
Culturological Analysis in the rehabilitation of urban housing environments

Author(s): Branka BERCE-BRATKO

Source: *Urbani Izziv*, No. 23/25, MESTO - BIVANJE IN STANOVANJE (november 1993), pp. 119-122

Published by: Urbanistični inštitut Republike Slovenije

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44164431>

Accessed: 21-02-2025 19:26 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Urbanistični inštitut Republike Slovenije is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Urbani Izziv*

statovanja glavnih razvojnih linija i uzroka nastanka problema nisu poljuljani. Oni su po mojoj oceni prevashodno kulturne i ekonomske prirode, a koreni se mogu otkriti u oblicama posleratne izgradnje našeg kako urbanog tako i seoskog prostora. Rat protiv gradova dozvoljava mnogobrojne spekulacije, ali će nas na kraju neminovno približiti kolektivnom saznanju da ima propagandni, psihološki i simbolički značaj. Uništenje mešovitih zajednica, a to je jasno i u slučaju Vukovara i Mostara i Sarajeva, jasno stavlja svima do znanja da takvi oblici života nisu mogući, da oni nisu ni poželjni. U praktičnom smislu uništavaju se nukleusi koje su svojim sadržanjem i geografskim položajem pretili da i dalje šire uverenje o potrebi otvorenosti, dijaloga i komunikacije. Elita je svakako tu (bila) jedan od ciljeva, ali manje važan, čini se. Realnije je zaključiti da je sila usmerena na uništenje plodova njenog postojanja i rada. Urbanitet je (bio) cilj na putu uništenja kolektiviteta, a ciljna grupa gradska elita.

Elita je danas ili u podrumima, spasavajući goli život ili je zagušena stvorenom atmosferom nacionalne ugroženosti, demonizovanjem ostataka komšiluka. Elita je danas uništena fizički (granatama, odvođenjem na front), socijalno (osiromašenjem), politički (na brzinu ustoličenim prividom demokratije) i najzad ekonomski. Ovo su manje - više zajedničke karakteristike svih bivših jugoslovenskih jedinica. Poternice nastale na planu sprečavanja elite da ponovo uspostavi svoje ranije odnose (ili neke slične), sprečavaju svaki kontakt. Strah je sve-moćan. U tim okolnostima i najmanji istup svrstava se u red izdajništva, na jedno strani, ili bezrazložno visokoprocenjene hrabrosti, na drugoj. I jedno i drugo besmisleno i pogrešno procenjeno. Izražavanje sopstvenog mišljenja i javno delanje je po definiciji osnovni zadatak intelektualaca, a moguća tačka samoispunjenja i osnov građenja istinitog urbaniteta svakako.

Vera u primarne vrednosti i značaj slobodne komunikacije jedan je od osnovnih razloga promene mog odredišta. Pokušavam da obnovim ili samo očuvam ono što je činilo moj dosadašnji život. Paradoksalno zvuči da je odavde moguće imati iluziju o trajanju prošlosti. Sve je dostupnije i, mada prostorno dalje, suštinski je bliže. Stara prijateljstva se mogu proveriti i pothraniti. Mnoge slike se realnije sklapaju, a provera vlastitih stavova i zapaženja je manje pod uticajem emocija. Odlazak se nije ukazao samo kao priznanje poraza, već i kao znak nepristajanja - poslednji vid otpora. U suprotnom slučaju, neminovno sledi lagano navikavanje i očaj neprijetnog kompromisa. Jedan oblik urbaniteta je izgubljen, uništen, bez obzira da li je fizički porušen ili će ga pokopati novi oblici relacija i pravila. U tim okolnostima možemo samo nagađati šta će se izroditi. Za proveru predviđanja biće potrebne decenije. Ko doživi pisace izveštaj. Jedina je nada da će imati gde ga objavi.

Dr. Miloš Bobić, arhitekt, Amsterdam

◆ ◆ ◆

Branka BERCE-BRATKO

Culturological Analysis in the rehabilitation of urban housing environments

Urban dwellings and housing for citizens are a basic need and are also one of the main instruments of social politics. Housing is identified as a central social issue in social and economic politics, presented through the media mainly as a crisis of inner cities in Western Europe, especially Britain (Markus, T., 1991 *Rehumanizing the dehumanized*). During the 1970s and '80s debates tended to concentrate on often simplistic explanations and equally simplistic "solutions" attributing the "problem" to single causes. In the '90s there is a need for a more comprehensive view, particular attention being paid to issues of problem definition, design and research of housing management, participation and control, as well as design, redesign, rehabilitation and improvement of existing housing.

