

**THE SERIAL VISION METHOD IN VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE RESEARCH
OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF SVETI STEFAN**

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Горан Копривица*

АПСТРАКТ

Некадашње средњовековно утврђење и рибарско село острво Свети Стефан у Црној Гори је последњих седамдесет година служило као луксузни „град хотел“. Иако је проглашено културним наслеђем од националног значаја 1960. године, његов дугорочни најам страном закупцу, модификације вернакуларног окружења, недостатак институционалног учешћа и новије управљачке праксе указују на неадекватан третман. Ова студија нуди поглед на Свети Стефан где његове културне и историјске вредности, интегрисане у сложени вернакуларни амбијент, надмашују његов економски значај. Користећи методу Серијског Сагледавања Простора, аутор документује просторно стање изабране путање кроз низ слика, наглашавајући вернакуларни карактер културног станишта. Метод је интегративан (пружа историјски преглед који допуњује слободоручне цртеже), практичан (истиче проблеме који угрожавају аутентичност острва), едукативан (показује потенцијал као алат за учење за студенте архитектуре) и економичан (захтева једноставну опрему и скромна финансијска средства). Посматрање путање 1-1 открила је највеће модификације вернакуларног амбијента у погледу прекомерног озелењавања, недовољног одржавања и генералне комерцијализације. Серијско сагледавање Светог Стефана служи као референца за побољшање постојећег стања културног наслеђа, нудећи привремену алтернативу ограничењу приступа острву.

Кључне речи: просторна анализа; вернакуларна архитектура Светог Стефана; културно наслеђе; Метода Серијског Сагледавања Простора

ABSTRACT

Formerly a medieval fortification and a fishing village, the island of Sveti Stefan in Montenegro has functioned as a luxury “town hotel” for the past seventy years. Although declared a cultural heritage of national importance in 1960, its long-term lease to a foreign tenant, modifications to the vernacular environment, insufficient institutional involvement, and recent management practices indicate improper treatment. This study offers a view of Sveti Stefan in which its cultural and historical values, integrated into a complex vernacular ambiance, outweigh its economic importance. Using the Serial Vision Method, the author documents the spatial condition of a chosen path through a sequence of images, emphasizing the vernacular character of the cultural habitat. The method is integrative (providing a historical overview that complements the freehand drawings), practical (highlighting the problems that threaten the island’s authenticity), educational (showing potential as a learning tool for architectural students), and economical (requiring only basic equipment and modest financial resources). Observation of the delineated path 1–1 revealed the most significant modifications of the vernacular environment in terms of excessive greening, insufficient maintenance, and general commercialization. The Serial Vision of Sveti Stefan serves as a reference for improving the current state of the cultural heritage, offering a temporary alternative to the island’s restricted access.

Keywords: spatial analysis; vernacular architecture of Sveti Stefan; cultural heritage; Serial Vision Method

1. INTRODUCTION

The challenging integration of vernacular architecture into contemporary socioeconomic processes has led to functional repurposing as a popular preservation method. However, successful adaptation to the newly assigned function often entails the sacrifice or commercialization of some authentic features. Recognizing such a problem during the radical transformation of the traditional Sveti Stefan village into a luxury hotel in the 1950s, the project’s lead architects emphasized the necessity of preserving the island’s original vernacular ambiance (Z., Đ. 1963, 42), making it the most significant offering to visitors. Nevertheless, the long operational duration

* Goran Koprivica, School of Art and Design, Wuhan University of Technology, Wuhan 430070, China, gorangao@qq.com; gorangao@whut.edu.cn
ORCID 0009-0009-9076-2159

and changing political and social environments have created unfavorable circumstances that threaten the heritage status of Sveti Stefan and its vernacular authenticity.¹

In 2007, the Montenegrin government leased Sveti Stefan to the companies Adriatic Properties, the official tenant, and Aman Resorts, responsible for hotel management (Đurašević, 2015, 19).² The request for complete privacy in managing the Sveti Stefan town hotel contradicts the Law on the Protection of Cultural Property of Montenegro, allowing access only to the hotel guests and thus disregarding the local community, the islander's descendants, and people of Montenegro in general, who all have the right to enjoy the cultural heritage.³ Even though the Administration for the Protection of Cultural Property of Montenegro had the obligation to monitor the reconstruction and later exploitation of the cultural monument (Vujović, 2009, 198-199), without the necessary governmental support, the tenant successfully avoided cooperating (Kisic et al., 2024, 17).⁴

The general dissatisfaction with the management that generated only a marginal profit and disallowed any visiting tours, reinforced by the successive replacement of official tenants and the fact that the hotel found its way onto the stock exchange in 2019, culminated in 2021 when protesting locals breached the fences of the hotel's private beach (Koprivica, 2025, 15). The incident prompted the tenant to close the hotel and file a lawsuit against the Montenegrin government (Kisic et al., 2024, 12). At the initiative of the local community, experts from the Europa Nostra organization, in partnership with the European Investment Bank Institute, included Sveti Stefan among the seven most endangered cultural sites in Europe in 2023.⁵ The lessee recently announced plans to reopen the hotel in summer 2026. This research addresses the issue of restricted access to cultural heritage by reconstructing the on-site experience through a series of images that emulate the three-dimensional space.

Developed under insular conditions, the organic pattern of Sveti Stefan's vernacular architecture defies the rules of planned design. The difficulty in finding criteria and parameters for observation analysis demanded a more holistic approach in the research. The author uses the Serial Vision Method, along with a historical and contextual overview, to document the spatial condition of a part of the island, emphasizing the vernacular

quality of its ambiance and highlighting the observed issues that compromise its authenticity. Serving as a place of business for over seventy years, Sveti Stefan represented a significant source of wealth and was a magnet for other tourist destinations in Montenegro (Koprivica, 2025, 19). Consequently, its overlooked cultural and historical significance has led to a lack of research on the topic. The scarce literature on Sveti Stefan – indirectly mentioned in studies on the Paštrovići tribe and their living areas (Vukmanović, 1960; Luketić, 1966; Božić, 1979, 105-149; Kovačević, 2024), evaluated as a tourist destination (V. Mitrović, 2007; Duletić, 2010; V. Mitrović, 2014), promoted as a tourist offer (Martinović, 1964; Edwards, 1974), or studied for its unusual transformation from folk architecture to object of tourism (Vujović, 2009; S. Mitrović, 2014) – tends to avoid its vernacular character. Considering the growing importance of islands in an increasingly homogenous world (Baldacchino, 2007, 1), and the underrated value of vernacular architecture as part of cultural heritage, the research offers a new perspective on Sveti Stefan, presenting it as a complex system of spatial experiences that has evolved through time, and is vulnerable to change.

2. METHODOLOGY

The choice of research method had to respond to the present conditions and research limitations: restricted island access and the need for efficiency; greenery as a physical obstacle; challenges in recording narrow spaces; the island's cultural significance; and financial constraints. Condition analysis reveals the current state and repair needs, but it insufficiently addresses the evolution of vernacular architecture by overlooking intangible cultural values. Although photogrammetry is useful for rendering accurate circumstances, it appears time-consuming and impractical for dealing with narrow, hard-to-reach spaces. The vernacular architecture of Sveti Stefan, developed on the island, represents a uniquely intricate case, which is difficult to comprehend through the generalizing tendencies of comparative analysis. GIS mapping provides dynamic layering of maps. However, the difficulty in reading maps of vernacular ambiance, due to their complexity and randomness, calls for a method preferably independent of the plan. Popularized by Gordon Cullen, the leading promoter of "Townscape," the Serial Vision Method connects the observer with the observed on a deeper emotional level, bridging the gap between the existing and the experienced (Cullen, 1971, 17; Whistler, Reed, 1994, 17). Proposing pastiche environments by embracing historic and modern, vernacular and classic to achieve a complex visual delight and a playful living environment (Engler, 2016, 86), Townscape methods apply to human-made environments closely related to natural landscapes, thus finding a new application in vernacular architecture research. The intricate configuration of the Sveti Stefan island settlement contains many of the townscape qualities described in Cullen's masterpiece (Cullen, 1971). The Serial Vision of Sveti Stefan displays a progression of images along a chosen path, placing the vernacular buildings inside a context.

