

Protection and restoration of cultural properties in spatial and urban planning in Serbia; Case study: immovable cultural properties in Brankovina

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Abstract

Serbia contains a large amount of immovable cultural properties which protection is regulated by law, strategic documents and rules pertaining to this field. The exact situation in the field is often specific and has to be solved from case to case. For example, an urban plan for the cultural and historical complex of Brankovina – the immovable cultural property of exceptional importance, has never been developed. Considering the importance of the locality, any construction activities in a wider area have been forbidden by a special document. This has brought many problems in the use of space and has also led to illegal construction and stagnation in the development of the settlement, as well as made the construction of public and utility facilities impossible. After the decision to develop a plan of general regulation was made, the next step was to create a program for the development of this area and provide spatial, economic and functional conditions that would enable future development and protection of this area and normal subsistence of local population, along with solutions for necessary infrastructure. The paper presents investigations of the current situation and gives guidelines for future development, which implies local economic recovery, protection and restoration of buildings, possibility to develop tourism of small economies and cultural tourism offer. The Plan especially deals with the reconstruction of protected cultural properties based on bioclimatic principles and principles of energy efficiency and ecologically sustainable development. *Keywords: protection, restoration, spatial and urban planning, protected cultural properties, cultural tourism, and bioclimatic principles*

1. INTRODUCTION

Major guidelines for the protection and sustainable use of cultural heritage in Serbia, as defined in the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia, relate to areas containing immovable cultural properties and their surroundings, the protection of which is regulated by legal regulations, planning and strategic documents and rules pertaining to this field [6]. The General Regulation Plan (GRP) for the settlement of Brankovina, developed by authors of this study during 2013, is a starting document and basis for the management of sustainable development of local community, the use of space and spatial planning. Brankovina is a very important cultural center with preserved authentic values which has been proclaimed the cultural property of exceptional importance, together with environmental protection. The need for making an adequate plan which would offer a realistic basis for solving numerous problems in the use of space, primarily illegal construction around immovable cultural properties, was conditioned by exceptional importance of this locality, as well as by a lack of planning documents. In addition, the primary constraints for an efficient protection of natural resources and immovable cultural properties include inefficient tourism promotion and poor accessibility of natural and cultural heritage due to inadequate network of roads and other infrastructure systems.

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The specific aim of the Plan was to define a program for the development of this area which should provide spatial, economic and functional conditions for the future development of the area.

The village of Brankovina is situated in West Serbia, twenty kilometers south-west of Belgrade. Due to its great cultural significance and natural values, Brankovina has been recognized in plans of higher level as a future center of community of villages, as well as a spirituality and cultural center of this region. There is no a coherent center of the village within the boundaries of the planned area. The potential for the spatial, functional and cultural development lies in its traffic-favorable position, significance and recognizability of cultural and historical complex of Brankovina, its cultural, spiritual and historical values, and tradition. Landscape values, available potential for tourism development and inclusion into tourism offer of Serbia provide an additional basis for improving its specific values. At the same time, in the period 1991-2001, the population of Brankovina declined by 30%, while the projection up to 2021 is further decline of about 55%. Unfavorable changes in the age structure also indicate that there are serious problems, which is contrary to the Development Strategy of the Republic of Serbia. The GRP offers solutions for mitigating the depopulation trends through economic, social and other measures related to economic development of the settlement.

The Plan is an initial planning document and a basis for directing the sustainable development and the use of cultural properties. The Law on Planning and Construction specifies methodology for making urban plans for areas containing protected immovable cultural properties with the protected environment. The requirements which must be met in making plans are issued by cultural heritage preservation institutes. The major objectives of the GRP are: to provide planning documentation; align long-term and short-term needs and interests; determine the place and rank of Brankovina on the Cultural Map of Serbia; develop a programmatic and spatial concept for its development; provide space and requirements for the preservation and protection of cultural and historical complex of Brankovina and nature conservation; establish immovable cultural property protected zones with appertaining natural areas; align economic, social and environmental aspects and aspects of spatial planning (development of agriculture, tourism, small economies, crafts); infrastructure development; blend the existing buildings into their surroundings (adaptations, reconstructions, etc.); as well as to improve environmental quality.

