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PRAZNINE U LOKALNOJ URBANOJ TERITORIJI. PERFORMATIVNI OBRASCI NA PRIMJERU NASELJA ČESMA-MADIĆ U BANJALUCI

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Apstrakt

Urbani razvoj slijedi logiku konteksta, ali oblici zauzimanja zemljišta nisu uvijek zasnovani na kontinuitetu izgrađenosti, te uzrokuju heterogene forme i pojavu urbanih praznina. Ovo je osobina gradova koji su se, usljed različitih uslova, razvijali spontano. Na primjeru posljednjih 20 godina razvoja naselja Česma-Madić u Banjaluci, rad definiše performativne obrasce praznina u strukturi niske gustine, kao specifične karakteristike grada. S obzirom na identitetarne vrijednosti urbanog diskontinuiteta, studija ističe njihove potencijale u procesima transformacija i potrebu daljih opsežnih istraživanja.

Ključne riječi: urbane praznine, struktura, (dis)kontinuitet, razmjera naselja, Banjaluka, Bosna i Hercegovina (BiH)

VOIDS IN THE LOCAL URBAN TERRITORY. PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR OF ČESMA-MADIĆ NEIGHBORHOOD IN BANJALUKA

Abstract:

Urban development follows the logic of a context, but forms of land occupation are not always based on continuously built structures, causing heterogeneity and emergence of urban voids. This is a characteristic of cities that, due to different conditions, have been spontaneously developed. On the example of the last 20-years-long development of Česma-Madić neighbourhood in Banjaluka the paper explores performative patterns of voids, as a specific feature of a low-density city. According to identity values of urban discontinuity, the study points out their potentials in processes of transformations and extensive further research.

Keywords: urban voids, structure, (dis)continuity, neighbourhood scale, Banjaluka, Bosnia and Herzegovina (B-H)

1. Introduction and objectives.

1.1. Introduction

Imagine a territory we know perfectly. We know its deepest conditions, its mechanisms of transformation, its historical evolution; we know its parts and the connections between them. But, if we have reached this level of knowledge about the place, it would be impossible for us to not know what tools or instruments to (we should) use to change it, regenerate it and protect it by planning. In the same way, if we recognize our ignorance about phenomena and contemporary logics of territories, we must also realize our lack of knowledge about the instruments or mechanisms of action and management, proper to the activity of planning [1].

Once we accept this initial hypothesis, it follows that instruments and space of the project necessarily overlap. This text presents one example of a parallel reflection on the object of study -the non-occupied space in a piece of the territory of Banjaluca city-, and the methods of criticism and projection, offering an approach to knowing its current behavior in order to be used as instrument of transformation.

1.2. Objectives

Following the logic of context of spontaneous development, socio-cultural preferences, spatial and other conditions, forms of land occupation are not always based on continuously built structures. On the contrary, they are often discontinuous, intermittent, heterogeneous, and permeated with voids, which is traditional character of B-H city. This also worth for Banjaluca [2], which through all development periods have had ambient values of “green” [3] and landscape city [4]. It was marked by the rarely built structure and presence of rural elements- garden and orchard on urban plots [4] [5], habit of small agricultural production, custom of staying along the river or the nearby resorts. Thus the nature was continuous environment for dispersed urban functions, and the open regulatory model was facilitating adaptation to changes [4]. 20 years of non-systematic post-war period of development is characterized by degradation of natural landscape in the city [3] [6]. Previous diluted structure of the city has significantly consolidated, while the discontinuity of the system of emptiness was moving to the periphery. The paper attempts to map and to define the structure of these spaces as well as different and hidden meanings of new voids in contemporary urban space, and their potential for future development of urban structure of Banjaluca.

2. Methodology. The case study.

The research is conducted on the case study of Česma-Madir - informal neighbourhood developed on the north-east periphery of the city of Banjaluca (the second largest city in B-H). Within the framework of qualitative urban analysis, the characteristics of urban pattern are analyzed considering aspects of: urban morphology, planning policy documents and author's personal experience

of informal space production `in situ`. In order to approach these, different techniques and analysis were used. Structure of urban voids has been observed in detail during the long-term stays on the site, conversations with inhabitants as well as on the base of cartography available and the new one produced by authors, by using satellite images and contemporary map of the neighborhood.