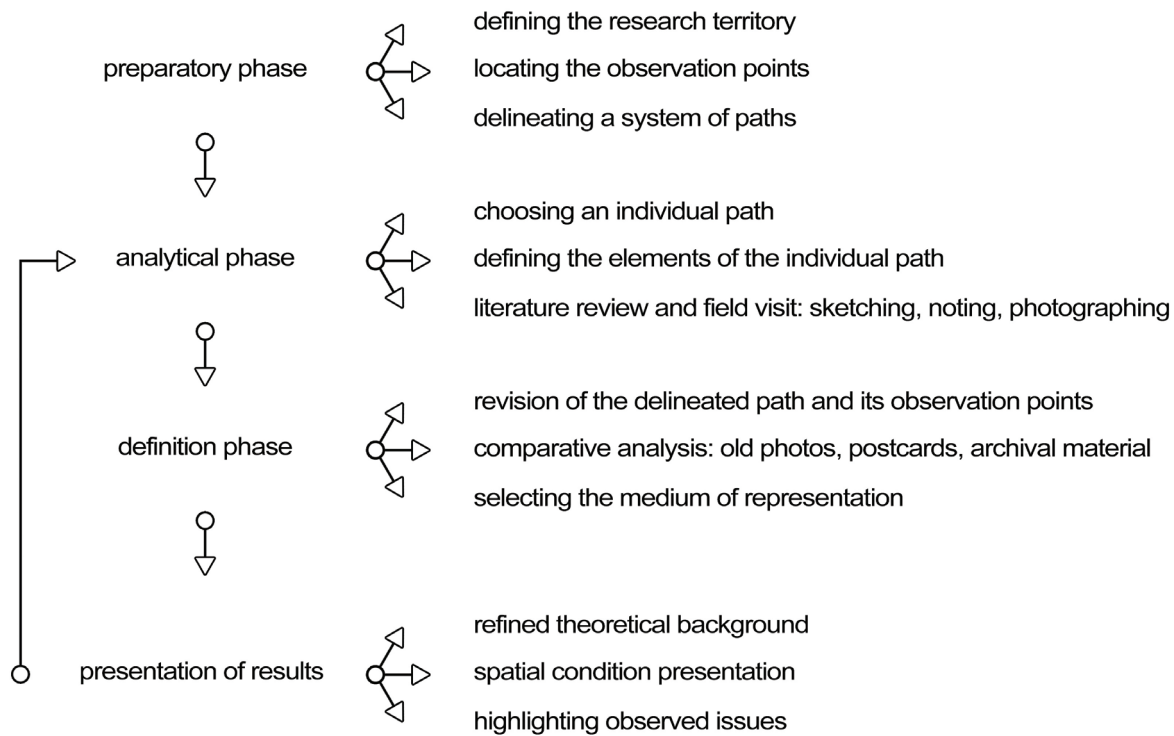
1 In 1960, Sveti Stefan received the status of cultural monument, confirmed in 2017, by declaring the island a cultural asset of national importance (Službeni List CG, 39/2023).

2 The forty-two-year lease of Sveti Stefan expires in 2049.

3 The 2017 Decision (Rješenje) clearly states that activities that affect the integrity of the cultural property and its protected environment must accord with the Law on the Protection of Cultural Property of Montenegro (Službeni List CG, 67/2017). Furthermore, it declares that "an immovable cultural asset in state ownership cannot be alienated" (Službeni List CG, 49/2010).

4 The protective measures of the 2017 Decision request that the activity bearers, whether national or local institutions, obtain conservation conditions from the Administration for the Protection of Cultural Property before handling any activities affecting the cultural property (Službeni List CG, 67/2017).

5 In the report that followed, they addressed several issues directly regarding Sveti Stefan: the difficulty of entering the island, the illegal construction of terraces on the island, the concern for the buildings' insufficiently ventilated interior, and the lack of public access to heritage, beaches, and culture (Kisic et al., 2024).



Сл. 1. Четири корака методолошког процеса (Извор: Аутор) / Fig.1 The four steps of the methodological process (Source: Author)

The methodological process consists of four phases (Fig. 1). The preparatory phase starts with the physical definition of the researched area. The analysis of the vernacular settlement design pattern and its environment precedes the division of the entire territory into observation points with overlapping visual impacts. The disposition and number of points first appear as a suggestion, later refined and corrected through field visits and additional data collection. The observation points group into a system of paths that follow physical routes with defined start and finish positions to indicate the observation direction. Since some observation points of different paths share visual materials, regrouping paths into a different system to cover the researched area remains a possibility. The analytical phase focuses on one of the delineated paths. A literature review offers background information on the observed sequence, introducing its historical and cultural elements. The field research concentrates on the physical aspects by photographing the site, making quick sketches, and taking observation notes. Physical inaccessibility and visual obstacles make quick sketching an effective substitute for taking clear photographs. Observation notes, however subjective, record experiential impressions on-site that are impossible to capture on camera and are valuable later for recalling memories of places. In the definition phase, the Serial Vision finally takes shape, first revising the number and location of scenes to describe the chosen path, in accordance with the collected data. Archival visual materials, such as old photos and postcards, help assess changes in the vernacular environment over time. The decision on the medium of representation can vary depending on the subject and the research goal, from computational to freehand renderings. In the final step of the methodological process, the presentation of the results refines the theoretical background, presents the

spatial condition illustrated through a series of images, and highlights the observed problems and challenges that threaten the vernacular ambiance of the island.

3. RESULTS

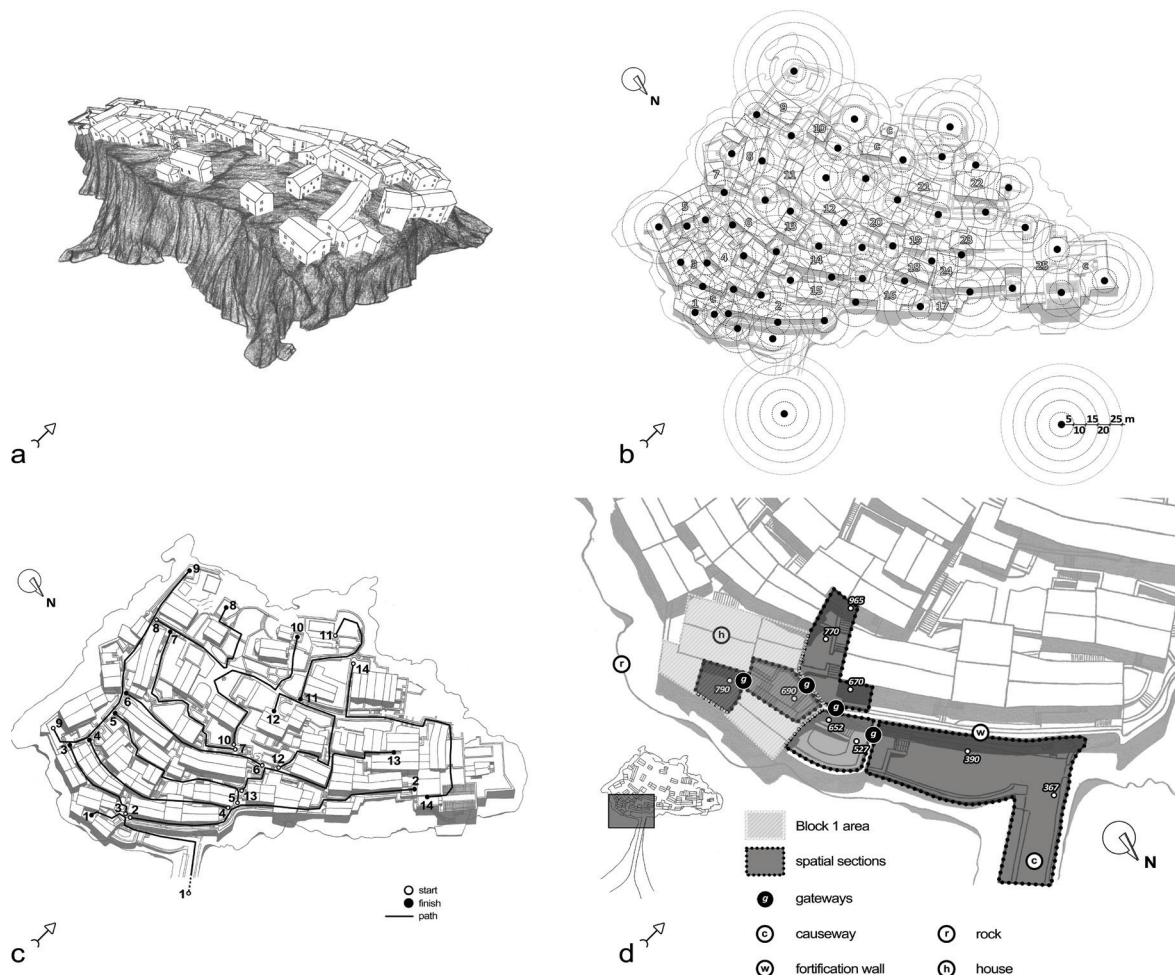
The clear definition of the island's physicality simplified the task of finding observation points to cover the island's entire territory (Fig. 2a), starting with the obvious – defined enclosures, well-known sights and characteristic elements, corner spaces, etc. – and filling in the remaining gaps (Fig. 2b).⁶ The traced paths connect the observation points into a system, practical in the field research (Fig. 2c).

