

romana kačič

maja fabbro

jozephine mair

noemi zonta

sandstone,
from grain
to paving

STONE CARPET OF PIRAN

sandstone, from grain to paving

STONE CARPET OF PIRAN

Piran is a town that breathes through its sandstone. The pattern and colour of this stone give the town a unique appearance and a certain warmth. This is best appreciated along the paths of its narrow and hidden streets, as well as its squares and waterfront areas. Inhabitants of Piran have a special affection for their stone and see it as part of their own cultural identity and heritage.



flaming town

In ancient times, red grains of sand would dance in the wind and warn sailors travelling towards the Greek colony of Aegida, that they were nearing the Piran peninsula. Here stood a settlement overlooking the sea, protected to the north by a high cliff of characteristic sandstone layers known as flysch. The red cliff exuded a fiery strength as well as a certain warmth and tranquility - as it still does today. It is not surprising therefore that a theory

about the origin of this town's name – that we now know as Piran - is linked to the Greek word *πυρρανος* meaning "red". This surely refers to the imposing red colour of the unique cliffs that those sailors of ancient times once observed. Today the red grains of sand still dance among the footsteps that follow the interwoven stone carpeting of Piran, a fragment of Slovenian Istra's cultural landscape of unquantifiable value.



The Slovenian part of the Istrian coastline is distinguished by its river plains, salt pans and flysch cliffs. These flysch cliffs tower above the sea and link settlements along the coastline. At the same time, they connect the maritime flora and fauna with species on the mainland.

Observed from the sea, the coastline resembles a necklace of colourful cliff faces in various shades of red, among which is the Strunjan cliff which rises 80 meters above sea level. Further embellishing this already unique coastline are the slender bell towers of its medieval coastal towns.

Adriatic sea



sand sculptures

The flysch cliff is high and steep, rising imposingly above the sea. It is like a living sculpture in constant evolution under the influences of water, wind and sun. The particularity of the cliffs overlooking the sea of the Slovenian coast is the presence of thick limestone layers. These flysch cliffs have largely retained their natural shape because of their inaccessibility. They support a rich coastal ecosystem of varied living organisms as well as limestone fossils and sandstone ichnofossils. The latter are observed on the surface of the sandstone in the form of casts; they are traces of organisms left in the sediment millions of years ago during the formation of the flysch.



from stone to paving

In the past, man appreciated the generosity of nature. Nowadays, due to the speed of development, he has lost contact with the natural environment. In a time when change takes place so quickly, we need to become increasingly aware that it is nature that allows us to exist on this earth and for this we must return to her and protect her.

To this avail, we should appreciate the existence of Piran's unique stone structures that are in harmony with the surrounding natural environment. We must promote their protection and restoration as well as understand their creation. This link between man and landscape is important. It helps us rediscover the ancient arts and rich local traditions as well as following principles of sustainable development. Much of the historic coastal town of Piran is built using sandstone rock. It can be found in the streets and squares, the piers and waterfronts, in the walls that frame the town and those that support the terraced gardens. It is found in the palaces, churches, bell towers, majestic town walls and the supporting arches under the church of Saint George.

In this compact town surrounded by the sea, public open spaces are made of local sandstone creating harmony with the surrounding natural environment.



Piran breathes through its stone

Piran's sandstone paving, placed on a bed of sand, forms a permeable membrane that separates but also connects the two elements earth and air. At the same time it allows the third element water to travel in both directions. One of its other characteristics is that it absorbs the energy of the sun and releases it back into the local environment. In this cycle earth and air are once again united, creating harmony between the natural elements that surround us.



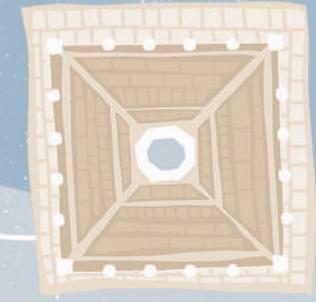
from the square
to the sea

Piran's two stone piers with their lighthouses protruding into the sea, embracing and accompanying every seafarer as they approach this coastal town. The piers which protect boats from high waves are paved with large blocks of limestone and sandstone, and are further adorned with bollards and steps. The public squares of Piran are typically paved with sandstone. Varied detailing in the shape, size and colour of the paving demonstrates different characteristics and traditions which link the paving with its surroundings as well as exhibiting cultural and aesthetic symbolism. White limestone represents the presence of water.

