



**INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DESIGN FOR
THE STRENGTHENING OF IDENTITY AND CULTURAL
TOURISM IN THE DANUBE CITIES - **SMEDEREVO****



INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DESIGN FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF IDENTITY AND CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE DANUBE CITIES - SMEDEREVO

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BRANDING PLACES THROUGH CULTURE AND TOURISM

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BRANDING PLACES THROUGH CULTURE AND TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this paper is to expand the possibilities for linking local urban development and educational process in the field of creative use of culture and tourism in relation to the place branding. Therefore, the chapter presents a model of cooperation between municipalities and higher education institutions in addressing important issues for local development. The research was conducted through the cooperation between the City of Smederevo and the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture, realised during the spring semester of the school year 2017/18 on the Master Project at the Master Integrated Urbanism Programme. A specific aspect of cultural tourism resulted in the development of different research topics, mentored through two lines of reasoning. One line investigated how new concepts of cultural tourism can be employed in using local values as a key element of place branding strategy and the second line explored the means of better management and activation of already appreciated assets of the city. New possibilities and successful case studies of the creative use of cultural heritage were examined at the same time.

The research indicates the importance of cultural innovation and creative projects for the extension of cultural and tourist offer of the city of Smederevo as well as for the enabling conditions for conception and successful implementation of place branding strategies. Creative exploration of cultural tourism can hold a nucleus for improving the quality of life in physical, social and economic terms for residents and tourists.

KEYWORDS:

Cultural tourism, place branding, urban management, education in urban and spatial planning, Smederevo

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last quarter of a century, a large number of world cities use cultural innovations and physical improvement in urban regeneration in promoting and branding the city as a high-quality place for the inhabitants and for attracting visitors, investments and international companies. Accordingly, new trends of entrepreneurial urban strategies in liberal capitalism (Harvey, 1989; Jessop, 1998) made a city a place that is innovative, exciting, creative and safe for life.

On the other hand, as Harvey (1989) and Fainstein (2010, p. 2) further elaborate, competition between cities and entrepreneurial approach to regeneration strategies opened up urban space to new development patterns through serial reproduction, producing sameness across the urban landscape, typical for capitalism: cultural and entertainment centres, shopping centres and science parks, thus focusing on economic development, which as an effect produces higher social polarization and gentrification. As a consequence, innovations and investments for creating attractive locations as cultural, tourist and consumer places have been imitated in a large number of cities to a greater and lesser extent.

The focus, thus, becomes investment and economic development with the speculative construction of place and concentration on spectacle and image, rather than on residents needs (Harvey, 1989, p. 8). Therefore, although selling of the city as a location for an activity depends heavily upon the creation of attractive urban imagery, urban entrepreneurialism searches for local identity in the presentation of self in a surrounding of spectacle and play. This state can produce a sense of belonging to the place, while the ideology of locality, place and community becomes central to the political rhetoric of urban governance which concentrates on the idea of togetherness in defence against international trade and city competition (Harvey, 1989, pp. 13-14).

As an addition to this entrepreneurial setting, Richards and Wilson (2005) recognize that globalization and city competitiveness result in the serial reproduction of

cultural attractions and commodification of the cultural tourism product as well. Having these circumstances in mind, the challenges to develop new unique cultural tourism strategies that can preserve local assets, highlight values and create distinctive and diverse cultural products are set ahead of urban planners and city representatives.

Therefore, this chapter considers the role of cultural tourism in the process of place branding and wider urban regeneration, through the cooperation between the educational institutions and public, private and civil sector. In doing so, it tries to contribute to the theoretical development of the link between place branding and culture and tourism at the conceptual level and highlights its usefulness through the operational instruments tested through the students' master project research in the specific post-socialist Serbian context of urban governance. In this way, students were directly engaged in the real-life governance context with stakeholders from the local community and representatives of the City of Smederevo.

2. BRANDING PLACES THROUGH CULTURE AND TOURISM

Ashworth (2009) underlines that place branding deals with discovering or creating uniqueness, which can differentiate specific place from others to gain competitive brand value.

Richards highlights the conceptual definition of cultural tourism as "the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs" (2005, p. 24).

