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The »Čampo«[1] in Izola

1. Introduction

Izola is a coastal town that has been undergoing significant physical changes during the last two decades. Complying to so called »post-modern tourist colonialism« (Tomšič, 1997) the Western part of the Izola amphitheatre is being rapidly urbanised. Adjacent to the historical town core and along the seafront there is an expansive open space called Lonka[2] today used as a parking lot and the venue of various sports and cultural events. Together with the Pietro Coppo park[3] and building block with businesses and housing on Gorki Street dividing the two, Lonka was the topic of the international urban planning workshop organized in Izola in the year 2000.

The main starting points for defining the issues and further considerations where: Lonka is part of the main urban structure of Izola, a large vacant plane next to the *lungo- mare*[4] and simultaneously lying next to the main crossroads in the town connecting the new with the old. According to the stated criteria, the place is much too precious to be used as a parking lot and only occasionally for staging events.

The goal of the workshop was to examine the transformation of the space into a public town square. Alongside its transformation it was necessary to solve/re-evaluate its use for parking, issues of accessibility and crossroads. In the future Lonka should be accessible from the footpath connecting the West part of the town (San Simon Bay, Arrigoni park, former industrial complex Argo/Riba, hotel Riviera and the catering and tourism high school) with the historical town core of Izola (old fishing harbour) and Punta (the cape).

In the physical development strategy of Izola we see the area of Lonka as a sustainable public space with maximum potential for the town. The conservation guidelines for the area in transformation were (Guštin, Tomšič, 2000):

- preservation of the vacant space and placement of necessary infrastructure and technical facilities for the squares functioning along the edge,
- the space has to become a public town square, the largest in the town, limited by the edge of the historical town core, facades of the existing buildings, high school and seafront,
- if a dominant element is positioned in the space, it shouldn't prevent the squares functioning,
- all developments have to ensure a multi-functional municipal surface and flexible use,
- open views to the sea have to be maintained. This is the greatest quality of spaces lying next to the sea, this specific feature (the phenomenon of the horizon) distinguishes them from enclosed town squares in the town itself or the hinterland. Views to the square and the sea from access roads should be preserved as important spatial orientation elements,
- access routes and footpaths running from the San Simon Bay to Punta have to be easily discernable,
- the facade on the East side of the space has to be redesigned, thus forming the squares new edge, but also as a connecting element between the old and new structure,
- greenery on the square should be minimal, spatially discreet, because Lonka is a coastal square - a large open space lying next to the sea. Rows of trees enclosing the square along the seafront and thus resembling a continental square shouldn't be planted, Planting along the Eastern edge however could be an important functional asset (shade in the Summer months) and visual element (resembling the former islands edge).
- use of materials can be exceptionally modern, except for the surfacing, where new materials should be interlaced with classical ones.

2. Certain historical considerations

In 1797 Napoleon abolished the Venetian Republic. Until 1805 Venice together with Istria and Dalmatia was ruled by the French (Illyric provinces) and then, after their demise following Napoleons defeat and the victors Congress in Vienna, for an extensive period by the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. This political turnover triggered massive transformation in the urban development of Izola (Tomšič, 2000). During the period of the enlightened absolutism, the former island was joined to the mainland, roads were built, swamps filled in, probably the salt pans as well, all dilapidated and non-functional was demolished.

Industrial development during the nineteenth century saw Izola expanding beyond its gradually disappearing town wall. The town lost its protected medieval image. The first road around the historical town core along the seafront was built. Town squares, such as the »Big Square« lost their former administrative and functional purpose and became public, representative urban spaces (Tomšič, 1997).

Public urban surfaces blossomed in the first half of the 20. Century, but were mostly neglected later on.

Thus between the 1st and 2nd world wars new elements of public character, such as: roads, squares, parks and promenades were added. Squares changed into representative urban surfaces, illustrated by the fact that instead of retaining market activities on the main square, specialized shops grew all over the town.

This was the time when the Pietro Coppo Park was built. The present preserved and restored layout is from 1920, although there were previous attempts at building a town park on the filled-in, swampy entrance area with the fountain. Somewhat later the 1. May Alley was built; a double tree lined alley with plane trees, which is also the main connecting road between the old and new parts of Izola. In 1930 cypress trees and palm trees where planted along the seafront by the historical town core, thus giving it a promenade.

On the filled-in space of what is today Lonka, Mussolini ordered the building of a football field (Tomšič, 2000).

