

Modernism in the Petrified Landscape: Architecture in Montenegro 1945-1980

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2024 Special

Architecture, Landscape and Territory
in Yugoslav Modernism

University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy
Универзитет у Бањој Луци, Архитектонско-грађевинско-геодетски факултет

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Bosnia and Herzegovina





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Slavica Stamatović Vučković 

*University of Montenegro, Faculty of Architecture in Podgorica, Montenegro,
slavicasv@ucq.ac.me*

Danilo Bulatović 

*Politecnico di Torino, Department of Architecture and Design, Italy
dan.bulatovic@gmail.com*

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* corresponding author

Slavica Stamatović Vučković 

University of Montenegro, Faculty of Architecture in Podgorica, Montenegro,
slavicasv@ucg.ac.me

Danilo Bulatović  *

Politecnico di Torino, Department of Architecture and Design, Italy, dan.bulatovic@gmail.com

MODERNISM IN THE PETRIFIED LANDSCAPE: ARCHITECTURE IN MONTENEGRO 1945-1980

ABSTRACT

The subject of this paper is architectural heritage of the former Socialist Republic of Montenegro (SR Montenegro) in the period between 1945 and 1980, with particular emphasis on the role of stone in modern architecture. Stone, as a primordial building and design material, is present in post-war modernist Yugoslav architecture, especially during the first decades, the 50s and 60s of the 20th century. It establishes the continuity of construction, which in Montenegro has two fundamental links: the first is the connection with the vernacular principles of construction in the dry, rugged Mediterranean landscape that extends all the way to the central part of Montenegro, and the second is the connection with the beginnings of the modernist architectural idiom in Montenegro in the interwar period when stone was used mainly in a classical, academic manner. While the paper sheds the light on a hidden part of a very fruitful but neglected architectural heritage, standing in sharp contrast with today's trends of neo-liberal design practices in the country, it also aims to discern an intrinsic influence of the Mediterranean ethos on the architectural and urban developments on the southern and central region of Montenegro. Although most of the addressed buildings are part of the urban context, the imprints of the Montenegrin landscape, with stone being its dominant characteristic and a certain kind of national demarcation present through its authentic use, create recognizable *genius loci*. Finally, while deconstructing this phenomenon, the paper will help to communicate the process of *retreat* with respect to the wider tendencies of European architectural currents of the 20th century.

Key words: Montenegro, stone, landscape, modernism, Mediterranean

1. INTRODUCTION

The subject of this paper is architectural heritage of the former Socialist Republic of Montenegro (SR Montenegro) in the period between 1945 and 1980. With the "new countries transformed into free zones of corporate capitalism without political agency, prone to historical amnesia" [1:17] this heritage reminds us of perpetual crisis in all segments of our lives including the social stratification, exploitation of human and natural resources, all the way to the individual humiliation. Therefore, the analysis of the socialist building heritage within the Socialist Republic of Montenegro provides just a small piece of puzzle in the wider quest for rebuilding the forgotten patterns of development in this region.

Conversely, the study seeks to discern the overall influence of Mediterranean ethos on the architectural and urban developments in the southern and central region of Montenegro, with emphasis on the usage of stone as a dominant element in the surrounding landscape. This is particularly important considering the wider context of influence of Mediterranean culture on fundamental principles adopted and heralded as a 'retreat' from pernicious legacies of internationalism during second half of the 20th century.

Most importantly, while reassessing three pivotal decades of the socialist modernism in SR Montenegro, the paper also interrogates how beneficial the architectural and urban practice was in the search for self-identity within the smallest Yugoslav republic, re-born in the legacies of heroic fight against fascism during WWII.

The first part of the paper reflects on the historical pre-conditions rooted into the historical indebtedness of this area to the sea, emphasizing its extraordinary potential for further affirmation through the contemporary practice of the post-war generation of Montenegrin architects. In fact, it served as a chance to re-integrate with the contemporary architectural currents within the Mediterranean region. The second part provides systematic layout of the most important architects who contributed to the process of attuning the international influences coming from abroad to the local conditions, reflecting the need to follow the global tendencies while keeping in touch with the authentic dialectics mentioned above.

This will primarily be examined through 'textile tectonics', created by the use of stone in different scales and treatments, present in the works of many architects in Montenegro during post-war period: Vujadin Popović in Podgorica ("Crna Gora" hotel and Post Office, 1949-51); Đorđije Minjević in Nikšić (Grammar School, Elementary School "Žarko Radić" and others, 1957-62); Nikola Dobrović in Herceg Novi (Post Office and Children's Department of the Institute for Physical Therapy, 1962) and Milan Zloković in Ulcinj (hotel "Mediteran", 1965); application of the so-called 'sea pebble', stone from the banks of the Morača river, in the works of Vukota Tupa Vukotić ("Galeb" beach facility, 1961), Svetlana Kana Radević (Podgorica hotel, 1967; Bus station, 1968; Barutana monument, 1976-80) where stone is an inseparable part of the primary architectural design; Arsenije Martinović (residential building, 1961), Milan Popović and Božidar Milić (Clinical Centre, 1974; Technical Faculty of the University of Montenegro, 1977) in Podgorica and its surroundings; Milorad Vukotić in Cetinje (residential block of Stari aerodrom, 1967), Aleksandar Keković in Budva (Elementary school, 1976) and others. Bogdan Bogdanović writes an 'ode' to the Jablanica granite in the unique essay *Record of the construction of monuments in Ivangrad* (1980) [2], in which he describes the long process of choosing stone and the creation of the only

monument of his on the territory of Montenegro - the Freedom Monument (1972-77) on Jasikovac Hill next to the city of Berane.

This paper will not only cast the light on neglected architecture of Montenegro, situating it within the larger context of Yugoslavia's *unfinished modernisation*, but it will also be used for decoding the shift from modern to post-modern practices, which spread across the world. Finally, this research will hopefully open new avenues for further understanding while contributing to the rich architectural heritage of the former Yugoslavia, Mediterranean region and, thus, European continent as a whole.

