

Culture and Creativity as Driving Forces for Urban Regeneration in Serbia

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Abstract—This paper develops a critical perspective on using culture and creativity as tools for urban regeneration. Following a brief assessment of the evolution of cultural policy in recent decades and different urban regeneration schemes, the concepts of creativity and creative cities are discussed. This is followed by an attempt to clarify the relationship between the concepts of creativity and culture. A more detailed critique of cultural and creative initiatives in Serbian cities is then undertaken. These attempts show that the potential for development of urban regeneration driven by culture and creativity exist. But, these initiatives failed to produce adequate results because they did not take root as a comprehensive urban regeneration strategy, therefore, recommendations for further development are offered.

Keywords—creativity, culture, Serbia, urban regeneration

I. INTRODUCTION

CONSIDERING the role of culture as a catalyst for urban development and as an integral part of urban regeneration strategies has become very active in recent years. The integration of culture in urban regeneration projects has been emphasized, as well as the impact of culture on the local economy, the quality of life, the image of the city, community involvement and city identity. Additionally, cultural tourism and culture based marketing of cities have become very popular among planners, marketing companies and cultural policy decision makers. Culture is used as a tool for attracting foreign tourists and for encouraging private sector investment.

Many cities are forced to compete with each other in order to develop unique cultural, social and physical characteristics and achieve competitive advantage. As a response to dramatic changes of social, economic and cultural structure of cities creativity has been brought into focus. This caused the emergence of new models of urban development, including the popular concept of creative city. This idea consists in the creation of conditions for people to think, plan and act in accordance with the imagination in order to take advantage of opportunities or solve some urban problems. Human knowledge, ideas and skills are becoming a driving force of the economic growth.

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More and more people are deciding to live in a place that offers a better quality of life, an open atmosphere and cultural heritage, and these are characteristics of the creative city. Because of popularity of these issues, which are subjected to constant development, criticisms and observations, they are extremely interesting as a research subject. By considering the different approaches and concepts of using culture and creativity in urban development, the aim is to determine their role and importance in the process of urban regeneration. The intention is to point out the necessity of the development of urban regeneration strategies with a fully integration of culture and creativity. Particular attention is devoted to the analysis of examples of cultural and creative initiatives of cities in Serbia.

II. URBAN REGENERATION – STARTING THE PROCESS AND ITS GOALS

Over time, urban regeneration has evolved from a simple form of renovation or rehabilitation of physical structures, to the targeted restructuring of urban areas, the renewal of the urban economy or city's image, along with the pursuit for greater social interaction and equality.

Urban regeneration can be generated under various stimuli, and a number of different influencing factors can be found in the literature [1]–[3]. Summing up all of these impacts it can be concluded that the main problems that lead to urban changes and that can trigger the process of urban regeneration are:

- *Economic*: limited private investment, unemployment, economic decline, economic mono-culture, etc.
- *Social*: population decline and population aging, poverty, social exclusion.
- *Spatial*: inefficient and irrational land use, devastated and degraded urban zones, deterioration of building stock, urban sprawl without clear boundaries, etc.
- *Environmental*: air pollution, increased noise, loss of open space, deterioration of environmental quality, etc.
- *Cultural*: cultural events, disturbance of the cultural heritage, etc.
- *Traffic*: long distance between housing, services and workplace, traffic congestion, etc.
- *Institutional*: outdated urban management, a new legal regime, etc.

For successful implementation of urban regeneration it is necessary to set clear goals. The goals can be economic, social, environmental, cultural and others. However, the most important goals of urban regeneration are [3]:

- Rehabilitation of complex urban structure and infrastructure improvements
- Improvement of the environment and quality of life of city residents.
- Preservation of valuable building heritage and building reconstruction.
- Control and prevention of deterioration of specific urban areas (e.g. residential).
- Restructuring of the economic functions of the urban fabric.
- Development of new forms of business and professional opportunities.
- Introduction of measures to promote economic growth.
- Organizing capacity building for institutions and agencies responsible for urban management and planning.
- Enhancing the basic services for vulnerable population groups.

III. THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN URBAN REGENERATION

Placing culture at the center of urban development started in the 1970's as discussed by Bianchini [4]. Influenced by new urban social movements that appeared the cultural development was seen as an integral part of urban policy. The goals were to provide all citizens with a wider and better access to cultural facilities and activities, to promote individual and group cultural expression and to promote the redevelopment of communities.

