

# THE INTEGRATION OF ANCIENT HERITAGE IN A MODERN CITY: A CASE STUDY OF OSIJEK, CROATIA

## ИНТЕГРАЦИЈА АНТИЧКОГ НАСЛЕЂА У САВРЕМЕНИ ГРАД: СЛУЧАЈ ОСИЈЕКА, ХРВАТСКА

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### ABSTRACT

The city of Osijek has experienced many changes in its cityscape throughout history. Osijek has many recognizable features which include an Austro-Hungarian Baroque fortress, the Classicist Upper Town, and the Art Nouveau European Avenue; also, the fact that three more historical layers exist: Roman, medieval and Turkish, is often overlooked. The main reason for this is the fact that the archaeological heritage of those periods is almost invisible. This paper is based on the hypothesis that the integration of ancient heritage can be a valuable asset when designing a modern city. The subject of this paper is the integration of the ancient heritage of Osijek into the modern architecture of the city in the 21st century, with special reference to a site within its protected cultural and historical area, which is part of Roman Mursa. The critical literature analysis illustrates the importance of cultural heritage preservation in the identity of a place, society and humanity. Cultural heritage is recognized as a bearer of identity and a resource of cultural diversity in the conditions of growing standardization, gentrification and (post) globalization.

Keywords: ancient heritage, identity, city, interpretation, Osijek

### INTRODUCTION

The role of cultural heritage in creating a city image can be very valuable. As an integral part of the expression and richness of cultural identities and a legacy that belongs to humanity, cultural heritage gives each specific location its own recognizable characteristics, and so it represents a repository of human experience (UNESCO, 1990). However, modern society and city planners consciously use heritage to shape history and its legacy, in response to various current needs, such as political credibility, social and ethnic cohesion, national identity, economic resources, etc.

### АПСТРАКТ

Град Осиек је доживео многе историјске промене у градском пејзажу, које су утицале на његов идентитет. Будући да је Осиек препознатљив по аустроугарској барокној тврђави, класицистичком Горњем граду и сецесијској Европској авенији, често се занемарује чињеница о још три историјска слоја, римском, средњовековном и турском. Главни разлог је тај што је археолошко наслеђе тих периода готово невидљиво. Главна хипотеза овог рада је да је интеграција античког наслеђа врло вредна имовина и потенцијал при дизајнирању савременог града и његове архитектуре. Овај рад има за циљ да преиспита и прикаже научно заснован интегративни приступ интеграцији античког наслеђа у савремени град 21. века који резултира очувањем идентитета историјског места и друштва на примеру нове зграде Грађевинско-архитектонског факултета у Осиеку, која је препозната као синтеза модерних трендова у архитектури и античког наслеђа пронађеног на локацији. Критичка анализа литературе илустровала је значај очувања културног наслеђа у идентитету места, друштва и човечанства. Културно наслеђе је препознато не само као носилац идентитета, већ и као ресурс културне разноликости у условима растуће стандардизације, гентрификације или (пост)глобализације.

Кључне речи: античко наслеђе, идентитет, град, интерпретација, Осиек

One of several factors that contribute to the creation of an authentic and convincing identity of a city is that it is very important to strengthen the sense of connection between citizens and the space in which they live. Numerous international examples illustrate how cities with a clear and consistent identity, based on authentic historical and local values, attract more visitors than cities that try to create their identity by adapting and transforming their resources, copying other people's ideas, and trying to achieve fast and commercial effects (Vuković, 2011). This paper is based on the hypothesis that the integration of ancient heritage can be a valuable asset when creating new architecture and revitalizing a city. This phenomenon will be analyzed predominantly from the archaeological and architectural point of view, with some referencing to social and urban aspects.

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Roter-Blagojević et al. (2009) praised the concept of presenting areas with ancient remains to both the domestic and foreign public in a modern manner, and in interaction with the environment. This approach is at the core of the University Campus in Osijek, in the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture Osijek building project (GRAFOS).

The subject of this paper is the integration of the ancient heritage of Osijek into the modern architecture of the city, with special reference to a site within its protected cultural and historical area, which is part of Roman Mursa. This important archaeological site is located in the very heart of today's city, discovered and significantly preserved during excavations for the construction of the GRAFOS building foundations.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

In writing this paper, qualitative research methods were used, namely the study of literary material, scientific information and case analysis. The literature review aimed to explore the existing knowledge base and previously published research on the concept of city identity, ancient heritage in the modern city, and types of preservation and presentation, in order to discover and identify insufficiently researched topics as opportunities for further research. During the literature review, several scientific methods were used: analysis, synthesis, comparison, and inductive and deductive reasoning.

