

VALORISATION AND REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES ON THE BELGRADE FORTRESS FOR PURPOSES OF MODERN WAYS OF PROTECTION AND REVITALISATION

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ABSTRACT

The area of the Belgrade Fortress is the most significant place of the city, the place of its origin and the starting point of its development and growth. Material remains dating from various eras testify on several centuries long development of the settlement and the fortress, for which the Belgrade fortress today is a multilayered archaeological site and a unique monument area of outstanding social, historic, spatial and architectural values.

Owing to continuous decades long conservation and restoration works, the Belgrade fortress today is a substantially investigated, protected and presented monument complex, with revitalised historic buildings and arranged green areas.

However, the greatest and the core problem that has yet to be resolved is the integration of the present day fortress in the modern city structure. In the early 18th century, the fortified town area was made solely a military structure, which created a break in the centuries long parallel development of both the town and the fortress. Results of such changes are reflected in the physical discontinuation of the present fortress, as a listed monuments complex and a modern city settlement. Successful solution to the problem is possible to achieve only if coordinated with the overall city planning on the level of protection and revitalization of the Belgrade fortress, all based upon the investigations, valorisation and rehabilitation of the historic structures.

Therefore, any future solutions should be based upon the historic structures valorisation and researching the possibilities of rehabilitation of those sections that are of a special significance as a valued Belgrade fortress monument complex and an historic urban core of the present city.

INTRODUCTION

The area of the Belgrade Fortress is the most significant one of the modern city. It is a place of its origin and a starting point in its development and growth. On a vantage location above the two big rivers, the Sava and the Danube, and on the slopes going down towards their banks, the first settlements and fortification were built. Their development can be traced through their material remains dating from various eras: from the period of an ancient castrum to a Byzantine castle and to a mediaeval fortified town, all the way to a modern 18th century bastion. As unique testimonies of the past times, they are all of a great importance for interdisciplinary studies and an insight into the growth of a town, so today, the Belgrade Fortress is a multilayered archaeological site and a unique monument complex of outstanding social, cultural, historic, spatial and architectural values. Considering its special position in the existing city structure, besides the primary aim of protecting it, which enables the fortress to be presented as a cultural monument, this area also provides great potentials for including it in the modern cultural and artistic stream of the city.

BELGRADE FORTRESS

- from periods the first fortresses came about to the cultural monuments of the highest order

Grounds for investigating the possibilities of the Belgrade Fortress revitalisation on the whole is the valorisation of its historic structures, so from that point of view its development can be divided into several basic stages.

The first significant stage was marked by the arrival of the Romans to the broader area along the Danube river. The Ancient Singidunum is linked to a formation of a series of fortifications along the northern border of the Empire and could be dating from the early 2nd century A.D.

The origins of ancient Singidunum on the highest and most prominent section of the hill above the confluence of the Sava and the Danube is linked to the coming of the Romans to the whole region along the Danube, where they built a series of fortifications along the set northern border of the empire. Building of the large fortification – *castrum*, is dated to the early 2nd century, the period when the IV legion, the Flavia legion came to Singidunum. The fortification is of almost rectangular plan, its construction following the terrain layout on the cliff above the confluence, climbing down to the banks. the civilian settlement grew towards the backs, along the main communication roads, *Via Cardo*. [1] We may assume that this town settlement was built according to the ancient urbanism principles: a street network was formed parallel to or perpendicular to the main communication road on the slopes towards the Sava and the Danube.

The next development phase is in the Middle Ages. During this long period, on the area of the Roman castrum ruins, first smaller forts were built on the highest point of the cliff directly above the confluence. Later on, when new defensive walls were built, the fortress spread towards the slopes above the Sava, where the western settlement grew with smaller fortified docks.



Figure 1: View of Belgrade, woodcarving by Wolfgang Resch, 1521

In early 15th century, Belgrade becomes a part of the Serbian state and sees a rapid development. By gaining new fortifications during the reign of Despot Stefan Lazarevic (1404-1427) the town spreads and gets its basic spatial quarters that remains to the present day. [2] The Upper town had

a major military character, while the Lower Town was inhabited by civilians. Within the Upper Town fortification, at its north-west corner, in the area of the original older fortress, there was an inner one, having a function of a fortified court of Despot Stefan Lazarevic. The Upper Town area was housing the greater part of the military crew, as well as a dwelling place for the noblemen.