By the mid 1980's, however, the emphasis was given to the potential function of cultural policy as a strategy for economic and physical development of cities [4]. This included the growing investment in the infrastructure needed for cultural production and flagship projects development such as arts centers, concert halls, museums and others.

Since the late 1990's, there has come to a social turn in cultural politics. The emphasis on the economic impact has been reduced, and priority has been given to local and participatory cultural activities. It was argued that benefits of this policy include "greater opportunities for socialization and contact across different sections of the population encouraging greater understanding between groups, and in that way contributing to increased social cohesion" [5].

Evans (2004) in [6] points different approaches of including culture in urban regeneration strategies:

- "Culture-led regeneration", in which culture provides the engine for development
- "Cultural regeneration", where culture is an integral part of the wider strategy.
- "Culture and regeneration", where cultural activities are less integrated, and have a supportive role.

These approaches may have different starting points and triggers. These may include prestigious projects and events (Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the Olympic Games, the World Expo or European Capital of Culture...), heritage preservation, festivals (e.g. Edinburgh Festival), the activity of artists and art (e.g. Soho in London and New York, Uudenmaankatu in Helsinki) and cultural quarters.

Many cities create cultural quarters as an integral part of regeneration strategies (e.g. Temple Bar, Dublin). These include museums, galleries, conference centers, theatres, cinemas and entertainment facilities such as cafes, restaurants and clubs. Smith [7] argues that these projects must be integrated into mixed-use areas, which also include hotels, office space, residential, commercial and recreational use, rather than creating isolated arts and cultural centers, which cannot generate further economic and social benefits for the local community.

Montgomery [8] sets out three groups of elements that are necessary for the successful development of cultural quarters:

- Activity – economic, cultural, social
- Form – the relationship between buildings and space
- Meaning – historical and cultural sense of the place

Various approaches to culture have proved successful in many cases. The potential value of culture is recognized and culture is becoming an integral part of urban regeneration strategies. The different models of cultural strategies can be noticed. The goal is always the same – improvement of the city's image, regeneration of an area, the development of cultural tourism.

Cultural strategy that a city can develop depends on many different factors including the economy of the city, historical heritage and the local context of the city. Dragicevic- Sestic [9] distinguishes three groups of strategies:

- *Competitive strategies* These strategies are usually used in the cities that have already achieved certain cultural and economic capital, and are seeking a better position in comparison to other cities of similar size and importance.
- *Quality achievement strategies* This group of strategies can be applied only to extremely wealthy cities, where the human capital, cultural capital and know-how are already at a high level. The chosen strategies should motivate the population towards new growth and development with an ambition of perfection. Cities that choose this strategy rely on a highly appreciated historical and cultural heritage.
- *Linking strategies* The third group includes strategies for making connections and partnerships with other cities in order to find the best solution for development. This can be a regional network of cities, network of cities according to profile, 'twin cities', etc., and this is usually a strategy of cities in countries in transition, which are too weak to compete and develop alone.

In a global world culture has become a 'product' that can be sold like any other. Some cities create similar spaces and landscapes that can be seen elsewhere. They have little connection to local heritage and sense of place. Therefore the role of communities in the development of cultural regeneration is crucial for maintaining local character and uniqueness [7].

IV. THE ROLE OF CREATIVITY IN URBAN REGENERATION

The implementation of similar models of development, based on culture, resulted in the projects repeating and the creation of globalized places and cities without identity.

The rising competitiveness between cities has led to the need for diversity and the creation different and unique places. Over the past two decades creativity has become the driving force of the economy. The key element of global competition is no longer the achieving lower prices for goods and services, but the competition for people.

Richard Florida drew attention to creativity and the emergence of a new creative class in American society, influenced by the rise of the creative sector, which makes almost half of total revenue in the United States. According to Florida every human is creative, but the creative class consists of people bring economic value through their creativity. He talks about the creative capital theory, according to which the economic growth in the region is driven by creative people, and these people prefer the places that are innovative, diverse and tolerant. People who create creative capital make creative class [10].