2. CULTURAL AND NATURAL POTENTIAL

The cultural and historical complex of Brankovina – the immovable cultural property, is a very important cultural center in Serbia with preserved authentic values proclaimed the cultural property of exceptional importance with protected environment – natural area. The protection of the landscape and its cultural and historical values, as well as linking of architectural structures and immovable cultural properties with natural environment, is a basis for developing this area. Speaking about landscape planning and design, Tratsela et al. [12] said that new terminology, concepts and methods developed in the context of ecology have been widely used in landscape architecture, especially in the field of environmental protection and sustainability issues. Natural values of this area include favorable geographical position, preserved natural ecosystems with low level of air pollution, landscape values in relation to ambience and views, forestland, orchards, meadows and pastures.

The main advantage of immovable cultural property is the importance and recognizability of cultural and historical complex of Brankovina in relation to cultural, spiritual and historical values and tradition, which makes it attractive for tourism development. The protection of an area within the Historic Landmarks of Great Importance implies an integrated protection of all buildings and sites in which they are located together with their surroundings. This means that the valorization of cultural heritage and analysis of condition of a heritage site are starting points in planning all

activities in a specific area, where it is of crucial importance to identify the main reasons for its emergence, as well as to again provide the same or similar conditions in the process of revitalization and regeneration of urban space, thus ensuring its continuous protection. Roter-Blagojević emphasizes that understanding an immovable cultural property in interaction with its surroundings, as organically formed landscape, is a new way of considering it, as well as a new integrated approach to planning of such sites [10]. In sites of historical importance, it is not sufficient only to preserve physical structure, but tracking contemporary trends in development is also an essential segment in preserving their cultural identity. Any change should be gradual, also including the protection services into planning.

The GRP covers the following immovable cultural properties situated in Brankovina: monuments of culture - church with a yard and graves of the Nenadović family¹, old and new school, Ljuba Nenadović Vajat (vajat – a traditional wooden house), which are valuable examples of folk architecture from the first half of the 19th century in Serbia and a specific form of an open-air museum. During the last century, prominent rural families used to build specific small wooden houses for family gatherings (Serbian: *sobrašice*) and vajat in churchyards, which were intended for gathering of people on feast days and fairs, while the old school is one of the oldest schools in Serbia. The famous Serbian poetess Desanka Maksimović² also attended this school. Efforts of the Cultural Heritage Preservation Institute of the Town of Valjevo to completely protect immovable cultural properties were not sufficient due to intense and uncontrolled construction as a result of specific economic, social and political circumstances. Inappropriate reconstructions and interventions in this area were the result of an absence of urban regulation over a long period of time. Insufficiently developed awareness about the importance of cultural heritage for the development of the area and lack of clearly defined programs and measures for ensuring continuous process of protection is a permanent threat to survival of this important heritage.

2.1 Tourism potential of Brankovina

Cultural heritage and natural resources of Brankovina are important potentials for cultural tourism development which implies a set of activities enabling affirmation of cultural and historical values, which is also a basis for the restoration of material and non-material cultural heritage. Local authenticities, uniqueness of the ambience, different historical layers, local tradition and customs, geographical and ecological specificities, as well as original identity as a whole, are a basis for cultural tourism in this area [1]. The need for an active protection and building of tourist attraction is based on a unique experience and memory of the place which build the identity of the Brankovina area.

Due to lack of hotels, restaurants, commercial and educational facilities, as well as entertaining contents in the complex and its wider surroundings, which would provide additional services to the tourists, the visitors only visit the complex of Brankovina without staying longer in the village, due to which significant economic development of the area is not possible, except during cultural and tourist-economic events. Because of its importance, the number of visitors who come into Brankovina is growing, thus over 40,000 people visited Brankovina in 2012. It is realistic to expect that the number of visitors will grow by 50%, i.e. to over 60,000 per year.

¹ The Nenadović family is one of the most famous Serbian families from which many dukes came from. It is also famous for Prince Aleksa Nenadović who, in the 18th century, advocated independence of Serbia from Ottoman Empire, his son Proto Matija Nenadović who, as a priest, had an important role in spreading enlightenment to people, as well as his grandson Ljuba Nenadović who was a well-known writer and Minister of Education in the Principality of Serbia.

² Desanka Maksimović (1898-1993) was a famous Serbian poetess, professor of literature and member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. She grew up in Brankovina. Her poetry is an important part of Serbian cultural tradition.

