

Case study ID

SR_01

BLOCK 19A

CASE STUDY SHORT SUMMARY REPORT

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BLOCK 19A

Case Study at a Glance

Block 19A, a residential neighborhood in New Belgrade, occupies a highly valued and well-connected urban location. On December 16, 2023, the Republic Directorate for Property of the Republic of Serbia publicly announced the sale of a parcel of land within Block 19A, establishing January 15, 2024, as the deadline for submitting bids. Prior to the announcement, the localized planning process had not included public consultations or community engagement initiatives regarding the future development of this specific parcel.

In response to the public notice, the community of Block 19A mobilized during the mid-winter holiday period, demonstrating local community resilience. Residents quickly organized to express their unified opposition to the potential conversion of this open space into a commercial development. This rapid response highlighted the community's commitment to preserving the neighborhood's existing green infrastructure. Ultimately, this proactive and unified grassroots initiative underscored the importance of establishing a collaborative platform where residents actively participate in local urban planning and land-use decisions.

This report was prepared by the team of the University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica within the UPRUN project. The team of the University of Priština in Kosovska Mitrovica is responsible for the content and the accuracy of the statements presented in this report.

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Case Study Profile

Topic

- ☐ Community Gardening & Urban Agriculture
- ☐ Community Hubs & Cultural Activities
- ☒ Urban Design & Planning Processes
- ☒ Public Space Development & Management
- ☐ Local Economic Development
- ☐ Urban Regeneration & Rehabilitation

Scale

- ☐ Metropolitan / city region
- ☐ City scale
- ☒ Neighbourhood scale
- ☒ Block scale
- ☐ Building scale

Resilience Challenge

- ☒ Environmental and ecological resilience
- ☐ Social & cultural resilience
- ☐ Infrastructure and technological resilience
- ☐ Economic & livelihood resilience

Duration

- ☒ Immediate (less than 1 month)
- ☐ Project-Based (1–12 months)
- ☐ Programme-Based (1–3 years)
- ☐ Strategic (3–5 years)
- ☐ Structural / Transformative (more than 5 years)

Stakeholders

- ☒ Community members
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- ☐ Private sector
- ☐ Academic and research institutions

Type of Civic Engagement Supporting Neighborhood Resilience

- ☒ Resident-led and grassroots initiatives
- ☐ Collaborative planning projects or processes
- ☐ Advocacy and capacity building
- ☐ Volunteer and community service projects
- ☒ Short-term, more flexible project-based engagement
- ☐ Long-term, more institutionalized engagement (development of stable structures, etc.)
- ☒ Protest and resistance mobilization
- ☐ Art-and culture-based civic Engagement

Level of Civic Participation

- ☒ Information
- ☐ Involvement or participation
- ☒ Collaboration or co-creation
- ☐ Empowerment
- ☒ Resistance and protest-based empowerment

Empirical Basis and Methodological Approach

The Block 19A case study analyzes the rapid, grassroots mobilization of a New Belgrade neighborhood community in response to an unexpected public notice to sell a vital 7485m² open green parcel for commercial development. By utilizing digital networks and conducting an intensive four-day signature drive, the residents successfully forced the immediate cancellation of the sale notice, transitioning their collective momentum from a defensive stance into a proactive, long-term stewardship platform for neighborhood-scale ecological preservation.

The research methodology underpinning the Block 19A case study integrates several complementary approaches to ensure a comprehensive and multi-layered evaluation. Data collection commenced with a thorough analysis of data sources and materials, including archival data, public records, planning documents, newspaper articles, institutional website posts, and social media content. Newspaper articles allowed us to reconstruct the chronology of events and understand how Block 19A was publicly framed. Institutional website posts were analyzed to review formal decisions regarding the Block 19A land parcel, as well as to evaluate institutional willingness and active involvement in resolving the issue. Finally, social media posts from public Block 19A profiles (encompassing calls to action, petitions, photographs, and narrative updates, alongside printed material such as posters and pamphlets disseminated throughout the neighborhood) helped us understand the perspective, scope and methods utilized by residents in their campaign to preserve vital neighborhood green space.

