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University as Identity

Sveučilište kao identitet

Abstract • Sažetak

The quality of university education derives from the quality of face-to-face interacions. University spatial identity contribute to that quality because it encourages personal identification with community. The case study of Ljubljana proves the thesis about university identity: it derives not only from internal elements and linkages, but more from its relations to other forms of culture. The development orientation to urban university integrity could contribute to making recognizable university places.

Kvaliteta sveučilišnog obrazovanja proizlazi iz neposrednog međudjelovanja licem u lice. Prostorni identitet sveučilišta tome pridonosi jer potiče osobnu identifikaciju sa zajednicom. Slučaj Ljubljane dokazuje tu tezu o identitetu sveučilišta: on ne proizlazi samo iz unutarnjih elemenata i veza, nego još više iz odnosa prema drugim oblicima kulture. Razvojna orijentacija prema integritetu između sveučilišta i grada bi mogla dovesti do razvoja prepoznatljivih sveučilišnih mjesta.

1. Spatial Identity / **Prostorni identitet**

The idea of architecture as "identity"[1] reached the point where it rivals architectural discourses about space and language analogies. It comprises a series of related complementary topics about tradition and innovation, continuity and change, local and global... But all of them could be expressed in a word difference[2]. It could be added: not only the recognisable difference between heterogeneous essences of realities but also between their virtual abstractions (types) according to their common characteristics. The character of space could be symbolised by colours.[3] That could be called general identity.

Place identity could be defined as "*the interrelation of cognitive processes, social activity and formal attributes*".[4] "P*eople need an identifiable spatial unit to belong to*".[5] Some writers[6] emphasised the importance of being able to interact with architecture in a personal way in order to give a proper expression to the personal and social identity, especially due to having control over certain places. They have a "*dynamic, community forming force*"[7]. So we can become "friends" with a particular environment. Even more: places are parts of us.[8] Human identification "with"[9] a place presupposes that places have a character, distinct attributes which lend its unique presence or *genius loci* of its "*special identity to a place*"[10]. Analysing streets, Allan B. Jacobs[11] suggested that some of them are "great" and have "magic"-meaning the difference between our needs and wishes to be there.

General and special identities are just the two views of the same reality. It could be argued that both could be investigated on every level of wholeness: macro, regional, and local...

2. University Idea / **Ideja sveučilišta**

University is like an organism. It was born in the dark European Middle Ages but survived even an information revolution. It will probably exist in any form as long as its basic idea of community stays alive.

It represents a community of "free" seekers and offerers of knowledge and experience of the truth. First about the human spirit, body and interpersonal relations (*universitas magistrorum et scholarium*), then also about beauty (*universitas literarum*), and last about all scientific fields (*universitas scientiarium*) which bring many philosophers to the question of the freedom and idea of a university itself.

Community gives certain degree of guarantee for success in searching that truth to an individual especially in a university as a social acknowledged and institutionalised system of knowledge organisation and creativeness. So it also helps to form personal identity.

3. Materialisation and Dematerialisation of Idea / **Materijalizacija i dematerijalizacija ideje**

University idea is materialised in spatial elements and coherence - in space of communications. University building, university street, quarter, centre, "village", town... are forms of human representations of that materialisation.

The role of metaphors in changing university concepts is dynamic and creative.[12] The metaphor of university as a "*marketplace of ideas*"[13] emphasises the freedom of exchange. As a "*cathedral of learning*"[14] it represents privileges and superiority. University as a bridge[15] links the known and unknown world.

1 Košir, 1993: 372.
2 Abel, 1997: 151.
3 Turner, 1996: 189-198.
4 Abel, 1997: 145.
5 Alexander, 1977: 81.
6 Rapaport, 1968.
7 Violich, 1995: 206; 1996: 5.
8 Abel, 1997: 154.
9 Lipovac, 1997: 2.
10 Evans and Shalev, 1984: 94.
11 Jacobs, 1993: 11.
12 Abel, 1997: 100, 106.
13 Alexander, 1977: 231-235.
14 Turner, 1994: 237.
15 Lampugnani, 1986.

Complexity of university spatial conditions and needs derives from a series of contemporary contradictions between universality and scientific specialisation.

The most important immaterial university communications are social, visual and last but not least - virtual.

4. University Identity / Sveučilišni identitet

To have or not to have its spatial identity is the first question about the university. How it could be recognised among other systems and structures - is it a university at all? But it is not the only one. The questions about the causes of its present or not present identity are much more important. Which university is that?

Universalists would say that university has its own internal identity that is visible enough for us to recognise it in any of its spatial expressions. But relativists would argue that each university has only its own, unchangeable identity. "*Critical relativism*" [16] leads us to the suggestion that university is objective and relative, global and local at the same time.

Like in the whole reality, a series of opposites is present in every stage of university expressions. As long as they tend to their complementary dynamical equilibrium and to the balance to their larger wholes, they intensify the possibility of human recognition.