*First of May square



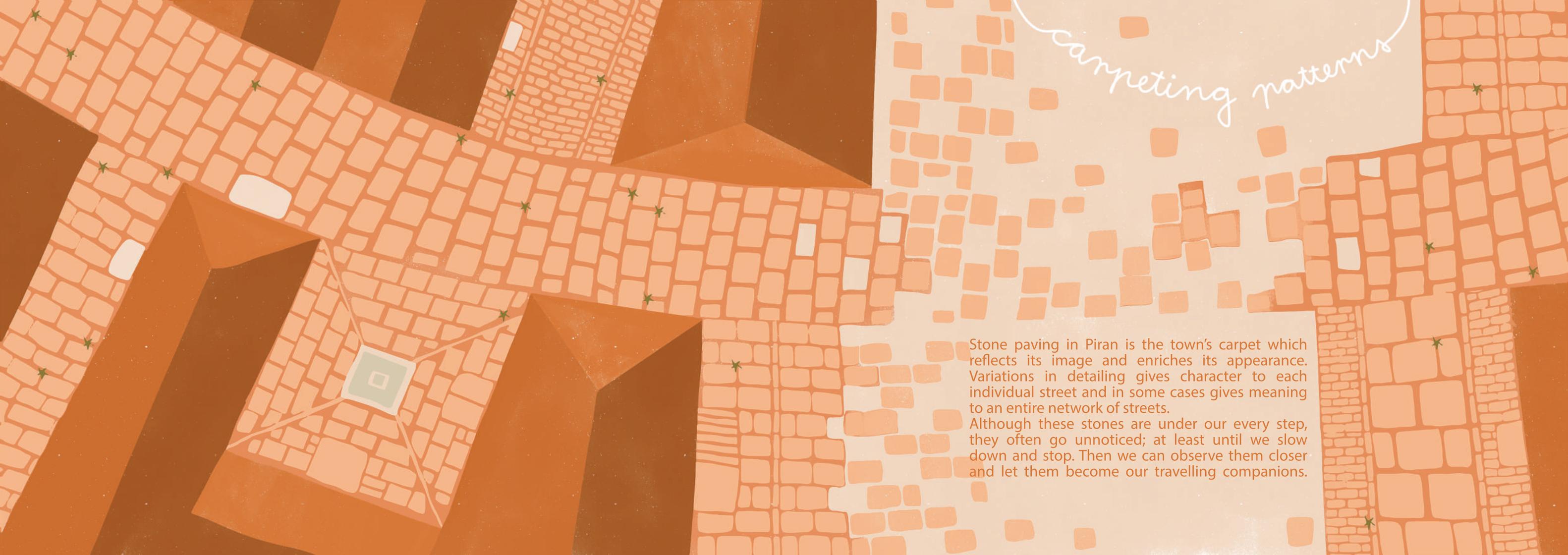
The cluster



Jewish square



Vodnik square



competing patterns

Stone paving in Piran is the town's carpet which reflects its image and enriches its appearance. Variations in detailing gives character to each individual street and in some cases gives meaning to an entire network of streets. Although these stones are under our every step, they often go unnoticed; at least until we slow down and stop. Then we can observe them closer and let them become our travelling companions.



What the stones tell us

Detailing on the surface of the stonework tells us more about its history. In front of church entrances we can find a paved surface with reused white sepulchral stones. On the street in front of the church of Saint George we can observe sandstone blocks with square details that once supported the base of a pergola. Large stones were laid in front of house entrances. They were used as stone doormats and are still present today; moreover they symbolise the transition between private and public space.

The design of sloping streets and steps were often adapted for the terrain. Stones were carved and placed transversely against the slope of the ground. Carvings and sand fragments gave these stones a rough texture and prevented them from being slippery as people hurried along the hidden streets.



STONE CARPET OF PIRAN: Sandstone, from Grain to Paving
Original title: KAMNITA PREPROGA PIRANA: peščenjak, od zrna do tlaka
Text: Romana Kačič, Mojca Fabbro, Josephine Mair
Illustrations: Noemi Zonta
Design: Romana Kačič, Mojca Fabbro, Noemi Zonta
Art director: Romana Kačič
Translation: Mattias Lidén, Zosia Brett, Andy Froggatt
Contractor: ABAKKUM Zavod za krajino, kulturo in umetnost, Piran /
Institute for landscape, culture and art, Piran
Published by: Turistično združenje Portorož / Tourist board Portorož
Portorož, 2020

Online edition

Access to the online edition: <https://www.portoroz.si/si/medijsko-sredisce/tiskovine>

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani
COBISS.SI-ID=16536579
ISBN 978-961-94982-5-5 (pdf)

Format: 42 cm x 14,8 cm

Referenčes: Baloh E. 2016. Geografija 9: Samostojni delovni zvezek za geografijo v devetem razredu osnovne šole. 1. izd. Ljubljana, Mladinska knjiga / Gosar A. 2004. Zavarovana območja in njihov pomen za turizem: morska učna pot: Mesečev zaliv in njegovi zakladi strokovni seminar in terensko delo, 28.-29. november 2003, Strunjan. Koper, Univerza na Primorskem / Karinja S. 2013. Večen Piran v luči arheoloških najdb. Piran, Pomorski muzej "Sergej Mašera" / Ogrin D. 2012. Geografija stika Slovenske Istre in Tržaškega zaliva. 1. izd. Ljubljana, Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete / Snoj M. 2009. Etimološki slovar slovenskih zemljepisnih imen. Ljubljana, Založba Modrijan in Založba ZRC / Sotir R. 2017. Slovenska pomorska terminologija. Ljubljana, Osminka & Co.