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Culture-Led Regeneration of Industrial Brownfield Hosting Temporary Uses: A Post-Socialist Context—Case Study from Novi Sad, Serbia

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Abstract: Utilizing culture as a tool for the regeneration of industrial brownfields represents a fairly new trend in post-socialist Europe. This topic has garnered some academic attention; however, studies primarily originate from EU member states, whereas the examples from non-EU cities remains largely unexplored. In addition, the literature dealing with the temporary creative use of derelict industrial sites in post-socialist cities is scarce. The case study-based paper contributes to filling these voids by investigating the creativity-driven informal activation of the Kineska Quarter in Novi Sad, the second largest city in Serbia and the European Capital of Culture for 2022, and its planned transformation into a creative district. The research aims are to examine the capacity of temporary uses to act as a hard infrastructure of the culture-led regeneration, identify the policy framework that shaped the project and highlight its shortcomings, detect potential sustainability issues, and examine how soft factors affect the use of hard infrastructure. The findings suggest that the redevelopment of a creative brownfield based on the simulation of bottom-up decision-making and hastily developed and blurry regeneration policies lead to uncertainty about its sustainability. They also suggest that post-socialist cities lacking experience in this field necessitate a context-perceptive, socially responsible, and locale-conscious approach to the (then sustainable) culture-led regeneration of spontaneously activated brownfields sites, which requires meaningful and not just pro forma involvement of non-institutional actors in the policy- and decision-making process.

Keywords: temporary use; industrial brownfield; brownfield regeneration; culture-led regeneration; sustainability; post-socialist cities



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1. Introduction

Industrial brownfields refer to sites containing derelict factories and warehouses, which are fully abandoned or partially occupied and utilized [1], mainly located in developed urban areas and “require intervention to bring them back to beneficial use” [2] (p. 12). They surfaced as the most striking physical manifestation of the deindustrialization that spread across the US and Western Europe in the 1970s as cities entered the post-industrial transition [3,4]. These sites were reducing the attractiveness and value of the surrounding real estate both socially and economically [5,6], posing a threat of proliferating urban decay [7]. However, they simultaneously represented valuable land resources [8], as well as an effective instrument to combat various problems that hinder sustainable urban development. It did not take long for the reuse of industrial brownfields to become a hot topic in the West and cities began repurposing them to cope with urban land scarcity, reduce environmental burdens, recoup and increase real estate value, but also to supplement neighborhoods with new uses [9–11].

Culture has quickly established itself as a possible (and preferred) tool for the regeneration of industrial brownfields [12,13]. In Western European cities, the trend of employing culture as the engine of urban regeneration has emerged in the early 1980s [14,15], being

further empowered first by the introduction of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) competition in 1985, and then by Florida's [16] concept of creating an innovative living environment that meets the requirements of the "creative class". Culture was seen as the "magic substitute for all the lost factories", but also as "a device that will create new urban image" [17] (p. 640). Besides economic restructuring, what provided the key impetus for culture-led urban regeneration projects was "the rise of an entrepreneurial or neoliberal mode of urban governance" [18] (p. 506). Numerous cultural economists have argued that "each euro invested in culture brings eight euros in revenue" [19] (p. 45). The notion that culture can serve as a fuel for economic growth has become the essence "of the new orthodoxy by which cities seek to enhance their competitive position" [20] (p. 833). Many declining Western European cities have begun redesigning and "reimagining" their built environment by utilizing culture as a driver, expecting that such projects would attract investments, boost tourism, reinvent their image, increase their economic performance and contribute to their regional and global competitiveness [21–24]. The majority succeeded in achieving these aims.

Large industrial buildings, particularly those of great architectural value, swiftly became the target of large-scale investments of national and local governments, and during the 1980s and 1990s, cultural reuse of industrial brownfield was integrated into broader urban regeneration arrangements [25]. Yet, guided by the economic imperatives, some of these projects encouraged high-end commercial and residential developments, evolving into paradigms of property-led redevelopment and gentrification. According to Grodach, economic sustainability has largely determined the course of culture-led regeneration in the West for a long time [18].

Whereas initially focused on flagship cultural facilities enabling "spectacular consumption", attracting tourists and generating large revenues [26] (p. 43), culture-led regeneration in Western European cities has at some point widened the rationale to incorporate social benefits and improve the quality of urban life [27], evolving towards more fine-tuned and localized policies to support spaces and areas already utilized for cultural and creative production [26]. This shift had a substantial influence on the cultural reuse of industrial brownfields. In a period when their future is still uncertain, vacant industrial sites often become home to various temporary uses—restaurants, bars, nightclubs, artists' studios, small galleries, start-ups, artisan workshops, informal markets, etc., metamorphosing into exuberant urban spaces that combine cultural and creative production with a vibrant public sphere [28] and developing into creative brownfields (i.e., informal cultural/creative quarters). When the West embraced Florida-inspired concepts of making and governing a "creative city", creative brownfields started playing a key role in the "creative city-economy" that "privileges clusters of multiple creative producers as a desirable urban form" [29] (p. 759). The authors argued that they can constitute the "iconic cultural infrastructure" of a creative city [30] (p. 166) and act as a hard infrastructure of culture-led regeneration project [29], serving as catalysts for the development of cultural and creative quarters [31]. In many Western European cities, the policy-makers have therefore shifted the focus to the more informal initiatives of these "small players", building on their activities [32,33] and engaging them in the industrial brownfield regeneration. This has led to the emergence of "new" cultural and creative districts that strengthen and further develop the local cultural and creative economy [26] and serve as a social space for the local community, while simultaneously bringing in tourists and making profit thus being both socially and economically sustainable.

Although a large body of the literature investigates the post-socialist context of industrial brownfield regeneration [6,34–40], the studies pay a rather marginal attention to culture-led projects, which reveals that the implementation of culture as a brownfield redevelopment tool in Central and Eastern European (CEE) cities is a fairly new phenomenon [13]. There are three prime reasons for this. First, industrial brownfields emerged in the CEE region only after the collapse of socialism, when economic restructuring and market economy commenced, shaping the urban landscape. Second, post-socialist societies

for some time had a specific attitude towards the abandoned factory complexes, not recognizing their architectural or historical values and perceiving them as a reminder of the socialist past. Finally, such projects needed to wait for cities to recover from the transitional shock and recession, restructure their economy, and redefine their urban development priorities. The concept of “creative city” has made its way into urban policy after the EU enlargement that increased the inter-city competition, also enabling participation in the ECoC contest [41]. Guided by successful Western European examples, some cities, particularly capitals and those deciding to run for the ECoC title, have initiated the culture-led regeneration of their industrial brownfield, protecting them as heritage sites and converting them into creative quarters.

The studies on the cultural reuse of industrial brownfield sites primarily originate from CEE EU members states, whereas the experience of cities in non-EU countries, which imported the Western “creativity-oriented” trends in urban development with a certain lag, remains largely unexplored. Belgrade has lately drawn some academic attention in these terms [42,43]. In addition, the literature covering the topic of temporary uses and informal creative hubs in CEE cities is quite scarce [13,44–46], yet reveals that the public sector utilizes and/or treats them differently—in some cases, they are acknowledged, but most often not. The paper will contribute to filling these voids by shedding light on the spontaneous development of a creative brownfield within the former industrial complex and its transformation into a formal creative quarter in Novi Sad, the second largest city in Serbia and the holder of the ECoC 2022 title (originally 2021, but postponed due to the pandemic).

This paper examines activation of the Kineska Quarter (Eng. Chinese Quarter, hereinafter Kineska) through an informal and creativity-driven approach to place making and marking, and its planned culture-led regeneration—the first large-scale publicly funded project in the city’s post-socialist history, initiated by the local government for the purpose of the ECoC candidacy. The studied case may be understood as a paradigm of a seemingly bottom-up approach to the regeneration of a creative brownfield, which essentially has a rigid top-down nature, as well as an example of the selective utilization of its temporary uses, spatial features and image as what Landry et al. [47] call “regenerators”. The objective of this paper is threefold: (1) to investigate the development of a creative brownfield within Kineska and pinpoint its potential to act as a hard infrastructure of culture-led regeneration; (2) to identify the policy framework that shapes and guides the regeneration project, point out its shortcomings and detect the sustainability challenges and issues; (3) to examine how soft factors (institutional, policy- and governance-related) [6] affect the use of hard infrastructure. The research highlights the significance of a well-tailored, context-sensitive and socially responsible culture-led regeneration strategy for spontaneously reused industrial brownfields, which would fully capitalize on the site’s tangible and intangible assets, combining them as regenerators, and result in an authentic creative hub that is equally attractive to tourists and locals, and therefore socially, culturally, and economically sustainable. The findings suggest that the development of such an approach requires a continuous, meaningful and not just pro forma involvement of non-institutional actors (especially if they participated in developing a creative brownfield) in the policy- and decision-making process. The paper also considers the findings of other authors related to CEE cities, adding to them, and offers some remarks and recommendations for institutional actors.

