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The distribution of landscape types in Slovenia

The Slovene national territory is relatively small, but is very colourful and extremely diverse. Slovenian landscapes are themselves characterised by high diversity, though within an overall unity that makes Slovenian landscape distinctive from those of other countries. The basic structural features of Slovenian landscapes, are harmonic proportions between cultivated land, settlements and forest. Various types of landscapes have been formed in the past, as a result of the natural conditions of individual parts of Slovenia, particularly relief and climate. Particularly in areas with extreme natural conditions, certain landscapes have been preserved that can be classified as outstanding landscapes at a regional, national or even broader level. On the other hand, due to the above-described processes of concentration and related problems there are some areas, which can be described as degraded areas. Main problems of spatial development in Slovenia are concentration of the development in the valleys, dispersed housing – suburbanization, some illegal housing, infrastructure development – transit highways, railroads, utility lines, concentration of environmental pressures, abandoning of agricultural land, small scale farming, demographic change (depopulation in the mountains and in remote areas).

In the early 90-ties, it seemed that the interest suddenly focused more directly toward landscapes themselves. Slovenia has been – starting long before the adoption of the European Landscape Convention - making the effort to include the landscape and its component parts in its spatial plans and executive projects from the national to local level, which has also been settled in its legislative documents. One of the most important projects that prove the high position of the landscape in the system of values in Slovenia is the study entitled Regional Distribution of Landscape Types in Slovenia. It was made in years 1991 – 1998 by order of the National Office for Spatial Planning of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia. The project was carried out by the Department of Landscape Architecture. In preparing the project some 25 experts were taking part, mostly landscape architects. The results of the project are presented in six volumes; in five volumes the five Slovenian landscape regions were elaborated. The sixth volume was entitled Bases of Procedures and it was printed also in English version.

The project represented a remarkable shift. Landscape planning methods, namely, address landscapes indirectly, stressing the importance of analysis and trying to resolve landscape developmental or landscape conservation problems in an indirect way – by controlling the decisions about new developments. The goals of the project were:

1. to acquire as complete as possible knowledge about the character of Slovenian landscapes,
2. to acquire knowledge about the Slovenian landscapes changes,
3. to categorize Slovenian cultural landscapes according to their visual appearance – visual attraction,
4. to prepare, as a result, the basis for defining direct protection of outstanding Slovenian landscapes,
5. to prepare guidelines for landscape development and conservation.

Working procedure

The basic working method was field work. It comprised observation, recording, taking photographs of landscape patterns and verification of previous definitions, e. g. definitions of regions and boundaries, classification hierarchy, etc. The description structure was agreed in advance, and subsequently co-ordinated and amended. An attempt was also made to standardise writing methods in order to suppress the differences in style among individual authors. In order to reduce excessive subjective approach our working procedures involved precisely defined working methods by stages or steps, multiple verifications and workshop confrontations and discussions. Although simultaneous verification of individual working steps and procedures was time-consuming it proved in the end to be a very useful activity, because simultaneous adjustments to the study objectives were made through the experience gained from field work and processing of the material collected on site.

