University:

POLITECNICO DI MILANO, SCUOLA DI ARCHITETTURA, URBANISTICA E INGEGNERIA DELLE COSTRUZIONI

POLO TERRITORIALE DI PIACENZA

MSc degree course:

SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN

MSc degree thesis topic:

THE FORGOTTEN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF BAY OF KOTOR. VALORISATION OF MEDIEVAL PATH AND RUINS IN PRCANJ

Topic of this paper:

ABSTRACT, HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND PROJECT PROPOSAL

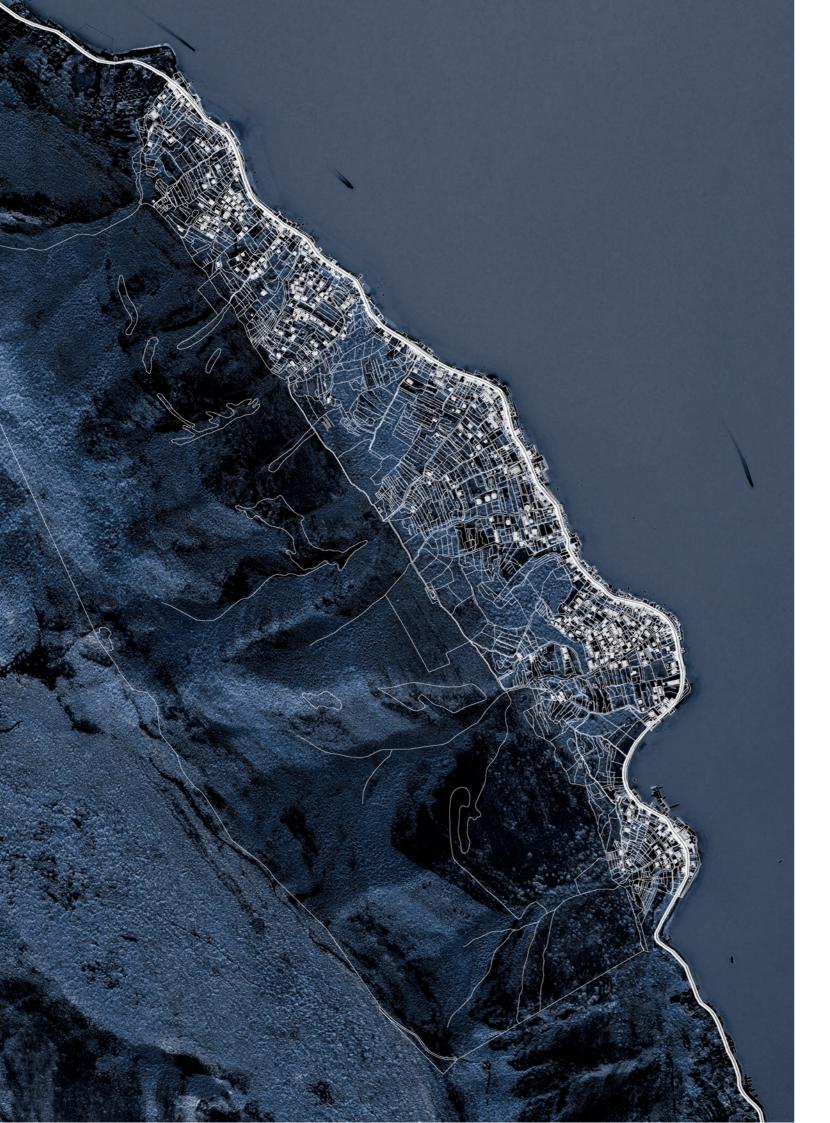
GAIA REDAELLI PhD professor/ mentor-supervisor