2. STONE AS THE *FIL ROUGE* OF THE TERRITORIAL CONTINUUM

If we recall what Fernard Braudel, in *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, coined as "narrow seas" [3], with the Adriatic acting like a head to this coherent system constituting the Mediterranean, there is no doubt that this paradigm has strongly and most vividly reflected the historical importance of this part of the Old Continent. With numerous cities along the coastline, acting as economic engines and diffusers of what Braudel termed *civilisation*, we can understand the importance of synthetic analysis of mutual socio-political indebtedness between them. It is in this context that historians claim that "The hypothesis of a Mediterranean people united by centuries of history and multiple relationships has been accepted and explored by many scientists, and today it is consistent use to speak of "Mediterranean civilization" which exhibits the cultural and historical unity between the different peoples facing the Mare Nostrum." [4:264]. Consequently, it is exactly due to this historical discourse that architecture, with the stone in its foundations, represents a laborious testimony of the similar cultural roots (Figure 1). According to Antonio Monestirolì it lays new avenues in the overall process of decoding "...the homogenous territory anthropized in a unique way." (Figure 2) [4:199]



Figure 1. Walls of the Old city of Kotor under the Škudra canyon (left) and ruins of the Old city of Bar (middle and right) [11: 3, 77, 78]

In this context, Montenegro truly represents a unique substratum of indigenous practices interconnected by multicultural interests in forging the common idea of inextricable territorial continuum. This territorial continuum requires further studies on infrastructural, urban, typological and archaeological level that could lead us to the new understandings of stone as a unique DNA of the region. In that context, the emphasis on researching the term *built* landscapes in Montenegro vividly invokes the symbiotic relationship between the natural and artificial world where the new and the past coexist. One of the fundamental

traits of this unique territorial identification can be found in its materiality. Used as a domestic material, intrinsic to the dishevelled relief of the Adriatic coast and Dinaric Alps, whitened by the sea and river currents and carved by the wind streams, stone remained the basic unit of construction within the Montenegrin landscape. In fact, during the centuries-long process of anthropisation of the landscape, it reinforced the ideal of transversal civilization, which has preserved the symbiotic relationship between the men and the territory, and vice-versa. In this context, exploring the role of the stone as a primary building material in Montenegrin architecture, urbanism and morphology, within the overarching aim of retracing the *fil rouge* interwoven within this complex territorial system is of indispensable importance.

Anthropisation of the Montenegrin territory was predominantly characterized by its rough relief which pre-conditioned a wide range of vernacular architectural practices. These were divided in five different categories spread across the country, starting with the sea to the mountain oriented types of houses. In each case, however, the role of stone in the construction process was indispensable, contributing to the general notion of the symbiotic relationship between natural and artificial. In contrast to 'Durmitorska' and 'Plavska' house in the north, in case of 'Paštrovska', 'Bokeška' and 'Crmnička' houses, built in roughly processed or roughly fitted lime-stone present within the local landscape, it is important to note the general organization which complements not just natural environment but also entrenched social habits of Montenegrin 'bratstvo' (brotherhood) (Figure 4). This is particularly reflected through territorial organization in the south and central part of the country, represented by continual rows of tightly arranged plots of land of different brotherhoods on macro level and terraced houses within one brotherhood on a micro level.

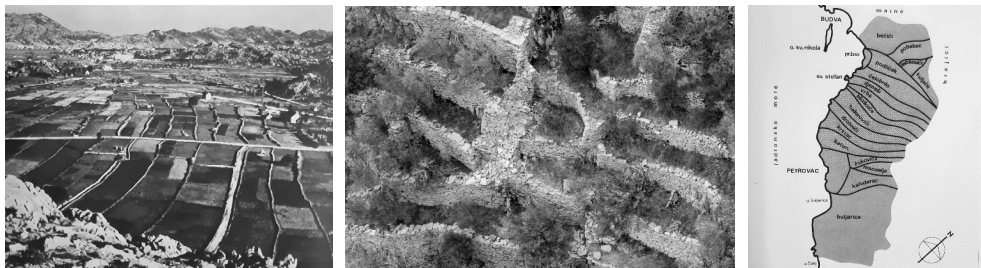


Figure 2. Anthropisation of the landscape - Karst of Cetinjsko polje (left) [9:14] and Adriatic coast of Montenegro (middle and right) [5]

Such constellation was also conditioned by turbulent periods of enemies, whereby locals were always ready to defend themselves. This state of affairs is reflected in the architecture itself. The appearance of houses pressed against each other, each group being made up of a single family, speaks of the need to bring kinship closer together in times of misfortune and danger. Usually, each of these territorial units was divided by 'suvomeđa' as a stone arrangement not only intrinsic to the seaside and hinterland of Montenegro, but also of the Mediterranean in general. This skill of building in the dry involves processing and stacking stones on top of each other without the use of binding material. The stability of the structure is ensured by the careful selection and stacking of stone, and dry construction has shaped various cultural landscapes from prehistoric times to the present day. The skill was primarily passed down from generation to generation, depending on the terrain on which it was built.

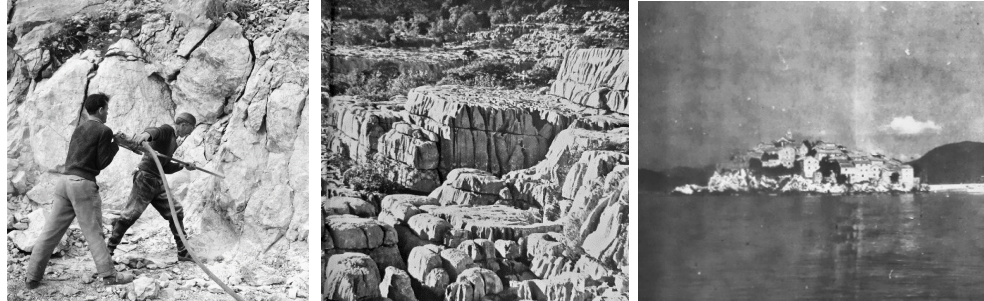


Figure 3. Excerpts from Montenegrin landscape from 1964 [11: 3, 19, 44]

The critical value of this inherited system, stone being in its foundations, can particularly be emphasized during post-WWII period when "...the tension between, on the one hand, the need for access to this progress and, on the other hand, the need to preserve our heritage, [in that] we suffer the pressure of the two different but equally compelling needs." [6] This was also one of the reasons why in 1957 the question of "crisis or continuity" [7] denoted critical discourse between pragmatic ideals of capitalist modernism and the possibility of domesticating the modernist ideals and attuning them to the inherited qualities of (in this case) the Mediterranean ethos (Figure 3). The values of this approach made it possible for architects across this region to identify the "truth that architecture could not give up on the social movements that justified it, the programmes that gave it meaning, or on memory, the engine of reconciliation with history, with the identity of place, with the value of the context, and finally with life." [8] Heralded in different socio-political circumstances that emerged on the continent, it was indeed this humane character which altered the principles of (post)modern architectural practice within the Mediterranean region resonating also on the global level. As this approach was simultaneously interrogated by architects in Portugal (Fernando Tavora), Spain (Joseph Antoni Coderch), France (Georges Candilis), Italy (Luigi Moretti), it also became the subject of architects in Montenegro, whose work addressed the complexity of vernacular as well as its translation into contemporary design context.



