

Public spaces of Montenegrin cities' coasts -a case study

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Abstract

The paper analyzes and investigates the potentials and limitations of public spaces in cities' coasts of Montenegro in a mountainous and coastal context. Emphasis is placed upon the littoral. New criteria for the study of public open space and revitalizing environment models in the context of establishing a balance between the natural and built, are being explored and defined, as well bringing about the attractiveness which is necessary for the development of tourism as the main economic activity in Montenegro. The diversity of beaches, their potential as well as natural values and geographical specificity of the Montenegrin space, require thoughtful engagement in the shaping and development of a touristic environment. Montenegro has not used the potentials of public spaces of the coast. A lack of harmony and order is expressed, as well as the small number of attractive contents in multiple segments. The intensive construction, mass tourism, degradation and devastation of space at the beginning of the 21st century point out the need for a solid strategy for reconstruction and sustainable development of the area.

Keywords: public spaces, Montenegrin coasts, criteria, sustainable development

Introduction

Montenegro is located in the southeastern part of Europe in the center of the Balkan Peninsula. It occupies an area of 13 815 km² with about 650 000 inhabitants. It has an access to the Adriatic Sea and its coast has a length of 294 km with 117 beaches with a total length of about 73 km. The dominance of tourism as a branch of the economy, after the decline in industrial development, points to the importance of prudent attitude towards open public spaces as arteries of socialization, communication and visual recognition of the touristic destinations.

The paper puts a special emphasis on natural resources for which Montenegro is recognized, through the research of models of environmental protection and improvement of space with an emphasis on energy-efficient construction. In general it is necessary to invest much energy and knowledge in the direction of transformation, revitalization and development of open public spaces of Montenegrin touristic cities.

Multi-functionality, stratification, complexity, flexibility and dynamism of public spaces, as well as their recognizability are of primary importance for a healthy and sustainable touristic environment. Preservation of historic values, integrity of elements of an entirety, the logistics of the mobility, as well as the balance between the units of systems, are the basic parameters for achieving social, cultural, economic, visual and psychological atmosphere of a high value.

Public spaces are being explored in the paper in a general manner so as to define the general, objective criteria for their evaluation and to develop a platform for revitalization of the existing and planning of new open spaces. Natural potentials are expressed but also quite threatened by the unplanned construction, which is especially pronounced in public green spaces.

Contemporary urbanism needs require radical intervention towards achieving stratification, flexibility, integrity, inclusiveness and attractiveness of the space. In this context, particularly important is to insist on urban design and landscape architecture in particular micro-architecture, which are not sufficiently involved in the creation of public urban spaces of Montenegro's coastal towns. It is necessary to establish multiple forms poly-functional "urban carpets" that will contribute to: the socio-economic, cultural, ecological and visual aspects of the environment.

Methodology and research directions

The Land-sea border has a special place in the study of a city's system. Public spaces are its dominant factors. Rational use and protection of coastal areas is of particular importance for the sustainability of touristic cities. The investment trend in beginning of the 21st century in Montenegro influenced the devastation of the coast to a great extent. New technologies and capabilities, fast construction, influenced the incompactness in the development of touristic public spaces.

Public spaces of the coasts of Montenegrin towns require a controlled and thorough analysis in order to set up criteria for their evaluation. They are important factors of development of sports, natural and cultural tourism in Montenegro. The competitiveness of a touristic destination is reflected in the character of public spaces. Undeveloped spaces are as important as built blocks and they are equally carriers of the area's identity, inclusion, integration. Traditionally, public spaces are the primary places of social processes, of assembly, places of culture, energy, visual recognizability, originality. These are the places for rest, recreation, places filled with various contents that are available to all users equally. Global processes require a higher level of authenticity of the local area for the purpose of sustainability of local in the global.