This paper observes the delineated path 1-1, covering its segments and elements (Fig. 2d). The four gateways and elevation differences define five spatial sections, indicating the need for at least five observation points to cover the route. With greenery often concealing architectural features, quick sketching and observational notes proved useful in field research, providing additional information about specific elements observed on site. Gathering all the data clarified the need for revision, modifying the location of observation points and adding new ones, bringing the total to eight (Fig. 3).

Archival materials (old photos, postcards) assisted with the separation of the island's vernacular character from its general context (Fig. 4).⁷ The comparison of images taken at different

⁶ Collected from the Administration for the Protection of Cultural Property of Montenegro, the island's dimensional analysis maps served as a valuable source of information (M. Kovačević, 1987).

⁷ Archival materials come from various sources: Administration for the Protection of Cultural Property of Montenegro, State Archives of Montenegro, National Library of Budva, National Library of Montenegro, Museums and galleries of Budva, tourist guides (Martinović, 1964; Edwards, 1974), etc.

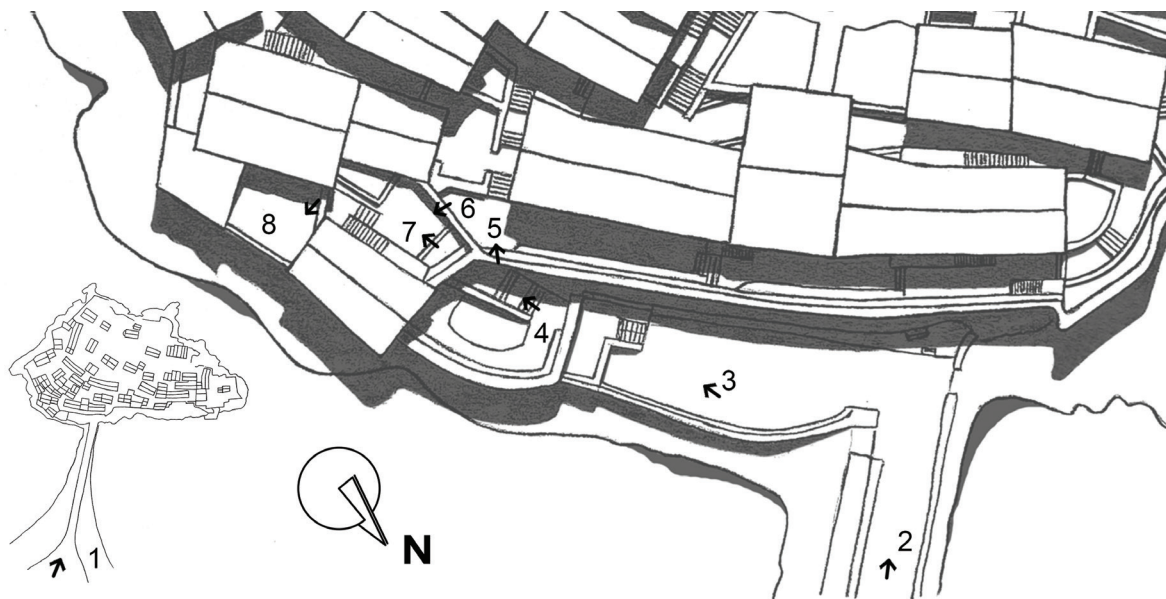


Сл. 2. Поједностављени модел кућа на острву постављених на природној стени (а); Предлог тачака посматрања и њихових визуелних утицаја (б); Предлог путања (с); Анализа дефинисане путање 1-1 (д) (Извор: Аутор) / Fig. 2 A simplified model of the island's houses on the natural rock (a); Suggestion for observation points and their visual impacts (b); Suggestion for paths (c); Analysis of the delineated path 1-1 (d) (Source: Author)

times shed light on the modification of the ambience in the past hundred years, most notable in the details of openings, green cover, and the building's transformation. The choice of rendering medium depended on its ability to demonstrate subtle variations of natural and vernacular forms in their intrinsic

relationship, evoking direct visual-tactile experience. The flexibility in capturing the vernacular ambience (emphasizing the focus of attention, assigning the appropriate level of detail to different elements, rendering contrasting feelings of surroundings through light and shadow, etc.) and excluding the

Сл. 3. Карта одабране путање: бројеви означавају распоред сцена, док стрелице указују на смер посматрања (Извор: Аутор) / Fig. 3 A map of the chosen path: the numbers show the disposition of scenes, whereas the arrows indicate the direction of observation (Source: Author)





Сл. 4. Пример архивске грађе (Разни извори) / Fig. 4 A sample of the archival material (Various sources)

unnecessary and cluttering elements made freehand drawing an appropriate choice for the Serial Vision representation of Sveti Stefan. The following section presents background information on the chosen sequence and documents its spatial condition.

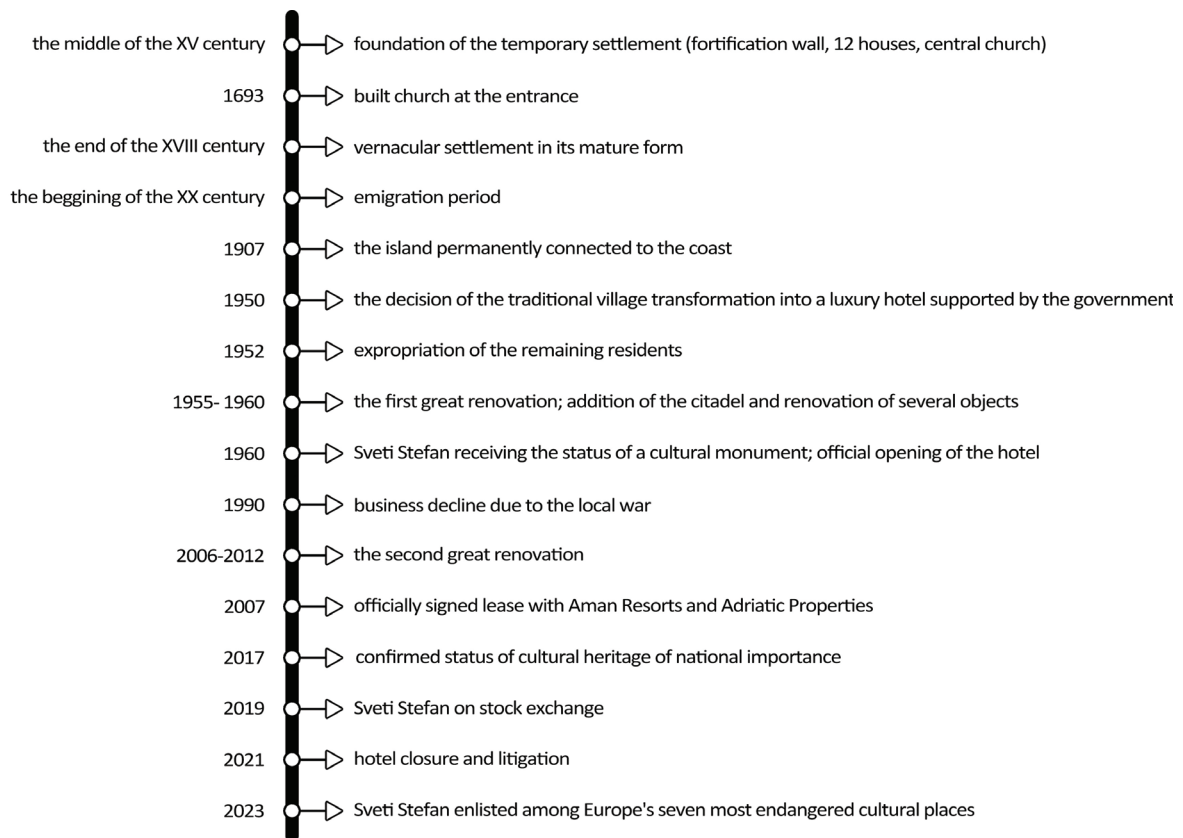
Built around the fifteenth century as a temporary refuge for the Paštrovići tribe families (Joksimović, 2017, 81-85; Ljubiša, 2022, 14-17), the early Sveti Stefan settlement consisted of twelve houses and a small church, secured by a fortification wall (Luketić, 1966, 160; Službeni List CG, 2017) (Fig. 5). The island's original landscape, made up of rocky surroundings with short Mediterranean shrubs, provided little patches of arable land, later used as vegetable gardens. The four churches, built from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, occupy the island's most distinguished locations. Among the oldest structures on the island, the fortification wall appears where the natural cliffs failed to provide necessary physical protection, specifically along the island's front and left sides, as viewed from the coast.

