

## Case Study : Imagining Novi Pazar;

### Content;

Theoretical framework;

Novi Pazar and Balkans;

Novi Pazar today;

City of Novi Pazar;

Conclusions;

Content;

Theoretical framework;

Map can show but can also mislead. It is a medium which was one of fundamental tools to inspire world-wide national identity movements at the end(?) of colonial era. It appears to me almost as a fantasy how maps, simple lines applied over the face of Earth, were cause for debates, conflicts and wars. While the race to describe the area of Balkan peninsula as a specific geo-political entity was a highly diplomatic one (Todorova, 2009) the very act of identification was short and brutal. And it is still an ongoing process.

While reading Anderson's presentation of world-wide identity quests, I notice that writer doesn't seem to approve the described nationalization of world by the West, and that he implicitly address how all the nations and countries inspired by those policies are quite absurd. My favourite example is that of a country of Philippine which got its name from the Spanish king Filip. Anderson means the existence of political forces which are driving the instinct of identification. He doesn't leave space for any other cause for nationalism except for the global political scene. These political forces are generating changes big enough to drive constant switch from local to global, back to local, and so on, where identity is updated and manipulated. At the end of colonial era, world was divided using mass-creation of identities and with many present conflicts as examples, this process is still at work today. Although invention, creation, imagining of those communities was commonly followed by violent conflicts.

The contemporary mainstream quest for identity, in my opinion, is usually not a result of honest wish feeling for identification, but is inspired by fear from disappearance, fear from becoming the part of ever growing global swamp where borders and nations are disappearing into a unified liquid. Everything is allowed and encouraged to be mixed with everything else. Probably as a result of global economic race which undervalues everything except profit, this became concept which seems to work everywhere. Identity, under these circumstances exists as a symptom of potential unidentification. It is becoming a self-branding process of identification which escapes its patriotic cause and takes a shape of marketing which again has a profit-oriented policy. Presence in media, tourism, fairs, and other scenarios are, at the same time, goals and tools for self-promotion and self-identification. This material-driven abstract process of identification, places us outside of our identity as we try to identify ourselves with anything that can earn us profitable points. I feel like there is a switch from traditional feeling of belonging to continuous creation and manipulation of identity. This is in big portion allowed by the mass media, by potential for non-stop creation of everyday culture. A true identification should be, I suppose, something completely different, more close to the human nature.

I grew up inside several countries, without changing my living space. My hometown, a city of Novi Pazar, with its turbulent geopolitical history will be a subject of a case study, in the realm which is bounded by built environment and the Question of identity. Context of analysis will be geopolitics of Balkans and subject is the identity of central urban space of Novi Pazar. Theoretical inspiration and framework for this analysis are Benedict (2006), Todorova (2009) and Žižek (1989).

Novi Pazar is among cities which survived even three changes of, name of the country it belongs, in last 15 years. Even before this turbulent period, its' political dependency was shifting on the regular basis. Today's city was founded by Ottomans, next to the former capital of Serbia throughout the Middle Ages. Novi Pazar is a multi-cultural city where all monotheistic religions exist along with existence of different nations and nationalities. Historically Sandžak has rich demographic and cultural structure.

This case study will start with the geopolitical analysis of selected region to suggest conditions for the analysis of identification process. It will then shift to spatial analysis of the fabric of Novi Pazar's city center. As a final layer specific examples will be discussed. The set of conclusion will try to address the phenomena with critical brief as a result of case study.

Specific subjects of study are the region of Balkan peninsula, Serbia, area around Novi Pazar and its city center. Area marked with the circle with radius of 1500 m from bridge which connects old and new part of the city will be regarded as city center.

Although Novi Pazar was never a true political centre, it was a noticeable point among the conflicts be-

tween big centres like Beograd and Sarajevo, Istanbul and Wien, East and West Roman Empire. There are maps which show that the area of Novi Pazar belongs to space where the division line was drawn after the Roman Empire splited. Idea is that a city of Novi Pazar never had been more populated than it is today, and at the same time carries very long burden of history. This situation creates identity conflicts with questions who we are, what does that means, and how are those questions connected with architecture?

## Novi Pazar and Balkans;

For this purpose i took several historical maps, official regional and national maps, Google maps, and with QGIS, an open source GIS<sup>1</sup> software, those maps are combined into a picture which tells how complex is geopolitical situation of the area of and around Novi Pazar. Points of georeferncing are Beograd, Sarajevo, Sofia, Skopje and Skadar because all of them a present on most of the historical maps showing Balkan peninsula.