Those two conceptual definitions reveal two major challenges in regeneration processes placed in front of the local governments in the entrepreneurial setting. One is how to discover the uniqueness of certain places and still achieve a competitive advantage, while the other is how to make local specific assets and cultural attractions understandable to tourists and make them

interesting for different perceptions that go beyond ordinary experiences.

Furthermore, the interplay between place branding and local identity, as recognized by Karavatzis and Hatch (2013), consists of four main features: expressing the place's cultural understandings, mirroring impressions and expectations, reflecting and adding new meanings and symbols and leaving an impression on others.

The development of cultural tourism strategies at heritage sites always implies cooperation and the series of negotiations with various stakeholders regarding the heritage as a resource and its possible reuse (Cassel & Pashkevich, 2014). At the same time, in governance terms, traditional planning techniques are characterized by insufficient involvement of relevant actors in the process, low level of available recourses for the implementation and low organizational capacities of local governments to organize the whole process. In this process, higher educational institutions can be of great importance as they can introduce contemporary ideas based on a wider theoretical research tested and applied in practice. At the same time, the process of cooperation between higher educational institutions and municipalities, along with various representatives from public institutions, can have an impact on building capacity at the local level.

Despite already acknowledged relations and mutual benefits between higher educational institutions and municipalities, the research conducted in Cardiff and Dortmund reveals still insufficiently developed links between culture, creativity, and spatial planning in University curricula (Kunzmann, 2004). Additionally, Kunzmann (2004) highlights that culture has been often a neglected subject in spatial planning and architectural education.

In that sense, following section describes academic efforts for bridging this gap between cultural tourism and place branding in spatial planning.

3. EDUCATIONAL PROCESS AND METHODS USED FOR PLACE BRANDING AT THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE

In the process of the transformation of Serbian society from the socialist system to Western market democracy from 2000, the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade has also transformed its educational process according to those shifts and due to the Bologna convention in order to adopt European values. In that respect, the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade has been developing a new model of academic education of students of architecture and urbanism in supporting local development processes regarding the needs of local self-governments in Serbia. This practice already exists in many European countries and brings multiple social benefits, both in terms of preparing new experts ready for modern professional work in practice, as well as regarding professional assistance to local governments through the preparation of expertise and expert studies related to specific local development issues.

In the period from 2000 till today, at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade, educational projects aimed at promoting cultural and tourism development have been implemented in cooperation at different national and local government levels. Although these educational projects were envisioned and exercised at the local level, they have produced spatial, economic and social effects at the national, regional and international level. The cooperation has been realized within array of different, yet important partners, such as the Ministry of Economy and Regional Development, National Tourist Development Corporation of Serbia and their local tourist organizations, as well as with the international organizations such as the GIZ German Cooperation Agency within the project "Municipal Economic Development in the Danube Region", and various local contexts such as Negotin (Radosavljević, i drugi, 2012), Golubac (Radosavljević, Mrdenović, Pavić, & Krell, 2010), Kragujevac (Radosavljević, Đorđević, & Živković, 2015) and Kikinda (Radosavljević, Đorđević, & Radosavljević, 2016).

During the spring semester of the school year 2017/18 at the University of Belgrade Faculty of Architecture educational process on the Master Project at the Master Integral Urbanism was conducted in cooperation with the City of Smederevo. The specific theme was *Strengthening cultural identity in the Danube area* in the city of Smederevo through DANUrB project within the INTERREG Danube EU Program.

Among six offered and guided topics at the Faculty of Architecture, one of the topics was *Cultural tourism*, comprised of the research of culture, cultural identity and tourism. This studio was led by authors of this chapter, with the mentor committee, which included also professor PhD Mirjana Roter Blagojević, an expert in the protection and revitalization of heritage and professor PhD Milorad Mladenović, an expert in art and architecture, originally from the City of Smederevo. The methodology (Fig.1) in this studio included synthesis of previously gained knowledge related to analytical, urban design and planning skills in general at the master course, and specific methodology in line with place branding concepts and urban management issues. These specific issues were further intertwined with the interdisciplinary knowledge provided by the mentor committee.