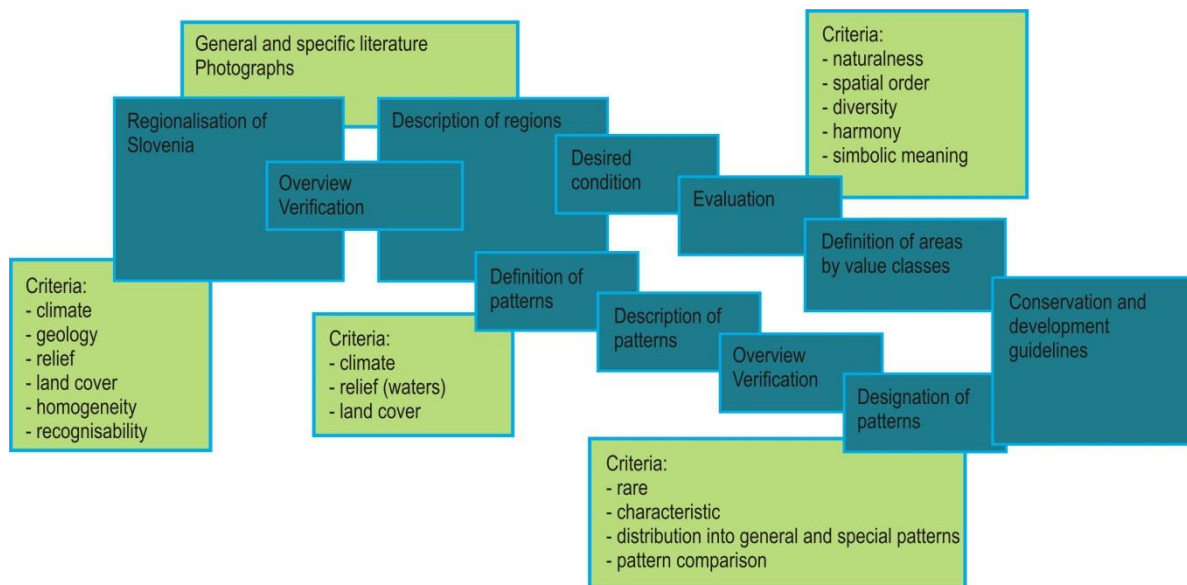


Fig. Working procedure

Landscape regionalisation of Slovenia

The first step of our working procedure was the regionalisation of Slovenia into the broadest landscape units. Another level was added to the classification hierarchy, so that we came to comparatively smaller but consequently clearer units. The first hierarchic classification was based to the largest extent on the climatic conditions, and on geologic ones, as well. The next hierarchic level also included the criteria of macro-relief in addition to climatic conditions. At the last two levels the most important criterion was landscape image. We presumed that the units at the lowest level have mostly uniform landscape image or at least less diverse basic typological patterns. The landscape image of a particular unit is defined by landscape patterns. It was clearly not possible to identify just one single pattern within a particular unit. The patterns are defined on the basis of criteria which should reveal their morphological landscape characteristics. The landscape type is an abstraction, a generalised model for several landscape patterns.

The typological system was built by gradual inclusion of the most important elements of a landscape pattern. These elements are:

- climate - it determines the basic features of landscape which can be »read« both in land use and in vegetative cover;
- relief - together with waters it forms the basic morphologic foundation for a landscape structure;
- land use or surface cover - a synthesis of climate and relief, and in the areas of the most intensive spatial development it also reflects the disintegration of the traditional landscape pattern.

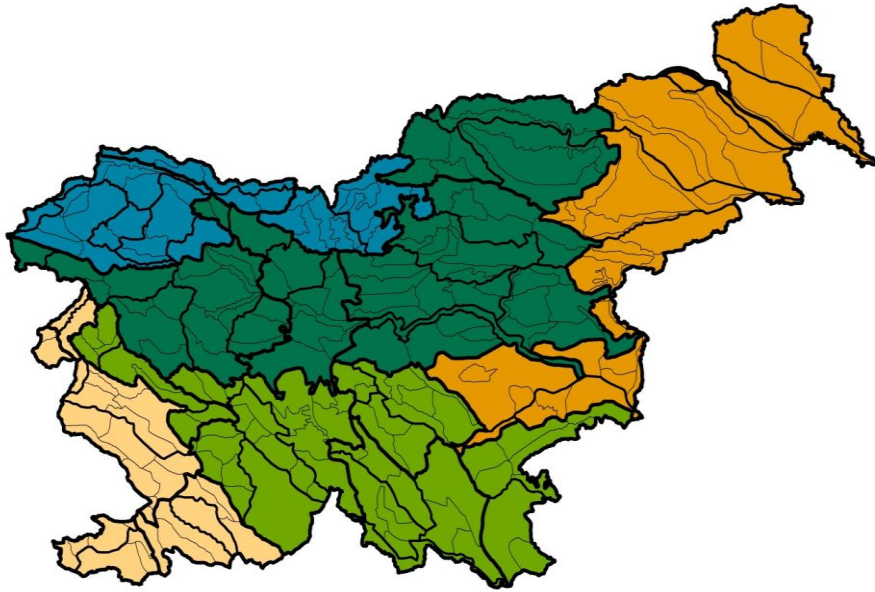


Fig. Landscape Regionalisation of Slovenia

Evaluation of landscape

The evaluation of landscape was carried out in the process of evaluation of landscape units at the lowest level. It was made because of the need to prepare value definitions of individual parts of Slovenia for the spatial plan, and consequently also for the formation of the landscape development or protection guidelines. Four basic criteria were selected: natural conservation, diversity, spatial order and harmony.

