

Proposal for a Cultural and Congress Center in Shkodra, Albania

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Abstract—This paper describes the projection of a Cultural and Congress Center in the city of Shkodra, Albania. Due to major transformations of the last decades, Albanian cities have passed through unsuitable spatial transformations. In the verge of application of the project of the waterfront of Shkodra, it was convenient to explore the opportunities for possible recreative and cultural spaces. Considered as the cradle of the culture, the city of Shkodra is inevitably connected to the art life. Therefore, it was assumed very important the design of a new multipurpose Cultural and Congress Center as part of waterfront regeneration project.

Firstly, some international similar case studies are described. Secondly, international normative have been analyzed and taken in consideration for our project. Thirdly, is described the design idea and project of the Cultural and Congress Center. Lastly are drawn some conclusions regarding future steps and studies.

Keywords—cultural center, congress area, cinema, theatre, library, recreative spaces

I. INTRODUCTION

In the verge of promoting strategical development plans of Albanian cities, there are prepared some important documents, plans and instruments to determine future developments of the city of Shkodra. Here are some of the most important documents regarding city's development through these decades:

- The Strategic Plan for Economic Development 2005-2015 (from the Municipality of Shkodra),
- Rehabilitation of beaches of Lake Shkodra and construction of infrastructure for sport activities 2014 (from the Municipality of Shkodra),
- Local General Instrument for land use 2010 (from the Municipality of Shkodra),
- Local General Plan of Shkodra 2010 (approved from K.K.T),
- Territorial Development Policy of Shkodra Municipality 2010 (approved from K.K.T),

- Strategical Environmental Assessment 2005, Lake Shkoder monitoring program development 2011 (with the consulence of ERICoVelenje Ecological Research & Industrial Co-operation Ltd.),
- Assessment of current situation of Shkodra Lake Ramsar Site 2010 (from Regional Environmental Center Albania),
- Lake Shkodra Integrated Ecosystem Management Project (LSIEMP),
- Management of urban waste in Shkodra,
- Waterfront project 2010.

The Regulatory Plan of Shkodraproclaimed the importance of economic, cultural and natural promotion of city's assets. Sustainable administration of natural heritage as lakes, rivers and agricultural lands need clear strategy and careful implementation of plans and directives. In order to advocate touristic development of the city and to conserve the coastline, the project of the waterfront proposes mix-use buildings including residential edifices, cultural spaces and a yacht port. The water frontier will also serve as dam to prevent flooding. Part of other design projects for this specific area, is our project of Cultural and Congress Center, as a multipurpose facility proposing the presence of conference hall, cinema, library and other useful art activities.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In this paper is described the proposal for projection of a Cultural and Congress Center in Shkoder, Albania. At the verge of application of many strategical and local projects as the waterfront in the edge of Buna river, the Municipality of Shkodra have proposed the renewal of this specific area located in the south-wester part of the city. Furthermore, lack of multipurpose cultural centers are lastly evidenced in city. Hence, our intention was to propose a cultural center with all necessary art and leisure facilities that could be used as a key node for events to promote the city of Shkodra in the national and international level.

Our aim is to propose a thorough multicultural center, including deficient artistic provisions in the city. This study could be considered as part of other integrated studies and projects for the entirely waterfront area design.

For desk research we mainly focused on reports published from the Municipality of Shkodra and other legal entities, plans and advertisement brochures. Furthermore, maps and other historical documents were made possible from online websites and local contacts. Our qualitative research was also focused on the analyzation of relevant international similar case studies, to grasp the most important experiences. Field trip and in-place recording were useful to record site characteristics and features. At last, design and projection of the cultural center was a result of group work and professional assistance.

III. INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES

Multifunctional Cultural Centers is conceived as a complex of cultural eveniments attended in a structure.

We have selected three representative examples from international sphere.