The western lower section was most probably the area of the last town defence, as this was the way connecting the fortified court with less fortified docks on the Sava. In the Lower Town area was the civilian settlement with the church of Assumption of the Virgin and most probably the residence of the Belgrade Metropolitan. Along the Danube banks large wharf was built in a shape of a deep bay which, unlike the smaller Sava wharf being a strategic town port, mostly had a role of commercial docks.[3]



Figure 2: Map of Belgrade by Gabriel Bodenehr showing Belgrade soon after Austrian conquest in 1688

On the structure, population density and its appearance we can tell only by picture sources and very old plans dating from the second half of 16th century, when Belgrade was already under the Turkish rule.

In the long period of Turkish rule (1521-1688) the town lost its military and strategic role of an important border fortification it had had up to that point, but it became an important fortification at the backs, a centre of military armament and equipment, as well as a starting point for conquest campaigns. Trade and crafts development strengthened the town economic position as a trading transit centre, which had an impact on the existing settlement structure and further spreading of the town. Parts of town that had accommodated the military crew now developed into town quarters with mostly civilian population. Outside the town walls, in line with the Oriental urban culture, new town centres were formed, and along with those complexes of public buildings of particular purposes, commercial centres developed with rows of crafts and trade buildings and residential houses –*mahallas*. Apart from the basic characteristics of its physical structure, the general appearance of the town in that period featured the public buildings architecture: a mosque, medrese, hammam, caravansary, *tekye* (*khanqah*), fountains.[4]

New historical trends that were characterised by constant conflicts between Austria and Turkey place Belgrade back at the centre of warfare. Due to significant changes in ways of warfare, the existing fortifications of the Belgrade town, built at the times when more primitive weapons had

been used, had to be reconstructed and adjusted to newly introduced artillery. The reconstruction had to be done in several stages, when mediaeval fortifications underwent serious changes only to be fitted in the newly built elements of modern bastion fortifications. The area of the mediaeval town was surrounded by new projected fortifications with earthen embankments and cannon platforms. The civilian settlement in the Lower Town was destroyed so as a series of military structures could be built: barracks, arsenal, gunpowder magazines.



Figure 3: Map of Belgrade after the Austrian reconstruction in 1740-1747

In the second half of the 19th century, by the liberation from the Turkish rule, the Belgrade Fortress gradually loses its military significance. The remaining structures are maintained and used for various purposes. During the World War I, almost all the structures within the fortress were destroyed in bombardment, and its ramparts significantly damaged. Further wasting away goes on between the two wars, but at the same time, following a gradual retreat of the armies, some sections are restored, gaining new purpose.

The Belgrade Fortress was neither spared in the World War II. Bombardment of the allied forces in 1945 destroyed the gunpowder magazine in the Lower Town, which was at the time one of the few remaining structures, and the explosions also destroyed vast walls of the other magazine complex in the vicinity.

After the World War II, from the moment the army completely vacates the area of the Belgrade Fortress, leaving it to the city administration, and particularly from the moment it is declared a cultural monument, conditions are created for conducting systematic research and works on protection and presentation of this great and significant monumental complex.

Degree of preservation of the material remains from various historical periods and their basic features

A multifold character of the heritage from various periods is certainly one of the essential values of the Belgrade Fortress. However, different degrees of preservation of these material remains are a chief problem in the issue of their evaluation and consequently in the protection and presentation. Material remains dating from the oldest ancient period are preserved only in fragments on certain locations and mostly in a lesser number. The greatest problem is that they constitute integral parts

of more recent fortifications, so they are difficult, almost impossible, to be located and presented in a greater scope in the way that they may represent a complete and consistent whole. Sections of the Roman castrum fortification are on locations where they were found and, as much as it was possible, they are presented in the same condition they were found, or as archaeological sites (the Roman hall in the basement of the City of Belgrade Library).



Figure 4: Fortification sections of the ancient castrum, found and presented within the Upper Town medieval ramparts

The degree of the heritage preservation from the mediaeval period differs. The spatial division of the former city into various units has been preserved only in part. That includes the area of both the Lower and Upper Towns and the eastern settlement, where the new bastion fortifications developed at their outer sides, usually keeping the inner frame of the already existing mediaeval fortifications. However, this is not the case with western settlement, as parts of its ramparts were cut off and lost their function when several bastions were built together with a complex of a large gunpowder magazine. The inner fortification was destroyed almost to the ground, except for the entrance section, where the revealed walls have been conserved and presented in a form of an archaeological site. But nevertheless, because of its partial preservation and changes in the terrain layout, the area of this important mediaeval fortification, which also doubled as a ruler's court, is impossible to hold in view properly and completely. The gates and towers, as structures built as integral parts of the fortress, have been preserved only in part, and that even in a changed form. Only at limited sections they could be restored in full, or at least to the extent to be presented in their original architectural form. In most cases, they are built into structures of later bastion fortifications, so their investigation is limited to sections where it is possible, without greater interventions on the fortification bastion walls, to remove the earthen banks, or to sections where removal of the banks is linked to the protection works.



