

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS FOR SOCIAL COMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Case study: Public buildings in the central area of Novi Sad

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Summary: The various typologies of public buildings in the city are more or less recognized in the collective conscience of the community as benchmarks, allowing orientation in space, recognition of city units, definition of the town image, as well as forming socialization sites. With the program, content, design, materialization and urban micro-ambient that such places generate around themselves, they are becoming suitable for achieving social contact among inhabitants. The attractiveness that a certain structure possesses in terms of contribution to social development is significantly influenced by the typological point. Furthermore, the morphological characteristics, areal features, building identity and the offered contents form various gathering places in the building or its immediate surroundings. These places differ regarding the amount of users, as well as the frequency and quality of utilization. The importance of public buildings can be either global or local, depending on which the structure of participants in them changes during the process of socializing. They can be distinguished based on affiliation to a certain age, education or interest category, as well as the place of residence. This study investigates public buildings in the central area of Novi Sad. This area is also the functional center of the city where most public buildings with various typologies and levels of identity are located. By analyzing public structures and their urban environment, the degree of their significance for social interaction among the inhabitants will be determined. These analysis will also define the character of the gathering places, as well as examine the opportunities that they provide and the effects that impact the social development of the community. The attendance to certain public objects, the purpose of visit, as well as the time spent in them are dictated by the parameters that are the subjects of this research. Conclusions will be presented on the basis of the perception and categorization of urban, program and morphological determinants of analyzed public buildings evaluated in relation to aspects of

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socialization. The functioning and the character of the socialization sites directly related to the objects will also be valorized and the causal relations between them will be highlighted.

Keywords: *socialization, public+buildings, importance, central+area, Novi Sad*

1. INTRODUCTION

As social beings, humans spend a large part of their life living and working in a community. They accomplish that by using various objects, specially arranged surfaces and designed free spaces both inside and outside of the settlement. Social contact development is linked to the quality of the socialization site, as well as the overall space that is used every day. Easily accessible places, tight or roomy, decorated, equipped, protected from adverse effects and comfortable to stay, allow people to socialize and establish good communication. Such places also attract and encourage people to exploit specific utilization. Places of gathering are becoming recognizable points in the area towards which people are drawn and have better memory of. In the cities they are recognized as significant tourist stopping points, that are, in the virtual world, shown and advertised as waypoints and reasons for visiting a certain city. Public buildings, mostly contribute to the development of socialization at a local level, but also help with affirming the community in a wider radius. By their character, functions and attractiveness, they increase the value of their immediate surroundings. With that in mind, they are a potential factor in changing the recognition of the settlement from a local to a global level. Public buildings in Novi Sad have the quality of focal points, but also great potential to become a lot more attractive and important at a much wider radius than the present one.

2. CONSTANT PARAMETERS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIALIZATION SITE

Urban parameters (spatial characteristics) represent the bond of city elements in a wider radius. The interdependencies formed at this spatial level affect the connection of the entire image of the city. Morphological and functional entities, smaller or bigger, located in the unique context of a city unit, should jointly create spatial, content and ambient characteristics. Together they will form a high-quality network of micro-ambients used by both residents and tourists. Three major groups of relationships are distinguished, according to which, it is possible to analyze and valorize the interrelationship of urban parameters:

1. location in relation to the settlement,
2. in relation to the immediate surroundings,
3. in relation to the offer and networking of similar or identical contents that contribute to the importance and exclusiveness of the typology.

The widest evaluation level is determined by looking at the position of an urban or architectural element regarding the entire city. The disposition on this spatial level indicates the position regarding its boundaries, whether a particular place is located in the central area or on the outskirts of the city. Furthermore, from a wider situation, existing relations between city units, street networks, traffic organization, utilization schedules, etc., can be derived. These aspects indicate the availability and accessibility of a certain area for all potential users. By analyzing the parameters in this group, characteristics such as identity, singularity, prominence or incorporation in the physical structure can be determined. As pointed out in the book *Destinatin Brands*: "urban design, or aesthetics of the city, is the catalyst of a strong identity and thus of success and development; moreover, the successful design of a city increases the comfort of its inhabitants, the quality of the living environment and the image of the city. [1]