After 1945 the town's public spaces started deteriorating, as well as crafts and small-scale manufacturing. Maritime traffic with other coastal towns on the Istrian coast and in Italy was abandoned.[5]

The sixties in Izola were dominated by architect Mihevc.[6] During that period the architect built four residential towers between the 1. May Alley and the seafront. Somewhat later, in 1963, he built the Riviera hotel and the catering and tourism high school. In the early 80s architect Marjan Vrabec added an extension.

3. Evaluating the proposals

Following effective organization experiences from past workshops we invited local, Slovenian and foreign architects and urban planners. The four groups named their proposals as follows:
Group 1: MUD Izola 2000 - Lonka[7],
Group 2: The story of Lonka[8],
Group 3: Izola - Lonka Square[9],
Group 4: Izola Lonka - The square as a Mediterranean stage[10]

The approach in assessing proposals was borrowed from the analytical and comparative method used for evaluating competition proposals (Košir 2000). The goal was to equally deal with all of them.

With the analytical method we can establish the most characteristic features of each proposal, while the comparative method joins similarities between different proposals into groups, that are compared and the best solution sought for, one that meets demands of the profession and/or investor.

The main characteristics of the proposals were presented with four headings:
- position and size of the square
- parking arrangements and traffic regime
- renovated and new built structures in the area
- amendments to the park and landscaping

Position and size of the square:

• Group 1: trapezium shaped square maintaining links to the seafront, the longer side follows the seacoast; it is smaller in size than the present square; the longer axis lies North-South, the square opens to the West;
• Group 2: rectangular shaped square with no links to the present seafront; the shorter side follows the seacoast; it is smaller in size than the present square; the longer axis lies East-West;
• Group 3: elongated rectangular shaped square together with a smaller square maintaining links to the seafront; the longer side follows the seacoast; maintains the size of the present square; the longer axis lies North-South, the square opens to the West;
• Group 4: rectangular shaped square together with a smaller square maintaining links to the seafront; it is smaller than the present square; the longer axis lies in North-South, the square opens to the West.

Parking arrangements and traffic regime:

• Group 1: entrance to the garage is from the seafront (Sončno nabrežje); the garage is in the basement level and new building on the South part of the plot; there are 265 parking places; the garage is public;
• Group 2: entrance to the garage is from the street (Ulica Prekomorskih brigad); the garage is in a three-floor building on the South part of the plot; there are 277 parking places; the garage is public;
• Group 3: entrance to the garage is from the seafront (Sončno nabrežje); the garage is in the basement level of the raised square and new building; there are 147 parking places; the garage is public (105 pp) and private (42 pp);
• Group 4: entrance to the garage is from the street (Ulica Prekomorskih brigad); the garage is in the basement level under the raised square; there are 163 parking places; the garage is public (143 pp) and private (20 pp).

Renovated and new built structures in the area:
• Group 1: the building between Lonka and the Pietro Cop- po park (PC) is demolished; buildings (3 floors) are in the SW part of the plot; public uses are on the ground floor and first floor of the new building, residential uses are on the second floor;
• Group 2: the building between Lonka and PC is demolished; buildings (3 floors) are in the SW part of the plot; public uses of the former parking lot are moved into the new garage
• Group 3: the building between Lonka and PC is replaced by a new five-floor building, in the SW part of the plot there is a smaller three-floor building; uses in the larger building are mixed - public and residential, the smaller building is intended for public uses;
• Group 4: the building between Lonka and PC is replaced by a new two-floor arcade; building in the SW part of the plot has four-floors; uses in the replaced building are public - central town library; the other building is part public, part residential.

Amendments to the park and landscaping:
• Group 1: new layout of the Pietro Coppo park (PC); the surface is larger in size than the present park; no new planting is proposed; public use;
• Group 2: PC is renovated; the size of the surface is equal to the present park; new planting is proposed: oleander garden; *giardino leggero* and semi-public atrium;
• Group 3: PC is renovated; the size of the surface is equal to the present park; no new planting is proposed, public use;
• Group 4: PC is renovated; the surface is larger in size than the present park; new planting is proposed: double tree-lined alley in the SW; public use.

4. Comparison of proposals

We compared solutions of the following issues:
- The shape
- Functionality of the square
- Ties to the surroundings
- Roads and traffic
- Parking arrangements
- Rehabilitation or reconstruction of the housing block on Gorki Street
- Renewal and revitalisation of the park
- Expression

4.1 The shape

The groups proposed four different combinations of form, size and disposition of the square:
• Group 1 stated that: »the size of the new space supersedes all sensible dimensions for a central public space relative to the size of the town«. The length of the proposed square is almost half the size of the present plot.