2. Temporary Uses, Creative Brownfields and Creative Districts

Temporary use is defined as “the temporary activation of vacant land or buildings with no foreseeable development demand”, while the “use of a site is, by agreement with the owner, time-limited” and “permitted until an investor emerges” (Blumner, cited in [48], p. 1741).

Abandoned industrial premises are often centrally located and offer large spaces that can be cheaply rented and easily adapted to fit different needs, thus being extremely attractive to informal creative workers, start-ups in the creative industries, alternative

bars and clubs, and craftsmen [49,50]. The presence of temporary uses is beneficial for the brownfield owners, as it represents an interim solution preventing the property from degradation, devaluation and vandalism and reducing the management costs [51,52]. These uses also offer an alternative experience of a place [53,54]. It has been noted that spontaneously activated industrial brownfields are perceived by the public more positively than vacant sites; hence, temporary uses create great preconditions for the regeneration projects that would be publicly accepted [55] and based on the involvement of the local community [56].

Andres and Grésillon define creative brownfields as organic cultural and creative spaces developed by the concentration of temporary uses in aesthetically distinct, but derelict brownfield sites [26]. According to these authors, their further development may take two different paths—they either are incorporated into cultural and urban policy and enter a redevelopment process, moving towards a more conventional cultural and creative space (formal creative districts) or they disappear (become repurposed) as a result of the insurmountable conflicts with other stakeholders (local authorities, owners, local community, etc.) and their incapacity to adequately respond to external political and economic pressures. Cities most often opt for the first path—creative brownfields are “increasingly exploited, rather than confronted, by entrepreneurial strategies which seek to capitalize on their ‘creative’ aura”, drawing upon place distinctiveness and alternativeness, experience economy, consumption and branding, and bringing redevelopment and reinvestment [29] (p. 759). Such an approach reflects shifts in the cultural preferences of Florida’s creative class towards a more informal culture, but should also be seen in the context of providing a less expensive place-branding tool that brings distinctiveness “in the global competition of cities all using the concept of the ‘creative city’ for urban economic growth” [13] (p. 607). The regeneration of creative brownfields offers an opportunity to capitalize on a cultural component already embedded in the local social and economic life [57], producing a distinctive cultural or creative quarters that creative cities long for. The establishment of formal cultural or creative quarters or districts perfectly fits the goals of culture-led urban regeneration, thus often being in the focus of urban policy-makers. These districts merge cultural and creative production with consumption and feature a diversity of venues and programs. However, “true” creative districts only emerge by recognizing the local context (historic, architectural, cultural, social, etc.) [58,59] and achieving complementarity between culture, creativity and local tangible and intangible assets [60]. The efficiency of cultural development then enhances the social and economic sustainability of a cultural district. This requires participatory democracy, i.e., a special willingness of policy- and decision-makers to work together with the local creative and cultural actors (formal and informal) and the local community [12], as well as strong and meaningful stakeholder collaboration [61].

3. Culture-Led Regeneration of Industrial Brownfields in CEE Cities

The tide of economic restructuring hit the CEE region with a substantial delay compared to the West. It was artificially delayed for many years because socialist governments attached enormous economic, strategic and ideological importance to the industrial growth [62,63]. Their deindustrialization, tertiarization and integration into the global economy began in 1989, when socialism collapsed. The industrial complexes—once prominent symbols of socialist cities, which covered up to a third of their territory—have been emptied, forming large and dispersed patches of attractively located “dead tissue”, but simultaneously presenting precious land reservoirs for future urban development [64] (p. 10). In addition, with the advent of market capitalism, many political, ideological and social values embedded in industrial buildings during the socialist period suddenly became undesirable and obsolete [25], thus becoming perceived for quite some time as “ghosts of burdened, unwanted pasts” [65] (p. 134). In the early 2000s, some cities began to focus on their reuse of abandoned factories, yet they were rarely recognized as heritage sites, being frequently remodeled at the whim of private investors without any guidelines or even

demolished. It was only after 2010 that more attention was paid to the wise reuse of derelict industrial complexes [36,38], when CEE cities finally began seizing the opportunities that brownfields offer in terms of contributing to sustainable urban development. The emphasis was also placed on the protection of these buildings. They possess not only architectural and aesthetic values, but represent an important segment of the cultural and social heritage, as well as the identity of the CEE region [66].

The concept of utilizing culture as a tool for the regeneration of industrial brownfields has also arrived to the CEE region with a certain delay. During the “Wild East” phase of urban management [67], the role of culture in urban regeneration (and urban development in general) was marginalized due to the dominance of private interests and an extremely weak position of the public sector [68]. The situation changed when it began regaining control. One of the main incentives for the public sector to start investing in culture-related projects and cultural infrastructure, especially in the case of second-tier cities, came from a stronger inclusion of the CEE region in the ECoC competition—as of 2007, one elected candidate originates from the CEE EU member state, with the aim of reinforcing the notion of “Europeanness” [69]. Almost overnight, the idea of “creative city” conceived in the West has entered the official urban development narrative [41,44]. To illustrate, all Hungarian applicants for the 2010 award have integrated it into their urban policy [70]. Some CEE cities have also swiftly picked up on the Western European experience with the cultural reuse of industrial brownfield, transforming it to creative quarters [25]. The most-known projects come from the ECoC winners—Pécs, Pilsen, Tallinn, Košice and Riga. They demonstrate that the ECoC title provides the necessary impetus for recognizing the tourism potential of brownfield sites, which is still largely underestimated in the CEE region [38,55,71]. However, the projects based on merging culture with brownfield regeneration in the majority of cities that failed to win the ECoC competition have been quickly forgotten by the public sector [72,73].

What most of culture-led regeneration projects in CEE cities have in common is that that they are large-scale [68,74], rely on the top-down approach and exhibit the characteristics of entrepreneurial governance, being “regarded as standard business models” [75] (p. 963). Large-scale refurbishments of industrial brownfield sites based on culture require more funding and are more constrained by financial return than small-scale ones [25]. Their main aim, although often well-disguised, is therefore economically predetermined, which fits perfectly with the neoliberal orientation of post-socialist urban policies, pro-growth strategies and the entrepreneurial model of urban governance. Whereas culture-driven regeneration projects in Western Europe have shifted towards achieving the balance between social and economic objectives, CEE cities appear to be primarily allured by their economic benefits. For this reason, bottom-up brownfield redevelopment efforts originating from temporary creative users which typically prioritize social over economic goals [75,76] generally garner fewer resources and less support from the public sector [13]. There is also the problem of insufficient level of public engagement as a commonality of urban regeneration projects in CEE cities [77–80].

The scarce literature dealing with the topic of temporary uses, creative brownfields and bottom-up projects in CEE cities reveals that organically structured cultural and creative initiatives may become instrumentalized by local politicians in the course of a regeneration project and used to pursue economic interests, such as in Prague [45], for example. The study from Ostrava showed that the combination of “bottom-up informal governance” of culture-led brownfield redevelopment based on partnership and trust, and “insufficient enforcement of formal rules in planning” leads to the exploitation of temporary uses “for the sake of private profit and narrow, immediate political objectives” [13] (p. 621). During the regeneration of the Zsolnay porcelain factory in Pécs, the local government has converted informal community efforts into a top-down approach [25]. There are also cases when the local authorities selectively utilize (in Tallinn [75]) or are not interested in capitalizing on the potential of temporary creative uses and initiating regeneration (in Timișoara [44] or Budapest [46]). In Pilsen, however, a bottom-up approach to the regeneration of an old

tram depo resulted in the self-sustainable Creative Zone DEPO2015. Rijeka has chosen a similar approach. The transformation of the Rikard Benčić factory complex into a cultural quarter (underway) is based on circular bottom-up actions that prioritize social goals over economic and will give the permanent status to temporary uses [81].