The following materials were used for the research: written scientific literature, electronic media and professional materials, conceptual and executive design, construction plans of GRAFOS, Conservation and Presentation Project of the Archeological Site Osijek, Faculty of Civil Engineering (2010).

## ANCIENT HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY CITY

Cities are populated places that give validity to everyday and unusual rituals, both accidental and staged. The continuities of time and place are summarized in urban artefacts and their transformations (Kostof, 1999). Developing on the basis of historical narratives and the legacy of previous epochs, the data intertwine and are incorporated into the "corpus" of the new city and the modern urban environment, becoming an integral part of the identity and everyday life of the city and creating a homogeneous environment. However, in recent decades, cities have been rapidly transformed under the influence of various global trends, such as neoliberalism, economic crises, climate change, the digital revolution, etc. These phenomena sometimes leave deep traces on the historical heritage, a key element of identity (Vuković, 2011).

In recent decades, cities have gained a central role in working towards inclusive integration and cohesion (EC, 2018), and this is due to their intermediary status, which is both global and local. In a reality where European cities are becoming increasingly ethnically diverse, art and heritage are becoming the main tools

to make this possible. However, at the same time, they kept the ability to be a subject of constant negotiation and active shaping, as urban heritage can be viewed as a major repository of a city's identity (EC, 2018b), from which citizens "pick and choose" the parts they need in a given day. Unlike national identities, urban identities more easily include everyone living in the city, despite national boundaries or citizenship, because of the everyday interactions experienced by the plural population.

## CONSERVATION RESEARCH AND CHARTERS

For a very long time, the most influential international conservation document was the Venice Charter from 1964 (Ahunbay, 2011). In this charter, most of the earlier recommendations on restoration were extended. It was then followed by the Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (Lausanne, 1990), which laid out general principles for the investigation, maintenance, and conservation as well as the reconstruction of architectural heritage, and guidelines for archaeological heritage management (ICOMOS, 1990). This charter started focusing on archaeological sites as living cultural heritage (Kocaman, Eyupgiller, 2018).

International efforts on the protection of archaeological heritage continued targeting the public awareness of heritage (Kocaman, Eyupgiller, 2018), and so the tension and pressure on heritage increased (Orbasli, 2000).

The Principles for the Analysis, Conservation and Structural Restoration of Architectural Heritage (Victoria Falls, 2003) explained the differences between a re-discovered building and an exposed building, by pointing out the fragile nature of excavated structures (ICOMOS, 2003). The Charter on the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites (Québec, 2008) dwelled on the interpretation and presentation of heritage, planning of sustainability, preservation of authenticity, the understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage sites and fostering public awareness, rather than the formal, physico-chemical and structural protection of heritage (ICOMOS, 2008).

With the arrival of the Council of Europe Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, 2018a), it was recognized that cultural heritage can also be a source and opportunity to promote networking, exchange and cooperation between different participants and the public. This is especially true when people dealing with heritage are not considered passive consumers but creators, distributors and decision-makers (EC, 2018b). Historical cultural heritage can also represent a resource for protecting cultural diversity and a sense of place, as opposed to growing standardization, gentrification, and (post) globalization. The Convention (2018b) accepts the idea that culture can be understood as a set of symbolic and conceptual tools that members of society need to interpret the reality that surrounds them.

One of the great examples of restored, preserved and protected ancient heritage is the city of Rome, which also evolved from ancient ruins. The historic core (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), a complex and layered area, includes remarkable ancient archaeological sites integrated into the urban fabric, predominantly using in-situ principles. The material and spiritual elements of ancient and Christian Rome, as key symbols of human history, have been the bearers of both internal (local) and external (global) identities for centuries. Rome is just one, the first in a series of historic cities that have developed on ancient ruins, with large areas of in-situ archaeological presentations. These cities are known for their successful merging of modern life and ancient heritage, and include Cairo, Athens, Tel-Aviv and Xi'an (BBC, 2013). Built on well-preserved ancient heritage, they are not without problems or challenges. However, thanks to an integrative approach to urban planning and preservation of cultural heritage, based on connecting different expertise and involving various actors, the most effective results are achieved in preserving, restoring, presenting in-situ, and integrating ancient heritage, as well as promoting identity through it.