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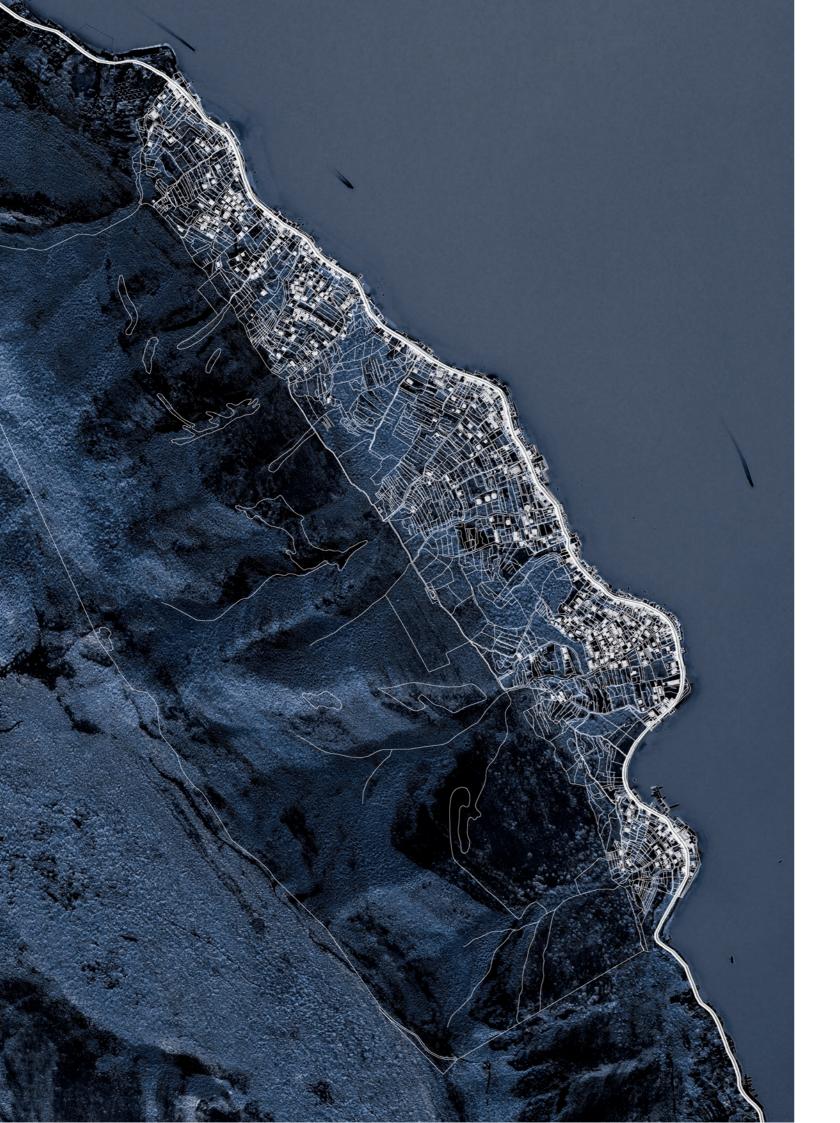
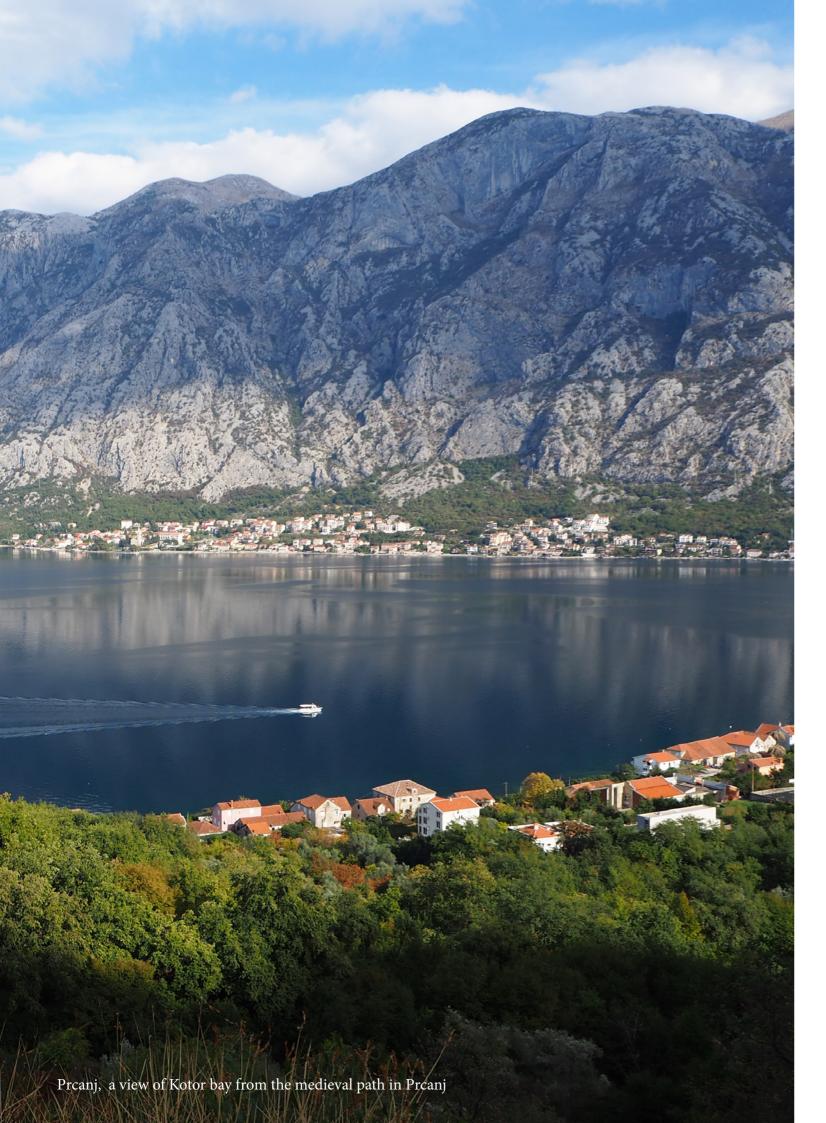