4. Research Design, Materials and Methodology

The review of the relevant literature on the culture-led brownfield regeneration presented in the previous two sections provided a theoretical background for investigating the spontaneous activation of Kineska and its planned redevelopment. The case study-based research relied on the qualitative approach. The data used for the analyses were drawn from publicly accessible sources—city development strategies and programs, action plans, planning documentation and guidelines, city-commissioned studies, Novi Sad: ECoC-related publications, public statements, press releases and newspaper articles, all referenced in the text.

The context for the analyses was set by explaining the urban development and cultural policies of Novi Sad during the socialist and post-socialist periods. Following a brief description of the location and main features of Kineska, its evolution was dissected based on the methodology proposed by Andres [12] (pp. 797–798) who made a distinction between three successive stages of brownfield (re)development governance, which follow the “industrial phase”—“crisis era”, “waiting and/or watching period” and “regeneration stage”. During the “crisis era”, the owner runs into problems and closes the factory or relocates its production. In the “waiting and/or watching period”, former industrial facilities begin to deteriorate. The owner sometimes leases existing premises to cultural and non-cultural actors (in some cases the buildings are squatted), creating “temporary urban spaces”. This stage ends when the formal stakeholders reach agreement on the redevelopment. What follows is the “regeneration stage”. For the purposes of this paper, the “policy recognition stage” that preceded the regeneration stage was added. Due to a specific development trajectory of this brownfield, the “waiting and/or watching period” was renamed the “uncertainty stage”. The subsequent critical analysis of the policy challenges in the case of the regeneration of Kineska focuses on the citizen participation in the planning process, shortcoming of the planning documentation, (unrecognized) importance of organizing a design competition, conflicts with temporary users and the failure to capitalize on their potential. It finalizes with a discussion of the project’s sustainability challenges. Limitations in this paper relate to the opinion poll. The redevelopment of Kineska is still in progress—seven buildings have been reconstructed by now, but only several venues began operating in four of them, while the rest of their premises are vacant, with unknown future users—which makes it difficult to gauge public opinion on the current impacts of the regeneration.

The results of the analyses presented in this paper contribute to the findings of other authors who have investigated both spontaneous and planned cultural reuse of industrial brownfields in CEE cities. They also bring new insights into the post-socialist context of culture-led brownfield regeneration approaches, leading to a set of recommendations for policy- and decision-makers.

5. Novi Sad: Urban Development and Cultural Policy

Novi Sad is the second largest city in Serbia and the capital of its northern province of Vojvodina. It is located halfway between Belgrade and the Hungarian border (around 100 km to each) and lies on the Danube River, on the junction of two pan-European transport corridors, representing a business and trade node of national and regional importance. Its proper area covers 130 km² and has a population of 290,000. In Novi Sad, cultural development was one of the key priorities of the urban policy until the beginning of the 1990s. The city also has a long tradition in hosting various cultural institutions important for defining the cultural identity of Serbian people. Before WWI and during the interwar period, it represented the focal point of Serbian culture, bearing the nickname “Serbian Athens”. The socialist period brought extensive industrialization and urbanization, and

Novi Sad quickly evolved into one of the fastest growing and most economically developed and industrialized cities in the country. The high rate of economic growth enabled the local government to continue investing in the development of cultural infrastructure, as well as in organizing various cultural events of national significance, which preserved the city's cultural character and upgraded its cultural offer. However, the era of prosperity ended with the collapse of socialism, when Yugoslavia disintegrated and Serbia entered a decade-long blocked transition marked by disastrous political and economic solutions and a severe recession, making Serbian cities the main "losers" of the post-socialist transformation. In these circumstances, culture ranked lowest among investment and development priorities. As an imprint of a society that was "suffocating in state propaganda, cheap entertainment and complete poverty" [82] (p. 37), Novi Sad suffered the greatest cultural deprivation in its modern history.

The October Revolution of 2000 set off the delayed transition that brought Serbia democratic changes, economic restructuring, macro-economic stabilization, and the status of a candidate country for EU membership. It also brought the neoliberal transformation [83,84], which had a profound impact on the urban development. Novi Sad turned to investor urbanism, implementing urban policies with a lot of illogicalities, while cultural (re)development and investments in improving the city's cultural infrastructure remained on the margins of the urban agenda. Moreover, the local cultural policy was peripheral, top-down and highly bureaucratized [85], perceiving culture in its traditional and material form, strictly tied to formal institutions and overlooking its intangible components.

The local officials also showed little interest in reusing abandoned factory buildings, which proliferated as the post-socialist deindustrialization progressed. Brownfield activation required significant public investments that, in line with the entrepreneurial governance logic, could have been spent on more lucrative projects. The long-term economic benefit of redeveloping abandoned industrial sites was insufficiently understood and brownfield regeneration projects in Serbian cities were quite rare. The first local policy to recognize their potential emerged in 2015 [86]. Before participating in the ECoC 2021 competition, the city also saw no benefit in using culture as a brownfield redevelopment tool. In addition, the topic of preserving industrial heritage has long been neglected by the local officials due to a generally low understanding of the importance of cultural heritage [87].

In the early 2010s, Novi Sad has started reinventing its shattered cultural image. The decision to enter the ECoC 2021 competition represented a turning point on several levels. The local authorities have finally decided to abandon the hands-off approach to cultural development and reform the cultural policy. This sudden interest in culture resulted from recognizing the advantages of growth-oriented cultural planning and the "creative city" concept, and seeing the economic and symbolic opportunity in winning the competition. First, many ECoCs, particularly former industrial centers, have already used this title to transform their external image, attract investments and stimulate tourism, and Novi Sad intended to achieve the same. Second, in geographically and/or politically marginal cities, especially those in former socialist countries that joined EU, this title served "as a symbol of entry into the European mainstream" aiming to encourage tourists and media to "discover them as part of Europe" [88] (p. 520). Aspects of such strategies could be found in second-tier CEE cities such as Maribor, Pécs, Košice, Pilsen, Wrocław or Plovdiv. Even though all CEE ECoCs were driven by the ambition to present themselves to the EU as rebranded and reborn after four decades of socialism, Novi Sad had an additional motivation—it wanted to become the first city in a non-EU country to win the title (in 2014, the decision was made to allow cities in EU candidate and potential candidate countries and eligible EFTA/EEA member states to hold the title every three years as of 2021). Moreover, due to Serbia's turbulent recent history, as well as its EU candidate status, the city had an enhanced need to perform as "developed" and "modern", but, above all, "cultural" and "European" [85]. After winning the title, the local government started extensively investing in cultural development. The share of the total city budget allocated to culture increased from 4.2% in 2016 to almost 10% in 2019 [89,90], remaining on that level.

The ECoC 2021 candidacy has also given impetus to the culture-led regeneration of industrial brownfield, same as in Pécs, Pilsen, Poznań or Ostrava, as well as to the recognition of industrial heritage. The first in line was Svilara, an abandoned silk factory built in 1884 and located in the Almaški historic neighborhood, which has been redeveloped into a “cultural station”. The transformation of Kineska into a creative district was selected as the flagship project of the candidacy. This large and derelict industrial complex has already been partially activated by non-institutional actors, presenting a locally known creative brownfield, which made it a logical choice for such a project.

6. Kineska Quarter: Chronology of (Re)Development

The Kineska Quarter is a former Petar Drapšin industrial complex located on one of the most valuable stretches of urban land in Novi Sad—between a public beach on the Danube and a large park, adjacent to the Liberty Bridge and neighboring a high-density residential district of Liman (Figure 1). Prior to the redevelopment, it represented one of the largest industrial brownfield sites owned by the city, covering 2.65 ha and comprising around 30 mostly derelict facilities built between the mid-1920s and the late 1960s (Figure 2), which accommodated temporary uses. Despite the rather poor technical condition, this complex managed to preserve its ambience, testifying to the city’s industrial history.

