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URBAN RECONSTRUCTION OF BANJA LUKA
CITY CENTRE

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URBANA REKONSTRUKCIJA GRADSKJE JEZGRE
BANJA LUKE

STRUČNI ČLANAK
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FIG. 1 DETAILED PLAN OF A PART OF DOWNTOWN BANJA LUKA CITY, SPATIAL DISPOSITION
SL. 1. REGULACIJSKI PLAN DIJELA GRADSKE JEZGRE BANJA LUKE, PLAN PROSTORNE ORGANIZACIJE

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URBAN RECONSTRUCTION OF BANJA LUKA CITY CENTRE**URBANA REKONSTRUKCIJA GRADSKJE JEZGRE BANJA LUKE**

URBAN PLANNING METHODOLOGY
URBAN RECONSTRUCTION
VALUES
PUBLIC GOOD

METODOLOGIJA URBANISTIČKOG PLANIRANJA
URBANA REKONSTRUKCIJA
VRIJEDNOSTI
JAVNO DOBRO

Over the past decade, the city centre of Banja Luka (the second largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina) has been under extensive construction. An experience of its fast-changing cityscape initiated this research into a planning strategy for the urban and architectural interventions in the city centre in the post-war social setting. The aim of the research was to reconstruct the institutional factors involved in the process of planning the reconstruction of Banja Luka city centre, in order to explain the used town planning methodology and its relation to the social and political context.

Tijekom proteklog desetljeća gradsko središte Banja Luke (drugog po veličini grada u Bosni i Hercegovini) bilo je poprište opsežnih građevinskih radova. Brze promjene izgleda grada dale su poticaj da se ovo istraživanje oblikuje kao pitanje strategije urbanih i arhitektonskih intervencija u poslijeratnoj socijalnoj situaciji grada. Cilj istraživanja je rekonstrukcija institucionalnih struktura uključenih u proces planiranja rekonstrukcije banjalučke gradske jezgre kako bi se obrazložila korištena metodologija urbanističkog planiranja i njezin odnos prema društvenom i političkom kontekstu.

INTRODUCTION

UVOD

In the 20th century, Banja Luka went through several urban projects of reconstruction, that is, planned and guided activities of renewal and transformation of its urban structure and city life. Apart from the planned renewal in the aftermath of World War II, Banja Luka also underwent urban reconstruction in 1969, following a devastating earthquake, which brought radical change to the city life. However, the focus of the research presented in this paper is the planning strategy for the most recent cycle of reconstruction of Banja Luka's urban spaces, which has been taking place in the first decade of the 21st century, again in a post-war social context.

The aim of this paper is to explain the process of planning urban reconstruction of Banja Luka city centre. More specifically, it aims to clarify formal and institutional aspects of the planning process. To that end, the paper first presents the assumption that the process of urban planning is a social and political phenomenon, and not isolated practice by concerned professionals. The urban reconstruction of Banja Luka city centre is understood here as an urban and architectural intervention forming part of the "Project of Urban Reconstruction and Renewal of Banja Luka City Centre", which is currently under way.¹

When it comes to reconstruction of urban public space, the focus is on two major questions regarding the urban space. Firstly, what kind of public space results from urban plan-

ning and design, and who is supposed to have the upper hand in the process? More precisely, in what way does the resulting physical space direct and facilitate social interaction, communication and spatial non-exclusiveness? Secondly, is the process of the production of space public non-exclusive in the first place? The study of urban planning methodology falls within the scope of the second question, but these two questions are inseparable, as the nature of the first question depends on the answer of the second one. The research begins with the broadest definition of the concept of urban public space as an area of social interaction, communication, control, constitution of collective social life and individual choice. This research does not attempt to examine the theoretical, technological, economic, legal or political complexity of the phenomenon of urban public space.

In terms of urban policy and planning theory in Western countries, the key notions that have been reiterated are participation, legitimacy, and private-public partnership. Some authors address the social and political setting predominated by these notions as "political modernization".² Political modernization is seen as a change in the discourse and practice of city administration, and is connected with changes in the relations between three social components: state, market and social formations. Political modernization indicates major shifts of power, competence and accountability among members of the above-mentioned triad.³ The empirical question of importance for the research of urban planning methodology arising from this context is: who is involved in the political process, and who is not?

In terms of Banja Luka's urban setting, the social, i.e. political and economic situation is undergoing change. A specific planning methodology was applied in the socialist regime, which some authors today find traditional. The principal characteristics of the traditional urban planning methodology are its vertical hierarchy basis, professional expertise and state-initiated planning. It went without saying that the purpose behind planning was to apply the selected pattern of urban space development based on common interest, while never challenging the model of the decision-

¹ In the XVII CEMEX Building Award, an international competition in the field of construction, which was held in Mexico in October 2008, the City of Banja Luka received two awards for the "Project of Urban Reconstruction and Renewal of City Centre". The first award was presented to the City of Banja Luka in the category "Accessibility", and the other in the category "Sustainable Construction". http://www.cemex.com/mc/mc_ba.asp There are no town planning documents under this title.

² LEROY, 2000: 1

making process or the actual nature of the common interest. It is easy to assume that a methodology of planning urban interventions developed in one social system will operate with difficulty in different social circumstances. How does this incompatibility reflect on Banja Luka's public domain and public space, if we take into account the fact the social system has changed and is still changing?

