

DESIGNED LANDSCAPES – THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

TÖRTÉNETI TÁJ – MÚLT, JELEN, JÖVŐ

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THE TERM “landscape” is usually used to define an element of the Earth’s surface. Given the fact that a landscape is continuous in time and space, its size and boundaries are defined using special purpose-built criteria. Primarily various natural processes and phenomena determine the development of landscape and its appearance. Approximately in the Late Neolithic period in Central Europe, another significant phenomenon changing the landscape appeared among the complex of the natural factors – man.

The cultural landscapes evolved and formed in different natural, historic, and socio-economic environments. The major factors of the influence were the spontaneous economy-focused activities of people. The following human activities are considered the most important ones shaping the landscape of the Czech Republic, and generally also the Central European landscape: agriculture, forestry, water management, urbanisation, transport, mineral extraction, industry, and large-scale recreational activities in the recent periods.

On the other hand, there are many areas within the Central European

territory, which were shaped in accordance with a clearly stated design – artistic, architectonic or urbanistic – or a religious, and/or philosophical concept. In such cases, the landscape could be described as a collective work of nature and man. For all types of landscapes, which were altered or remodelled with the emphasis on their compositional, symbolic, and aesthetic parameters, the term “designed landscape” is commonly used. Very often the actual designer or designers who created the original historic concept are known.

The landscape of the Czech Republic is a very varied one, featuring numerous designed spaces, many of which are of supreme quality. In the Bohemian, Moravian, and Silesian sub-territories of the Czech Republic, such landscapes were created especially during the High Middle Ages (13th – 14th centuries), the Renaissance, (15th – 16th centuries), the Baroque Period (17th century) and the Romantic Age (19th century). A strong influence on the landscape compositions originating in the past three periods mentioned above came from the garden arts. Given the space, the classical principles of garden design

exceeded their commonly-understood limits and were lavishly applied to the open landscape. Despite this fact, the Renaissance, Baroque, and the Romantic compositions were usually perfect examples of harmony between the economic requirements on the landscape and the aesthetic principles of garden design. The landscapes of the Lednice-Valtice and the Mikulov - Falkenstein zones have continuously evolved as designer concepts from the medieval period. All the abovementioned styles and concepts are present here, one laid over another or complementing each other. This territory, which is the subject of our long-term research, can be considered a model example of the conservation, planning and management of a designed landscape.

The Lednice-Valtice heritage zone is situated within a territory defined by the Czech-Austrian state boundary, and lines joining the villages and towns of Lanžhot, Břeclav, Podivín, Bulhary, Sedlec, and Valtice. The western part of this area, which is listed as an UNESCO World Cultural Heritage (listing in 1996 as a *ferme ornée* type of landscape), is closely related to the Protected Landscape Area and

UNESCO Biosphere Reserve of Pálava, the centre of which lies in the town of Mikulov. From the landscape designer's point of view, the whole of the Lednice-Valtice Area must be perceived in a wider context, especially due to its close connection to the Mikulov zone and the borderline part of the Lower Austria. All these territories can be described as a land of a strong pre-historic spiritual significance, which was demonstrably colonised as early as 27,000 BC, being a space through which nearly all the known Central-European cultures passed from the Palaeolithic to the Modern ages.

A substantial factor forming the face of the designed landscape was the almost 700-year-long influence of the principal owner of the land - the princely family of the Liechtensteins. Despite this fact, the denomination of the area as a homogenous and independent space is very problematic. Although the natural conditions, the ownership rights and relations have been studied in detail, a clear and unequivocal boundary of the area cannot be determined, as the influence of the family was changing during the centuries. A significant factor unifying both these spaces is

the presence of designed landscapes. Another important consideration, which allows for the understanding of the wider spatial context, is the fact that the original home of the princely family was Mikulov (from 1249), and Valtice won this position much later (from 1560). The Renaissance and the Early Baroque landscape design efforts therefore came from the centre of Mikulov, and reached to the territory of today's Austria. On the other hand, the Romantic English-style landscape remodelling was typical for the Valtice dominion and is distinctly expressed especially around Lednice. The unique phenomenon of the landscape of the Lednice-Valtice Area and the Mikulov zone consists of several fundamental factors:

1. Natural characteristics of the contrasting environment:

- wide floodplain valley of the Dyje river and the fishpond system between Lednice and Mikulov
- limestone crags of the Pálava, with relict post-glacial steppe habitats;
- warm hilly land on the limestone loess and the airborne sands around Valtice.