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I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF TOWN OF PRCANJ

01. VENETIAN PROVINCE IN BAY OF KOTOR (1420-1797)

In 1420, after several attempts to form an alliance with the Venetian Republic, Kotor's Governors finally received a positive response and gained the Venetian protection. As it was due in time of war, Kotor's Governors aswered to the city's assistance request providing a free mobilisation, and sailors always went to the sea battlefield against enemies with other Venetian provinces on Adriatic. Thanks to their extremely high faithfulness in naval battles and in sustaining safe sea-trade, all the Bay's captains gained numerous benefits. For example, in 18th century Prcanj's sailors and ship-owners got free merchandise, without any charge, available on Venezia and Padova, and tax-free trade. In 1420 the Bay of Kotor was not entirely under Venetian protection; in fact, the only inner area with the towns of Kotor, Dobrota, Mulla, Perzagno, Stolivo, Perasto, and Sterp was. Other areas of Bay of Kotor, such as Castel Nuovo and Risano, become Venetian provinces following the Liberation from the Ottoman rule in 1687.

02. SAILORS FROM PRCANJ (PERZAGNO) AND THEIR ECONOMIC POWER

Prcanj sailors from early 15th century demonstrate the town's tremendous skillfulness at the sea, witnessed by state Venetian captains. Maritime trade was very active and successful and made a lot of families from Prcanj exceptionally rich (for example, the Beskuca family owns 99 houses in the Bay of Kotor and overseas). Maritime trade flourished during 16th and 18th century; the ships owned by people from Prcanj grew in size and number so that by the end of the 18th century, Prcanj was a home port for 98 overseas ships. Prcanj's wealthiest sea captains' families names were: Lukovic, Gjurovic, Sbutega, Lazzari, Mihnic, Florio, Verona, Milin, Petkic, Raffaeili, Beskuca, Marassi. Many of them had their trade houses and family residences in Venice, Trieste, Corfu, Thebes,

Corinto, Alessandria, Algeri, etc. Among their most common merchandise were Montenegrin and Greek cheese, Dalmatian vine, oil candles, salted sardines, dry meat, dry figs, Dalmatian and Greek olive oil, and silk. Their most frequent ports of call were - apart from the eastern Mediterranean ones - Ancona, Bari, Brindisi, Venice, and Trieste. The success of maritime trade was so immense for Prcani that by the end of 17th century it had overpassed, in economic terms, the medieval town of Kotor (Cattaro in Italian), which had often helped them giving money and manual labour in times of crisis. After the catastrophic earthquake of 1667, by which Kotor was almost completely destroyed, Prcanj's sailors and shipowners volunteerely helped repairing the destroyed town with money and labour, even providing free transport of goods on their ships.