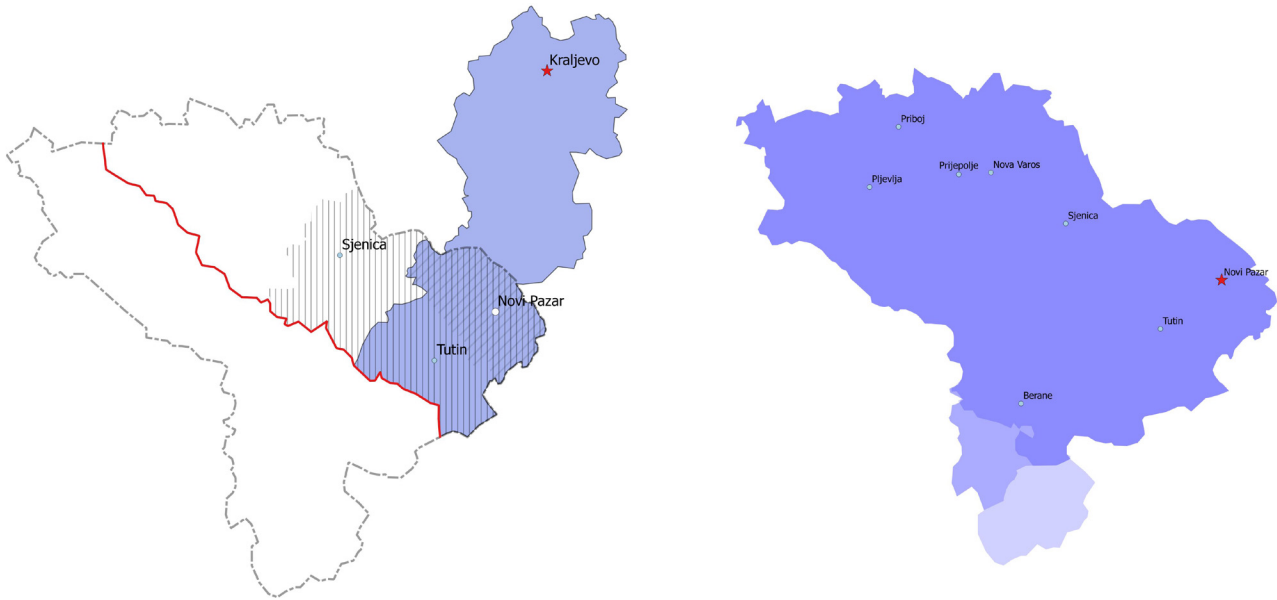


The left map shows the variety and size of mayor political entities in timeframe form migration of Slavs to Balkan peninsula till nowadays times. On the bigger scale, there are three important periods (shown on the right) in the second millenium, which can be recognized in urban morphology of Novi Pazar and it's surrounding area. With the raise of Serbian country at the end of first and beggining of second millenia, through the period of Ottoman rule until the creation and disapearence of Yugoslavia, Novi Pazar had different roles to play in the geo-political context. Map indicates how Novi Pazar was a very point of overlap between East and the West.

<sup>1</sup> GIS(Geographical Information Systems) is a method of analysis of spatial data using specifcly designed software. Available software offer ranges of possibilities when it comes to comparison, analysis and presenta-tion of spatial information.

Novi Pazar today;

The idea of local nationalism started together with breakup of Yugoslavia, in the end of 90'. The idea of the identity of "Bošnjak" became official when a local politician was a candidate in the elections for the president of Yugoslavia, which was then already made only from Serbia and Montenegro. With break up of Yugoslavia, idea of independence also appeared in Novi Pazar, and it was strongly related to a specific geographical area. Historical region of Sandžak draws a map around cities where Bošnjaks live today and it was a very important part of this "national awakening". Idea of Sandžak comes from the period of Ottoman rule, when Novi Pazar was important trading point and relatively influential political entity. Bošnjaks are muslims which live in geographical area of Sandžak which today belongs to the south of Serbia and north of Montenegro.



Overlapping several available maps describing the region of Sandžak, it is noticeable that there are inconsistencies about its borders (right map). While the idea of Sandžak is present and deeply rooted into the identity of Bosnjaks, current political administrative division of Serbia (and Montenegro) has completely divided Sandžak. Firstly Sandžak is split with the border between Serbia and Montenegro. Secondly, Novi Pazar belongs to Raška district, as a legitimate administrative region of Serbia with Kraljevo as its capital. Few cities of Sandžak are under the patronage of the Novi Pazar's court. At the same time, one relatively small space suffers so many abstract, political divisions (left map). Novi Pazar is city dependant on the political wills present in Balkan peninsula and therefore is facing a very big identity crisis.

