

Touristic Potentials of Open Space Heritage – 4 Case Studies in South East Europe

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1 ABSTRACT

Landscape and open space is where "cultural history and architectural practice" (Meyer 1997: 73) meet. Hence they are an expression of the culture and society of their time. Yet the meanings of each period overlap and are expressed in different ways. Since the 1962 recommendation of UNESCO in Paris (UNESCO 1962), a change in the definition of monument-related spaces and objects has intervened, a shift in focus from the created object to the significance of the location (BURRA Charter 1999). The question if this present meaning, encompassing all levels, can be exploited for tourist concepts is currently being evaluated on the basis of four case studies in the EU-funded CultTour project (CultTour 2012).

This paper describes the "attractive" — in the actual sense — features beyond the superficial, visible susceptibility to conservation that distinguish open spaces and which of these features can be integrated into a tourism master plan for the city and region. Furthermore, we will investigate how these hidden characteristics can be communicated and made visible in an imaginative, exciting way. This requires in the first place, a thematic framework to which other gardens, open spaces and objects can be added and visited as part of a theme route. But the focus will also be on the type of communication by which history and folklore can be perceived and passed on. Eyal Weizman, an English architectural forensic claims that such sites create their own stories; that it was only a matter of finding the right translation. (Weizmann 2012: 9). Thus the aim is "to shape perception that makes a difference between raw matter and landscape". (Shama 1995: 10)

In order to determine and analyse the open spaces, we resorted to historical research, landscape architectural surveying and graphic analysis, video analysis and an indexed analysis of interviews. The properties were analysed from a qualitative perspective.

This article will focus on the analytical methods, the allocation of the properties resulting from the qualitative analysis and on the various levels of meaning of the open spaces. This represents a partial result of the research project.

2 INTRODUCTION

This paper presents initial results from the project co-financed by the European Union: "CultTour: (garden) heritage as focal points for sustainable tourism". In this research project, open spaces and gardens in South East Europe were examined in regard to their cultural significance and combined at a later stage to establish themed routes for tourism purposes. The starting point are four pilot sites which were explored by an international team consisting of landscape architects and tourism experts. At all four sites, Alexandroupoli (Greece), Veliko Tarnovo (Bulgaria), Avrig (Romania) and Taranto (Italy), abundant traces of intensive change throughout history are found.

According to Elizabeth Meyer, landscape and open spaces are generally of a cultural heritage value which interacts with sculpted reality (Meyer 1997: 73). This interaction is not restricted in time to a certain period; rather it creates at any time sculpted spaces with multifaceted meanings. Landscape architecture and garden design fit into this overall context. "Landscape architecture as such is a rather hybrid than binary activity." (Meyer 1997: 50). 'Binary thinking', in other words, the polarity between historically relevant and historically irrelevant events impedes understanding the complexity of open spaces. In the context of the project we therefore argue that a touristically attractive cultural heritage site is not restricted to the marketing of a distinct space but also a way of communicating information and of perceiving geographic places.

The basic objective of the spatial analysis is to define the characteristic features of the open space, to assess the potential of the open space and the interpretation of the open space from the perspective of the project 'CultTour' – seeing garden and open space culture as the motor for sustainable tourism development.

Therefore, quite generally, correlations must be established from the facts to see and understand the open space in its historical, spatial and social context. Hence the view to the outside is not only essential and substantial for the purposes of monument conservation; the environment also acts as an integrative component of the site on the inside (Böhme 1996).



Fig. 1 SEE Programme Area

3 THE MEANING OF THE SITE

The various layers of meaning of an open space have been elaborated repeatedly in academic writings, while emphasising the role of the perceiving persons. (Schama 1995; Meyer 2008 and 1997; Treib 1995 et al.). Marc Treib, for example, has pointed out the meaning of the cultural background of the designers as well as of the users: "[M]eaning condenses at the intersection of people and place, and not alone in the form the designer's idea takes. Thus design can be perceived as a semi-permeable layer between 'intended perception' and 'perceived intention' in times of growing social differentiation." (Treib 1995). This approach makes it possible to create a nexus between the intention behind the historical design and its current use and function.