Figure 5: Upper Town mediaeval fortifications

Today, at the Belgrade Fortress, mostly preserved heritage dates from the most recent period of reconstruction conducted in late 19th century. A whole series of different artillery fortification elements (ravelins, bastions, casemates, armouries) are connected into bastion fronts which encompass the fortress area from all sides.



Figure 6: The King Gate, part of the south-western fortification front

THE HERITAGE REVITALISATION PROBLEMS

The remains of the fortification, built and destroyed, then reconstructed and destroyed again, transformed through a long period of time, are present to various extents on the area of the Belgrade Fortress today. Due to these constant changes, it could be said that its primary value is the stratified heritage, which is of a great significance for researches in history, urban socio-economic development and the cultural growth of Belgrade, as well as for studying the development of fortifications, their military, strategic, architectural and construction characteristics. On the other hand, because of its centuries long continuous presence on such an important geostrategic spot, in the environment of numerous historic changes and military activities, the Belgrade Fortress features various degrees of preservation of the heritage dating from different eras.

Today it is a heterogeneous structure, containing most of the fortifications built in the second half of the 18th century. The preserved legacy from earlier eras include only the areas built as part of the fortifications: gates, towers, casemates, artillery emplacements and gunpowder magazines. Inside the enclosed area, any free standing structures are almost nonexistent. Those completely preserved or preserved to the extent that enabled their complete reconstruction belong to either the final period of the Turkish rule or were built in the late 19th or early 20 century, when the fortress already lost its military function. [5] It was in that period that certain interventions were made, which due to their scope and way they treated the surviving built heritage, had a great impact on the present state of the built complex and on a possibility of presenting the most significant historic structures. For that reason, those interventions should be included in the valorisation process of Belgrade Fortress in its entirety, so that it could be revitalised and integrated in the contemporary city present urban structure.

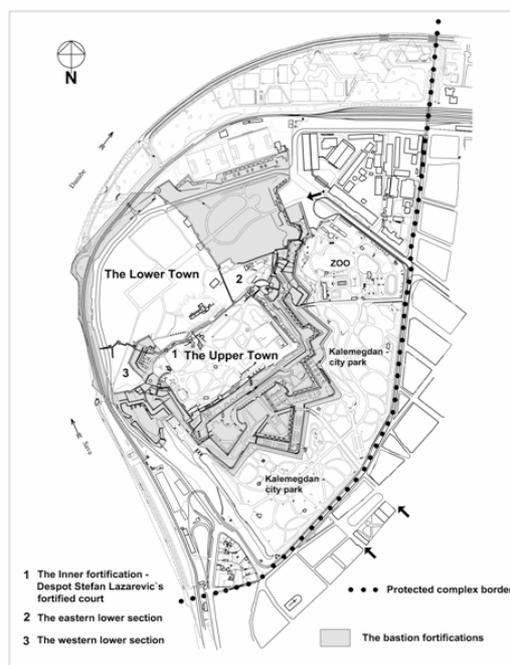


Figure 7: Map of the Belgrade Fortress

Retreat of the Turkish military forces and handing over the fortress to the Serbian army in 1867 marked the beginning of the first works on its arrangement. They started with arranging the green areas and tracing the footpaths on the erstwhile town field, separating the fortress and the town.[6] The present Kalemegdan park came to be as a result of those first and also subsequent major works that went in the following years, spreading to the Sava banks slopes where, on their highest point, an impressive city promenade was built with monumental stairs towards the city itself.[7]

In the period between the two World Wars, the works continued on sections that had been damaged or destroyed in the WWI, as well as the works induced by the announcement that the army was going to withdraw from the west part of the Upper Town. In order to make way to this part of the fortress, the Sava promenade was extended.[8]

In the south-east trenches, in the direct vicinity of the inner Stambol Gate and in the trench before the Great Ravelin, sports grounds were arranged and club facilities built. Along the East Front border line, on the slopes towards the Danube, a Zoo was built and upon the bastions overlooking the Zoo, a large restaurant complex was made. In the East Suburb section, near the Ruzica Church - a garrison church created from a gunpowder magazine in the first half of the 18th century - on an old holy place linked to a spring of medicinal water, in 1938, a Chapel and a lodge devoted to St Petka (St Paraskevi) were built. [9] On a bastion, to south from the Stambol Gate, a building that housed the Military-Geographical Institute was built, today housing the Military Museum. In 1928, in the Small Kalemegdan Park, the Cvijeta Zuzoric Art Pavilion was erected.



