

## IN-BETWEEN PUBLIC SPACES OF POST-SOCIALIST NEIGHBOURHOODS: CASE STUDY OF LIMAN 3 IN NOVI SAD

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**Summary:** *In the period between two world wars, and particularly afterwards the Second World War, Novi Sad had an intensive construction of industrial sites and mass housing neighbourhoods in Liman area. Although the city was faced with serious morphological and functional changes, the most of newly built areas remained without thoughtful set of public spaces. Newly built mass housing neighbourhoods had a particular problem with the lack of public spaces intended for socialization, closed facades without any relation with activities on sidewalks, evident lack of any connection with the Danube River, etc. On the other hand, the post-socialist period has left rich industrial heritage and unused in-between public spaces in this area with potential for reuse. The first industrial zone in Novi Sad, built around the former industrial complex Petar Drapšin in Liman 3, has been abandoned and neglected for decades, until it was reused as space for various public activities compelling Novi Sad in development of cultural and creative resources of the city. The recent development of creative industries through reuse of an abandoned industrial structures highlights the issue of inadequate intermediate public spaces. This research is oriented towards the case study of Liman 3, through observation and valorisation of its in-between public spaces with the potential for reuse, in order to reconsider how a post-socialist legacy can be used in the transformation of such spaces. The aim of the study is take advantage of observed potentials, and to make these spaces suitable as a public stage for the social life of the city through their future development.*

**Keywords:** *public space, space reuse, Liman, Novi Sad*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Physical and functional organization of Novi Sad has been changed through numerous changes, with the most significant transformations of the urban matrix carried out in the period after the Second World War. Demographic changes and spatial expansion in the second half of the 20th century have led to the excessive changes of the urban environment of Novi Sad. The population has progressively increased from 69,407 (1948) to 250,439 (2011), within the urban area of 307,760 inhabitants, and the administrative area of the city with 341,625 inhabitants. [1] Such intense demographic changes and spatial development in co-optation with various political, economic and social influences had created urban image that the city has today.

The post-Second World War era was characterized with the rapid industrialization, the transition of population to the urban areas and evident growth of the cities, including Novi Sad. This period has led to radical changes in society and reorganization of the way in which cities in former socialist Yugoslavia are being built, whereas the urban planning has been seen as “an extended arm of the state, a means of social control and manipulation.” [2] Social framework of cities has changed, and “instrument of authority, rather than any particular form of activity, was the generating force for many towns.” [3] Post-war reconstruction of Novi Sad was characterized with all the features of socialist construction, such as fabricated construction, concrete as building material, rationality, uniform facades, etc. Implementation of the Master Plan of 1950 altered Novi Sad in accordance to the needs for the new urban organization and has caused its morphological and functional changes. Expansion of car traffic has empowered a significant percentage of the urban fabric to the new traffic network, whereas the most of the transport infrastructure was built between 1960s and 1980s. With the construction of the main Liberation Boulevard in the early 1960s, the city has been divided into central part with a compact historical centre, and the “new” part of the city with Liman neighbourhood built in the period after the Second World War.



Figure 1. Historical development of Liman neighbourhood between 1960s-1980s

During the 18th century, area on which Liman was built on was part of wetland area known as *Great Liman*, where the Danube River occasionally poured and deposited large deposits of sand and mud. The construction of a new mass housing neighbourhood has physically changed the area, offering new perspective of the city from the other bank of the river. Economic prosperity during the 1960s created the conditions for construction of Liman neighbourhood (Fig. 1). Whereas the issue of traffic infrastructure

was solved through construction of new roads and boulevards, the lack of housing capacities has been solved through construction of mass housing blocks known as the “dorm rooms” of the city. Construction of Liman has started in the early 1960s, and it developed chronologically from Liman 1 with University campus, to Liman 4 in the 1990s.

