URBAN STRUCTURE OF THE OLD TOWN PODGORICA – STARA VAROŠ: DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION

*Eski Şehir Podgorica Kentsel Yapısı - Stara Varoš: Kalkınma ve
Dönüşüm*

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Near East Historical Review

10/2, April - Nisan 2020
e-ISSN: 2717-6363 (Online)
www.nehrreview.com

Article Type - Makale Türü : Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

Received Date - Geliş Tarihi : 07.01.2020

Accepted Date - Kabul Tarihi : 25.02.2020

Pages - Sayfa : 227-234

doi : <http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/nehrrreview.42866>

Citation - Atıf : Gordana Rovčanin, “Urban Structure of The Old Town Podgorica – Stara Varoš: Development And Transformation”, *Near East Historical Review*, 10/2, April 2020, pp. 227-234

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is on the urban structure of the old town of Podgorica, located in the Republic of Montenegro. The old town of Podgorica was mostly built during the Ottoman rule from the 15th to the 19th century. Stara Varoš is a fortified medieval urban structure that had the concept of the oriental-Balkan urban and architectural structure. The structure of streets in Stara Varoš was unplanned and dispersed with irregular shaped squares. The old town developed spontaneously, without urban planning until the end of the 19th century and had a big transformation through centuries. The urban plans of Podgorica from the 20th century did not adequately treat the inherited urban matrix until the last decade. Stara Varoš today represents one city block of the modern city Podgorica with an inner thick urban structure, threatened by the constant city expansion.

Keywords: development, old town, Stara Varoš, transformation, urban structure, Podgorica, Montenegro

Öz

Bu makalenin odak noktası, Karadağ Cumhuriyeti'nde bulunan eski Podgorica kentinin kentsel yapısıdır. Eski Podgorica, 15. Yüzyıldan 19. Yüzyıla geçen Osmanlı hakimiyeti boyunca inşa edilmiştir. Stara Varoš, oryantal-Balkan kentsel ve mimari yapı kavramına sahiptir. Stara Varoš'taki sokakların yapısı planlanmamıştı ve düzensiz şekilli karelerle dağılmıştı. Eski şehir, 19. yüzyılın sonuna kadar kentsel planlama olmadan kendiliğinden gelişti ve yüzyıllar boyunca büyük bir dönüşüm geçirdi. Podgorica'nın 20. yüzyıldan kalma kentsel planları, miras alınan kentsel matrisi son on yıla kadar yeterince işlenmedi. Stara Varoš bugün, sürekli şehir genişlemesi ile tehdit edilen, iç kalın kentsel yapıya sahip modern şehir Podgorica'nın bir şehir bloğunu temsil ediyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: gelişme, eskişehir, Stara Varoš, dönüşüm, kentsel yapı, Podgorica, Karadağ

Introduction

The Ottomans left a rich architectural and urban heritage on the territory of the Balkan Peninsula during their rule. Except the territories they ruled, the impact of the Ottoman Empire could also be recognized in the wider environment. The topic of this presentation is the urban structure of the old town of Podgorica, located in the Republic of Montenegro. The old town of Podgorica was mostly built during the Ottoman rule in the territory of Montenegro from the 15th to the 19th century. The old town Stara Varoš is a fortified medieval urban structure. The main urban development of the historic urban structure of Podgorica was in the Ottoman period of rule in Montenegro (1474-1878). Ottomans began to build a fort in 1474 at the mouth of Ribnica and Morača rivers. The settlement was surrounded by a rampart with towers and with suburb outside the fortified protected area. The area where Stara Varoš began in the Middle Ages was predisposed due to natural, geomorphological and historical values.¹ The suitable climate, the proximity of the Skadar Lake and the Adriatic Sea, the transport roads and a good strategic position have contributed to the development of settlement in this area. Since the Middle Ages, the settlement is called Podgorica, and since the end of the 19th century, it is called by the name Stara Varoš.

