raised the question of how to manage a public asset for the benefit of all users and the environment.





The project aims to transform the river bank and adjacent fabric to adapt to unpredictable climate change-related natural hazard events. Good examples of land use and organisation, learned by studying Ada Ciganlija & Ada Međica, will spread to the surrounding riverbanks forming a vast river bank landscape composed of Seasonal Wetlands, Garden Colonies, a Water Park, a Water Forest and the Zeitgeist Meadow on Ada Ciganlija. The new extended landscape will comprise publicly accessible and communally maintained recreational spaces that simultaneously protect the groundwater reserve.



**Sava Zeitgeist Meadow**  
 The Ada Golf Park operates like an exclusive club, separated from the rest of the peninsula. Build on public land and harmful to the groundwater, the project reclaims the area as a public biodiverse dry meadow. The public field is maintained without fertiliser reflecting the current Zeitgeist of ecological awareness.

**Abused Banks To Seasonal Wetlands**  
 Illegal buildings and landfills destroy the natural meadowlands of the Sava Riverbank (Savski Nasip area). The basin's groundwater level is exceptionally high, creating a natural wetland. Through a path system of light structures, starting at the fringe of New Belgrade, a boulevard along the Sava Riverbank will be extended with into the seasonal wetlands. Belgrade's people will experience the water seasonality and fluctuations, bringing public attention to the site, protecting the land from further illegal intrusion.

**Wasteland Fringe to New Belgrade Garden Colony**  
 West of Block 71, New Belgrade is growing further into the Sava water basin. In the urban fringe situation, illegal structures and waste dumping turns the valuable land into wasteland. Some of the new Belgrade citizens have already started to turn parts of the land into small allotment gardens. Expanding on this idea and learning from the community principle of Špilavkov culture, the future New Belgrade Garden Colony supports biodiversity and increases public interest.

**Pictureesque Infrastructure to Water Forest**  
 Makii area's protected forest hosts most of the water treatment-related infrastructures like underground pipes and high voltage land lines, and forest aisles cut through the woods for access and maintenance. The geometrical wood clearings remind of baroque gardens, referencing Andre le Nôtre, and extended to the city fabric. New public entry points provide access to Belgrade's new Water Forest Park.

**Reactivating the forgotten Water Park**  
 The abandoned park leaves concrete structures and surfaces between residential blocks and the riverbank, currently separating both entities. Reactivating the site allows water to enter again into the residential area, offering new water experiences for the neighbourhood, while providing space for the river to expand during seasonal flood events.

**Connecting Shipyard Green**  
 The old shipyard remains since the 1990s an empty industrial site, mainly used today for illegal or alternative uses. Reactivating the space for citizens will allow a continuous promenade along the riverbank of new Belgrade. The industrial heritage and structures of the site will be used to create temporary public designs and still be used as boat storage during winter offering new water experiences for the neighbourhood, while

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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