- Group 2 rotated the longer axis of the square thus placing it perpendicular to the seafront. The central part of the space is surrounded by smaller open spaces (gardens).
- »Lonka is a flat urban public space. It is a singular surface ... and the only place on the Slovenian coast or Bay of Trieste, where it is possible to establish a large open space at the edge joining the continent and the sea« (Group 3). The present plot was therefore shortened only by the building in the SW corner, but enlarged with the new small square lying next to the street (Ulica Prekomorskih brigad).
- The length of the plot is divided by a new building into the »piazza« (larger, central) and »piazzetta (small, intimate) square (Group 4).

The plot is unique because of its size and position along the seafront. Evaluation of proposals according to this criterion, gives the advantage to proposals by groups 3 and 4.

4.2 Functionality

The Lonka square is: »a poly-functional surface for different programmes using the towns open space« (Group 3), ...« a small market, park, opening towards the sea, raft on the sea, small gardens with fountains, lighthouse with viewing terrace; Lonka is also a stage, used for the »Izola night«, concerts and sports events« (Group 2), »...a generally void place, events and lively use occur on the edges, where the square meets all the surroundings surfaces (Group 3), «... a place where various possibilities for motion begin ... we get a real chaotic multi-geo- metry« (Group 1). It van be invisible and created by people with their activities only in a certain period, but it can also be defined and marked as an artistic element of the squares design.

A square can be (Vreeburg, 2000):

- a commercial crossroads, market, positioned next to crossings of infrastructure communications,
- an instrument of urban development,
- the place of recreation, night life,
- the place of local, regional, national identity,
- political place - place for expressing public satisfac- tion/dissatisfaction,
- agora - open public place,
- place of memory,
- place of special, honorary functions,
- place of awe, impression,
- »magnet«, where one simply has to be.

In the 21. century societal changes are also changing the functions of squares. Societies are becoming »festivalised«; cities are changing into »fun-cities«.

4.3 Ties to the surroundings

The area is an intermediate link in the city structure: it is one of the typical coastal sequences, which are - the Lonka square, secondary school centre with housing towers, Riba and Arrigoni (former factories); the Marina, hotels Delfin and Simonov zaliv (group3); it has direct ties to the sea

- a raft would directly achieve the desire for intensified ties between the city and the sea (group 2); a soft sea edge that moves with the tide (group 3).

4.4 Roads and traffic

Here it was necessary to respond to three issues:

- ***connections to the wider traffic system:*** »even after improvements to the traffic system, the access to Lonka remains part of the system with local, connecting character. Crossroads where five different routes meet (in front of the post office and former factory Riba) can be organised as roundabouts, even in view of traffic calming«. (Group 3)
- ***accessing the square:*** »the main access shouldn't be from the 1. May Alley, because it is one of the most distinct town motifs and places in Izola« (Group 3). »The square itself is relieved of motor vehicles, only delivery services are provided for that can be organised by the park and gates on Volaričeva Street« (Group 2).
- ***access to the garage:*** opinions on suitable access points to the garage differ. Two groups proposed entry from the seafront - Sončno nabrežje (Group 1), (Group 3) and two from the street - Ulica Prekomorskih brigad (Group 4) (Group 2) and Volaričeva Street (Group 2). In view of the place itself, the last proposal is best, because »unpleasant« infrastructure is hidden behind the square's back - traffic is not only physically removed from the square, but also hides it visually, while the square's design along the joint with the seafront (Sončno Nabrežje) isn't obstructed by entrances and exits from the garage. Functionally entry from the seafront (Sončno Nabrežje) is closer to the roundabout, where traffic is distributed and therefore somewhat more beneficial.

4.5 Parking arrangements

The groups proposed three different solutions for garages (parking):

- ***subterranean*** - three groups (Group 1), (Group 3), (Group 4), remove the existing surface parking into an underground garage below the square, that can be divided for public or private use (Group 3), (Group 4). The subterranean garage affects the image of the square; it becomes a platform raised by 1 meter becoming a Mediterranean stage (Group 4) (Group 3).
- ***raised*** - Group 2 proposed a parking garage (with public programmes on the ground floor, thus providing a large number of parking spaces, short access paths and small surface of the square itself. It also removes the building between the square and park, changing the configuration of the place. The garage is positioned along the street (Ulica Prekomorskih brigad).
- ***Raft with parking spaces*** - is an attempt at organising a parking space in the immediate vicinity of the town's centre (Group 2).

The capacity of the Lonka parking is still relatively small. Therefore a larger parking area proving for the wider area between the former factory Arrigoni and Lonka can be organised on the site of the former factory Riba (Group 3).