03. SAILORS FROM PRCANJ MORE SKILLFUL AT THE SEA THAN THE VENETIANS

Already at the end of the 16th century, sailors from Prcani stood out with their ships (fusta) on sails and oars which overpassed the Venetian State ships, as witnessed by the Venetian governor-general Almorò Tiepolo (1593). In fact, by the end of the 16th century, due to their tremendous skillfulness at the sea, the administration of the Venetian Republic decided to give to Prcanj's captains the great responsibility to transport State mail (pubblici dispacci) on their ships. The decision, come into force in 1625, has brought many benefits to the population of Prcani, such as relieving them from military service and physical, manual labour. On the other hand, the importance of a reliable postal service, ranging from Venice to Zadar and Kotor and even to Corfu, was of immense importance for the Republic of Venice. The ships carrying mail were small in size and their crew numbered nine members. The privileges of the city grew thanks to this extraordinary role, and in 1704 Prcanj received the statute of Municipality (Comunità di Perzagno). This decision of the Republic resulted in huge benefits, namely the abolition of customs, which strengthened the economic growth that innereased the city's maritime economy.



II. ARCHITECTURE OF PRCANJ

01. MEDIEVAL SACRAL ARCHITECTURE IN PRCANJ

Medieval churches in Prcanj, are small-sized, features not sophisticated but elegant proportions, as well as picturesque forms with a very interesting way of integrating into the landscape. In the Middle Ages, the Gothic style was not developed enough here, even though it was too much postponed compared to other urban centres on the Adriatic. However, the local sacral architecture, based upon centuries of development, has incorporated something of the medieval styles expressed mostly into the design of windows and doors. The techniques used at that time of building were very much defined, considering that they were developed by local craftsman rather than by professional architects or builders.

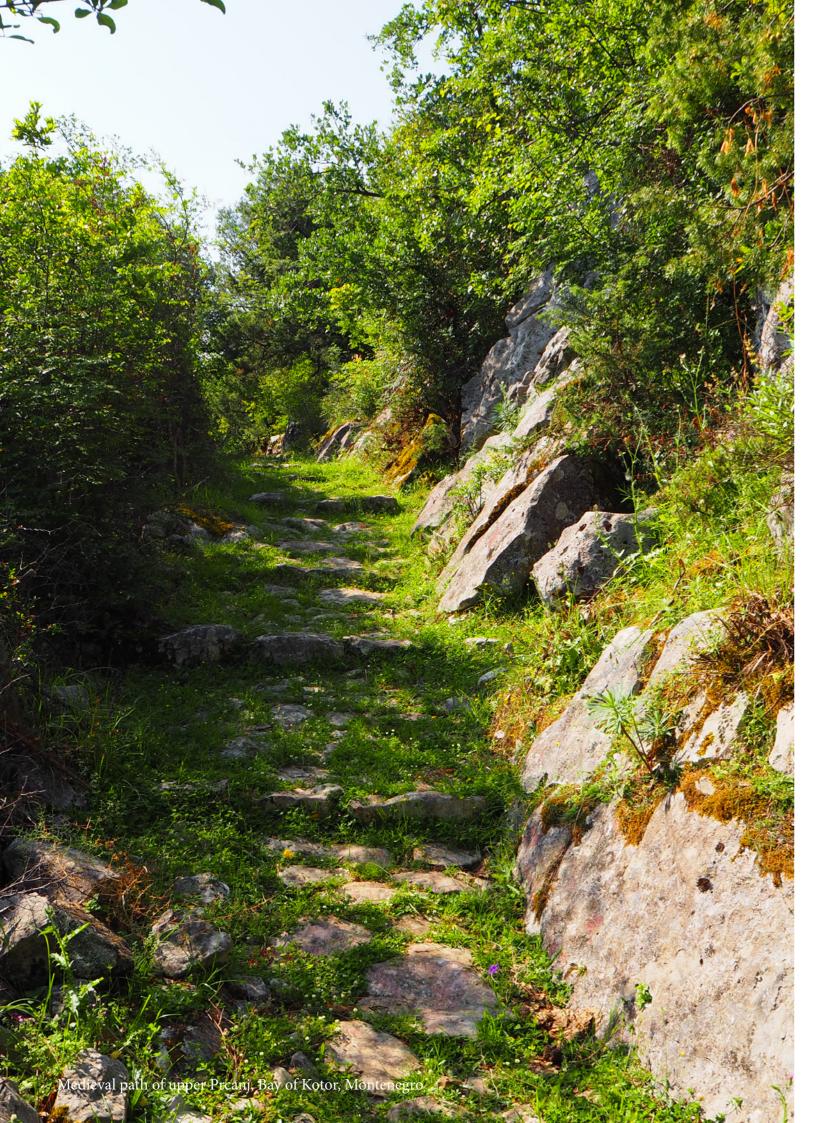
The catholic private family chapels were numerous in the town of Prcanj. In ancient times the town recorded eighteen churches and family chapels, of which today just eight are still standing. The church of St. Anna in Prcanj is believed to be existing since the 14th century, and the ruins of the parish house in the immediate vicinity are the most ancient remains of residential buildings in the town of Prcanj. The church of St. Anna is situated 100 m from the sea on the hill of Vrmac. It is single span with gable roof; it has a semicircular apse and a fragmented vault in the middle, as well as a bell tower. The church belonged to the Sbutega family and stands in the area that was called, in ancient times, Calme that means "calm, quiet". In front of the church an ancient graveyard used to lay, whose remains are not evident any longer.