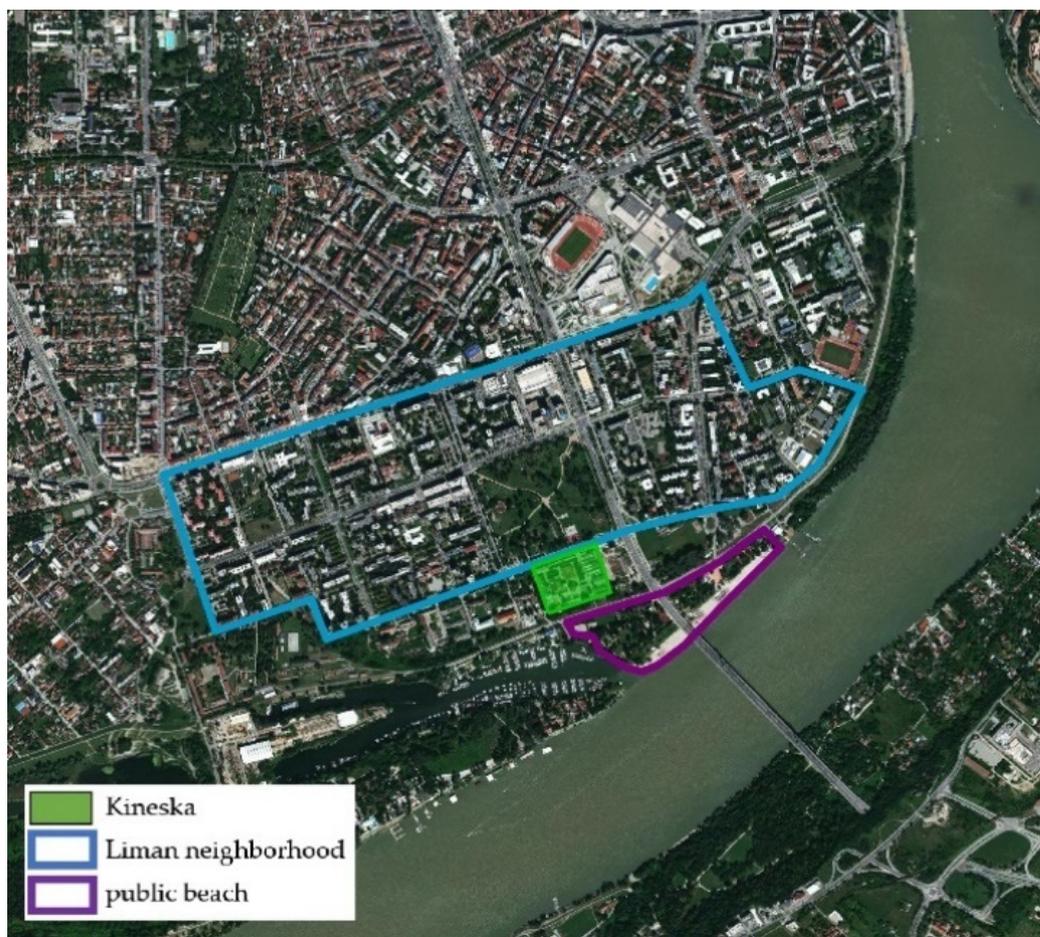


Figure 1. Location of Kineska in reference to the Liman neighborhood and public beach. Source: GeoSrbija (<https://a3.geosrbija.rs/>, accessed on 20 August 2022).



Figure 2. Aerial view of the site prior to the planned regeneration. Source: GIS portal of the City of Novi Sad (<http://www.mapanovisad.rs/mapserver2015/gisjp/>, accessed on 14 July 2022).

6.1. Industrial Phase

In the early 1920s, the city assembly decided to sell a piece of the then-peripheral urban land near the Danube for the construction of a wire factory, marking the beginning of the development of Kineska. After WWII, its land and premises were nationalized in line with the socialist postulates of collective ownership. In 1947, the merger of several state-owned companies resulted in the establishment of the factory of screws, wire, and iron goods “Petar Drapšin”. It took over the premises, began expanding the complex and quickly grew into one of the most prominent export-oriented industries in the city, employing hundreds of workers, which is why the locals nicknamed it the Chinese Quarter. In the late 1950s, the construction of neighboring high-density housing estates began.

Due to an unexpectedly high rate of industrialization and propulsive urban growth, the city’s Master Plan from 1963 prescribed the formation of a new and much larger industrial zone, as well as the relocation of the existing factories that found themselves surrounded by housing. In 1974, “Petar Drapšin” moved out from Kineska and continued operating in the Northern Industrial Zone.

6.2. Crisis-Era

The initial idea was to clear the site for the construction of sport and recreational facilities. Yet, in the late 1970s, the city entered a major economic crisis that deepened during the 1980s, reaching its peak after the collapse of socialism. No development actions were undertaken, and this large brownfield was left to the ravages of time.

6.3. Uncertainty Stage: Development of a Creative Brownfield

The reuse of Kineska started spontaneously in the late 1980s. Few smaller warehouses were rented to private companies, while various craftsmen (carpenters, dyers, tinsmiths, locksmiths, glaziers, stonemasons, a boatbuilder, etc.) began leasing the dilapidated industrial premises and transforming them into workshops. In the early 2000s, a painter and a sculptor moved in, opening their ateliers. They were followed by the private Museum of

Forgotten Arts (Figure 3A) and the Route 66, an alternative bar frequently hosting concerts of local rock bands.



Figure 3. The uncertainty stage. (A): the Manual Museum of Forgotten Arts (M.F.A.M.) and neighboring nightclub The Quarter. (B): a row of buildings with a shed roof as a valuable piece of industrial heritage—artisan workshops. (C,D): derelict warehouses. (E): the SKCNS Fabrika. (F): the Community Center (NGO). Sources: (A): authors; (B): City of Novi Sad (<http://www.novisad.rs/lat/kineska-cetvrt-buduci-centar-kulturnog-zivota-novog-sada>); (C,D): City of Novi Sad (<http://www.novisad.rs/lat/tzv-kineska-cetvrt-nebezbedna-i-neiskoriscena>); (E,F): Google Maps, 2014 (all accessed on 23 November 2022).

Despite this piecemeal development of creative temporary uses, the local authorities did not acknowledge their informal efforts in reactivating the abandoned brownfield, nor perceive them as regeneration catalysts. They did not recognize Kineska as industrial heritage, either (Figure 3B). The detailed regulatory plan (DRP) adopted in 2007 drew attention to the poor technical condition of some buildings (Figure 3C,D) and categorized the Petar Drapšin complex as a “construction zone” [91], subtly implying demolition. This document proposed the development of “multifunctional spaces and buildings”, yet required organizing a design competition in search of the best reconstruction strategy.

In the same year, the Association of Novi Sad Architects organized a competition for the design of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Vojvodina in Kineska. Most of the entries treated the complex as an empty site, but the first prize went to the team of architects who preserved several existing buildings, making them integral components of the proposed solution. However, the idea of constructing a museum was soon abandoned for financial reasons. As rumors about the sale of this complex to a developer for housing construction began to spread, in 2009, the NGO Pro.Polis: Centre for Strengthening the City’s Cultural Immunity created a regeneration proposal in order to protect the complex from being sold and demolished. It suggested the transformation into a cultural hub through the retention of the existing programs and the gradual introduction of new cultural, leisure, entertainment, hospitality and other complementary venues [92]. There was no official response to this proposal.

In 2010, the Students’ Cultural Center Novi Sad was granted the use of an abandoned building and opened the SKCNS Fabrika (The Factory, Figure 3E). It quickly evolved into one of the city’s most popular hotspots for alternative culture where various events (e.g., literature evenings, rock concerts, cultural panels, art exhibitions, comic book conventions, etc.) were taking place on a weekly basis, triggering further development of creative temporary uses. The NGO Community Center also moved to Kineska (Figure 3F). Two nightclubs

opened afterwards as an alternative to more conventional outing places located downtown, followed by several new bars and restaurants. The business model of these venues could be associated with the phenomenon of guerilla hospitality, a cultural entrepreneurship paradigm that combines non-mainstream cultural forms with aestheticization and exploitation of urban decay [93].

The transformation of Kineska into a creative brownfield may be interpreted as a practice of “making the space a veritable ‘non-institutionalized’ social and cultural institution” and establishing “a public sphere not exclusively bound to the logic of consumption” [94] (pp. 508–509). In addition, by investing their time and money in renovating dilapidated buildings without any financial assistance from the local government, the temporary users have played a key role in protecting Kineska from further deterioration. As the owner of one of the nightclubs pointed out in an interview [87] (p. 34), “if we were not there, this would have collapsed 10 years ago”.