The subject of this analysis is not urban or architectural spatial intervention seen as an outcome of the process of reconstruction planning. The focus is rather on the formal institutional steps in making decisions in the process of planning reconstruction. That process greatly precedes the stage of producing detailed spatial design drafts. There are several questions that need to be posed. Was the reconstruction of Banja Luka's city centre planned as a single, comprehensive project, and how was the planning process structured? What is the relation between the planning methodology of urban public space reconstruction and the social setting in which this process is taking place? Which stakeholders are supported by the preferential reconstruction planning strategy? Given the many interests of the social, political and economic sectors expressed in relation to the process of planning urban interventions, the issue of stakeholders brings us to the method used to formulate the public interest and the individuals or parties who participated in its formulation.

Since the process of urban planning is a highly complex social and political activity, this research was limited to the analysis of several basic documents indicating the methodology selected in the process of planning urban reconstruction. The first series of examined documents were legal documents providing insight into the fixed structure of the urban planning process, which does not allow modification by the planners. The second series of documents ought to indicate the selected methodology for the planning process filling the gap between the plan obtained as a result through planning and the legal framework as the initial fixed framework of the process. Did the selected reconstruction planning strategy remain within the boundaries set by the paradigm of traditionalist methodology, or does methodology

change simultaneously with the social setting? The planning process does not end once the plan has been completed, but in this research the reconstruction plan, i.e. the detailed plan will be the last document analyzed. The issues concerning the institutional framework used for plan implementation, spatial contents as an outcome of planning and the stakeholders in the stage of plan implementation will have to await further research.

RESEARCH METHOD

ISTRAŽIVAČKA METODA

This empirical research is based on the specific character of Banja Luka's urban structure and its social space. The time span under scrutiny is the first decade of the 21st century, when the Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City (Regulacioni plan dijela centralnog gradskog područja grada Banjaluka) was first adopted and subsequently amended; it was the primary reconstruction plan, based on which extensive interventions ensued in the physical structure of the city centre.⁴ The findings of this research are limited owing to the complexity of the urban planning methodology as a social and political phenomenon and the distance in time from which the problem is being examined. Therefore, they should be additionally checked using other methods. In terms of its theoretical background, the research adduces the urban planning process theory and communicative planning theory, that is, the transformation of the traditional planning paradigm into a more complex paradigm of participatory planning.

The following documents were analyzed: the Physical Planning Act (Zakon o uređenju prostora), which indicates a fixed structure of the planning process. The legislative structure of the planning process cannot be changed by the planners; instead, it forces them to take specific steps in the process. At the same time, the regulations make an integral component of the planning process, if that process is viewed as a social and political phenomenon. Law is not an isolated segment of the process; consequently, it may not be exempt from social criticism or change.

The second document analyzed was the Banja Luka City Development Strategy 2007-2015 (Strategija razvoja grada Banja Luka u periodu 2007-2015. godine). This document was selected for analysis because it contains guidelines for reconstruction of city core, and "urban rehabilitation and city renewal"⁵ is the operative goal of this strategy. Finally, the Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City was studied as the first higher-or-

3 LEROY, 2000: 1

4 Banja Luka's central city area has been the stage of dynamic building interventions over the last five years. Petar Kocić City Park, Krajina Square, Square of Serbian Sovereigns and the city market have changed both their appearance and functions; the pedestrian and traffic facilities downtown have been reconstructed; many structures have been renovated or reconstructed, and many new have been built.

5 *** 2008: 19

der plan for reconstruction, which makes the statutory framework for lower-order plans as well as urban and architectural reconstruction projects of Banja Luka's public space. The Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City is seen as a watershed in the process of planning urban reconstruction; after the Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City was adopted, the process entered the operative phase of preparation of large-scale technical documents. This research focuses on the period in the process prior to the adoption of the detailed plan, which is the stage of strategic decision making regarding the contents, values and goals of urban reconstruction.

SOCIAL SPACE AND URBAN PLANNING

DRUŠTVENI PROSTOR I URBANIZAM

As an introduction to the issues this research deals with, it would be interesting to consider several theses about the contemporary city setting and the role of urban design and planning as defined by Robert Fishman. Fishman's theses point to two principal issues of urban theory, namely, the issue of the urban planning purpose and goals in the contemporary social setting and the selection of urban planning methodology.

Bearing in mind specifically Le Corbusier's plan Voisin (1925), Fishman holds the view that the kind of utopia represented by this plan is now behind us. In the context of contemporary civilization, it is very difficult to support the principal concept of the plan Voisin, according to which it is possible and desirable to plan, design and renew cities and societies following a new unitary model. Rejecting utopia as a promising and prospective model also means rejecting one of Le Corbusier's major assumptions, the linear development of cities, or the idea that cities change successively according to a single comprehensive plan leading to a better future. Fishman's question is indirect and sceptical: do we still believe in unitary solutions, and are they possible after all?⁶

If we think along the same lines as Fishman in his thesis, we come to some rather interesting assumptions. If we overcome utopia, be it unintentionally, as it may, we reach a stage where cities are no longer the logical necessity for the growth of civilization or the accumulation of social energy. The development of networks of different forms of communication has made it possible to decentralize human habitations. The functional necessity to concentrate trade, administration and culture has disappeared, marking the completion of a period when cities were indispensable for the reasons mentioned. Currently, urban de-

velopment strives towards fragmentation, low density of construction, blurring the boundaries between the urban and rural settings. In contemporary circumstances this challenges the role of urban planning as such. The end of utopia means the impossibility to create and make operational a uniform pattern of city development, which would allow stakeholders to find a common interest. After generating other forms of communal habitation, with shopping malls, dense road networks, single-family housing, the Internet and television, the city is no longer the first choice as a place of living.⁷

