

Landscape-urban Study of Potential for Recreation in Micro-region Radošinka

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Starting point:

The original goal of the urban-landscape study should have focused on water elements and their influence on the country. Historical transformation of water elements, water retention system and other subsystems regarding water should have been considered as potential for local recreation, economic development and environmental sustainability.

The original goal has changed due to the performed analysis which was significantly influenced by a stone that was found in a locality Golgota above the municipality Nové Sady. Theoretically, the stone should not have been there because in this locality there were 5 to 10m deep soils without any stones, gravels nor other fractions within. Being inspired by the stone, the team members recognized surprisingly high number of sacral elements in the micro-region Radošinka. Therefore, the team decided to explore religious, cultural and historical elements too. An understanding that the rich cultural values and strong religious spirit nearly disappeared in Radošinka made the team interested in the sacral dimension of the country too.

Main goals:

- To analyse potentials and limits for development of the micro-region Radošinka, which unites 11 municipalities, that rise from history, landscape and socio-cultural context as well as from the subordinate urban and strategic plans (regional and municipal)
- To support development in line with the identified potentials, protect the key elements of local identity and strengthen sustainability; a special attention should be paid to the local system of water circulation and retention, urban development and tourism in Radošinka
- To manage negative influence on landscape structures, historical sacral elements and local genius loci
- To prepare a set of suggestions, limits and regulations for future urban and strategic plans in line with the obligatory Urban Plan of Region Nitra (ÚPN-R NK) which was approved by the local

representatives of The Self-governing Region of Nitra (NSK), dated in 14. May 2012 under the number 113/2012

1. Introduction:

Slovakia is a rural country with a great natural potential and it is often marked as catholic. Unfortunately, historic, cultural and natural values get destroyed very fast, the landscape changes in line with investors' desires and the sacral dimension vanishes in modern period. Moreover, quality of country is endangered and irreversible losses of ecological stability, destruction of water system and cultural elements occur. The country is desolated and plundered. The team members see landscape as a potential for development, however, the real question is if local citizens are also interested to use this potential. The team highlights the sustainable use of renewable natural capital, such as soil, water and biodiversity.

2. Description of the micro-region Radošinka:

Micro-region Radošinka is situated in Slovakia, west from the city of Nitra. It unites 11 villages (Jelšovce, Čakajovce, Zbehy, Čab, Nové Sady, Šurianky, Hruboňovo, Kapince, Malé Zálužie, Lukáčovce, Alekšince) which together have approx. 13 km² and over 10.000 inhabitants. Radošinka is an agricultural region. High farming on large-areas has a negative impact on the quality of country, local genius loci and the historical memory of landscape. It farms out the soil, pollutes water, eliminates forests and traditional alleys/avenues in fields, dries up flood lands and decreases biodiversity. This situation contrasts with the European Landscape Convention and other trends that value, protect and develop nature as a sustainable source of our wealth.

3. Methodology of the work and its innovative approach:

The method is integrative, especially in its analytical part. It introduces multi-layer analysis, complex multi-disciplinary perspective and the use of visual points, links and relations between dominant elements in landscape (digital simulations were made by researchers from the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra). Also, a detailed survey among citizens and the use of historical maps uncover an important knowledge about the local potential. Authors did not explore the natural and the urban environments separately; rather they considered urban areas and the surrounding landscape to be a complex entity which creates one structured and fully functional system.

4. Key results of analyses:

The analysis revealed new, unexpected and often surprising information, for example:

- Historical connections between nature and people disappeared, people left countryside and moved into villages. Sacral elements in landscape prove that people lived closer to the nature in the past and today they are replaced by heavy agricultural mechanisms.
- The oldest parts of settlements were built at the leeward side of hills whereas new settlements do not take natural conditions (e.g. winds, frosty valleys and rain flows) into account; this leads to higher demands for energies
- Reduction of local forests from 14% to 3.3% (decline 76%); of landscape vegetation, alleys and avenues from 264km to 119km (decline 45%) and of vineyards from 200ha to 10ha (decline 95%) in spite that Radošinka belongs to the "Nitra Vineyard Area" and the "Royal Wine Road" passed through here in the past
- Harsh soil erosion (32% of agricultural land) and the loss of ecological stability caused by large-scale farming, unsuitable plants, soil fertilization, destruction of traditional field alleys, avenues and green elements; all of these lead to exodus of people from the country
- Destruction of water system, diversion from the traditional use of water elements and lack of water retention; out of 17 original water mills only 2 remained (1 is dysfunctional and 1 is used as a restaurant); out of 13 water dams and polders only 2 small ponds remained and 5 new large reservoirs were built (2 of them are dysfunctional); out of 12 original water springs only 3 remained (3 were covered and 6 lost water); newly built remote water supplies need additional energies and the water in soil decreases with abnormal pumping of the groundwater; water streams and canals are regulated (95% of Radošinka creek) – water is no more used as a source of energy, the water circulation is interrupted and there is a lack of water during summers