Figure 4. Bokeška house (left), Paštrovska house (middle), Crmnička house (right) [9: 11, 26, 40]

Moreover, specific to historical conditions of re-birth of the Montenegrin state in 1943, it was a post-war generation of architects that articulated fundamental values upon which new layers of authenticity were discovered and etched into diverse mosaic underpinning historical continuity of this minute Balkan state. In broad terms, these values can primarily be connected to those of the "socialist-humanist" approach in former Yugoslavia based on "antifascist, self-managed, non-aligned, anti-imperial and progressive political aesthetic" [1:18]. Such foundational character served as an ideal experimental laboratory for the generations of architects to research new categories between self-identification and future

development of the Montenegrin society. In deconstructing a DNA of this territorial complexity, different forms of stone integration within the construction process were pivotal in establishing the line of continuity between modern and vernacular. This wasn't just a mere imitation but a profound willingness to penetrate into the collective sub-consciousness that influenced the way of living of the local people for centuries. It was an intrinsic need of the architects to synthesise the qualities of the ethnographic understanding of the materiality, which, we could say, strived to "animate rather than simply mimic, to rupture rather than merely account, to evoke rather than just report, and to reverberate instead of more modestly resonating." [10] Reawakening the sensoriality deeply entrenched into the ethos of the local people, Montenegrin modernists successfully balanced between contemporary programmatic expectations of new buildings and their capacity to establish connection with the pre-existing condition, adding additional value to it. With different interpretations of the stone, seamlessly fitting into the jagged landscapes across the country, they enriched Montenegrin architectural legacy to such an extent that it proved its quality far beyond the borders of ex-Yugoslavia. More importantly, the works of the post WWII generation of architects continue to remind us of our role in the process of discovering our own identity as a constitutive part of a broader civilisational context.

3. ECHOES OF THE MEDITERRANEAN LANDSCAPE

Retracing the continuity in materiality and forms, Milan Zloković and Branislav Kojić clearly understood, through their writings from 1964, the importance of medieval settlements of the Boka Bay in Montenegro, stating that "considered as a whole, the rural house of Boka Kotorska belongs to the general type of coastal house that one encounters from Ulcinj to Trieste, in the islands as well as on the entire Adriatic coast." [11:51] Kojić recognizes fundamental values of continuum in both historical and material context. He goes on and distinguishes two groups of settlements. The first one extends along the coast and the roads, in a long line of tightly packed houses, always facing the sea. Behind them, on the slopes rise the habitats of the second group, with scattered houses hidden in greenery. Kojić outlines that "the real village of Boka Kotorska is actually revealed in the second type of habitats which, located on hillsides, are more or less distant from the coast." [11:52] Kojić particularly emphasizes the authentic value of the stone as a primary construction material stating that "seen from the marine landscape, the house of the Boka can hardly be distinguished from the rocky ground which outcrops in places through the greenery. Built in stone, its grey colour blends with the grey of the rocky massifs." [11:53]. Here, Kojić outlines the quality of the vernacular in what he sees as creation of a stratified territory well represented by the same stone that homogeneously builds the nature and architecture of this strip of land.

Milan Zloković, on the other side, whose "childhood and adolescence must have been the great trinity of the Mediterranean life: the sea, the ship and the stone house" [12] directs his attention to bourgeois houses of Boka. Aligned, according to Ljiljana Blagojević with the aesthetics and logic of a ship, Zloković notices that "the simple numerical ratios, based on a common determined measure, represent one of the characteristics of the architecture here... [and] in addition to the traditional use of stone and the skill of its execution, architecture consisted in its quiet and discreet proportions." [11:56]. What is particularly important here to emphasize is that Zloković read the stone, not only as a material rooted into the tradition of the Mediterranean building practice but as a principal unit of a modular

system, which he later translated into his own architectural language. In case of palaces of Boka Kotorska he describes that "the stone elements were ordered before the start of the work, always according to the measurements taken previously, which led to the typing of certain elements. For module we have tacitly adopted the measure of 17.4 cm, that is to say half of the current Venetian foot." [11:57]. As the stone for palaces was often transported from the island of Korčula via Adriatic to Boka Bay, it represents yet another testimony to the integral idea of continuity in forms and materials traversing this unicum of territories and people. It is also the reason why the heritage in the words of Zloković "represents an important chapter in the history and serves as a model in the realization of contemporary architectural problems." [11:58].

Specifically, during the 1950s and 1960s, the work of the most important protagonists of early modernism in interwar Yugoslavia, architects Nikola Dobrović (1897-1967) and Milan Zloković (1898-1965) on the coast of Montenegro, is of particular importance. In case of Zloković, the attitude towards the Mediterranean heritage comes from inheritance from Boka Kotorska (Bijela), whereas Dobrović's connection was established during his so-called 'Dubrovnik period' (1934-43).

The "Mediteran" Hotel complex in Ulcinj, on the slope of the Pinješ hill (first phase 1961-62; second phase 1963-64), which architect Milan Zloković realized with architects Đorđe Zloković and Milica Mojović [13], achieved a specific relationship between modernity and tradition, primarily through simple geometry of shapes and a sophisticated sense of measure and proportion, using the so-called modular coordination, constantly present in Zloković's work (Figure 5). The urban layout of the complex, based on cascaded pavilion buildings in the pre-existing greenery of terraced gardens and olive groves, represents a kind of interpretation of the Mediterranean vernacular heritage, while the combination of modern and traditional materials, primarily stone, brings the author in contact with the postulates of the "regional context" [14] and specific "Mediterranean modernism" [15]. This work establishes a clear continuity with his numerous realizations in Montenegro in the period between the two world wars (villa "Rivijera" in Herceg Novi (1934-35); People's House in Bijela (House of the Knight King Alexander I of the United Nations, 1935) [16]; Customs House building in Kotor (1935-38) and the National Health Centre with a hospital in Risan, the endowment of Vasa Ćuković (1938-41)), where a synthesis of modernist architectural principles and the Mediterranean building tradition [17] can be clearly observed (Figure 5). Specifically from that period, the buildings in Bijela and Kotor stand out as representatives of the Mediterranean tradition of stone integration within construction process.