Development of Stara Varoš – The Construction of Fortress and Settlement

Today there are some preserved segments from the Ottoman period - the remains of a triangle-shaped military fortress named Depedogen, at the mouth of two rivers.² The town fortress was a strong fortification facility built during the transition from cold weapons to firearms. It had a polygonal base, but mostly covered a triangular area between the banks of two rivers. The fortress was rebuilt several times, expanded and reinforced in part towards the shores, while its southeastern rampart and tower are still preserved today. The walls of the ramparts and the towers on the mainland were thicker than those near the rivers, while the walls of the towers next to the rivers were thickened in certain sections because of the enemy attack. The inner space of the fort was 75 m in direction east-west and 45 m in direction north-south. The inner space was filled with barracks and small houses used for fortification purposes.³

A triangle-shaped military fortress

Situation plan of the fortress

¹ Vasilije Knežević, "Stara Varoš u Podgorici – urbanistički aspekt revitalizacije i zaštite ambijenta", *Tradicionalna arhitektura Crne Gore*, monograph, Univerzitet Crne Gore, Građevinski fakultet, Podgorica 2005, p.142.

² Branislav Đurđev, "Depedogen-Podgorica", *Istorijski zapisi*, Year XV, Book XIX, Organ istorijskog instituta i istorijskog društva NR Crne Gore, Titograd 1962, pp. 60-61.

³ Pavle Mijović, *Od Dogleje do Podgorice*, Centralna narodna biblioteka Republike Crne Gore "Đurđe Crnojević", Cetinje 1998, pp. 72-76.

Section of the fortress

View of the south tower with walls

View of the southeast tower with walls

View of the north tower with walls

Fig. 1 Military fortress Depedogen in Podgorica (Built 1474-1478)

The urban structure of Stara Varoš had the concept of the oriental-Balkan urban and architectural structure, developed spontaneously, without urban planning until the end of the 19th century. It is built in oriental style without a plan, with a grouping of houses without any order. The Ottomans built an oriental-type fortress with craft-trade and administrative functions. The matrix of streets in Stara Varoš was unplanned and dispersed with irregular shaped squares. Along the streets were the houses and traditional trades. In the central part of the settlement was a square, and it was divided into irregular streets *sokaks* and settlement areas *mahalas*. The town occupied 3-4 km² of space and was divided into two parts: *Varoš* and *Miçen*, which divided into *mahalas*. Mahalas in both parts was up to 25. Varoš covered the western part along the Morača river and Miçen covered the eastern part out of the town walls formed in the 18th century. Varoš is older than Miçen, the first was inhabited and built.

Fig. 2 Urban structure of Stara Varoš

During the Ottoman rule, Stara Varoš was an economic center. Trade and crafts were the most developed. The settlement was organized according to the principles of the East-Mediterranean culture, with a bazaar - *çarşı* in the middle, where small trade and craft shops were located. Around the *çarşı* were resident areas - mahalas. The settlement built outside the fortress, and surrounded by a town wall, was irregularly shaped settlement, with narrow meandering streets. This settlement had no defensive walls, but it had stone houses - towers, enclosed by high walls of stone, which served to defend the town and fortress. In the Stara Varoš were no public buildings but only several hundred small residential houses built along curving and narrow streets. From this period, there are no mapping documents on settlement planning.

Fig. 3 Bazaar (Çarşı) and Mahalas (Mahalle) in Stara Varoš

Transformation of Stara Varoš in 19th and 20th century

In the old Montenegrin state, Podgorica was the only city with a developed civil status, developed communications and roads. By the 20th century, Stara Varoš was the most well-preserved urban structure of the Ottoman feudal in Montenegro. After the Berlin Congress in 1878 was the end of the Ottoman period and the town of Podgorica was united with Montenegro. After that period, began a new growth of incoming residential population and constant tendency in the expansion of Podgorica. At the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, the city expanded out of the historic frames. The social and economic development of the city was followed by migration of the population when started a more intensive process of expansion and building of the city. With the development of the city, in the 20th century, Podgorica experienced changes in functions that influenced the change of the historic structure - Stara Varoš. The first urban plan of Podgorica, after the built Stara Varoš, was the urban plan of New town in 1879, which included the free space on the right bank of the river Ribnica. The plan had functional character, a geometric orthogonal raster.