Figure 8: The St. Paraskevi Chapel built in 1936
in the eastern Fortress foot

The goal of the works done in that period on the Belgrade Fortress was primarily to turn the whole area into a park with all the sports, education and entertainment facilities. However, because of the interventions, a part of the fortress was pulled down and a part remained neglected and degraded when new structures were built and new facilities introduced. One section of the fortress underwent the first works on its renovation and reconstruction. Yet they were not grounded on any previously conducted investigations or any modern protection principles, but carried out using architectural models of the fortifications from the coastal region. In spite of that, or perhaps just because of that, such changes are of a special value for studying the history of defence in Serbia [10]

Furthermore, the present appearance of the Belgrade Fortress was greatly influenced by certain traffic arrangements in the city. Sections of the river bank bulwarks were physically destroyed as the railway tracks and heavy traffic road were built along the banks and over the existing bastions and fortifications, thereby cutting off the fortress and the whole town from the rivers and their banks. [11]

Also, due to the construction of new roads, a large section was formed extending further from the Kalemegdan Park and the Zoo. This section, now along the street, bordering with the fortress, has a school built and a military clothing industrial complex. Further area structuring was done totally unsystematically, so numerous provisional buildings and warehouses were erected. Smaller industrial zones were made along the Sava banks, as well.

The Belgrade Fortress was in the above described state after the WWII, when organised and systematic research, investigation and protection works started, when the fortress was listed as a cultural monument. [12]

On these grounds, it could be concluded that there are two sets of issues concerning the approach in protection and revitalisation of the Belgrade Fortress. The first set derives from the fact that the fortress is a monument complex covering an extremely large area, but with not so many structures, even if we include those built as part of the fortification. This set of issues directly relates to establishing an appropriate manner of utilising the extant buildings, as well as the complex on the whole.

The second set of issues make the already existing incompatible structures within the protected area boundaries. On the one hand, they obstruct the link between the fortress and the city, and on the other, prevent the city to spread towards the rivers, thus impeding any arrangement and utilisation of the banks below.

All these issues were addressed at the very start of the protection works on the Belgrade Fortress, at the time it was listed as a cultural monument. Simultaneous to archaeological and other investigative works, those on conservation, restoration and static repairs of the structures and sections of the fortress started, as well. Upon completing the conservation works, many of the buildings were given a new, modern purpose. [13]

General concept considerations of the monument complex arrangement and purpose gave the basis for setting a Master Plan, which treated the fortress from two aspects: as an historic monument of Belgrade and as a City Park. [14] The first one saw the fortress primarily as a museum in the open, which would be presented as such and would also create interconnections between individual ambiance units of different historic periods. To this end, a possibility was made open for extensive works to be done on restoring certain sections of the fortress, which would, among other things, provide specific scenic areas for various cultural events. The second one saw the fortress as a city park, with special areas for people to repose, be entertained and go in for sports. The importance of such a plan was that it emphasised the basic historic and architectural values of the Belgrade Fortress and saw it as an independent area complex. It was also of a significant value for it provided original purpose for the extant buildings, and identified all the unsuitable contents which would be removed. [15]

CONCLUSIONS

Having in mind all the decades long works on the protection and revitalisation of the Belgrade Fortress and the state this monument complex is in today, it could be said that the area of the Upper Town and Kalemegdan Park, from the point of view of their purpose and manner of utilisation, is a clearly defined area with the characteristics of a park and a museum. At this section of the fortress, the restoration works on the fortifications are almost completed, the mediaeval structures have been investigated and presented and restored at all the points where the state of preservation and the relation to the subsequent bastion fortifications allowed it. Here we place an emphasis on the area of the fortified palace of Despot Stefan Lazarevic, which, after extensive and

systematic investigations, has been conserved and presented as an archaeological site. At the north corner of the Upper Town plateau, a complete reconstruction was done of the north-east and north-west bulwark sections, with a particular accent on the corner tower, which, looking from the river side, provided a recognisable contour of a mediaeval town. [16]



Figure 9: Mediaeval fortifications

Unlike in the Upper Town, there are numerous problems with the Lower Town. Covering a rather large area, it is almost devoid of any buildings. It is arranged as a green area with footpaths, surrounded with bastion fortifications from the times when the Lower Town was only a military structure. But it is now cut off by a road and railway tracks. The connection between the Lower Town and the modern city with the river banks is almost nonexistent. This connection is somehow possible via the Upper Town and Kalemegdan Park, while the links with the Sava and Danube banks are obstructed by the industrial zone and warehouses. Although it is obvious that the city could reach the rivers through this area, where once there used to be a town, now, under these conditions, it is not possible.