Nonetheless, the city still holds the values which no other inhabited place has. The city may no longer be quintessential for the growth of civilization in terms of technology and trade, but it certainly is from the social aspect and the aspect of culture. Values such as sense of identity and history, public life and social and cultural diversity would vanish with the disappearance and stagnation of cities. In terms of this, urban planning essentially turns into a resistance movement. "...[R]esistance to the dominant trends that threatens to reduce regional diversity. Urbanism after the end of cities means preserving great cities, small cities, and rural open spaces against trends that otherwise engulf them and destroy them."⁸

The context of Fishman's thesis straightens out the issue of urban planning, because planning essentially strives to foresee a development of urban environment and to direct human activity along the chosen line of development. "In planning, the legacy of utopia is constantly present alongside architectural heritage: on the one hand, there is a tendency to overcome the problem entirely, to find a solution – a project. On the other, the utopian legacy asks for an overall vision, where everything is rationally connected so the complete idea has to appear / to work in a harmonized and logical manner."⁹ Planning strikes a balance between the utopian and corrective elements, though it frequently takes a form where one of the two elements prevails.

In any case, planning is a political process. As Nada Lazarevic-Bajec writes, every decision that needs to be made in the process of urban planning is a political decision, because

6 FISHMAN, 1998: 1

7 FISHMAN, 1998: 1

8 FISHMAN, 1998: 1

9 LAZAREVIC-BAJEC, 2000: 17

10 LAZAREVIC-BAJEC, 2000: 25

11 OPPERMAN, HARRISON, 2005: 320

12 VUJOVIĆ, 2004: 153

13 LAZAREVIC-BAJEC, 2000: 31

the consequences of the decision concern other people.¹⁰ The process of making decisions about the environment, likewise the process of urban planning in contemporary cities, is largely affected by social change. This is primarily the issue of the changing relation between state, market and society, which among other things reflects in the increasing number of those participating in the process of planning and decision making. As a result of the planning policy becoming increasingly complex, official and unofficial power distribution networks are created, and their activity affects public life, or city life.¹¹

Pluralism of interests makes the process of urban planning and design considerably more complex, particularly in the current transitional situation. Many authors dealing with planning theory view the city as an arena of conflict between the interests of many different stakeholders involved in the process of conquering or producing space. According to the conflict theory of society and cities, the category of social power has a very important role. Urban environment is the pivot of activity in a complex system of stakeholders, where some are in charge, while others are the opposition.¹² In any case, changes in the social, political and economic sectors or their interrelations lead to changes in the positions of responsibility and power of various protagonists.

Surely, many protagonists participate in the planning of urban interventions in Banja Luka's public space, that is, in the planning of its overall structure. The current formal model of urban planning, however, does not support the participation of all protagonists. Experience has shown certain groups of protagonists enjoy increasingly more advantage when it comes to expressing and integrating their interests in the process of urban change, while many others are left out.

The planning theory asks for continuous reconsideration of the conditions under which urban planning and other human activities may produce a better city, not only in the physical sense, but also in all other senses. Given the dynamic and unstable period of transition of the social setup, it is necessary to examine the current status of urban planning in Banja Luka. I agree with the thesis that asking useful questions about the ef-

fects of planning has greater chances of finding the right answers than simply improving the planning formula.¹³

The complexity of urban reality in the City of Banja Luka is additionally enhanced by the fact the Banja Luka City Urban Plan (Urbanistički plan grada Banja Luka) adopted in 1975 was in effect until 1990. In the meantime, many plans were adopted and modified, without a higher-order urban planning document to fall back on, especially in the current period of privatization and in the changing social system.¹⁴ The situation was most certainly aggravated by the fact the Republic of Srpska Urban Planning Agency based in Banja Luka was privatized in 2001, simultaneously with the transformation of the social system, when privatization mechanisms were still undeveloped.

PLANNING THE URBAN RECONSTRUCTION OF BANJA LUKA'S CITY CENTRE

PLANIRANJE URBANE REKONSTRUKCIJE GRADSKJE JEZGRE BANJA LUKE

Urban reconstruction may be seen as a specific urban intervention, because it means that the current condition of space or, more precisely, of social space, has faced criticism. The aim of urban reconstruction or renewal is not simply to plan the development of all aspects of a certain area, but also to change the direction of development of the environment. In what way were the goals of urban reconstruction of Banja Luka city centre defined, and who took part in their formulation? Does the formal process of urban planning allow the possibility of creating a "public arena, where the meanings of the terms of public good and public interest could be formulated?"¹⁵

Legislative framework for urban planning in the City of Banja Luka – The Physical Planning Act sets out the basic framework for the planning process, within which the methodology of urban planning in the Republic of Srpska develops. The Physical Planning Act, with some amendments, has been in effect since 1996.¹⁶ Do the stipulations of this act narrow the space within which the methodology of planning urban interventions is chosen? Who are the stakeholders whose participation in the planning process is compulsory, as defined by the act? Does it insist on advocacy planning – mandatory citizen participation in the planning process? Is a special procedure or a special plan required for urban reconstruction or renewal?