Today, the interior of the church has not any frescos or painting and is plastered with blue colour which is much eroded by the passing time. The traditional techniques of Romanesque altar vault, domed with a monolith of perfectly carved white rock, and the stone-paved floor characterized the architecture of the interior of the church. There are also two small niches in the wall at both ends of the altar, and a holy water pot, integrated into the entrance wall, which is a very interesting shape. There is no evidence of when the church was built, but the style of the building techniques, the apse stone roof and the unique disposition suggest that it has been there since the 14th century.

o2. ARCHITECTURE OF AMBIENTAL STREETS IN PRCANJ

Waterfront in Prcanj in particular the old historical street of Lukovic family features luxurious palaces overlooking the sea, the Captain's house with as many as 12 baroque balconies, and the ancient stone paving along the entire street front, according to numerous historians is at the very top of the artistic expression of the baroque profane architecture of streets in the South Adriatic. Lukovic Street is named after the Lukovic family houses, which have exceptionally elegantly decorated stone balustrades; the palaces follows the sea line, merging into the street front, and making a unique and indivisible ambient unit in a functional and aesthetic domain. Opposed to the houses towards the sea, so-called 'ponta' were made over the time, for accessing sailboats with a plateau on which cargoes from ships were landed, as well as small ports for binding family boats.

The coastal belt was an indivisible private space and made up a whole with the palaces. In the later period, around 1805, when this region was already under the Austro-Hungarian empire, the emperor had the first coastal road built along the sea for military needs, thus completely interrupting the continuity of family gardens from the sea to the houses. This act changed forever the character of space, dividing it into two parts, one made up of family ports for boats with berths along the sea, and another made up of a paved street of the Lukovic family. The seafront, including ponta and boat bindings, were private properties in the 19th century, characterized by traditional stone bindings, stone paving and stone sea-shores, with small gardens rich in Mediterranean vegetation. On the opposite side of the houses, there are elegant courts (avlije) with greenery, authentic stylish furniture and paved paths. Each 'avlija', or, artistic yard, has its own water well with a baroque stone hood; the pavement from the house to the well features square plates of red and white stone, and each yard shows parts of artistic gardening masonry such as stone sinks and verandas on the stone pillars with capitals.



III. THE AIM OF THE PUBLIC SURVEY PROJECT - PRCANJ'S CULTURAL HERITAGE

O1. The aim of the public survey project, PRCANJ'S CULTURAL HERITAGE, held on my personal initiative from 27th November to 7th December 2017, over Google Forms platform, targeting resident population of Prcanj, was to raise public awareness about the importance of cultural heritage in the everyday life of local population, as well as to point to some very crucial problems for the community.

The territory of Prcanj is part of UNESCO's Natural and Culturo-historical Region of Kotor inscribed in the World heritage list since 1979. Nowadays, due to lack of regulations about the protection of the cultural landscape and the appalling development of the entire UNESCO's area of Kotor, Prcanj is under a big threat of losing the integrity of its inherited cultural values.

The public survey I held, as an architect and resident of Prcanj, addressed solely the local population: the respondents were 65, an amount which only covers 5.76% of Prcanj's total population (1128 people, according to 2011 census). The people who responded to the anonymous questionnaire belong to diverse age groups; the majority ages between 25-34 years (26.2%) and are, in most cases, native residents with very different levels of formal education. Most of them (44.6%), however, have a university qualification.