To supplement documentary evidence with physical and spatial context, the desk-based research was paired with on-site field visits to the Block 19A location. This allowed for direct observation of the environmental, infrastructural and urban conditions of the contested parcel. Furthermore, to gain a deeper understanding of community perception, local solidarity, and the grassroots connectivity fostered during the mobilization, we conducted an in-depth qualitative interview with a Block 19A neighborhood resident. This first-hand account provided valuable insights into how residents perceived institutional barriers and how the collective petition-signing action successfully transitioned from a defensive stance against land privatization to a proactive, collaborative urban greening initiative. Ultimately, the comparative triangulation of empirical data streams, field observations, and qualitative testimony allowed for an in-depth analysis of the local community's spatial resilience.

Compendious summary

Introduction

Block 19A, a residential neighborhood in the highly sought-after area of New Belgrade, occupies a prime strategic location. Its boundaries are clearly defined by the E-75 highway, Milentija Popovića Street, and Vladimira Popovića Street. Furthermore, the block benefits from close proximity to both the Sava River, lying a mere 500 meters away, and the iconic Gazela Bridge.

Since 2004, the area has undergone considerable changes, marked by the new construction of several buildings. Specifically, two office buildings, each towering with nine or more floors, have been erected. In addition to these commercial structures, four new residential buildings have also been added to the landscape. These developments collectively represent a significant alteration to the neighborhood's original urban and architectural character from the 1970s. Prior to these land transactions, the localized planning process did not feature direct public consultations or formal notification channels for local residents. This procedural gap in early-stage community engagement has subsequently coincided with a number of significant challenges for the neighborhood's existing infrastructure systems. These challenges include, but are not limited to, a noticeable and growing scarcity of available parking spaces, increased instances of flooding along the edges of the block and in the area beneath the Gazela Bridge, and a persistent sewage odor emanating from a system not originally scaled to manage the increased volume resulting from the newly constructed buildings.

Mirroring earlier cases, the Republic Directorate for Property of the Republic of Serbia publicly announced the sale of an additional land parcel within Block 19A on December 16, 2023. The deadline for submitting offers was set for January 15, 2024. The scheduling of this public notice during the mid-winter holiday period structurally limited public scrutiny and awareness, as community attention is typically focused on seasonal celebrations and travel.

The case study delves into the concept of social resilience at the neighborhood level, specifically examining how the community of Block 19A in New Belgrade responded to significant environmental and infrastructural challenges posed by the proposed sale of a land parcel within their immediate vicinity. The investigation highlights the proactive and organized efforts undertaken by the residents when faced with external pressures threatening their living environment.

The pivotal moment and central action of the Block 19A case was the successful withdrawal of the contested Sale Notice for the aforementioned land parcel. This significant achievement was spearheaded entirely by the local community, demonstrating their collective agency and determination. The initiative not only secured a crucial victory but also effectively fostered heightened resident engagement throughout the process. This was achieved through transparent and consistent information sharing, which kept all community members informed, and through robust collaborative efforts that united diverse residents under a common cause. Ultimately, the sustained engagement served to showcase the

community's profound commitment and active involvement in shaping the future and preserving the integrity of their cherished neighborhood.

Neighborhood challenge

Block 19A, officially designated as a “valuable modern architectural-urban ensemble”, was constructed between 1978 and 1982. The buildings within this neighborhood are characterized by their unique architectural expression, which today represents significant examples of 20th-century heritage architecture in Belgrade. The layout of Block 19A is notably irregular, shaped by its surrounding streets. Unique among New Belgrade neighborhoods, the buildings within Block 19A are positioned diagonally. This distinctive design choice was purposefully influenced by microclimate conditions and dominant wind patterns, aiming to optimize environmental comfort. Furthermore, all buildings are set back significantly from the adjacent highway, a strategic urban planning measure intended to minimize traffic noise and maximize residential tranquility and comfort.

Another key feature of the Block 19A design is the deliberate separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Building entrances are thoughtfully elevated above ground level, with dedicated pedestrian walkways traversing the central part of the neighborhood. These walkways are equipped with benches, providing resting spots, and a prominent sports court occupies the central area, serving as a hub for recreational activities. Additionally, a children's playground and outdoor exercise equipment are conveniently located within the expansive green space on the south side of Block 19A, further enhancing the neighborhood's livability and communal amenities.

The key urban indicators of Block 19A in its original state, prior to the construction of subsequently built residential buildings, are presented in the table below.