6.4. Policy Recognition Stage

The topic of preserving Kineska as an industrial heritage site and regenerating it emerged in the official discourse in 2010 (Table 1). A city-commissioned architectural study conducted in preparation for the development of the city’s new Master Plan included the former Petar Drapšin factory among the architectural complexes that present “the most valuable cultural and historical testimony” of the city’s development [95] (p. 30). Although this document did not explicitly advocate the transformation of Kineska into a creative hub, it stated that a step-by-step introduction of cultural and leisure venues would contribute to raising the quality of life not only in neighboring residential districts, but also in the whole city (p. 57). In 2012, the local government finally began investing in the repair and upgrade of the basic infrastructure within this complex; however, there was still no clear vision of its reuse and redevelopment.

In 2013, Kineska was finally registered as a “spatial, cultural and historic entity” and put under preliminary protection for a period of three years. Protection measures implied the preservation of buildings categorized as of great historical significance and the possibility of demolishing the rest. This status resulted from the proposition to regenerate Kineska and make it a centerpiece of the ECoC candidacy. The Action Plan of the City of Novi Sad for the Implementation of Creative Industries from 2015 recognized this complex as “the city’s alternative cultural center” (p. 1767) and highlighted that its transformation into an art quarter (“a new center of the city’s cultural production”, p. 1752) would present a visionary approach to both the preservation of valuable industrial heritage and the development of creative industries [96].

Apart from sporadic press releases, the public did not receive any additional information about the redevelopment project in this period, which left plenty of room for speculation. Some citizens and tenants of Kineska were worried that the complex would fall into private hands and become fully commercialized, expelling the former users, as well as that its public spaces would be privatized. In the summer of 2015, graffiti “stop gentrification” appeared in Kineska, attracting both media and public attention.

In 2016, Novi Sad has brought its first Cultural Development Strategy, gained the European Youth Capital (EYC) 2019 title, and entered the ECoC 2021 competition. The Bid Book, a document submitted in response to the ECoC call, has finally revealed the details of regeneration plans for Kineska—transformation into the Youth Creative Polis (YCP), an innovative creative space for young people, which would be managed by youth organizations [97]. As the Bid Book stated, this idea was inspired by three flagship culture-led brownfield regeneration projects in CEE cities that previously won the ECoC title—Zsolnay Quarter in Pécs, Kasárne/Kulturpark in Košice and DEPO2015 in Pilsen, which successfully attracted tourists and boosted local economies. The regeneration concept entailed the renovation of approx. 55% of the building stock, construction of new premises in private ownership and extensive rehabilitation of public spaces financed by a public-private partnership. The regeneration projection was set to end in 2019. After Novi Sad won

the ECoC 2021 title later that year, the local government established the ECoC Foundation, which became in charge of the YCP project.

A team of experts was first hired to assess the technical condition and quality of the building stock in Kineska. The report categorized more than 70% of the buildings as being in very poor condition and unsafe for use, and recommended their demolition [98]. The preliminary protection status expired in 2016 without being renewed and a year later, the city assembly adopted the new DRP for Kineska [99], stipulating its transformation into a creative district. In contrast to the previous one, this plan did not oblige the city to organize an overall architectural and urban design competition. This document prescribed the preservation and reconstruction of a larger share of the existing buildings than recommended in the experts' report, along with the replacement of beyond repair facilities, provided some design and (re)construction requirements and broadly defined future uses (Figure 4). The city's Sustainable Development Strategy [100] brought in 2017 attached great importance to the regeneration of Kineska, singling out this project as the highest priority in the field of Sustainable Social Development, Specific Aim: Creative Cultural Policy and Preservation of Cultural Heritage (p. 2807). The city's Tourism Development Program [101] from 2018 characterized the YCP project as a basis for creating new tourist products and niches, which would be particularly beneficial to promoting Novi Sad for city break and youth tourism.



Figure 4. The DRP for Kineska and the redevelopment project—general uses: (1) hotel/hostel; (2) culture, hospitality and businesses; (3) shops, hospitality and artisan workshops; (4) culture, creative industries, education and hospitality; (5) art studios, artisan workshops, businesses and shops; (6) art market; (7) youth center; (8) culture, hospitality, businesses, youth activism and education; (9) culture and businesses; (10) multifunctional center; (11) culture and/or hospitality; (12) culture, businesses, tourism, hospitality and shops; (13) culture, businesses and shops; (A), (B) and (C) culture, creative industries, education and services. Sources: [99] and City Administration for Construction Land and Investments (<https://ugzins.rs/sr/aktuelno/nastavla-se-uredene-kineske-chetvrti.html>; accessed on 22 November 2022).

Table 1. Policies related to the (re)development of Kineska.

Year	Policy/Document	Contributions	Shortcomings
Uncertainty Stage			
2007	Detailed Regulation Plan for Kineska [91]	Drew attention to poor technical condition of the buildings and stipulated a “complete reconstruction” of the complex; obliged the city to organize a design competition	Disregarded the cultural and historic value of Kineska and categorized the site as a “construction zone”, thus subtly implying demolition
2009	Regeneration proposal of the NGO Pro.Polis [92]	Aimed to protect the complex from demolition; proposed the transformation into a cultural quarter by retinting the existing uses and gradually introducing new venues	Did not propose financial mechanisms

Table 1. Cont.

Year	Policy/Document	Contributions	Shortcomings
Policy Recognition Stage			
2010	Study of the Design of Urban Units and Architectural Design of Buildings [95]	Recognized Kineska as an industrial heritage site and recommended its transformation through the gradual introduction of cultural and leisure programs and venues	The proposal was based on an idea and did not elaborate on the transformation process
2013	Preliminary protection status	The complex was registered as a “spatial, cultural and historic entity”	According to the law, the preliminary protection status would expire after three years
2015	Action Plan of the City of NS for the Implementation of Creative Industries [96]	Recognized Kineska as a creative brownfield and proposed its transformation into an art quarter; drew attention to the urgency of developing cultural participation	Excluded crafts and other temporary uses from the list of future uses; did not propose mechanism for achieving this goal
	Analysis of Selected Brownfield and Grayfield Sites in Novi Sad [86]	Confirmed that Kineska represents the “central zone for the development of cultural and creative industries” within the ECoC candidacy; announced the new DRP	Did not provide any additional details regarding the future uses
2016	Novi Sad—European Capital of Culture 2021 Bid Book [97]	Announced the YCP project, promoted it as a flagship project of the ECoC candidacy and provided cost estimates	Did not provide any additional details regarding the future uses; set an unrealistic regeneration timeline
	Cultural Development Strategy of the City of NS for 2016–2022 [102]	Called for the sustainable use of cultural heritage, identified “insufficiently transparent and participatory decision-making” as one of the key problems in the field of cultural policy and highlighted the need for decentralizing culture	Did not propose any specific participatory instruments and measures
	Assessment of the technical condition of the building stock [98]	Categorized 70% of the buildings as being in poor technical condition and unsafe for use, and recommended their demolition	Did not take into account the preliminary protection status
2017	Detailed Regulation Plan for Kineska [99]	Stipulated the transformation of Kineska into a creative district, providing the regeneration instructions and guidelines	Did not advise on extending the preliminary protection; loosely defined future uses and did not require the design competition; almost all the remarks made during its public presentation have been rejected
	Sustainable Development Strategy of the City of NS [100]	Recognized the development of YCP as the top priority in the field of Sustainable Social Development, Aim: Creative Cultural Policy and Preservation of Cultural Heritage	Did not specify what is meant by “sustainable social development” in the case of Kineska or ways to achieve the aim
2018	Tourism Development Program of the City of NS for 2018–2022 [101]	Characterized the development of YCP as a basis for creating new tourist products and niches	Did not elaborate the future tourist offer of Kineska

6.5. Redevelopment Stage

Regeneration works began in the spring of 2018. The first two phases entailed the demolition of run-down barracks, the provision of necessary infrastructure, and the revitalization of public spaces. In early 2022, Kineska began being promoted as the Novi Sad *Creative District*. The third phase is currently underway. So far, seven buildings have been fully reconstructed using public funds. Some of them are in use (Figure 5): No. 2/3 (A): partially activated, hosting the SKCNS Fabrika, French Institute and the Office for Cooper-

ation with Civil Society of the City of Novi Sad; No. 5 (B): partially activated, with four art studios; No. 7 (C): fully activated by the Liman Cultural Station and the EYC offices. Buildings No. 11, 12 and 13 (D) are fully refurbished, yet vacant, with still undefined future users. Building No. 6 (I) is currently under construction, as the reconstruction was not possible due to the poor technical conditions. The renewal of the rest of the building stock (E–H) has not yet started although the designs are finished, while the construction of three new buildings facing the Danube (private investments) is pending.