## 2. THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE, FUNCTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND THE IDENTITY OF LIMAN 3

Liman is covering the area of ~2.3 km<sup>2</sup>, and it is divided into four neighbourhoods: Liman 1 with University campus, Liman 2, Liman 3, and Liman 4. The analysed area of Liman 3<sup>5</sup> can be divided into three fragments (Fig. 2, centre): 1. Upper belt – dominantly socialist mass housing neighbourhoods; 2. Middle belt – rich industrial heritage set for re-usage; and 3. Lower belt – Green belt and extension on Danube River. Mass housing neighbourhoods (Fig. 2, right, a) mainly have closed structure, uniform number of floors, and similar lifestyle of inhabitants, and with commercial contents (shops, restaurants, coffee bars, etc.) in the ground floors. Particular problems are lack of public spaces and places for socialization, beside Liman Park (Fig. 2, right, c), closed facades without any relation with activities on sidewalks, evident lack of any connection with the Danube River, etc.



Figure 2. Analysed area and its disposition in urban matrix of Novi Sad (left), three parts of studied area (centre) and important buildings and places (right)

Commercial buildings on Liman 3 are mainly located in the eastern part of the settlement (Fig. 2, right, b), and south of the Despot Stefan Boulevard in area known as the Chinese Quarter, while rich industrial heritage in middle belt consists of former industrial complex Petar Drapšin (Fig. 2, right, d), Czech warehouse<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 2, right, e), and old shipyard in vicinity. Recreational zone Fishing Island is located on the south, and it is one of only few extensions of the city on Danube River together with marine (Fig. 2, right, f) and popular public beach Štrand (Fig. 2, right, g).

<sup>5</sup> The case study in this paper includes Liman 3 within the border of Tsar Lazar Boulevard on the north, Balzakova Street on the west, Liberation Boulevard on the east, and the Danube River on the south.

<sup>6</sup> Czech warehouse was used in the 1920s by Czechoslovakian entrepreneurs for storing agricultural products they bought in Vojvodina region before transporting it to the north by the Danube River.

Towns in Vojvodina region are positioned around the buildings of the city administration or the dominant vertical tower of the church in the oldest urban centre, and not around the geometric centre of the settlement. This is resulting in departure of the inhabitants of other parts of the city to the central zone in order to perform the necessary daily activities. On the other hand, Liman neighbourhood, as one of only the few parts of the city that have link with the river bank, is introducing reverse process by attracting inhabitants from other parts of the city with the adjacent Danube River as one of its most important advantages.



*Figure 3. Urban morphology of Liman 3 (up, left), typical mass housing complex (up, centre), characteristics of socialist architecture (up, right), Chinese Quarter (down, left), Czech warehouse (down, centre) and rich industrial heritage (down, right)*

The network of public spaces consists primarily out of streets, squares, and many other entities. This paper explores in-between public spaces of Liman 3, spaces beyond streets and squares, such as inner spaces of the urban blocks, outer/inner courtyards, pedestrian passages, sidewalks and communications, premises/intermediate spaces of buildings, beaches, parks, etc.

### 3. UNUSED POTENTIALS OF IN-BETWEEN PUBLIC SPACES

Mass housing neighbourhoods of Liman 3 consist out of various internal spaces of the urban blocks, outer/inner courtyards, pedestrian passages, sidewalks, etc. Good public spaces are supposed to share the four qualities - "they are accessible, people are engaged in activities there, the space is comfortable and has a good image, and finally, it is a sociable place." [4] On the other hand, most of the public spaces at the Liman 3 have been vastly devastated during last decades, with poor urban equipment, insufficient vegetation, evident inaccessibility for disabled, and lack of general maintenance. A large number of public spaces have lost their role in the social life of the urban blocks as a meeting place for the residents and are commonly not completely adapted to socialization of the children or old people.

Liman 3 is situated on the left bank of the Danube River and it is characterized by a spacious green belt with a pedestrian promenade and sports/recreational areas. It has got river beach Štrand, water sports clubs, marine, the Liman Park and many other recreational areas for pedestrians and cyclists. Growing presence of cyclists and pedestrians in this area is enabled by the relatively flat terrain of the city, moderate climate and closeness of the Danube River. Presence of people and their public activities at these spaces attract other people and represent a magnet that raise the value of the attractiveness of whole area. Danube promenade named the Sunny Quay represents the most noticeable walking promenade of the city, that is satisfying four main conditions that a walk-through city has to fulfil - "it must be useful, safe, comfortable, and interesting." [5]



Figure 4. Fishing Island (left) and Danube promenade of Novi Sad (right)

The first industrial zone in Novi Sad was built in the 1920s around the former industrial complex Petar Drapšin in Liman 3, nowadays known as Chinese Quarter. It has been abandoned and neglected for decades, until it was re-occupied by artists, musicians and activists a few years ago, and reused as space for exhibitions, concerts, festivals and other public activities. What makes some space public, usually is not its predetermined "publicness", but "when a people occupy the space in order to fulfil a specific need, and through their actions make it public." [6] "Creative class" consisting out of people involved in design, education, art, music, etc. is rapidly growing during the last years, compelling Novi Sad in development of cultural and creative resources of the city through reuse of old buildings and abandoned public spaces.