Table 1: Key urban indicators of Block 19A (source: Journal Urbanizam Beograda 49, 1978)

Indicator	Value
Residential area of the neighborhood	9,112 ha
Area under residential buildings	1,594 ha
Free area with pedestrian paths	5,046 ha
Traffic surfaces	2,472 ha
Total residential built-up area	91 000 m ²
Garage area	21 000 m ²
Number of apartments	915
Number of residents	3200
Population density	312 residents/ha
Average building height (in floors)	5,7

The primary neighborhood-level challenge that spurred the civic initiative described in this case study is the potential reduction of green spaces due to proposed new construction, which would further burden the block's infrastructure and directly contribute to increased local pollution.

Response to the challenge

The civic initiative in Block 19A was directly spurred by a significant neighborhood-level challenge: the proposed sale of a land parcel for the construction of a new mixed-use commercial and residential building. A new development would have reduced the block's open green space, further altering its existing infrastructure and potentially increasing localized environmental pressures. In response, the local residents established a clear and focused goal: to prevent the sale of the specific parcel in Block 19A and, by extension, to preserve the existing green spaces within the neighborhood.

On December 16, 2023, the Republic Directorate for Property of the Republic of Serbia published Announcement No. 38, advertising the sale of a substantial 7485 m² public land parcel within New Belgrade. Upon learning of the sale, the administrators of the official Block 19A community social media page promptly posted the announcement on December 17, 2023. This initial step allowed residents to receive the information, share immediate comments, and offer suggestions over the following two weeks, demonstrating the utility of digital communication networks in rapid community awareness.

Immediately after the winter holidays, a grassroots campaign was launched. From January 4 to 7, 2024, residents organized the distribution and posting of informational posters at building entrances while simultaneously conducting a large-scale signature collection effort in the central pedestrian areas of the neighborhood and at building entrances. This intensive four-day drive successfully garnered 1300 signatures in support of a formal appeal against the sale of the parcel.

The core of the residents' opposition was articulated in a detailed formal request submitted to various local and national authorities. The key points of this appeal included:

- An urgent request to cancel the public advertisement;
- A challenging valuation – highlighting that the starting price did not reflect the broader socio-environmental value of losing one of the neighborhood's primary open green spaces;
- Questioning land use designation – noting that while the parcel was designated as a commercial zone for educational purposes in the General Regulation Plan for Belgrade, local residents had not been actively engaged during its public display or adoption phases;
- Concerns regarding construction scale – expressing apprehension that the land-use designation could facilitate a large-scale commercial project rather than low-rise public infrastructure, thereby altering the architectural-urban integrity of Block 19A and degrading the immediate residential environment;
- Procedural concerns. The request detailed several arguments reinforcing community reservations, including: 1) the adoption of the General Regulation Plan without resident participation; 2) the absence of state or municipal entities as the primary investors on public land; 3) the sale price being perceived as below market value relative to the neighborhood's historical real estate patterns; 4) the procedural choice of closed bids rather than a public auction; and 5) scheduling of the bidding process during a major holiday period, which residents argued limited broader public awareness and mobilization;

- Stated long-term objective. Residents declared categorical opposition to any development not serving the explicit public interest, expressing an intent to instead implement community-led tree-planting initiatives on the site;
- Historical and architectural value – emphasizing Block 19A’s reputation as an integrated modern urban space and its historical planning as a protected architectural entity, designed alongside the neighboring Block 23. The appeal also referenced prior commercial infill projects in the southern part of Block 19A that had already induced infrastructural strain;
- Broader environmental considerations – warning of potential localized microclimate consequences, particularly regarding air quality and the creation of urban heat islands;
- Alternative spatial proposals – presenting a community-supported alternative to develop an “ecological buffer zone” on the contested land to mitigate environmental pollution;
- Direct institutional appeal – calling for the Republic Directorate for Property to annul Public Notice No. 38 and recommending that the City of Belgrade acquire the parcel for public use to align with environmental protection goals and preserve Block 19A’s architectural heritage.

The request concluded with an expression of hope for a prompt response and was signed on behalf of citizens of Block 19A. The appeal was strategically submitted to a wide array of key institutions, including the Office of the President, the Prime Minister, the Republic Directorate for Property, the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure, the Mayor of Belgrade, the Chief Urbanist, the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade, and the President of the New Belgrade Municipality.