- Radical reduction of flood areas, water streams and canals, dams, polders, small water tanks, etc., together with the loss of supporting vegetation, green areas and biodiversity
- The use of water streams was thoughtful in the past. For example, the manor-house of the Ghyczy's family was situated between two arms of the Radošinka creek, thus delivering water for watering of gardens, watering-place for livestock and washing as well as for the water mill. The use of water power was with no barriers or restrictions for animal migration.
- In 11 municipalities, out of 13 original manor-houses only 8 remained and 4 of these are totally rebuilt (they lost all architectural, cultural and historical value), 1 is a ruin, 1 is heavily damaged (private property) and only 1 in Nové Sady is reconstructed
- Out of 91 original sacral objects and elements 84 remained (86%), two localities are named Golgota. Sacral elements are situated mostly in Nové Sady (historical center of the micro-region), Lukáčovce (the past bishop residence), Jelšovce and Čakajovce (crossroads).
- Historical "roads" were situated in this locality: a trade road (in direction to Piešťany and Topoľčany), a military road (in direction to castle Baňa near of Piešťany), a pilgrim road that was discovered thanks to sacral elements and their analysis (in direction from Nitra to Hlohovec and Trnava) and a bishop road (in direction from Lukáčovce, the past bishop residence, to Nitra, the current archbishop residence). The Royal Wine Road was identified, however, not proved.
- A baroque composition of landscape was discovered: a clerical baroque in Lukáčovce (with the church as a central point) and a large composition which runs from Nové Sady (with the statue of Jesus Christ as a central point, a catholic church was there in the past) to churches in other villages in the micro-region.

4. Key conclusions and suggestions:

The team members present landscape as an important capital for urban development and focus on the reconstruction of its historical, cultural and spiritual values:

- The first key problem is connected to large-scale farming in the micro-region Radošinka which causes the loss of biological, physical and traditional attributes of landscape. Therefore, the priority of future planning processes should be given to supporting natural capital, such as revitalizing the country and retaining water, renaturalization of water streams (at least partly) and soil protection against erosion.
- The second key problem is an exodus of small farmers from the country. "Good landlords" moved out to live in cities because, according to surveys, they could not find satisfying jobs. Therefore, it is important to return local people back to the country, at least to support the connection between nature and people in a form of leisure-time activities, ideally in a form of new small entrepreneurs who are supported by state aids.
- The third key challenge is to ensure continuity of values between past, present and future. Therefore, the study offers a set of inspiring ideas which are rooted in traditions and could be involved to future urban and strategic plans. Historic systems, roads and individual elements should be reconstructed or at least reflected in new development projects.

This study concerns nature, landscape structures, urban areas, cultural, historical and spiritual values, traditional ecosystems, water, etc., and uncovers available potential, challenges and limits. The study offers suggestions for the entire micro-region Radošinka as well as for individual 11 municipalities – these should be reflected in urban and strategic plans of the micro-region and municipalities. The study was delivered to official representatives of the Nitra Region, the micro-region Radošinka that belongs to Nitra region and of each village.

5. Standpoint of the jury of the competition "ZUUPS Award – Price for Urbanism 2013":

The jury appreciated methodical approach to identification of the recreational potential in Radošinka, consideration of cultural-historical aspects, urban and landscape values and preservation of traditional elements and of local genius loci. Especially the high number of layers in the analytical part is remarkable. This methodology is suitable for identification of further urban development in Radošinka as well as in similar localities.

(Ing.arch. Arnost Mitske, curator of the ZUUPS Award competition)

Documentary photos:

		
<i>Reconstructed manor-house Nové Sady</i>	<i>Water gate on Radošinka creek</i>	<i>Willow-trees – traditional cut</i>
		
<i>Church in Nové Sady</i>	<i>Deteriorating manor-house Hruboňovo</i>	<i>Disfunctional reservoir Hruboňovo</i>
		
<i>Protected area – Park Šurianky</i>	<i>Regulated Radošinka creek</i>	<i>Water dam Malé Zálužie</i>
		
<i>Bishop manor-house Lukáčovce</i>	<i>Church in Jelšovce</i>	<i>Church in Lukáčovce</i>
		
<i>Baroque gate Čakajovce</i>	<i>The last functionless mill in Zbehy</i>	<i>Large-scale farming causing erosion</i>