

Aleksandar Bede

## AIR – Artist in Residence Report



The duration of my residency at AIR Krems was two months (January – February 2015). I have used this time to meet the local context of Krems as much as possible, in institutional and spatial terms. Besides that, I have engaged in spontaneous collaborations with other artists that have been residents at AIR at the same time as me. I found this period (2 months) to be optimal for getting to know the place and collect the material for a “light” research project.

Since my initial proposal was to engage in investigation of the river aspect of this place, I have spent much time walking and cycling along the river, trying to grasp what are the specific issues that Krems has relating to the Danube. As a major international river, the Danube has its place in many local and international narratives of connectivity and internationality; however the local situation is often very different, since many cities don't really engage with the river. As my residency was in the winter time, the user activity along the river was minimal; however one could also examine the true role of the river in the city's life in the most unattractive season. For example, if one wanted to engage with the river in the warm enclosed public space, there are no options for that, apart from one cafe that might not appeal to younger generations. Further on, I have noticed great spatial contradictions along the river. There are many sports and leisure public amenities; however they are all fenced-off and have a certain alienating appearance, as closed zones for exclusive groups of users. Besides that, the river as a whole is separated from the city by the series of barriers, like motorway, railway, levies and walls. One has an impression that such a situation is mostly not justified and that it is a relic of outdated approach to urban design. Therefore I have decided to map all the barriers along the river, in order to create an atlas of barriers with suggestions about possible solutions to overcome this situation. This will be my contribution for AIR and ORTE.

As I have mentioned, besides working on my research I have been engaging in collaborations with other artists that I have met here at AIR. For example, I have ended up working on a video piece with artists Anca Benera and Arnold Estefan, a piece that in a way combines our common preoccupations with space, society and economy, with the Danube as a major motive. We have been filming the river and the passing ship on several locations, as well as above from the AIR center. Also, I took part in a performance by Maria Chavez, an American sound artist, that took place in the Minoritenkirche. The performance included several of us who were experimenting with sound that is produced when stones are thrown in the acoustic space of the church. The performance will be featured in a video documentary about Maria Chavez. Finally, we went with Italian artists Andrea Caretto and Raffaella Spagna to a river island that was the source of the stone material for their piece Field Works, in order to better understand their approach to working with natural materials and objects found in situ. I think this illustrates best why programs such as AIR Krems are important for artistic practices: the enable, through accidental encounters with fellow artists, to meet each other's work and create a sense of a broader artistic scene thanks to these contacts.



A river situation: empty, fenced off, exclusive