In this paper, the methodology consisted of a comparative and statistical methods and surveys of citizens. The study of coastal public space in Montenegro included the following phases:

- Identifying characteristic public spaces in coastal and mountain zone
- Typological classification
- Analysis of the potential and limitations
- Defining the criteria for evaluation of public coastal spaces
- Defining the strategies for development of public coastal spaces

The first phase defines the typical coastal public spaces, focus points in the coastal and mountain zone. Then they were classified according to:

- position in a narrow context,
- thematic-function,
- integrity with the context
- visual identification

Based on the previous parameters, the conclusion was reached on the basic characteristic groups of coastal public spaces of Montenegrin touristic towns on the basis of which the potentials and limitations of these spaces were further investigated.

The potentials and limitations of public spaces of the Montenegrin touristic ambient

Analyzing and interviewing users of the spaces led to the conclusion that a crisis of space identity is present which is typical for countries in a transition, which include Montenegro. The conclusion of the study is that potentials of public space of coastal towns of Montenegro are multiple, but insufficiently investigated and do not participate adequately in the process of shaping the urban ambient. On the other hand, there is a high degree of devastation of the area due to the intensive construction of the coast in recent times.

However, it is important to emphasize the great potential of the Montenegrin coast, in particular because of their diversity and natural values. This is particularly pronounced in the mountain tourism area where there are panoramas of unspoiled nature which by their specificity and attractiveness contribute to the quality of touristic attractions. A special characteristic is that at a relatively small area there are visual diversity and unique sights desirable for visitors, which are often symbolic, but, on the other hand, a visual partiality due to the lack of integration of spatial system elements. In this context, public open spaces hold a special place.

Geographic location, climate, terrain, proximity to mountains and coastal zones, natural authenticity and area identity, make Montenegro a desirable touristic destination. On the other hand, visual partialities, under-arranged coasts, under-achieved level of comprehensiveness, homogeneity and integrity in space, with a particularly sensitive issue of public coastal space, reduce the quality of the experience.

Montenegro is faced with a growing devastation of the coast. Revitalization of such areas would require large investments and uncertain profits. Sustainable development is directly related to this problem. The presence of informal construction and intensive construction of new physical structures by the private sector has resulted in occupation of greenfield areas and reduce of the value of space. Massive construction in the first decade of the 21th century indicates a disturbance in the spatial system. It has degraded the landscape, eliminated parts of the coast and isolated many historic parts of the old cities. In particular, that is present in the coastal tourism industry with emphasis on Budva, which annually receives half of the total number of tourists at the Montenegrin coastline. Another problem is the private sector, over which the state system has no control. Long term, this intensive phase of development has brought a huge burden upon the future sustainable development of coastal tourism.

The unity of the natural and historical heritage of the Montenegrin coast is of special importance, and therefore, in tourism, it shouldn't have been allowed the provision of services in the form of massive resorts. Economic contribution of tourism to the gross domestic product is 25%. However, long-term sustainable development requires a synergistic and deliberate intervention in the direction of spatial planning and its management if it aims towards long-term economic sustainability.

The devastation of space has resulted in the vulnerability and disappearance of rare endemic species, high water consumption, high pollution and waste, violation of local ways of life, social structures and traditional activities that are often related to the sustainable use of biodiversity, partiality, visual differentiation, monotony, discord, unfair distribution of economic profit, which is based on the exploitation of the physical environment.

Architectural objects of cities' coasts must have a quality relationship towards public open spaces and all the amenities that in an interaction should represent an attractive full contact buffer zone between land and sea. Buffer zone requires diversity, complexity, rhythm, but also homogeneity, integrity, interaction and stratification at all levels.