The immediate surroundings of an element and their interrelation are defined at the level of basic urban elements and architectural forms. Together they form a spatial unit in a morphological or functional sense. The network of micro-ambients of public spaces, squares, pedestrian zones, parks, plateaus, arranged coastal areas, define distinct units primarily intended for gathering and designed for fulfilling the needs of people. At this level far more than at settlement level, people are perceived as units of measure representing a guiding principle when it comes to designing, "the term of public implies openness, accessibility, participation, inclusion, tolerance and democracy." [2]

Alongside the importance of forming a network of built structures in the immediate surroundings, comes the importance of the presence of distinct and selected typologies, as well as the specifically planned program schedule both out in the open and indoors. This suits the diversity of interests and offers. By creating these networks made out of places significant for culture, history, tourism, development and economy, the city gains a new layer of links and meanings that are perceived alongside with its physical space. In contemporary society, "entertainment, consumption and promotion on one hand, as well as genuine spiritual revelation on the other, also define a new image of globalization." [3] Socialization is largely induced by the activities of the consumers, window shopping, shopping, marking spaces with advertising campaigns with which, apart from the targeted space management and already established interventions of cultural, tourist, educational initiatives and city politics, the ideology of consumerism contributes to the activation of urban space.

Program characteristics represent a group that greatly affects the attendance of the building, primarily from the perspective of program contents, and also defined by a spatial response to the needs of the consumers. Thanks to this program it possible to comprehensively approach the formation of the desired effect and achieve the planned results when it comes to socialization in public buildings. The type of the public building, namely the openness and content accessibility to the public and to a large number of consumers is of great importance. This is achieved by carefully designing the exterior, interior and immediate surroundings, as well as carefully placing the primary and secondary functions, contents and activities within. The objects can be categorized as an *open type*, with contents adapted to a large number of users, satisfying the needs and interests of the global society; a *semi-open / semi-closed type*, which is on purpose or not, intended for selected users, whether entry is restricted to paying/registered users, or the contents are not intended for everyone; and a *closed type*, which addresses a small

or selected number of potential users. Each type has a different significance for the community and encourages social activity at different levels.

Architectural characteristics represent a big group of characteristics, including characteristics which comprehensively define the architectural entity and enable the most exact assessment of the condition and the quality of the object, the potential for socialization within it, and also determine the significance of the object itself in the community. In addition, some of the characteristics of this group provide the greatest opportunities for recommendations and concrete undertakings in the event of adjustments and improvements in socialization:

Morphology (size, shape) affects the possibility of high-quality placement of functions and visitors, as well as their number. The content is also in direct relation with the morphology of the object. If the morphology allows it, it is possible to schedule and arrange both the main and the accompanying contents. As long as the shape of the object, the arrangement of functions and the formation of micro-units allow it, there is a good potential for spontaneous or planned creation of focal points within a public building.

The equipment should follow the content requirements and offer comfortable stay and consuming to the visitors. It should also enable easy navigation and guidance, as well as to satisfy the potential needs of the consumers during their stay in the facility.

Multifunctionality is one of the characteristics that modern designing practice strives to, because it is recognized as very important for sustainability, the quality of the object and the level of interest and attendance.

The horizontal or vertical spatial placement within the object makes it easier or harder to access the contents. If this is complemented by thoughtful and comprehensive equipment, it can equally contribute to the attractiveness of the object. The layout along the horizontal plan provides a better physical connection with the environment, while the vertical plan may offer an unusual visual contact with the city area and, thanks to this feature, it can be an essential and attractive moment in the utilization of the object. *The interaction of the object with open space* is important for expanding spatial and ambient potentials, by expanding into the open space or introducing natural and urban elements in the object. The shaping of plateaus, covered sitting areas, terraces, guiding the movement through the passages of the object, forming atriums, introducing vegetation and water, are important steps which help nurturing the identity of the place and achieving a high level of attraction.