A more comprehensive strategy with the aim of the creative development is the concept of creative city. It is a dynamic concept, focusing on creativity, community development and culture as key indicators of a dynamic, vibrant, comfortable and sustainable city [11]. The basic idea is that cities have to use their creative potential and resources to attract the most talented creative individuals. Florida [10] stresses the great mobility of the creative class and argues that idea of creativity and cities revolves around the 'three T's' of economic growth: technology, talent and tolerance. Creativity and members of the creative class come from a place that has all three factors.

The main strategy of cities in Europe that call themselves creative consists of the strengthening the arts and cultural fabric, and focusing on fostering the creative industries [12]. But the idea of creative city has broader ambitions. Creativity is not limited to the arts and science; it may also include social creativity and political imagination. The key challenge of the creative city is establishing "an innovative milieu within which creative people, processes, ideas and products interact" [13]. Sasaki (2001) in [14] defines the creative city as "a city that cultivates new trends in arts and culture and promotes innovative and creative industries through the energetic creative activities of artists, creators and ordinary citizens, contains many diverse "creative milieus" and "innovative milieus," and has a regional, grass-roots capability to find solutions to social exclusion problems such as homeless people". The concept of creative city is not making the universal model – each city needs to concentrate on its unique and special characteristic. The creative city should have its own strong identity and uniqueness. It consists of an open, connected and mobile society that accepts new people, adapts easily to new ideas and that is willing to take risks to achieve a particular goal.

Scott [15] indicates that the mere presence of creative people is not enough to sustain urban creativity over a long period of time, and creativity should be mobilized and directed toward the practical form of learning and innovation.

Landry [13] identifies seven groups of factors that are necessary for the implementation of the concept of creativity: 1- personal qualities; 2- will and leadership; 3 – human diversity and variety of talent; 4 - organizational culture; 5 - local identity; 6 - urban spaces and buildings; and 7 - networking. Cities can be creative with some of these factors, but they would operate the best in the presence of all factors.

V. INTERACTION OF CULTURE AND CREATIVITY

The concept of creative city is based on the idea that culture as values, lifestyle and form of creative expression, is the basis for the emergence and growth of creativity, and thus provides an impulse for development [13]. Culture is the main source of creativity and it lies in the core of creative innovations. Cultural resources are the raw materials and tools for starting the process. However, in order to maintain the culture of the city, it needs to be formed through creativity. According to Scott [15] the foundation of the creative city is making a balance between the production system and cultural environment of the city, in order to enhance and emphasize their qualitative functions.

Cultural activities have impact on the development of cultural tourism by attracting the people who want to collect new information and experiences, and fulfil their cultural needs. If tourists are not just passive observers, and they actively engage in certain activities and contribute to the acquisition of new knowledge and closer contact with the local population, creative cultural tourism develops [16]. The main goal of this tourism is the contribution to the economic development of society while preserving cultural values.

The challenge of the creative city is to determine how cultural resources can contribute to the integrated development of the area. By placing culture at the center of decision making, the connection between it and any public policy (in the field of economics, housing, health, education, social services, tourism, urban planning, architecture, and culture itself) is being established.

VI. CREATIVE AND CULTURAL INTERVENTIONS IN SERBIA

Creative sector in Serbia has not yet become significant social, economic and cultural element of urban society and it is still considered as an alternative culture. Cultural and political processes are not balanced, which can be seen through the urban landscape of the cities. The culture is not observed as the tool of regeneration and it insufficiently associated with the economic and spatial development strategies. The starting initiatives for the development of creative sectors can be found in Belgrade at the late 1990's.

These projects were the result of the unofficial movement of creative opposition and the need for individualization of cultural and intellectual production. At the same time the urban recycling is recognized as a method for providing the space for living and working of the creative sector, while maintaining and enhancing the architectural heritage of the city [17].