Built of thick stone walls, the houses of Sveti Stefan expanded gradually into chainlike clusters, remaining the property of one family (Vukmanović, 1960, 47; Službeni List CG, 2017). A single cubical room occupied each floor, divided only by light partitions for functional separation. Typically, the ground floor served as a storage, whereas the upper floors functioned as

living quarters (Keković, 2001, 200). Amateur builders used local stone for all the structures on the island, replacing it with more refined imported pieces only for details, such as door- and window- frames. Well-known for building their hinterland houses with lean-to roofs (Vuksanović, 1998, 80), the Paštrovići used gable roofs for the island's buildings instead, responding to the climatic conditions of the lower mountain area (Fig. 6). The terrain slope conditioned the predominant northeast orientation of houses, facing the coast. The mature form of the settlement by the end of the eighteenth century featured a dense arrangement of some hundred residential units (Luketić, 1966, 161), immersed in a complex network of narrow streets, vaulted passages, small piazzas, and endless stairs.

One hundred and fifty meters from the coast, the miniature island provided a safe environment for the tribe's organized social life. For two to three hundred years, Sveti Stefan served as a judicial, economic, and cultural center for the surrounding villages (Vukmanović, 1960, 417; Martinović, 1964, 15).⁸ However, due to political and financial reasons, the town

⁸ Throughout their existence, the Paštrovići retained self-administration by acting as an army of powerful rulers, most notably the Venetian Republic, for which they enjoyed protection and trade privileges in return (Vukmanović, 1960, 244–251; Karadžić, 1977, 144; Božić, 1979, 137). They made all the decisions pertinent to the islanders' lives at official assemblies in Sveti Stefan until 1929, when the tribal leaders gathered for one last time (Luketić, 1966, 160).



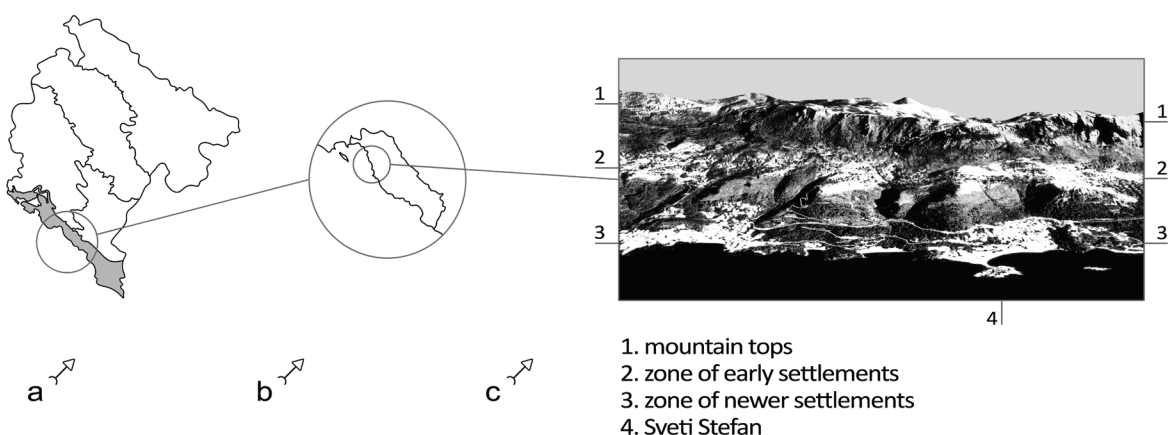
Сл. 5. Временска линија (Извор: Аутор) / Fig 5 Timeline chart (Source: Author)

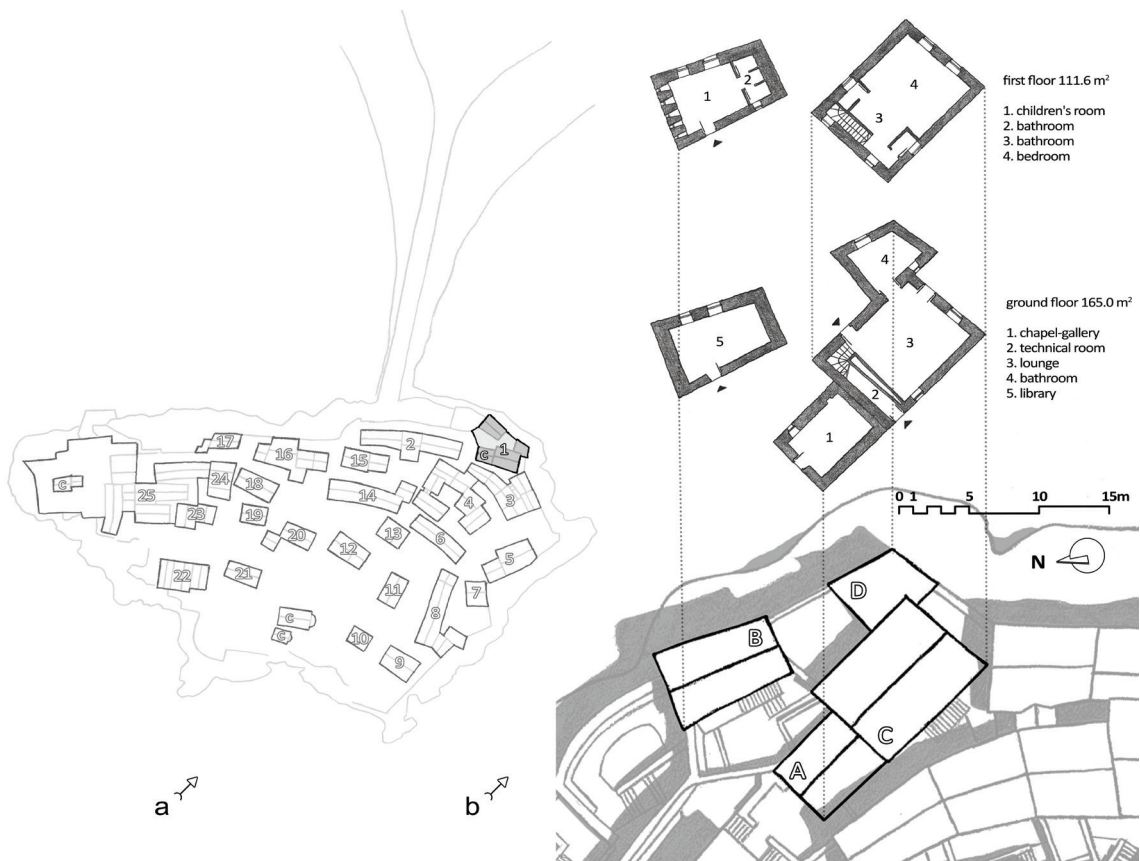
experienced massive emigration at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries (Luketić, 1966, 21; Kovačević, 2024, 53), gradually turning into a fishing village. In 1950, the communist government of the former Yugoslavia decided to turn the abandoned settlement into one of the most luxurious hotels on the Adriatic (Edwards, 1974, 45-46; Duletić, 2010, 157), relocating the remaining residents to the newly built coastal community (V. Mitrović, 2014, 28). The five-year restoration turned the houses into accommodation units (S. Mitrović, 2014, 70-71), preserving the original ambiance as much as possible (Z., Đ., 1963, 42). Now called a town hotel, Sveti Stefan, the favorite meeting place of the local and international elite, and a primary destination for visiting tours, obtained world recognition as a business success in the hotel industry

(V. Mitrović, 2014, 29-31). This progress terminated at the beginning of the nineties with the disintegration of Yugoslavia. By jointly leasing Sveti Stefan in 2007, Adriatic Properties and Aman Resorts envisaged the town hotel as an independent tourist unit providing all services within the island's premises, exclusively for the hotel guests (Đurašević, 2015, 19). The new management upgraded the accommodation units' installation equipment and expanded the usable area of the suites, often internally connecting houses in a row. The buildings on the island form twenty-five physically connected functional groups, otherwise called Blocks.⁹ Situated next to the island's entrance,

⁹ The number of houses in a Block varies from a single building to a dozen linked-together units. Mirko Kovačević uses the classification by Blocks in his project of the current state of Sveti Stefan (Kovačević, 1987).