Theoretical and research-practical work on the subject area applied processes of reprogramming and transforming the space in which students acquire new knowledge based on contemporary paradigms of urban management involving stakeholders in the envisioning creation and implementation of place branding strategies. This implies knowledge and skills in reaching consensus on the common interest in re-creating urban and rural space at the local level, as well as the implications about the position of the city of Smederevo at the regional level and possible links with the global audience and networks. These exercises also help to develop different contemporary ways of communicating and creating the basis for understanding of specific interests in the pluralistic society. It could be achieved through open communication about the possibilities of realization of different interests within the same space.

reaching consensus by creating a common vision, offering different options and scenarios of developing and transforming space. This means establishing rules about possible land uses in space, planning new activities and hallmark events while providing spatial capacities in accordance with the recognized brand and cultural identity of the space, the protection of urban and rural heritage and the natural environment. Such process aimed to explore potentials through the research of the authentic cultural identity of urban and rural areas, assets and households, food, agricultural products, music, folklore and customs, and analyse and explore the possibilities of using these elements in the future place branding strategies developed in an integrated approach. In addition, the goal was to create an integral concept for the development and design of spatial solutions with contemporary principles of protection of authentic cultural heritage through active use in accordance with the recognized elements of local identities and potentials of the territory.

In the first stage of the educational process and according to the recognized field of interest that each of four students expressed, the individual methodological approach was developed by the mentoring team. This approach was further tested and upgraded through collaborative workshops conducted in order to identify the needs of local stakeholders and recognize key development constraints and opportunities of the territory of Smederevo. In that particular way, the students analysed existing relations between cultural and tourism uses and programs on the one side and urban structure and the entire territory and its development potentials on the other side. The students also researched spatial planning and strategic documents to gain an understanding of city strategic aspirations in the field of tourism and economy, spatial planning and rural development. The students' research of the existing documents revealed that most of the strategic documents in most cases were based on generalized solutions neglecting specific local identities, needs and interests of the local population and in few cases neglecting specific assets of the territory.

The representatives that took part in formal workshops intended for all six mentoring teams and students were The Mayor of the City of Smederevo, the city urbanist and representatives from Local Economic Development Office, Regional Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments in Smederevo and Tourist organization of Smederevo. Beside them, the research process required the organization of several additional individual meetings with the city urbanist of the City of Smederevo and residents and rural households in the wider territory of Smederevo municipality. Accordingly, few additional individual students' site visits were organized related to their particular specific work at the Faculty.

New possibilities and successful case studies of the creative use of cultural heritage in place branding were examined at the same time. On the basis of such research, a comprehensive place branding vision was developed, accompanied by the creative student master projects dealing with urban regeneration aiming to produce expansion of cultural and tourist attractions in Smederevo and therefore introduce an improvement of the city image in the physical, social and economic terms.

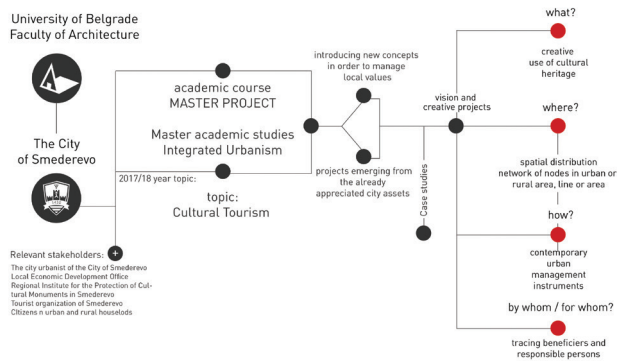


Fig. 1: Model of the applied methodology (Source: chapter authors)

4. STUDENT PROJECTS FOR PLACE BRANDING THROUGH CULTURE AND TOURISM

After the preliminary research, four main topics on how to interlink culture and tourism in Smederevo were introduced and furthered researched in the students' design thesis and projects. On the one side, two topics can be observed as attempts to introduce new concepts in order to manage local values, such as the introduction of cultural industries regarding craftsmanship and introduction of gastro-tourism in rural households. On the other hand, two of the remaining topics can be perceived as projects that emerged from the already appreciated assets of the city: the Fortress and the industrial steel tradition, aiming to explore new ways on how the Fortress could be activated to satisfy the needs of the contemporary tourists and how steel can be used for the city branding.