The project is at the fault line between the perception of open space and the cultural garden heritage of South East Europe. The focus is on four countries whose cultural garden heritage is perceived very differently by local experts and is known to a varying degree. The majority of the involved project partners had a conventional picture of historically valuable open space in mind, focusing on garden heritage sites to the exclusion of other types of open spaces, in particular public space. Yet the four pilot sites show how important these open spaces are in the daily life of the locations concerned. Thus the focus spanned from heritage significance to open space usage. Accordingly, it was necessary from the outset to explore the pilot sites in different ways and to reflect their perception from different positions. Recording methods such as landscape architectural surveys, expert interviews and cartographic, photographic and video recordings were used in addition to background research on the sites. Nowadays, the sites meet vital open space functions; as a result, their historical meaning is less obvious than their everyday use. The sites are rooted in different landscape contexts. Three spaces are integrated into an urban space, while the fourth one forms part of a rural environment. Moreover, they are in different states of maintenance. The question if and how they should and could be earmarked for conservationist renewal is not answered uniformly by the partners in the project. On the one hand, historical revival is proposed — for example, in the case of the former baroque palace gardens of Brukenthal in Avrig where baroque festivals take place — while in other cases, minor superficial changes — as in the urban green belt in Veliko Tarnovo — suffice.

The survey of the open spaces serves to explore the meaning of individual elements, spatial situations and narratives. These meanings may serve as the basis for means to integrate them into tourist concepts. To obtain information beyond the physical space, questions relating to the genesis of the site, its current function and meaning, the specificity of the location in the context of the landscape as well to the future projects of persons responsible were explored.

These issues cover the essential objectives of the project. In a second step, the levels of meaning were abstracted from the analysis and reviewed to determine how they might fit into tourist concepts.

4 METHODS

The methods presented here show several approaches an open space inventory. They are chosen to provide multilayered results for a twofold of recommendations and implementations. On the one hand they deliver a basis for practical measures to maintain the heritage value and at the same time safeguarding the actual usage. On the other hand they are a basis to develop touristic models and tools for re-utilisation of garden and open space heritage sites in South East Europe. The collection of data (survey) covers spatial, structural, plant and historical traces and uses. It consists of historical research, qualitative expert interviews as well as empirical field research. To analyse the surveys from a multi-layered perspective, data were generated on the one hand in different ways, going beyond the traditional surveying in the form entering data in existing maps. On the other hand, the data were analysed with different qualitative and experimental methods based on language, drawings and moving images.

The expert interviews consisted mostly of partially structured guideline interviews that were analysed qualitatively. The partial structure left room for additional emerging questions. This additional scope resulted in new perspectives and made it possible to spontaneously respond to and deal with specific situations. For the purposes of the analysis, the transcribed texts were encoded by assigning the contents to theme field. This procedure permits a qualitative comparison. Experts were dealing with regulations for protection and management and development of garden and open space heritage sites. The results of the interviews give insight into the existing framework and make it possible to formulate recommendations for structural changes.

The elements and conditions in the sites were recorded in simple, schematic drawings. Steenbergen (2008) describes graphic reproduction as copying. The abstraction during the process of transfer represents an interpretation step. Thus the situation is abstracted and filtered, revealing eventually that which is perceived to be the essential. In doing so, perception and selection are open to interpretation.

The transfer of site features into simple maps is similar to mapping. Compared to a conventional survey, a reduction takes place in this case, which results in the remaining features becoming more clearly visible. A weighing takes place, and correlations become evident.

The video analysis is based on the method developed by Christoph Girot with four different recording techniques each. The four variants are: long video sequences, slow walks, shooting in quick passing and recordings altered by editing or trick manipulations. (Girot 2010). Video analysis is understood to be the experimental part of the assessment of the site, which is influenced by the existing situation and the events taking place there. Statements are made, which can be related to the overall effect, the activities and sequence of spaces. By using video analysis spatial transitions are clearly displayed. By lining up the single video-stills of the states of transition the theatrical composition of site is traceable and communicable.