Figure 5. Third phase of the redevelopment stage: early 2022 (aerial view) and September 2022 (site photos). Sources: aerial view—Google Earth (accessed on 20 August 2022); site photos—authors.

The regeneration costs were estimated at 16,65 million euros and distributed as follows [97] (Sec. 4, p. 6): reconstruction of buildings (4 million)—City of NS; construction of new buildings (11.15 million)—City of NS and private investors; infrastructure and public spaces (1.5 million)—City of NS, all with the help of external financing sources such as EU funds and state and provincial budgets. The construction of new buildings was planned to be largely financed by the private sector—9.5 million euros or approx. 85% of the costs. This project phase has not yet started, and private investors are still unknown.

7. Policy Challenges and Shortcomings

Prior to deciding to nominate the city for the ECoC title, the local authorities did not see almost any interest in redeveloping Kineska, even though it acted as a valuable creative brownfield and had an impressive regeneration potential. The issues arising from its culture-led regeneration revealed the shortcomings of the relevant planning documents and strategies (Table 1), which were hastily developed and enacted for the purpose of the candidacy and after the city won the competition. They also disclosed a collision between the rigid top-down decision-making tradition and requirements set by the EU. Same as in the case of other winners, the ECoC title came with a series of commitments [103]. Closely monitored and evaluated by a Brussels-based committee, the city administration needed to make its decision-making process more transparent, participatory and democratic [104]. This entailed the implementation of a more bottom-up approach involving civil society and other non-institutional actors, which is still not common in CEE cities. At the same time, however, the city wanted to maintain its long-established practices and prevent any serious disruption of the existing political order, developing a quite absurd combination of participatory instruments and top-down measures, which generated tensions and fueled many heated public debates and defined the planning of this culture-led regeneration project as well as its implementation.

7.1. (Lacking) Citizen Participation in the Planning Process

The DRP for Kineska was made available for public inspection in December 2016, just two weeks after Novi Sad won the ECoC title. During its public presentation the citizens and members of the professional community voiced plenty of remarks and filed a series of complaints regarding the extent of demolition and quite vague explanations of what the reconstruction of buildings to be retained entails. Yet, almost all the proposals and appeals were rejected as ungrounded, and the plan was adopted shortly after as an umbrella document that would guide the regeneration of Kineska.

The number of complaints made has revealed that the DRP was developed without public involvement, i.e., in a rather non-transparent manner. Second, the rejection of proposals without convincing arguments implied that the plan was adoption-ready, as well as that the local officials did not perceive the public as an equal partner “but rather an obstacle to their agenda” [105] (p. 23). This confirmed what has already evolved into a post-socialist practice—participation in the planning process was only simulated through public presentations, representing a mere formality, while all key decisions have already been made elsewhere. Furthermore, the development of the DRP followed the expiration of Kineska’s preliminary protection status (April 2016) that was not renewed or made permanent. This allowed the demolition of several buildings previously categorized as industrial heritage to be approved. The decision of what to preserve and what to tear down was justified by the technical and safety concerns stated in the expert assessment, yet the buildings deemed unsafe were not put out of use. This has cast doubt on the validity of both the assessment and the DRP. In addition, it seemed that the plan had been developed hastily and needed to be adopted as soon as possible without initiating complicated and lengthy public debates, since the EcoC title year was just around the corner. Finally, the timing of the public inspection disclosed that the ratification of the DRP determining the future of Kineska primarily depended on winning the EcoC 2021 title.

7.2. (Unrecognized) Importance of Design Competitions

In contrast to the previous one, the new DRP did not oblige the city officials to organize an architectural and urban design competition for Kineska. This question has also been raised during its public presentation. As previously mentioned, the Bid Book singled out three cultural districts in CEE cities as the transformation role models. However, these culture-led brownfield regeneration projects emerged from the design competitions. In general terms, they represent a platform where new ideas are evolving, new debates are ignited and various issues are resolved [106], producing results “that enjoy a higher level of acceptance by both the general public and the architectural community” [107] (p. 38). In Kineska specifically, a design competition would have served as a creative think tank and also created an opportunity to implement the steps that were skipped during the development of the DRP, particularly those related to defining future uses in a transparent and participative manner. Despite all the benefits of organizing a design competition, the planners decided to exclude it as a requirement. The DRP solely stated that “an internal architectural competition may be organized” for the design of four new buildings [99] (p. 412), but did not require it.

7.3. Conflicts with Temporary Users

Most of the temporary users have moved into the abandoned and derelict buildings within Kineska during the waiting stage based on short-term leases. The infrastructure was in poor condition or lacking, there was no clear vision about the future development of this complex and the investments from the public sector were non-existent until 2012. Moreover, there were no heritage protection, construction, adaptation or maintenance requirements or specific terms of use issued by the relevant institutions. Consequently, the tenants were able to freely transform the leased premises and although their contracts could have ended any time, most of them kept investing in the maintenance and technical upgrading. In this way, they aided in slowing down the degradation process and protecting Kineska from deteriorating completely.

The Action Plan for the Implementation of Creative Industries brought in 2015 was the first policy to officially acknowledge Kineska as a creative brownfield. The Bid Book confirmed this, stating that Kineska “already possesses a rich legacy of cultural assets” [97] (Sec. 6, p. 16). Although these documents indirectly recognized the significance of numerous tenants who jointly activated the forgotten brownfield and produced its authenticity, they omitted to specify the temporary uses to be retained, foreshadowing tensions.

It is quite common for a conflict with temporary users to arise at the beginning of the redevelopment phase. Their activities might be forced out by more profitable functions or those with a faster return on investments, especially when private developers have the upper hand; however, when the public sector is the site owner or holds a stronger position in the decision-making process, temporary users may become recognized and involved in the brownfield regeneration [12,29]. From the aspect of jurisdictions, the case of Kineska falls into the second category, as the city is the owner, yet the local authorities had a rather ambiguous attitude towards most tenants, largely failing to use their capacities.

The official regeneration proposal called for the preservation of existing cultural amenities such as the Factory and artist studios and included their owners in the regeneration process as consultants, yet the conflict primarily arose over “the desirable crafts”. The DRP allocated parts of the mixed-use buildings for artisan workshops (“a carpenter, locksmith, dyer and similar”, p. 413), but it generally provided a vague definition of future uses, which was heavily criticized during the public presentation. Shortly after the adoption of this document, however, the city government issued a statement saying that, of 32 artisan workshops operating in Kineska, none hosted “old” or “artistic” crafts, as well as that barely 10% of temporary uses could be linked to culture [108]. The results of a city-commissioned public survey conducted in the summer of 2017 resulted in favor of this thesis, showing that the majority of the 803 respondents could not associate Kineska with any particular function [109]. Less than 6% of the respondents related it to cultural events. As many as

65% agreed that its transformation into a creative hub would be beneficial, but also believed that the emphasis should be put on the preservation of its architectural identity. The survey provided a much-needed public justification of the regeneration project. Nevertheless, the aforementioned statement signaled that the local authorities did not perceive numerous craftsmen as space pioneers who spontaneously activated this brownfield, nor planned to treat them as stakeholders in the regeneration, revealing the lack of cooperation and understanding between the formal institutions and informal actors.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the ECoC 2021 project, of which the regeneration of Kineska was a part, required the development of various participatory instruments and measures. The notion that “the EU is watching” was of crucial significance in these terms [85] (p. 70). In the early summer of 2017, the ECoC Foundation and the city government thus adopted a platform for establishing a “culture of dialogue” and decided to organize three open discussions called “Divan” (“Conversation”) as a form of a bottom-up approach with the aim of articulating guidelines for the transformation of Kineska in cooperation with citizens and temporary users and reaching a consensus on future actions, as well as preventing misunderstandings, as pointed out in the statement [110]. This indicated that there was a lot of guesstimates about the regeneration project. During the first Divan, one of the artisans who had a workshop in Kineska for 22 years said that he would be willing to re-register his business, if only he knew which crafts were considered desirable [111].