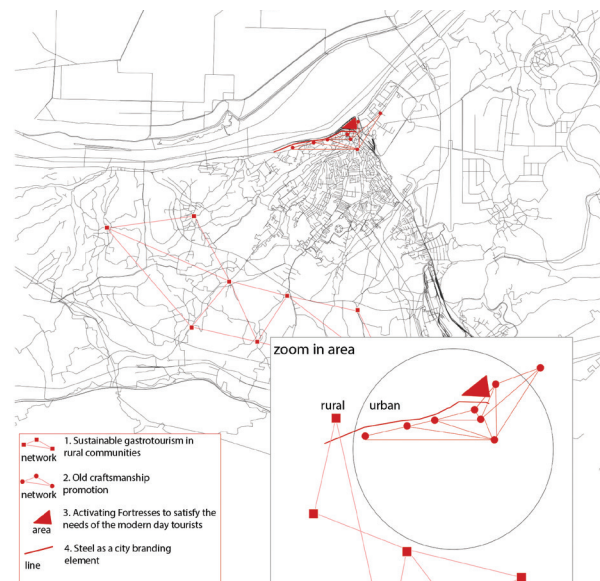


Fig. 2: Spatial distribution of students' project (Source: chapter authors)

Regarding spatial distribution of student projects (Fig. 2) each of them can be perceived as a network of nodes (4.1 and 4.2), area (4.3) or line (4.4). In the remainder of the text, each of the four approaches will be described in detail.

4.1. Sustainable gastro-tourism in rural communities

This project was focused on the research of the relation between cultural tourism, cultural identity and local communities, particularly on the way in which these interrelations could contribute to the strengthening of the cultural identity of the city. A broad explanatory basis for the project was built on the existing theoretical notions of the definition of cultural identity (Feldman, 1990, Hyman, 1990), globalization influences (Giddens, 1990, p. 64; Jagić & Vučetić, 2017), importance of the culture in the relation to tourism and identity (Stebbins, 1997), food significance for the local identity (Hughes, 1995), and the general reasons for the introduction of cultural tourism (Richards, 2005; Richards & Hall, 2000). Following their line of reasoning, food can be perceived as a reflection of the culture of one nation and its people, and as such can provide basic ground to increase place attractiveness (ibid). As such, gastro-tourism is distinguished as a specific branch of cultural tourism, which plays a very important role, since food, in addition to being an important element of the local identity of the postmodern society, becomes a central place in the tourist experience as well. Accordingly, gastro-tourism can be perceived as a blend of unique natural and cultural characteristics, services, infrastructure and behaviour towards tourists, and as such can enhance the overall experience of the city. Additionally, authenticity has always been an important factor in the tourist offer, while the search for authentic local and regional food can motivate tourist to visit a particular place. Guided by the assumption that strengthening of culture at the local level could have a positive impact on the strengthening of the identity, this project highlights gastro-tourism as a branch of cultural tourism with the potential for development in the rural areas of the city of Smederevo.

relying on the strategic plan and what Smederevo could offer in the touristic field. The research was conducted through the site analysis, where six local villages were researched in depth and with whose residents, student conducted semi-structured interviews (Fig. 3).

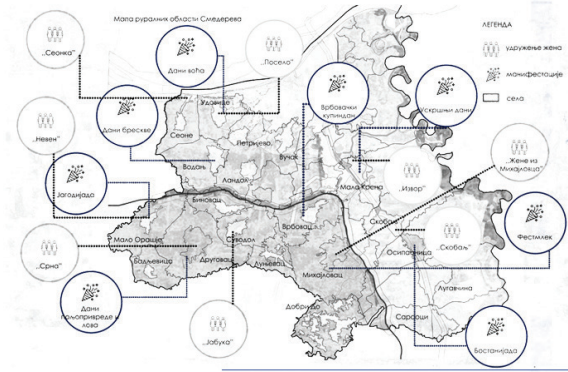


Fig. 3: Analysis of the potentials of specific villages (Author: Aleksandra Ilić)

The main goal of the site analysis was to explore the possibilities and conditions for the implementation of gastro-tourism in the specific rural communities of Smederevo in order to strengthen the identity, but also to reveal potential threats that this strategy could produce.