Historical research is carried out by studying the literary sources, historical maps and photographs, engravings, postcards, letters and paintings. In this way, through the collection, presentation and juxtaposition of the documents and contents it is possible to arrive at the genesis of the sites.

The empirical research provides a comprehensive understanding of the site. The abiotic and biotic properties of the site itself are examined and described as well as its integration into the adjacent, urban and regional surroundings. The functions and uses in interaction with the historical features reveal the specific character and context of the garden or open space.

5 EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The pilot sites provided the empirical data. The results of research, observation, interviews and surveys make it possible to interpret the layers of meaning of the sites.

The following section will illustrate by way of example how the different layers of meaning of the park of the Villa Peripato in the Apulian city of Taranto on the Ionian Sea were determined.

5.1 Levels of meaning – Components of a cultural change in meaning

5.1.1 Archaeological component

Archaeological finds are tangible legacies of people. Their reconstruction can manifest the cultural significance of a site. A. Ressa, the conservation officer of the city of Taranto, draws attention to these

hidden historical witnesses in the interview: A. RESSA: "Villa Peripato is a very important site, not only for the vegetable species in the garden or for the design of the garden which is typical for the 19th century. Not only for these cultural reasons, but also because Villa Peripato develops on a certain height (altitude level), on a higher part. This means that below Villa Peripato there are many levels of historic findings. There are a lot of archaeological findings. It is a very important archaeological site because of its height".

These specific archaeological findings emerged when the foundations for an annex to the open-air theatre built in 2004 were excavated. First scientific photographs of the excavations were taken, but then the places of discovery were filled again, ostensibly for a lack of funds to properly process and professionally display them. Another important consideration may have been that using parts of the garden site for an open-air theatre may have appeared more attractive than presenting an archaeological site. Anyway, it is part of the aim of project to make these distant historical artefacts accessible for presentation purposes and for the status of the site as a historical garden heritage. The lower-lying layers of the areas of the archaeological finds illustrate one of the layers of meaning of the park. It is hidden, yet known and thus part of the narrative of the location.

This level can be marketed for tourist purposes through the existing images of the historical mosaics.



Fig. 2: The excavation site before the construction of a toilet facility for the open-air theatre

5.1.2 Spiritual component

In the 13th century, a convent was built next to the garden of the Villa Peripato. Historian Cosimo D'Angela reported about it in the expert interview: "So, in the 13th century the Prince of Taranto wanted to create a convent in that area, dedicated to St Antonie. Since it is a higher part in the city, this area was called the posilipo, which is another area in Naples which means 'the higher part'. (...) The archbishop of the town built a private part here at the higher part of the town. During the construction of his house, the remains of Greek findings were found. Next to the Greek theatre, there was a temple of Dionysus. We have some draft about this discovering, that states the present of the temple and the Greek theatre. These drawings were made by a French traveller. They are available at a French bibliotheca, Paris. They have been published. The entire remains of Greek findings have been sold to King Gustav of Denmark, and they are in Copenhagen."

Christian religious buildings were often built on the sites of ancient Roman or Greek temples. Thus the Villa Peripato has always been a place of superior religious significance and forms part of a historical spiritual meaning for hundreds of years. The convent can be integrated into a tourist concept.

5.1.3 Social and economic components

For users, the meaning of the park has continuously changed. The conservation officer, Ressa, explains the atmosphere of the original garden of the villa. "Villa Peripato, like all other Villas of the cities, was like a dream (paradiso) at the beginning." When it was created in the 18th century by Beaumont Bonelli, it was an expression, typical of that time, of the eternal longing for paradise.