- a) Natural preservation – naturalness: It denotes preserved natural elements or the elementariness of areas, as well as the areas perceived as natural (left to nature) although they may be of secondary origin.
- b) Diversity: We took into consideration the diversity of phenomena, the variation of shape and the diversity of elements. Very important factors of experiencing diversity are forests because of their high growth (vertical structure) and volume. The forest appears in many different and varied forms (large or small patches of forest, tongues of forest in ravines, forest in plains). Diversity also increases in association with relief, e. g. the association of forest and relief or water and relief.
- c) Spatial order: Only the patterns of order have been taken into account. Complexity, as the highest degree of order, containing also the criteria of congruity, balance, and harmony, is considered elsewhere. In the frame of nature, we evaluate the structural order (the orientation and course of ridges and valleys) as well as individual constituents of spatial order: recurrence, rhythm, direction, gradation.
- d) Harmony: The harmony is a composite criterion, consisting of diversity (number of elements, phenomena, forms of elements and phenomena) and order. In addition to the harmony between the existing natural conditions and transformation it also contains the criterion of aesthetic value - pleasantness of landscape image.

We added two criteria of symbolic meaning for the elements of landscape parts already attributed with specific associative meanings, either at the local community level, or at a wider - regional level, or at the national level:

- e) Symbolic meaning of natural elements (mountains, lakes, rivers, growth): The scope of recognisability (national, regional, or local) of a certain area is defined on the basis of natural characteristics and the historical and cultural significance that can be identified in the landscape.
- f) Symbolic meaning of cultural elements: The assessment of the scope of recognisability (national, regional, or local) of an area is based on the landscape characteristics of cultural elements.

The landscape was ranked on the evaluation scale from 1 to 5. There was used landscape units evaluation scale:

- of the basic criteria (score 1 = the most, the largest, or to the highest degree; score 5 = the least, the smallest, or to the lowest degree), and
- of the additional criteria (national, regional, local significance).

With the regionalization of landscape types in Slovenia a very comprehensive work was done, which was the basis for defining outstanding landscapes, heritage cultural landscapes and areas and elements of landscape identity of Slovenia.

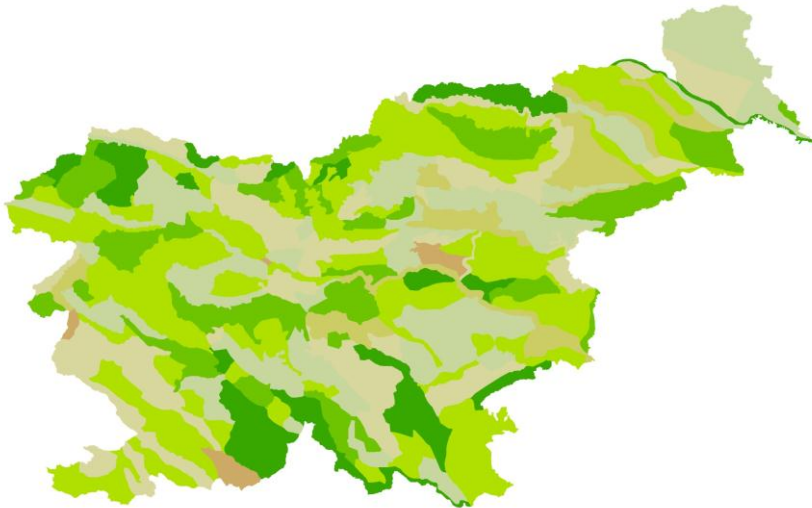


Fig. Evaluation of Slovene landscapes

Outstanding landscapes

In the last ten years, there were a few attempts to set up a register of Slovenian outstanding landscapes. We took into account that in the landscape typology and in the defining of outstanding landscapes the landscapes (landscape units) are classified and valued not only on the basis of objectively defined data on landscape structures, but also on the basis of the personal experience based on the watching and understanding of the space. The actual list of outstanding landscapes includes almost one hundred small landscape areas which:

- represent traditional forms of dwelling and land use, adapted to natural landscape structure,
- have visually distinctive patterns of settlements and visually expressive architectural elements,
- have symbolic, cultural and associational values,
- have great impressional values (natural structures, cultural values)
- are unique in regional, national or even broader scale,
- have special values of natural landscape structures,
- have a consistent landscape structure which enables their spatial limitation,
- have great importance for national identity.