The ancient Romans were responsible for laying the foundations of various aspects of modern civilization. From bridges and stadiums, to the books and words we hear every day, they made an impact on the world and our present time. Therefore, we can conclude that ancient heritage has huge historical potential, and it is found in all segments of our society, in particular in the form of cultural heritage.

## CONCEPTS OF ANCIENT HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

The creation of various protective structures – provisional or permanent ones over conserved remains

(Schmidt, 1988) – today is an obsolete form of restoration and presentation, because it interrupts the integrity of a site and disturbs viewing its authenticity and continuity. Furthermore, Jukilehto (2003) states that a historic site should be a true testimony to the culture and tradition it represents, and its authenticity is an expression of tangible and intangible aspects of a structure.

Contemporary concepts of heritage presentation can be divided into two main categories: museum presentation, which refers to the display of artefacts in museums, and in-situ presentation at the original archaeological location (Vuković, 2011). Both concepts have advantages and disadvantages, and over time they have undergone many changes in approaches and methodology. The traditional way of preserving heritage throughout history has most often relied on the preservation and display of heritage elements in museums. Some of the key benefits in the case of museum exhibits are the protection of artefacts from destruction and decay, accessibility via the web anywhere in the world (especially during times of restricted movement due to biological pandemics), augmented realities, and immediate updating of knowledge with new facts. The

disadvantages are: block-buster and historical entertainment effects, incomplete or incorrect contextualization, loss of the sense of regional affiliation and community. The museum is, by its traditional nature, a collector and custodian of historical objects, except in the case of some artefacts that are immovable, such as archaeological sites, individual buildings and settlements, which are objects that we preserve in-situ (Loboda, 1983). In-situ exhibitions usually include archaeological reconstructions, the rehabilitation of individual buildings and/or open-air ethnographic museums. The revised European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (EC, 1992) highlights the concerns of archaeologists about the accelerated degradation of their original material, the disappearance of which results in the loss of significant historical information. The convention emphasizes the need for a different approach to in-situ presentation, based on communication with the outside world, influencing the political and socio-economic decision-making process, and gaining the support of the general public. Therefore, the revitalization process not only increases the physical appearance and identity of a place, but also improves its social and economic viability (Doratli, 2005). Archaeological heritage is also recognized as a significant factor in the economic and social development of a city, as a generator of inclusive cultural policy or a source of income in the field of cultural tourism. In conclusion, archaeology has enormous potential to create narratives that help develop a sense of rootedness and provide place identity (Williams, 2014).

A good example of the integration of ancient heritage into the modern city, and the maximum use of ancient heritage to create a strong and original city identity in Croatia is Split. The Roman emperor Diocletian built a palace near his native Salona in the early 4th century, a sumptuous and richly decorated villa and military camp, fortified with towers and walls. At the beginning of the 7th century, Salona was demolished, and the surviving inhabitants took refuge in the palace, which grew into a city that subsequently grew into modern-day Split. The peculiarity of this historic city (Marasović, 1994) is manifested in the community, with the presence of parts of this magnificent late antique building, and its permanent remodelling, adaptation and enrichment with new buildings of Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance styles. Many architectural remains of the original palace have been preserved and some restored, and they are presented together using in-situ principles of presentation. In the process of restoring the archaeological remains, the concept of anastylosis<sup>1</sup> was used whenever possible. The palace today represents a completely revitalized place with new content introduced, such as: shops, cafes, bars and art galleries. Later, the medieval city of Split gradually integrated into the walls of the palace. The palace became a "living" monument, as it serves as a place in which people live and work, and they clean and

<sup>1</sup> The term anastylosis is here used in the meaning of the reconstruction of a monument from fallen parts. As defined in Merriam-Webster online Dictionary, available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anastylosis> [Accessed: 14.06.2022.]



Fig. 1. In-situ presentation of excavation / Сл. 1. *In-situ* презентација ископина

repair it, thus contributing to improving the housing, health and traffic conditions within the city. Today, Diocletian's Palace is a recognizable monument of the city of Split, and a large part of its identity. The historic complex of Split with the Diocletian Palace was among the first to appear on the UNESCO list in 1979. The importance of the Diocletian Palace goes beyond local significance due to its preservation, and it represents "one of the most famous and integral architectural and cultural buildings on the Croatian Adriatic coast" (UNESCO, 2019).