Recent trends show the importance of the place that should become the stream. Pulse, circulation and communication are of the sustainable importance. The attractiveness of the coastal zone holds a special

place. It requires economic, social, cultural, ecological balance. Blend of natural values and diversity are opportunities for the development of new public open spaces on a relatively small area, walking trails, bike paths, natural and arranged beaches, coastal promenades, their dynamics, openness, accessibility and availability through the originality of ideas, are the high-quality courses of addressing these spaces. However, there is an expressed lack of awareness of the importance of landscape architecture and micro architecture in the planning and spatial design. In addition, spatial design involves perception of the daily activities of all potential users, local residents, visitors and tourists. Everyday life is largely associated with public space and depends on its quality, dynamism and attractiveness, so that the most important parameters in the spatial planning process are the vision of public life and the area of public land. There is plenty potential for improving public spaces of Montenegrin coastal cities, it just needs a investment of knowledge, energy and skill in their transformation and revitalization through the use of new models of urban design, adapted to modern users' needs. This is the path towards sustainable development of tourism and general social development.

The criteria for evaluation of public space coast tourist cities

Based on surveys of local communities and the requirements set by global processes, certain criteria were formed for the valorization of coastal public spaces in touristic cities of Montenegro. In the global time, instead of the classic touristic offers, innovative solutions are needed, that offer extraordinary experiences, promote specific emotions (fun, adventure, happenings, public-art).

Here a special place is held by experimental visual art relevant to collective memory and experience of users in social and cultural context that they share. Projections, various types of art, new forms of the scene, material selection, three-dimensional spatial design for the users, through the participation of beneficiaries in the creation of their own environment, are especially important in cultural tourism, which is preferred by the Montenegrin coastal context. In cultural tourism, artistic side has a special meaning. Spaces should be flexible, have the ability to transform, users can develop their activities and adapt them to their needs. Performances, outdoor exhibitions, multi-purpose creative workshops, music shows, creative spaces, cultural events, educational theme parks, pedestrian zones models of coastal areas, pavilion elements, elements of micro-architecture and interaction at all levels, are all necessary elements in creating public space in the coastal touristic environment.

Research gained conclusions about there being contrasts, inequality in the coastal region, specialization, fragmentation and lack of inclusiveness.

For the adequate development of new and rehabilitation of existing public spaces, quality criteria are needed to enable an adequate evaluation of their potential. Research identified as particularly relevant, the following criteria:

- Attractiveness
- Dynamism
- Complexity
- Inclusiveness
- Aesthetic value
- Comprehensiveness
- Synergy
- Conflict
- Visitation
- Devastation
- Integrity

Through the proposed criteria for valorization it is possible to define strategies and directions for the improvement of public open spaces of coastal cities.

The Strategy for sustainable development of public space coast tourist cities

A particularly important issue is to define strategies and guidelines that represent a set of urban qualities of public spaces defined from man's perspective and everyday activities. They strive to ensure quality space on the coast of seas, lakes or rivers, dynamic public life, social interaction and variety and diversity within a particular context, which is an integral part of the city.

The goal is to, through: attraction, integrity, flexibility, inclusiveness, complexity, context, visual diversity of the places: squares, terraces, pedestrian zones, parks, sports fields ; attract all the user groups, which will occupy the area longer, establish new contacts and meet their specific needs. In the touristic environment special attention should be given to the classification of users by: lifestyle and motives. There are active and classic users. In Montenegro there is no sufficiently developed perception of the need to establish common areas for different users and specific needs. It is therefore necessary to invest more energy for the purpose of co-operation between different social actors in order to involve all the stakeholders in the process of designing a common environment. Montenegro's touristic towns are not overcrowded, having tens of thousands of inhabitants. This certainly opens up possibilities for better and more controlled management of the space. However, it is necessary to invest extra energy in order to establish better cooperation between public and private sectors, as well as consistent implementation of legal regulations.

Master Plan as a model that determines the guidelines for the design of public surfaces, the manner in which the streets, squares and open spaces are connected, defines the height and dimensions of buildings, establishes the proposed connection between the buildings and open space, identifies the network patterns of the mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists, vehicles or public transport, often is not implemented in practice in an adequate manner.

In addition, urban design, which is not sufficiently present in practice, plays a key role in the development strategies of cities, reaching their competitiveness in global hierarchy, and competition for investments and visitors.