University identity derives not only from its internal elements and linkages, but more from its relations to other forms of culture. Its transformation and adaptation to regional circumstances doesn't mean losing but intensifying the expression of its identity.

A university community is not able to form itself without its own space. But if that space is not recognisable, university identification is impossible.

5. Urban Entity / Gradska cjelina

Connecting the term of university with the meaning of the word ubiety shows us several levels of university space that remind us of the whole urban complexity. It is not a coincidence. University derives from urban environment and belongs to it.

University is like an urban structure and community. But it is only a part of it. It possesses a special character of an institution and its community in all their ways of life. As one of town-making activities it comprises and (at the same time) forms a common, public and private urban level, rich layer of urban communications, but institutionally it belongs to the top of the hierarchical structure of the town. Though it is similar to a town in its spatial complexity, which could play its role, the university could not perform the role of the town. Definition of town as university town is clear, when university predominates as social, natural and cultural environment in urban space.

University is then an urban entity, but town represents university experience.[17]

6. Urban University and Campus / Gradsko sveučilište i sveučilišno naselje

Every single type of interrelations between university and city grows from certain conditions of space, time (single intervention or partial growth) and society.

16 Frampton, 1980; Abel, 1997: 124.
17 Zupančič Strojan, 1997.

Basic development dividing-line of university types is cultural (geographical): European and American. The combination of knowledge, offered in the first European universities, has no parallels to other cultures.[18] So we could talk about an important element of European identity. The American tradition represents regional transformation of the European one.

There are two types: urban university and campus (in alternatives: "academic village", urban campus and "wired-up" campus).

An urban university represents a dynamic balance of growth and coherence in the hierarchical city of wholeness (a part of campus grows there only in specific modern disciplinary circumstances and demands). If a university grows faster than a town, the interrelations of wholeness will be destroyed and an entirely isolated campus will emerge.

The common characteristics of campuses are homogeneity of programme, space and meaning, independence in relation to town.

In the fast growing town - with neutral, anonymous network of communications and building areas - urban communities don't have an opportunity to think about hierarchical forming of centres, which are perceptible due to their fast growth.

If a university grows as fast as or slower than a town, an urban campus will arise, which is at least partly interwoven with areas of urban public activities. But overtaking of urban growth results in an isolated, relatively self-sufficient centre of an "academic village", which could be formed anywhere by its own linkages.

In the outskirts university growth is always faster than urban growth, therefore an isolated campus is the only option.

The spatial homogeneity of a wired-up campus is transformed into virtual. But in spite of any kind of affinities with an urban infrastructure, its isolation as a whole stays above all other types.

Time in a cybercity is transformed into a single moment or into continuous flow. The virtual campus represents just the opposite of original meanings of the terms university and campus as spaces and communities.
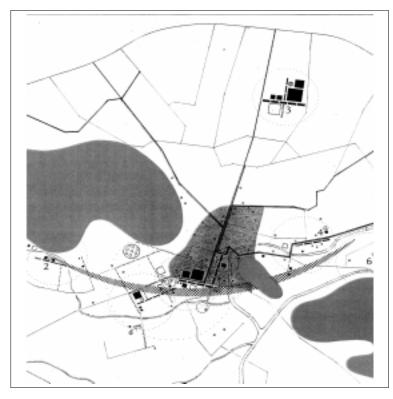
7. University and Cyberuniversity /
Sveučilište i virtualno sveučilište

Probably M. Christine Boyer[19] exaggerates with his suggestion that our notion of a real world is being ruined, writing about disappearing of a physical city in the information society. It is still a real space we live in and we need our homes. But it is true that information systems influence the way of thinking about university and town, researching and planning them.

Dualism of universalists' campus and relativists' urban form is transformed into a new one. Global function of the university is incorporated in cyberuniversity, while a local one remains in a real space.

Information system gives the university an opportunity to reduce unnecessary spatial internal coherence to immaterial communications and intensify its relations according to the affinities with the urban fabric and infrastructure. Lack of identity at the net level has to be balanced in a real space.

18 Mumford, 1938: 34.
19 Boyer, 1996: 242.

8. University Places - Case Study of Ljubljana / Sveučilišna mjesta - slučaj Ljubljane

The contemporary situation of the complete Ljubljana University (Fg. 1) shows an irregular structure of different levels of patterns. It is not a result of total planning, but of a continuous partly controlled self-organisation. In spite of that, the irregularity is only virtual, every element and coherence have own rationality, geometry and architectural expression. Special organ parts are developed according to the rules of forming their own wholeness. Even at the beginning it differs from others (because of its never fully implemented plan), the nucleus of social sciences is guided by the same rulers of growth. Every partial wholeness uses infrastructure of the whole city: the town connects the University. But those nucleuses add an internal infrastructure offer to the town as well. University-urban streets (except in the previously mentioned area) are developed parallel to important urban axes of public transport. Public University places are also urban places. The majority of a built-up area is interwoven with the urban area as well.