4.6 Rehabilitation or reconstruction of the housing block on Gorki Street

There were four solutions proposed:

- ***renewal of the housing block*** - none of the groups took this possibility onboard

- ***reconstruction of the block with existing layout and vertical dimensions*** - not attempted by any of the groups
- ***building a new block*** - »the five floor building, replacing the existing one ... is intended for mixed use ... the faga- de is composed of three volumes connected by a glass membrane, thus replicating the structure of the former block. Residences are in the upper floors, oriented towards the South and park, with balconies, different design expression and emphasised horizontal lines with sliding screens that create spontaneous and varied fagade dynamics«. (Group 3)
- Replacing the former building is a central town library, enclosed in a single floor glass case, raised on a two- floor arcade, enabling real transparency between the surfaces of the square and park (Group 4).
- ***Removing the block*** - »by demolishing the block between the parking lot and park we can achieve a much better image of the place when viewing the continent from the sea or vice versa: the sea gains better presence in the town and can be seen from all the surrounding places (Trg republike, Drevoreda 1. Maja or even Pittoni's Street and the tree lined Cankar Alley). From the maritime side Lon- ka becomes a green limit, barrier, separating the historical town core's scale from the recent developments« (Group 2). Group 1 also replaced the building block between the park and created a new square, most of the removed programmes are placed in the new building.

By removing the building and transforming the clear spatial limits into »transitory« ones, a new danger arises, namely that integration of various segments of the area fails or even causes fragmentation of the place. The danger is great, also because the space lies next to an important crossroads, the spatial organiser of urban flows, also an open space and »square«. Passages from the traffic node into the park and later new square are unclear without vertical articulation and the spaces themselves undefined. All can condition the emergence of a so called »non-place«, non-existence of place, inversion of the »fenced garden«[11] (Aben, de Witt, 1999) as a development guideline for the square and park, into their opposite.

4.7 Renewal and revitalisation of the park

The groups proposed renewal of the park with smaller changes:

- »removal of shrubbery and sowing of grass instead« ... »designing accesses in all directions, especially between the alley, square and seafront and restoring the fountain in its original form (Group 2).
- »preserved park with additions to its Northern edge ...« (Group 3)
- »different planting in the park ...« (Group 1)
- »the park is enlarged to reach the square, landscaped and designed as a shaded Mediterranean garden ...« (Group 4)

The Pietro Coppa park was renovated in 2001, according to the plan designed by architect Aleksander Bizjak and landscape architect Vladimir Vremec.

4.8 Expression

At least three variations can be discerned from the proposals:

- ***Mediterranean square with historical iconography*** - none of the groups embarked on such a romantic image (Group 1), very easily such a square could ... »change into a static tourist exhibit«. (Group 2)
- ***Modern Mediterranean square*** - »when designing the image of the place, the image of a Mediterranean square is the first reference ... they are modern and adaptable spaces ... capable of constant adaptations and additions« (Group 2). Apparently the group understands »Mediterranean« as lush with vegetation, while the buildings are designed »super modernistic«;
- »The coast, port, pier... town square and market ... space by the fountain or lighthouse ... and sea become from time to time an open stage ... a »Mediterranean theatre« (Matvejevi, 2000) (Group 4). They do however propose the erection of a library, with a demanding construction and transparent building;
- Layout with deconstructive geometry, whose functioning is nevertheless questionable, but creating an attractive and varied scenography (Group 1);
- ***New square*** - urban surface, that is ... »intentionally brutal in its physical manifestation«, ... the expression of the buildings re-enacts »motives from the sea waves, the cruel kindness of the water element and soft landscape of Izola's natural amphitheatre« (Group 3). The architecture although searching for references in nature, desists from an organic image and assumes post-modern design approaches.

5. Conclusion

The new square by the seafront can become the new bearer of the towns identity *(pro)* or not *(contra).*

- »Pro«:
  With the new square Izola ... »gains a possibility to create a new identification point, around which it can build a new story« (group 4). »Lonka becomes the focal point of coastal development and a representative town surface« (group 3) ... »functioning as the town stage« (group 2).
- »Contra«:
  »It is improbable that Lonka can independently become the bearer of future urban identity«. More probably it will ... »function as urban infrastructure enabling the operation of other urban programmes«. In the past towns where recognized by their palaces and squares, today the role is taken over by major events.

Both attitudes can be joined: major events staged on the well designed and maintained surface of the square lying by the seafront will enable the town of Izola to enhance its identity and image.

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Notes

[2] In Latin: spacious, distant, elongated.

[3] The city park was named after Pietro Coppo, geographer, cartographer and researcher, born in Venice, but lived most

of his life in Izola. The park was renovated in 2001 and reopened to the public on the municipal holiday.