#### THE ANCIENT HERITAGE OF OSIJEK

Osijek is the largest city in eastern Croatia, with beginnings dating back to ancient times of Roman occupation. Ancient Osijek was called *Colonia Aelia Mursa*. A forum, public and administrative buildings, temples, an amphitheatre, houses with underfloor heating, gardens of rich citizens and patricians, and a city decorated with statues, were built in *Mursa* (Perinić Muratović, 2004). Roman *Mursa* is proof of the continuation of the Roman colonisation of eastern Croatia in the area of Vukovar and Vinkovci, where life took place 5000-6000 years before *Mursa*, so many call this area the cradle of European civilization (Marin, 2018).

Leleković (2020), the head of research at the archaeological site of the *Mursa* excavations, claims that Osijek is today primarily perceived as an Austro-Hungarian city with a Baroque Fortress, Classicist Upper Town and Art Nouveau European Avenue, and it is often forgotten that there are three more cities underneath it. The main reason for this is the fact that the archaeological heritage of Osijek is almost invisible, as the Roman *Mursa*, the medieval layer of the city, and Turkish Osijek are according to Leleković (2020) yet to be properly excavated and presented. The ancient heritage of *Mursa* is currently only an integral part of the identity of the Down Town city district, but not the entire city, which is a good enough basis for the incorporation of *Mursa* into the identity of modern Osijek as a whole (Leleković, 2020).

One of the most interesting ancient finds in the area of Osijek is the discovery and presentation of Roman road remains, found

during the excavation of the foundations for a new Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture building in Osijek in 2006. According to the Conservation and Presentation Project of the Archeological Site Osijek, Faculty of Civil Engineering (2010), the archaeological site on the university campus in Osijek is part of a Roman urban structure whose backbone is a road with mutually laid buildings.

Archaeological excavations on the construction site of the Faculty of Civil Engineering have found the following immovable and movable artefacts: the earth substructure of the road consisting of bilateral drainage channels and holes from the pillars of the wooden structure; the rest of the building with a porch south of the road, the remains of the foundations of the northern facade of the building and the negatives of the foundations of the pillars of the associated porch. As *Mursa* is an example of a Roman city (Marin, 2018) about which there is not much data, and there are very few historical documents or physical remains, this archaeological site is of even greater importance. Due to the importance of the find itself, it was decided that the site should be presented within the future building of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture in Osijek according to the in-situ principle of presentation.

The disproportion between the low preservation of the basic building substance in relation to the high interpretive value of the site, which consists of a clear spatial organization and profiled stone elements, directly influenced the choice of an in-situ presentation model. This model focuses on the three most valuable features of the site: remnants of the original building structure, a three-line disposition, and attractive stone elements of the former architecture. The in-situ model combines elements of speculative reconstruction according to the idea of anastylosis, together with elements of museological presentation that explain or interpret the entire presentation zone, but through another suitable medium (Conservation and Presentation Project of the Archeological Site Osijek, Faculty of Civil Engineering, 2010). The main advantages of the chosen principle are ensuring the greatest experience of authentic

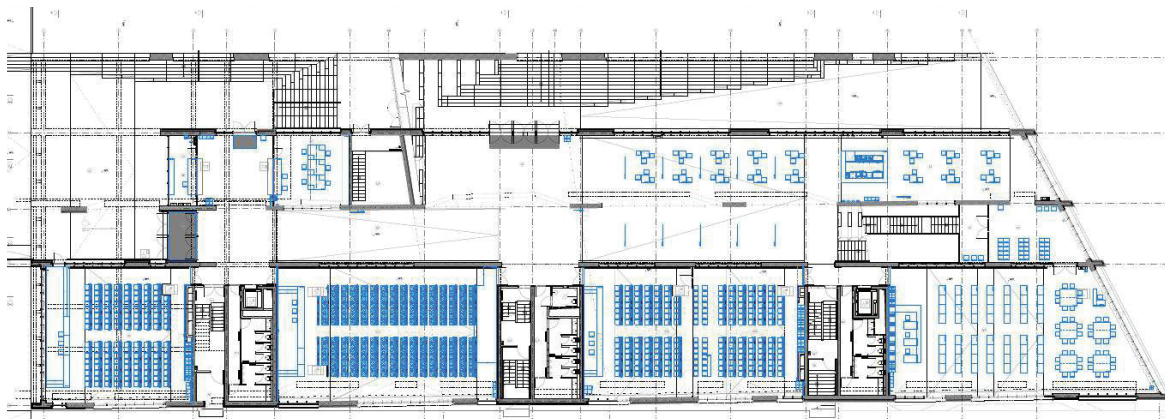


Fig. 2. Floorplan of GRAFOS / Сл. 2. Основа приземља ГРАФОС

findings (including use of the anastylosis principle) as well as the highest degree of attractiveness for visitors. The main shortcomings related to the choice of in-situ models in relation to the Mursa site are: poor preservation of the basic building substance (only 2.5% preserved), relocation of attractive pieces of profiled architectural elements, cost and the legal complexity of maintenance. The road is presented in its original direction, which influenced the architectural solution for the ground floor of GRAFOS, and its level was a key determinant of the geometry of the entire complex, i.e., the logical and literal relationship with the architecture of Roman buildings and the associated porch.

