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# Tivat's trajectory - from Arsenal to Porto Montenegro

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This paper examines how and to what extent urban regeneration works in practice through the lens of Tivat's regeneration. The paper enlightens Tivat's economic and physical transformations from the town known as a base of the Naval-shipyard "Arsenal" to the nautical-touristic complex "Porto Montenegro". In the modern history urban development of Tivat was related to the Naval-shipyard "Sava Kovacevic", most often referred to by its old name "Arsenal". Since its development in 1889, Arsenal became the main employer in town and shaped the town's identity. Arsenal employed experienced skilled workers, mostly engineers and craftsmen, and enjoyed an international reputation for a quality ship repair (Radovic, 2015). In 1990's, the turbulent political and economic situation in ex-Yugoslavia countries and UN sanctions resulted with the downfall of Arsenal and decline of Tivat's economy. At the same time, Montenegro decided to make a strategic turnover from a socialist centrally planned to an open market economy. Montenegro wanted to attract inward investments and create an image of an attractive tourist destination that would result with economic revitalisation. These circumstances led to the decision made by the Montenegrin government to sell Arsenal to a private investor who showed the initiative to transform it and create the nautical resort "Porto Montenegro". Regeneration of Tivat, in terms of its vision, seems to be a successful story - the town's image was changed, Arsenal's site became an accessible place and new economic opportunities were made. However, this regeneration did not go without consequences.

Keywords:

regeneration, Tivat, economic transition, physical change, transformation, tourism

## Introduction

Jones and Evans (2013) refer to cities as "never finished objects; land-uses change, neighbourhoods are redeveloped, the urban area itself expands and, occasionally, shrinks" (p.3). This means that city planning and development presents never-ending work. The pressure for change comes from both external and internal forces and cities are required to adapt in response (Roberts and Sykes 2000). Furthermore, urban planning is a key for managing not just physical conditions, but also different complex issues such as social, economic, cultural etc. (Rydin, 2011). The history of modern planning in the 1980s introduced a new concept of urban regeneration as "something more than simply demolition and rebuilding" (Jones and Evans, 2013, 3). Similarly, O'Brien and Matthews (2016) argue that regeneration is a concept, which tries to address more than social, economic and physical circumstances. Moreover, they refer that regeneration is typically in the urban environment, but not exclusively, as it could happen in any other place(s), although it is usually an intervention after a certain decline. This decline can be the consequence of global economic changes, such as the "long recession" in the 1970s, and failure of traditional manufacturing activities (Paddison, 1993, 339; Rogerson, 2012). Yet, sometimes regeneration is required in places that have long-standing problems such as stigmatization, which could be rooted in "slum clearance" (Hasting and Dean, 2002, 172). Regeneration makes an opportunity for place transformation, which could change a negative image, improve the economy, and attract inward investments and tourists (Bradley, Hall and Harrison, 2002; Hasting and Dean, 2002; Paddison, 1993). However, in practice, urban regeneration is not always successful as it fails to make a holistic approach and to consider the roots of the issues (O'Brien and Matthews, 2016).

This paper explores how and to what extent regeneration works in practice through the lens of Tivat's regeneration. Most precisely, the paper discusses the trajectory from the Naval-shipyard "Arsenal" to the nautical-touristic complex "Porto Montenegro". To address the theoretical framework of regeneration influence, the case study approach was utilised as it allows a more detailed analysis of a particular issue. The case study was selected since it is considered the most successful regeneration projects in Montenegro. Nevertheless, this transformation exceptionally shaped and changed Tivat image in the last two decades. The paper will enlighten mostly economic and physical aspects of transformation and it will discuss side effects created.

## Background

Tivat is a coastal town situated in Boka Kotorska Bay on the coast of Montenegro. Its urban development in the modern history was related to the Naval-shipyard “Sava Kovacevic”, most often referred to by its old name “Arsenal”. Arsenal was developed for the purposes of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, which at that time administrated territories in Boka Kotorska. Since its development in 1889, Arsenal became the main employer in town. The primacy in employment had local inhabitants and the number of employees has been between 1.000 to 1.300 (Bajic Scepanovic, 2017; Stamatovic Vuckovic, 2017). Arsenal employed experienced skilled workers, mostly engineers and craftsmen, and enjoyed an international reputation for a quality ship repair, modernisation of control systems etc. (Radovic 2015). Thus, it does not surprised that the image of Tivat was closely connected with Arsenal and that its demographic structure culturally and socially relied on Arsenal development.