Figure 5. National Health Centre, 1939-41 (left) and Hotel 'Mediteran' in Ulcinj, 1961-64 (middle and right) [17]

These are compact reduced volumes that represent a modern expression of traditional coastal building principles and materials, in precise classical proportions. A dominant multi-storey volume of the hospital in Risan, done in reinforced concrete and a low, terraced tract with pergolas, terraces and sub-walls, placed longitudinally, parallel to the coast in the hinterland towards the hill, adapted to the views, topography of the terrain and specific climatic and environmental conditions, establishes a successful dialogue with natural landscape. [15:107-108]

In the period from 1950 to 1965, architect Nikola Dobrović was active in the area of Herceg Novi and Igalo, where he laid the foundations for the development of modern health tourism through a series of urban plans and architectural projects, most of which remained unrealized [18]. Dobrović's first work was, extremely modest in dimensions, the object of the reception and porter's office of the old spa treatment centre in Igalo (the old hotel "Igalo", 1958, demolished in 1972), of specific design with walls made of local stone [19:202]. Through a series of annexed functional-plastic masses and elements, using local, Mediterranean materials - stone and sea pebbles, Dobrović creates a living and authentic architecture, with an expressive character such as the Children's Department of the Institute for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation "Dr. Simo Milošević" in Igalo (1959-62), which is actually an extensive addition and adaptation of a smaller cubical object of the former French cable telephone exchange building (Figure 6).

At the beginning of the 60s, Dobrović designed two more buildings in Herceg Novi: the Post Office building (1962), the position and plastic design of which derives from his previously defined urban design, and a new part of the Herceg Novi Municipality building (1962) (Figure 6). The expressive way in which Dobrović modifies the basic cubist plastics from which he starts, creating his own "conflict architecture" [19:203] (as in his most famous work - the General Staff building in Belgrade, 1954-63), is further enhanced by the influence of the specific morphological characteristics of the Mediterranean environment. The treatment of surfaces with different coverings - stone and sea pebbles of local origin - and their juxtapositional relationship, is an active principle in Dobrović's work since the 'Dubrovnik period'. The buildings in Herceg Novi and Igalo represent a significant part of the post-war architectural oeuvre of the architect, showing his specific way of thinking about space and architecture, Heidegger's attitude towards *genius loci* and the Mediterranean landscape, through the transformation of strict modernist principles characteristic of his pre-war period. [20]

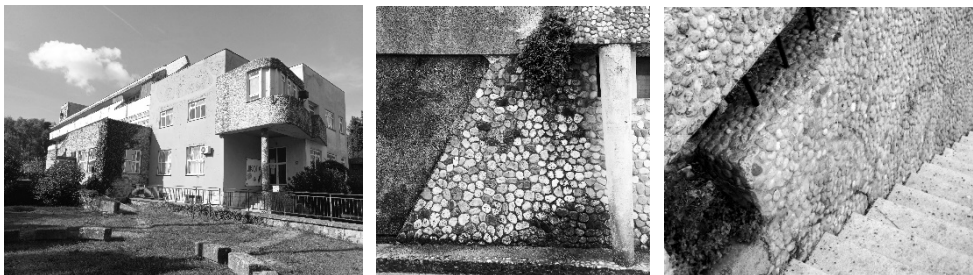


Figure 6. Children department in Igalo, 1959-62 (left and middle) and Post Office in Herceg Novi – detail, 1962 (right) (photos by Slavica S. Vučković)

In the 1970s, there was an almost complete change of the modernist paradigm and the emergence of architectural pluralism and "conceptual dualism" [21:19-21] in the whole of

Yugoslavia, including Montenegro. The modernist idiom is mostly transformed into a structuralist one, followed by the appearance of strong forms of individualized and sculptural volume, broken and curved lines. In addition to the dominant use of natural concrete in that period, some authors are still directed towards interpretations of the local construction context, which usually implies the establishment of continuity in the use of local stone, especially when it comes to the Mediterranean context.



Figure 7. Elementary School 'Stefan Mitrov Ljubiša' in Budva, 1975-77 (photos by Danilo Bulatović)

A good example is the spatial and form concept of the Elementary School "Stefan Mitrov Ljubiša" in Budva (1975-77) (Figure 7), designed by architect Aleksandar Keković (1939-2018) [22]. A fluid semi-open space in the basement part, strong modular stone wall masses and slanted single-pitched roofs, make this unique building, although compact and strong in form, fully integrated into the Mediterranean context [23]. It is precisely the use of semi-hewn stone on wall panels and surfaces that contributes to the reading of the specific 'vernacular archetype' of a terraced Pašović house, specific to the part of the hinterland of the Budva riviera.

4. STONE EMBROIDERIES

The simplified cubist volume of the flat roofs of the Post Office building (1947-49) and the hotel "Crna Gora" (1949-53), designed by the architect Vujadin Popović (1912-1999) [24], undoubtedly one of the first post-war Montenegrin architects who developed a clearly legible modernist language, marks the entrance to the central area of Podgorica ("Nova Varoš"). The Post Office building is characterized by plain geometry, clean facade surfaces with simple rectangular openings, grouped in horizontal strips on the first floor, without covered segments on the ground floor, with cladding made of white, cut stone slabs, placed in regular order without emphasizing the joint. The sculptural detail on the facade facing the boulevard - a dynamised female figure executed in a deep relief - represents a lyrical, classicist composition, which is also attributed to the specific artistic sensibility of the architect [25]. The skilfully juxtaposed cubic masses of the hotel "Crna Gora" (1949-53) [26], the orthogonal matrix of the facades and the formation of the open ground-floor portico on the columns show Popović's sophisticated perception in establishing functional and spatial relationships (Figure 8).

The use of roughly processed stone is dominant on the external surfaces of the ground floor, especially in the part of the covered portico - the central terrace of the hotel, where the pillars, covered with the same type of stone, come to the fore. Conspicuous use of stone on the ground floor contrasts with the clean facade surfaces on the higher floors and follows the Renaissance (classical) matrix of vertical facade treatment, with rustic cladding on the

ground floor. Similar design features can be seen in Popović's hotel "Onogošt" in Nikšić (1952-55), where there is also an emphasis on the use of local stone on the ground floor (Figure 8). The same material will also be present in the designs of the architect Đorđije Minjević (1924-2013) [24:120-122], who, after Popović's sudden emigration to Australia, participated in the design and completion of the construction of the "Onogošt" hotel.



