MENDING VARNA

Authentic Landscape as a Fountainhead and Essential Element of Urban Continuity and Identity

MSc Thesis Presentation P5

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Problem statement

“Varna is the Sea Capital of Bulgaria. It is located on verdant terraces at the Black Sea coast, at the foot of a low mountains’ chain”
How can the authentic landscape of the area, – its processes and qualities, – be revealed within the cityscape, in order to arouse urban continuity and identity, to enhance the relation of the city to its context, and thus to strengthen the “placeness” of the urban environment?
Meaning of Flowscapes
Research method

The four layers: example of Varna region case

"urban palimpsest" - personal and collective memories and meanings
"atmosphere"
lifestyle
art
architecture
materials
urban pattern
spatial relations
routes
infrastructural flows
and patterns
flora & fauna
hydrology
soil
climate
geomorphology

mental layer

urban layer

networks layer

natural layer

Dynamic flows and places.

actors within the urban flow-places, led by the flowscapes

flowscapes as carriers and connectors of urban milieus

an actor within the urban place

Actors within the urban flow-places, led by the flowscapes
Varna region background

Site location: context of Europe, country, and the region.

Varna Lake area, Bulgaria

Scenarions of the region. Source: google.com
Origins of the landscape of the region

Varna, 1854. Focus on the “natural setting” of the site (all human impact is shown in red) Source: www.oldbulgaria.com
Water system of the region

Water system in Varna region: mapping the processes

Planning the new channel. Source: lostbulgaria.com

City plan, ca. 1800
Source: lostbulgaria.com
“Var” as a “limestone”

mountains & quarries

Pobiti Kamani mysterious monument

building material - nowadays...

... and in the past (Aladža Manastir) (to the north)

“Var” as “a limestone”: mapping the authentic feature of the region
Yumruk Kaya thracian sanctuary
Unexpected findings during revelations of the old layers
Hidden treasures

Gold from Varna necropolis, ca. 5000 years B.C.
Regional essence and strategic proposal for Varna region

Fig. 2.28. Varna region: essence of human impact of the area

Fig. 2.29. Varna region: demarcation of the strategic proposal for the region
Varna city
The urban growth in time, in relation to the landscape.
Notes from the hill: introduction to the city by the locals

To the south - the direction of future urban development
there’s a camping Borovetz to the south from Varna

Asparuhov (the only) bridge & small old bridge;
plans exist to "upgrade" Asparuhov bridge
(to widen it, and to facilitate biking and walking)

Primorsky Park is around 100 years old, it
needs some changes

Sand beaches appeared 40-50 years ago, after
groynes were built

Dangerous landslides are caused by erosion and
improper sewage system in many buildings

Primorsky Park is planned to become
"the new face of the city"
Connections with the city are important (low -
only ferry by now)

Old railway station is a beautiful building, beg. XX c.

After a big landslide, a 1km retention wall
was constructed

Water in the lake is brackish and polluted by industries

Gypsies’ district Maksuda behind the bridge - bulgarians avoid it. "Gypsies are everywhere, you cannot do anything about them. They are our problem"

Primorsky Park is 100 years old, it needs some changes

Future ideas:
- park (instead of military zone)
- residential zone
- public function
- fresh
- salty

Airport

Mapping the knowledge of the locals.
Existing programme of public spaces

Salsa workshop in the city centre
http://tinyurl.com/z5ou2hd

Sea gazing in Primorsky (Seaside) Park
photo by Robin de Louw

Folk festival in Varna, Tzar Osvoboditel street
http://tinyurl.com/jmwsqb3

Relation of main attractions of the city centre to the city as a whole
Port Varna East is one of the two major ports located at the Varna Lake. Its strategic location at the edge of the sea and inland has been first adapted to “a port” in XIX century during Ottoman times in Bulgaria. The initial wooden structure has been later transformed into a hard surface quay wall, which was later extended to its current area.

Nowadays, the part of the port adjacent to the coast line is planned to be moved further inland, due to the intention of develop cultural and ecological qualities of the site.

The location of container terminal strategically has the greatest potential for cultural development. However, despite the existing strategy for land-use development from the Municipality of Varna, the demand exists for various ideas for the area. The interstitial island is intended to obtain a new meaning for citizens. The intention is to develop a park, a residential zone and cultural activities. However, the vast size and complexity of the area leaves large projects unrealized.

Current project intends to regard the site from the perspective of landscape architecture, and with special attention to the cultural potential of the site.
Memory of Varna Lake

With the fluctuations of the sea level, pre-thracian settlements have been sunken under the water.

During modern construction work, precious relics are found, such as the famous Varna Necropolis. The unique memory, spatial structure and materialization of the monument have become an inspiration for the design at the coast line.

Golden treasures which were found at Necropolis, show sophisticated mastery, and are a resonating connector between past and present. The texture of gold, its reflecting qualities, and meaning of “preciousness”, inspire to give it an application of a special intriguing element in the design.
The city edges

I the City - the Sea

II the Hills - the City

III the City - the Lake
Ecological gradients in the city context

Fig. 3.9. Ecological gradient of the city and its context.
Existing dialogue between nature and the city

1. Erosion is tamed by a large-scale structure with weak spatial qualities.

2. Fresh water stream is taken in a concrete body, and washed away to the sea, with neither purification, nor “celebration.”