In this regard, the specific goal was set to enhance the way how tourists perceive Smederevo rural setting through specific gastro tourism offer and thus enhance the economic vitality of local residents and social cohesion among various actors. In the next phase of master work, the project focused on the development of an action plan for the single village, defining the realization phases, management plan with activities and responsible stakeholders, project time span, evaluation criteria as well as the budget needed for project implementation. Five main activities for the project implementation included the development of tourist accommodation facilities, introduction of cooperative kitchen involving tourist in

the cooking process, construction of the market store with local products, construction of bicycle paths that will connect all the villages and establishment of tourist signalization (Fig. 4). For each of them, technical, location, program and organizational requirements were defined and illustrated.

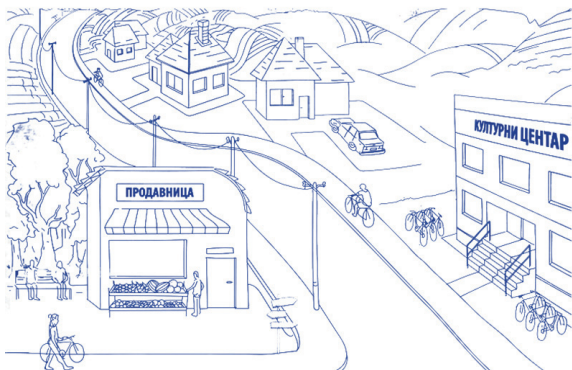


Fig. 4: Market store with local products in village (Author: Aleksandra Ilić)

As researched, the project can be implemented within a year and a half in one village, and if successfully evaluated and re-examined, it can become a model that could be transferred to the rest of the rural area. Having in mind that rural area covers 92% of the Smederevo area, along with the high fertility of the land, unique natural values of the landscape and tradition in fruit growing and viticulture, this project provides a unique perspective on how gastro-tourism can be used to enhance the connection between culture and tourism while its integrated strategic approach offer ways on how to operationalise and implement those ideas into real setting.

4.2. Old craftsmanship promotion

The focus of the project is on the immaterial heritage, identified as one of the most important elements of the local identity. The old craftsmanship, along with

the traditional production, social history and way of life, has been recognized as main potentials for the cultural tourism in Serbia due to the diversity and variety of crafts in areas that emerged several centuries ago and that are becoming forgotten in modern days. Along with this assumption, the main goal was set to promote traditional craftsmanship through cultural tourism in order to preserve tradition, cultural and natural heritage and enhance local economic development on the micro level. The basis for the project was developed through the research of good examples of the old craftsmanship promotion such as the open-air museum in Riga (brivdabasmuzej, 2018), establishment of national association for the old and artistic crafts and handcrafts in Serbia (Our Hands, 2018) and organization of manifestations that promote old crafts such as Belgrade Manifest (Beogradski Manifest, 2018) and Ugljevik handmade product's fair (Todorović, 2014). The student project was developed through several urban management instruments, mostly promotional and organizational. The projects proposed the inclusion of Smederevo's old crafts into national and international Danube region strategies, development of promotional campaigns, use of subventions and incentives for the local production and organization of cultural manifestations, development of the web platform, informational material and pavilions for the promotion of local products.

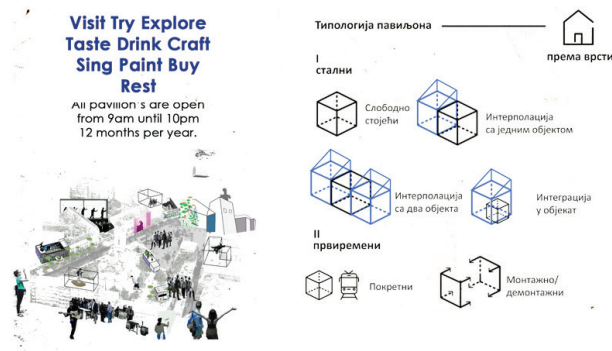


Fig. 5: Pavilion's typology (Author: Aleksandar Lukić)

The project included the development of the pavilion's typology (Fig. 5) regarding program (food, art, manufacture, information, mix type), durability and incorporation into the existing open public spaces and urban structure (permanent or temporary, free-standing, interpolated or integrated into the existing urban structure).

