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WORKSHOP 3

Landscape in the function of local development: a pilot project for local development of the Island of Cres

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The Republic of Croatia was among the first countries to sign and ratify (2002) the European Landscape Convention. Nevertheless, after so many years, the landscape issue is still being not tackled holistically, in accordance with the thinking behind the European Landscape Convention. Besides the *Act on the Ratification of the European Landscape Convention*, there is no single law that regulates the matter of landscape in Croatia. The current legal protection of the landscape is based on several laws which results in different approaches to the landscape issue, each one in favour of the sectorial needs. The most important are: *Act on Protection and Preservation of Cultural Goods*, *Nature Protection Act*, *Act on Physical Planning*, *Environmental Protection Act*. There are other laws, such as the *Forest Act*, *Water Act*, *Act on Regional Development*, *Agricultural Act*, *Act on Energy*, *Act on Roads*, which do not consider the landscape at all, but their implementation have an impact on the landscape.

Most landscapes in Croatia are protected on the bases of the *Nature Protection Act* and come under the category of “important landscapes”, while some of them are integral parts of the wider protected areas (national parks, regional parks, monuments of park architecture). This fact indicates that the most landscapes are valued and protected because of their natural elements. The “cultural landscapes” can be listed and protected on the bases of *Act on Protection and Preservation of Cultural Goods* but this possibility is not used very often due to the ambiguity of the regulations as well as the lack of standards and criteria for their identification and inventorying.

Even more overlooked are the ordinary landscapes which have been settled and cultivated for centuries and today are recognised as traditional rural (agricultural) landscapes. Many of them are threatened due to depopulation of rural areas and consequently the abandonment of cultivated land and then vegetation succession, degradation of material heritage and increase of environmental risks such as wildfires. Such landscapes are even more jeopardised on the Croatian coast and islands, where the demand for tourist areas is increasing, whilst the spatial plans often do not take into consideration the unprotected landscapes.

One interesting approach to preserve and valorise ordinary landscapes was achieved within the Local Development Pilot Projects (LDPP) – an international programme begun in Croatia in 2008 and carried out in the framework of the RPSEE (Regional Programme on Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe). The LDPPs were jointly implemented by the Council of Europe, several countries from South East Europe and Cyprus (2003-2015).

The LDPPs implemented the principles of the *Framework Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society* and those of the *European Landscape Convention*, in order to provide a specific contribution to the most important political priorities of the Council of Europe: strengthen European democracy; promote more efficient and transparent governance; and implement new, integrated and sustainable development models based on the social and economic values of heritage.

These community-led and place-based pilot projects were established on some key principles: the local population was a main player in development, heritage was an asset, and synergies were created for a common project.

The LDPPs objectives were the following: to promote and manage local cultural, natural and human heritage as sustainable resources and a common good; to plan and develop territories both socially and economically, while respecting their specificities; to elaborate innovative projects which can generate investments that are better adapted to local resources and integrated into public action; to have new procedures and methods of action validated that can be used in other territories at national or international level.

Croatia chose the island of Cres as pilot territory for the implementation of the LDPP. The features of the island of Cres best met the needs of the project: it has rich natural and cultural heritage and specific landscapes; it is poorly developed - especially in terms of tourism; its traditional economy is quite well preserved and the present development models did not offer solutions to new challenges. The population

density is very low so the protection, revitalisation and valorisation of the elements that make Cres unique represented a big challenge for the small local community and competent institutions.

This LDPP outlined a framework for consultations and the exchange of opinions by incorporating a wide spectre of public and private subjects in a debate on the future of the island of Cres that will lead to co-operation and partnership among local stakeholders, public administrations, private businesses and national or international partners. The result of this participative process was set out in a document called the Territory Charter, i.e. The Development Charter for the Island of Cres. The Charter is based on two key documents elaborated during the LDPP process, the Territorial Diagnosis and Territorial Strategy, which are an integral part of it. The Charter has to be adopted and signed by various LDPP partners and other stakeholders at national, regional and local levels, as a sign of their explicit commitment to realise the vision it sets out.

In order to gather additional and more precise data on the island's heritage, the project carried out surveys on built heritage and landscape. The general objective of the Landscape Survey was to provide the stakeholders engaged in the island development process with technical support for identifying and recognising the landscape features in the territory, but also with facts to assess the values of the landscape in order to clarify its potential role in long-term development policies.