Česma-Mađir neighborhood is situated at the right bank of the Vrbas and Vrbanja rivers, 4 km away from the city centre, between protected natural sites, Mađir's field on the West, and Trapist's forest at the North-East (Picture 1). New "urban" construction of the neighborhood was developed reflecting the context marked by the war (1992-1995), following dynamic migrations and ongoing transition. The case study emphasizes the scale, form and importance of voids in a low-density structure.

3. Concept of urban void. A discussion.

The approach to planning of territory as Česma-Mađir neighbourhood will depend on how we understand these unbuilt spaces. What we consider as 'urban space' in this and other cases, represents a contemporary urban morphology that is nothing but the sum of forms, that have been taken throughout history, and which we perceived as a specific vision [7]. As morphological product, this tissue contains basic information both to understand and to plan it [8]. The arrangement of elements, which is never casual, forms a set of dependent relationships, capable of transmitting by itself logical or foresight future. If one knows how to observe it, this information could be a magnificent canvas for calibration of new possibilities.

Regardless of the scale, unbuilt territory becomes the area of attention of the user's eye of urban network, representing the capacity for growth and opportunity for the relocation of new uses and urban forms. From square to countryside, the environment appears fused with urbanization in what is the visible construction of our time, i.e., the contemporary urban landscape. It is also a reflection of (in)ability of the current "city" to deal with different systems of the territory.

Both urban and architectural research through the design have provided tools to define qualities and potential applications on urban voids. The definition of the three domains of Anderson [9] -residential, occupational and public-, with its diverse functions and internal typologies, helped to balance the importance of spatial systems with regard to the built structure. The emphasis on strengthening the structures of "green space", in urban plans of Secchi and Viganò [10] in Italy, showed that the network of open spaces could develop and grow by the "ecological infiltrations". Meanwhile, the banks of the Garonne river in Bordeaux witnessed the planning of the re-conversion of the industrial areas designed by Desvigne [11]. Green space was historically important in Bosnian cities, by defining structure of mahallas [12] and spaces which were emerging 'in-between' partially realised and isolated urban units [13]. Those "empty" and generic interstices are changed in a diversified range of solutions that allowed the incorporation of multiple urban uses, including residential function and facilities.

In this sense, we could learn to turn the voids into a powerful tools (of the project), which are the key ones for integration and central in terms of functional diversification. This way we could have proper and powerful approach for urban planning studies that appreciate the specifics of each territory, beyond terminologies and prejudices.

4. Urban voids in Česma-Madir.

As we could see, the structure of urban voids is a complex issue which deserves almost the same treat as urban structure. In attempt to open discourse about their importance for the image of the city of Banjaluka, we will discuss about their emergence, structure and meanings.

4.1. Emergence

Structure of voids emerged as the “negative” of built urban structure, developed with small initiatives of displaced and refugee newcomers' families in the process of urgent resolving of “roof over the head” problem. Spontaneous informal self-construction has been going on according to a kind of a *bottom-up* system, out of the planning system. In this chaotic process of construction, the space on urban border has become a playground with no rules. The development occurred sporadically and punctual, without conscious about broader context, other forms of spaces, complete image, density, (dis)continuity or further development and optimal function. 20 years after construction has begun, apart from unfinished houses, everything else is missing in Madir (basic infrastructure, transport communications and public facilities). As the land occupation was on a 'first-come-first-serve' basis [14], the plan emerged from land in relation between tenure, ownership and land acquisition in a direct 'in situ' process. Previous traditionally agriculture parcels of an approximate 2.500-5.000 m² were transformed into smaller ones, but this fragmentation neither was systematic or comprehensive. Although is just one of many unfinished and discontinuous processes, the land powdering influenced decrease in size and the number of agricultural parcels, low density built structure, and vast empty spaces.

4.2. Structure of voids

New self-produced pattern has interpolated into existing field configuration and stretched grid of streets, so fragmented urban structure spread dispersive and pervades with natural, agricultural and existing low density built structure, forming widespread structure of voids. These are conditionally abandoned parcels, parcels in the long urbanization processes, as well as nearby hills, forests, fields, river banks, agricultural land in-between, and many others on the border line between urban and rural area. They ranged from 'non-places' [15] 'terrain vague' [16] 'zones of disorder', 'bits of plot' and others like 'incomplete', 'unfinished', 'empty', 'free', etc. Form of the void is determined by inherited or adopted traditional using patterns so the shape of the plot is directly influenced the urban form. The land that used to be only property and topography, became the subject of distributive catalogue of planimetrics, where the art of

composition are treated in contrary with Sola-Morales's [17] systematic attention.

