

8th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
"TOWARDS A HUMANE CITY"
New Mobility Challenges
Novi Sad 11th and 12th November 2021

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ANALYSIS OF THE ARRANGEMENT OF PUBLIC SPACE NEXT TO CULTURAL STATION FACILITIES IN NOVI SAD

Key Words

Public areas
Cultural stations
Planning
Informal city
centres
Traffic

Abstract

For a time now, there has been a need in Novi Sad for the formation of new, secondary city centers with mixed content located within peripheral parts of the city, mostly for residential purposes. Obligatory within these centers are social centers and cultural facilities. The integration of new cultural facilities - cultural stations in the planned centers of existing residential settlements has opened the question of how to best design public spaces in their environment, so that these spaces become representative, functional and accessible. In order to achieve this, a number of urban principles, guidelines and rules needed to be implemented within the framework of the drafting and implementation of planning documents. The situation at the city given locations required different model variations for shaping public spaces and organizing traffic in the vicinity of cultural station facilities, as well as designing the facilities themselves.

1. INTRODUCTION

As part of the process of preparing Novi Sad for the status of the European Capitals of Culture, it was necessary to design new cultural infrastructure projects, programs and content. Through them, social and cultural life is enriched accompanied by modern movements and trends in the field of culture, as well as meeting the needs of the population in terms of cultural and social life. This turned out to be an

opportunity for fragmented intervention in the public area of the city and the transformation of the same for the needs of the citizens. As Novi Sad has been developing for several decades, mainly through the growth of residential capacity, construction of new housing estates, but also the concentration of housing within existing ones, there is a need to arrange public spaces for movement and socialization, as well as for the introduction of cultural, entertainment and educational programs.

Novi Sad is a centrally organized city, in terms of the arrangement of non-residential programs and content in relation to its surface and the way it spreads through space. That is why most of the existing, especially cultural, entertainment and educational content intended for the functioning of the city and the life of its inhabitants, is focused in narrower and broader city center area. For this reason, an approach has been imposed, in terms of location, to place new facilities and programs along the perimeter and outskirts of the city. There is little public space, lack of programs and content, while public space is often inadequately landscaped.

In terms of forming a polycentric city, it is desirable to form secondary city centers in settlements further away from the city center. These would generate mixed urban content, activate space, make it more visited, accessible by foot, directing movement within the area, and forming focal points of assembly in parts of these settlements. Such interventions require landscaping, designing meeting places and living places, applying space design standards, arranging and organizing traffic areas, respecting ambient values, enabling accessibility, introducing modern design to the design of public spaces, functionality and familiarity of programs and content to public areas, as well as the use of frequent traffic routes to concentrate new programs and content.

In order to achieve this, during the construction of cultural facilities such as cultural stations, it was necessary to apply urban criteria and principles, harmonizing them with existing planning documentation.

The methodology in this paper includes an analysis of planning documentation on the basis of which the design, construction of cultural stations, and the transformation of space into informal city centers was carried out, and a comparative analysis of the original and as built state. A synthesis of this research is a concept for shaping public spaces in the vicinity of cultural facilities, as a contribution to the organization of public space, and changes to the traffic regimes within them, but also the successful integration of demanding public programs and content in mostly residential areas.

2. CHOICE OF LOCATIONS FOR CULTURAL STATIONS

Cultural stations are facilities. Their surface and stories are not necessarily large. In functional terms, they are characterized by the existence of halls and other areas for the collection of local residents and an attractive, accessible and functional, multifunctional public space in front of the buildings themselves. The function of the space in front of the facility is to attract people with cultural content and to impose it on the local community within the observation settlements, or parts of the settlement.

The situation in Novi Sad demanded the decentralization of cultural content as analysis showed that they were hyperconcentrated in the city center. All cultural institutions, whose founders are provincial, republic and city institutions, are concentrated within several blocks of the city, or Petrovaradin Fortress.

