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ЈАВНА БИБЛИОТЕКА КАО ПРИВЛАЧАН ДЕО УРБАНОГ ПЕЈЗАЖА

Апстракт

Јавна библиотека је део урбаног дизајна још од античких градова. Њени архитектура, простор, функције и одлика јавног простора, чине јавну библиотеку привлачним, активним и виталним делом урбаног пејзажа. Стога је препозната као урбани маркер, активатор места и урбани магнет који подржава стратегије урбаних трансформација.

Циљ овог рада је да јавну библиотеку дефинише као сложену институцију, повезану с урбаним пејзажом, истражујући на који начин јавна библиотека утиче на урбани пејзаж и трансформише га кроз више слојева, и који симболички обрасци креирају спољну слику ове везе. Истраживање је спроведено кроз студије случаја четири библиотеке смештене у центру града: две историјске и две савремене, анализирајући и дефинишући локацију јавне библиотеке у граду, однос пројекта библиотеке према политици града/државе, друштвено и културно значење библиотеке и њену функцију и архитектуру.

Јавна библиотека је атрактиван део урбаног пејзажа, учествује у обликовању истакнутих јавних градских простора. Она унапређује квалитет и вредност урбаног пејзажа као целине, креира или трансформише слику града кроз простор и време. Стога је могуће отворити даља истраживања о томе како се јавна библиотека уклапа у концепт еманације урбаног пејзажа.

Кључне речи: јавна библиотека, урбана трансформација, слика града, урбани пејзаж

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PUBLIC LIBRARY AS AN APPEALING URBANSCAPE ELEMENT

Abstract

A public library has been a part of the urban design since ancient times. Its architecture, space, functions, and public space character make it an appealing, active, and vital part of the urbanscape. It is therefore recognized as an urban landmark, place activator, and urban magnet supporting urban strategies.

This paper aims to define public library as a complex institution related to the urbanscape, investigating its effects on and the power to transform urbanscape in multiple layers, the symbolic patterns of which create an outward image of this relation. The research was conducted through the case studies of four downtown libraries: two historic and two contemporary ones, by analyzing and defining their locations in the city, the relation of library project to the city/state policies, their social and cultural meanings, functions, and architecture.

Public library is an appealing urbanscape element that shapes prominent public spaces in the city. It adds to the quality and the value of urbanscape, creates or transforms the image of the city through space and time. This opens up further discussion on the ways public libraries fit into the concept of urbanscape emanation.

Keywords: public library, urban transformation, image of the city, urbanscape

Introduction

A public library is recognized as an urban icon and landmark, place activator, and urban space in cities and towns. It offers free access to everybody, acts as a local information, education, and culture center, funded by national and/or local governments. With its space, architecture, function, and symbolism, it is an appealing, active, and vital constitutive part of the city.

This research aims to highlight active and appealing roles of public libraries in urbanscape, defining its historic, symbolic, and physical background from the time of ancient cities to modern days.

Public library is observed beyond the perception of a monumental building that archives culture and knowledge and provides reading space. Public library is a complex institution, the most relevant attribute of which is "being the public space" in the city², which brings public library in an active relationship with urbanscape.

Urbanscape is the appearance of an urban area, and like similar concepts — landscape, cityscape, townscape, urban landscape — it has been researched in terms of "decoding the outward image of cities".³ This research deals with urbanscape as a complete image of an urban area, and its relation to a public library not just as in appearance, but as a dynamic multilayered concept. On the symbolic level, library is an institution with social, cultural, educational, and political function, while on the physical level all these functions are embodied and reflected in the library space and architecture, and related to the specific urbanscape.

A public library project found its place in the contemporary city renewal programs connected to downtown regeneration in multiple cases⁴. It takes an active role in different urban transformation strategies — culture led urban regeneration, urban upgrading, and increasing urban resilience.⁵ Within those strategies, library is recognized as a cultural icon, landmark, placemaker, community vitaliser,⁶ urban "meeting room", "intellectual heart of civic life",⁷ and one of the few real public places in commercialized cities⁸. Public library is a political tool, it is government-funded and used to present the political and city or state power.⁹

Public library is a complex institution with widely recognized role and position in cities. This paper defines public libraries as an appealing element of urbanscape, examining the ways they transform urbanscape, the symbolic patterns of which create an outward image of this relation.

The research was conducted through the case studies of four cities and their central libraries: two historic ones – the Ulpian Library (AD 114), Ancient Rome, and the San Marco Library (1579), Venice; and two contemporary ones – the Birmingham Library (2013) and the Helsinki Central Library Oodi (2018); in order to outline the evolution of the relation, and research historical background of public libraries as urbanscape elements.