Furthermore, the spatial distribution of types (Fig. 6) was developed along with the program for the pavilions. Consistent of the touristic offer specific for Smederevo: wine production, fruit growing, production of middle age tools, fishing and tasting the royal cheese. Local touristic guided tours were provided, connecting different types of pavilions and thus providing the specific experience of the city and its hinterland.

All of the suggested activities should serve as a stimulus for the revival of old and artistic crafts and the introduction of contemporary modes on how this type of production could attract tourist, connect people, provide additional incomes for local households and promote the city of Smederevo. Consequently, it is expected that the project will, directly and indirectly, influence the development in the field of tourism, culture and education while increasing awareness of the importance of the preservation of cultural values and assets which Smederevo has.

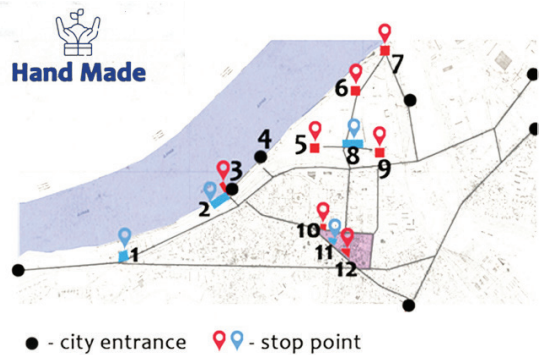


Fig. 6: Spatial distribution of pavilions (Author: Aleksandar Lukić)

4.3. Activating Fortresses to satisfy the needs of the modern day tourists

The project starts with the identification of the changed concepts of tourism from "sight-seeing" to "life seeing", emphasizing the importance of experience, atmosphere, participation in everyday life (Đukić Dojčinović, 2005). Having this in mind and the importance of old fortifications, the question that arose was how to make these locations more attractive to tourist and yet preserve the cultural and historical values of the site? Fortresses, once with the defensive role, can now be observed as a potential ground for reading the layers of national history and culture and as a place for new activities to emerge. The ways of activating the Fortresses were defined related to previous Nešković's research(1986), such as ideas to transform fortress into historical ambience, archaeological park, revitalization of specific parts into museums, galleries, accommodation and service facilities were taken as a starting ground of the project. Additionally, open space of the Fortress was envisioned as a place for various manifestations to take place, but recognizing risks that those activities could have a negative impact on the preservation of the Fortresses.

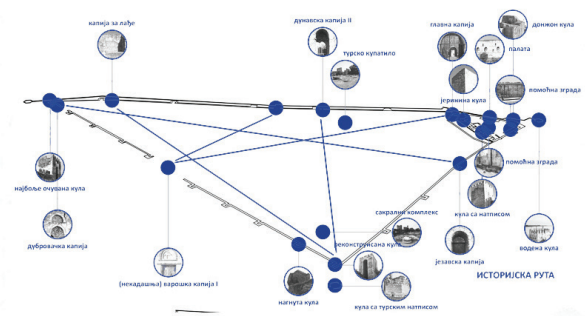


Fig. 7: Fortress thematic routes (Author: Sara Kovačević)

As an alternative to massive events, it is possible to develop cultural routes (Fig. 7) that will present a unique set of values, connect specific cultural resources. The main goal of focusing on a single theme is to provide

a better insight into the historical and cultural aspect of the destination that tourist visits. (Matić, Zubanov, & Tomka, 2015).

Any of these ways of activation will require construction works on technical protection of the specific parts of the Fortress, adaptation of existing infrastructure, lightning and safety improvement measures as well as the establishment of the tourist informational centre. The rest of the measures, such as providing space for open-air performances, promotional market spaces and construction of the restaurant, accommodation facilities and port on the Danube River will depend on the way of activation and available resources.



