

New Urbanism – Challenges and Perspectives in the Urban Context of Old Batumi

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Abstract. New urbanism is an urban design movement that emerged in the United States in the 1980s, aiming to create a more sustainable, socially inclusive, eco-friendly environment, and has been implemented in various developed countries worldwide. In the 21st century, the congestion of modern cities created a need for a holistic approach in urban design for urbanists, which led specialists to conclude that urban planning needed a new approach – something that would allow cities to breathe at this stage of development while not hindering irreversible progress, which inherently involved population growth and the creation of increasingly dense settlements. The significant growth of construction development industry in cities has led to a reduction in anthropogenic buffer zones. Multiple studies have shown that the core elements of New Urbanism significantly impact the healthy functioning of a city. The research presented in this article involved studying public and open spaces in the old historical part of Batumi, Georgia, examining how it responded to the challenges of New Urbanism and how it could be adapted in the context of the other parts of the city. The research shows that the historical part of Old Batumi is not a modern example of New Urbanism. Nevertheless, the city has undergone significant development over time, and while New Urbanism principles may not be explicitly noticeable in this historical part of the city, it expresses broad trends similar to other Western countries. Creating attractive public spaces, promoting tourism, and infrastructure renewal are the city's New Urbanism challenges. The introduction of modern architecture in Old Batumi's urban area has inherently transformed this historical district and formed a partial New Urbanism form where new and old buildings are seemingly placed within a single spatial-urban planning framework. It is a fact that reducing infrastructure, maintaining an eco-friendly, sustainable architecture, maintaining open public spaces, and community involvement in the planning process play an important role in forming of the city's New Urbanism. © 2025 *Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.*

Keywords: new urbanism, sustainable architecture

Introduction

New Urbanism, as an urban design movement, is a new concept that has become relevant over the last few decades and has significantly changed the design of cities, making them more sustainable and livable places.

New Urbanism strives to create a sustainable, well-connected, and aesthetically pleasing urban environment that emerged in the United States in the early 1980s and gradually influenced many aspects of urban planning and municipal land use strategies. New Urbanism promotes the formation

of an environmentally clean habitat and tries to solve problems related to post-World War II suburban development. It should be noted that the restructuring of public policy and development practices in New Urbanism supports the following principles: neighborhood diversity, designed for pedestrians and transit as well as automobiles; the establishment of cities as physically defined and universally accessible public spaces; and the formation of urban places that incorporate architectural and landscape design aspects emphasizing local history, climate, ecology, and building practices [1].

In 1993, a group established by Peter Katz published a document known as the Charter of New Urbanism, which included: restoration of existing urban centers and cities in coherent metropolitan regions, reconstruction-conservation and preservation of created heritage, environmental protection, and restructuring of public policy and development practices. According to the Charter of New Urbanism (1996), “New Urbanism aims to create a human-oriented environment where pedestrian mobility, public transport, and dense living, environment are of paramount importance. This promotes the strengthening of public life and achievement of environmentally sustainable development” [2].

New urbanist developments are often characterized by new classical, postmodern, or vernacular style, although this is not always the case. The movement's principles are also reflected in modern architecture. The principles established in the Charter of New Urbanism were created to offer an alternative to the wide, single-use, low-density settlements characteristic of post-World War II development, which had negative economic and environmental impacts. These design principles can be an opportunity for new development during urban renaissance. New urbanists prioritize the importance of place in the design process and the abundance of public spaces; they want to see the return of human-scale neighborhoods in modern urban planning. Charles Bohl (2000) said “New Urbanism

aims to renew city hearts and humanize modern urban settlements, which includes the merger of residential and commercial functions” [3].