2. Cultural and historic characteristics:

- long-term inhabitation of the landscape from the Palaeolithic era, with numerous archaeological sites;
- continuous land cultivation activities, most significantly between the Renaissance period (14th century) and the end of the 19th century, offering good conditions for viticulture, fruit growing, forestry, hunting, and fish farming;
- intentional land-forming activities of the landowners co-operating with architects, landscape architects, engineers, and theologians (Filiberto Lucchese, Giovanni Giacomo Tencalla, Andrea Erna, J. B. Fischer von Erlach, Domenico Martinelli, Joseph Hardtmuth, Bernard Petri, Wilhelm Lauche, and the provosts Konstantin Schulz and Norbert Boccus).

After the division of the Mikulov and Valtice dominions between the Liechtenstein and Dietrichstein families the landscape has been preserved, thanks to its complex philosophical concept of the *ferme ornée* type and its cultural and stylistic continuity. When evaluating the composition of the whole area (200 - 250 km²), the following can be determined:

- the basic philosophical principle of the *ferme ornée* (ornamental farm): unity of function and beauty, landscape as a garden, landscape as a “showcase”;
- the focal points of the organised space: the medieval towns of Mikulov, Lednice, Valtice, and Podivín;
- important parkland compositions in the open landscape:

A. Renaissance fishpond systems (remodelled in Romantic style in 19th century):

B. game reserves:

- Baroque forest game parks, later altered into the Romantic style
- ornamental pheasantries, orchards, and smaller game parks, where the aesthetic function dominated over the economic function: Tiergarten by Schweibarth, the Princely pheasantry by Mikulov, pheasantry by Valtice);

C. parks surrounding chateaux (originally in Renaissance style, with later romantic adjustments): Lednice, Valtice, Mikulov;

D. Baroque tree allées, organising the space into the shape of a star;

E. high Baroque symbolic spiritual compositions in the landscape: the Calvary on Svatý Kopeček (Sacred Hill) in Mikulov, as well as smaller votive shrines and Baroque statues in the landscape;

- visual links:

A. landscape dominants: medieval castles, secular and spiritual baroque structures, romantic follies;

B. designed vistas: visual links between significant landscape features, often with a symbolic meaning.

The quintessence of the designed landscape of Lednice-Valtice and the Mikulov - Falkenstein zones consists of two basic plans:

1. THE SECULAR LEVEL – symbolising the secular power of the ruling family.
2. THE SPIRITUAL LEVEL – symbolising the religion of the community inhabiting the landscape. The representatives of monasteries in co-operation influenced the character of this level with the princely family.

MANY important spiritual landscape designs were created as early as in the pre-Christian period, and featured the arrangement of pagan ritual sites. Unfortunately, this type of landscape, well known from Great Britain, has not been preserved in the Czech Republic, as it often suffered total destruction due to the deliberate rearrangement of such places into symbolic features of the Christian religion. The Sacred Hill near Mikulov with its spectacular Calvary, might well have been one of these places, worshipped as an important place of summer solstice rituals (“The Dancing Hill”).

Apart from the concepts of Calvary and Via Crucis (a way of the cross symbolising the passion of Jesus Christ), fragments of early Baroque adjustments can be often found close to monasteries. The symbolic meaning of such remnants is very difficult to interpret and it is very likely that the symbolic meaning comes from the Kabbalah, a

wisdom understood by only a few people (the Boří Les forest within the Lednice-Valtice Area, road layout around Valtice, system of deliberate and symbolic location of sacred structures).

Despite their highly elaborate spiritual and symbolic concept of the landscape composition, the Lednice-Valtice and the Mikulov heritage zones are valued especially for their unique artistic interpretation of the landscape. The influence of fine arts, architecture, and landscape design was at its strongest during these periods. The characteristics and qualities of the composition, as well as its cultural and historical background were sufficiently described in the texts of numerous authors (NOVÁK, 1993, 1995, KUČERA ET AL. 2000, SURPMO 1970, 1971, KUSÁK 1986, WITZANY 1901). Thanks to its character and uniqueness, this area has been described as the “Garden of Europe” for a long time. Although it is possible to find similar landscape schemes elsewhere, the Lednice-Valtice Area and the Mikulov - Falkenstein zones remain unrivalled in some ways:

- due to the long-term continuous development of the composition, both areas feature partially-preserved signs of all the historic concepts involved;
- the vast size of this designed landscape is unusual in Europe.

