

Final Review Report ISVSej_12.03.03_Petar
Compiled from Two Reviews

Please use this number to identify the revision.

Title of paper: Saint Sophia and the Urban Fabric of Ohrid: Architectural and Cultural Impacts on the City's Vernacular Landscape

General

This paper examines an issue related to the ways of architectural and cultural influence of Saint Sophia on the urban fabric of Ohrid, in Macedonia. The paper is reasonably well written. It has some issues that need to be resolved.

Title: The title needs revision. Following title is suggested: Architectural and Cultural Impacts of Saint Sophia on the Urban Fabric and the Vernacular Landscape of Ohrid, Macedonia. Current title does not indicate where the city of Ohrid exists.

Language: Language is reasonably good. However, there are some issues of language in terms of grammar and sentence style. Write short and meaningful sentences and construct a narrative. It is also necessary to construct a good flow of argument.

Formatting: This paper has some issues in formatting. Keywords must be left-justified. All the text must be fully justified, except the lists which must be indented from the left and left-justified. It is suggested that the sub titles are not numbered. Do not bold some selected text within the paragraphs. Text within the tables must be 10 points and not 11. Under the 'Findings', sub titles of sections must be bolded. Figure titles must be Fig. and not Figure. Remove the full stop after the brackets in the references. When more than one author is cited in the references remove the comma after the initials of the author before the last.

Abstract

Abstract is reasonably well-written. First paragraph must introduce the issue of the presence of the church as a dominant structure. Before anything else, please introduce Saint Sophia and say that it is a church in the city of Ohrid. This abstract goes straight onto saying that the paper "examines the architectural and cultural influence of Saint Sophia on the urban fabric of Ohrid". No one knows what Saint Sophia is and where Ohrid exists. Only after introducing the church and the issue, say what the paper examines.

Second paragraph must be about the research methods and the third paragraph must be about the conclusions.

Current second paragraph explains the research methods reasonably well. Last paragraph makes the conclusions clear. However, these conclusions are insignificant because the introduction begins by saying the same thing, that the church "has played a crucial part in shaping the spatial organization and urban morphology of Ohrid. Over the centuries, its presence has influenced the development of surrounding neighborhoods, street networks, and vernacular architecture, making it a central reference point in the city's growth." If this was known before this research was conducted, then there is a question why was this research required to conclude that "Saint Sophia's architecture played a significant role in shaping Ohrid's urban layout. The church influenced both the spatial organization and the cultural identity of the city. The integration of the church within the urban fabric reflects a clear connection between religious architecture and the broader development of the city's urban structure during the Byzantine period". It says almost the same thing with a little bit more detail.

However, the introduction says that its intention is to ascertain the "shifts in settlement patterns, density, and architectural styles" and "assess how the church has influenced the evolution of Ohrid's vernacular landscape, including the historical changes in spatial organization, transformations in built form, and the socio-cultural significance of these developments over time". Conclusions must therefore be related to these: not general. This is valid to the conclusions at the end of the paper too.

Paper

1. **The introduction:** Introduction is written well. However, it is poor in terms of its aims. An introduction must introduce the issue as related to the title, and as claimed in the abstract. It must then say what this research examines, followed by the aims and objectives.

Its aim is not clear; what is written as aims are only objectives. However, the aim is mentioned differently: 'The study will explore historical changes in spatial organization, transformations in built form, and the socio-cultural significance of these developments over time.' The sentences that say "the purpose of this research is to" must be modified to say what is examined directly. Say that 'the paper "examines the interaction between Saint Sophia and the surrounding urban fabric, assessing how the church has influenced the evolution of the vernacular landscape of Ohrid"

Please revise the aims and objectives. Please note that aims are noble, unmeasurable, long term, almost-impossible-to-fully-achieve expectations while the objectives are practical, measurable, short term, achievable intentions. Objectives must be always listed starting with 'To'. The introduction must end with them. Remove the highlighted sub title before these objectives. 'To investigate' and 'to examine' cannot be objectives. They are aims.

Surprisingly, the introduction ends with another aim. It says that the "study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Saint Sophia's role in the urban history of Ohrid." Please note that aims cannot be to 'emphasize'.

In this paper, there is no clarity about the aims and objectives.

Fig. 1 does not belong here. It must be part of the research methods.