The historic structures valorisation process has a crucial role in the way these issues are to be resolved. It is a complex process, particularly so if we have in mind all the stated characteristics of the existing architectural heritage. From the point of view of the values of the Belgrade Fortress as an historic core of the modern city of today, certainly of the greatest significance is the structure of the mediaeval fortified town, dating from the times of Despot Stefan Lazarevic. It has been preserved up to the present day mostly due to an area division to Upper and Lower Towns. The fortifications have been discovered and reconstructed only in certain and limited stretches. As for the buildings that may provide enough information for any more extensive restoration works, so far only the Metropolitan complex in the Lower Town has been discovered.

On the other hand, it is the area of the Lower Town that provides possibilities for rehabilitating the mediaeval structures of the City of Belgrade, by connecting it with the existing city structures via historic roads and ways, along which, in the Middle Ages, the settlement spread out of the fortification, towards the Sava and the Danube bank slopes. Such a possibility is provided by reconstructing a large section leaning on the bastion outer front, towards the Danube, where there are those unsuitable structures at the moment. This section was also considered in the Belgrade Master Plan – to be reconstructed into a new cultural and tourist city centre.



Figure 10: The view at the Lower Town

For all those plans to be carried out, it is of crucial importance to remove the traffic roads from the river banks zones, which open up a possibility of investigating and restoring the fortification sections there. By reconstructing the large Danube wharfs, the mediaeval structure of the town would be rehabilitated – the only one that escaped destruction when the town was reconstructed into a bastion fortification.

As funding for the investigation, protection and rehabilitation works of the Belgrade Fortress has increased in the last years, they should be focused on the Lower Town area, which would open up possibilities for resolving the above stated issues and for the rehabilitation of the most significant historic structures of this monument complex.

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- [4] Đurić – Zamolo D. (1977)., *Beograd kao orijentalna varoš pod Turcima 1521 – 1867*, pp 181-201. , Beograd
- [5] In the area of the Upper Town today, only two structures have been preserved completely: a smaller memorial building – a turbeh from the Turkish period and a building of an erstwhile Military HQ, which now houses the Institute for Protection of Cultural Monuments of the City of Belgrade. In the Lower Town there are also two structures: a Turkish bath dating from the last period of the Turkish rule, and a smaller building of a military mess hall. In the area of the south-east front, at the very entrance to the fortress from the direction of the city, there is a building for the guard, dating from the 1840's and another one, built between the two wars for the Military-Geographical Institute, today housing the Military Museum.
- [6] The idea and the suggestion for creating a park on the area of the once-to-be town field came from Emilijan Josimovic, the first Serbian city planner, in his Master Plan of the "Town in the Trench".
- [7] Milanović H., "Prilog istraživanju nastanka i razvoja parka Kalemegdan", (1999) in Nasleđe No.II pp. 41-51. Beograd
- [8] Božović Lopičić R. , Popović M. (1999), "Savsko šetalište sa velikim stepeništem na Kalemegdanu", in Nasleđe No.II, pp. 53-71. Beograd

[9] The chapel and the quarters were designed by Momir Korunovic, an architect. The quarters were demolished in the WWII and the new ones were built there in the 1980's.

[10] As part of the works, the east suburb bulwark with the corner tower were restored, as well as the Zindan Gate complex, dating from the second half of the 15th century.

[11] Tracing of the roads was done in the late 19th and early 20th century.

[12] The Belgrade Fortress was listed in 1946 by a Decision of the Department of Protection of Cultural Monuments at the Museum of Fine Arts of Belgrade.

[13] Turkish bath in the Lower Town was adapted as a Planetarium, an angled mediaeval tower in the Upper Town was made an Observatory, the guards' building and the great Gunpowder Magazine are now exhibition rooms.

[14] The Belgrade Fortress Master Plan was adopted in 1969.

[15] The Plan envisaged removal of the sports grounds from the fortress trenches, the Zoo and most importantly, the traffic roads and the railway tracks.

[16] Vulović M., (1999), "Prilog istraživanju nastanka i razvoja parka Kalemegdan", in NasleđeNo.II pp.41-51. Beograd