The focus of the survey was to recognize and express the residents' opinion and vision about their everyday life in town, the site's future development and its touristic destination. The residents' thought was supposed to approve the general vision and suggestions of the UNESCO's Commission and dedicated experts, who claim that the appalling development of the entire region is proving to have a devastating impact on the outstanding universal values of UNESCO Natural and Culturo-Historical Region of Kotor.

02. PRCANJ'S CULTURAL HERITAGE THROUGH THE CITISENS' EYES

The respondents confirmed the claim and vision of UNESCO's and Montenegrin experts of cultural heritage: Responses state that the cultural heritage in Prcanj is endangered, as stated by 92.3% of those surveyed (even "extremely endangered", as stated by 23.1%).

To the question "How much do State and Municipal institutions work towards protection of cultural heritage?", 61.5% responded "very little" (as a matter of fact, this is also due to the citizens' general indifference towards heritage values).

The next question asked "To what degree is Prcanj endangered by indiscriminate building?"; 93.8% of respondents confirm UNESCO's claim; among these, 40% think that Prcanj is "very endangered" and 15.4% that it is "extremely endangered".

03. APARTMENT COMPLEX IN LAST PRESERVED CULTURAL LANDSCAPE? (QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS)

Upon the following question in Prcanj's cultural heritage questionaire: "Do you consider the area Glavati, Valley of St. Anna (meadows behind the parapet) as a convenient location for building an apartment complex?"

(49.2%) Of respondents stated that is **not suitable** at all for building the apartment complex.

(explanation) Valley of St. Anna is the last preserved but not protected area of the cultural landscape of inner Kotor bay, which preserved its original horizontal and vertical structure, sprawling in full area from the sea to the hill. All (63.1 %) of respondents agree that the Valley of Sv. Ana - Glavati (meadows behind the parapet) as part of the last preserved authentic cultural landscape of the inner Kotor bay, requires a special protection at the level of Kotor municipality.



IV. LANDSCAPE IN DANGER OF THE BAY OF KOTOR

01. Nowadays native people have lost connection with the local environment in Bay of Kotor; this has happened by changing the way people use landscape and by vanishing the active cultivation of the same. Moreover, the way the landscape is used has drastically changed after the last earthquake in 1979; furthermore, over the last decade it has been highly influenced by the heavy foreign investment in real estate industry.

For all these reasons, the cultural landscape of the Bay of Kotor region, and Prcanj in particular, is under the big threat of losing all its inherited features represented by the materiality and the structure of the landscape itself, as well as vanishing the collective memory of its traditional character and specificity. Today, many areas have been devastated by building residential buildings without any legal certificate, thus imposing high seismic hazard; also, by interrupting the organical linkage with surrounding landscape; even, by making life more complicated and dangerous (neglecting the necessity of adequate access for personal cars, or not providing a livable neighbourhood). All these problems make a real urban chaos in some upper areas of Prcanj like Tre Sorelle and Sarena Gomila.

