Walled Cities & Open Societies
Managing Historic Walls in Urban World Heritage Properties
Siena, Italy. 26-27 January 2017

Šibenik, Croatia
Info sheet

F. Hogenberg, G. Braun, "Sibinium", Civitates orbis terrarum II, 1575, engraving
1. General Background

One of just several major urban centres on the Adriatic coastline without ancient heritage, early medieval Šibenik had developed under the St. Michael's Fortress, a checkpoint on the maritime route which led from ancient city of Scardona towards the open sea. A favourable position within the early Croatian kingdom had enabled the initial momentum for the city, and by 14th century Šibenik was as important as Trogir, Split or Zadar, his older neighbours and sometimes rivals. The old town of Šibenik was formed in a shape of irregular rectangle, enclosed within its medieval walls, which led from St. Michael's Fortress toward the coastline.

Šibenik had gained its long-term political stability with the firm establishment of Venetian authority in 1412, in which the city retained some of its former autonomy. Two golden age centuries followed, marked by the strong economic and social growth, and 17th-century Šibenik became the largest town of Venetian Dalmatia. The prosperity of that era is still clearly visible – numerous religious and civil buildings were built, as well as the famed St. James' Cathedral, a masterpiece of Gothic and Renaissance art, protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000.

The War of Candia (1645-69) and the horrible outbreak of plague in 1649 transformed Šibenik from a pulsating regional centre to a stagnating provincial town, and fundamentally changed its economic and demographic structure. The redevelopment of the city started only in the final decades of the 19th century, with the rapid installation of modern urban facilities in what was still a pre-industrial town. As one of the most industrialized cities of Yugoslav state in the second half of the 20th century, after the collapse of the Croatian industry in the 90's, Šibenik had found itself on the turning point. Rich natural, cultural and historical heritage steered the town towards the post-industrial age, and Šibenik has since became one of the best Croatian examples regarding the skilful and sustainable use of EU funds.

2. Basic description and brief history of the walls

Four fortresses are located within the city of Šibenik, and together with other defence objects, both preserved and demolished, had once formed a fortification system of the city and its district. Although fairly well preserved – unlike many fortifications in other Dalmatian and Croatian cities – all four fortresses were without urban function at the start of the 21st century.
The oldest of them, named after St. Michael, is the nucleus of Šibenik. Most of the fortress' visible parts date from the early and mid-15th century, when the new Venetian government restored much of its defensive structures. Throughout the centuries, St. Michael's Fortress was the main defence point of the city, but the construction of new fortifications diminished its value, and was gradually left to decay. St. Nicolas' Fortress was built in mid-16th century, as a part of a broader war effort of Venice against the expanding power of the Ottoman navy. Constructed in a quite unique triangular shape and guarding the entrance to the Šibenik channel, this fortress was the largest military investment made by Venetians in Dalmatia. It was designed by Giangirolamo Sanmicheli, nephew of Michele, the celebrated architect and urbanist of cinquecento.

![Figure 2: St. Nicholas’ Fortress, 2005 © Šibenik Tourist Board](image)

St. John's and Barone Fortress, located on the hills just above the medieval Šibenik, were built in only two months of 1646, in the wake of the Ottoman attack during the War of Candia. New fortresses, constructed with the resources and the effort of the citizens themselves, withheld two Ottoman sieges, and were subsequently strengthened and brought into their current shape until 1656. The continuous development of military technology has led to the construction of various fortification elements from 13th to 17th century. Very little was preserved – parts of city's gates, walls and towers, ruins of two watchtowers guarding the entrance of the channel. In the wider city area, several defensive walls were built as a shelter for the local population (Mandalina, Vrpolje, Grebaštica).

3. Current functions and management/governance framework

Revitalization project, financed by the EU and the City of Šibenik, and implemented in 2012-14, had transformed St. Michael's Fortress into a multifunctional area with the open-air summer stage, and well-designed curtain walls and underground parts. Similar EU-Šibenik project with many interesting features was carried out on the Barone Fortress in 2014-16. Both fortresses are open for visits and used for various daily and evening events throughout the year. They have hosted more than 165,000 visitors only
in 2016. Another project started in September 2016, which will revitalize the largest fortification of Šibenik – St. John's Fortress – with its finalization date set in September of 2019. The management of these fortresses was entrusted to Public Cultural Institution Fortress of Culture – Šibenik. Its employees have participated as partners, associates and members of project teams in the implementation and post-project activities on all three revitalization projects. This management model guarantees a sustainable maintenance and use of cultural heritage, and establishes a mechanism that directs the resources obtained through the touristic value of the monument toward further renovation and cultural activities.

Both St. Michael's Fortress and Barone Fortress won the Cultural Attraction of the Year Award in 2014 and 2016, respectively, awarded by the Croatian Ministry of Tourism and Croatian Tourist Board.