Case studies – four libraries

Researching public libraries as appealing urbanscape elements, considering symbolic and physical layers of this connection, was conducted by means of analysis and definition

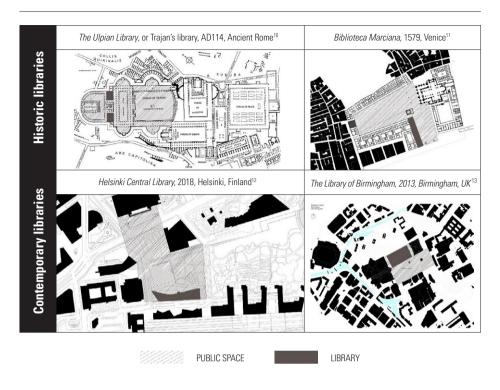


Table I. Public libraries in urbanscape — situations

of their location in the city, relation of the library project to the city/state policies, social and cultural meaning of the library, its functions and architecture. Historic libraries were researched in the same manner as contemporary ones in order to define the origins of library in urbanscape.

Two historic and two contemporary libraries selected are public libraries, located in the city core, in the busiest public spaces in the cities; they were designed and built as part of larger city agendas and their space and architecture reflect their publicness.

Ulpian library, or Trajan's library, built in AD114 in Ancient Rome, was a part of the imperial fora – a complex of monumental public spaces and buildings. Together with the public basilica and Trajan's temple, the library framed a small square within the fora. It consisted of two identical chambers on the opposite sides of the square with Trajan's column in its center.¹⁰

Libraries were constitutive parts of monumental public complexes that were focal points of large urban transformation projects in Ancient Rome. This trend was started with the Palatine Library, a part of the Forum of Augustus, continued with Trajan's forum and Ulpian Library and was the result of Hellenistic influence to bring culture, art, and education to cities.¹¹

According to Welch (2005), "Though the ancient city grew gradually, building by building, throughout its millennium-long heyday, the city experienced periodic growth spurts during which large-scale building programs dramatically transformed the urban landscape.



Fig. 1. The Library of Saint Mark, Venice, Italy

Such sweeping changes in the urban fabric usually coincided with political or social crises or periods of transition in Roman identity."12

Hence, Trajan's forum was designed and built to celebrate the military success and political power of the Roman Emperor Trajan. It was the cornerstone within several projects in the city of Rome, conducted to change and improve the image of the city.

Libraries in Ancient Rome were open to all the citizens and were more than just book depositories. They were used as meeting places for intellectuals, spaces for public readings by authors, allowing the illiterate majority to take part into library activities, places for political and philosophical debates, and private gatherings.¹³ Trajan's library was visually and functionally part of the open public space. It consisted of a pair of chambers housing literature in Greek and Latin, which was the model of library design in Rome of that time. In this case, the two chambers were positioned on opposite sides of the small square, their lavishly decorated interiors facing the open public space, and communicating with it through open porticos.¹⁴

In its volume, decoration or monumentality, the Ulpian Library was not the dominant part of the public forum or urbanscape; it was, at the symbolic and physical levels, a part of the public monumental complex.

Biblioteca Marciana, Venice, built in 1579, is an iconic library building that shaped and outlined one of the most prominent open public spaces of the Renaissance.¹⁵ The library is located within the complex of public spaces — Piazza and the Piazzetta di San Marco, and the waterfront of the Grand Canal. The Piazzetta connects Piazza di San Marco with the waterfront and is framed with the Ducal Palace and Marciana Library. At the time this public space took its final shape, and the library was built, it was the formal entrance to the city of Venice.¹⁶

Reconstruction of this public space and construction of the library were a part of the *Renovatio Urbis* — city renewal project that took place in Venice in the 16th century. The main goal of this project was to affirm the identity of Venice as a European cultural center,



Fig. 2. The Library of Birmingham, UK (Source: Image provided by Mecanoo architects, Image copyright by Christian Richters)

to present the Venetian Republic on the international scene after its decline in political power, defeat in the War of the League of Cambra, (1508–1516) and striving with other political issues, at the same time recovering from the fire of 1512.¹⁷ The task of urban reconstruction was assigned to Jacopo Sansovino, the state builder, who transformed the Piazza complex with its public spaces and designed the iconic building of Marciana Library.

According to Psarra (2018), "Sansovino seized the urban properties of Venice and used classical architecture to powerfully express the city-state and the Republic." 18

Venice urbanscape was dramatically changed against the prevailingly medieval patterned urban fabric toward the image of the renaissance city, by introducing large Ancient Roman urban sites, such as this reconstruction of the Piazza, inspired by Roman forum and theatre. Buildings, including the Library of San Marco, were designed and built as an open public space for social and political events, with the view to improving the identity of the city. This is their physical and symbolic layer in urbanscape. That urbanscape has remained an example of sustainable cultural heritage landscape until nowadays.