Concurrently with the institutional submissions, residents engaged local media. On January 8, 2024, the daily newspaper *Politika* published an article detailing the initiative, incorporating substantial portions of the community’s formal text. This media coverage elevated public awareness, provided a transparent platform for community concerns, and reinforced the visibility of the initiative.

The immediate outcome of the combined mobilization was recorded on January 9, 2024, when media portal *E-kapija* and the official website of the Republic Directorate for Property of Serbia confirmed that the public notice for the land sale had been officially canceled. A follow-up article published by *Politika* on January 10, 2024, documented the cancellation, validating the efficacy of the collective civic response in preserving the contested neighborhood space.

Mechanisms of civic engagement

The Block 19A case demonstrates the dynamics of informal, localized activism when navigating top-down urban planning decisions. Citizen engagement encompassed a multi-pronged approach: systematically informing residents about the impending land sale, efficiently organizing a large-scale signature drive to request the annulment of the public notice, and strategically publishing critical information in the prominent daily newspaper *Politika*. This collective action, driven independently by local residents at the neighborhood level, highlights a noticeable gap in formalized mechanisms for early-stage citizen involvement in broader urban development processes.

The circumstances surrounding Block 19A initiative presented significant structural challenges. Due to the limited timeframe imposed by the bidding deadline, further compounded by the concurrent winter holiday period, participation was necessarily concentrated among residents at the immediate neighborhood level. Despite the temporal constraints, the community response proved highly effective.

Following the swift annulment of the sale notice, the nature of the community engagement evolved. A new initiative was promptly established with representatives of the Municipality of New Belgrade, shifting the community's focus from a defensive stance toward the proactive improvement and preservation of the neighborhood's existing green spaces. The transition underscores the community's capacity to move beyond immediate crisis response toward long-term stewardship.

The outcome of Block 19A case can be attributed to the community's rapid, large-scale, and highly organized mobilization in response to the administrative decision to sell the parcel. The collective action ultimately led to the withdrawal of the public notice. Crucially, throughout the process, consistent information sharing supported a high degree of internal social cohesion and democratic participation within the neighborhood.

Case study findings and lessons learned

The efficient and rapid self-organization of residents at the neighborhood level, despite compressed timeframes and challenging temporal conditions, demonstrates the capacity of local communities to actively safeguard localized urban heritage against external real estate pressures. A primary lesson from the Block 19A case is that effective, transparent communication networks are crucial to the speed and success of grassroots spatial mobilization. While this specific initiative did not result in immediate structural or innovative spatial transformations, it highlights a critical systemic vulnerability: the disconnect between statutory urban planning mechanisms and early-stage citizen engagement, a gap that exists independently of economic constraints. Ultimately, institutional decision-makers halted further action on the parcel sale upon recognizing the high degree of internal community cohesion and the residents' readiness to pursue formal administrative and legal remedies. The positive outcome underscores the idea that community resilience is not only reactive, but can serve as a catalyst for re-evaluating top-down spatial interventions.

Conclusion

The Block 19A case study demonstrates the efficacy of community engagement and neighborhood resilience when navigating rapid spatial interventions. It highlights how residents achieved swift, large-scale organization, mobilizing effectively despite compressed timeframes and complex situational constraints.

Similar to other localized initiatives, the Block 19A case underscores the critical need for formal urban planning frameworks and municipal policies to align with the perceptions, lived experiences and needs of local communities. Currently, these grassroots actions rarely result in structural modifications to urban

policy. It is, therefore, imperative to integrate community representatives into the urban planning process from its inception. Early-stage public integration ensures the comprehensive evaluation of all stakeholder interests, facilitating co-creative, balanced spatial solutions that prioritize the well-being of both the immediate neighborhood and the wider urban ecosystem.

The replicable aspect of the Block 19A case lies in the community's agile, highly efficient organizational structure and its unified approach to advocating for localized spatial needs. The adaptive capacity and collective action offer a valuable framework for other urban communities navigating comparable spatial and infrastructural challenges.