- a) Center Georges Pomidou, in Paris, France
- b) Deichmanskebibliotek, in Oslo, Norway
- c) Regional Cultural Centre, in Lettrekenny, Ireland

A. Center Georges Pomidou, in Paris, France

The multidisciplinary center is located in the area of Plateau Beaubourg, in Paris, France (Fig.1,2). After the decision of President Pompidou in 1969 for the construction of a cultural center, the competition announced the winning project of Renzo Piano, Gianfranco Franchini and Richard Rogers. The center was inaugurated in 1977 and from them proved to be a successful art exhibition nucleus.

The building, with its untraditional appearance, presented the intention for art spaces by an outside transparent structure of steel elements and glass construction. The architectonic elements were evidenced in a colorful way, as Piano said: ... red representing vertical means of transport, yellow for electrical cabling, green for fluids, blue for air ducts and air-conditioning, and white for the structure [1]. The center has an external escalator, from which could be gradually seen the plaza and surrounding area. From the functional prospect, the Pompidou center held public library, bibliotheca, research center, exhibition spaces, museum, shops, cinemas etc.



Fig. 1. Center Pompidou.



Fig. 2. Center Pompidou.

Source: DigDesFab 2011 (Online: <https://digdesfab11.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/pompidou1.pdf>)

B. Deichmanske bibliotek, in Oslo, Norway

The project of Deichmanske bibliotheca was designed by the architects Lund HagemArkitekter AS | Atelier Oslo (Fig. 3,4). The object has started construction in 2009 and is expected to be opened for the public in 2018. The library with high quality innovative climatic solutions is composed by fascinate luminous façade. This friendly building summarizes the last environmental standards as low gas emission, passive house criteria according to Norwegian Standard 370 [13] and the use of recycled materials as recycled steel in foundations.

The first idea was to divide the site in three parts, and objects giving each one a human scale. The library is faced to the surrounding green hills, with close link to public transport station. In order to be visible from the public, the library's top floors are designed as console structures. The entrance to the building is offered by three main apertures, inviting public access from different parts.

The object concludes in itself cinema, auditorium, offices, restaurants, library, various service areas and other technical spaces.



Fig. 3. *Deichmanske bibliotek.*

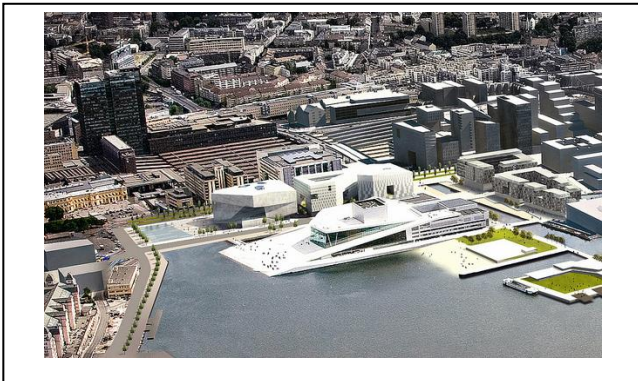


Fig. 4. *Deichmanske bibliotek.*

Source: The Locals (Online: <http://www.the-locals.net/a-library-of-the-future-new-deichman-main-library-oslo-norway/>)

C. *Regional Cultural Centre, in Lettrekenny, Ireland*

The RCC building is a project by MacGabhann Architects, from a competition design in Donegal, Ireland (Fig. 5,6). The center was opened in 2007 offering art, music, film and exhibition facilities. It now operates also for community and educational projects as festivals, events and workshops.

The building is located in a green valley, near two other important sites as the Griannan Theatre and the Leisure Center. Hence, the intention was to create a new attraction area by providing a special deconstructivist form. The façade made from grass and aluminum attracts the attention from different point of view from the city. The center includes auditorium, cinema, digital media suites, and exhibition and art galleries.