Novi Pazar City Center;

Novi Pazar is a symbol of Bošnjak identity. It is also an important point for near major political centers. Several hills surrounding the river of Raška, dominate the topography and views of the city. Hills are symbols of turbulent past, and are spaces behind which the enemy was, where enemy was first seen. Desired and real image of Novi Pazar are in conflict. Current economical situation is bad and cannot support free process of identification. There are many jobless young people. Bošnjaks are divided in several political groups which are supported by different allies from the outside. The external political forces have a significant role in the creation of the identity of the Novi Pazar's society, and therefore the identity of the city itself. Nevertheless there are successful citizens and communities in Novi Pazar who are contributing for the city's well being. There are many world known successful Bošnjak sportsmen, which are a very strong and positive part of identification process. Actually, renovation of football stadium and construction of sport venue "Pendik" are the only major construction works in the area of the city center since democracy entered these geographies. Local government is made up mostly from people who identify themselves as Bosnjaks.

What the region under the direct and indirect patronage of Novi Pazar is experiencing in recent years is construction of infrastructural projects and buildings with money donated from Turkey, EU, USA, Serbian Government and Bošnjaks who live and work in western countries. There is another very important and simi-

lar kind of influence on the built environment, in terms of schools, mosques, administration buildings, coming from the religious groups and communities. Within the community of Bošnjaks, there are two official muslim communities. One which is supported by Sarajevo as its parent centre, where the historical and religious similarities with people of Bosnia is used as an argument and other which is supported by the Belgrade.

The present urban setting of Novi Pazar is made of forms originating from Ottoman period, 20th Century and 21st century. The remaining of the Ottoman old fortification is in the very center of the city and it is used as a public park. There are also mosques, fountains, houses which are setting up the cities predominantly oriental image. The creation and life of the country of South Slavs in 20th century brought western architectural ideas through big residential and public projects. During the existence of Yugoslavia, Novi Pazar started to transform from *kasaba* into a town with buildings presenting modern political and art preferences of Belgrade and Zagreb.



City center is very active and attractive urban environment.

Historically a trading oriented town, center of the city is mostly

crowded space with lovely spirit. That is because Novi Pazar is one of the cities with most youngest population in Balkans. Major public and private buildings are present within the space which is addressed by locals with “Grad” (City), “Centar” (Center), “Čaršija” (Downtown). There is a strong affinity towards the ownership of the land within Center. Big number of Bošnjaks living and working in western countries, together with local businessmen has found interest to invest in building of multi-family and office buildings. New public square and pedestrian zones created a comfortable public space inside of city center, which started getting intention from well situated *bauštelci*<sup>2</sup>, who raised the value of land by buying it from the “natives” for insanely high prices. Properties are changing owners frequently. Construction of public square and pedestrian zones within the city center also marked the 21st century political changes, as construction was a main propaganda element used in political presentations. Another wave of construction which is based on multi-family high-rise housing financed mostly by the people from diaspora. One can say that they are building homes for themselves, as they are the most common buyers of those properties, which they use during holidays and vacations. There are local buyers too. The local portion of inhabitants living in multi-family houses are mostly present in buildings built during the existence of Yugoslavia. Those buildings differ in form and size, as they were built according to a plan designed and implemented by a public company responsible for construction industry in the region, “Sandžak projekt”. After the breakup of Yugoslavia, “Sandžak projekt” was privatised and responsibilities were transferred to local and national government bodies.

One of direct relationships between space and identity are places which can be marked as cultural, in sense that those places offer a chance for the process of identification. In this case study those are : cultural centers, museum, educational facilities, sport facilities, public open spaces. Buildings which are part of public services are also recognized as another type of spaces which are contributing to creation of identity. Political

2 From german *baustelle* meaning construction site, came from the fact that most of the people from Novi Pazar and its surrounding went to western countries to work as construction workers.

ownership over the buildings with cultural and public amenities, over the important spaces within the city center is very diverse. Buildings are owned and managed by rebulic government body, local governement, local



and republic government bodies together, religious communities or it is a case of private ownerhsip, which is a result of the privatization process of public property. In the case of Novi Pazar, the city coach station and local TV stations are now a private property.

Few years ago fire destroyed old city tavern -kafana Granata-, which was one of the oldest existing buildings in the city. This was a very strong element of cultural and historical hertiage. The building was under the protection of the relevant national body, but not even one single input didnt happen to provide adequate protection and preservation actions. I think nothing was changed on that building since it was first built next to the road going from Istanbul to Dubrovnik. Now the empty lot serves as a private parking.