One essential element of urban design is public open spaces (POS). POS can be a square, park, garden, or simply space between buildings. Various studies argue that such spaces play a major role in determining the quality of life of society, even when they have to compete with such high-quality design as privatized public space. It is important to see the retrospective of housing policy perspectives in capitalism. For example, in Georgia, the problem of managing privatized housing stock was solved by the Civil Code of Georgia adopted in 1997, where Chapter Four “Apartment Ownership in Multi-apartment Buildings” establishes the concept of “Apartment Owners' Association” and principles of common property management. It should be noted that building civil society is just possible through understanding, internalizing, and relying on the spread of modern urban culture [4]. Apart from private spaces, city public open spaces usually did not feature special design; it can be said that it formed naturally over time, but society continues to use space intensively today, accordingly New Urbanism not only offers rethinking accessibility but also healthy formation of specific (POS) public spaces. It is a fact that society forms from time to time, while space is created through human conscious action. Andres Duany (2000) noted that traditional urban planning is what New Urbanism preaches: multifunctional, densely populated, and friendly neighborhoods that are adapted for everyday life [5]. Along with emphasis on cities' economic competitiveness, metropolitan mobility, space privatization, and security metropolitan areas around the world, the value of urban life, civic culture, and meaningful spatial forms is also increasing.

Discussion

Urban planning is a crucial aspect in forming a city's planning structure to make the city more viable, sustainable, and efficient [1]. While consid-

ring urban planning, it's important to consider aspects such as integrated land use, where planning should combine different land uses such as residential, commercial, industrial, and recreational zones to minimize transportation needs and promote mixed-use development [6,1,4,7]. Reorganization of transport infrastructure is one of the important aspects of New Urbanism, which inherently involves developing efficient transport street networks that include public transit, pedestrian infrastructure, and infrastructure for various non-motorized transport means to minimize street network congestion. Creating green spaces involves incorporating green corridors and public spaces in urban design to dramatically improve air quality. Construction of affordable housing, formation of an inclusive environment. Also, an important aspect of New Urbanism includes protection of cultural heritage, preservation of historical buildings, landmarks, and cultural heritage. Additionally, community involvement includes the participation of residents, business sector, and stakeholders in the planning process to consider local needs [8-10].

New urbanism principles have been successfully implemented in several cities and countries worldwide, making cities even more sustainable and developed. For example, the city of Portland in the United States is known for its sustainable urban policies. The city has implemented a network of pedestrian streets, bicycle routes, and significant public spaces that dramatically improve the quality of urban life. The city of Copenhagen in Denmark is also a good example of New Urbanism formation, where city planners are currently actively pursuing policies aimed at sustainability and ecological strength. One of Europe's most beautiful cities, Barcelona, is distinguished by its grid-like urban planning organization. It's important to note that this city implemented the "superblocks" project, which allowed residential neighborhoods to form into a more peaceful and environmentally clean surroundings and all this significantly restricted vehicle and car traffic in certain parts of

the city. It should be noted that New Urbanism is not just a continental phenomenon and rethinking in urban design, but we also find it in Melbourne, Australia, which is known for its active urban development policy that promotes public transport, pedestrian spaces development, and creation of green buffer spaces. Good examples of New Urbanism on the European continent are also cities like Amsterdam, Helsinki, and Bristol, which have strong public transport systems and focus on perfecting the city's urban fabric, while state institutions actively pursue urban development policies where significant attention is paid to green technologies, pedestrian infrastructure improvement, ecology, and sustainability. Sustainable architecture, which is one of the components of New Urbanism, is the subject of interest for various researchers, including Richard Rogers, who (2006) said: "Sustainable architecture refers to design that not only saves energy but increases human quality of life, strengthens community connections, and has minimum impact on the environment". Among them is also Jane Jacobs, who emphasized that sustainable city planning and architecture should be connected to a human-oriented approach. We should not forget that buildings are parts of the city that create balance between nature and people.

Although New Urbanism began forming in the 1980s, it can be said that its rethinking in Georgia happened much earlier, at the end of the 19th century. Interestingly, one of the famous public figures, Niko Nikoladze, planned the city of Poti according to New Urbanism standards. As early as 1871, speaking about the city of Poti, Niko Nikoladze argued: "Poti awaits a great role and good fortune in the future, the railway will soon connect it with Tiflis, then with the Caspian Sea, later someday with Central Asia, Persia, and possibly with India. Then this route will establish great movement, coming and going, and trade between Europe on one side and Georgia, Central Asia, and Persia on the other, and Poti with its port will have great significance; it will become one of

the largest and richest commercial cities, it will surpass even Odessa then... [11].