Сл. 6. Карта Црне Горе (а); Подручје племена Паштровићи (b); Распоред насеља Паштровића (c) / Fig. 6 A map of Montenegro (a); Area of the Paštrovići tribe (b); Distribution of the Paštrovići settlements (c) (Source: Author)





Сл. 7. Блок 1 у односу на суседне блокове (а); Планови Блока 1 (б) (Извор: Аутор) / Fig. 7 Block 1 in relation to neighboring Blocks (a); Block 1 plans (b) (Source: Author)

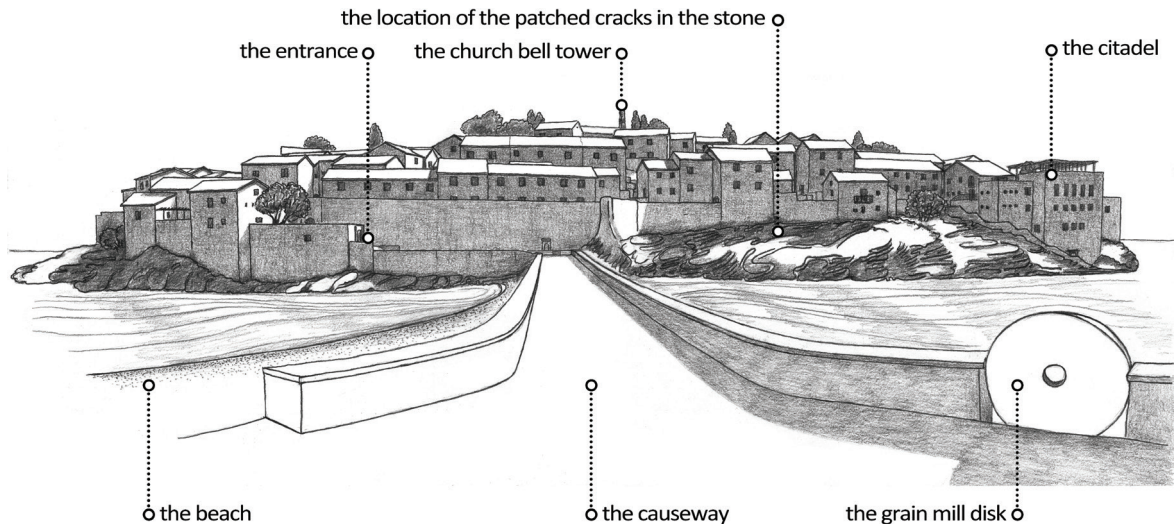
the cluster Block 1, a part of the Serial Vision presented, includes four buildings, one of which is a church, and the outdoor spaces between them (Fig. 7). The three residential buildings now compose one two-bedroom suite, meeting the requirements of a five-star hotel. The continuous greening of the island over the past seven decades has significantly changed the authentic rocky landscape. The disappointing results of one decade of business and intolerable restrictions on access to the island and its private beaches generated dissatisfaction and protests from the local community, leading to a lawsuit and the hotel's closure.

The Serial Vision starts with the coastal view of the island's front, introducing its size and scale before engaging with it more directly (Fig. 8). The citadel-like building on the right, an addition of the reconstruction in the 1950s, balances out the building masses on the far left, completing the architectural composition of six centuries. It deliberately differs in style and material from the rest of the complex to clearly distinguish the old from the new, but the shape and proportion, as well as the hint of medieval legacy, make it a valuable contribution to the island's visual representation (S. Mitrović, 2014, 71). Arising from the natural rock, the cube houses of various proportions pile up in several vertical layers, giving depth to the predominantly shaded frontal view. The current circumstances record the extensive greening of the rocky landscape with the addition of numerous tall trees, redefining the island's primarily geometrical silhouette. As a result, the bell tower of the tallest church, in the island's approximate center, once a gravitational point of visual focus, today competes for attention with the overgrown treetops. Stone-paved and finally shaped in 1907,

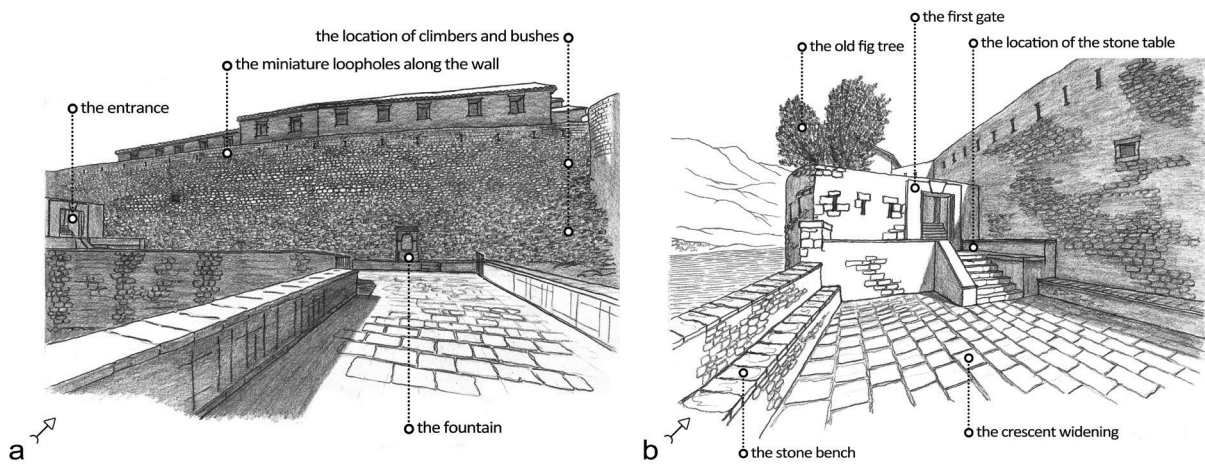
the causeway transformed the natural island into an artificial peninsula while permanently connecting Sveti Stefan with the coast (Luketić, 1966, 159). A disk element integrated into the parapet wall at the beginning of the causeway appropriately indicates the former existence of a grain mill at the shore. The abundance of fish in Sveti Stefan's surroundings once resulted in a landscape filled with fishing nets and rowboats (Vukmanović, 1960, 177), whereas today the vacant side beaches and restricted sea area serve only affluent hotel guests. The attempt to patch cracks in the foundation rock with mismatching stone tiles on the right side of the causeway shows a lack of consideration for the vernacular design, but also brings into question the island's stability and safety.

The second scene illustrates an example of truncation: as the observer approaches the fortification wall, the houses behind gradually disappear (Fig. 9a).¹⁰ Opposing the brightness of the pavement, the richly shaded wall texture transitions from the abstract natural stone at the bottom to the refined, smaller stone blocks at the top. At present, it appears less impactful and solid, invaded by large patches of climbers and bushes. The miniature loopholes above, sized by the light weapons once used in battle, hint at the approximate position of a walking trail on the other side of the wall, together constituting a typical medieval line of defense. Built in 1960, the small fountain at the foot of the fortification wall draws the observer's attention and humanizes the wall's massiveness, making it visually easy to measure. The

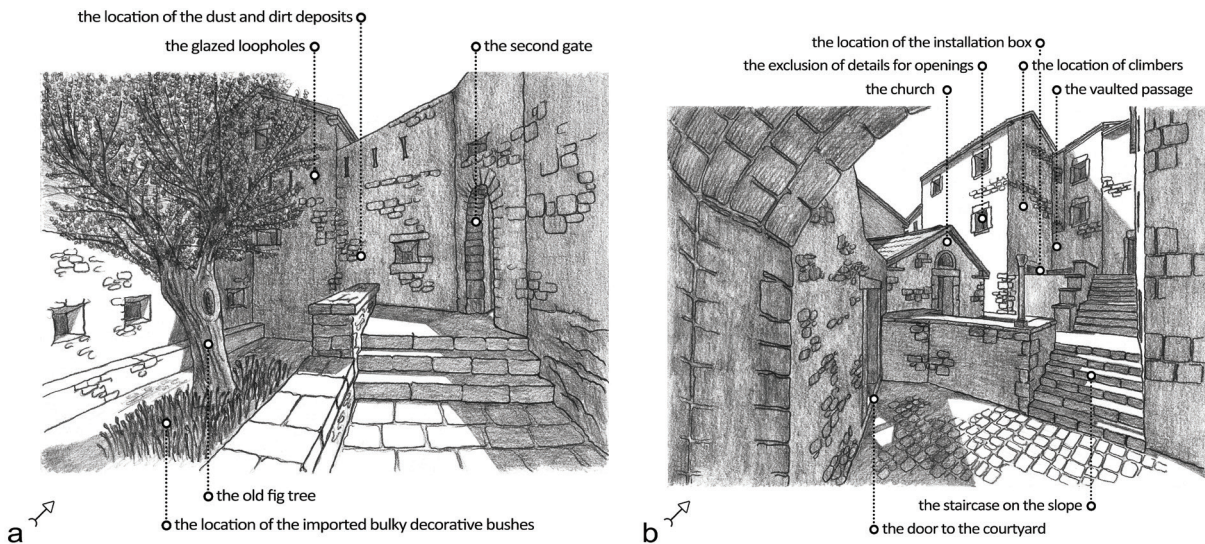
¹⁰ Cullen uses the term "truncation" to describe a "sudden visual break" where "foreground cuts out background," disrupting a gradual transition (Cullen, 1971, 37).