Figure 8. Hotel "Crna Gora" in Podgorica, 1949-53 (left) [27] and Hotel "Onogošt" in Nikšić, 1952-55 (right) [28]

In Nikšić, Minjević designed a series of buildings characterized by harmonious functional-compositional units developed in orthogonal matrices and cubic volumetric masses, flat roofs and emphasized horizontality with the distinctive use of local stone on some facades: the Grammar School building (1955-57, later "Olga Golović" elementary school [29]), surgical and gynaecological hospital (1960) and elementary school "Žarko Radić" (1961). The Nikšić Municipality building (1962), and soon after that the residential tower on the roundabout (1963), became recognizable landmarks of the city from which a typical international style pattern can be read, while the first and the only Trade Union House in Montenegro (1962) [30], functionally divided and with dynamic volumetry, along with the impressive vertical concrete brise-soleils on the southern facade, is a unique piece of work in Minjević's oeuvre from Nikšić [30: 129, 339]. The use of stone-clad wall tiles becomes a special element of architectural expression, which is architect's "preoccupation that originates from the tradition of the Montenegrin architecture" [31]. He uses different types of stone masonry that were favoured in the 50s and 60s (the so-called 'splitski vez' (Split embroidery) or 'češki vez' (Czech embroidery); 'na bunju', 'štokovano' etc.), emphasizing that for him the use of stone meant precisely the establishment of continuity "between traditional stone construction and modern architecture", but also the landscape ("and the landscape of this climate was dominantly characterized by stone") which "will not negate modernity, but will only ennoble it." [31:36].

The cubic volumetry of shallow floors and emphasized horizontality, with reinforced-concrete walls covered with stone are also characteristic with respect to other buildings from the same period: elementary schools "Radojica Perović" in Podgorica (1963, today the School of Mechanical Engineering) (Figure 9) and "Vuko Jovović" in Danilovgrad by architect Yuri Gruzinov (1927-1973) (Figure 9) [24:61-62]; the building of the Faculty of Law and Economics in Podgorica (1962) by which Milan Popović (1934-1985) [24: 155-157] as one of the most productive Montenegrin architects, began his abundant and short 25-year career; as well as the impressive residential villa of the Executive Council of SR Montenegro (1967, today "CANU" building [32]) also in Podgorica, designed by architect Milorad Miša Vukotić (1932-1978) [24:49-52]. The last example is a completely authentic application of the modernist language on an unobtrusive volume, organically integrated into the slope of the

Gorica hill, with emphasized horizontal lines, rhythmically placed brisoileils and penetrations of wall sycamores into the stone [33]. All the above-mentioned works are emblematic examples of 'regionalized modernism' in the 1960s.



Figure 9. Faculty of Law and Economics 1962 (left) and "Radojica Perović" school 1963 (right) in Podgorica (photos by Danilo Bulatović)

5. PEBBLE-MODERNISM IN TITOGRAĐ

During post WWII years of reconstruction, the capital city of Titograd (today Podgorica) acted as *tabula rasa* in terms of its capacity to adopt different kind of urban and architectural approaches in creating contemporary image of the socialist city. This modernity was predominantly reflected through new residential blocks, governmental and educational institutions, interconnected with wide network of transport infrastructure built on the west side of the Morača River. Most importantly, during this phase of the city's enlargement it is of indispensable importance to note how beneficial the architectural and urban practice of local architects was in the search for self-identity within the smallest Yugoslav republic. In broader terms, such development of the "unconquered men of the Black Mountain...whose inhabitants reacted to the unprecedented loss of independence [in 1918] by converting en masse to communism" [34], socialism brought, for the first time, a peaceful contribution to the historically war-torn process of a self-identification in Montenegro. Hence, in search for collective consciousness of the society and its translation into architectural language that defied the common principles of high-modernism during 1950s and 1960s, architects such as Svetlana Kana Radević, Vukota Tupa Vukotić, Arsenije Martinović, Dušan Laličić, among many others, left behind positive examples of this authentic design practice as a contribution to the "more local, the more universal" [35] paradigm.

Identification of co-existence between territorial materiality and architectonic-typological solutions within the petrified landscape of the Morača river canyon (which passes through Podgorica) was initially adopted and heralded in design by architect Vukota Tupa Vukotić (1932 – 2002). As the first author who used local pebblestone in the construction of "Labud plaža" (river-beach complex) in 1960, Vukotić followed the principles of *continuum* of knowledge related to stone building techniques, which testifies to the fundamental sensibility of the architect to the existing context (Figure 10). With the building devised "as

an organism with a multitude of balanced contents [that] follows the terrain without force, with the impression of complete adhesion and fusion", accompanied by "the horizontal strip [that] harmonizes the rhythmically arranged free spaces...with a lacy treatment of the wall (made of hollow blocks) to full partitions made of natural concrete and those with pebbles" [24:44] the architect manages to blur the line between the natural and artificial. Interestingly, a connecting line can be drawn between Vukotić (b.1932) and his Portuguese contemporary Álvaro Siza (b.1933), who, six year after Vukotić, designed the well-known Leça Swimming Pools complex (1966) on the beach of Matosinhos.



Figure 10. "Labud plaža" river-beach complex in Podgorica, 1960 (left) [36], (middle and right - photos by Danilo Bulatović)

In both cases the right balance was struck "between the functional, technological and material requirements of contemporary architecture", while keeping in touch with the "knowledge of local tools and techniques to resolve the specific problems of each context: climatic efficiency, economy of construction and conflict-free continuity in the landscape and in scale." [35:21]. Consequently, the two examples show how skilful both architects were in deriving new meanings and solutions for quite similar structures in quite complex relief, to the benefit of both the users and the local environment. Another trait that significantly contributes to the realization is that in such cases, instead of opposition, tradition and modernity did not clash. This approach allowed Tupa Vukotić to successfully materialize extremely contemporary architecture, without overlooking the legacies of modernism, nor the collective sensory sub-consciousness of the local people. Even today, when the pebble-stone of the river still emanates the essential qualities of the building's concept, it is an example "which inform approaches to urban planning and regeneration that are more attuned to the pleasures and effects of sensual diversity in the city" [37], which Podgorica desperately needs today.