Internal linkages of the whole University are also virtual, forming a local university information network.

Urban spatial structure is enriched by university considerations (by mutual openness) about its own programme definition and personal indication.

Within the urban plain pattern there is a linear one: a pattern of emphasised sequence axes of university places (university poles

FG. 2. University identity derives not only from its internal elements and linkages, but more from its relations to other forms of culture. It encourages personal identification with community and direct contacts between seekers and offerers of knowledge and experience. Human creativity needs a lot of places of challenge

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SL. 2. Sveučilišni identitet ne potječe samo od njegovih unutarnjih elemenata i veza, nego još više od njegovog odnosa prema drugim oblicima kulture. On potiče osobnu identifikaciju sa zajednicom i izravne veze između onih koji traže i onih koji nude znanje i iskustvo. Da bi se pobudila ljudska kreativnost, potrebno je mnogo različitih mjesta

and their interconnections) with its own hierarchy in an urban network, which contributes to the value of an urban structure.

Ljubljana as a cybercity possesses also a kind of substitution of university identity; the Ljubljana "cyberuniversity" named Butterfly. That analogy could be recognised only in the scheme of network lines. Virtual university identity is based on the real one. It is fragmented and totally reduced to some images of university buildings.

University places of Ljubljana represent both, university and town, not because of a great number of students in comparison to the number of population, but because of the way they live together. An increased number of students should be observed on the most important urban meeting place - Preseren's Square – in an early afternoon (Fg. 2). None of buildings that university owns stand exactly there, but it is a place of challenge for all students and teachers. They mix with people going home from work and occasional events taking place there. In the evening students will sit on the same stairs, in street cafes... They fill the place with great energy of living without "serious" obligations.

All urban design contributions to better urban quality of life affect university as well - and the opposite. We could watch university students relaxing on the architect's Plecnik's reconstructions of the Roman wall of Emona like being their own possession (Fg. 3). That is one of the places of quiet dreaming, the second pole needed for human creativity.

9. Meaning of University Identity /
Značenje sveučilišnog identiteta

People communicate and interact with other people mainly by making use of their architecture, much in the same way they make use of their own bodies.[20]

The case of Ljubljana proves the thesis about the origins and richness of university identity. Some places of Ljubljana are called "university" just because university people use them. But some of

20 Abel, 1997: 117.

them, especially and more obvious, because university people interact with others - share and possess their common ubiety. The latter forms a university image of townspeople.

Why is university spatial identity so important? Because "*creativity does not proceed from a blank mind*"[21]. University identity encourages personal identification with community and direct contacts between seekers and offerers of knowledge and experience. And especially because the quality of university education derives from the quality of face-to-face interactions.

21 Abel, 1997: 116.

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Sažetak • Summary

Sveučilište kao identitet

Proučavanje sveučilišta i njegovog prostornog identiteta razvilo se iz analogija između simbolične uloge arhitekture te razvoja osobnog i društvenog identiteta. Zasniva se na analizi tipova poznatih sveučilišnih središta sa stanovišta prostornog odnosa između sveučilišta i grada. Sveučilištu identitet ne daju samo njegovi unutarnji elementi i veze, nego još više njegov odnos prema drugim oblicima kulture. Njegova transformacija i prilagođavanje regionalnim uvjetima ne znače gubitak identiteta, nego njegovo jačanje. Zašto je prostorni identitet sveučilišta tako važan? Zbog toga jer potiče osobnu identifikaciju sa zajednicom i izravne veze između onih koji traže i onih koji nude znanje i iskustvo. A osobito zato jer kvaliteta sveučilišnog obrazovanja proizlazi iz neposrednog međudjelovanja licem u lice. Slučaj Ljubljane dokazuje ovu tezu o porijeklu i bogatstvu sveučilišnog identiteta. Razvojna orijentacija prema integritetu između sveučilišta i grada bi mogla dovesti do razvoja prepoznatljivih sveučilišnih mjesta.

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Biography • Biografija

Assist. Tadeja Župančič Strojan, Ph.D., Arch. Eng., born in 1968 in Ljubljana, graduated in 1991 from the Faculty of Architecture at Ljubljana University. She did post-graduate studies and won her doctor's degree in 1995 with the thesis *University and Town - Locational Possibilities for the Development of Ljubljana University*. During that time she did research, and since 1994 she has been assistant in *Elements of Town Planning*. She is interested in urban design.

Asist. dr. sc. Tadeja Župančič Strojan, dipl. ing. arh., rođena 1968. u Ljubljani, diplomirala 1991. na Arhitektonskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Ljubljani. Nakon poslijediplomskog studija doktorirala 1995. g. s disertacijom *Sveučilište i grad - ubikacijske mogućnosti razvoja Sveučilišta u Ljubljani*. Za to je vrijeme radila kao istraživačica, a od 1994. asistentica je za predmet *Elementi urbanizma*. Bavi se područjem urbanističkog oblikovanja.