In the last decade the intensive development of qualitative methods (the so called "soft" methodology) has emerged as a kind of protest against "statistical averages", and solely quantitative research. Town planning was no exception, it became placeless and inhuman, there was no sense of identity - with little if any reference to the genius loci or character and cultural needs of the local community. At the same time we have to emphasise the different world view forced upon us by environmental problems and worldwide economic (and therefore also social) crisis, all of which represent a new set of tasks for planning and planners to solve, especially evident in urban housing.

An additional problem arose in the '80s and early '90s when the ideology prevailed that "market and market forces" alone were supposed to solve problems of the national economy, including problems of urban and countryside life. The market is oriented towards profit, and works on the basis of free, and highly developed competition. Not all people are competitive by nature. Now, in the '90s it is recognised that planning is needed to balance the market (Montgomery, Thornley, 1990, 16). There can be strong economic influences, if matters of social impacts concerning housing, employment and free time activities of the majority of the population are not considered seriously.

Better developed communities in terms of a balanced social life in a physically responsive environment, and economic opportunities for most residents are of utmost importance. These problems have to be identified from the point of view of affected residents, or their perceptions of the problems have to be accepted as the first step towards their elimination or improvement. McConnell (1981, 121) pointed out this direction while discussing participation.

The lack of an integrated approach to planning has been highly criticised by social scientists (Jantch, 1971, Mlinar, 1988, 238). The first criticism was related to a lack

of concern for the environment. Thus, Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) was introduced. In turn the social context was seen as vital to the environment, and so Social Impact Analysis (SIA) was introduced as an integral part of EIA. More recently, strong criticism by the World Bank prompted the introduction of a mandatory condition for their support that SIA be undertaken also in relation to development proposals. Research has shown that cultural analysis is an essential part of any SIA, especially in developing countries (Seymour, 1990). It is now seen to be wrong to associate cultural anthropology and its methodology solely with "primitive" societies (B. B. Bratko, 1991, 1-17).

Concern about inadequacy of social input and long-term environmental protection were put forward by the Club of Rome in their book on "Limits to Growth" (1967) where environmental and social factors were put forward against overuse of natural resources. These particular efforts might be seen as seeds of later definitions and policy guidelines for the '90s known as "sustainable development" i. e. development which takes into consideration resources in the economic sense, particularly the environmental protection and rational use of non-renewable resources. By sustainable development we understand development which takes into account full consideration of the environment in its ecological and long-term social consequences - development which will retain our natural environments for future generations to enjoy (EEC guidelines for the environment in the 1990s, 1991) and is dependent on rational and ecologically sound use of energy, and social aspects as a part of an ecologically balanced development (ARGE group, 1991).

Culturological analysis

Rehabilitation as a part of planning is looked upon as a complex developmental task in areas where housing is physically more or less sound in the structural sense but improvements are required to the physical, aesthetic, social, economic and cultural environments. A desirable approach to rehabilitation is to incorporate physical, economic and social aspects in a way which integrates the knowledge and skills from a range of disciplines and professions, especially in rehabilitation of housing and reurbanisation. The programme should aim for not only physical revitalisation of housing, including ecological improvement and economic regeneration of the area, but also social and cultural renewal.

In cultural or re-civilising urban rehabilitation, social and cultural re-civilisation of the community is more fully achieved, when we use two stages of Culturological Analysis (CA) in the preparation of a Local Plan and of a Housing Action Area Programme. Preferably monitoring of CA should be carried out after implementation.

The focus is on improving the local community within a generally improved residential environment. Besides new local employment initiatives, it is vital to achieve a genuinely enhanced status for the community, taking into special account its values, problems and aspirations. Residents should participate actively from the

preparatory stages onwards. The approach and methods advocated and explained have been derived from basic paradigms of applied ethnology i.e. cultural anthropology. These are: holism, participant observation and the comparative method, and are useful for planning because it is necessary to make choices and compromises, using qualitative research methods for actions sympathetic to the people most concerned, including those subjects participating in the research.

To justify the use of culturological analysis presented for planning of urban rehabilitation, a closer consideration of recent developments in research methodologies for social sciences, new paradigms of the research and their connection to the epistemology of planning is required.

The current state of theoretical and methodological debates in collaborative human research and methodologies has to be assessed in relation to the proposed use of culturological analysis (CA) in planning. The philosophical basis for adopting CA as a part of a newly emerging approach to human inquiry has been established "... as a part of a new world-view which is emerging through systems thinking, ecological concerns and awareness, feminism, education as well as in the philosophy of human inquiry (Reason, 1990, 3).