The outstanding landscapes in Slovenia are divided into field landscapes, landscapes of grasslands, landscapes of vineyards and orchards and landscapes with exceptional natural structure. For each type of outstanding landscape the actual problems, desired state and guidelines for the preservation or maintenance respectively of these landscapes have been defined.

Use of the results in the practice

The project results:

- created a professional foundation for the definition of the most valuable landscape regions in Slovenia, so-called outstanding landscapes,
- provided an expert foundation for the establishment of Areas and Elements of Landscape Identity which were designated in national planning acts,
- provided an expert foundation for the drafting of the whole Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia (SPRS, 2004), and in particular for the landscape section which, in addition to settlements and infrastructure, comprised two of the three main chapters in the plan and will continue to provide the main expert foundation for the preparation of spatial plans, detailed spatial planning, and environmental protection policies,
- provide valuable information for any continued research into the types of landscape areas,
- in informing the public, and in educational processes(e.g. project We are Managing the Landscape, lead by Slovenian Association of Landscape Architects; posters etc.);can be used in the development of tourism, the marketing of Slovenia as a tourist destination, and the use of tourist trade marks based on landscape diversity and the many ways to make use of natural sources,
- can also be used in the creation of policies for the development of agriculture in areas with limited development potentials, for the protection of Slovenian natural and cultural heritage. The results can be used as data about the current condition and tendencies of Slovenian regions and as an evaluation of aspects and elements that fall under the competence of various sectors. Thus the results of the project have become an integral part of the sustainable development policy planning of Slovenia.

The Spatial management Policy of Slovenia (2001) presents declarative political positions and attitudes to the landscape, and represents the first consensus on the attitude assumed by Slovenia in relation to the landscape. In the Slovenia the conception of landscape identity was introduced by the Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia and Spatial Order of Slovenia in year 2004. The Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia (2004) includes sections on Population Distribution, Infrastructure and also a special chapter on Landscape Development. This includes plans on the development and protection of open spaces and discusses the overall image of landscape, valuable natural features, the use of natural resources and the limitations on spatial planning that result from the natural features and value of landscape. The Spatial Development Strategy is defining also the Landscape areas of importance at the national level. To be able to determine the most valuable landscapes and cultural heritage in the landscapes, the Ministry has prepared the list and map of heritage landscapes and of areas of complex conservation of cultural heritage in landscape (open space); this map was taken into the Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia as the basic input of goals in the field of conservation of cultural values. The spatial plans should present the areas of landscape identity on the national, regional and local level and they should define the elements of recognisability on the complete area covered by the plan. The landscape identity is defined as a whole of characteristics of the landscape structure and its symbolic meanings, by which each individual landscape area can be recognized and identified. Spatial Order of Slovenia between the rules of spatial planning and management – they are some rules for managing the landscape (landscape distribution of activities, planning for existing activities, rules for landscape management respecting the typological characteristics of specific landscape units).

Conclusion

The results of all these efforts were not fully exploited in Slovenia. We think the reason is in aside the fact that the landscape is a synthetic concept. The activity of making landscapes does not belong to any sector that exploit unbuilt areas, like agriculture, forestry, water management and last but not least nature conservation. Each sector sticks to its goals and wants to keep the responsibilities for the development and management of 'its own garden'. Even physical planning might abandon the idea of comprehensiveness by transforming spatial plan into a compound map of separately taken decisions. The situations in Slovenia where landscape plan does not represent part of a comprehensive land use

planning process lead to definition that landscape plan is a sectoral plan. The successful implementation of landscape management depends very much on the willingness of the sectors, like agriculture, forestry, water management, etc. to accept other interests about the landscape conservation.

The ELC provides an opportunity for comprehensive consideration of landscapes and their inclusion into the development and protection planning processes. The main goal should not be landscapes themselves, neither their inventory and recognition or evaluation, their physical structure or their visual appearance alone, but the processes within which the landscapes are changed, intentionally or spontaneously.

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