Ownership and economic factors affect the perception of accessibility from the consumer's point of view. The attitude of users towards public buildings owned by of a private owner and public institutions that are the property of the city and all its citizens is different, as is the the level of maintenance and investments in content development and renewal of architectural elements and in the modernization of equipment. Different financial possibilities also have an influence on this situation. Because of that, it is of great importance that the cost-effectiveness and self-sustainability of the facilities is taken into account during spatial and program planning.

Object identity, as well as the image of the city in a whole, in which a certain object can play an important part, should be a part of the targeted urban development policy, supported by cultural policy and city marketing. The identity is an element that makes the object more prominent than others in its closer or wider environment. It can be formed on multiple levels of influence like genesis, important city contents, exclusive or

essential and unique function in the given environment, modernization, technological breakthrough in terms of visual and technological distinctions, favorable location, a brand with a history etc. The potentials of these characteristics should be noticed by the community and navigated in the direction in which they could express the most of their potential and contribute to the well being of the city on multiple levels.

3. VARIABLE PARAMETERS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOCIALIZATION SITE

The way of use, individually, in smaller or larger groups, organized or independently, defines the level of dependence on offer, as well as the planning of the number of possible users in a particular iteration (renewal). Invoking interaction within an object also contributes in creating contacts between users, as well as connecting them with the program. Such approach to use, creates a more direct relationship with the visitors and a sense of belonging which will lead to the desire to return and re-stay in certain area. „If activities and people merge, it can come to mutual encouragement between individual events“ [4], therefore, it is very likely that a high-quality symbiosis of the city life with the micro-ambience of a certain architectural unit will be achieved if the way of use is viewed from the angle of the immediate surroundings.

Frequency of use is reflected, depending on the contents accommodated in the facility at that time, on the seasonal character of the program, like pools, ice rinks; and during the whole year (shopping malls, cinema, theaters, schools, galleries). The reduced importance in certain parts of the year and the absence of some activities during that same time can boost the interest for them during the period they are active because their exclusiveness rises in that manner. On the other hand, the constant availability of certain programs can help with connecting to the area and cause a bigger sense of belonging, more frequent interactions between consumers and more active socialization.

The number of users is an important parameter and, like the previous ones, very dual regarding the positive effects of its variability. The area of the settlement has to contain places that are considered massive socialization sites and those with a reduced number of consumers. What connects them is the mutual interest in the content offering, comfortable space, location and event. Every type of socialization site gathers certain activities around itself and ambient within which the social contact occurs, which explains the importance of various focal points in the objects.

4. CASE STUDY

The central area of every town represents a territory of strong gravitational force within its wider structure in the sense of functionality, which is "a multifarious structure, with variable organizations, a set of many functions, built with many hands, and a relative speed ". [5] A large number of public contents, buildings and surfaces located in these areas affect the high significance of this part for all inhabitants while also attracting tourists. For that reason, these parts of physical structure become symbols of social contact and areas that combine the most important content for socialization. The unification considering these distinctions of the city unit has a very positive impact on

the overall image of the city. In case of methodical and thoughtful approach to its development, while at the same time including local areas in the other parts, the highest level of usage of its full potential can be achieved.

Novi Sad has that well-described proper functional center that is of great significance for the whole community, and which also creates a global image of the city. The center of the city is a common good that everyone wants to study and visit and where everyone can find suiting activities, contents and areas fitting their needs.

The area of Stari grad is also the historical center of the city, whose street network and architectural expression, along with its contents, plays an important role in the development strategy of Novi Sad. The ambience, identity, safety, assimilating the citizens with the area are just some of the main features of this part of the city. For that reason, Stari grad is a composition of well-designed or spontaneously created, open and closed areas around which collective identity and social interaction are formed.