In the future, the survey results will also help the policy makers propose or support development projects which use and adapt landscape resources in a sustainable way, compatible with the identity of the place. Such projects will, in the long-term, preserve the values and the diversity of the landscape which contribute to the definition of the attractiveness and the competitiveness of the island.

The first specific objective of the Landscape Survey was to identify the landscapes, and to analyse their features, as well as their dynamics and the pressures which modify them. The landscapes were assessed for the specific values given by actors, users and inhabitants. The survey was therefore to confront these possible different representations and to propose a consensual interpretation directed towards future actions.

The guiding principle behind the Landscape Survey was to gain a comprehensive picture of the island's landscape situation and its specifics. The goal was not to attain completeness and perfection but to carry out a rapid survey that could prove useful in subsequent development phases (Strategy, as well as Pilot Actions), a basis for further work in greater depth, an overview that is easy to read and helps to pinpoint issues of special significance for the landscape, and heritage in general.

The implementation of the rapid survey was quite a challenging task since nobody in Croatia had any experience in using such an approach. In order to involve as many stakeholders and experts as possible, the LDPP Implementation Unit set up the Coordination Team (experts from different institutions and private studios and a consultant from the Council of Europe) and the Executive Team (students and landscape architects guided by interdisciplinary mentoring team). The two teams established very good co-operation and conducted a one-year study based on the model that unified approaches of French and Croatian schools of landscape architecture, as well as geographic, architectural and ethnographic approaches to landscape analysis and assessment.

In order to allow multiple perspectives on landscape, a combined approach to landscape assessment was implemented; in addition to the standard procedure, the survey also incorporated ethnologic and visual/artistic interpretations. Ethnographic research provided insight into history, memories, social associations and landscape preferences, while visual/artistic approach contributed to analytic contemplation and clarification of spatial identity and, finally, the presentation of visual, perceptive and associative characteristics of landscape. The interdisciplinary approach used in the survey encouraged equality and dialogue between different professions involved in landscape research.

Methods and procedures used in the survey combined desk research and fieldwork. Desk research involved collecting and analysing cartographic and written sources, photographs and other relevant data, using GIS techniques, as well as “hand drawn” analysis and presentation. Field research involved two field visits (seven days in total). The survey was conducted by students and young landscape architects guided by four mentors (a geographer, a landscape architect, an architect-visual artist and an ethnologist).

Upon collection of all the data, each landscape area was described and classified, followed by landscape evaluation, i.e. trends, problems and sensitivity analysis. As final result of the survey the *Landscape Study of the Island of Cres* was published. It includes recommendations for planning and management of the island’s landscapes, as well as a map of guidelines for landscape management. The Landscape Study represents a shared reference knowledge base which helped the LDPP Implementation Unit to integrate the landscape issue within the long term development strategy (Territorial Strategy) and to better define the strategy measures needed to realise the development vision of the island.

In 2016, after the LDPP was closed, the Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the Town of Cres and the Project Implementation Unit, made an attempt to introduce the main recommendations of the Landscape Study into the amendments of the Spatial Plan of the Town of Cres. The proposal was rejected because there was no legal basis for its adoption. An additional explanation was that the study is not written in the “spatial planning language”.

Although the effort to insert landscape elements into the Spatial Plan of the Town of Cres did not succeed, the Landscape Study has certainly had positive impacts on stakeholders involved in local development and the local community in general. First of all, it was proven that the landscape survey can serve as a useful tool to encourage co-operation between various experts and stakeholders to quickly assess the landscapes of a certain territory. It also represents a helpful tool for awareness-raising of landscape values of the territory, and can consequently directly contribute to the objectives of the European Landscape Convention.

The participation in the landscape survey process has helped the LDPP Implementation Unit to acquire new knowledge and get acquainted with a poll of experts and researchers. This fact was of crucial importance, as well as the data gathered and elaborated in the study, for enabling the Project Implementation Unit to later participate as a partner in the preparation of several international project proposals (Interreg Crossbred Co-operation, Horizon 2020) having as their main topic the valorisation of the landscape. Finally, the Landscape Study will certainly in the future contribute to establishing criteria

and methods for protection and restoring the island landscape, once the authorities have the means and determine to do it.

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