The inspiration for starting this kind of research and projects was found in the positive experience of the world practice. Different urban areas (brownfields) were identified as potential sites for development and revitalization, such as land complexes starting from the Port of Belgrade to “Ada Huja” and the large land complex in the “Sava amphitheatre”. For most of these sites was initiated the development of urban plans, but often by the initiative of the new private owners and not the city, so that the reconstructed buildings adapt to market. One of the existing examples of urban recycling was implemented in 2007, when the former book warehouse was transformed into a “Magacin” (Warehouse) – a new multidisciplinary cultural center in Belgrade [18]. This was made by joining two initiatives – the initiative of the independent cultural scene of Belgrade to obtain adequate working space, and the initiative of the Belgrade authorities to start the recycling of existing unused urban space. Thus, one of the aims of urban regeneration was fulfilled, in terms of conservation of significant part of building heritage and building reconstruction. This is an example of culture-led regeneration, while in the whole process the most dominant was the artists’ activity. Through this project was also achieved one of the factors of the creative city related to the creation of an innovative milieu. “Magacin” (Fig. 1) has become appealing to new audiences – very young visitors, who are very interested in this kind of program, which has interdisciplinary character.



Fig. 1 “Magacin” – the former warehouse transformed into the cultural center

For the creation of the intellectual support of the creative city, it is necessary to have diverse and comprehensive research and education system. In Serbia, there have been several attempts – initiatives to create clusters, incubators and parks [18].

The Business Technology Incubator of Technical Faculties Belgrade has been established in partnership between the four technical faculties, the Municipality of Palilula and a non-governmental organization, and it is the first such organization in Serbia. The objectives of the incubator are the creation of a tool to encourage and support young, technically educated people in starting and developing their own business, so that they remain in the country.

IT Park in Indjija represents the first ambitious initiative to build a technology park designed for business development and technology transfer in Serbia. It was planned as a multi-phase development project with international LEED certification for green building. However, although the construction contract was signed in 2008, the construction has not yet started. In the meantime, the design of technology parks in several locations in Serbia has began (Novi Sad, Nis, Novi Beograd, Vrsac, etc.), and the construction of some of them has also started, indicating the growing tendency to develop and promote innovative technology projects and companies. The implementation of technology parks, with the economy as the main driving mechanism, would improve the development of new business and professional opportunities. By linking them with universities’ infrastructure, some of the essential conditions for the establishment of the creative city would be achieved. However, unlike in Nis and Novi Sad, where the technology parks are located within the existing urban fabric and university buildings, in Vrsac and Kragujevac is applied the old model of technology parks development, on the city fringe, along highways. Serbian cities have a valuable and authentic cultural heritage, which is not affirmed as a development resource. On the other hand, various non-governmental organizations are increasingly involving in protecting, revitalizing and activating neglected cultural and historical heritage. These include ARCH – Association for Rehabilitation of Cultural Heritage in Belgrade, “Kulturklammer” - Center for the cultural interaction in Belgrade and “Suburbium” from Novi Sad [19]. The examples of cultural tourism development can be found only in traces. The most dominant in this sphere are the Exit festival in Novi Sad and Trumpet Festival in Guca, which became the trademark and brand of these cities. The Exit Festival has grown from variety of concerts and parties, performed in 2000 as a campaign of the United Serbian Youth Movement for Democratic Elections, into one of the biggest music festival in Southeastern Europe. While the culture can be identified as the main driver and goal of this festival, it cannot be subsumed under any model of urban regeneration. The key element of the strategy could be in connecting Novi Sad, the city – organizer, with other cities, while taking advantage of organized groups of people who attend Exit. Regarding the general environment of the creative sector development, Exit receives substantial financial support from the state compared to other events [20], but funds are not the only assistance that the state can provide to support and enhance organizational forms in the field of cultural industries. The clear and effective cultural policy and effective instruments of incentives are the needed starting point for developing and exploiting all the potential of cultural industries. A good example of cultural tourism development can be found at Mokra Gora. The unique narrow gauge railway “Sarganska osmica” (Sargan’s Eight), and ethno village “Drvengrad” (Fig. 2), have made Mokra Gora the inevitable tourist destination in Serbia. The connecting the ecological factors regarding the protection of the Tara National Park with the development of tourism based on natural resources, authentic architecture, local values and cultural amenities were the main goals of this project, which was implemented as an

economic monoculture. The main approach of this culture-led regeneration was the preservation of the area identity and tradition, which has, along with the Kustendorf Film Festival, generated the revival and revitalization of this area and the creation of recognized visiting place for artists and art events from all over the world. This project is the result of individual effort and enthusiasm of one man, supported by the Serbian government. However, such projects should be a part of national and regional strategies for the development of cultural tourism.