Figure 11. Residential buildings in Podgorica, 1960 and 1964 (photos by Danilo Bulatović)

During the same period, architect Arsenije Martinović (1932-2018) also made his contribution to the process of dissemination of the pebblestone in the facade treatment in his architectural works in Titograd. It was residential typology in all three cases that Martinović made his recognizable footprint. These examples gravitate towards the river banks which clearly reflects architect's motivation and understanding of the city's interdependence on the natural elements as well as its role in creating the architectural identity of the city as a whole. In the first example (1960), on the west side of the river, on a linearly distributed three stories building, Martinović posited pebble-stone on the symmetrical corners of both blind-sides, with the white square windows in the upper corners underpinning the overall geometrical composition (Figure 11).

Furthermore, in two residential buildings (1964) on the east side of the river, near Stara varoš (Old city), the architect proposed a similar solution with minor changes in the treatment of the front elevation, with equally accentuated corners covered in pebble without openings (Figure 11). Hence, it is important to outline a clear intention of the architect to cultivate the austerity brought by the principles of high modernism, whereby shining white volumes on the top overlap with the carefully crafted connection to the ground. In this context, Martinović's sensibility shares foundational character similar to that of Vukota Tupa Vukotić, aiming at synthetic approach in resolving the questions of modern design practice.

Another important influence in the usage of a pebble-stone as the non-representational underlay of these *materialities* that we learn from, more than its representational overlay is Svetlana Kana Radević (1937 – 2000). In her elaborate writing about the pernicious legacies of internationalization and her vision of the contemporary, Radević immensely contributed to the process of demesticating the architectural practice to the ambience of Titograd. Among many examples that show this kind of commitment, stand some of the most notable such as hotel "Podgorica" (1967) and bus terminal building (1968) (Figure 12). Those two represent architect's opposition to the wider currents in the architectural world that she described as "the movement [that] was eventually deprived in terms of creative force, repeated endlessly and as a consequence depleted while also being introduced in the ambient surroundings neglecting their qualities" [38].



Figure 12. Hotel "Podgorica" 1967 (left) and central bus station 1968 (right) in Podgorica (photos by Lazar Pejović and Danilo Bulatović)

Built on the western banks of the Morača River, hotel "Podgorica", for which Radević was honoured with the prestigious *Borba* Award (1968), represents crucial moment in identification of the spatial and sensorial qualities which the site offers to the architect. In a linear arrangement of the volumes along the contours of the landscape, interrupted with concrete walls covered in pebble, she successfully balances between material and visual continuity with the surrounding space. In general terms, it subscribes to the "cats stretched out on the floor" [39] notion on account of its ability to blend into the ground. Similarly, in the bus station project, Radević emphasizes the role of pebble-stone in lower and upper zones of the building whereby the "plasticity and expressiveness of concrete" [40:13] reaches its pinnacle as a part of an authentic architectural language. In her saying that "I do not like tradition in the sense of something fixed, frozen, which is passed on. Rather I see tradition as a dynamic process where things are refined and we get a new expression that is essentially tradition.", [40:27] we can acknowledge a great contribution Svetlana Kana Radević had in the process of self-identification within Montenegrin architectural practice, etching her footprint into the collective memory of the city-scape.



Figure 13. Train station in Podgorica, 1976 (photos by Danilo Bulatović)

In addition to the public infrastructure projects such as Radević's bus terminal, another important example of the implementation of a pebble-stone is the central train station in Podgorica (1976) (Figure 13). Designed by Dušan Laličić (1933-2006) in repetitive system of the 'pebble stripes' with a continual colonnade covering the waiting platform, the architect emphasized the materiality as the initial meeting point between the city and the foreigners. It is yet another testament to the deep understanding of the anthropologic (and thus sensorial) character rooted into the rough landscape and its masterly translation into principles of contemporary design, that architects such as Laličić successfully incorporated as crucial value of Montenegrin architecture.

6. MONUMENT, STONE AND LANDSCAPE

In order to establish a new Yugoslav ideology [41], an array of specific architectural, sculptural, and landscape forms helped mark the major WWII events in the 1950s and 1960s. While the first notable evidence of memorial (monumental) architecture in Montenegro dates back to the 1950s, the culmination of their construction (in Montenegro and other areas of the SFRY) took place in the 1970s, which was the time that gave rise to very ambitious, republic and federal competitions symbolizing a general socio-economic development of the country. A leading role in the process of planning and building monuments and memorial complexes was given to architects since the fundamental aim was not the display of sculptural plastic, but the creation of specific public spaces – places where "ME" becomes "WE" [42], which, given an important socio-ideological role, have become new urban, ambient and landscape topoi.

The monument in the Savinska Dubrava in Herceg Novi [43] is one of the first monuments and prominent landmarks of the urban space constructed during the 1950s in Montenegro. Although it represents a modest form of spatial intervention – ‘small-scale architecture’, the analogy that can be drawn between the monument and other works of the architect Nikola Dobrović from the same period (in Herceg Novi and Igalo; the General Staff building and the Ministry of Defence building in Belgrade) indicates an essentially identical architectural approach characterized by Bergson's concept of dynamism of space and movement, the importance of the holes (pits) as a compositional element, and particularly the use of juxtaposed elements/materials-coverings, which altogether became the recurring elements of Dobrović's post-war works [43]. With his distinctive and subtle conception of design elements and the application and use of materials, primarily stone, Dobrović demonstrates a responsible attitude towards monuments. For him, monuments represent "the most subtle aspects of urbanity" and "means of harmonizing masses, finding proportional relationships, rhythmization and in-depth experience of space" [44]. Dobrović establishes a specific relationship with the Herzegovinian landscape by developing the dualistic spatial-form concept "vertically vs. horizontally", also present in his Monument to Viktor Dyk on Lopud (1936) from the time he worked in Dubrovnik (1934-43), when his emphasized relationship with the natural, Mediterranean environment paved the way for the landscape and the garden space to become inextricably interwoven, becoming thus an important design and shape tool. One side of the Savina monument (Figure 14) shows a "vertical marking" with a reduced cubic vertical covered with white marble in a square grid ("textile matrix" characteristic of Dobrović), on top of which there is an expressive work in bronze by the sculptor Luka Tomanović (the so-called "Bezmetković", phase I, 1954). The expanded memorial ossuary (phase II, 1960), located on the other side of the monument, represents the opposite principle of a "horizontal marking", which is based on the spatial immersion and the creation of a "rift/penetration" of a kind of "interspace" ("the plasticity of the void" [43]), as a specific spatial effect that Dobrović skilfully manipulates in much broader spatial compositions, such as the General Staff building complex in Belgrade (1954-63). While a square matrix of stone covering is applied on the vertical element of the Savina monument, the surfaces of the buried parts are covered with two characteristic, juxtaposed surfaces – sea pebbles and non-floodable red stone from the local mine in Morinj. It is precisely this use of local stone, noticeable in all of Dobrović's works in Herceg Novi, which aims to establish the continuity between the architecture and the characteristic Mediterranean landscape.