Attachments

References

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Republička direkcija za imovinu. Oglas br. 38 o otuđenju neizgrađenog građevinskog zemljišta u javnoj svojini Republike Srbije radi izgradnje, putem prikupljanja pismenih ponuda, koji se objavljuje dana 16.12. u dnevnom listu Alo. Available online:

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Photos



Figure 1: Block 19A, showing the parcel in question (purple) and the area where numerous residential and commercial buildings have been constructed since 2004 (red) (Map Data: Google Earth Pro © Airbus 2025)

Комшије из Блока 19а против продаје ливаде и њене урбанизације

Комшије из Блока 19а не желе урбанизацију ливаде испод својих прозора. Зато ће од данас и наредна три дана да скупљају потписе код продавнице „Шоп снд го“ од 18 до 19 часова против изградње комерцијалних садржаја на парцели од 7.485 квадратних метара уз Улицу Владимира Поповића, а прекопута Сава центра, раздваја их Булевар Арсенија Чарнојевића (ауто-пут), коју је Републичка дирекција за имовину (РДИ) прошлог месеца огласила на продају. То земљиште је у јавној својини Србије, а у огласу о отуђењу парцеле РДИ је навео да је реч о неизграђеном грађевинском земљишту.

Тај плац налази се у површинама осталих намена зона комерцијалних садржаја у служби образовања у оквиру које се могу планирати приватне предшколске установе, основне школе, средњошколске и високошколске уста-

не средине у урбаном језгру, водећи рачуна о Блоку 19а као архитектонско-урбанистичкој целини”.

– Блок 19а познат је као „зелена оаза у центру града”. Уз суседни Блок 23 и Блок 19а планиран је да буде заштићена урбанистичко-архитектонска целина као награђивани пројекат нашег познатог архитекте и академика проф. др Милана Лојанице и његових колега проф. др Предрага Цагића, Боривоја Јовановића и Радисава Марића. Са јужне стране блока на почетку Улице Милутина Миланковића већ су изграђене пословне зграде и стамбени комплекс „Парк апартмани”, управо на зеленој површини значајних димензија, чиме је урбанистичка целина блока већ у приличној мери нарушена и што је изазвало инфраструктурне проблеме са којима становници блока већ свакодневно живе (као што је недостатак паркинг-места,

Реч је о парцели од 7.485 квадрата преко пута Сава центра коју је држава прошлог месеца огласила на продају и на којој би могли да се зидају комерцијални садржаји



Станари не желе бетонирање „њиховог” пољанчета

нове, уз обавезу израде урбанистичког пројекта, пише у огласу о отуђењу тог земљишта Републичке дирекције за имовину.

Комшије тврде да нису знале да је намена њихове ливаде за коју кажу да је зелена оаза и тампон зона од превеликог саобраћајног загађења промењена и не желе да им се тај „зелени зид” са 50 великих и 70 малих стабала одузме.

– Око нашег блока постоје четири ливаде и оне су наш спас будући да живимо уз малтене сами ауто-пут и у близини изузетно фреквентног саобраћаја. Та ливада која се сада полаје место је где се деца играју, а ми одрасли дружимо. Немамо појма шта би ту могло да се зида, али шта год да се планира ми ћемо дати све од себе да то спречимо. Не можемо ни да замислимо да будемо опкољени још неким вишеспратницама и бетоном – каже за наш лист Марија Тодоровић, једна од станарки Блока 19а које су окупљене око неформалне групе „Комшије Блока 19а”.

Сви они захтевају да се по хитном поступку обустави продаја ливаде и у апелу, између осталог, траже да РДИ поништи поступак отуђења тих 75 ари земљишта, а да град размотри све могућности за преузимање односно откуп те катастарске парцеле коју би потом „могао уредити у јавном интересу грађана и у складу са заштитом живот-

појава поплавних вода по ободу блока и испод моста „Га-зела” и несносан смрад из канализације која очигледно није пројектована тако да подржи и новонастале објекте). Изградња на предместној локацији имала би далекосежне последице на домаћој и међународној мали Србије због квалитета ваздуха код Сава центра. То је, уз Мостарску петљу, црна тачка нашег града, место највећег загађења, а укидање значајне зелене површине под садницама у овом делу градског језгра директно представља кршење Агенде 2030 Уједињених нација, чије принципе Влада РС истиче као национални приоритет – наведено је у апелу у који је „Политика” имала увид.