Fig. 2 Ethno village "Drvengrad"

Belgrade's candidacy for the 'European Capital of Culture' in 2020 represents the trigger for the promotion and revival of cultural life in the city, and all activities that are closely related to it (tourism, the hotel industry, services, transport). Since Belgrade has not had in modern history significant strategic project in the field of culture, the candidacy is a major challenge for the city. The long-term strategy of cultural development of the city in the next decade should be implemented through ten thematic sections, with the participation of all three sectors (public, private and civil), through networking with cities in Serbia, the region and Europe, and by including all artistic disciplines, the traditional and the modern [21]. Through the Belgrade's candidacy for European Capital of Culture, the proposed model and the concept of the strategy intends to present the rich cultural heritage and creative potential of Belgrade and Serbia to the European cultural society. The driving mechanisms in most projects in Serbia were economic benefits, with the main goals to create new forms of business and economic growth. It may be noted that there is a lack of achievement of other factors, primarily social, that would allow the implementation of a comprehensive process of urban regeneration.

Some initiatives show that culture is recognized as a development resource and the model of culture-led urban regeneration can be identified, while models of culture integration into urban regeneration program is not evident. In terms of creative strategies, Serbia is just at the beginning. The first essential factor for the development of creative city, that Serbian cities do not meet, are the creative people. Young and talented people are increasingly leaving the country due to lack of work and a general dissatisfaction with life. Additionally, there is an evident decline in tolerance towards other ethnic, religious, political and other non-eligible group, and the spread of prejudice and stereotypes.

This makes difficulties in the participation of foreigners and immigrants in the creative process and the mixture of different and diverse talent that advocate Landry [13] and Florida [10]. One of the main goals of building various technology parks is to create opportunities for creative people and to assure their staying in the cities. Developed cities in the world are competing for high technological standards and innovation, global trends and the general quality of life. In contrast to them the benefits of Serbian cities are authentic cultural, historical and ethnic diversity. For this reason it is necessary to develop a strategy of urban regeneration based on local cultural, intellectual and individual resources. Experiences and strategies of successful world cities, despite their differences in institutional, administrative and structural barriers may be helpful for educating the administration, professionals and investors. Another necessary condition for development is the change in the conservative management system both for the city government and resources, and the introduction of new legal and financial models, as well as the possibility of partnerships between the public and private sectors.

VII. CONCLUSION

The culture creates the city's identity and permeates its tradition and the way of life and therefore should be recognized as a resource. Creativity and imagination are the methods for the using and development of cultural resources. Culture should not be treated as a marginal activity; it should be integrated into urban development and urban regeneration strategies. Many cities around the world have recognized the importance of culture and have developed different approaches for the inclusion of culture in the urban regeneration. Emphasizing only one direction of development has been shown to be ineffective in many cases, and therefore the balance between heritage conservation, the promotion of arts and festivals and the development of new cultural and entertainment complexes should be achieved.

There are many successful examples of urban regeneration with the culture in the centre of the strategy. But, sometimes these examples are copied and their entire strategies are adopted, without referring to the local context. For this reason appeared the need for creativity, which was seen as the best tool for the cities to compete globally and improve the quality of life in them.

By using the talent and skills of people, creative solutions for the connection of the new trends and local traditions and customs can be found in order to preserve the identity of the city. The concept of the creative city is young and insufficiently developed, and there is no unique opinion on how this city should look like. In addition, different cities have different structure, identity and culture, thus it is impossible to make a perfect model of creative city that can be applied worldwide. The most important thing to bear in mind is that all investments in the creative city can be returned through culture, by creating a brand that attracts tourists or by development of new innovative technologies that can be also used by others.

In Serbia, there is no clearly defined strategy for using the cultural and creative potential within urban regeneration. It can only be found individual and random cultural and creative initiatives, which are based on economic factors and which potential has not been used for generating a wider regeneration programs. Major creative projects, technology parks and new technologies have appeared only in the plans and optimistic projects, initiated mainly by foreign investors. In addition, such projects are planned on the greenfield sites. Cities in Serbia can hardly take greater initiatives, but they can use existing assets that they have, local culture and values, and try gradually, in small steps to overcome their problems. Above all, it is essential to engage citizens in planning and decision-making process, in order to give them a feeling that they are the part of their city, as well as the desire to improve it.

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