4 Path by the sea.

5 According to data from the Agency for maritime traffic in Koper there was a strong decline of traffic by passenger ships on regular lines between 1953 and 1993 when in stopped altogether and was carried out by individuals irregularly. In year 2000 a new line was reopened connecting towns along the Slovenian coast, but only during the summer season.

6 Edo Mihevc, Slovenian architect and professor, 1911 - 1985

7 First local group: Aleksander Bizjak, Vladimir Vremec, Jernej Černe, Roman Savkovič

8 International group: Mirko Buvinič, Blaž Križnik, Tinka Pre- kovič

9 Slovenian group: Ivan Stanič, Tanja Rus, Nina Toman

10 Second local group: Boris Zuliani, Peter Rijavec, Marko Volf

11 The enclosed garden.

Illustrations

Picture 1: *MUD Izola 2000 - Lonka (Aleksander Bizjak, Vladimir Vremec, Jernej Černe, Roman Savkovič)* ***Picture 2:*** *The story of Lonka (Mirko Buvinič, Blaž Križnik, Tinka Prekovič)*

Picture 3: *Izola - Lonka square - the wider setting (Ivan Stanič, Tanja Rus, Nina Toman)*

Picture 4: *Izola Lonka - The square as a Meditteranean stage - the concept (Boris Zuliani, Peter Rijavec, Marko Volf)*

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Ina ŠUKLJE ERJAVEC

Overlooked potentials of open spaces - new types and categories of urban landscapes

1. Introduction

The aim of the article is to draw attention to numerous overlooked and unused potentials of urban open spaces and green surfaces, but also to give a detailed account of some rarely recognised possibilities that can lead to new types and categories of urban landscapes.

Maybe speaking about hidden potentials of open spaces in cities could appear pretentious and premature, when we are confronted on every step with completely unused and unmanaged known and generally recognised potentials, such as riverfronts, open spaces in residential neighbourhoods and even existing city parks. However the issue is raised at this time, because spatial plans of most city municipalities are in the phase of completion. These municipalities are continuously under pressure by investors, often displaying little regard for open spaces and green surfaces, therefore they need clear and definite arguments to support their decisions. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to open the whole, wide spectre of possibilities, define visions and guidelines in which various differing interests can meet, for the benefit of all inhabitants. The issue is extremely multi-layered and possible solutions for improvements varied and diverse.

The fact stands that values are changing and subsequently the needs and expectations of people concerning the quality of the urban environment as well. Prevailing narrow and usually rigid views on the issue are inadequate. Many important functions of urban green surfaces, which are the consequence of a diverse range of needs, remain unrecognised and are not considered, thus they are not manifested in the existing typological structuring of the urban landscape.[1] Demands for more possibilities of choice can be met only with a broadly set typology of urban spaces.

Open urban spaces are not only streets, squares and parks, and the odd remaining green surface, they are much more complex, a living organism with many intertwined functions and physical forms, inherent internal logic and peculiarities. We have to be aware of the possibilities these places have for improving the quality of life and satisfaction of all inhabitants, co-creating form and structure of the city space and establishing ecological balance within.

There are not many open spaces in cities and in the future there will be even less, after all the direction is compact development. Because of this the rational behaviour in the sense of including and considering all potentials and possibilities of open spaces is extremely important. Improving individual today mainly neglected and degraded spaces simultaneously leads to general improvement of the whole city space.

New wider views on issues urban landscapes and a more extensive typology of pertaining places are important for improving the efficiency and suitability of urban planning. In Slovenia it is especially inefficient in planning urban landscapes.

The most often used definition in recent spatial plans and designs is inadequate and damaging in the long run. The definition of »R« zones, including everything from sports to parks etc., was unsuccessful in preventing building and didn't promote active approaches to planning open spaces and green surfaces. Many of the zones coined »sports etc.«, even urban green surfaces, were built upon, city parks, such as Tivoli in Ljubljana or the park in Celje as well, while new parks weren't provided.

Contemporary practice has even in Slovenia and especially amongst landscape architects widened attitudes to the issue and begun introducing a much more extensive and consistent typological structure of urban landscapes, which this article is complementing even further with additional arguments.

2. Hidden potentials of cities

Hidden, unrecognised potentials of the city are defined as all those open spaces and green surfaces in the city that have, in view of their position and/or content and above all inadequate use, substantial potential for improvement, but are not listed as generally accepted spatial potentials (ev

[1] **Campo is a word derived from the Latin word campus, implying the shape of a place (plane, field), its function (playground, battlefield, practice ground, camp, place for political gatherings, place for tents) and even its meaning (kingdom, palace, power).**