In the course of transition to post-positivism the development of high-quality 'knowledge' is required, while maintaining the 'old' scientific view ... 'we keep the ideals of critical and public knowledge' (Reason, 1988, 43). Since it is inevitable that values affect the work we do, the important thing is to be clear about what those values are. Becker (1967) put it as 'whose side are we on?' His answer is that the social scientist should favour the people whose voices are seldom or never heard in public debate, because they are powerless to make themselves heard. Participant observation research of particular groups enables their point of view to be expressed (McNeill, 1990, 131). Participant observation is known as ethnomethodology, and in the 60s represented a radical alternative to conventional sociology. As Reason (1990, 2) put it:

"The emphasis of participatory research is in establishing a dialogue between research workers and the grass-roots people with whom they work, in order to discover and realise the practical and cultural needs of those people".

The aim of participant observation in the case studies within Slovenia and Scotland was to educate the participants for more effective participation in planning matters through the dialogue established during the research activities, thus enabling them to express their problems relating to everyday life, such as built and social environments, employment, education, cultural issues etc. and putting forward suggestions for improvements of the identified problems.

McConnell (1981) suggested that responsive planning should be in harmony with the physical and social environment. In trying to locate cultural analysis within the different styles of planning as proposed in Brindley et al., the categorisations of both authors were utilised

in arriving at suggestions as to how cultural analysis should be incorporated in the planning/design process for rehabilitation schemes.

Brindley (1989, 159) defined six categories of "planning style" by reference to two basic variables - institutional "arrangements" and "politics and decision making". Planning with cultural analysis represents a combination of the categories of "popular planning" and "private-management planning", resulting in what could be called "responsive" and "sustainable planning".

Each country has a different planning system as it is usually an integral part of their own distinctive culture. Cultural analysis brings issues of everyday culture into the planning process in the form of recommendations and guidelines for its implementation, as well as conditions of functioning on the level of the Development Plan.

The importance of culture within urban renewal can be identified through the following connections between culture, the planning process and the built environment.

The cultural concept for planning has feed-back implications at regional and local levels, mainly on development policies: this concept is a result of culturological evaluation which is based on ethnological assessments.

Ethnological assessments are evaluations by an expert with a background in ethnology for planning. In the case of CA these are assessments of the cultural characteristics of places (spaces) and people in the area dealt with in the Plan.

Ethnologically assessed places are those which are "created" by the people studied. Emerging from ethnological assessment we can accordingly identify ethnologically defined zones (EDZ), i.e. places defined or created by the community from the significance implied by the responses or behaviour. Created places or EDZ are evaluated as entities, but for the purpose of analysis they were considered in their physical, social and cultural aspects.

In CA one should consider the specific physical, societal, and cultural aspects of the place. These analyses can be achieved by the establishment of values ("qualities") and problems ("nonqualities") pertaining to the area. These characteristics are derived from research of the way of life of residents in the area where the research is conducted. This CA consists of four major elements: 1. identity, 2. way of life and life-style, 3. acceptability and authenticity and 4. elements of cultural patterns.

The aim of the study is to develop culturological analysis as an alternative method. Its strength is that it enables us to evaluate the current state of affairs in the locality, hence specific criteria and recommendations for improvements can be suggested. The method was further developed to monitor the changes in environment, and efforts were made to assess qualitatively the effects of change on affected people and their physical, social and cultural-proper environments.

Elements of Culturological Analysis

Culturological analysis consists of the definition and functioning conditions of local values and problems, in

reference to the past and historical continuity of cultural identity in all levels, all of which are the basis for locally sensitive development criteria. These are:

- cultural aspect of ecological development of the area and also the region,
- cultural manifestations of the urban or settlement pattern,
- cultural aspect of residential environment,
- cultural aspect of the functioning of the society,
- the local culture proper.

For the alternatives of development the factors stated below are important:

- acceptability for development,
- attitudes towards change:
 1. ecological and spatial,
 2. socio-economic and,
 3. cultural proper.

The derivation of development criteria for authentic development of the community is carried out by comparison between regional and local criteria of development. Macro, mezzo and micro levels are compared to arrive at proper or authentic criteria for development of a particular area or community, in all three segments i.e. spatial, social and cultural proper.

Results of Culturological Analysis

The results of culturological analysis are as follows:

- establishment of relations conditioned by development which led to changes within space,
- derivation of impacts of those developmental changes, and spatial legitimacy of the areas studied to establish criteria for assessment of future development,
- diagnosis of the situation with possibilities for development by means of rehabilitation, in light of the criteria for the authentic and social plan, including social strategy.

Culture should function as the generator of development. The question is what is "appropriate" development? The future course of development has to take heritage into account, including building traditions in terms of objects, landscapes and townscapes. Until recently, only the outer shell was important; the culturally conditioned ecological, societal and cultural legitimacies which created the regional identity were not taken into account. Therefore it is of national importance to establish the above mentioned approaches towards cultural heritage. Those identities can be established solely through the legacy of developments which formed that heritage.