As per the Maritime Domain and Seaports Act of Croatia, the St. Nicolas' Fortress area is managed by the Public Institute for the Management of Protected Natural Areas in Šibenik-Knin County. The fortress is currently in evaluation process, as a part of The Venetian Works of defence between 15th and 17th centuries candidacy for the UNESCO World Heritage Site list. There are currently no plans for large or mid-scale interventions on St. Nicolas' Fortress, apart from occasional repairs.

Other defensive structures in Šibenik and its surroundings are currently being used for various purposes. A segment of medieval city walls was incorporated into the library building. Cavalier Madonna is today a part of the old cemetery. An attractive space once known as strada di soccorso is an integral part of St. Michael's Fortress and a project has been made for its reuse. Certain defensive walls and other objects, especially those outside the inner city area, need further repairs and research.

4. Role of the walls with the regard to the OUV of the WH property and its management system

Fortification system of Šibenik was initially included in the transnational application for UNESCO World Heritage Site list – The Venetian Works of defence between 15th and 17th centuries. Regarding its value, the fortification system of Šibenik corresponds to:
criterion (ii): outstanding example of military architecture development both on land and at sea, made possible by the most significant architects and military engineers, using the newest knowledge, skills and materials of the age.

criterion (iii): this heritage testifies the Venetian cultural and military tradition that spans throughout Italy and across the eastern Mediterranean. Numerous archive materials, architectural monuments, but also the urban image and the way of life of present-day Šibenik bear witness to the same.

criterion (iv): well-adapted to the geomorphological features of the terrain, fortifications of Šibenik are an excellent example of an elaborated system designed for securing Adriatic trade routes and coastal towns. St. Nicolas' Fortress is especially important, where the new engineering solutions of modern (alla moderna) military architecture are still visible today.

Authenticity of Šibenik fortification system is verified by the old cartography depicting its development. All four fortresses are well preserved, and their connection to the local population and identity has been strengthened in recent years with their new urban functions. The integrity was preserved with minimal permanent interventions, the application of old conservation techniques, and the limitation of new features within the areas of ruined old objects. The management model of Šibenik fortification system has been recognized as an effective, successful and sustainable one, and it has recently been studied with great interest by other Croatian cities and communes with valuable heritage monuments.

5. Main challenges and opportunities concerning walls management

(as per Programme and work plan 2017-2020, Fortress of Culture – Šibenik, written by Gorana Barišić Bačelić, director, November 29, 2016)

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<th>CHALLENGES</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
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<td>• Economic instability of Croatia; low national budget for the Ministry of Culture (less than 1%); low purchasing power of Croatians and some foreign visitors</td>
<td>• Further improvement of current heritage management model</td>
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<td>• Ineffective day-to-day financial model (City Treasury)</td>
<td>• Promotion of Šibenik, Croatian cultural heritage and cultural tourism at international level</td>
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<td>• Small cultural and creative industries market causes the decline in programme quality.</td>
<td>• The need and necessity for new cultural and other facilities in Šibenik and the region.</td>
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<td>• High seasonality (high quantity of cultural and touristic events of varying quality from June to September)</td>
<td>• Expansion of our partner network (national and international institutions and companies)</td>
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<td>• The lack of HR educated in the field of cultural management.</td>
<td>• The habit of visiting development across local and regional population (educational programmes, public relations)</td>
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<td>• Various location and content challenges (dispersed objects; weather and climate conditions; expensive equipment</td>
<td>• Intensive cooperation with local cultural shareholders and NGO's.</td>
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<td>• Highly motivated team of young experts, well-experienced in project management and implementation</td>
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<td>• Long-term strategic planning model establishment</td>
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<td>• Continuing financial sustainability (new various sources of funding)</td>
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6. Main past, on-going or planned activities for enhancing the walls

Public Cultural Institution Fortress of Culture – Šibenik is the main apparatus established by the City of Šibenik for the management of its historical and cultural heritage. Through the quadrennial plan, Fortress of Culture had defined its specific objectives, namely:

- Revitalization of non-renovated parts of the fortification system.
- Implementation of innovative solutions for the presentation of cultural and historical fortification heritage.
- Development of high-quality, recognizable, diverse and balanced cultural programme.
- Further improvement of the already positive professional and general public image.
- Increase the attendance rate of the fortresses and the use of their features and programmes.
- Ensure a wide range of financial sources and retain financial sustainability.

A detailed activity plan and timetable has been made for each of these objectives, with realistic goals by 2020.

Besides the work of the Fortress of Culture, the aforementioned St. Nicolas’ Fortress candidacy for inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List will determine further steps for its future use. Projects have been designed for the re-use of some neglected public historical areas within the city center, and their future implementation depends on City resources and possible EU funding. The City of Šibenik and its institutions have undoubtedly proved their dedication to identify, renovate and revitalize historical walls, aiming to appropriately valorise them and present them to the future generations.

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1 This document has been drafted by the City of Šibenik. Authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this paper and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.