The first criterion for the selection of the location was that they be arranged in parts of the city that are either predominantly monofunctional (intended only for housing - "city dormitories") or are physically and functionally significantly separated from the city center. These are large settlements built on the principles of modernist urbanism such as Liman, Detelinara and Novo Naselje, then urban settlements, mostly with a residential purpose without accompanying facilities, such as Klisa, Petrovaradin, Sremska Kamenica, with the potential to attract a vast number of people. Another criterion was the approach to support local cultural initiatives that exist in these parts of the city. To determine, through dialog and research, what content the inhabitants of these localities needed. The first to be analyzed was the needs of the inhabitants in those parts of the city. Through this procedure, insight was made into the program tasks for the design of new, *i.e.*, the reconstruction of existing buildings, for the purpose of culture. The third criterion for choosing a location was that these sites had to be planned for some purpose which was commercial, general urban or culture. The fourth criterion was that these sites were owned by the city of Novi Sad in order for the realization to be efficient.

In Novo Naselje, a site was chosen in a city settlement of multi-residential homes, with more than 30,000 inhabitants, at the corner of Bate Brkića and Seljačkih buna, which has been foreseen as a general urban center. This is a location where cultural activities and social interactions have been taking place for years, making it recognizable to the residents. The next location is on Čenejska Street, in the settlement of Slana Bara/Klisa, exclusively residential housing on the northern outskirts of the city. Although very removed from the city center, it is a focal point. It is home to a semi-urban, socially and ethnically diverse population, which can be brought closer together through culture. One library is currently the only cultural institution for a settlement of about 25,000 inhabitants. The mentioned locality is located in the vicinity of a sports business center, a religious facility, a primary school and a health center. On the lot owned by the city of Novi Sad which already houses a temporary local community facility, what has been planned is a general urban center, and all processes required for the construction of a new facility have been completed. Within the multi-residential housing settlement of Liman, with more than 50,000 inhabitants, the location of an abandoned metal factory, so-called "Chinatown" was the most favorable location based on the defined criteria. Chinatown has been designed as a hybrid concept for the purpose of culture, specific business activities and youth activism. In the immediate vicinity are student dormitories, *i.e.*, the entire settlement of Liman, with a highly dense population that would gravitate to the stated purpose. This space, with 13 existing and 3 planned facilities, is undergoing a gradual reconstruction. The location of the cultural station for the Podbara settlement, namely Almaš area near the center of Novi Sad, is within a former silk factory.

There were ideas for this project of cultural stations to be on the Srem side of the city (the site of the former Sokolski dom in Petrovaradin and the castle smithy in Sremska Kamenica), *i.e.*, in other city settlements such as Detelinara, but those locations were not selected.

3. CURRENT STATE AT THE LOCATIONS AND TRAFFIC CONNECTIONS

At the location of the central part of Novo Naselje, there were three temporary facility - barracks dating back to the late 1970s when the settlement was being built. They needed to be brought to planned purpose, intended for a general urban center, *i.e.*, commercial facility [1]. A cultural station lot would be located on part of the lot. The site is not located on the corner of Bate Brkića, ranked as a road [2], and Seljačkih buna, which are not busy streets, nor are they located on frequent pedestrian routes, but they are located near focal points such as: primary and secondary schools, a school for children with disabilities, an old age home. City public transport passes through Bate Brkića, with a bus stop. Bicycle paths intercept the sites. There are two larger parking areas located next to the lot. They are used by citizens who live in the surrounding residential buildings, and it is possible for other visitors to use them as well. This concept of cultural institution is more related to the local community, but still an underground garage is planned for visitors and the needs of the cultural station itself, and it is intended for the functioning of the facility (users), and not for residents of surrounding residential buildings.