The Physical Planning Act defines spatial organization as a set of measures and activities within the scope of building processes, spatial and urban planning, urban, architectural and building design and construction. The



FIG. 2 A LEAFLET FOUND IN BANJA LUKA'S PUBLIC SPACE IN 2006

SL. 2. LETAK PRONADEN 2006. G. U JAVNOM PROSTORU BANJA LUKE

¹⁴ According to Plan Contents Regulations Book hierarchy of plans is set like this: Spatial Plan of Republic of Srpska (Scale 1:200 000), Spatial Plan of Specific Area (Scale 1:5 000), Spatial Plan of Municipality (Scale 1:25 000), Urban Plan (Scale 1:5 000), Master Plan (Scale 1:1000 or 1:500), Urban Design Project (Scale 1:500).

¹⁵ PETOVAR, 2003: 130

¹⁶ The passing of this Act made void the initial Spatial Organization Act, which was adopted in 1987.

goal of these measures and activities is to "harmonize" citizens' needs for housing, work and physical activity in a healthy and safe environment. Also, the goal is to create conditions for a "harmonious and uniform" growth of the Republic of Srpska, with a "balance of general and particular interests of all users of space." Due to the multi-disciplinary and complex character of the activity of spatial organization, the Act instructs commitment to comply with specific technical regulations.¹⁷ Also, it defines the purpose of planning as harmonizing development plans and programs to result in rational use of space, while adhering to principles of integral planning. It is obligatory to maintain the public character of the planning process and allow access to plans to all interested parties.¹⁸

"The planning of space and settlements is an integral part of a single system of planning and programming development, and represents a mandatory continual activity of all political and territorial units... The planning of space and settlements based on the study of natural, historical, demographic, economic, social, technical and other conditions ensures functional and rational organization and use of the available space, common-use goods, natural resources, material, cultural and ecological assets, rational energy consumption, preservation and improvement of the environment, and proportioning the interests of all space users."¹⁹

It is worthwhile mentioning the text of the Physical Planning Act which defines planning and spatial organization uses the word harmonization. According to the act, one of the principal goals of planning and spatial organization is harmonization. The act instructs harmonizing citizens' needs, common and individual interests and development plans and programs. This raises the key question of urban planning methodology: how should the needs and interests concerning space be harmonized? The process is additionally made complex by the fact the act does not specify the way to define the contents of the category of public interest or public good. In fact, defining them is made an integral part of the planning process.

Theoretical definitions of public good and interest vary considerably.²⁰ "When it comes to actual implementation, this tension runs wider and deeper, to the extent where it is possible to establish and show with certainty, based on an abundance of empirical material, that in planning we always deal with a conflict between heterogeneous, different positions of various stakeholders in terms of interests, quite often with a conflict between disparate ways of understanding the theoretical relation between individual and com-

mon, i.e. public interests."²¹ The same author offers an overview of the most dominant three political and philosophical concepts of public good, namely Jürgen Habermas's concept of legitimate needs and individual interests which can be made common, Karl Marx's concept of class interest, and the contemporary concept of the liberal model, whereby all different individual interests are legitimate. Yet, I would like to emphasize as very important the statement where the author paraphrases V. Held and says the signification of public interest depends on a specific socio-political context and the very procedures used to protect and promote it.²²

The reconstruction of an urban complex as physical planning activity is first mentioned in Article 16 of the Physical Planning Act. Reconstructing the existent parts of a settlement is defined by means of a plan, which refers to the detailed plan mentioned in the previous paragraph. Consequently, the detailed plan is the principal plan defining activities and measures of reconstruction and rehabilitation of public space in cities. All technical interventions of urban space reconstruction have to be in agreement with the goals and propositions of the relevant detailed plan. The Physical Planning Act does not stipulate a specific reconstruction plan. What methodology does the Act specify to be used when preparing a detailed plan? More precisely, who participates in its preparation?

The planning process intended to produce a detailed plan begins with the preparation of the preliminary design of the plan. "The contents, procedures and manner of the preparation, making and adoption of the preliminary design of the plan are more closely specified by the institution or organization preparing the plan. As for the spatial complexes of a city which are of particular importance, the creation of the preliminary design may be the

¹⁷ This concerns regulations stipulating environmental protection, use of farm and construction land, forests, water, ores, traffic, energy sector, preservation of cultural and historical heritage and nature, protection against natural disasters and war operations, and technological hazard.

¹⁸ *** 1996: Article 2

¹⁹ *** 1996: Article 2

²⁰ Petovar, 2003. In terms of the context of constructed space, Ksenija Petovar says in her book *Our Cities Between the State and Citizen* that public good comprises two kinds of assets or values: materialized and non-materialized. She understands the materialized assets as those which can be quantified and specified using exact measures (PETOVAR, 2003). In terms of public space in cities, I recognize material values as spatial or physical characteristics of these spaces, whether as individual parts, entities integrated in the city matrix, or the image of public space. It is possible to determine those spatial or physical characteristics quantitatively. Immaterial values result from the 'sedimentation' of natural, historical, cultural, economic, political, social and other layers in the urban environment.

subject of a public competition.”²³ The Physical Planning Act specifies the body of the city assembly in charge for urban planning matters as the “incumbent” responsible for the plan preparation, while the actual “making of the plan is entrusted to enterprises, that is, other legal entities licensed for the making of specific types of plans, in accordance with this act.”²⁴