### GENESIS OF THE ARCHITECTURAL CONCEPT – THE INFLUENCE OF HERITAGE ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTION FOR THE GRAFOS BUILDING

The GRAFOS building is located within the University Campus in Down Town Osijek, and the value of the investment was 4.4 million EUR. The purpose of the building is as a higher education institution with a full capacity of 1348 students and about 179 employees. The building consists of various function-based units: 7 departments, classrooms, administrative spaces, library, laboratories, student and common spaces (halls, stands, open classroom, canteen, hallways) and technical rooms.

Fig. 3. Connection between ancient ruins and the modern building / Сл. 3. Веза између античких рушевина и модерне зграде





Fig. 4 & 5. Internal access to the presentation site / Сл. 4 и 5. Интерни приступ сајту за презентацију

The building stretches north-south and is designed as part of the interpretation of the archaeological site and the external spaces to which it opens. The presentation area of the site is the result of the adaptation of the GRAFOS building project, and it includes a part of the ground floor that is relieved of the vital functions of the building. Given the transverse position in relation to the longer axis of the building, the space retains the necessary communication function between the separated contents of the ground floor.

The site is presented and incorporated to represent a point that revitalizes both the building and space, so for example, access to the site is provided through two doors (one outside and one inside).

Double access to the presentation space (Figure 3) of the archaeological site has been provided in order to increase accessibility and contribute to the popularization of this site. The internal approach provides a simple and accessible route that is often used by visitors to the faculty building, which at the same time physically connects two spaces, with the ancient ruins presented and protected through in-situ presentation and the modern building. The external access provides an easy way for citizens and tourists to reach the presentation site without the need to enter the interior of the building.

The fact that the site is partially visible from outside (Figure 6 & 7), and professionally lit at night, creates a point of interest for passersby. It attracts attention and suggests the possibility of sightseeing, and therefore represents a great asset from a sociological point of view.

Three longitudinal, open spaces have been created in the building, each of which has its own specific role, place and

use. The volume of the building is shaped by a cross-section that defines the open spaces of L, U and V shapes. By carefully designing functional units in GRAFOS around the archaeological site, the site does not disrupt the primary educational activities in the building but enriches them with the possibility of sightseeing and interaction. This has resulted in a rich and creative collaboration with the Academy of Arts and Culture in Osijek (AUKOS) since the building was completed.

According to Vrančić and Nadilo (2015), the hallways and central spaces create open ends and offer "infinite" views, based on flat horizons and the traditional linear organization of settlements and agricultural land in Slavonia. This interpretation of the Slavonian landscape, in which Osijek is immersed, connects the building with the local spatial and cultural context and has great urban value. It also creates a sense of openness of roads and infinity, which is a link both with the design of the space and with the basic characteristic of the (Roman) road. In this way, we can observe Paradis' (1989) idea that the present can be defined as the difference that is extracted from repetition and mirroring of the past, the past as a difference which is involved in repetition, and the future as a difference that the repetition creates.

And so, if we remember that the original and essential function of the road is travelling, connection and communication with different areas, but also that roads and streets are a place of contact between indoor and outdoor spaces, public and private, built and open, static and dynamic (Reba, 2010), then we begin to understand the true value of this project.

By incorporating the remains of the original, ancient road in the new building, the spatial experience has truly been upgraded,



Fig. 6 & 7. Outside view of the archaeological site / Сл. 6 и 7. Спољашњи поглед на археолошко налазиште

through repetition and the creation of new and different functions within the educational structure. In a way, the ancient road is now becoming a part of a future journey for many that come to this faculty in search of knowledge.