4.3. Meanings

Regardless of definition, urban voids have many different meanings. In most of cases voids are just greenery complements to built structures used as agriculture land. In others they have other meanings as spontaneously occupations and transformations in a kind of provisional “public” space, which residents missed to construct previously. It was a need and natural sequence of constructing the neighborhood, so some voids have become “public” as well as extensions by street, bus stations or yards' fences. But as “conquest” of spaces can never be definite, this turns to be constantly open collective process which is important for social interaction. They also have rich symbolic meanings for the image of the city with a great importance and potential for the place identity. Some of specifically symbolic spaces in Česma-Mađir neighborhood are Mađir's field; the flow of Vrbanja into Vrbaš river; Trappist forest; sloping foothills of Krčmarice village, etc.

5. Analysis of results. Sensational city.

Large plots of agricultural land, open fields and wide spaces full of greenery, long vistas and natural landscape between fragmented urban structure make a gradual transition from rural towards urban structure, so peripheral neighbourhood becomes porous border of the city. Despite sporadic dense construction, total low density leaves room for “breathing” and different experiences, that this place produces. This neighbourhood's character allows visible sense of weather changes and the transience that does not exist in other urban structures. It enhances the experience of living in a natural landscape, of the atmosphere and emotional quality, as elements of place [18], so Pallasmaa [19] calls on perspectives, which go beyond Vitruvius 'trinity' “utilitas, firmitas, venustas”.

The analysis shows that urban voids are not inarticulate spaces, but part of specific spatial network, complementary to the built structure so the emptiness becomes fullness. The widespread presence, meanings and using show that urban voids form an equal part of the urban structure of the city, as well as the continuous characteristic of identity. In accordance with these values, the study points to their potentials in the processes of transformation, and to extensive further research. Despite discontinuity of development, the incompleteness and imperfection, this urban space can be seen as a comparative advantage.

Urban voids should not be ignored as they were treated by Detailed Regulation Plan for the planning period from 2001 to 2010 (adopted in 2007, after 12 years of neighborhood expansion), which did not recognize their structural character. It considered them just as any other building land and tended for increasing density in accordance with the existing trends. However, 9 years after it was adopted, nothing of planed solutions was realized.

6. Conclusions.

Observing urban territories, as it is Česma-Mađir means to go beyond the acceptance of a diverse range of well-known forms of urban growth. This means striving to understand each of the needs and laws of individual behaviour and consider the need to discover the possibilities of generating new hybrid architectures and urbanizations at border locations. They allow reinforcement of a collective space in which we previously found only individual actions. Here we found a great number of urban things [20] from many sources: mostly mixed urban border emerged from the continuous rise of blocks of individual single housings with functional linkages but not really urban. The usual tiny scale intervention is found in the origin of this ground fertile for the differences: "blind streets", unfinished houses, in-between agricultural land, forgotten geographies, and autisms of places from tertiary sector, industrials or mixed uses etc.

What could be our work in this 'hyper-differentiated' context? We could start with bringing up the pre-existing conditions of the geography of these layers of individual and disconnected stories. We could clarify and dignify urban plots by access improving, connecting and increasing collective activities as urban catalysts. On the other hand, we could orient the understanding of this area towards a deeper urban character. That could be achieved by providing more comprehensive relationships, by integrating different spaces and periods of time, and allowing different levels of artificiality: city and countryside, previous settlement and new types and functions achieving a special combination of them. We should work with the form as well as with the program, distinguishing through a respectful observation towards behaviour patterns described and valuing the differences of these voids, so they could be identified as a system of social space without losing their strength and their natural beauty. But before of all these actions listed, we should address the issue both to citizens living in the neighbourhood and to local authorities as well as to the others agents of process of planning and development.



Picture 1. Position of neighborhood in the City. (1) Česma-Mađir; (2) Center. (Illustration by Authors)



Picture 2. *Urban void in Česma-Mađir neighbourhood, winter 2016 and summer 2015 (Source: Authors)*



Picture 3. *Interaction in the occupied public space in the process. (Source: Authors)*



Picture 4. *Urban voids vs. built structure in Česma-Mađir neighborhood. (Illustration by Authors)*

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