During the making of the plan, it is obligatory to cooperate with “all the interested stakeholders”, and also “harmonize” the plan in accordance with their views. The “stakeholders” are identified in this order: Chamber of Commerce, organizations in charge of activities of planning and programming the development of water resources management, traffic, health sector, culture, housing and utilities, surveying, geological, geophysical, seismic and hydro-meteorological operations, operations of statistics, agriculture, forestry, tourism, preservation of natural, cultural and historical heritage, environmental protection and defence. Next, it mentions “other parties”, who are consulted to the extent as dictated by the plan; more specifically, it is necessary to “obtain their opinion about the solutions of the plan falling in their field of expertise.”²⁵

The definition of those participating in the making of the plan as given in the above-quoted article is not quite clear. In its initial part, the paragraph says “all interested stakeholders” and “other parties”, which can, therefore, also be related to citizens and citizen associations. The second part of its text mentions specialist planning and programming organizations for particular areas, thus specifying the interested stakeholders whose cooperation is obligatory are actually expert advisors. The act specifies another protagonist in the process of “making” the detailed plan, which is the planning council. Again, the council is an expert body, representing a

form of expert or technical control of the quality of the plan.

All those parties not explicitly named in the act can see and respond to the initial results of the planning process during a stage called the “public inspection of the plan”.²⁶ Public inspection lasts 30 days and represents the only stage in the planning process when citizen response, i.e. the response of protagonists not directly involved in the making of the plan is given the legitimacy which allows it to be accepted and taken into consideration by the planners; naturally, only in cases when the planners accept the legislative framework as their planning methodology. In that context, the planning steps are identified with the procedural pyramidal steps as prescribed by the law, while the rest of the space within the process is seen as private space for expert or technical work, which should not be interfered with.

The Physical Planning Act, together with the Regulations on the Spatial Planning Policy,²⁷ makes a broad framework for the selection of urban planning methodology, irrespective of the type of urban intervention concerned. The act defines the pyramidal decision making procedure; of course, this procedure can be viewed critically, but it still leaves room for forming a planning methodology matching a specific social/spatial issue. The question is if the Physical Planning Act has left too many categories undefined, thus making the work of planners more difficult. The act obviously insists on harmonizing common and individual interests, which keeps open the debate about what the common interest is, who decides on what it is and in what way. Apart from insisting on balancing common with individual interests, the act does not require or promote any direct participation of non-technical persons or bodies in the process of urban planning, i.e. the creation of master plans.

Protagonists defining goals and qualities of the city’s development strategy – The Banja

Luka City Development Strategy 2007-2015 is a document adopted by the city government in April 2008. This document is relevant inasmuch as it defines the “rehabilitation of the city centre and urban renewal” as the operative goal of the city development.²⁸ It is worthwhile mentioning the fact that the Banja Luka City Development Strategy 2007-2015 and the Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City, which is analyzed in the next chapter, are and will be in effect during the same period of time, from 2007 to 2015. However, the development strategy, which is a higher-order document due to the magnitude of its concept and spatial coverage, was adopted a year after the revised version of the detailed plan had been passed.

21 VUJOŠEVIĆ, 2004.b: 4

22 VUJOŠEVIĆ, 2004.b.: 5

23 *** 1996: Article 49

24 *** 1996: Article 49

25 *** 1996: Article 57

26 *** 1996: Article 60

27 The Regulations on the Spatial Planning Policy is a legislative document stipulating a specific number, title and contents of the documents constituting spatial intervention plans. Together with the *Physical Planning Act*, it forms the legislative foundation for planning in the Republic of Srpska. The Regulations Book was adopted and came into effect in 2002, making null the *Instructions on the Mandatory and Uniform Methodology of the Preparation and Creation of Master Plans and Urban Designs* in the Republic of Srpska. It would be interesting to compare the three documents in further research. The analysis of the Regulations Book did not reveal any information relevant for this research.

28 *** 2008: 19

The city's strategic development plan was composed of three institutions in cooperation with the Banja Luka City government, which were mainly economic institutions: Institute of Economics, Faculty of Economics and the "Synergy" Association. The task of this consortium was to delineate a "commonly acceptable and realistically feasible development strategy for the City of Banja Luka", using "contemporary methods of preparation of strategic documents".²⁹ The document mentions the secondary contributors assisting in the preparation: City Development Agency, Centre for State Development and Growth, and City Tourist Organization.

The part of the strategy explaining the methodological approach in the preparation of the document states that the method selection came from the terms of reference written by the city government. I wish to single out two out of the four theses which according to the authors are implicitly included in the creation of the document: "...Development requires a social consensus of all interested parties, both those who will be affected by the strategy and those who will be in charge of its implementation" and "the users ought to accept the development strategy as their own, not as something imposed from outside"³⁰. These statements attract attention as they directly relate to the subject matter of this research, which is the issue of participation in the decision-making process, in the light of which they raise the question of the formulation of the statements. Ought the users to "accept the development strategy," or ought the strategy to be formed so as to allow the users to identify with its theses?