One of the very original manifestation of Novi Pazar's spatial identity are unfinished houses. The need to build house with three stories and then only finish and furnish one of them is very popular ideology. Psychological moment of truth, the conflict of present and ideal, inner struggle of masses of people who dream of better days<sup>3</sup>, is brutally shown on the facades of these houses. Majority of consumed material for construction is produced locally because Novi Pazar has a local tilery where all kinds of bricks are being made from earth excavated from a local hill. Another noticable residential archetype is group of villas, mansions, castle-like summer houses. Those are owned by local businessmen and people living abroad, and are a popular tool for-manifestation and proclamation. of individual powers.

As a symptom of demographical changes in recent years, a phenomenon of identification with old-Novi Pazar is present among most of the native inhabitants of the city. Identification through pictures showing old streets, houses, events in the city is very common. Media is used as a tool to separate the people who are inhabiting the city for a longer time from people who moved to the city in last decade.

Novi Pazar is not wealthy enough to have opportunity to invest into a project whose size will be able to establish a significant symbol of identity. There are though examples withing the region of Sandzak which are built for the very reason to be symbols of identity. A mosque with one of the tallest minarets in Europe is built near Novi Pazar, in an open and empty field, to mark and symbolize the mood of Pester highlands in a very expressive manner.

<sup>3</sup> I grew up inside the raise of democratic political movement in Serbia which came onto power on 5th of October, 2000, after the violent raid of National Assembly Building in Belgrade, where democracy litteraly in a highly undemocratical way established a "new political era" of Serbia. What then came are series of promises and prolonged dates about Serbia becoming a part of European Union. Those were days that whole nation was waiting, preparing, dreaming of. I remember how excited i was, and was very persistant to ask over and over about that famous date which will make all troubles disapear. When the better days will come.,(?)

## Conclusions;

How does this incredibly, almost unbelievable movement of political tectonic plates, affect the everyday life? What identity can we read from present built environment? How is feeling of identity manifested through built environment? How should architect perceive identity and more importantly how it should express it? Is it a responsibility of architect to address identity? What kind of dialogue should be established between identity and built environment?

The contemporary mainstream quest for identity, in my opinion is usually not a result of honest wish and will for identification but is inspired by fear from disappearance, fear from becoming the part of ever growing global swamp where borders and nations are disappearing into a unified liquid. Everything is allowed and encouraged to be mixed with everything else. Identity, under these circumstances raises as a symptom of potential unidentification. Probably as a result of global economic race which undervalues everything except profit. Process of self-branding, as process of identification, shifts the direction of identification process towards marketing, which again has a profit-oriented policy. Presence in media, tourism, fairs, and other scenarios are, at the same time, goals and tools for self-promotion and self-identification. This material-driven abstract process of identification places us outside of our identity as we try to identify ourselves with anything that earn us positive mainstream points. I feel like there is a switch from belonging to an specific entity as a phenomenon of identity, towards continuous creation of identity. This is in big portion allowed by the mass and global media, by potential for non-stop creation of everyday culture. A true identification is, I suppose, something very different.

My point is that, there are many things which need to be understood, explored, before the very act of architecture happens. I do not think we are aware of power we have as architects, and more importantly we are not aware of consequences our building produce on the life of communities, as built environment is an important tool for identification. Everything which confronts the natural state of identity and process of identification, that threatens to challenge and transform the image of identity can be regarded as ideology. How architecture should follow the process of identification is extremely important. Every building is a monument of identity. It marks the identity in a specific time, and will tell transfer that message for a long time. Current architectural practice in a very little portion addresses identity, and is subject to pure profit mixed with tendency of looking like the mainstream global architecture.

Architecture deserves and can hold natural position, but one always closer to the needs of people, not power. In today's race of ideologies it is very critical to be in constant mode of differentiation, questioning, critical observation. One easily slips into another ideological realm while trying to overcome other one. My starting point is question of the role of architecture and architect in creation of one society's identity. If one needs house, architect must be skillful to provide as much as possible from what is available. Make more from less. The only acceptable argument for shape distortion is sustainability, social, economical, ecological. Building should be considered as a living organism which breath, consume, communicate with exterior and process the interior, which should play a positive role in balance between built form and other dimensions of society.

In the city like Novi Pazar, surrounded, interlaced with different political and religious ideologies, rich historical and cultural heritage, and an attribute of being the youngest city in Balkans according to the age structure of its population, identification is a very important process.

Benedict Anderson (2006), *Imagined Communities*, London, New York: Verso  
Žižek, S. (1989) *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London, New York :Verso.  
Maria Todorova (2009), *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford: Univeristy Press