Natural resources are one of Montenegro's priority resources of, which is why it is particularly important to encourage positive attitude towards natural values and the environment.

The natural wealth contributes to the preservation of ecological balance and sustainability of the built environment.

This study aims to, at a crossroad of urban expansion and environmental protection, point out the importance of implementation of integrated development and management of the coastal zone with emphasis on inclusiveness and dialogue.

The study included some general criteria for the analysis of coastal areas, such as:

- Determination of total problems of the cities 'coastal zone on the basis of domestic and foreign experience and development
- Identification of patterns of coastal towns developments
- Justification of architecture and coastal areas design
- Models of coastal areas in the current socio-economic conditions
- Strategic planning of ecological cities

Modern functional organization of urban space does not meet the general standards: environmental safety, comfort, and the relationship of natural vs. manmade. The intensity of urban growth indicates there is a need for involvement in the planning system in order to establish the ecological stability and economic growth in coastal areas.

The study showed that generally new theories and new concepts are required in order to form a sustainable environment.

National Sustainable Development Strategy, under the term "sustainability in tourism" implies the development which

- respects the economic, environmental and social principles in a balanced mutual relationship;
- does not exhaust the natural resources, but uses them only to the extent that conserves them for future generations;
- preserves cultural diversity and identity, while fostering social cohesion and additionally, bears in mind the satisfaction of tourists

Based on all of the analysis, necessary parameters are set which need to be included in the process of creating public spaces of Montenegrin coastal cities:

- Upgrading the perception about the basic values of space to a higher level
- Involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making process-synergetic involvement
- Increase of the aesthetic, functional and environmental criteria
- Cooperation between public and private sectors, as well as different institutions
- Strengthening the impact of legal norms and constraints
- Overlapping and linking public spaces, on the network principle in a particular context
- Adjusting new spaces to the current context

Useful guidance can be downloaded and applied from the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected areas:

The protection and promotion of cultural and environmental values of a sensitive area;

Sustainable use of natural resources and wealth by the tourism sector;

A significant contribution to socio-economic development and quality of life of the local communities;

Wider economic benefits, fully compatible with the previous three criteria and equally distributed.

Through the application of appropriate strategies, the goal is to achieve high level quality of touristic area. This implies that public space has following general characteristics:

- Visual recognizability
- Inclusiveness
- Poly-functionality, variety, flexibility
- Adjustment to the context
- High level of integration with elements from the environment
- Artistic expression
- identity recognition
- Attractiveness

Conclusion

Based on the research of public coastal spaces of Montenegro's cities, it was concluded that a systematic strategy towards their sustainable development, is needed.

For planning and use of existing and creating new public spaces, it is essential to center on the users of the future space and explore their needs. In this regard, cooperation between architects, engineers, artists and local community, all forms of knowledge and all stakeholders of society, at all stages, is of paramount importance.

Public spaces are the bearers of city's identity and cultural values. In addition, those are the key sites of

social processes and interactions. Public spaces require universality, ambient filled with attractions, that are competitive, the usual representation of everyday life, places that interpret culture of the area and the society. They should provide opportunities for recreational and sporting activities, excursions, leisure and entertainment, and be appealing to all user groups throughout the year. This is particularly important in the touristic context.

The touristic offer in Montenegro should be based on exclusive natural and cultural attractions and various touristic activities that include the natural environment and diversity of historical and cultural heritage.

The revival of joint space through high-quality events that are offered in the area and social inclusion are becoming very important factors of mental and physical relaxation of users. A set of different cultures and needs in one place encourages local residents and tourists to activity and dialogue. The potential of Montenegrin public spaces is great, but insufficiently utilized and adapted to different structures and needs of the users.

It is generally necessary to open a new era in the development of coastal areas and to invest extra energy in environmental protection and improvement of the touristic ambient with an emphasis on energy-efficient construction and development of new models of organization of space in accordance with the current needs of the society.

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