A number of studies and input data were used in the preparation of the strategy. I wish to single out four groups of the input data indicating a shift towards the paradigm of participatory strategic planning: public survey findings, business people survey findings, conclusions and recommendations of focus groups, and conclusions and recommendations of working groups. Fourteen focus groups were organized, which took part in the discussion about the vision and goals of the development strategy: 6 focus groups were selected from local communities, and the rest comprised groups of youths, experts, civil sector, economy, culture and sport representatives. The survey included 6,200 Banja Luka citizens, of whom 4,938 urban area residents. A hundred and sixty-four business entities were surveyed. Workshops were organized for the working groups in charge of the socio-economic analysis, spatial, infrastructural and environmental development, industrial and economic development, and social development. Apart from the working group experts, there are no lists identifying

the workshop participants. A public debate was organized, in which approximately 1,200 citizens participated.

The strategy is conceived as a structure with six strategic objectives. Each of these objectives has its own operative goals, and each of the goals has its own programs. So, the strategy was elaborated into concrete actions in the actual space. The first strategic objective is sustainable development and more efficient resource management. The first strategic objective should be accomplished through six operative goals. Some of them are rational use of space, preservation and upgrade of environment, and balanced development of Banja Luka's urban areas. The operative goal of the city development defined as rational use of space really indicates rational organization and arrangement of the city space, "with clearly set guidelines in terms of the intended use of space and its urban renewal".³¹ "The implementation of this goal means the application of contemporary methods in the area of spatial planning and management, in line with contemporary urban and economic principles, which would give Banja Luka the profile of a modern European city."³² However, no contemporary methods in the area of spatial planning and management are specified further in the text.

The same operative goal is further in the text broken down into two programs, or more precisely into two implementation steps: 1) intended use of space, and 2) urban rehabilitation and city renewal. It also specifies the indicators which are to be used for monitoring the two implementation steps. These indicators are primarily quantitative: degree of coordination between a plan and its implementation, number of created industrial zones, area or length of protected areas, number of constructed squares, parks and "facilities", establishment of accurate real property records, number of legalized buildings, as well as profits from more rational city management.³³

A detailed analysis of the methodology used in the preparation of the City of Banja Luka Development Strategy 2007-2015 goes beyond the scope and aim of this research, as in this case it represents only one document used in the process of planning urban reconstruction. Rather, the focus is on all the formal steps constituting the process and their positions in it. Obviously, it was not only adminis-

29 *** 2008: 7

30 *** 2008: 8

31 *** 2008: 19

32 *** 2008: 19

33 *** 2008: 19

34 These data are stated in the text of the final version of the revised Plan adopted in 2007.

trators and experts who took part in the making of this document. Yet, a detailed inspection of the compatibility between the final text of the Strategy and the views of the many protagonists who took part in the discussion in the working stage would provide information about the decision-making policy.

The methods of participation and active involvement of different protagonists used in the creation of the City of Banja Luka Development Strategy 2007-2015 announce a change in the paradigm of planning strategic documents. However, the strategy is only one document in the complex structure of the urban reconstruction planning process, and urban reconstruction is only one of the many goals of this document. Due to its characteristics, this strategy should be at the start of the urban reconstruction planning process, whereas in reality, it was adopted last. As such, this document may be seen as the instigator of a new cycle of urban reconstruction.

Urban reconstruction plan – Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City – The detailed plan for the central area of Banja Luka was adopted in 1991. The central city area, as delineated in the plan, covers an area of approximately 44 hectares. The Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City regulates the main city square (Krajina Square), City Market, Petar Kočić Park, the pedestrian streets Gospodska and Bana Milosavljevića and Serbian Sovereigns Square. Since the year of its adoption, the plan has twice been officially amended. Additionally, during the preparation of the Master Plan "South 7", a part of the plan for the central area was also included and modified.³⁴ The decision of the city government to revise the plan again was made in 2004, and the revised version was adopted in 2007. Based on the conclusions drawn after the analysis of the act, the guidelines and goals formulated in the stated detailed plan represent a basis for social/spatial interventions of urban reconstruction. There is no other comprehensive plan for urban reconstruction apart from the detailed plan. For that reason, it is important to reconsider the methodology used during the preparation of the detailed plan for city centre and the goals formulated in it, prior to any recapitulation of the urban reconstruction planning strategy.

Three reasons are stated as the causes for the revision of the plan, namely a lack of develop-

ment of the central city area guided by a plan, which is a consequence of the war and post-war situation during the 1990s and the pressing need to provide office space in the city centre, as well as the need to review the traffic scheme.³⁵ The textual supplement of the plan offers only a very short description of the methodology used in its preparation. The city administration played an active role in the making of the plan, and several expert debates were organized and the procedure of public inspection used to create a document as good and complete as possible. Also, the revision of the plan was "coordinated in terms of contents and methodology" with the stipulations of the Physical Planning Act and the Regulations on the Spatial Planning Policy.³⁶ Also emphasized is the fact the Plan is in harmony with the attitudes of bodies and organizations as stipulated in article 56 of the act, through consultation with a "great number of interested parties (mainly legal entities)".³⁷

According to the Physical Planning Act, detailed plans are based on higher-order plans. The Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City adduces the 1975 Banja Luka City Urban Plan as the legitimate document "regulating general and particular goals of urban development and the basic concept of the city's urban growth." The urban plan defines the city centre as the most significant city area, whose buildings have constituted "Banja Luka's physiognomy and character to date." It also mentions a new urban plan of the City of Banja Luka which is currently being prepared, and which will take into account the growing need for office space in the city centre, "with respect to its development and changed character, based on which it is becoming the administrative and cultural centre of the region, creating a need to increase office space in relation to housing, even in terms of the existing buildings."³⁸ So, the detailed plan for the central city area is conceptually also based on the Banja Luka City Urban Plan covering the period from 1975 through 1990, whose preparation methodology may basically be termed traditionalist, as well as on the new urban plan, whose preparation is under way and whose methodology is yet to be analyzed.