Given that the research concerns the old urban fabric of the Black Sea coastal city of Batumi, it should be noted that the urban part of Old Batumi is not a classic example of New Urbanism, although this city has undergone significant development and urban renewal over the last few decades. Although New Urbanism principles may not be explicitly used, the development of this historical part of the city reflects broad trends that are also clearly visible in many different cities' urban parts worldwide.

In 2017, A+S Consult GmbH's consulting group prepared a report "Batumi Sustainable Urban Mobility Integrated Plan 2018-2030" commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under the "Green Cities" project [12]. In 2015, in Batumi, with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the project "Green Cities: Sustainable Integrated Transport for the City of Batumi and Adjara Region" was launched. The project aimed at integrated sustainable urban mobility planning in Batumi, implementation of pilot measures, and making Batumi a successful example of sustainable urban mobility as one of the cities. It was within this project that the present Integrated Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (ISUMP) of Batumi was developed. It's important to note that the document outlined the strategic plan for sustainable urban mobility development in Batumi (2018-2030), which in turn included the urban fabric of the old historical part of Batumi. The document reviews the strategy framework, tasks, and objectives. It analyzes the current situation in Batumi in terms of urban mobility, accordingly, based on research results, it can be said that the main elements of New Urbanism for Batumi's development should be: mixed-use development that emphasizes the integration of residential, commercial, and recreational spaces in neighborhoods. Pedestrian mobility and creating connections, incorporating green spaces, parks, and

squares into the urban fabric to improve quality of life. Architectural diversity, encouraging a mix of architectural style and building design that combines modern amenities with local cultural elements, sustainability. Promoting alternative transportation methods while actively involving residents in the planning process to ensure that developed events meet local needs and preferences, to promote a sense of ownership and belonging [12].

Scope of Research

In the 21st century, studying New Urbanism principles is the subject of research for many scientists. Various specialists' research on New Urbanism indicates that discussion about how we plan cities where we want to live, when our world is experiencing changes, is actively ongoing and that all these processes affect urban design. The concept of New Urbanism is reflected in the 21st-century lifestyle and is gradually forming into a kind of planning strategy.

The research involves studying New Urbanism trends in the historical urban part of Batumi. The method chosen was a questionnaire survey form. The target group of the research was locals and respondents who frequently visited and moved around in this part of the city. 756 person participated in the survey. Research results were revealed through a special questionnaire, both through field surveys and in electronic format. The respondents' satisfaction level was determined on a five-point scale.

Research results and data analysis showed that the opinions of Old Batumi's local population and tourists differ, due to the fact that city visitors judged based on experience gained in a short period, while local residents had year-round experience of how city infrastructure and amenities affect their quality of life.

Local residents mostly note that they encounter the main problem when walking, and encroachment of public space owners into open spaces emerged as a significant problem. According to tourists,

such uncontrolled movement of cars and use of sidewalks for parking is completely inappropriate for this historical district of the city and diminishes its artistic appearance, and they would wish that, as in many European cities' historical districts where private cars are prohibited, such practice should be implemented in Batumi's case and this should be regulated at the legislative level. On average, respondents agreed that New Urbanism trends are slightly noticeable, however this is minimal and more aspects need to be considered in further planning process.

Conclusion

Context-appropriate architecture, planning, adequate provision of infrastructure, and balanced development of housing are the nuances that together create a new form of urbanism. Discussion about how we plan cities where we want to live is a 21st century challenge.

As a result of the current research, it was revealed that the old historical urban fabric of Batumi, which is characterized by a narrow street network and dense settlement, does not meet the

requirements of New Urbanism and needs new conceptualization.

Environmental sustainability and adaptation, creation of sustainable infrastructure and organization of adapted environment, maximizing reduction of climate change impacts are integral parts of New Urbanism. All this cannot be implemented if governance and policy in this direction are not effective, as governance structures are an important link in the sustainable urban environment development process, with the possibility of ensuring investments, resources, and equal distribution of benefits. All these factors in New Urbanism emphasize the multidimensional nature of urban planning and the necessity of holistic approaches that consider environmental, socio-cultural, and economic factors.