The second half of the 20th century has brought many changes to the landscape. The intensification of agricultural and building activities, inadequate land reform schemes in the socialist era, and mainly the total change of ownership relations between 1948 and 1989, as well as the specific

characteristics of the closed border region, have caused a gradual destruction of some of the historic landscape features and structures. The conservation and management of the Lednice-Valtice zone has been dealt with methodically after the change of the political climate in 1989. The efforts to integrate the administration and management of the areas have to face the substantial changes in the ownership rights from the very beginning. The area is not under the centralised government of the state or the aristocratic families any more. The land and properties belong to a large number of owners, whose requirements must be considered. The possibilities for creating a central administrative body and a complex management scheme, which would serve purely the purposes of the Lednice-Valtice and Mikulov heritage zones (e.g. in the form of a local government body, or a land-trust type of organisation), are still in the process of research and evaluation.

The fact that a landscape, unlike a structure or a garden, changes its character dynamically under the influence of the varying socio-economic situations makes the conservation and restoration of the spatial connections even more difficult. The application of the traditional "conservation" methods, as applied by the heritage protection bodies, poses many problems for the future development of the relatively large areas in question. In the first phase, traditional tools commonly used for spatial planning in the Czech Republic were put to service: Master plans of towns and villages, and a Land Use Plan of the Pálava large territory complex. These documents contain

detailed design proposals for the built-up areas of towns and villages including their technical infrastructure and environment protection, apart from the protection of the aesthetic qualities of the landscape and designed landscape, which is almost absent in these basic materials.

In the late 1990s, a set of strategic development documents was carried out due to the requirement for the integration of the management of such a complicated area under the new political and economical conditions. These strategic documents included the following: The Profile of the Micro-region (1999), Strategic Plan (1999), Urbanistic Study of the Area (2000, 2006), Complex Land Reform Schemes (still in progress) and Management Plan (2006). Parallel with this documentation, reconstruction projects of the individual designed spaces are carried out continuously.

Despite the effort to preserve the typical features of the landscape, it was not possible to prevent certain changes in its character related to the socio-economic changes of the current time. The bodies of the state heritage conservation and environment protection must therefore make a strategic decision as to what shall be protected and how it should be done. While the protection of architectural heritage is provided at a high level within the traditional and conservative heritage protection agenda, the conservation of designed landscapes and compositions is still in the process of development. The typical examples are the planned adjustments in road infrastructure altering the Baroque and Romantic compositional schemes, the development

of mineral extraction sites (petroleum and natural gas) within the heritage zone, construction of new objects close to the protected follies or within the vistas, as well as in the suburban zones situated in the historic heritage area.

Conflicts of interest between the heritage care and nature protection administration bodies and poor cross-communication and inferential dissension in decision-making process are relatively new and daily problems in heritage area management.

A possible solution lies in the maximum and consistent utilisation of all the options provided by the spatial planning tools commonly used in Western Europe. The most important ones include the Local Policy and Landscape Plan that defines the potentials, limits and resources of local development; a complex concept of land reform schemes, objective and complex processing of the EIA/SEA documentation with special emphasis on the visual impact assessment; consistent definition and observation of architectural principles in case of building development and adjustments; and cross-boundary strategic documentation and planning enabling the optimum solution of transport routes, the management of travel activities, etc. Formation of the new Czech legislative background is a never-ending process. All steps mentioned above are missing or are not consequently claiming in common reality. Some of their results can be seen in the slides.

The restoration and future functions of the landscape below the Pálava hills will probably be carried out in a step-by-step fashion. The extent of the political and economical changes in

the post-socialist countries does not allow for the remedy of the situation in partial and precipitous actions. The building up of a new integrated territory management system requires time, financial resources, the creation of appropriate legislative environment and public interest. Equally important is also the determination of the aesthetic standards for the assessment of changes within the territory, which will probably issue from the social and aesthetic standards of the relevant historic periods as well as from the standards of contemporary society.

Landscape is a live and dynamic system that cannot be conserved in any of its historic conditions, however valuable and rare they might be.

CASE STUDY - MIKULOV-FALKENSTEIN LANDSCAPE PLAN

The information contained in the landscape plan for the Mikulov region was presented at the CZ-IALE conference in 2006 (KUČERA, SALAŠOVÁ, ŠTĚPÁN ET AL. 2006B). This document, carried out upon the order of the town of Mikulov and co-financed from the INTERREG IIIA programme, can be considered a pilot project that aims to test the methodological potential of landscape plan preparation, and its implementation in the overall process of landscape management, together with the recently running complex land consolidation schemes, and the change of the local land use plan.