Architectural and Urban Design Competitions – The overview of the data and documentation used for the preparation of the detailed plan lists 6 documents. Apart from the 1975 Banja Luka City Urban Plan, it does not include the program of the new urban plan, although it is quoted in the text, as previously stated. We may assume the incumbent institution which produced the detailed plan, the Institute for Urbanism of the Republic of Srpska, has access to this program, as the same institution is making the new urban

35 *** 2007: 9

36 *** 2007: 10

37 *** 2007: 12. The interested parties stated are the Electric Company, City Heating Plant, Srpska Telecom, PUE Waterworks, and Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of the Republic of Srpska.

38 *** 2007: 10

plan. The list also contains the 1991 Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown of Banja Luka City and its amendments, as well as the Evaluation of Cultural and Historical Heritage with Preservation Measures. Entry 6 reads: Award-winning designs, Competition for Preliminary Architectural and Urban Design for Serbian Sovereigns Square and the pedestrian streets Gospodska and Bana Milosavljevića, held in 2004.

Competitions produce urban and architectural designs and are certainly a positive way for professionals to compete publicly in order to create sociably acceptable physical space. Additionally, competitions allow more active citizen participation in the selection of an architectural and urban design through exhibitions of competition entries and public debates about the works presented. However, the decisions concerning competition details such as what area is to be the subject of the competition, as well as the selection of the entry which is deemed most acceptable are part of the strategy of urban planning, and are certainly political.

The competition listed under number 6 in the text of the detailed plan was preceded by two competitions covering the same area in 2000 and 2002 (awards were presented following both these competitions). Why were these designs rejected? The reconstruction of the Petar Kocić Park, located in the city centre, was the subject of an urban and architectural competition held in 2002 with the winning design being constructed in 2007. The competition for the reconstruction of the Palace Hotel and Business Centre, located in the immediate vicinity of the park, was held in 2003. However, the winning design has not been implemented yet. Krajina Square, situated between the Palace Hotel and Petar Kocić Park, was reconstructed in 2004 without a public urban and architectural design competition. It is a fact that the mentioned competitions were held during a period which is a kind of transitional period when it comes to urban plans. This happened after 2001, when the 1991 Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City was no longer in effect and during the preparation of the new detailed plan (2004-2007).³⁹ At the same time, the Banja Luka City Urban Plan currently in force was adopted in 1975. In conclusion, should we see these competitions as a positive public method of searching for the goals and qualities to be integrated in the development of the city centre in the aftermath of the civil war, or are the effects of the competition in the absence of up-to-date planning documents damaging rather than beneficial, as they leave plenty of room for unofficial manoeuvring dictated by interests?

The methodology used in the preparation of the Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Ban-

ja Luka City should be studied in subsequent research by means of surveys or interviewing those who participated in its making. The reason why these research methods need to be employed is the fact there are no documents explaining the planning methodology applied. In the text of the detailed plan, the authors adduce only the act as their methodological framework. Both the act and the text of the detailed plan fail to specify the way in which planners deal with the interests that wish to be integrated in the final planning product, or in which way the public welfare or public interests are defined. This part of the planning process currently takes place during the phase of the technical elaboration of plans.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

ZAVRŠNE NAPOMENE

The aim of this research was to reconstruct the formal steps of the strategy of planning urban reconstruction of Banja Luka's city core, which has been under way for several years now, in order to clarify the used urban planning methodology and its relation to the social and political setting. The key problem following the research was the inability to establish a connection between urban reconstruction as a series of practical and concrete spatial interventions and urban reconstruction as a concept in the researched documents. Although urban reconstruction of the city centre is specified in the analyzed documents as an operative goal, primarily in the Banja Luka City Development Strategy 2007-2015, there is no single, all-inclusive project of urban reconstruction of the city centre, whose values and goals are defined by a single, autonomous plan. Urban reconstruction of the city centre may be seen as comprising all urban and architectural interventions actualized within that area over the past few years which invoke the stipulations of the Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City.

The formal methodological approach in the preparation of the Detailed Plan of a Part of

³⁹ Intention with all of the mentioned competitions for urban and architectural design was to get preliminary design of actual urban space.

Downtown Banja Luka City relied exclusively on the legislative framework. The textual supplement to the plan insists that, in terms of methodology, the planning process should be in coordination with the Physical Planning Act and the Regulations on the Spatial Planning Policy. Also, the planning process, or the preparation of the detailed plan, remained in the domain of expert work, whose most important aspect is the coordination of expert opinions.

The Physical Planning Act leaves plenty of space for the selection of urban planning methodology, regardless of the type of urban intervention. The law specifies fixed pyramidal procedures of decision making, but the process nevertheless remains indefinite between the institutional steps of making decisions as to who produces and adopts a plan, and what type of plan it is. The act visibly insists on balancing common and individual interests, although the debate remains open as to what the common interest is, who decides about what it is and in what way this decision is made.

We cannot equate the methodology used to prepare the Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City with the process of planning urban reconstruction, despite the fact that the detailed plan is the principal document which all reconstruction is based on. Urban reconstruction began prior to 2004, the year it was decided to revise the detailed plan, with a series of urban and architectural competitions for the most prominent public city spaces and actual spatial interventions. In this context, the planning process may be seen as highly dynamic and nonlinear since the relevant planning documents were produced and adopted with no regard for temporal succession.