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ინჟინერია

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მ. ცეცხლაძე

ბათუმის შოთა რუსთაველის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი, ტექნოლოგიური ფაკულტეტი, საქართველო

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის თ. შილაკაძის მიერ)

ახალი ურბანიზმი – ურბანული დიზაინის მოძრაობა, რომელიც ჩამოყალიბდა შეერთებულ შტატებში 1980-იან წლებში, მსოფლიოს სხვადასხვა განვითარებულ ქვეყნებში დანერგილი პრაქტიკაა. აღნიშნული მოძრაობა განაპირობებს უფრო მდგრადი, სოციალურად ინკლუზიური, ეკოლოგიურად სუფთა გარემოს შექმნას. 21-ე საუკუნეში თანამედროვე ქალაქების გადატვირთვამ ურბანულ დიზაინში ურბანისტებისთვის, ჰოლისტიკური მიდგომის საჭიროება დააყენა, რამაც სპეციალისტები მიიყვანა იმ დასკვნამდე, რომ ურბანული დაგეგმარება საჭიროებდა ახლებურ მიდგომას, რაღაც ისეთს, რაც განვითარების ამ ეტაპზე ქალაქებს ამოსუნთქვის საშუალებას მისცემდა და, ამავდროულად, შეუქცევად პროგრესს არ შეაფერხებდა, რომელიც მოსახლეობის ზრდას და უფრო და უფრო მჭიდრო დასახლებების წარმოქმნას მოიაზრებდა. ქალაქებში სამშენებლო დეველოპერული ინდუსტრიის მნიშვნელოვნად ზრდამ ანთროპოგენული ბუფერული ზონების შემცირება გამოიწვია. უნდა აღინიშნოს, რომ ახალი ურბანიზმის ძირითადი ელემენტები მნიშვნელოვან გავლენას ახდენს ქალაქის ჯანსაღ ფუნქციონირებაზე. ნაშრომში მოყვანილი კვლევა გულისხმობდა, საჯარო და ღია სივრცეების შესწავლას საქართველოს ერთ-ერთი ქალაქის, ბათუმის ძველ ისტორიულ ნაწილში, თუ რამდენად პასუხობდა ის ახალი ურბანიზმის გამოწვევებს და როგორ შეიძლებოდა მისი ადაპტაცია ქალაქის სხვა ნაწილებთან მიმართებაში. კვლევამ აჩვენა, რომ ძველი ბათუმის ისტორიული ნაწილი არ არის ახალი ურბანიზმის თანამედროვე მაგალითი. მიუხედავად ამისა, ქალაქი დროთა განმავლობაში მნიშვნელოვნად განვითარდა. ახალი ურბანიზმის პრინციპები შეიძლება ცალსახად არ იყოს შესაძენი ქალაქის ამ ისტორიულ ნაწილში, თუმცა გამოხატავს ფართო ტენდენციებს, როგორც ჩვენ ვხვდებით ევროპის სხვადასხვა ქვეყანაში. მიმზიდველი საჯარო სივრცეების შექმნა, ტურიზმის ხელშეწყობა და ინფრასტრუქტურის განახლება ეს ქალაქის ახალი ურბანიზმის გამოწვევებია. თანამედროვე არქიტექტურის ძველი ბათუმის ურბანულ ნაწილში შემოსვლამ თავისთავად სახე უცვალა ქალაქის ამ ისტორიულ უბანს და ჩამოაყალიბა ნაწილობრივ ახალი ურბანიზმის ისეთი ფორმა, სადაც ახალი და ძველი შენობები თითქმის ერთი სივრცის დაგეგმარების ჩარჩოში მოაქცია. ინფრასტრუქტურის განახლება, მდგრადი არქიტექტურა, ღია საჯარო სივრცეების შენარჩუნება და საზოგადოების ჩართულობა დაგეგმვის პროცესში მნიშვნელოვან როლს ასრულებს ქალაქის ახალი ურბანიზმის ფორმირებაში.

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