Figure 5. New perspective of Chinese Quarter - nightlife (left) and film festival (right)

Afterwards the fall of the communist regime and the dissolution of the old state, Novi Sad went through political transition, process of “generational, economic and social changes, in which people, societies and cities must find alternative ways of living and working.” [7] The traditional infrastructure of cultural institutions of the city has been neglected, and consequently Chinese Quarter took advantage of emerging gap by becoming the main social “stage” of the city, available for public events such are music/film/theatre festivals, workshops for youth, open-air exhibitions, fairs, etc. The identity of industrial architecture had a great impact on the re-usage of this space in the last ten years as space for craft activities, Student Cultural Centre, Social Centre, Museum of forgotten arts, bars and nightclubs.

| Public space  | In-between spaces of mass housing  | Liman Park                            | Sunny Quay   | In-between spaces of Chinese Quarter   | Štrand beach   |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Type  | Inner spaces of the blocks, outer/inner courtyards, pedestrian passages, sidewalks | Urban park                            | Pedestrian communication   | Premises/intermediate spaces of buildings and objects, pedestrian communications | Public beach   |
| Geometric shape   | Dominantly rectangular + irregular   | Rectangular                           | Linear   | Dominantly linear + irregular  | Irregular  |
| Spatial character                                       | Predominantly closed character   | Opened green space                    | Opened linear communication  | Closed character   | Opened natural entity                                    |
| Dominant function                                       | Socialization, recreation, relaxation, movement                                    | Socialization, recreation, relaxation | Socialization, recreation, relaxation, movement, sports activities | Socialization, cultural and artistic events, nightlife                           | Socialization, recreation, relaxation, sports activities |
| Ground floor contents                                   | Residential, commercial, public  | /                                     | /  | Cultural, artistic, craft, public, commercial                                    | /  |
| Characteristic architectural/urbanistic/natural element | Socialist architecture   | Public fountain, skate park           | Views of Fruška gora mountain                                      | Industrial heritage  | Danube River   |
| Street furniture  | Inadequate equipment   | Adequate equipment                    | Adequate equipment   | Inadequate equipment   | Adequate equipment                                       |
| Public activities <sup>7</sup>                          | Necessary, optional, social  | Optional, social                      | Optional   | Optional, social   | Optional, social   |

<sup>7</sup> According to Gehl [8], outdoor activities can be divided into necessary, optional and social. Necessary activities are part of everyday life and tasks that people have to do in general, while the optional activities require a good quality of public space and take place only under favourable external conditions.

| Space users <sup>8</sup> | Everyday users | Passers-by, recreational visitors, visitors of special events | Passers-by, recreational visitors | Content users, recreational visitors, visitors of special events | Recreational visitors, visitors of special events |
|--------------------------|----------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|
|--------------------------|----------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|

Figure 6. The physical structure, functional characteristics and the identity of public spaces in Liman 3

In order for Novi Sad to become an exciting city, culture needs to be “in the citizens’ sight, within the reach of their hands, and not closed and hidden from them” [10], emphasising the importance of this part of Novi Sad and its future development as the most important social prospect of the city.

An intertwined network of ambiances suitable for public contents in Chinese Quarter has played a crucial role in Novi Sad’s competition for the title of the European Youth Capital 2019 and European Capital of Culture 2021. European Capital of Culture title is an opportunity for “regenerating cities, raising the international profile of cities, enhancing the image of cities in the eyes of their own inhabitants, breathing new life into a city’s culture, and boosting tourism” [11], with long-term effects of an “cultural infrastructure improvements, more developed programmes of cultural activities and events, and increased international profile of the city/region.” [12] In that sense, Chinese Quarter will become a ‘creative district’ of Novi Sad in the future, used for the development of local contemporary economies in the domain of creative and cultural industries, tourism, arts, crafts, catering and entertainment, and its public spaces have important role in this advancement.