Valuing the socialization site quality in this city unit, consists of many layers and multiplicity. Many urban elements and micro-ambients like the pedestrian zone, offshore promenade, squares, plateaus, passages and inner yards were formed. These elements come into contact with each other and represent the city through a network images that reveal it to the observers. Public buildings are placed alongside this network of narrow streets and facades that carry the past with them, and form "center in the narrow sense". [6] Museums, theatres, libraries and reading rooms, administrative buildings that are open to Museums, theatres, libraries and reading rooms, administrative buildings that are open to cultural events, give a perfect answer to the ambience of open public spaces, because "urban spaces are inspired by institutions that by their meaning illuminate the ambience." [6]

The core surrounded with frequent traffic, while also maximally displaced from it, offers unrestricted and safe socialization. Accessibility of the center by private or public transport and three types of enabled traffic up to its periphery affects the frequency of visiting.

The coexistence of open spaces with those indoors improves the quality of stay and visiting in regard to the season, temperature differences, time of day, week or year. People's needs for events and social contact with a wider environment are satisfied if it is formed by planned public spaces and a diverse typologies of socialization within.

However, socialization sites are not formed the same way in similar places or environments. Depending on the presence and quality of the parameters that were explored, same typologies can create a completely different social contact platform. For example, the Serbian National Theatre (Srpsko narodno pozorište - SNP) and the Theater of Novi Sad (Novosadsko pozorište), monofunctional and production-rich facilities, attract a large number of consumers. However, the socialization before and after the show is enabled to a much greater extent in the spacious hall and the plateau in front of the SNP, than on the narrow traffic line intended for pedestrians in front of the Theatre of Novi Sad.

The unique building typologies of the shopping mall in Novi Sad, Bazar and The Paris magazine (Parski magazin), also point out that the reason for visiting and the time spent inside it depend on the diversity of the content they offer. While the first one, besides the shop, also provides areas for children, meetings, eating and relaxing, the other has shorter time of visitors retention because it limits its offers only to trade.

There is a very similar situation with the typology of the monuments located in a built environment as symbols of collective memory and identity. They represent clear navigation points and benchmarks, as long as the parameters for their placement are well planned. The area around the statue of Svetozar Miletic on LibertySquare (Trg Slobode), is a meeting, gathering and socializing place, due to its location on a crossroads of paths, and at an intersection of movement routes. On the other hand, the statue of Laza Kostic, located near the aforementioned monument, is less accessible and thus doesn't provide an inviting space that calls for stay which would create an ambience and a chance for interaction. Uniqueness creates exclusivity, which usually increases the significance of a certain space.

Unusual and attractive elements that engage multiple senses during the perception certainly contribute to the ambient and attendance. This is the case with the fountains that, thanks to their elements, engage the sense of sight, hearing, touch and smell, and in doing so, positively affect the microclimate conditions, and attract users through their surroundings. There are several fountains in the center of Novi Sad successfully designed to positively affect their surroundings.

However, only one of them, the one located in front of the New Nork shopping mall, actually represents the interaction of a public building with the external environment. The most common attempt to connect open and closed areas is through the gardens of catering facilities on the ground level of the pedestrian zone and advertising. At the same time, the city lacks the emergence of culture into the public space, in the immediate proximity, so it could encourage the observers to interact, establish a more intimate level with the institution and motivate users to more freely utilize their premises for mutual contact.

The importance of socialization sites is formed on various levels. The general significance that a certain place or object has on the widest spacial level, most of all contributes to the image of the city, its presentation on a global level and is equally recognizable to residents as well as to foreigners and tourists visiting the city for the first time or planning to visit in the future. Socializing in these areas happens in the widest possible sense and it offers great opportunities and variable characteristics. This is the case with the Petrovaradin Fortress. Further, the global significance can appear on a state level, due to the uniqueness and exclusiveness of a certain typology.

This may be most clearly observed on the example of the Matica srpska that methodically unifies unique content which is recognized in the collective conscience as a common good of great importance. Local significance, at the community level, includes all sites and objects that are recognized and marked in the social structure as venues.

The most intensive, permanent and diverse social life of the city is formed around them. It can include anyone, even those who are just getting to know the city. In fact, this level of significance has the greatest impact on healthy social contact that has to be maintained, encouraged and improved by planned interventions, through the exploitation of the selected parameters.