The importance of Brankovina resources, because of which this locality has received the status of the Historic Landmark of Great Importance, is primarily based on cultural, historical, social and anthropogenic values related to: (1) historically important figures and important historical events; (2) protected cultural and historical heritage; and (3) cultural and religious institutions. The presentation and affirmation of culture tourism in Brankovina is based on ensuring long-term and integrated management of natural and cultural resources together with determining the place and rank of Brankovina in cultural and tourist maps of Serbia. In this regard, the following special objectives that stand out include: developing a specific, recognizable tourism offer; organizing and planning the area and creating attractive programs; improving the transportation accessibility and interconnecting the tourist zones; completing utility infrastructure and improving levels of the existing services; increasing the planned tourist capacity; initiating and encouraging the organic food production and making of handmade ethno products; as well as presenting customs and lifestyle in this area. In addition, Brankovina also offers possibilities for developing other types of tourism: cultural event tourism, excursion tourism, recreational sports tourism, and rural tourism. Rural tourism is not sufficiently developed and organized, but particularly in Brankovina, it provides a great potential for the development owing to preserved nature, as well as traditional and autochthonous values in the area.

3. PLANNING SOLUTIONS

The General Regulation Plan for the village of Brankovina gives directions to development, planning and infrastructure provision for the entire area. The contemporary approaches to sustainable development and to improving the state of historical sites are based on understanding of the history of the place, with the aim to align all factors relevant to the process of planning, which includes good understanding of physical, social, cultural and economic aspects in a specified area [1]. The main objective of the Plan is to define basis for planning the protection of the area, where the protection of cultural heritage is an integral part of the process of planning. Recommendations concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas (UNESCO, 1976) suggest that immovable cultural properties and their immediate surroundings should be considered as a coherent whole defined by balanced relations between human activities, spatial organization of buildings and surroundings [4]. In this regard, the General Regulation Plan for Brankovina does not consider the built cultural heritage apart of its natural environment. Therefore, the Plan envisages three degrees of protection for the entire area. Historic sites and their immediate surroundings in which any construction is forbidden receive the 1st degree of protection; wider area surrounding a historic site under intermediate regime of its use and a strict control of the construction of educational, cultural, tourism and recreational sports facilities which have a complementary function in the historic site receive the 2nd degree of protection; other areas in which it is possible to develop certain activities within rural households, such as rural tourism, crafts and small economies, with a primary aim to regulate the unplanned construction receive the 3rd degree of protection. The reconstruction and restoration of the existing buildings is permitted in all of these zones along with landscaping.

The Plan envisages two sites for further development of this area. The first site is situated within the cultural and historical complex of Brankovina. The other one is situated in the immediate surrounding and will have a center of community of villages which is, according to plans of higher level, designated as a gravitational center for the wider region. The first site includes the cultural and historical complex of Brankovina of the first rank of the spiritual, historical and cultural importance for the Republic of Serbia. The major development objective is to safeguard immovable cultural heritage and preserve authentic urban structure in the form of creating a uniform cultural landscape [11] as a synthesis of natural and man-made elements. In investigating new approaches to restoration and creation of cultural landscapes, Roter-Blagojević refers to the conclusions of the European Landscape Convention [2] linking the cultural landscape with sustainable development

based on balanced and harmonious relationships between architectural heritage and conservation of natural areas which, in addition to ecological, also have cultural and social dimension [10]. According to the Plan, the proposals of programmatic and urban planning solutions include the following: 1. Culture park with the museum of the famous poetess, an open-air stage for different cultural events and small buildings of pavilion type for literary workshops and artist colonies. It is a model of research platform for the promotion of social sciences and artistic creativity in the form of courses and seminars to be held year round. In such way, the memory becomes an instrument of cultural landscape and valorization of protected area [3], whereby the landscape is a spatial setting and cultural image at the same time, the strategic medium of cultural change. 2. The following facilities are planned in the extension zone around immovable cultural properties: a) tourist info-center with reception and ticket office to be situated at the entrance to the cultural and historical complex, with a multifunctional space for contemporary museological narration and interactive workshops for children and adults, exhibition space, etc.; b) cafe bookshop and souvenir shop; c) small open-air amphitheater; d) outdoor display of a small authentic ethno-house typical for this area; and 3. tourism facilities and hospitality units (ethno-restaurant, small hotel, pastry cafe, shop) which would be situated west of the cultural and historic complex of Brankovina. In discussing the advantages of conventional approach to cultural heritage over modern approach to cultural heritage, Jokileto indicates that retaining an authentic whole is an essential quality which implies truthfulness, originality, authenticity [5]. In support of this, we can conclude that further development of methodologies and their better integration into the process of urban planning is a precondition for safeguarding the authenticity of historical sites. The other site to be developed includes a center of community of villages which is planned as an ethno-park with cultural and educational, tourism and sports recreational contents and hospitality facilities. The complex should become an avoidable station with several different functions in one place for tourist tours organized in the vicinity with the aim to present the culture of West Serbia. Programmatic and urban planning solutions include a visitor-center, hospitality facilities around the planned artificial lake, accommodation capacities of the pavilion type (as traditional *vajats*) intended for organizing artistic colonies and for accommodation of tourist, with a selling/exhibiting showroom for works of art, handicrafts and souvenirs created in artistic colonies, in which exhibitions would also occasionally be organized. A functional entity would include sports and recreational contents with small sports grounds. The ambience of ethno-park with a system of walking and biking trails is supplemented with a river flowing through this area.