According to Montgomery [13], the key indicators of the vitality of public space, among others, are: the extent of local ownership or independent business, the existence of evening and night activities, availability of places for cultural and daily gatherings, the existence of an active street life, etc. The mentioned key indicators are generating essential characteristics of Chinese Quarter, making it attractive to many different groups of users by giving them different opportunities in modern-day society.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND FINAL REMARKS

Potential advantages of public spaces in Liman 3 and their adjustments in the line with the needs of inhabitants and probable tourists can influence the creation of the new image of the city and be used for creation of spaces intended for cultural encounters, entrepreneurship and development. Certain improvements of physical qualities of analysed public spaces are needed, in order to emphasize their function as places for socialization with a noticeable role in the social life of the whole city.

Although there is no uninterrupted link between Liman 3 and Danube River, waterfront and its public spaces still represent one of the most important identity elements of Liman area. The possibility of functional and morphological alteration of this area can be an

<sup>8</sup> According to Sjøholt [9], people who use public spaces can be classified into several groups - 1. Daily users (people who live or work in the area), 2. Visitors / users of the contents (people using different services in the area), 3. Passers-by (transit passers through the area), 4. Recreational visitors (people visiting the area to use the public space in relation to recreation, pleasure, etc.), and 5. Visitors (people who visit the public space for a special event).

effort to bring the city back to the river and correct the mistakes from the post-war period by bringing mass housing neighbourhoods and their inhabitants closer to the waterfront. Revitalization of the urban setting of Liman 3 with its waterfront might bring this part of the city to the map of important tourist attractions along the Danube River. Future development of the Chinese Quarter as a “creative district” can enhance economies in the domain of creative and cultural industries of the city. The city of Novi Sad can reach a variety of cultural, economic and social objectives through its future transformations, however only by long-term planning, in order to reduce negative effects (e.g. gentrification). By turning them into multifunctional spaces intended for different public events and happenings, these in-between public spaces can become important social and cultural stages of the city, particularly having in mind Novi Sad’s stance as the European Capital of Culture for 2021.

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## ЈАВНИ МЕЂУ-ПРОСТОРИ ПОСТ-СОЦИЈАЛИСТИЧКИХ НАСЕЉА: СТУДИЈА СЛУЧАЈА ЛИМАНА 3 У НОВОМ САДУ

**Резиме:** У периоду између два светска рата, а посебно након Другог светског рата, Нови Сад се трансформисао кроз интензивну изградњу индустријских постројења и стамбених насеља, нарочито у области Лимана. Иако се град историјски суочавао са озбиљним морфолошким и функционалним променама, већина изграђених области је остала без смишљеног скупа јавних простора. Новоизграђена стамбена насеља имају истакнут проблем са недостатком јавних простора намењених социјализацији, са затвореним фасадама без релације са активностима на тротоару, очигледним недостатком везе са реком Дунав, итд. Са друге стране, пост-социјалистички период је оставио богато индустријско наслеђе и неискоришћене јавне просторе у овом подручју са могућношћу поновне употребе. Прва индустријска зона у Новом Саду, изграђена око некадашњег индустријског комплекса Петар Драпшин на Лиману 3, била је напуштена и запуштена деценијама, све док није поново искоришћена као простор за разне јавне активности, подупирујући Нови Сад у развоју културних и креативних ресурса града. Недавни развој креативних индустрија кроз поновну употребу напуштених индустријских објеката указује на постојање неадекватних јавних међу-простора ових комплекса. Истраживање је оријентисано ка студији случаја Лимана 3, кроз опсервацију и валоризацију јавних међу-простора са потенцијалом и могућностима поновног коришћења, да би се размотрило како се пост-социјалистичко наслеђе може искористити у трансформацији таквих простора. Циљ студије је да искористи уочене потенцијале јавних међу-простора Лимана 3, и да поново учини ове просторе јавном „позорницом“ друштвеног живота града кроз њихов будући развој.

**Кључне речи:** јавни простор, пренамена простора, Лиман, Нови Сад