Спорна парцела продаје се прикупљањем писаних, затворених понуда, а критеријум за оцењивање понуда биће највиша понуђена цена по квадратном метру. Продајна документација моћи ће да се преузме у просторијама РДИ-ја у Улици краља Милана 16 до 9. јануара. Учесник у поступку који преузме продајну документацију дужан је да депозит уплати до 11. јануара, а понуду да достави до 15. јануара на писарници Републичке дирекције за имовину у Добрињској 11. У огласу нигде није наведено када ће Комисија за прикупљање понуда за отуђење неизграђеног грађевинског земљишта у јавној својини Републике Србије отворити пристигле понуде.

Д. Мучибабић

Figure 2: The article “The neighbors from Block 19A against meadow sale and urbanization”, published in daily newspaper “Politika” on 08 January 2024.

Парцела у Блоку 19а није на продају

Републичка дирекција за имовину која је прошлог месеца огласила отуђење земљишта од око 75 ари прекопута Сава центра јуче поништила оглас, разлог непознат

Шест дана уочи рока за достављање писаних захтева за отуђење парцеле од 7.485 квадратних метара у јавној својини у новобеоградском Блоку 19а Републичка дирекција за имовину (РДИ) јуче је поништила оглас који је објавила средином прошлог месеца. Реч је о продаји плаца (зелене површине) који се налази у површинама осталих намена зона комерцијалних садржаја

понуђача за отуђење неизграђеног грађевинског земљишта у јавној својини Републике Србије ради изградње, посредством прикупљања писмених понуда – наведено је на интернет страници Републичке дирекције за имовину.

Јуче је био и последњи дан када су потенцијални купци могли да преузму пролајну документацију, а од свих рокова у вези са продајом тог земљишта уз Улицу Владимира Поповића и пре-

потписе против било какве изградње на једној од четири ливале, зелене површине, испред наших зграда. Припремили смо и апел који ћемо ових дана упутити надлежним градским и републичким институцијама јер не желимо да се за пет или десет година понови овакав оглас. Захтевамо да се промени намена тог земљишта и да буде јавна и зелена – истиче Марија Тодоровић, станарка Блока 19а која се придружила бројним комшијама у борби да заштити



Фото Д. Мучибабић

За житеље Блока 19а који су претходних дана устали против продаје парцеле за коју кажу да је њихова ливада и штит од близине ауто-пута и превеликог загађења поништај огласа је неочекивана, али и добра вест

у служби образовања у оквиру које се могу планирати приватне предшколске установе, основне школе, средњошколске и високошколске установе, уз обавезу израде урбанистичког пројекта. Шта је разлог за овакву одлуку РДИ-ја није познато нити је у документу – поништај огласа – који је објављен на званичном сајту ове институције наведено било шта што би потенцијално указало на овај потез.

– Овим огласом поништава се у целисти оглас број 38 за спровођење поступка избора најповољнијег

копута Сава центра, раздваја их Булевар Арсенија Чарнојевића (ауто-пут), у огласу из децембра прошле године није било наведено када ће понуде бити отворене. За житеље Блока 19а који су претходних дана устали против продаје парцеле за коју кажу да је њихова ливада и штит од близине ауто-пута и превеликог загађења поништај огласа је неочекивана, али и добра вест.

– Нисмо се надали да ће оглас бити поништен и све то је и даље под велом неке тајне. Како било, ми пратимо ситуацију и настављамо да прикупљамо

те, како кажу, зелену оазу са 120 стаба-ла која су житељи тог дела Новог Београда тик уз „Газелу“ посадили.

У апелу су, између осталог, навели да траже да РДИ поништи поступак отуђења око 75 ари земљишта, а да град размотри све могућности за преузимање, односно откуп те катастарске парцеле коју би потом „могао уредити у јавном интересу грађана и у складу са заштитом животне средине у урбаном језгру, водећи рачуна о Блоку 19а као архитектонско-урбанистичкој целини“.

Д. Мучибабић

Figure 3: The article “Parcel in Block 19A not on sale”, published in in daily newspaper “Politika” on 10 January 2024. (digital article available online at: <https://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/593553/Parcela-u-Bloku-19a-nije-na-prodaju>)

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