Сл. 8. Поглед на Свети Стефан са обале (Извор: Аутор) / Fig. 8 The coastal view of Sveti Stefan (Source: Author)



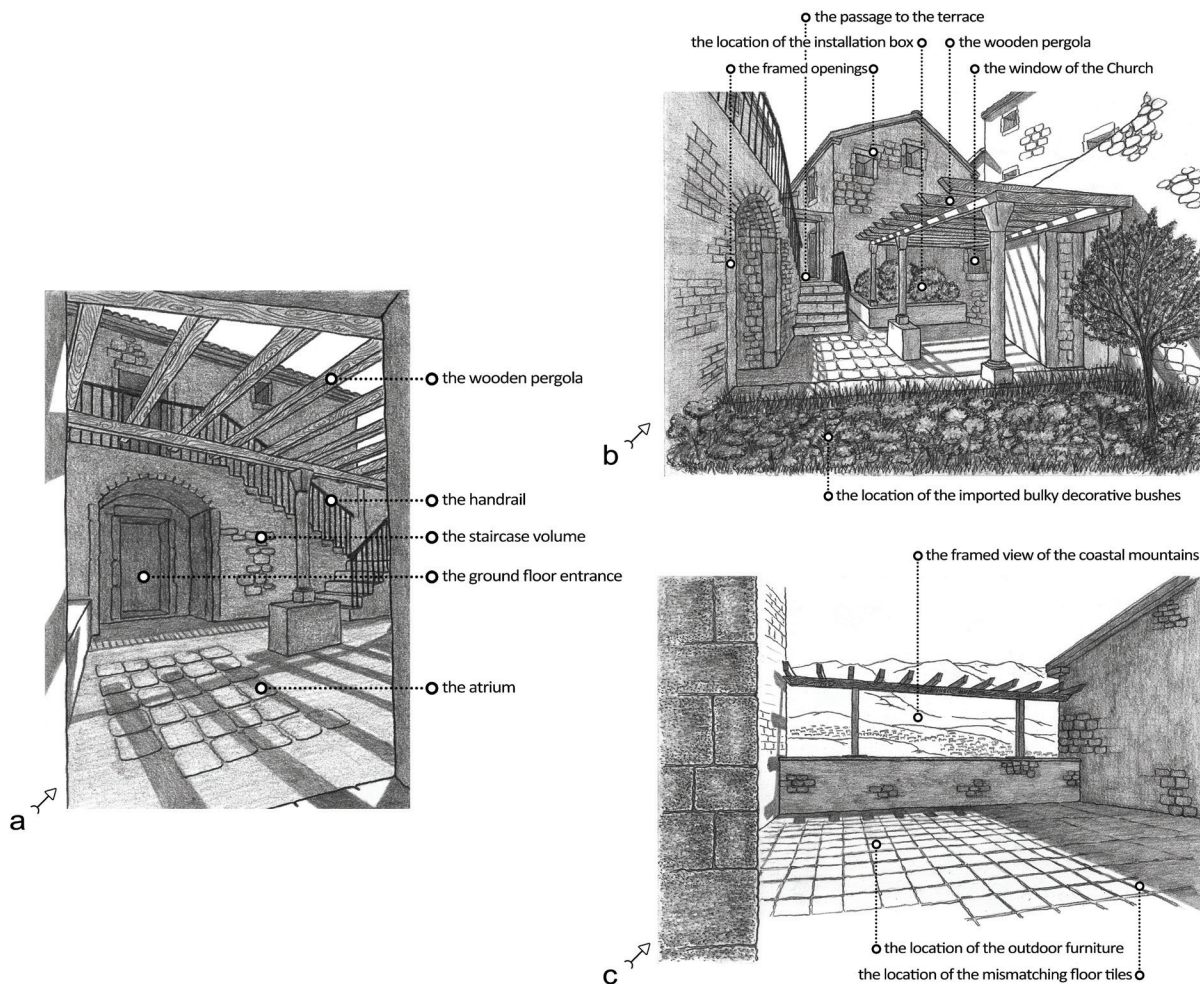
Сл. 9. Прилаз утврђењу (а); Улаз на острво (б) (Извор: Аутор) / Fig. 9 Approaching the fortification wall (a); The island's entrance (b) (Source: Author)



Сл. 10. „Улазни хол“ Светог Стефана (а); Прва сцена унутрашњости острва (б) (Извор: Аутор) / Fig. 10 The “entrance hall” of Sveti Stefan (a); The first scene of the island's interior (b) (Source: Author)

documented request by the Paštrovići for the Venetian Republic to fund the rebuilding of the fortification wall, badly damaged during the Cyprus war (Vukmanović, 1960, 416; Šekularac, 1999, 33), calling it a matter of life and death, testifies to its crucial importance for the survival of the islanders.

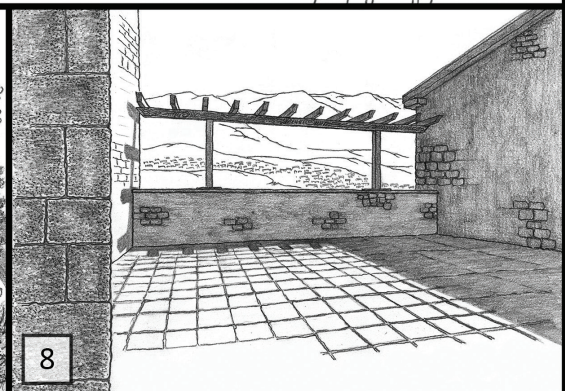
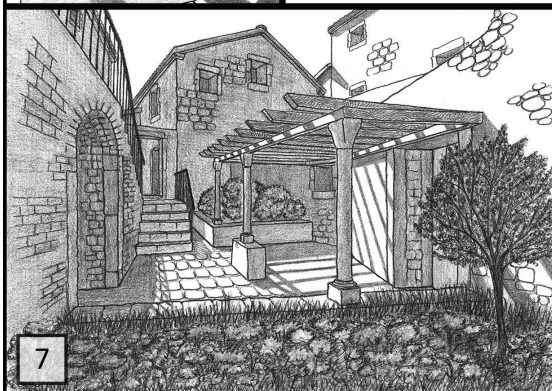
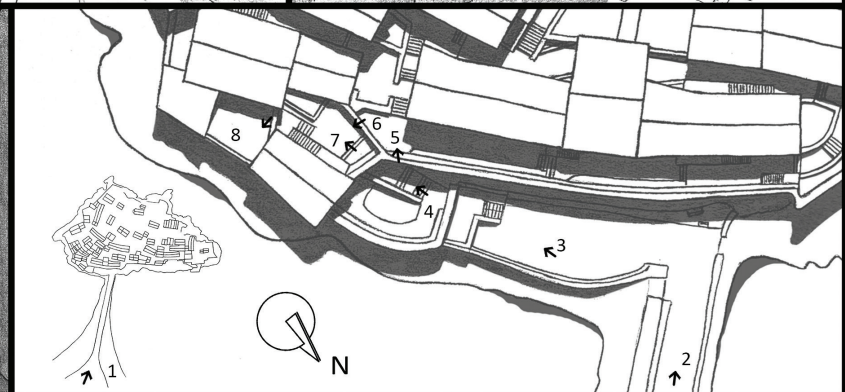
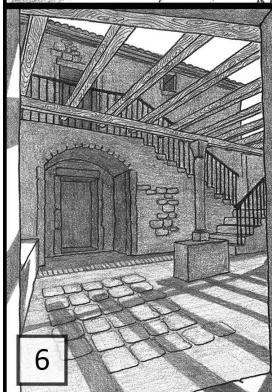
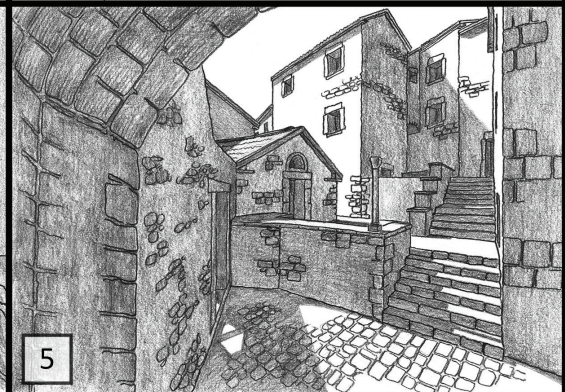
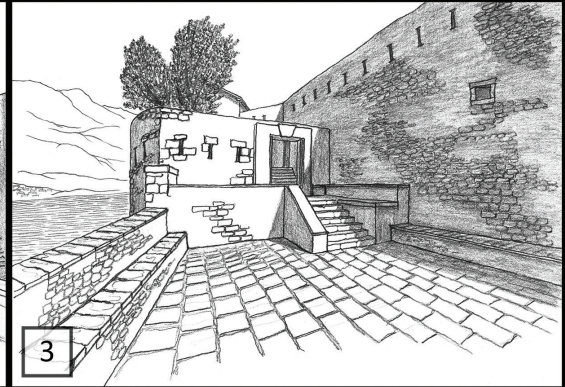
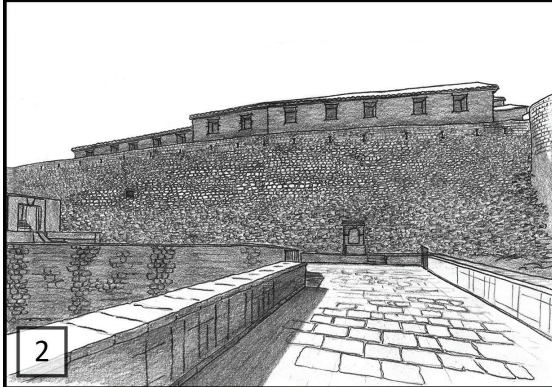
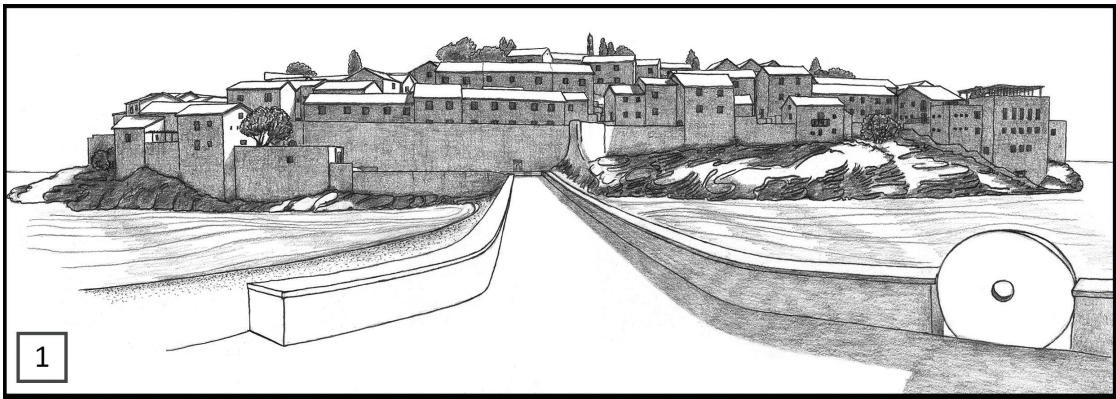
Apart from being a physical obstacle, the wall also acts as a directional element, bending left towards the doorway. The only entrance to the island consists of two gates, strengthening the weakest point of the fortification (Figs. 9b, 10a). Its corner position bridges the elevation difference between the causeway