The iconic library building was built according to classical standards, lavishly and elegantly decorated both in exterior and interior. It housed the collection previously archived in the Doge's Palace. The library was established on the first floor of the Sansovino's building, with shops and retail space on the ground floor. Such spatial organization of the building provided economic benefit for the city, at the same time safeguarding the book collection from moisture.

Both studied historic libraries symbolically presented the policy of the patronizing city, and actively contributed to improving the image of the city, reflecting their public character in both space and architecture, in line with the historical, social, and cultural conditions of their time.

The selected modern-day libraries were designed and built with similar social and cultural expectations.

The Library of Birmingham²⁰, Birmingham, UK, 2013, outlines and actively shapes the Centenary Square, one of the largest open public spaces in the city, consisting of three public piazzas. The library is positioned on the main pedestrian route, called the "Red Line".²¹

The central library building is the third building²² designed and constructed for that purpose in the history of the city of Birmingham, while its predecessors were demolished to leave space, both symbolically and physically, for the new library building.

All the library buildings were positioned so as to shape prominent public spaces in the city and were built as part of the larger urban renewal project. The Birmingham Reference Library²³ was rebuilt in 1882 as its predecessor was completely destroyed in the great fire a year before. Its location was at the Chamberlain square, the main square in Birmingham and part of the Paradise forum, and was among the first libraries to be built according to the United Kingdom *Public Libraries Act* of 1850 that gave local authorities legitimacy to establish free public libraries.²⁴ It was a monumental building, allowing free access to information and knowledge in urbanscape. The second library building was open to the public in 1974 as part of the urban reconstruction following World War II. After the war, Birmingham was devastated and ruined city. According to the City Council's decision on the renewal, there was no city-wide urban plan, but specific reconstruction of infrastructure and construction of public buildings, where the construction of the new Central library took place. The library building was an epitome of brutalist architecture, designed by local architect John Madin. It was centrally located in the city, at Paradise Forum, next to its predecessor demolished right after the completion of the Madin building. Paradise Forum was the crucial point of urban reconstruction, envisaging also other cultural buildings at this location. Paradise Forum has remained the 21st-century focal point or cornerstone of urban reconstruction, as well. During this process, the brutalist library was demolished, despite the campaigns that opposed it, to fit into the *Big City Plan* that remodeled the square and changed the image of the city.

On the other hand, the *Big City Plan* is the program for "reimagining the city", with the new library as a cornerstone for the city center revitalization.²⁵ The Library is the central element in a cluster of nearby cultural facilities, including the International Convention Centre, the Symphony Hall, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, and the Ikon Gallery.²⁶

"Central to the design is to relate the library interior to the popular public life of Centenary Square itself", bringing the outside in and inside out.²⁷ This thesis has been reflected in the library architecture. Glass façade and positioning most of public functions on the ground floor, the big cantilever cowering a part of the public space, a circular amphitheater cut into the square, which is connected to the underground floor of the library, roof gardens and terraces as visual extensions of public spaces on multiple levels, confirm the library function as "urban living room", "public arena", and public space²⁸. Archives and most of the reading rooms are on the upper floors, while the roof rotunda is designed to house Shakespeare's historical collection, and has memorial, cultural and educational significance for the community.

The case of the Seattle Central Library has certain similarities with the library in Birmingham as regards the three library buildings, only this institution changed three buildings at the site in the course of 100 years. From the Carnegie library, built in 1906, to the open



Fig. 3. Oodi Helsinki Central Library, Helsinki, Finland

plan library from 1960²⁹ designed in the international style, to the contemporary iconic and the most often analyzed library building in the world, designed by Rem Koolhaas and OMA and completed in 2004.

All the library buildings in Birmingham and Seattle have embodied social, cultural, and political marks of their time, and have actively contributed to changing the image of the city.

Oodi Helsinki Central Library³⁰, Helsinki, Finland, 2018, is the new icon and public space in Helsinki. Temporary and pilot library project, *Library 10*, which was a part of the long process of planning the central library, has proved the library is well accepted as a meeting place and that it has become one of the focal points in the civic life of the city. All the services and functions are now relocated into the new building.

Helsinki has a tradition in planning and building a library as a part of urbanscape transformation. The *National Library of Finland* ³¹, built in 1840–1845, was part of the 1812 town plan aiming to transform the city of Helsinki from a provincial town into a capital. The focal point of urbanscape transformation was the design of the monumental central square – Helsinki's Senate Square, with the library building as its constituent part.