The cultural station in Klisa, on Čenejska is also, as in Novi Sad, primarily of local character. It has been planned [3] for use by the local community (administration), with the possibility of an addition. In this respect, most citizens are expected to come by bike or foot. Bike paths do not exist near the facility itself but they do exist on busy streets in the immediate vicinity (Sentandrejski put). There is a system of public city transport lines in the immediate vicinity and there is a bus stop. A parking has not been foreseen within the Klisa cultural station. For the needs of the cultural station, visitors can park within the Slana Bara sports-commercial center located in the vicinity. Frequent pedestrian routes pass by the location, and there is a bicycle path along Sentandrejski put. In the immediate vicinity of this cultural station are focal points of the settlement Slana bara/Klisa, which is visited by a large number of people and are intended for service activities, sports (swimming pool and other facilities), banks, religious facilities and more. The introduction of cultural content would strengthen the function of the focal point and emphasize the character of the informal city center, primarily for the citizens of Klisa, but also for visitors to the cultural station from other parts of the city (who will come to visit the pool, etc.). The location for the cultural station in Liman is very attractive. It is located at the distinct focal point bearing an informal name of "Chinatown" located on Bulevaru despota Srefana, which is undergoing an extensive urban transformation, based on a new detailed regulation plan [4]. In this area, neglected facilities for crafts and production purposes will be replaced by facilities of the creative district planned for creative purposes, service activities and culture. There are other important focal points in the

immediate vicinity, such as the Štrand beach and Limanski park. Dominant pedestrian routes pass by this location, which reach the riverfront through the settlement of Liman, continuing along it. These routes are: through Limanski park; from the settlement (Limanska pijaca) to the student dormitory complex of the University of Novi Sad; along Bulevar despota Stefana; and the route along the riverfront. At this location, several dozen new parking lots have been planned, for the entire creative district, in the immediate vicinity of the cultural station. The location is well connected by a bike path that stretches across the Liman settlement, as well as with a bike path that stretches along the riverbank. Nearby, the bus terminus is in the immediate vicinity.

The location in Almaš area (corner of Almaška and Đorđa Rajkovića) has been planned [5] within the facilities of the former silk factory which has in the recent past become, for the most part, part of the Academy of Arts in Novi Sad. The only part of the former factory that was without purpose and extremely derelict has been foreseen for the Svilara cultural station. Bus lines run along Kosovska in the immediate vicinity. The entire Almaška area, a zone of a protected spatial cultural and historical whole, where this cultural station is located, has low intensity traffic. The tendency is for this to become a pedestrian zone to continue from the pedestrian zone in the city center.

Common for all these cultural station sites is that they are in streets with low-intensity traffic, well connected by pedestrian and bicycle communications, and relatively well connected by public city bus lines and equipped with visitors parking.

4. AS BUILT STATE

The advantage of all these locations is that they are in public ownership, the city of Novi Sad, and that operational urban documents (general and detailed regulation plans) have been adopted for the subject locations, on the basis of which it was possible to initiate procedures for the construction of facilities, public and traffic areas. In addition to the construction of the facilities themselves, what has also been planned is to arrange the public areas next to each cultural station, its horticultural and landscaping, equipping it with street furniture, a water fountain, for it to be safe for use by all categories of residents, and for it to be suitable for hosting cultural programs.

This has been achieved at the Svilara Cultural Station locations. This cultural station was the first to be completed and opened on October 23, 2018. (Figure 1.). The city built a parking lot next to the cultural station. A part of Đorđe Rajkovića has been closed and is now a pedestrian zone, in the immediate vicinity of the pedestrian zone in the city center. The tendency is to form a single whole with it over time.

A facility is still being built at the cultural station in the settlement of Klisa/Slana bara. There are indications that part of Čenejska, between the school and the cultural station, will be closed to car traffic. A project for arranging the public area around the cultural station has been completed. The plan is to build a water fountain. This public space is intended for cultural events. The cultural station in the settlement of Klisa/Slana bara is in the completion phase (Figure 3.).