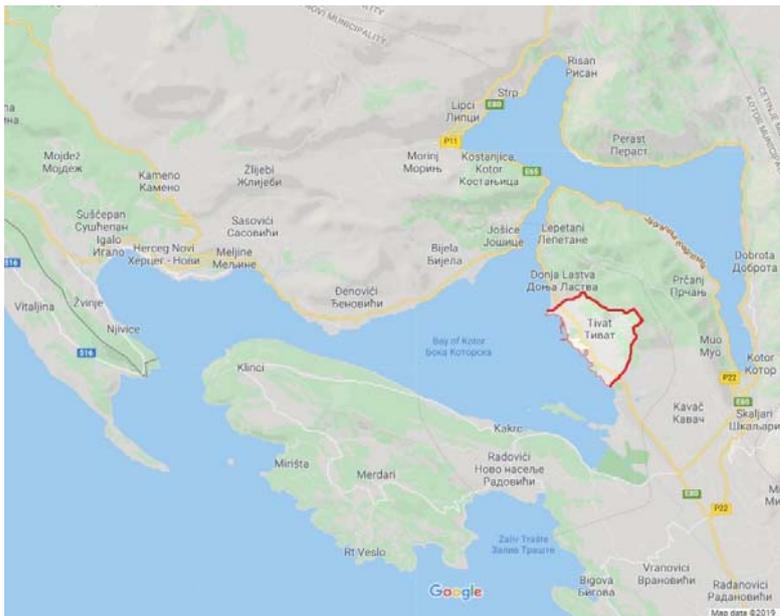


Figure 1: Location of Tivat in Boka Kotorska, 2019, Source: Google maps

The late 1980s became the turning point for Montenegro, as one of the six republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Yugoslavia), whose previous political and economic development was based on the socialist ideology. The post-socialist period brought systematic change from socialist centrally planned to open market economy. In the 1990s, this change was followed by the war in the ex-Yugoslav countries, the NATO bombardment and UN sanctions imposed on Serbia and Montenegro federation (which continued their federation after four out of six Yugoslav countries decided to declare independency). Hence, the turbulent political and economic situation had a negative influence on the entire country. Tivat was not exception, and it resulted with the downfall of Arsenal and decline of Tivat’s economy. Although in the next decade the situation improved slightly, new issues appeared, such as irregular payment and pollution of water from old shipbuilding’s materials (Djordjevic, 2015). Moreover, Montenegro wanted to attract inward investments and create an image of an attractive tourist destination that would result with economic revitalisation. Nevertheless, Arsenal was a military base and since the 2000s, Montenegro started military reform that included the abolishment of compulsory military service, reducing the number of soldiers and demilitarisation (Edmunds, 2006). Thus, majority of military bases were losing their function, including Arsenal.



Figure 2: Arsenal, 2004, Author: Anon, source Boka News

These external and internal pressures in 2007 resulted with a decision by the Montenegrin government to sell Arsenal to a private investor who showed interest to regenerate a place and follow the government's vision in creating a new tourist image of Tivat. After the negotiation process, the site was privatised for around €29 million, which included payment for a social programme (repaying Arsenal workers), environmental intervention and remediation of location. Apart from that, the investor promised that in the upcoming 4 years, they would invest €106 million in the new touristic complex (Djordjevic, 2015; Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, 2014).<sup>1</sup> The exact economic benefits of this privatisation were discussed. The Porto Montenegro was promoted as a project, which will increase taxation income, and it would be one of the main long-term benefit of the investment. Yet, at the time of privatisation, the Government of Montenegro created inward investment ambient and marina tax services were only 7%. In the last couple of years, the Government of Montenegro continued introducing new benefits, which keeps the discussion on this privatisation live. Some of those measures are the reduction of the VAT taxes for services in 5-star hotels from 21% to 7%, while for the rest the taxation stayed the same. Moreover, the most recent controversy was related to the fact that the Municipality of Tivat decided not to charge Porto Montenegro for a debt for utility equipment of €5,6 million. Nevertheless, since Arsenal was privatised, Tivat's transformation of 165 ha inner-city land began from a place "forbidden to the public (...) the untouchable island and barrier of its physical development" became a nautical resort "Porto Montenegro" (Radonjic, 2008, cited in Radovic, 2015, 108).