Fig. 5. *Regional Cultural Centre.*



Fig. 6. *Regional Cultural Centre.*

Source: MacGabhann Architects Online Site (Online: <http://www.macgabhannarchitects.ie/public/regional-cultural-centre/>)

IV. HISTORY OF CULTURAL CENTERS AND LIBRARIES ON SHKODRA

Artistic history of Albanian come from the antiquity, revoking the theatres of the centuries B.C. However, cultural centers in Albania are built late in the XX century, from the first Italian invasion.

After 1960, during the communist period, the cultural life burst in new cultural objects constructed according to the inspirations from the architecture of the time. Most of these buildings were coordinated in the so called Cultural Houses, where all cultural activities were held. Functional program intents the organization of spaces for exhibition (including performance hall and all necessary alcoves) and massive culture (library, cabinets, museal rooms and spaces for artistic activities. Their capacity depends on the number of inhabitants, capacity of activities held, and the space available in the site. The composition of spaces was symmetric, asymmetric or central.

Some of the most important art and culture facilities in Shkodra are the Migjeni Theatre, built in 1958 and reconstructed in 2001; the Palace of Culture, the Art gallery, which exposes more than 700 paintings; the Historic Museum the library and the cinema. Interesting is the fact that Shkodra has have several libraries since the Illyrian period as the muslim library, the catholic one, private libraries and the public library since 1916.

V. PROJECT OF CULTURAL AND CONGRESS CENTER IN SHKODRA

A. *Shkodra city*

Shkodra is located in the north-western part of Albania. Ample of natural resources, the city epitomizes various cultural, historical, and archeological assets. Cultural monuments as the Castle of Rozafa, English Watch tower, Monument of "Isa Boletini", "Luigj Gurakuqi" and "Preke Cali"; traditional houses, Historical Museum and Marubi Photographic archive; places of worship as cathedrals and mosques are some of the interesting places to visit.

B. The project

The project proposes a cultural and congress center in Shkodra, Albania. In the total area of 4 ha are proposed about 1 ha of congress hall, cinemas, library and other recreative areas. The project is compound of three main objects, holding each one important function. The site is located near the lake of Shkodra and is permeable by an opened water canal. The objects are conceived as abstract structures compound by the idea of art and beauty, as the place is the interconnection of history, tradition and people. Furthermore, the objects are inclined in projection to the Castle of Shkodra, pointing the view from the entrance of the site to the castle. The use of consoles, truss and opened facades with photovoltaic panels, offer a great view and create a nice environment for citizens and visitors.

1) Analysis of the site

Some of the most important issues raised during the site analysis are traffic and quality of the existing roads. From one side, individual buildings are placed very intensively in the urban net, on the other side historic buildings stand in harmony with urban layer. Furthermore, the Shkodra Lake is not really present as integral part of city. Revitalization of lake shore could take in consideration careful integration of lake-city symbiosis and create open view cones to the nature and relaxing view.

This project, part of Waterfront Design of Shkodra Municipality, explores opportunities and deficiencies of city life. Our proposal was a multipurpose Cultural and Congress Center. The project lies in 4 ha site in lake shore of low urbanized area. The project implies the construction of conference and congress areas with cinemas, library and other social facilities.

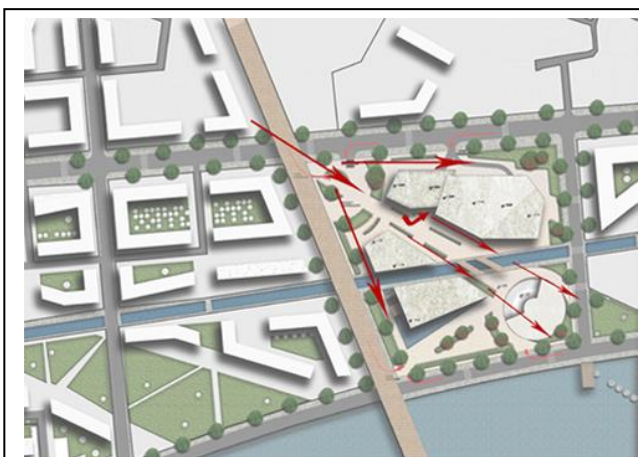


Fig. 7. Site flow analysis.