Fig. 8: Thematic routes (Author: Sara Kovačević)

In the next stage, the project was focused on the creation of thematic routes (Fig. 8), mainly historic, sports and culture and art routes. The historical route is designed to connect towers, gates, Turkish bath and sacral complex of the Big City with the facilities in the Small City. By this means, it shed new light into the historical importance of the Fortress and highlights the specificity of each tower and gate that are neglected nowadays. Sports route is intended to bring a new life into the once very lively city, through the outdoor gym, playgrounds, chess field and open-air cinema for sports live stream. Cultural and art route should initiate construction of facilities

and public space that would provide spatial capacity for food tasting, library, park of sculptures, exhibition space, open-air theatre and temporary stage for music shows. The project provides a general allocation strategy for the above-mentioned activities and program.

4.4. Steel as a city branding element

The main goal of the project was to identify conditions on how specific element can become a carrier of the city identity and evolve into a brand attractive for tourists thus contributing to the local economic development. The theoretical background of the project was developed on the findings dealing with place branding (Hankinson, 2004), urban tourism (Law, 2002; Costas, 2011) and cultural tourism (Richards, 2005). Besides theoretical research, the successful case from Belfast was described and analyzed since it has used Titanic as a historical brand (Coyles, 2013). In the case of Smederevo, steel has been recognized as a cultural and material legacy of the city (Fig. 9), while four goals were defined to create a comprehensive branding strategy. The first goal deals with the education about the innovative use of steel to increase promotion of the brand through the organization of workshops and seminars. The second goal is the promotion of the steel use while third goal states the need to include the old Steel factory into the touristic offer. The second and third goal are further interconnected through the production of new products- traditional tools, jewellery, decorations and providing necessary subsidies to support and enhance steel production. The fourth goal is concerned with improving city image, suggesting the development of new urban furniture and development of design guidelines prescribing the use of steel in the projects of reconstruction of the existing buildings and new ones. One of the first object to be reconstructed with steel would be the Fortress towers.

In the next phase, these goals were operationalised and tested on a specific area, the Danube riverfront in which the river and historical industrial heritage were recognized as carriers of the identity.

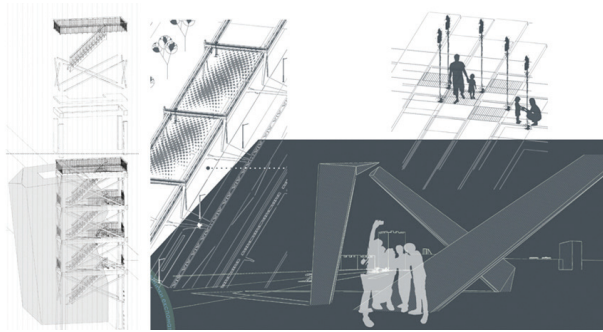


Fig. 9: Steel as a brand (Author: Uroš Marković)

Having this in mind, detailed design of specific urban elements was designed and presented in detail (Fig. 10): design of stands at sports courts; steel oversized chess field; implementation of steel wires into the existing factory cranes intended to more adventurous ways of movement; enabling two rails and introduction of mobile electric-powered trolleys to connect Old Steel Factory and the Fortress; installation of lighting, urban furniture, canopies of steel and sliding track along the promenade; upgrading the former silo's building into viewpoint and redesign of the public space in front of the Fortress with the use of water mirrors with steel elements.

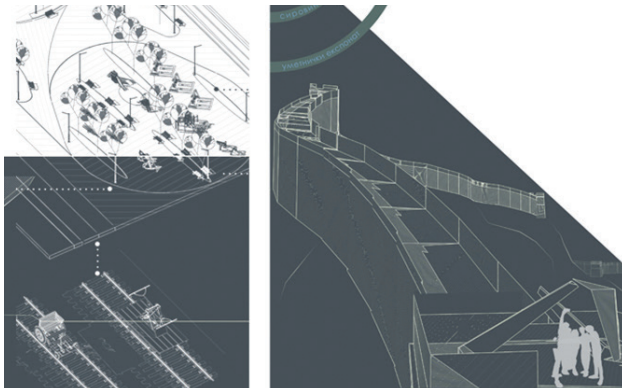


Fig. 10: Steel as a brand in detailed specific urban elements (Author: Uroš Marković)

Beside the implementation of new urban structures made of steel, the project suggests the use of art to fulfil project goals. Accordingly, it was planned that international artists exhibit their steel sculptures on the newly regenerated river promenade and thus create a place that is unique and attractive for tourists.