Figure 3: Porto Montenegro 2004, Author: Anon, source Forbes

Roberts and Skyes (2000) argue that major urban changes are made because of economic transition, social issues, physical obstacles and environmental issues (p.24). Tivat had all of these reasons for regeneration in order to respond to external and internal pressures. Yet, this paper will focus mostly on economic transition and physical obstacles. Furthermore, in practice, the urban policy response to urban issues is managed by using different approaches (Jones and Evans 2013). The approach that Tivat adopted is a tourism-led regeneration as the establishment of large-scale leisure facilities and port for mega-yachts followed it. Tourism became a legitimate part of regeneration strategies worldwide as tourism and leisure activities could make an economic improvement (Smith, 2007). Moreover, Richard and Wilson (2007) refer that “one of the keys to regeneration is attracting people to live in, work in and visit a city” (p. 12). The major indicator of success was seen in mega-project investments (Spirou, 2011). According to Aitchison, Richards and Tallon (2007) this kind of regeneration started in the 1990s and was seen as “big is beautiful” (p. 48). Furthermore, they refer that tourism-led regeneration could be summarised in the concept of “leisurefication” which involves infrastructure development, raising awareness and promotion of a place as a tourist destination and predict destination management (49-50). Similarly, Jones and Evans (2013) refer that development of touristic facilities needs to be followed by a modern transportation system. In this sense, Tivat had some good start-up conditions such a Mediterranean climate with a large number of sunny days, attractive coastline surrounded by mountains and an airport which ensured easy access for tourists. Thus, it does not surprise that Tivat’s regeneration was led by tourism as a key principle.

## **Economic transition**

The first aspect of Tivat’s change that will be discussed is economic transition and employment change through the lens of the adopted approach. The aim of city regeneration is to create more employment opportunities that will in turn provide economic growth and increase competitiveness (Jones and Evans, 2013). The global economic shift replaced traditional industries with more service-oriented industries and thus created a pressure on cities to adjust to new market demands (Dicken, 2004). Smith (2007) refers to this shift as transformation “from centres of production to centres of consumption” (p. 26). In this sense, tourism and leisure activities became an integral part of city economy and a form of local employment. Thus, cities tend to create tourist-planned zones, which will increase economic activity and expand entry-level employment opportunities (O’Brien and Matthews, 2016; Smith, 2007). However, in practice this does not go without some serious challenges, especially for residents who pre-date the regeneration intervention.

In the case of Tivat’s regeneration, the previous skilled workers and engineers suddenly faced a situation where their specialisation was no longer required. In 2006, when Arsenal was privatised, Arsenal had around 470 workers, which stayed without jobs, while in 2012 “Adriatic Marinas”, the owner of Porto Montenegro, hired only 93 employees (Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, 2014)<sup>2</sup>. The absence of new appropriate skills resulted partially in workers exclusion from the labour market and in the long-term it could have caused even social exclusion (Roberts and Sykes, 2000). The economic transformation imposed the question of how to encourage these workers to change their careers in a new tertiary industry. Arsenal as the town’s main industry for more than 100 years oriented the entire demographic structure not just in skills and educational specialisation, but in overall social and cultural mentality (Radovic 2015). The change urgently required that the population possess “a certain level of service mentality”, which was not a mentality that Tivat’s population had (Aitchison, Richards and Tallon 2007, 59; Radovic, 2015). Additionally, although the shift created an opportunity for less skilled citizens to enter the labour market, the value for money is often low and quite competitive (O’Brien, Matthews, 2016). Yet, according to Radovic (2015) the jobs offered in “Porto Montenegro” were well paid and the investor provided training for nautical tourism workers. However, this process required a raising awareness campaign that would change the citizen’s perception of the opportunities that Tivat now offered and of the town’s image as a tourist destination.

One of the issues in regenerated places, especially in post-socialist countries, is the fact that often development projects do not have a larger influence on local employment rate, rather they creates mobilisations of jobholders. In general, the employment policy of Porto Montenegro continued to give

the primacy to local inhabitants. However, there is no precise data on how many local residents work in Porto Montenegro, nevertheless, in 2016 it was reported that 79% of employees are from Montenegro (Lukovic, 2016). Additionally, in one of the latest interviews, the company representative stated that they have around 350 employees and the number goes up to 1000 with the employees from shop tenants located in Porto Montenegro Village<sup>3</sup>. However, bearing in mind the seasonal character of tourism industry it is not clear the number of employees who work during the entire year, nor the positions that they cover. Finally, one of the concerns is related to presumption that in business urban investments at the best the local people will have low qualification work positions, while the high positions will be covered by the foreign workers (Molotch, 1976). In the case of Porto Montenegro, this could be supported by the fact that the 6 out of 8 senior managers are foreigners.<sup>4</sup>