Within Chinatown in the settlement of Liman, a pedestrian zone has already been formed, closed to traffic. A representative public area has been set up in front of the cultural station, which will also be used for activities of the cultural station. This cultural station is intended for youth activism (Figure 2.). A large number of parking spaces intended for this location have already been built. This cultural station has the largest parking zone out of all four analyzed locations. In addition, many visitors to the Štrand City Beach, which is in close proximity, are potential users of this parking lot, which is free of charge. Bike lanes have been planned and executed so that visitors can, via the bike path, exit directly onto the Chinatown bike path from the riverbank bike path. By transforming Chinatown and building a cultural station, Bulevar despota Stefana was, for the first time, built in a complete cross-section in terms of complete utility infrastructure and all traffic areas.

The Novo Naselje cultural station has a large and landscaped green area in its vicinity. The station is designed to visually and functionally open up, the main hall, to that green surface. Landscaping, which will contain a small amphitheater, has yet to be completed. Construction of an underground parking is part of the project documentation that has been completed (Figure 4.).



Figure 1. Completed cultural station, Podbar



Figure 2. Completed cultural station, Liman



Figure 3. Cultural station under construction, Klisa



Figure 4. Cultural station under construction, Novo Naselje

All these cultural stations are primarily intended for their local environment, *i.e.*, urban settlements within which they are located. The Liman cultural station, unlike the others, was conceived as part of a creative block with a wealth of cultural content,

so the introduction of a large parking area is due to a potential larger number of visitors coming from all over the city.

5. CONCLUSION

It has been shown that in the domain of urban planning, implementation and utility arrangement, the city of Novi Sad has implemented everything that has been foreseen and which is related to the cultural station project at the aforementioned locations.

City authorities reacted well to the introduction of a pedestrian traffic regime in the vicinity of the cultural stations. The implementation of that part of the plans was not a problem. In addition, the concept of pedestrian zones was well received by the users, with the provision that there was a need to get used to the new car regime. This applies to the area of Liman and Podbara (Almaška area), while the formation of a pedestrian zone is in progress in the region of Klisa.

A new general regulation plan has been prepared for the Svilara cultural station, which foresaw a square on that site. It turned out that the introduction of the cultural station, the formation of the plateau, the change to the traffic regime, and the formation of a pedestrian zone were the impetus for the further development of the Almaš area, and the connection of the pedestrian zone with the city center. A similar situation of forming an informal center within the pedestrian zone should happen in the vicinity of the cultural station in Klisa.

It can be concluded that the planning and design of cultural stations at the level of Novi Sad has established an urban practice that expands the zone of pedestrian use of space in the vicinity of cultural stations. The new quality of public life in public urban spaces implies putting pedestrians in the foreground and restricting the movement of cars. This means that the introduction of cultural station programs is an effective approach to the decentralization of the city and the formation of informal urban centers in predominantly residential suburbs. In addition to restricting the movement of cars in favor of pedestrians, the quality of these interventions within a space, is in the introduction of larger parking areas, which can be used by users of all public facilities within the newly formed urban centers, but also public facilities in the wider vicinity. In addition, all cultural stations will receive adequate parking areas, for the needs of visitors who will come from more distant parts of the city. It can also be stated that all cultural station locations will have excellent accessibility by bus lines and bicycle paths.

This intervention involved major or minor changes to the urban plans for these settlements. In Podbara, the general regulation plan for the Almaš area, which was under public review in July 2021, was changed so that the public space would be arranged and completely adjusted to the movement of pedestrians. This plan expanded the pedestrian zone and foresaw its arrangement according to the needs of pedestrian movement. In Klisa, this will require a minor change to the plan, although certain changes are possible with temporary solutions by introducing a special traffic regime. In Novo Naselje, similar changes were not necessary because the concept of the cultural station fit into the existing state. A special detailed

regulation plan for Chinatown in Liman was adopted, which initiated the process of spatial transformation, and which foresaw a special landscaping solution for the pedestrian zone in the vicinity of the cultural station. It can be concluded that urban plans establish a new practice of forming urban centers in the vicinity of cultural stations in Novi Sad, new networks of cultural facilities, understand it and help continue its development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The realization of this paper has been supported by the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development program through the project no. 451-03-9/2021-14/200156: "Innovative scientific and artistic research from the FTS (activity) domain".

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