2. **Theoretical Framework:** This paper has the potential to present a good theoretical framework for the study. However, instead of producing the framework, it evaluates the Saint Sophia on individual theoretical ideas. This is not proper. Since the paper examines specific issues as related to 'architectural and cultural impacts on a vernacular Landscape' it should first offer a discussion about 'architectural and cultural aspects' and 'vernacular Landscapes' offering their definitions first, employing theoretical interpretations of them. It should also discuss other theoretical notions relevant to this research such as those of Lynch etc. Moreover, a theoretical framework must be produced employing the voice of the authors with statements such as 'according to Godman (1999), or Lawrence (2000) argues, instead of the authors making statements and putting references within brackets. The authors of this paper cannot theorize because they are not theoreticians. Currently, the materials exist, but because the ideas are applied to the case study straightaway, this is not a proper theoretical framework. Please produce a proper theoretical framework by referring to the outstanding theoreticians as having been identified currently and also by referring to Rapoport and Oliver as related to vernacular landscapes. Define the terms first. What is written under this title are piecemeal introductions to works of theoreticians and applications to the case study: this is analysis and not a framework. When referring to the theoreticians, do not mention full names and do not mention book titles. These are standards of research communication. In an essay, you can do that.

3. **Review of Literature:** The review of literature is done reasonably well. A review of literature should discuss the major research that has examined the issue previously to show the status of current knowledge, and where the gaps of that knowledge exist. The issue here is the 'architectural and cultural impacts of a **building** on the urban fabric and the vernacular landscape of a city (not Ohrid in particular- that is a case study)'. However, no research related generally to this issue is being critically reviewed, although the sub title exists and there is some theoretical discussion again and an application of them to Ohrid. The review should critically examine previous research that has examined architectural and cultural impacts of buildings on the urban fabric and the vernacular landscape of cities globally first, Macedonia afterwards and finally deal with any research that exist related to Ohrid, (not only or necessarily related to this church)

A review of literature must be produced employing the voice of the authors with statements such as 'according to Oliver (1999), or Rapoport (2000) points out, instead of the authors making statements and putting references within brackets. It should be a 'critical review'.

Please see 'how to write a review of literature' in the ISVS e-journal web site and follow suit. Write in the present tense because it discusses current knowledge. Sum up at the end and show the status of current knowledge and where the gaps of that knowledge exist. 12-15 references are needed. Current writing is not done well: it is all about the saint Sophia and does not establish the status of knowledge on this issue and where the gaps of that knowledge exist.

The last sentence of the first paragraph: "In the case of Ohrid, Saint Sophia serves as a focal point within the city's architectural and social fabric, necessitating a comprehensive examination of its role in shaping the vernacular landscape" does not belong to the review of literature.

4. **Research Methodology:** This is reasonably well done. However, to begin with, it must mention that it employs the qualitative paradigm and case study as a method. Within this, a number of data gathering techniques have been employed and mentioned: some within the case studies and some general. This is great. For example, the literature survey is general. On the other hand, observations, the photographic survey, systematic documentation and interviews are techniques employed within the case studies.

Please list them and explain instead of highlighting in the text. Moreover, present the data gathering techniques and tasks in detail: say when where and how, instead of saying what data was gathered. After saying that the research employs case study as a method, explain the basis upon which the case study was chosen. Some details of interviews are presented well. It says how the respondents were chosen, how many, when etc.

It is also great that the research identified literature survey as being distinctly different from a review of literature: a distinction often mixed up by many researchers. However, please explain how the literature was sourced.

The techniques of data collection are listed and explained well. For some techniques, however, the details are inadequate. What is needed is not either theory or what data was gathered but how the techniques were implemented. Say what was employed (Case studies) (Use present tense nevertheless) then the data gathering techniques. List them first and explain how each was carried out, with full details. They must be explained in such a way that another independent researcher can repeat them and see if they will get the same results. That is the test of science.

Table 1 is well done; however, it should be elaborated as part of the findings in terms of what was found in each source.

5. **Case studies:** Before the findings, introduce the case study Saint Sophia and Orhid, where the actual research was conducted. Show the location of the church where the research was conducted. Provide location plans of other significant buildings within the city. There should be an introduction to the city-settlement, places and the communities: its urban layout as it stands now. Fig. 2 belongs here. It is also necessary to show the locations from where, the photographic documentation was done as mentioned under the methods. It says 'multiple vantage points.'
6. **Findings:** Findings are not presented well. Provide an introduction to the issue and the data. Please produce data from all the techniques as related to each of the data gathering techniques: literature survey, observations of transformations, photographic survey and interviews. It only provides what is called 'insights' and this is not adequate.

First, provide findings from the research: list the archive documents and indicate which information was sourced from these archives. Second, provide the documentation from Orhid. Show what was documented in a lay out plan. Nothing exists.