The revised version of the Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City is based on the Banja Luka City Urban Plan as a higher-order document. The urban plan was adopted in 1975 and became void in 1990. The 1995-2005 draft plan never became the new urban plan, until in 2003 activities began to produce a new urban plan. Currently, the 2008-

2020 Banja Luka City Urban Plan is expected to be adopted. A number of preliminary urban and architectural competitions were held during the period of revision of the Detailed Plan of a Part of Downtown Banja Luka City, while the Banja Luka City Development Strategy 2007-2015 was produced and adopted after passing the detailed plan.

Should we single out the Banja Luka City Development Strategy 2007-2015 as the most recent document specifying urban reconstruction, there is an evident shift in the methodology used to produce this strategic document. Banja Luka's citizens were involved in the creation of this document through a survey, interviews and debates about the city's future. However, this shift in the paradigm of decision making stays on the general strategic level. The operative level, where common values become concrete spatial actions, still remains in the domain of experts, technical personnel and political bodies. It is absolutely necessary to develop methods to translate general strategic objectives into solving concrete spatial and social issues, with active involvement of the largest possible number of interested parties.

What remains to be analyzed and explained in further research is the second part of the urban reconstruction planning process, the part which followed the adoption of the detailed plan. It is important to examine the results of planning, more precisely, the quality of the actual interventions carried out in space and the extent to which they are in coordination with the values or qualities integrated in the detailed plan. Public advocacy, i.e. citizen participation or the involvement of as many parties as possible in the planning process will not lead to commonly acceptable goals and values. Changing the paradigm of urban planning towards active citizen participation is not a goal in itself. Planning should lead to the goal of creating a high-quality environment. In a specific case, the goal is creating high-quality public urban space, which will generate the essential social qualities of communication, equality and equity, along with its physical values.

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ILLUSTRATION SOURCES

IZVORI ILUSTRACIJA

- FIG. 1 Banja Luka City Official Web Page
http://www2.banjaluka.rs.ba/static/uploads/regulacioni_planovi_novi/5o_centar_1/51-RP_dijela_centra_BL.jpg
- FIG. 2 A leaflet found in Banja Luka's public space in 2006

SUMMARY

SAŽETAK

URBANA REKONSTRUKCIJA GRADSKJE JEZGRE BANJA LUKE

Tema ovog istraživanja institucionalna je strategija planiranja na kojoj se temelje projekti urbane i arhitektonske rekonstrukcije provodene u posljednjih deset godina u javnom prostoru grada Banja Luke. Cilj istraživanja je rekonstrukcija formalne procedure planiranja urbane rekonstrukcije banjalucke gradske jezgre, koja se provodi nekoliko godina, kako bi se obrazložila primijenjena metoda urbanističkog planiranja i njezin odnos s društvenim i političkim kontekstom. Istraživanje postavlja sljedeća pitanja: Je li rekonstrukcija banjalucke gradske jezgre osmišljena kao jedinstven i cjelovit projekt, te kako je stvorena struktura procesa planiranja? Koji su dionici zastupljeni odabranom strategijom planiranja rekonstrukcije? Imajući na umu

mногоstruke interese koje društvene, političke i ekonomske strukture imaju kad je riječ o planiranju urbanih intervencija, pitanje dionika dovodi do metode oblikovanja javnog interesa i onih pojedinaca ili grupa koji su sudjelovali u njegovom definiranju. Metoda sadržajne analize koristila se pri istraživanju relevantne dokumentacije. Istraženi su sljedeći dokumenti: Zakon o prostornom uređenju, Razvojna strategija grada Banja Luke u razdoblju od 2007. do 2015. godine i Regulacijski plan dijela gradske jezgre Banja Luke. Glavni problem tijekom provođenja istraživanja bilo je uspostavljanje veze između urbane rekonstrukcije kao niza praktičnih intervencija u fizičkom prostoru i urbane rekonstrukcije kao koncepta u analiziranim dokumenti-

ma. Zaključuje se da rekonstrukcija gradske jezgre ne postoji kao jedinstven, sveobuhvatan projekt te da nema specifičnog plana koji bi definirao njezine ciljeve i vrijednosti. Rekonstrukcija banjaluckog centra može se shvatiti kao zbroj urbanih i arhitektonskih intervencija koje su se fragmentarno provodile tijekom nekoliko posljednjih godina. To je posebice odraz pojedinosti navedenih u Regula-cijskom planu dijela gradske jezgre Banja Luke koje se odnose na prostorno planiranje. Kao ostavština prethodnog društvenog, političkog i ekonomskog sustava, formalni pristup urbanističkom planiranju i dalje se koristi s tendencijom prema prilagođavanju složenim suvremenim okolnostima koje odlikuju mnogostruki interesi.

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BIOGRAPHY

BIOGRAFIJA

NEVENA NOVAKOVIĆ, Dipl.Eng.Arch., has worked as research assistant to the Chair of Urban Planning at the Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering, Banja Luka University from where she graduated in 2003 at the Department of Architecture. She is currently a doctoral student at the Faculty of Architecture, Belgrade University where she is conducting research on the aspects of urban public space related to cult and politics. Having received the Junior Faculty Development Program scholarship, she spent a semester at the Taubamn Collage of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan.

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