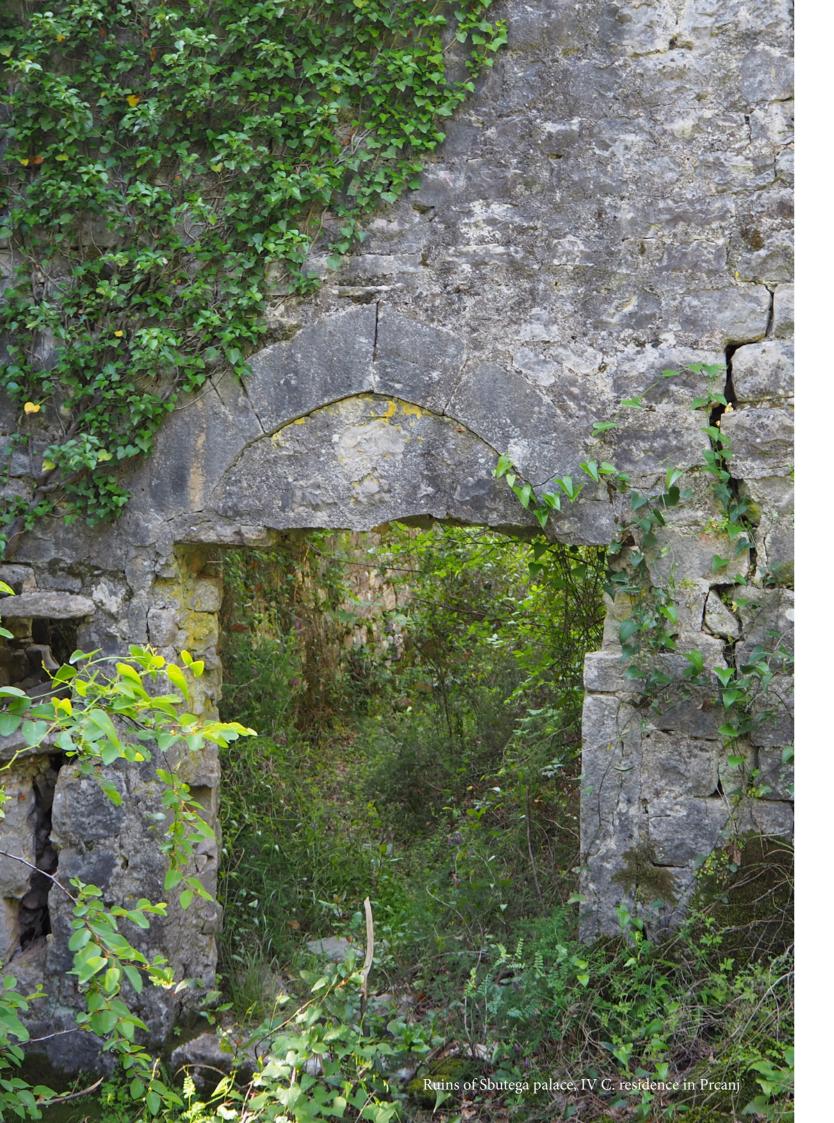
After the 1979 earthquake, an intensive urbanisation started without any implemented strategical urban planning. Today, some areas in Prcanj which are important for their cultural landscape, like St. Anna Valley, are threatened by uncontrolled urbanisation, like the building of a big real estate settlement, and by imposing the complete destruction of the authentic cultural landscape. Now the urge for urban legislation of the entire UNESCO area of Kotor, as well as in Prcanj, is the top priority for Montenegro, and among the aims of this thesis is to point to urgent actions in urban legislation and integrated approach toward cultural landscape protection, as well as to raise public awareness about its tangible and intangible features.

V. PROJECT PROPOSAL

O1. ACTIVATING THE MEDIEVAL PATH OF PRCANJ

The main aim of this MSc thesis, regarding the regeneration of the cultural landscape of the Bay of Kotor, is the particular case study of the medieval pathway in the upper level of the settlement of Prcanj, which is almost completely unknown today even to the local residents. The upper medieval path of Prcanj, from Glavati to Spille, with old churches on the hill and ruins of medieval houses, authentic farm estates and terraced gardens planted with olives as well as wooded areas between them, should be proclaimed, according to the wish of the residents, as protected landscape of special importance for the municipality of Kotor, as well as a valuable hiking tour. The area of the medieval path represents one of the few coastal areas in the interior of the Bay of Kotor, where the cultural landscape has not been attacked yet by commercial construction and where there is continuity from the sea (Glavati) to the top of the mountain (Spille River Canyon). The pathway is a proof of Prcanj's historical development, of the time when the settlement was located on the upper levels of the Vrmac hill, resting on agriculture. A special way of treating the soil, preserving fertile humus layers, was achieved by the dry-stone wall techniques on terraced levels along Vrmac slopes. Moving from the sea to the hill, ancient varieties of Mediterranean fruit, such as citrus, grapes, olives, figs, are still present. These authentic sloped terraces of autochthonous agricultural varieties are still preserved below the area of the upper medieval path connecting the Church of St. Anna with the church of St. Peter on the way to the Old Parish church toward Spilla river. There are also centuriesold oaks and pine forests in the zones between the agricultural estates, which are also planted as old villagers can tell. On the top, this zone of settlement also shows several foundations of ancient family homes that date back to the Middle Ages, and in addition to the medieval paths, numerous ruins of churches and dry stonewalls are the material evidence of the medieval village of Prcanj which was located on the hill.





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