Сл. 11. Улазак у приватно двориште Блока 1 (а); Унутрашњост дворишта Блока 1 (б); Приватна тераса Блока 1 као крајње одредиште серијског сагледавања простора (с) (Извор: Аутор) / Fig. 11 Entering the private courtyard of Block 1 (a); Inside the courtyard of Block 1 (b); The private terrace of Block 1 and the final destination of the Serial Vision (c) (Source: Author)

and the island's interior. The crescent widening before the entrance served as a venue for tribal leaders' official gatherings and trading affairs (Kovačević, 2024, 63). Stone parapets throughout the island make smooth transitions between the buildings and public spaces, defining physical borders or functioning as outdoor furniture, such as the benches in Figure 9b. The decorative key stone of the first gate, once functioning on a chain mechanism (Luketić, 1966, 160), indicates that the entrance is "here." The stone table, used as a selling point for entrance tickets, now only blocks the doorway. The first gate leads into the small courtyard with an old fig tree, one of the few original tall trees on the island (Fig. 10a). The detail inside shows the fortification wall merging with the residential building, indicating that the second floor of the house was an addition to the original single-story unit. The glazed loopholes, used as small window openings, make the top-floor bedroom interior design uniquely different. A closer inspection of the framed portion of the wall reveals long-standing dust and dirt deposits. Inauthentic decorative bushes of today introduce new fragrances to the island, overwhelming the narrow open spaces with bulky volumes (Koprivica, 2024, 323), as seen in the courtyard. With only one entrance, the insular settlement encountered the danger of autocratic tendencies in medieval times.

The arched doorway, the second gate, leads towards the island's interior (Fig. 10b). The tall buildings in the background create a cocoon for the small Orthodox church, the focus of attention, inscribed with the year 1693, probably referring to the date of its consecration. Caused by the island's physicality, the church's orientation deviates from strict canonical regulations, indicating that the islanders had their own sense of space. Used as the hotel's gallery for several decades, the church hosted many art exhibitions, gaining a high reputation among artists. Limited physical space demanded the grouping of houses, usually in a row, leaving narrow corridors in between, which sometimes penetrate the building clusters with vaulted passages, as seen in the drawing. However, in the current situation, visual obstacles obscure the vaulted passage at the top of the staircase, thereby interrupting the observer's perception of spatial continuity. Laying out the stairways, the builders relied on the natural terrain slopes, keeping the original landscape flow as a foundation for the urban setting. Windows and shutters of the island's buildings presently replicate the details of coastal townhouses, forcing repetition and uniformity, practical for commercial purposes but uncommon in the vernacular environment (Mitrović, 2016, 168). Their exemption from the drawings suggests the need for further archaeological research to determine the extent of their contribution in shaping the cultural habitat.



The door to the courtyard (Fig. 10b), framed with finer pieces of stone, as is the case with all windows and doors on the island, opens towards the building group labeled Block 1 (Figs. 11a, 11b). The unusual arrangement of houses around a private atrium, seen nowhere else on the island, suggests the different function of the cluster, probably as a monastery (Vujović, 2009, 192). The church's constructive reliance on the neighboring structure supports such a hypothesis. To connect the floors of the buildings, in a few places where the terrain slope provided little support, the builders created constructively independent staircase volumes annexed to the main body of the house (Fig. 11a). The vaulted structure that supports the staircase slab frames an entrance to the ground floor, formerly used as storage space. The simplicity of the handrail appropriately complements the overall minimalism of architectural forms. The wooden pergola defines a space once used to keep cattle outside, making a successful addition to the original ambience. The organization of the atrium demonstrates confidence and maturity in shaping the architectural space (Fig. 11b), knowledge brought from countless Mediterranean travels.¹¹ Significantly upgrading the comfort, during the last hotel reconstruction, the new management introduced modern installation equipment, placed in small outdoor boxes throughout the island, one located in the atrium. Although aiming for visual discretion, their influence on the vernacular environment remains noticeable.

Approaching the island's edge and reestablishing the awareness of the surrounding water, the Serial Vision ends with a framed view of the coastal mountains (Fig. 11c). A minimum of architectural details and overall stone materialization (the floor, the walls, the parapet) emphasize the collective impression before individual elements, a principle applied throughout the island. The terrace now offers a small haven for the suite's guests. However, the metal sunbathing furniture appears inflexible and heavy, occupying a significant portion of the usable area. Material mismatching of some floor tiles indicates the recent replacement of installation cables and the unsuccessful restoration to the previous setting. Supposedly providing a protected environment for the cultural monument, the coastal area has endured intense and uncontrolled urbanization over the last thirty years. The destruction of the natural landscape of the mountains compromises the exclusivity of the cultural habitat. The last scene completes the visual loop, as the observer looks back at the starting point of the Serial Vision. The physical route described appears much longer and more time-consuming than initially expected.