Tourism regeneration of Tivat required business-like and entrepreneurial planning in order to redesign itself as an appealing product with a marketing strategy that would promote it (Spirou, 2011). Tivat was known as an Arsenal base, a military ship repairing brand and suddenly there was an urgent need to make an entirely new town image. In the regeneration process, the city marketing was supposed to have multiple objectives oriented towards the creation of a place that would attract people and investments and ensure the well-being of the population (Paddison, 1993). Nevertheless, it is argued that the previous city identity can predict how the new one will be perceived externally (Bradley, Hall and Harrison 2002; Spirou 2011). Furthermore, Spirou (2001) explains that “cities with strong past industrial images that had gone through significant reorganization towards the travel industry, were more successful than those with weaker manufacturing identities that had experienced similar restricting” (p.63). Porto Montenegro’s marketing strategy indeed changed Tivat’s image internationally and it became a well-known destination for mega-yacht owners and high-income people (Radovic 2015).

## **Physical transition**

The second main aspect where Tivat’s Arsenal area needed to adapt in order to make tourist-led regeneration was physical conditions and their influence on the wider community. In the regeneration process, physical conditions are a sufficient reason for making the urban change (Jeffrey and Pounder, 2000). According to Jeffrey and Pounder (2000) the physical and environmental qualities are closely connected with a city’s prosperity, the residents’ quality of life and enterprises and thus their adaptability to social and economic change is the key for preventing city decline. Moreover, they refer that the environmental decay “can damage both the functioning and reputation of a city” (p.87). Furthermore, successful urban planning needs to create a balance between economic success, environmental protection and people’s interests (Jones and Evans, 2013). Arsenal’s area in Tivat was an area of “two-meter-high stone wall” and as a military base it was not accessible to the public (Radovic, 2015, 108). Additionally, during the 118 years of Arsenal’s existence, the heavy-metal and other waste material accumulated in the area and created major concerns for their influence on the environment and on public health (Djordjevic, 2015). This was the reason why regeneration vision was “the formation of a coastal place oriented and open to the sea, which, during the season and off-season, will function actively, in accordance with the needs of the population, visitors and users of space” (Jelovac, 2013, 45). Moreover, keeping in mind that Arsenal was situated in a coastal area it directed Tivat’s economic development in the tertiary industry. Nevertheless, while from broader perspective the vision was in accordance to the national strategy of branding Montenegro as a tourist destination and with valorisation of natural potential that the country has from simply observation it did not succeed to become a “part of the urban tissue”, as academics described the process in 2007.<sup>5</sup> The Porto Montenegro Village physical still creates division from Westside where is surrounded by the fences, which clearly indicated that is private and not a public place, and finally it is accessible only from a limited number of entries.



Figure 4: West part of Porto Montenegro entrances, 2019, Author: Ćaki Lisičić

The physical regeneration process needs to take into consideration existing complementarities and the residents' perspective, because only a regeneration that involves the understanding of a place and its potential could lead to improvement and successful outcomes (Smith, 2007; Jeffrey and Pounder, 2000). The adopted approach for meeting Tivat's vision was creating a nautical tourist resort with a marina for small boats and mega-yachts, mixed with other service, retail and commercial facilities, sport and recreation spaces (Jelovac, 2013). Transformation from a leading naval repair complex into "the biggest and the most modern Mediterranean marina" at the beginning had a location advantage in terms of coastal accessibility and pre-existing docks (Radovic, 2015, p.110). Moreover, Tivat had an airport and was close to Dubrovnik airport thus it had air accessibility for international tourists. Yet, the area needed better road accessibility and connection of urban matrix with other parts of the city and the sea. For this reason the master plan predicted demolition of Arsenal facilities and the wall that surrounded the area which will be the base for this physical improvement. In terms of environmental decay, investor organised a cleaning of the 64 tons of rusted ships and submarines and related shipyard material, in order to secure the water quality for both residents and tourists (Djordjevic 2015).

Additionally, the first part of the investment included the opening of a five-star hotel complex "Regent" that physically changed the place and allowed visitors to enjoy the seaside view. However, having in mind the importance of heritage to the residents and the visitors need for "authenticity", the investor connected the nautical heritage and transformed the old Arsenal's submarine into a museum, thus keeping a memory of the Arsenal's old glory (Smith, 2007; Porto Montenegro, 2018). Nevertheless, this process does not go without concerns. Porto Montenegro is promoted as nautical-touristic complex and

attracts yacht owners and high-status tourists who can afford to stay in its accommodation premises, while the middle-class people can enjoy in some of the food services and drinks (Djordjevic, 2015). Yet, although the average salary in Tivat is the highest one in Montenegro, comparing to Porto Montenegro prices it is not enough even to enjoy the basic food services, especially for those who unemployed (Anon, 2013). Thus, while the regeneration creates a chance for physical accessibility the tourism-led development the approach used for Porto Montenegro can create a “tourism bubble” and new psychological barriers (Bosley and Brothers 2008; Smith 2007).