Findings are thus presented inadequately. It lists the techniques separately and conclusions from each technique but there is no data to substantiate these statements. It says "the urban morphology around Saint Sophia remains largely consistent with historical patterns, despite modern interventions". Where is the evidence? Why are not these historical patterns not revealed for scrutiny? They must be. It says that 'medieval planning principles, indicate that the church has historically served as a focal point for urban development.' Show how these principles have been implemented and mention what the principles are. Without any evidence, they have no value or validity; Lay out patterns then and now must be presented. Some of the interviews must be quoted. Same goes for all the techniques.

Currently, there is no data, there is no analysis. What is written are just opinions of the researcher called 'insights.' Many such statements exist and they are meaningless. They have no scientific value.

In the findings, if you make a statement, provide evidence. A research paper is not an essay. Research needs data to substantiate the findings.

7. **Discussion:** The discussion presents the findings of this research comparing them with other research that have examined the same issue. It shows the findings of this research which are similar or different to other research. However, it should also explain why. However, much of what is presented here are new information: data, and must have been presented under the sub title 'findings' and not here. This is especially so in terms of Figures 4 – 9; they should be part of the findings and analysis. A discussion should not be a place to present findings. It should only discuss the findings and their similarity or difference with other research.
8. **Conclusions:** The five conclusions are well-done. However, unfortunately, the data and evidence for these conclusions do not exist in the findings. This is a big issue. Moreover, before presenting these conclusions, please say that these are the conclusions.

Many claims are not presented before and there was no evidence. For example, it says 'The Varosh neighborhood, which housed the Christian population, remained dense and compact, with small plots and limited open spaces, while the Ottoman-era neighborhoods expanded more freely in the lower, flatter areas of the city'. This cannot be a conclusion of this research (although it may be true). This paper did not present this neighborhood anywhere in the findings. There is some reference to this neighbourhood under 'discussion' under the sub title 'Cultural Transformations and Urban Integration'. This is problematic.

Many of the conclusions suffer from this confusion. Please resolve them and present the findings and analysis first and then discuss only the findings under 'discussion'. Do not present findings under discussion.

Strengths and weaknesses after the conclusions are well presented.

References: References are not done well. When there is more than one name, there should be '&' before the last name but no comma after the initials before that. No comma after the last initial of the last author too. Some of the page numbers are missing. Books require the place of publication and the publisher. Some references are incomplete without the places of publications. Pay attention to details and be consistent. Use the Harvard system as per the template. Follow the template to the last dot.

Final Decision: Major Revisions

Summary of the overall observations of the paper:

This is a potentially very valuable paper that could make a significant contribution to knowledge about the architectural and cultural impacts of Saint Sophia on the urban fabric and the vernacular landscape of Ohrid, Macedonia. However, it needs major revisions to bring the argument to be cohesive supported by clear findings.

The abstract needs to be succinct but must have sufficient details to introduce the issue, the research methods and the specific conclusions, it is not written well; conclusions are problematic. In fact, the paper suffers from a lack of clarity and focus as to how it arrives at the conclusions. The findings are not clear. Conclusions are therefore questionable, do not have evidence presented under the findings.

Introduction needs to be presented articulating the issue. It should end with proper focused aims and objectives again in keeping with the issue. Introduce a proper theoretical framework using citations to major research defining the critical concepts such as 'culture' and 'vernacular landscape' establishing their relationships and not referring to the case study of Saint Sophia. Write a proper review of literature afterwards: again, do not refer to the case study. The research methodology must be organized well with the list of techniques employed to gather data and explanations of how each was carried out. Introduce the case study Saint Sophia. Present the detailed findings from each of the techniques and not just the 'insights' as has been done.

ISVS e-journal

Journal of the International Society for the Study of Vernacular Settlements

2025

Discussion should not present the findings, but discuss the similarities and differences of the findings with other research examining the same issue. There is a huge problem here. Interviews are mentioned but no data. Photographic documentations are mentioned but nothing is presented. It raises doubts as to if any of these claimed tasks have actually been accomplished. Findings must present three things as follows as per the title.

1. Characteristics of the vernacular landscape at Ohrid.
2. Impact of architecture on this landscape.
3. Impact of culture on this landscape.

Discuss only the specific conclusions arising from the findings related to the case study, substantiated by evidence presented under the sub title 'findings.' Move the findings from the discussion to the findings. Conclusions must be derived and substantiated by data presented under the sub title 'Findings.'

Re-examine and reproduce the references to be complete and compatible with the ISVS e-journal template.