Interdependence is characterized by causal relations. These relations, regarding the socialization site, in reverse direction refer to the consequences of the type and number of places and the socialization character that they enable. At a local level, they are significant for social maturity, health, community identity, given that socializing is among the existential needs. It represents a desire for belonging to the community. On the city level and wider, as global, their significance is reflected in the potential for the

prosperity of wishes and the global development of the population, as well as the impact on the development of city tourism, branding of the city, cultural policy and offer and general progress.

5. CONCLUSION

The moment of socializing is a significant segment of city life, which foremost includes the active involvement of people. Social contact requires an spatial frame in which it can express its full potential. In addition to the traditionally recognized public areas of the city, which are mostly undeveloped and known for their primary function of gathering places, a significant level is represented by public buildings of various urban, architectural and program characteristics that dictate the character of socialization offered to their users. Staying with the principles of design and the methodical approach in forming these objects and maintaining contents and microambients, will result in the presence of a large number of focal points within public buildings or their immediate surroundings. In that manner, the city will be enriched with high-quality ambient units and program offerings, in which the contact between a larger or smaller number of participants will be encouraged and social interaction will be supported.

Novi Sad consists of well located public buildings in its central core, connected by a network of urban elements designed to suit the needs for staying, learning and socializing. However, not all objects of the same typology are ready to answer the need for contact among users with the same quality. To a greater or lesser extent, spatial and program characteristics are ready to provide a socialization site, but not to a sufficient extent and number required by the character of the city.

The importance of socialization sites on a global level creates a well-designed and targeted projection of the public city image which can enable the development of tourism, as well as economic potentials. Active participation of people in urban life, and their connection within focal points, stimulates the stratification of collective identity and memory, which is mostly related to space. This contributes to community and a sense of belonging, which is of major importance for the focused and targeted development of the city and the community.

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ЗНАЧАЈ ЈАВНИХ ОБЈЕКТА ЗА СОЦИЈАЛНИ РАЗВОЈ ЗАЈЕДНИЦЕ

Студија случаја: Јавни објекти у централној зони Новог Сада

Резиме: *Различите типологије јавних објеката у граду, у мањој или већој мери препознају се у колективној свести заједнице као репери, помоћу којих се оријентација у простору, препознају градске целине, дефинишу слику града, али и формирају места социјализације. Такве грађевине својим програмом, садржајима, обликовањем, материјализацијом и урбаним микроамбијентима које генеришу око себе, постају погодна места за остваривање друштвеног контакта међу становницима. Типолошка одредница значајно утиче на јачину привлачне силе коју одређена структура има у погледу доприноса социолошком развоју. Осим ње, морфолошке карактеристике, просторне могућности, идентитет објекта и понуда садржаја формирају различита места окупљања у објекту или његовој непосредној околини, која варирају у броју корисника, као и периодичности и начину њиховог коришћења. Значај јавних објеката може бити глобални или локални, у зависности од чега се мења структура учесника у процесу социјализације у њима, који могу бити диференцирани на основу припадности одређеним старосним, образовним или интересним категоријама, као и месту становања. У раду се истражују јавни објекти у централној зони Новог Сада, која је уједно и функционални центар града у ком је смештена већина јавних објеката, различитих типологија и степена идентитета. Анализом јавних структура и њиховог урбаног окружења, утврдиће се степен њиховог значаја за друштвени контакт међу становницима, дефинисаће се карактер места окупљања, сагледаће се могућности које оне пружају и ефекти којима утичу на социјални развој заједнице. Посећеност одређених јавних објеката, сврха одласка, као и време задржавања у њима, диктирани су параметрима којима се истраживање бави. Закључци ће бити изнети на основу сагледавања и категоризације урбанистичких, програмских и морфолошких одредница анализираних јавних објеката вреднованих у вези са аспектима социјализације. Такође, валоризоваће се функционисање и карактер места социјализације која су у директној вези са разматраним објектима и истаћиће се каузални односи међу њима.*

Кључне речи: *социјализација, јавни објекти, значај, централна зона, Нови Сад*