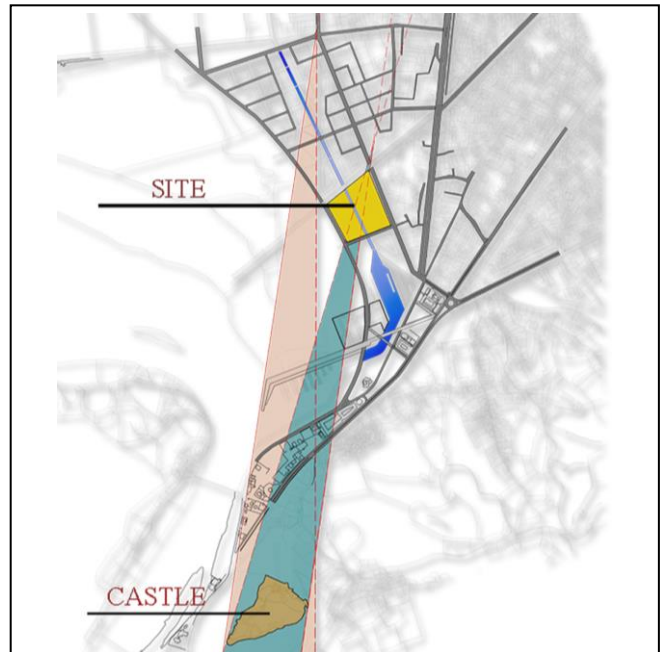


Fig. 8. View cones from site to castle of Shkodra.

2) Urban and architectural concept

The essence of the project is the integration of what we thought were three most important elements as the Lake, the Castle and the site (Fig. 7). In the site are proposed a pedestrian runway from the city center to the lakeside. Further facilities include library, cinema, recreative and performance areas and an opened amphitheater with direct view to Shkodra Castle (Fig. 8). The general idea was that view cones of visitors could be projected and summarized at the culminate point of the castle, in latitude, and at the lake in longitude. Hence, the perception of visitors enriches with historical and traditional sensations of local character.

Parallel to the urban organization, architectural concept lies in the volumes structure of the buildings. They height increase gradually to the castle and to open the view to the lake shore. Other design elements have cultivated the general idea, as the provision of water surfaces in the site and interior spaces of the recreative areas, transparent facades, high consoles with clear view to the wonderful surrounding environment and green belts in the entire site (Fig 9).

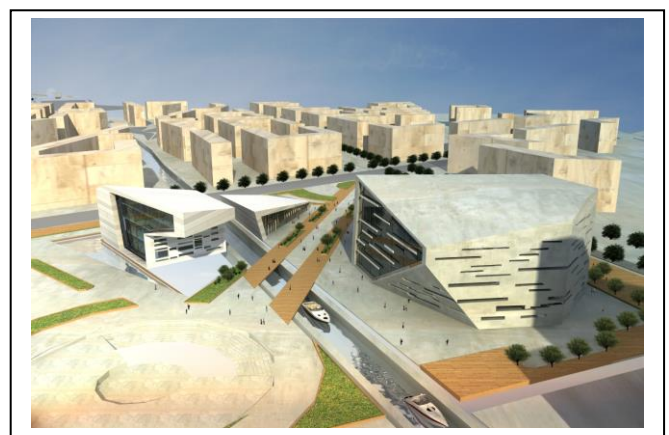


Fig. 9. *Architectural concept – perspective view.*

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Shkodra is one of the most important cities in Albania. With its remarkable environment and authentic local architecture and urban structure, projects of the lake shore should be very careful to take in consideration all the above mentioned issues. Parallel to local inhabitants, with high consent to cultural events, recreative areas should provide further economic facilities with the goal of local economic growth. However, the key point is the provision of an integrative architecture, which summarizes all sustainable design elements.

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