Examples of Culturological Analysis

The study of different regional identities is an important research task in Slovenia and it is believed the same in Scotland. In such studies, the regional identity in built and non-built environments will be examined. On the local level the local identity will be established individually and for the groups of people living in EDZ.

These studies always deal with the relationship between local and global systems, and between the various ele-

ments of each system. The vertical line of past, present and future has to be respected in these studies. They are all part of research on the relationship between man and the environment.

The culturological analysis was developed on case studies in Slovenia and Scotland based on the Krsko rehabilitation process and its use in any planning procedure. The type of Cultural Anyalysis, how it can be integrated into a planning process of a local plan and respectively incorporated into a Housing Action Area procedure for rehabilitation is explained in Figure 1. It is based on Local Plan Procedures (1992) and the Charing Cross Housing Association Plan (1989).

The approach has shown the main problems concerning future development of the neighbourhood and a community within it. It has pointed out problems of multi-dimensional unemployment and its effects on the community. Residents were inevitably commenting the lack of adequate variety in treatment which could have been achieved without significant additional costs (as the result of refurbishment), such as incorporating a range of colours or tree planting to distinguish streets. There is also a lack of adequate community training available to residents in order to fight unemployment in the area. Residents were advocating an integral approach to rehabilitation: they resent mere refurbishment since it risks being quite short lived. There still exists an occupational inclination to follow family traditions, but nowadays these are just wishes from the past, since many of the old-style jobs have gone forever. Economic restructuring is needed, and along with it re-education and re-training as well.

The novelty of the study is the introduction of criteria on the basis of cultural phenomena, through the combination of qualitative and quantitative measurements and evaluations for planning purposes. Culturological analysis could be used as a kind of "societal impact" analysis looking to conditions of certain development. For example, by using the holistic view, vertical and horizontal evaluation of culturologically derived elements were assessed, in our particular case for rehabilitation, and the impact of a certain development on people and their residential environment. Analysis was tested through a "monitoring analysis" as well. Its aim was to evaluate improvements as experienced by culturologists whose expertise relies on the inhabitants way of life.

Criteria were derived from case studies, case Study A with a more qualitative approach in Ljubljana and Glasgow, case study B based on urban rehabilitation programme of Krsko and Garnethill in Scotland where the combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis was used.

The criteria are as follows:

1. The level of social functionality of the area,
2. The level of socio-economic vulnerability,
3. The level of social ability to accept change and
4. The level of possible social rehabilitation.

Benefits and the scope of culturological analysis in the rehabilitation process

The general merits of an approach which incorporates culturological analysis can be summarised as follows:

1. With this approach the following data which usually isn't collected and interpreted, is gathered from the inhabitants:
 - perceptions of identity, identifying its development and functioning in the community,
 - societal and spatial values associated with living places and values with reference to their living space,
 - societal and spatial problems and suggestions for their solution.
 - economic and employment environment assessment by residents, and suggestions made for retraining and education for possible employment in the area,
 - social environment assesment and how the community operates socially, including solution of problems concerning drugs and alcohol abuse,
 - aspirations about the future of the area and reasons why they want to stay, or why and where they want to move on,
 - dissatisfaction with the present and worries and fears about the future,
 - deduction or speculation about the reasons for these views,
 - cooperation with the inhabitants, so that the culturologist's interpretation is correct, including the suggested social strategy.
2. Without CA the planning and 'design team' would be unable or unlikely to have a full enough appreciation themselves of the range and distribution of cultural needs and preferences, especially those related to ethnic factors. Hence they would be most unlikely to arrive at a project formulation which proves satisfactory to most people.
3. Part of the skill of the culturologist is to be able to evaluate in a holistic way a whole range of 'data' on diverse aspects of the area, its population and its properties. Without such an expert, planning and the design team would tend to function in a more narrow-minded way, each adopting a relatively narrow and partial perspective from his/her own discipline or profession. One of the most important skills is to suggest appropriate "social engineering" for the area studied.
4. To ignore the cultural questions is to risk much abortive investment, since adverse social reaction to the project by the local community can jeopardise its economics from a property angle e.g. it may lower land and building prices, and cause destruction or neglect of properties in the area. With physical decay usually social decay is associated, such as vandalism, community crime, drugs and alcohol. These problems could be avoided or never developed to an advanced stage.
5. By combining quantitative and qualitative criteria, a balanced programme for rehabilitation of an area was achieved, which discovered its own identity as a group within the city.

Dr. Branka Berce-Bratko