In the Second World War, there was a complete turning point in the development of Podgorica. In the period after World War II, Podgorica was a city with rapid expansion, that crossed the boundary of the planned territorial limits. More attention was on the new settlements and their urbanization, but not to the integration and activation of the old town - Stara Varoš. The several urban plans of Podgorica that were made in the second half of the 20th century, had a geometric orthogonal grid.⁴ The plans did not adequately treat the inherited urban matrix of Stara Varoš.⁵

⁴ The plans from the second half of 20th century were: unsuccessful General Plan 1950, General Plan 1957, General Urban Plan 1964, General Urban Plan 1974 and General Urban Plan 1990.

⁵ Igbala Šabović-Kerović, "Architectural heritage conservation strategy of Old Varoš (Podgorica)/ Protect or not? Civilization or occupation? Applying knowledge in practice or not?", *Almanah*, Udruženje "Almanah", Podgorica 2014, pp. 144-145.

Toward the south, two straight axes have been extended, breaking the whole historic urban structure. The concept of the plan from 1957 proposes the demolition of older buildings, mostly built before the Second World War. This was primarily concerned with the Stara Varoš, where 10 000 inhabitants of the total population of 14 000 inhabitants had to stay without a home.⁶ In the place of old houses, it was proposed to build new multifunctional buildings, without buildings of political and social life. Part of the plan that relates to the Stara Varoš proposes the development of industry in this area. The plan was not adapted to the natural course of the Morača river, and the entire Stara Varoš building fund, except the Depedogen Fortress, remained out of the planned regulation.

Fig. 4 Urban transformation of Stara Varoš in 20th century

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Finally, in the plan from 1974, broken segments of Stara Varoš along the Morača river are protected. Conservation with the socio-cultural aim is proposed for recognized cultural monuments and archaeological research, for the purpose of reconstruction of authentic urban structures and facilities. The first detailed urban plan of Stara Varoš was created in 1990, which for the first time shows the space of Stara Varoš in more detail.⁷ The plan primarily concerned the valorization of the architectural heritage. The connection of the Stara Varoš and the new parts of Podgorica was implemented exclusively for functional reasons, by extending the primary and connecting the secondary city streets. In this way, the original historic structure of Stara Varoš was ruined with the possibility of integration only certain segments of urban structure. The archaeological research of Stara Varoš was finished out in 1963.⁸ There were the remains of: urban agglomeration from the 16th to the 19th century, one-fifth part of the citadel, one of the six towers protecting the ramparts, the bridge on the Ribnica, the Clock Tower and two mosques.⁹

⁶ Zdravko Ivanović, *Urbano-geografske promjene u razvitku Titograda*, Skupština opštine Titograd, Odjeljenje za komunalne poslove i urbanizam, Titograd 1974, p. 83.

⁷ This plan was followed by the first Urban project of Stara Varoš in 1994.

⁸ The research was carried out by the Belgrade Archeological Institute. The works were in progress from September 23 to November 2, 1963. All architectural drawings were made by Mirko Kovačević, and photographs by Pavle Mijović and Mirko Kovačević.

⁹ Pavle Mijović, *Od Dokleje do Podgorice*, Centralna narodna biblioteka Republike Crne Gore "Đurđe Crnojević", Cetinje 1998, pp. 71-72.

Fig. 5 Preserved urban structure and architectural heritage in Stara Varoš

Conclusion

The old town Podgorica - Stara Varoš had big transformations in the 20th century, which were the result of the development and expansion of the city of Podgorica, especially after World War II. Many of the functions from the old town Stara Varoš had disappeared and moved to new parts of the city. The orthogonal geometric matrix of the new city has disturbed the urban structure of Stara Varoš. This had the effect of decaying and ruining the old town. Stara Varoš today represents one city block of the modern city Podgorica with an inner thick urban structure, endangered by the recent decay and city expansion. Possibilities of integrating historic structure Stara Varoš into the urban matrix of the city Podgorica could be:

- Spatial and functional connection of new and old urban structure;
- Regeneration of historical agglomerations and adaptation of old structures to contemporary city functions;
- Defining the role and importance of the historic structure in the modern city, through the recognition of cultural significance, historic significance and spatial and ambient values.

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- Fig. 1 Mijović, Pavle, 1998, pp. 74-93.
- Fig. 2 From General Urban Plan of Titograd, 1990.
- Fig. 3 and 4 From Museums and Galleries of Podgorica
- Fig. 5 Author Rovčanin G. and orthophoto map