The project was planned for realization through several phases, from the development of the initiative for plan development, through plan design and formalization to the formation of working bodies and implementation. It was expected that the project can be financed by the EPCTE, IPA funds with the support of Ministry of Tourism and steel processing private companies.

5. CONCLUSION

The research indicates the importance of cultural innovation and creative projects for the extension of cultural and tourist offer of the city of Smederevo. Both of the applied strategies in terms of using new concepts such as gastro-tourism and creative tourism or introducing better management and activation of the already appreciated assets of the city such as active use of the Fortress and use of steel as a main element of the branding strategy can enable conditions for conception and successful implementation of place branding strategies. The cooperation between the educational institution and local municipality on the final master project provides a platform for the creative exploration of cultural tourism, thus creating a nucleus for improving the quality of life in physical, social and economic terms for residents and tourists.

Taking into account that the governance component of place branding through culture and tourism is a challenge in today's globalized world, this type of educational process may hold the key for increasing capacities and developing organizational skills, both for students and municipalities, complementary to the traditional planning techniques that could be used in other contexts.

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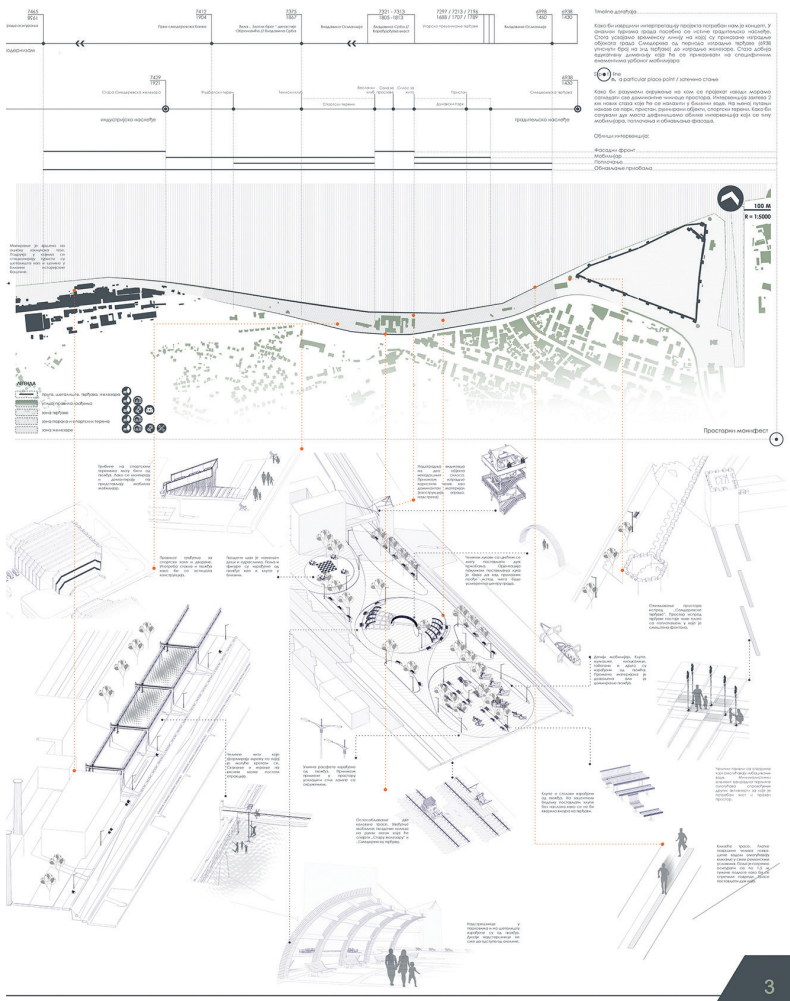
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Poster 1

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