According to the Spatial Plan of Valjevo, Brankovina falls into the category of small centers of communities of villages, as well as settlements with special potential for the development of certain products and activities. The main economic development objective for the area covered by the Plan is to increase employment by introducing incentive measures for handicraft production, as well as to gradually implement principles of sustainability in agricultural development and environmental conservation together with the use of environmentally friendly and energy-efficient technologies. The Plan envisages certain contents which would ensure the development of local community and which would have positive socio-economic effects. Local population would distribute its products to new tourism and hospitality facilities, but would also get jobs in the complex, accommodation facilities, ethno-park, restaurants, cafes and shops. In this way, by developing the core of the complex and its surroundings would contribute to the revival of the village, but also to the change in the attitude of local people towards the complex.

3.1. Measures for sustainable architectural design and energy efficiency and renewable energy measures

There are no energy savings programs, neither are there energy efficiency programs for the Brankovina area although potential for the use of renewable energy sources exists, which primarily includes solar energy, biomass, biogas, geothermal energy, waste heat, etc. In this regard, the Plan

sets forth the requirements for urban and architectural planning and design (outline, height, organization and orientation of buildings, etc.), as well as requirements for the implementation of principles of sustainable architecture. „The implementation of principles of sustainable architecture in protected areas of cultural and historical heritage and ambience entities require an integrated approach to this extremely important and sensitive issue, in which the cultural context and the context of ambience (tradition and setting), location, micro-climate, existing buildings, comfort, used materials and energy consumption are of equal importance.“ [7]. According to Pucar, one of the authors of this paper, the main principles of traditional architecture contain in themselves a series of elements of sustainable architecture and sustainable development. Sustainable architecture implies the integration of buildings into their environment and natural energy flows without disturbing natural ecological balance, whereby taking into account climate, conditions of location, tradition, materials, context, resources, environmental capacity, customs and conditions of natural and man-made environment. [9]. In the context of sustainable architecture, Pucar dedicates special attention to principles of bioclimatic architecture taking into account tradition and climate as integral parts of contemporary concept of planning. The restoration and reconstruction of protected buildings, urban/rural entities, cultural heritage and area are issues of particular importance [8]. Furthermore, the possibility of using active and passive solar systems has also been realized. Thus, the electrical power generated in this way is close to the consumers, which brings a great advantage. At the same time, solving energy problems is also important from an environmental standpoint in terms of reducing air pollution caused by burning of fossil fuels.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The spatial planning solutions which are directed towards achieving sustainable development, high levels of sustainable economic growth and preservation of resources of Brankovina will enable the development and popularization of contents of the cultural and historical complex, the improvement of infrastructure and internal communications along with solutions for parking lots in the protected zone, as well as the initiation of socio-economic progress of local community. The goals are directed towards affirmation, protection and improvement of cultural and historical complex of Brankovina, as well as improvement of cultural heritage, through planning new contents appropriate to the importance of the site without negative environmental effects; remedying and activating the existing potentials and creating conditions for further development; increasing quality and diversity of overall tourism offer (culture, education, tourism, museum displays, existing and new cultural events); stimulating the suitability for investment in facilities which can contribute to achieving this goal; creating conditions of employment of local population (rural tourism, food production, revival of handicrafts, etc.); as well as affirming the concept of rural, weekend and excursion tourism through a diverse offer.

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