Figure 14. Savina monument in Herceg Novi, 1950s (photos by Slavica S. Vučković)

The Monument (Mausoleum) to the Partisan Fighter (1953-57) on Gorica Hill, one of the most impressive symbols of Podgorica, is the work of Vojislav Đokić (architect) and Drago Đurović (the academic sculptor) (Figure 15). Đurović created two memorial statues of 'partisan fighters' in front of the crypt area [45: 47-48]. Although similar to the monument on Savina in terms of its burial depth, the Mausoleum was designed in a classicist way, according to the principle of axial symmetry, with monumental access staircase leading to the central "canopy-house" in the upper zone of the complex. All surfaces are covered with the distinctive white-coloured local stone from the local stone quarry in the vicinity of Podgorica (Spuzh), with the nuances in the varying treatment of both extremely rough and finely carved surfaces (including sculptures), which makes the whole complex monolithic and monumental. The dominance of the local stone corresponds directly to the local context of dry stone and sparse vegetation from the 1950s, while the orientation of the longer axis in the direction of Njegoševa Street at the foot of the hill, establishes the connection with the urban matrix of the central city zone.

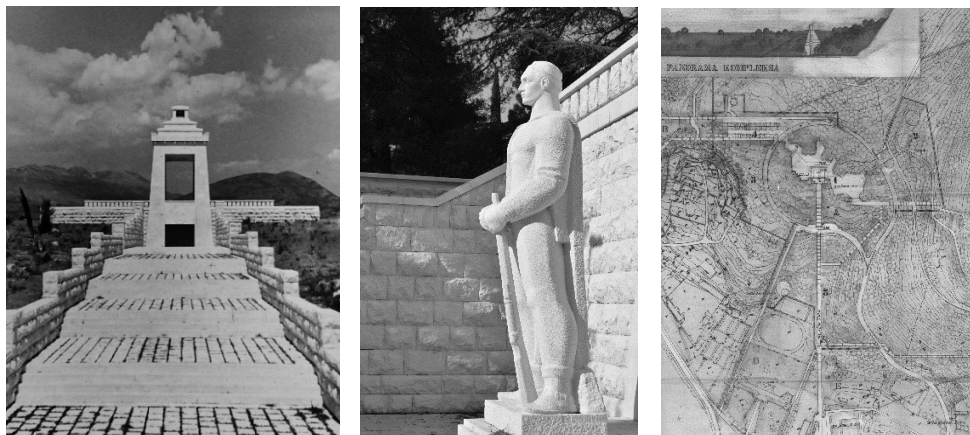


Figure 15. The Monument (Mausoleum) to the Partisan Fighter in Podgorica, 1957 (Slavica S. Vučković's private archive)

After designing Villa Gorica in Montenegro (Podgorica, 1957), the Croatian architect Branko Bon (1912-2001) also proposed the concept for the Monument in Žabljak (Figure 16) (Monument to Fallen Soldiers of the National Liberation War and Victims of the Fascist Terror in Durmitor, 1963) [45: 51-52]. Transforming vernacular architecture into a reduced modernist expression, the archetypal form of the Durmitor log cabin is materialized

uniformly in a finely cut white stone from Brač, creating a close but subtle resemblance to the characteristic landscapes of Durmitor. It is exactly the fine stonework that inspired Đorđije Minjević to describe the monument in his memoirs as "a crystalline form...(with a Venetian mosaic in the interior)" [31: 37-38]. As an already experienced stone architect at the time, Branko Bon invited Minjević to supervise the construction of the monument.



Figure 16. *Monument to Fallen Soldiers of the National Liberation War and Victims of the fascist terror in Durmitor, 1963 [45: 51-52]*

The only architectural work of Bogdan Bogdanović in Montenegro is the Monument to Freedom on Jasikovac Hill, Berane (formerly Ivangrad), which was completed in 1977 [fig. 17]. In his essay on the construction of the monument in Ivangrad [2], Bogdanović once again expresses his search for 'paradigmatic material' in a lyrical attitude towards the landscape he selected as a location of the monument: he goes out and walks up the hill at night so that he can listen to the sounds and the wind, hoping to experience a prophetic vision of the 'invisible paradigm of the future building', waiting for the place itself to tell him what it wants to accommodate, in order to be perfectly complemented and yet remain naturally intact. He describes the process of creating the monument, which started in 1972 and took years to complete, emphasizing the 'wise search for the right stone' as a way of primordial, cosmological connecting with the 'Mother Earth' [45: 23-36]. His 'profane purchase' of the initially selected stone was unsuccessful due to the cracks that appeared in the stone. A long search ended when he made a selection and chose the well-known Jablanica granite, a hard, crystalline rock, which he used for the construction of 40 sarcophagi placed in the ambulatory around the central stone cone, or a 'pillar' 18 meters high (made of limestone rock on a metal substructure). The Monument to Freedom, like the other monuments designed by Bogdanović, is another cosmological category – 'idea-form-formula' [46: 30-41] – that establishes a primordial bond with nature and landscape.



Figure 17. Monument to Freedom on Jasikovac Hill, Berane, 1977 (left - Slavica S. Vučković private archive; right – photos by Duško Miljanić)

Designed by architect Svetlana Kana Radević, Monument in Barutana (1980) is recognizable, first of all, by its expressive sculptural vertical in natur-beton ("torch of freedom" height ~12m), which represents the central part of the memorial complex, and dominates the surrounding landscape (Figure 18). Equally impressive and remarkable, and distinctly unusual and unique in the entire oeuvre of this architect, is the way the memorial complex ("Flowers") [45: 17-22] is shaped and structured, which enables Radević to express a special relationship to the so-called "non-programmatic architecture" that includes the monument theme. Prior to the Monument in Barutana, Radević created the memorial complex on the grounds of the Tobacco Factory (1972) as well as the Zlatina Park landscape design (1974) in Podgorica [46: 30-41]. It is precisely in these works that her architectural expression and design become softer, which is manifested in round and circular lines continuously connecting to each other. The culmination of the quest for forms that establish the continuity of nature is clearly represented in the subtle connection of the memorial space with specific landforms and the landscape of rocky hills, characteristic of the wider area of Lake Skadar.