Oodi building is facing the House of Parliament at the Kansalaistori square, next to other cultural and civic institutions structures. Its specific location presents, on a symbolical level, the government's care for citizens and the civic and cultural life of the city. The location is at the heart of urban transformation and city development area. The library is one of the projects of the city and the government symbolizing the centenary of Finland's independence. 33

This library building is the real civic center, community hub, and urban living room. Most public spaces, including cinema, mixed use area and exhibition space, are located on the ground floor. On this level, library building design, with a large cantilever partly above the public square, glass façade, and open floor plan, makes the library space an extension of the square. The second floor is reserved for workshops and relaxation space. Traditional library space occupies one third of the building. The "book heaven" is an open-plan rea-

ding room on the upper floor that offers peace and quiet and the vista of the city, actively involving urbanscape into the library space.

The history of public libraries, according to library science researches,³⁴ has begun in the middle of the 19th century. Library as a part of urbanscape has had the elements of public space since ancient times.

Discussion

Although the libraries that were subject of the research belong to different historical periods, and were built in different socio-political contexts, it is still possible to draw out parallels and comment on their intensive interaction with the city as an appealing part of urbanscape.

A public library in Ancient Rome was a must-have element within new complexes of public spaces and structures built on monumental scale to transform urbanscape and glorify political situation or the ruler itself. Libraries were monumental and lavishly decorated, but not a physical landmark in itself. They embodied physical and symbolic presentation of the importance of literacy and culture for people, and served as social gathering and event places, as well.

Renaissance *Biblioteca Marciana* was built as an independent, iconic building as part of the urban transformation program, aiming at turning the medieval urbanscape towards renaissance values, as well as reflecting political and economic power. Its presentational character dominated over its public function and accessibility to all. Its iconic and monumental façade provided a frame to open public spaces and served as a background to public activities within that space. It had the role in creating the image of the city on the global level, as well. The library interior was not conceptualized as visually or functionally connected to the public square.

Contemporary libraries, like their historical predecessors, are a part or a cornerstone of the contemporary urban transformation agendas. Although there has been a strong tendency to show that the social role of the library is way in front of its political role, the library remains a political instrument, just as it was in the past. Urban transformation projects in cities are related to the presentation of political power or success, aiming to change and improve the image of the city, create or change the identity. Birmingham and Seattle case studies strongly support this conclusion, since they opted for the new central, iconic library building and demolished their predecessor in crucial moments in their history and as a part of big urban revitalization projects. Those projects and the libraries in all the cities included in the research affected urbanscapes both physically and symbolically.

Their public space function and urban room character are most prominent on the symbolic level. Social, political, and cultural elements are embodied in libraries' architecture. Intensive communication between the library building and the open public spaces, where boundaries between interior and exterior, open and closed, are blurred, prove a library to be a public space, free and accessible to the community. The Ulpian Library case study brings up the historical background of this function, with the library space visible and accessible from the open public space, which also served as a communication area

	Part of the urban renewal — identity transformation	Changing the image of the city	Iconic building and landmark	Social space
The Ulpian Library (Trajan's library), Ancient Rome, 114	+	+	+-	+
The Library of Saint Mark, Venice, 1579	+	+	+	-
The Library of Birmingham, Birmingham, UK, 2013	+	+	+	+
Oodi Helsinki Central Library, Helsinki, Finland, 2019	+	+	+	+

Table II. Public library as an urbanscape element

between two library rooms. Iconic architecture and the quality of a landmark in urbanscape prove significance of library buildings to the community, and also create the image of a city (local and/or that of the state or government) as powerful, economically strong, and caring for education, information, cultural and social life of its citizens. Hence it is necessary to define a library as an appealing urbanscape element, both on symbolic and physical levels.

A public library fits in the urbanscape emanation concept, as it is developed within the heritage urbanism approach. It can be seen as a tool "within the urban development and planning of settlements, towns, and landscapes".³⁵

Conclusion

A public library, with its functions, symbolic values, space, and architecture, is a powerful feature in the image of the city, acting both as an element of its identity and as a shaping tool for public spaces. The concept of a public library has dramatically changed from a static unit in a city — a building for storing books and media collections that provides space for reading and education, to a proactive and vital element of the city, when it came into the focus as an active part of urbanscape. This concept is deeply rooted in the institution of a public library and its historical values, it has evolved and upgraded, taking into account all its traditional forms and functions.

A public library is not just a cultural, educational, and informational institution; it is also a physical building in urbanscape. Shaping and outlining urban areas, creating and improving an image of the city, is defined in this research as a quality that attracts and holds the attention in urbanscape. It raises or improves the quality and value of urbanscape. Hence, it is possible to open discussion on how a public library fits into the concept of urbanscape emanation if this concept is seen as an impact of the unit or system on its environment, allowing forward movement in space and time. From this point of view, a public library is perceived as a unit of a multilayered system. The concept of a public library has evolved from that of a static building to a proactive one, to a singular building in an urban

complex, and from an object showing the "beauty of the past" to an object that encapsulates the importance of multifaceted cultural values. A public library is to be defined as a part of the city on the informational, educational, cultural, social, and technological level, and an appealing part of urbanscape.

Notes

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