## Conclusion

Cities are complex socio-economic systems which face different challenges. Their management depends on their characteristics such as physical conditions, social capital and their policies (O’Brien and Matthews, 2016; Roberts and Sykes, 2000). Yet, with time and with changing circumstances some cities start facing major issues and decline. In the urban context, the solution is seen in regeneration that should be guided by effective policy, but nevertheless could have limited effectiveness (O’Brien and Matthews, 2016). Regeneration is criticized as its “aggregate impacts will tend to be small and incremental as most urban regeneration programmes are ‘microsolutions for megaproblems’” (O’Brien and Matthews, 2016, 69). Yet, Tivat’s case shows that regeneration strategies could include large-scale intervention and could be having more success. Tivat’s regeneration in terms of its vision seems a successful one – the new nautical-touristic complex was created, the town’s image was changed, Arsenal’s site became an accessible place and new economic opportunities were made. However, this regeneration is not without concerns of its consequences. There is no data regarding the status of previous Arsenal’s skilled workers and it is questionable how they adapted to the new jobs offers in tertiary industry. Moreover, the change towards service mentality of residents is a long-term process and could not be achieved in a short time (Aitchison, Richards and Tallon 2007). Nevertheless, although Porto Montenegro project increased physical accessibility and took care of the accumulated water pollution this could be seen both as negative and positive impact. Namely, touristic yacht marina means that in short time larger number of vessels will come to Tivat. Similarly, the number of international flights and motorway vehicles will increase and its impact on environment still needs to be measured. Lastly, high-status tourism increased the prices in the area and it could contribute to gentrification and loss of local identity for residents (Smith 2007).

## Endnote

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<sup>1</sup> See the contract amount distribution: Djordjevic, A., 2015, *The Effect and Influence of Privatization on Tourism in ex-Yugoslavian Countries, more Specifically Serbia and Montenegro*. Bachelor. MODUL University Vienna, on pp.30-31; See for the investment amount distribution and exact prices of facilities: Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism, 2014, Information on the privatisation status of hotel and tourism companies, pp. 37-38

<sup>2</sup> It was not specified the qualification of workers and if they were employed before by Arsenal

<sup>3</sup> "U samoj našoj matičnoj kompaniji imamo 350 zaposlenih, s tim što "Porto Montenegro" kao naselje, uz sve naše zakupce, hotel "Ridžent", bazen "Lido", zapošljava 1000 ljudi..." for more see the interview (in Serbian): Available at: <<https://www1.wdr.de/radio/cosmo/programm/sendungen/radio-forum/reisen/porto-montenegro-100.html>> [Accessed 25 November 2019].

<sup>4</sup> See Porto Montenegro website: <https://www.portomontenegro.com/en/corporate/senior-management/>

<sup>5</sup> The review of academic literature mostly indicates that with Porto Montenegro, the blockade created by Arsenal ended and that it finally reconnected the town towards the coast. See for more: Radovic, G., 2015; Stamatovic-Vuckovic, S. 2017.

## List of figures:

- Figure 1: Location of Tivat in Boka Kotorska, 2019, Source: Google maps

- Figure 2: Arsenal, 2004, Author: Anon, source Boka News Available at: <<https://www.bokanews.me/featured/porto-montenegro-nije-potisnuo-arsenal-iz-srca/>> [Accessed 25 November 2019].
- Figure 3: Porto Montenegro 2004, Author: Anon, source Forbes Available at: <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jimdobson/2018/07/22/porto-montenegro-is-becoming-the-ultimate-superyacht-sanctuary-along-the-adriatic-coast/#1fb160612985>> [Accessed 25 November 2019].
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## Author's bio

Ksenija Martinovic graduated from the University of Glasgow with an MSc in Public and Urban Policy, which she have attended as a Chevening awardee - the UK Government's international award. Her research focus is on exploring the urban development in post-socialist Montenegro, what kind of influence trajectory from a socialist system to open market left on the urban realm and how to strategically involve the community in urban planning. Having a Bachelor degree and Special research degree in Political Science from the University of Montenegro and academic exchange experience at the University of Rome "La Sapienza" she adopted the holistic and interdisciplinary approach in

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