11 The Paštrovići established themselves as successful merchants and sailors (Vukmanović, 1960, 178-187).

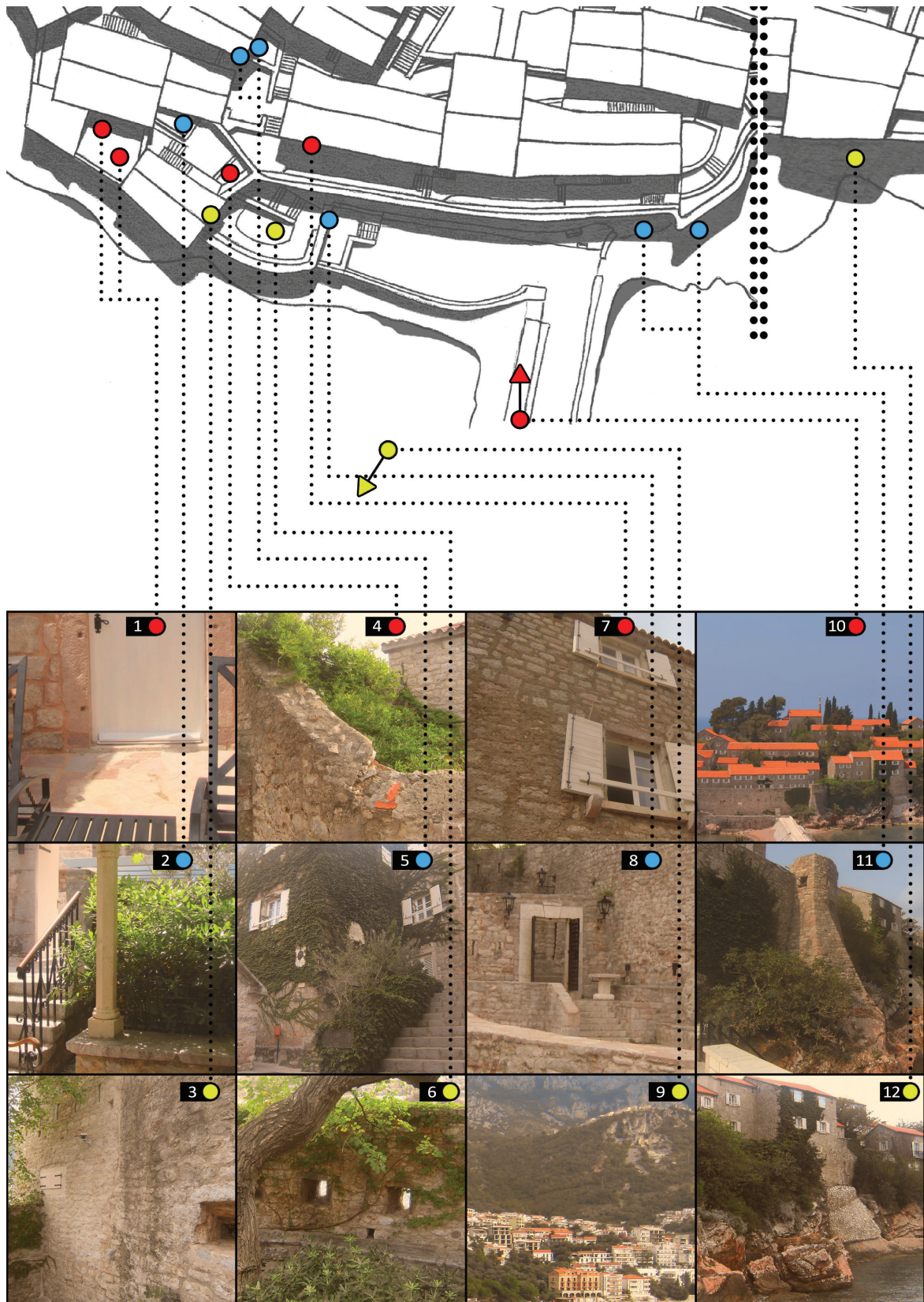
Сл. 12. (лево) Серијско сагледавање Светог Стефана (Извор: Аутор) / Fig. 12 (left) The Serial Vision of Sveti Stefan (Source: Author)

The eight images and the map of their disposition together complete the Serial Vision (Fig. 12), following the example given in Cullen's "Townscape" (Cullen 1971, 17).

4. DISCUSSION

The Serial Vision of the chosen path displays a multitude of visual impressions over a relatively short distance, contradicting the general notion of vernacular architecture, often regarded as simple and unsophisticated. The use of freehand drawing as a medium of representation revealed a new appreciation for the vernacular ambience and the spontaneous variety of its constituent elements, usually neglected and generalized in other research methods. The presented Serial Vision provides a second-hand experience as a response to the restriction of access to the island's interior content. This research has shown that the organic development of the cultural habitat Sveti Stefan formed a dynamic spatial system, enhanced by an emphasis on collective rather than individual structures. The gradual expansion of residential units and the most recent addition of the citadel buildings and the drinking fountain represent successful alterations of the vernacular ambience of Sveti Stefan, in accordance with the developmental logic of the existing ambience. However, the study revealed a disregard for the settlement's vernacular character, largely deriving from its use as a luxury hotel (Fig. 13).

The lush green cover of the island created several unfavorable modifications to the ambience: altering the island's silhouette, overpowering and concealing architectural features, hindering visual corridors, suppressing the native flora, and introducing new fragrances. Additional exposure to weather conditions makes the exterior walls particularly susceptible to dust accumulation, as observed in the entrance courtyard, requiring better maintenance. The handling of repairs, such as the rock patching and floor tiling replacement, shows little consideration towards the original circumstances. Learning about the commercialization of the details in the openings raises the question of necessary archaeological research, whose conduct, thanks to significant technological advancement, would minimally disturb the built structures. The latest modernization of the hotel's installation systems produced equipment cubicles, which, scattered around the island, now participate in the urban logic of the architectural composition. Although needed for the smooth operation of the upgraded accommodation units, they occupy a noticeable amount of space (e.g., the entire corner of the Block 1 atrium), thus visibly influencing the vernacular ambience. Reconsidering the outdoor furniture, with attention to equipment size (terrace deckchairs) and appropriate positioning (the stone table at the entrance gate), would improve the communication flow and user



Сл. 13. Уочени проблеми дуж дефинисане путање 1-1 (Извор: Аутор) / Fig. 13 Observed issues along the delineated path 1-1 (Source: Author)

experience. The degradation of the coastal mountain negatively affects both the heritage status of Sveti Stefan - given that its immediate surroundings should enjoy legal protection - and a constituent trait of its vernacular identity, namely its relational closeness to the natural environment, manifested through spectacular landscape vistas.

5. CONCLUSION

The private interest of foreign tenants negates the islanders' gradual, collective effort that built the cultural habitat over six centuries. The long-term lease indicates further alienation and questionable future prospects for Sveti Stefan, due to the lack of institutional control. Simultaneously an island,

a distinct vernacular environment, and proclaimed cultural heritage, Sveti Stefan offers a unique spatial experience worth preserving. The observation of one part of the island revealed unfavorable modifications that threaten its authenticity. Controlling the green cover by replacing imported plant species with native ones or removing them where unnecessary and thus revealing the rocky landscape, would open visual corridors, reestablishing connections between buildings of different elevations. Further investigation of the details of the openings reveals that distancing them from the imitation of coastal houses and reintroducing certain original features now holds commercial value, as consumers' demands increasingly gravitate towards the authenticity of a destination. Redirecting priorities with regard to achieving luxury, from providing a kind of comfort expected from a five-star hotel to offering a piece of genuine ambiance, would, on the one hand, benefit the tenant's interests, and on the other, acknowledge Sveti Stefan's cultural value of national importance. That implies regular maintenance and controlled modification of the vernacular ambiance, as well as professionally conducted restoration, to avoid unskilled improvisation repairs.

This research could extend to cover the entire island's territory, following the suggested path system in the analysis phase of the methodology section. The completed work would serve as a reference point for managing the vernacular ambiance, suggesting areas for improvement, and also showing the influence of potential alteration through comparison. Lacking the skill to translate natural landscape forms into architecture, local architects rarely produce significant work responsive to the place of origin. As the practice of freehand drawing in architectural schools encourages naturally attentive observation, the involvement of students in rendering the vernacular ambiance appears appropriate, with both educational and practical purposes, using only simple equipment. Evoking interest in the vernacular architecture of Sveti Stefan contributes to its acknowledgement as Montenegrin cultural heritage.

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ИЗВОРИ ИЛУСТРАЦИЈА / SOURCES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Сл. 1 Дијаграм аутора / Fig 1. Chart by the author
- Сл. 2 Цртежи и планови аутора / Fig 2. Drawings and plans by the author
- Сл. 3 Карта аутора / Fig 3. Map by the author
- Сл. 4 Различити извори: Управа за заштиту културних добара Црне Горе, Државни архив Црне Горе, Народна библиотека Будве, Народна библиотека Црне Горе, Музеји и галерије Будве, туристички водичи (Martinović, 1964; Edwards, 1974) и др.
- Fig 4. Various sources: Administration for the Protection of Cultural Property of Montenegro, State Archives of Montenegro, National Library of Budva, National Library of Montenegro, Museums and galleries of Budva, tourist guides (Martinović, 1964; Edwards, 1974), etc.
- Сл. 5 Дијаграм аутора / Fig 5. Chart by the author
- Сл. 6 Илустрација аутора / Fig 6. Illustration by the author
- Сл. 7 Планови аутора / Fig 7. Plans by the author
- Сл. 8 Цртеж аутора / Fig 8. Drawing by the author
- Сл. 9 Цртежи аутора / Fig 9. Drawings by the author
- Сл.10 Цртежи аутора / Fig 10. Drawings by the author
- Сл. 11 Цртежи аутора / Fig 11. Drawings by the author
- Сл. 12 Цртежи аутора / Fig 12. Drawings by the author
- Сл. 13 Илустрација и фотографије аутора / Fig 13. Illustration and photos by the author