The subject area is situated on both sides of the Czech-Austrian border. The security regime of the "iron curtain" during the Communist Era caused

dilapidation of some of the compositional features, but it also, rather paradoxically, contributed to its preservation as no significant investments were supported within the area. The Mikulov landscape is nowadays a very attractive area for the development of residential housing, technical infrastructure and various commercial activities. In the southern part of the territory, the interests clash between the preservation of good quality arable land, biodiversity protection, and the protection of the harmonious cultural landscape character.

From the methodological point of view, the working team issued from a meticulous analysis of the primary, secondary, and tertiary landscape structure. A typological study of the cultural landscape was carried out, as well as the landscape character assessment, and a detailed study of the development and recent state of the landscape composition. At the same time, the ecosystems and their condition were closely analysed, with the determination of risk factors in soil and water, as well as the capacity of the landscape for recreation. Upon the evaluation of land use, necessary changes and measures were proposed.

During the work on the landscape plan, the interests of nature protection were addressed as well as the complex land consolidation schemes, the creation of ecological networks, erosion control measures, compensation measures related to the planned motorway, and the need for the protection of landscape aesthetic qualities. A substantial part of the work was represented by the analysis of visual relations within the area, based on the evaluation of landscape dominants and over 700

views and vistas selected upon their historic context, value, and situation within the landscape. The result of all this is the proposal of a complex land use organisation with a proposal for vegetation design, as well as measures aiming to reconstruct the landscape composition and carry out regulations for further management of the area. The data was produced using GIS. After the preliminary discussions about the landscape plan with the interested public, there will be a possibility to incorporate the proposal in all the planning documents that will feature the subject area in the future.



TÖRTÉNETI TÁJ – MÚLT, JELEN, JÖVŐ Alena Salašová

A történeti tájak különböző természeti, történeti és társadalmi-gazdasági környezetben születtek és formálódtak. A tanulmány a Lednice-Valtice és Mikulov-Falkenstein térségét mutatja be, amelynek egy része UNESCO világörökségi helyszín és szorosan kapcsolódik a Pálava UNESCO Bioszféra rezervátumhoz és tájvédelmi körzethez, amelynek központja Mikulovban van. Ez a térség már Kr.e. 27 000 évvel lakott volt. A történeti táj kialakulására a természeti tényezők mellett egyik legfontosabb formáló erő a csaknem 700 éven át tulajdonos Liechtenstein család befolyása, továbbá a tulajdonosok építészettel, tájépítészettel és mérnökökkel közös tájformáló tevékenysége volt. A Lednice-Valtice és Mikulov-Falkenstein térségének (200 – 250 km²) elemzésekor a következők állapíthatók meg: Az alapelv a *ferme ornée*: a funkció és a forma (szépség) egyisége, a középkori városok képezik a hangsúlyos elemeket (Mikulov, Lednice, Valtice és Podivín).

A történeti tájat meghatározó kompozíciós elemek: a reneszánsz halastavak rendszere, a vadasparkok, a kastélyokat körülvevő parkok (Lednice, Valtice, Mikulov), barokk allék valamint olyan barokk elemek mint a kálváriadomb (Svatý Kopeček) és barokk kápolnák és szobrok.

A táj sajátosságának és egyediségének köszönhetően sokáig a térséget „Európa Kertje”-ként emlegették és még ma is több szempontból unikálisnak tekinthető:

a kompozíció folyamatos fejlődése következtében minden történeti korhoz köthetően fennmaradtak, megőrződtek részei, hatalmas területe miatt egyedülálló Európában.

A XX. század sok változást hozott a tájra, az intenzív mezőgazdasági és építési tevékenységek, az elhibázott földreformok a szocializmus alatt, a tulajdonosi szerkezet totális változása valamint a határ közelsége miatti korlátozások következtében fokozatos pusztulásnak indult a táj számos értéke. Az érintett tulajdonosok nagy száma rendkívül megnehezíti a táj hatékony védelmét. Az 1990-es évek végén több stratégiai terv született az új gazdasági és társadalmi viszonyok között a táji értékek védelme érdekében. Sajnos az erőfeszítések ellenére sem sikerült bizonyos változásokat megakadályozni. Míg az építészeti örökség védelme magas szinten biztosított, a történeti tájak védelmének hatékonyságát javítani kell. A lehetséges megoldás a Nyugat-Európában alkalmazott területi tervezési eszközök valamennyi lehetőségének maximális és konzisztens kihasználása. A szerző bemutatja a Mikulov-Falkenstein térségére készült tájrendezési terv készítését, amely INTERREG IIIA program társfinanszírozásával készült.

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