After three Divans held in the summer of 2017, the mayor announced that the consensus has been reached to include all services and crafts, previously excluded by the Action Plan, which contribute to creative production [112], again failing to specify them. The additional result of Divans was the establishment of the YCP Development Council to continue with “the culture of dialogue” [113]. It consisted of representatives of the ECoC Foundation, EYC and four relevant city administrations, as well as two representatives of artists and artisans working in Kineska, yet did not include members of the local or professional community. This council has been given a quite important role, such as to assist in precisely defining the models for reaching the economic sustainability of uses, provide transformation guidelines, and facilitate the cooperation between all stakeholders [113]. After two meetings, it reached an agreement and managed to change the leasing ordinance on the city-owned premises, now stipulating that artisans engaged in old or artistic crafts can rent the space in Kineska by direct negotiation and that all its conscientious tenants would have the same benefit in other locations [114]. Although the majority of temporary users were satisfied with this decision that guaranteed them good lease terms, it did not resolve their future status within Kineska, but merely reiterated the description of desirable crafts. Briefly after, the artisans began receiving eviction notices—most being told that their craft did not fit the creative district concept—and relocated without knowing whether they would be able to return [115]. The thesis that there were no old or artistic crafts in this complex before regeneration has been repeated countless times ever since, becoming the official rhetoric whenever the future uses were discussed. The YCP Development Council made no public statements afterwards and stopped being mentioned in the media, leaving the impression that its sole *raison d’être* was to ease the tensions between the city and former tenants, and disguise the top-down approach. Even if some craftsmen return to Kineska, the question is how much it will cost to rent the space and who will be able to afford it.

8. Sustainability Challenges

Organically developed character is what made Kineska distinctive. The coexistence of different temporary users provided it with diversity and authenticity. This only locally known creative brownfield represented a setting for social and cultural escapism, a shelter from the mainstream, and acted as an inclusive urban space. It had a relatively limited, but regular audience and was both socially and culturally self-reliant, ensuring not high, but steady income to temporary users. However, this *modus operandi* could not ade-

quately protect the architectural heritage, fully utilize the site potentials, or generate large city revenues. From the perspective of the local government, Kineska was a large and attractively located, yet underused complex in poor technical condition and preserving it as a creative brownfield in its original form was both economically and ecologically unsustainable (perhaps socially and culturally as well, given the official statements).

The policies guiding the regeneration of Kineska all stressed the importance of various sustainability aspects. For example, the Bid Book stated that the YCP is expected to become sustainable and “remain the most significant legacy of the city’s ECoC candidacy” [87] (Sec. 1, p. 3). The city’s Sustainable Development Strategy recognized the YCP project as the top priority in the field of Social Development [100]. The Cultural Development Strategy called for “the protection and long-term sustainable use of heritage” [102] (p. 53).

Although they draw attention to different aspects of sustainability, these policies seem to address them partially, superficially, vaguely or even cosmetically (because “sustainability” is a buzzword) and none essentially explained ways to achieve the goals. In order to truly ensure the success and sustainability of a culture-led brownfield regeneration, environmental, economic, social and cultural aspects should be integrated into the decision-making process, simultaneously considered beginning with the planning phase, as well as constantly and iteratively evaluated—not solely to some extent, occasionally and cursorily [57]. In the case of Kineska, only the environmental sustainability is ensured, as the project entails brownfield redevelopment and involves the reduction of energy consumption. The other aspects appear to be insufficiently thought out—either by accident or intentionally, which raises the question of the projects’ social, cultural, and economic impacts.

With the regeneration project, Kineska becomes a product that the city wants to sell to tourists, thus needing to cater to their tastes. Growing intercity competition for foreign visitors through the promotion of cultural assets [116–118], particularly in the case of CEE cities that are relatively new to this race [119], requires more original forms of cultural events and spaces to attract tourist dollars [116]. The ECoC title provided Novi Sad with a much-needed impetus in terms of cultural tourism; now, the task of Kineska from an economic perspective is to develop a brand, generate a tourist bubble and earn the prestigious label of a creative district worth a visit from top international travel guides, which would outlive the title year. However, culture-led regeneration is as much about tourists as it is about the local community and the culture it relies on. Economic sustainability is thus closely tied to the social and cultural impacts of the regeneration project.

When culture is appropriately utilized, it articulates the residents’ needs and ensures their participation in and ‘ownership’ of culture-led regeneration, as well as their identification with the results; alternatively, the locals may feel as if the project has been imposed on them [120]. Public acceptance of the project is therefore crucial to achieving its social sustainability. To reach this goal, the spatial context of the brownfield earmarked for reactivation should be taken into account—not only site-specific attributes, but also various contextual factors [6], especially if they have cultural connotations. In Kineska, this would refer to its former epithet. The ambivalence of the statements coming from city officials and public institutions involved in the regeneration of this complex—valuing its transformation into a creative brownfield during the waiting stage and recognizing its distinctiveness as a brand, but then diminishing the role of craftsmen as space pioneers—leads to the question of a desirable image, i.e., which culture Kineska would rely on. In contrast to the Svilara Cultural Station, as a vacant industrial brownfield that was unencumbered by the issues deriving from temporary users, this complex has a specific layer of aggregated intangible cultural heritage. It is this legacy that poses a challenge to place-making and branding, and the question is how it will be used.

The culture previously present in Kineska was neither commodified nor mass consumed, yet it succeeded in branding this complex as alternative, eclectic and authentic. If the inherited identity and image are used artificially and superficially, Kineska would end up recycling and mainstreaming the alternatives and exploiting it for commercial purposes. This might be labelled as the “just add local culture and stir” [121] (p. 106) approach to

culture-led regeneration. It delivers ostensibly different locally tinted cultural hubs that are appealing to tourists, yet lack a genuine bond with “the local”; they contribute to the standardization and homogenization of cultural offer and experience, and generate somewhat copy-pasted and stereotyped urban spaces that have almost the same charm wherever located [68]. Although sustainable culture-led regeneration by definition “eschews the promotion of a themed version of local identities, it does not altogether ignore the role of place branding”, yet the emphasis should be on revitalizing and nurturing the local “sense of place instead of orientating place images primarily towards tourist consumption” [18] (p. 509). In Kineska, the former temporary users, particularly craftsmen, who gave it a specific charm that the local community already recognizes could have aided in achieving this. The image-making and place branding strategies should draw on the already built-up identity and *genius loci*, and not replicate best practices, supplemented with a drop of “the local” and mainly catering to tourists. Acceptance, appreciation and “appropriation” of the regenerated industrial brownfield by the local community can warrant its usage all year round, contributing to the vitality of daily urban life and bringing about both social and economic sustainability of brownfield regeneration [13]. However, this requires an inclusive and participatory approach and active involvement of the non-institutional actors, as well as the representatives of the local community not only in the planning phase, but throughout the whole project [122–125], which has been largely omitted in the case of Kineska. The rejection of almost all the proposals made during the public presentation of the DRP and the pro forma role of the Council in which there were no representatives of the local community are just two illustrations. Similar to the case of other culture-led regeneration projects, the transformation of Kineska is encountered with a dilemma of what to support more—cultural production or cultural consumption. The former would significantly contribute to the development of new cultural programs, while the latter aims to supplement urban life with various leisure activities, bring in tourists and boost urban economy [126]. Most culture-led regeneration strategies in the CEE region correspond to the prevailing neoliberal orientation of urban policies, favoring economic over other goals [13,46,127], meaning that cultural consumption most often replaces cultural production. The proliferation of commercial uses at the expense of culture-generating ones is a regular incident of culture-led redevelopments of industrial brownfields in post-socialist cities [25]. When large-scale, these projects are costly, thus being more likely to prioritize consumption-oriented uses. By privileging them, culture-led regeneration irreversibly attaches itself to economic benefits (and sustainability aspects) and results in establishing a much stronger relationship between culture and profit than culture and the local society or the city itself [68]. However, the balance might be achieved by shifting the focus from purely place re-imagining, profit-driven and tourism-enhancing objectives, and combining cultural production and consumption in a way that does not instrumentalize or commodify culture, but reinforces and integrates it, developing authentic culture-generating and transmitting “third places” that bind the needs of the local community with tourist demands, and making the project successful and sustainable from both social and economic aspects. The primary orientation of the regeneration of Kineska in these terms will be revealed after future uses and the profile of tenants become known. The documents and official statements indicate that the creative industries would prevail. According to Pratt, creative industries in such projects often briefly “shine and burn”, and then get expelled from the site; the cities are “wasting” them as a “starter fuel for property development” instead of using them to develop “more sustainable economic and cultural agendas” [128] (p. 1043). When there is pressure from the real estate market, as is currently the case in Novi Sad, regenerated brownfields become progressively commercialized, usually pricing out less profitable, often cultural and creative uses and moving them out [26,29,129]. Given the prime location of Kineska, this scenario may not be too far-fetched.