3. Breakwater designed as a robust alien structure within the coastal landscape.

4. Local gardening.

5. Artworks related to the landscape.
Streams and Voids

Map of urban interstices

- a courtyard
- a square - traffic “left-over”
- a square
- “untreated” spaces
An urban utopia: natural logic for the urban context
I Existing situation  
II Upstream solutions  

III “Spotty” application in the city centre  
IV A network  

Ecological benefits  
Social benefits  

Possible scenarios
Conceptual visualization of the extraordinary proposal for the city

Conceptual vision: guidance of the streams into the city

Streams in the city
an Edge between the city and the coast.
A sandy heart. Source: maps.google.com
Spatial analysis of the location

The edge of the city
Visual analysis of the site’s interstices: Sea Boulevard
Visual analysis of the site’s interstices: Breakwater

Serial version of the breakwater
Points of attraction around the site

Current condition of the site

railway station
Bulgarian maritime navigation headquarters
Ministry of transport’s hospital

Customs office
Bulgarian chamber of shipping

Port Varna headquarters

restaurant / cafe
residential buildings / hotels
station
hospital
maritime-related office buildings
museum / heritage object
park

Primorsky (Seaside) Park
Museum of Varna History
Small Roman Baths (a monument)
Fitness centre with two swimming-pools
Restaurant
Storages
Cruise terminal
Yacht marina

500 m
The suggested strategy for urban development in case of Varna

Principle of small attractions in a valuable context

Fig. 4.16. Distribution map: vernacular housing in Bulgaria.
Source: Цапенко, p. 187

Principle of small attractions in a valuable context

Fig. 4.16. Outdoor markets' typologies

1. a point
2. row
3. passage
4. stylobate
5. solitary structure

Fig. 4.16. Outdoor markets' typologies

Principle of small attractions in a valuable context
The series of sketches illustrates search for understanding the site and exploring its possible connections to the street flows of the city.

“What do I want to see when I approach the harbour? I don’t want to see structures (like at the image). I want a simplicity after a busy city.”

City as a villa with a view
Design proposal for the New Place in the harbour
Social introduction of the new place: breakwater enrichment

The existing condition of the breakwater

Design proposal for the enrichment of a place

Location at the plan.
Model as a method for understanding the essence of the design

Conceptual model of the local scale design essence
Elaborated sequence of places related to the flow: *the dialogues*
Dialogue with the past
Fig. 4.26, 4.27.
Small Roman Thermae
1. Entrance. 2. Information Centre.

Cross-section of the proposed utopia.

A project reference to the design by Carlo Scarpa. Fondazione Querini Stampalia (1961-63), where the layers of history are materialized and highlighted by the reflecting surface of water.

Source: http://maggiemayhan.tumblr.com/
Vision 1 from the city to the old ruins of Roman Thermae. An intriguing element embraces the flow. The new touches the old.

Vision 2 at the connection between the new embraced stream and the old landscape. Here authenticity of the landscape strongly relates to the built structures.
Vision 3 at the connection between the new embraced stream and the old landscape.
Here authenticity of the landscape strongly relates to the built structures.
Transition to the New Place

Cross-section of the tunnel

Reference: Mal-Tepe tomb, IV century B.C.
Source: Spixmann p.85

Vision 4 of the tunnel toward the new harbour environment. The texture of white limestone translates authenticity of the place through materialization. The structure of tiles highlights the dynamics of the transition.
Dialogue with the horizon
Cross-section of the current state of the harbour

Cross-section of the design proposal.
The existing vegetation is shown in white

Salix chrysocoma
Cupressus sempervirens
Prunus spinosa
Rosa canina
Berberis vulgaris

Varna coordinates: 43°13′00″, 27°55′00″
The peak degree of sun rays, at 2 p.m. on the dates:

- March 20: 47°
- June 20: 70°
- Sept. 20: 48°
- December 20: 23°

Source: http://planetcalc.ru/320/

Fig. 4. 42. Search for the position of the trees for the purpose of shadow creation
Dialogue with the New Place
The pulsating line
Cross-section of the wadi, which reveals gradual transition from a robust tamed embracement to the free character, where the wilderness takes over the tamed urban landscape.
Dialogue with the horizon: a sunken pier
Articulation of history through materials and shape

Fig. 4.49. A sunken pier. Model photo: concrete, resin, “gold”

Contrast in vegetation refers to the inflow of fresh water from the stream.

Translation of the history of sunken cities and hidden treasures to the language of the landscape.
Opening of the view at the future of Varna harbour
Panoramic view within the New Place
Model as a method for understanding the essence of the resulted design

the key discovery of the research: the actual flow of water can serve as a metaphorical guideline for understanding the urban spaces and their interrelations. One could think about the reference to a Japanese term “ma”, which means “a gap”, “a void”, - a negative space, “nothing”. Such phenomena finds a certain reflection in the meaning of the urban interstices.
Bedankt