The walking surfaces are paved with stone in a regular linear and radial pattern, and the entire memorial complex is subtly bordered by a low sloping wavy wall, which is covered with broken stone and accentuated joints that give the impression of a discrete stone network connected to the surrounding landscape. Interestingly enough, the monument design and the way in which the entire surface of the memorial is connected to the ground is very similar to the Partisan Memorial Cemetery in Mostar (1965), which was designed by Bogdanović. A clear similarity in the architectural language of both monuments is closely reflected in the wavy lines of the perimeter wall, as well as the combination of irregular pieces of stone with wide, accentuated joints and the linear stone cladding. Svetlana Kana Radević perceived the environment in the same way as Bogdanović ("... more than the space itself, the environment is also every sound, and event in space, and man in space, and time in space" [46: 30-41]), as something of "a great, complex value". [46: 30-41] Still, it was Svetlana Kana Radević who understood architecture, especially monumental architecture, as an important 'social medium', a public space, a space for meetings, events, and communication – a place where "ME" becomes "WE".[42]



Figure 18. Monument in Barutana, Municipality of Podgorica, 1980 (Slavica S. Vučković's private archive)

7. CONCLUSION

The overview of the post-war Montenegrin architectural scene given in this paper through the prism of the use of stone as an autochthonous material with the aim of building upon the characteristics of the Montenegrin landscape and establishing the continuity in the building process, enables the election of a specific group of architects whose contribution is immeasurable with respect to the size of the architectural scene in Montenegro.

The paper outlines a particular autonomy which can be seen in the practices of the architects such as Dobrović, Zloković, Bogdanović, Minjević, Vukotić, Radević, Keković and whose contribution to the development of modern architecture in Montenegro is of outstanding importance in defining a collective identity.

Precisely this group of the most influential (post)modernists, both Yugoslav (Dobrović, Zloković, Bogdanović) and originally Montenegrin (Minjević, Vukotić, Radević, Keković) show that among the best architectural achievements in Montenegro are precisely those who establish subtle relationship with the landscape or urban context, primarily through the use of authentic natural materials such as stone.

The paper has shown a transposition of the 'pebble', first applied by Nikola Dobrović (sea pebble) in his designs in Herceg Novi, which, afterwards, in the context of the Morača river (river pebble in a different scale) was adopted and became a crucial component of demarcation of the architectural works in Podgorica. Moreover, Đorđe Minjević, capable of manipulating and producing various forms of 'textile tectonics', achieved impressive work in the territory of Nikšić municipality. Alongside, his contemporary Bogdan Bogdanović judiciously chooses the pistoyan stone, re-contextualizing it from Jablanica to the landscape of Jasikovac.

All of the presented examples, show not only the fundamental role of stone as a building material intrinsic to the Mediterranean ethos and various possibilities of its application, but architecture as a thoughtful, synergistic act of art that complements the values of the pre-existing. Inasmuch we are capable to grasp at the enduring, distinctive and inspiring legacies these works provide even today, to that extent will we be able to learn about ourselves in first place, and consequently about our future practice as architects.

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AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHIES

Slavica Stamatović Vučković

Slavica Stamatović Vučković is an associate professor and vice-dean for international cooperation at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Montenegro. She received her master's degree at the University of 'La Sapienza' in Rome and earned a doctorate at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. She is the author of the monograph *Architectural communication: Cultural Centers in Montenegro 1945-2000* (University Montenegro, 2018) for which she received an award at the Third Montenegrin Salon of Architecture; the book *Monuments of the Second World War in Montenegro* (Expeditio, Kotor, 2020) as well as numerous scientific research papers published in domestic and foreign journals and publications. She participated in the XI Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2008. She is among the winners of the "13. Jul" National Award (2009).

Danilo Bulatović

Danilo Bulatović is a PhD candidate at Politecnico di Torino. In 2018 he obtained Bachelor diploma in Architecture at the University of Montenegro, Faculty of Architecture in Podgorica. He was nominated for the best student of architecture in Montenegro in the same year receiving "19. Decembar" Award. He did specialization in Architecture in 2019 at UoM. As the Italian Government scholar he did a two year master studies at Politecnico di Milano in Architectural Design and History and obtained a degree (Lode) in 2021. As a British Government grantee, he also obtained Master of Art Degree (Distinction) in Architecture (History and Theory) at the University of Westminster in London in 2022. He was awarded with 'Jila Golzari' award for contribution to the Architecture + Cities programme. His primary research area is the architectural heritage of the Adriatic region from XV to XX century.

МОДЕРНИЗАМ У ОКАМЕЊЕНОМ ПЕЈЗАЖУ: АРХИТЕКТУРА ЦРНЕ ГОРЕ 1945-1980

Предмет овог рада је архитектонско наслеђе бивше Социјалистичке Републике Црне Горе (СР Црна Гора) у периоду од 1945. до 1980. године, са посебним освртом на употребу камена у пројектантској пракси. Камен, као исконски грађевински и дизајнерски материјал, присутан је у послератној модернистичкој југословенској архитектури, посебно током првих деценија, 50-их и 60-их година 20. века. Примена камена успоставља континуитет градње који у Црној Гори има две темељне повезнице: прва је веза са вернакуларним принципима грађења у сувом, кршевитом медитеранском пејзажу који се простира све до централног дела Црне Горе, а друга је веза са зачецима модернистичког архитектонског идиома у Црној Гори у међуратном периоду када је камен коришћен углавном на класичан, академизован начин. Сходно томе, овај рад има за циљ да осветли скривени део веома плодног, али занемареног архитектонског наслеђа, које је у оштром контрасту са данашњим трендовима неолибералне дизајнерске праксе у земљи. С друге стране, рад има за циљ да декодира суштински утицај медитеранског етоса на архитектонско-урбанистички развој јужног и централног региона Црне Горе. Иако је већина обрађених објеката дио урбаног контекста, отисци црногорског пејзажа, са каменом као његовом доминантном карактеристиком и одређеном националном разграниченошћу која је присутна кроз његову аутентичну употребу, стварају препознатљиве гениус лоци. У деконструкцији овог феномена, рад ће помоћи да се процес 'retreat'-а у Црној Гори позиционира у односу на шире тенденције европских архитектонских токова 20. века.

Кључне ријечи: Црна Гора, камен, пејзаж, модернизам, Медитеран