9. Discussion and Conclusions

Culture-led regeneration projects, particularly those involving brownfield activation, are common to almost all ECoC winners—they are either initiated for the bidding purposes or their completion accelerates because of the title [88]. The transformation of Kineska into a creative hub belongs to the first group. The decision of Novi Sad to compete for the ECoC title undoubtedly had a crucial impact on the recognition of this brownfield as an industrial heritage site and gave an impetus to its redevelopment. The failure of the candidacy would presumably extinguish the idea of regeneration, similarly as it did in the case of the Black Meadow cultural cluster in Ostrava, which fell into the category of desired but irrational projects after the city lost the ECoC 2010 competition to Pilsen [72]. Due to the still dominant neoliberal focus of urban policies and a rather strong real estate market pressure, the local authorities would have most likely sold Kineska to private investors for residential and/or commercial projects, completely ignoring its architectural and historic significance.

If evaluated exclusively in general terms, without going into too many details, it may be said that the culture-led regeneration of Kineska will represent an accomplishment. The local authorities have drawn attention to the need for decentralizing culture [96,102], and the project will contribute to reaching these goals while also providing residents of one of the largest residential districts in Novi Sad with a direct access to various cultural venues. Furthermore, the project will improve the city's cultural infrastructure, strengthen the creative industries, enrich the city's tourist offer and boost its tourist appeal, thus reinvigorating the local economy. Finally, it will revive a large and attractively located industrial brownfield that would otherwise deteriorate, achieving more efficient land use. As a consequence, it may be argued that the regeneration of Kineska was well-designed and supported by a careful consideration of various sustainability aspects, as well as that the Creative District will remain a proud legacy of the ECoC title, contributing to sustainable urban development.

On the other hand, it is the “details” that raise concerns. Due to lagging behind the West in the economic restructuring, CEE cities have a much shorter tradition of brownfield redevelopment projects, particularly those that utilize culture as a tool. As the case study has demonstrated, in these circumstances, culture-led brownfield regeneration represents a much more complex process than initially perceived, highlighting several exceptionally important, but often overlooked factors. First, the planning of such projects takes time, their duration tends to be longer than in the case of greenfield construction, and the number of stakeholders frequently multiplies during the regeneration process [57]. The unrealistic deadline for the transformation of Kineska stated in the Bid Book and the speed with which certain documents were produced and enacted indicate that these aspects have not been considered seriously enough. Second, creative brownfields generate good preconditions for triggering and accelerating the culture-led regeneration project, acting as its hard infrastructure. However, as the case study has portrayed, even good preconditions may not be adequately utilized if there are barriers crafted by the soft factors, primarily insufficient cooperation between institutional and non-institutional actors, rigid decision-making process, lack of meaningful public participation, blurry policies, and economic pressures. Because of these factors, the regeneration project has failed to fully utilize the potential of Kineska as a creative brownfield and capitalize on its intangible authenticity, exploiting the narratives rather than the substance. The institutional actors refused to recognize the majority of temporary uses as distinguished regenerators—it may be that they did not fit in the place-branding concepts or that their activities were not seen as profit-generating. They were involved only in the redevelopment planning, but apparently for cosmetic reasons, to validate that their participation has been enabled (their involvement in the Council was to negotiate the relocation terms). The same applies to the engagement of the local community. This means that the rhetoric of “democratic decision-making” was rather empty and that the participatory instruments were a mere formality, introduced for external (EU) monitoring purposes only and simulating a bottom-up approach. However,

the redevelopment of Kineska is not an isolated case in terms of such treatment of temporary users. As Bosák et al. pointed out [13] (p. 621), their intrinsic nature is often in sharp contrast with what the public administration in post-socialist cities expects from culture-led regeneration, thus their potential is rarely utilized.

The case study has also disclosed that policies guiding culture-led regeneration of industrial brownfield sites, which are developed in haste, not accompanied by adequate outcome assessments and imbued with blurriness (especially in terms of defining future uses) lead to uncertainty about the sustainability of the project. According to Shaw and Porter [130], policy-makers rarely show understanding of the social, cultural, economic, political and environmental complexities of urban regeneration tied to the local context, often deciding to implement “off-the-shelf” strategies “as though they have universal application” (p. 1). It appears that policies related to the redevelopment of Kineska feature blurriness to disguise some formulaic copy-pasted solutions and the absence of preceding in-depth analyses of local specificities, giving the impression that these complexities have not been taken into account. In addition, this blurriness veils a lack of long-term vision (revealed by the conceptual inconsistencies—from “Art Quarter”, over “Youth Creative Polis” to “Creative District”). Such blurriness may also conceal a potential conflict of private and public interests, i.e., profit-driven and consumption-based regeneration. Since the further implementation of the DRP is left to market conditions, mostly relying on private cultural investments that are quite rare in Serbia, this may drive the regeneration of Kineska in this direction. As the ECoC title year in Novi Sad is progressing, it is becoming increasingly apparent that, similar to other CEE such as Ostrava, for example, the support of culture and creative industries presents a “pragmatic pro-growth effort motivated by external factors (ECoC)” rather than by the government’s idealistic endeavor to buttress culture and its true concern for the cultural needs of the local community [72] (p. 110). It is still not known precisely what uses Kineska would host and what culture or whose culture would reside in it; yet, given the post-socialist neoliberal reality as well as the experience of many other CEE cities that utilized culture as a redevelopment tool [25,48,79,127], these decisions are likely to be economic, calling into question both the social and cultural sustainability of the project.

The case study presented in this paper has pointed out the weaknesses of blurry and hastily developed policies guiding the culture-led regeneration of brownfields that feature temporary uses. It has also shown that a simulated bottom-up approach to decision-making, which essentially has a rigid top-down character, may have a significant impact on the regeneration project and jeopardize its sustainability, simultaneously reinforcing the neoliberal agenda. Such a disguised approach diminishes the role of informal actors who, as noted by Pixová [45], already have an inferior societal position in post-socialist environment, and additionally discourages the involvement of the public in the regeneration process, which is already insufficient in the CEE region. There is a set of recommendations for institutional actors that may be drawn from the research, which emphasize the importance of a systematic approach to the culture-based redevelopment of informally activated brownfields in CEE cities and may aid in achieving the overall sustainability of the redevelopment project. These recommendations are as follows: (1) taking necessary time to tailor a regeneration project that fully relies on the local context, unequivocally delineates the public interest, balances social and economic goals, and leave no room for ambiguities, guesstimates and misinterpretations; (2) exploring the possibility of adaptive reuse and partial redevelopment (upgrades that are deemed necessary); as such, projects are less expensive and reduce the pressure on users to generate revenue, thus supporting creative activities with a social overlap [13]; (3) consulting the examples of good practice, but not utilizing them as recipes or strict guidelines since each brownfield is distinctive, structured and determined by a specific historic, socio-cultural and spatial context; (4) enabling meaningful engagement of non-institutional actors and facilitating cross-sector collaboration from the planning phase throughout the project duration; (5) providing support to temporary users, acknowledging their prior efforts and actively involving them in the regeneration process; (6) ensuring

that the decision-making process is transparent and democratic; (7) enabling wise use of local social and cultural assets and responding to the social and cultural needs of the local community; (8) carefully selecting new uses and moving beyond a pure focus on tourism consumption to incorporate a blend of cultural production and consumption activities geared towards and reflective of the local community and local cultural producers [18]; (9) avoiding artificial use of the inherited site image; (10) clearly defining the role of the private sector in the regeneration process; (11) ensuring effective monitoring of the regeneration and constant evaluation of its progress. The aim is to properly draw on the potential of a spontaneously reactivated brownfield site and create an authentic culture- and creativity-generating and transmitting hub rooted in the local context, equally attractive to locals and tourists, which can thus concurrently enhance the quality of urban life, boost tourism, reinforce the local cultural and creative economy, and contribute to city branding. As for Kineska, although its regeneration is not yet complete, the Lonely Planet recently listed it among the top places to visit in Novi Sad [131]. The post-redevelopment stage will reveal whether the “new Kineska” will gain public acceptance and achieve sustainability.

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