Architects Dinko Peračić and Roman Šilje, the authors of the project "Faculty of Civil Engineering Osijek – GRAFOS", won the Medal for Architecture in 2016, the annual award of the Croatian Chamber of Architects, a prestigious professional award for their outstanding contribution to Croatian architecture. This prize testifies that the building has achieved the best possible reception and respect for the profession in relation to its realization and concept. Due to its very attractive large spaces, it has become very popular for various events and has so far been a host to hundreds of events, whose visitors include delegates from Brussels, the European Union headquarters. All these visitors, at some point during the events, visit the archaeological site as a point of particular interest. Also, it is important to point out that the faculty has an extremely good relationship with schools and nurseries and is a very popular destination for organized visits. Since the official opening of the new GRAFOS building on 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2016, it has hosted numerous visitors, especially through regular events such as conferences and The Science Week – an annual event held at the university level, during which visits and workshops are organized for children of various ages.

In the five-year period since the opening of the new building, it can be estimated that the faculty has been visited by a minimum of 500 children and several thousand conference attendees, which demonstrates the great social asset of the building and archaeological site. We can conclude that before the opening of the new building, access to the archaeological

site was non-existent and so it had zero visits, whereas after construction of the GRAFOS building, access, protection and restoration of the findings have been achieved and visitor numbers have increased several-fold.

Development of public awareness is maybe the most important part of preserving archaeological and cultural heritage (Nikolić et al., 2020). In parallel with these activities, it would be of great value to start a series of promotional and educational projects, as well as public discussions, which would aim to raise awareness of professionals and the general public about this type of heritage.

The success and popularity achieved by the GRAFOS heritage site so far are very positive, and the result of the joint activities of all mentioned stakeholders, ranging from experts to citizens, prove that the best results can be achieved through joint efforts and synergy.

## CONCLUSION

Osijek is mostly built on ancient remains, the preservation, protection, restoration and presentation of which are an everyday challenge in the revitalization, urbanization and modernization of the city. This paper has presented a successful example of heritage integration, and emphasized the benefits of presenting ancient heritage for the identity of a city by providing an example that can be easily mirrored.

The social aspects of strengthening the sense of connection between citizens and the place in which they live is an important factor that contributes to creating an authentic and convincing identity of a city, while at the same time reducing the effect of erosion of the place (identity loss).

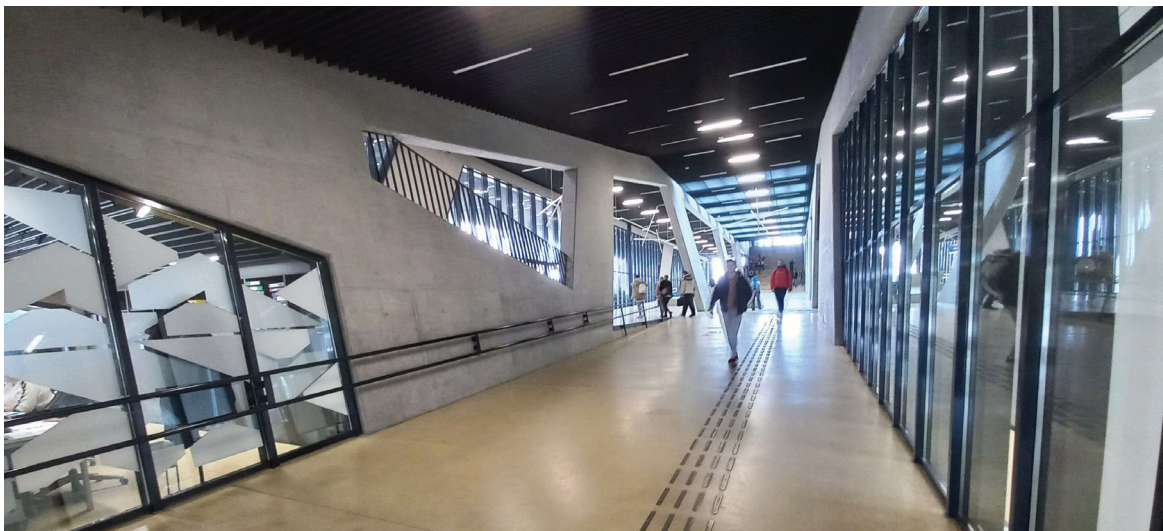


Fig. 8. Interior, road echo / Сл. 8. Унутрашњост, ехо пута

This paper confirms the hypotheses by proving that the successful integration of ancient heritage into the modern city is possible and also extremely important, in order to preserve its historical identity while contributing actively to its revitalization with award-winning architecture. The hypothesis was proven through the analysis of successful integration, as well as the analysis of the performance and use of the new GRAFOS building. In order to gain a more thorough understanding of the attitude of the citizens of Osijek towards ancient heritage, it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive survey that would provide answers to these questions.

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## SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS / ИЗВОРИ ИЛУСТРАЦИЈА

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