In the 19th century, when it was given the appearance that is still visible in part today, the Villa Peripato was also an important and regular meeting point for the wealthy middle class. The garden offered space for social interaction, as in a society salon, and was the platform for discussing economic and business matters, as A. Ressa explains in the interview: "The characteristic of Villa Peripato is based on a different way of life imposed by the middle class at that time. New interests, new way of life, new life in the city and so on (...). While at the beginning it was the meeting point of the middle class, it was a respectable place in a certain

way. Generally only middle class people went here. Here the cultural and economic life of the city was decided." According to Ressa, the garden changed once again after the period of industrialisation: "During the past [centuries, note of the author], the population grew, but the middle class got fewer. For this reason, the role of Villa Peripato has changed. Then, around 1950/1960 the situation changed because the middle class became fewer and Villa Peripato started to be used also by other social classes. Villa Peripato was more and more used by poorer people. In this way the idea of Villa Peripato changed. Since there was this contrast between the old city and the new city with Villa Peripato with all the green, from a cultural point of view, poorer people considered Villa Peripato as a beauty-farm, because of the presence of all the plants and so on. It was a healthy place. Their children were playing in the garden. In this way, it was difficult to control Villa Peripato. People started to make damages. There was vandalism and so on. Rich people did not feel safe anymore. For this reason they decided to close Villa Peripato"

The historical analysis and the analysis of use by means of mapping result in a spatial overlapping of several eras: According to historical sources, the large rondel was already created before the World War II (cf. the plan from the period of 1915 to 1925), but the American occupying forces turned it into a skating rink, according to historian D'Angela. Today, the rondel is mainly a very popular meeting point for adolescents and young adults. In winter it is used as an ice-skating rink. Thus the rondel, which was only added at a late stage to the development of the garden, became an important garden element dating from a later period than its establishment due to the new forms of usage. Through the available and actual types of usage, these time shifts can also be experienced by outside visitors.

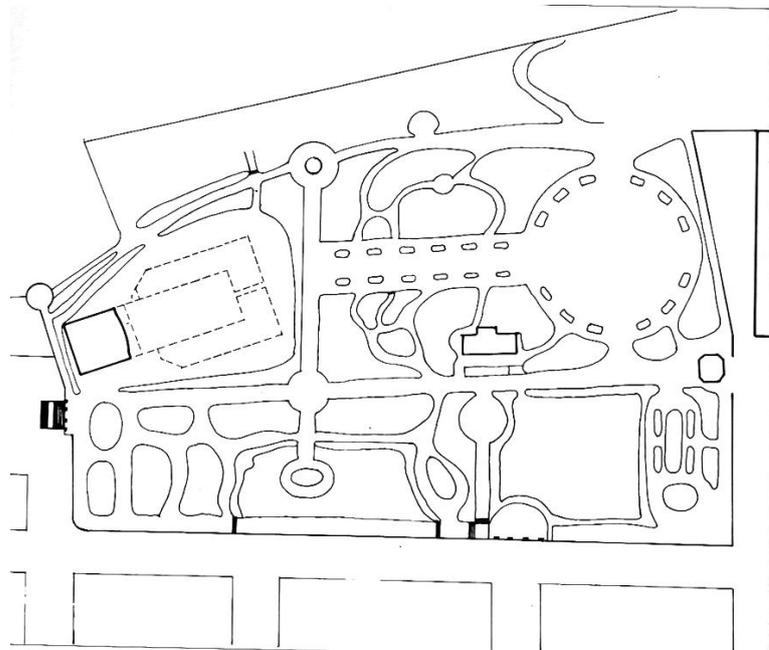


Fig. 5: Plan around 1915/25

5.1.4 Design component – exemplified by the context of the surroundings

In spatial analysis, the open space is examined beyond its boundaries in the context of its surroundings. The open space is part of a larger (urban) landscape. The spatial analysis illustrates the actual integration and location of the site in this landscape, the visual connections that result from it and the spatial effects created from the outside. The analytical method of copying reveals the distinctive position of the open space on the terrain edge to the bay.



Fig. 3: Highlighting the terrain edge by copying

This makes it possible to highlight the significance of the open space of the Villa Peripato for the recognition value of the more recent historic city centre of Taranto.

Historical research has revealed that park was initially designed (around 1860) as a belvedere/viewpoint. It overlooked the "Mar Piccolo", the bay to the north-east. There were probably two terraces, at least one of which can still be seen on a historical photograph (cf. Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Terrace overlooking Mar Piccolo, probably around 1930.

The spatial analysis shows that the present high plant density at the terrain edge forms a very distinctive, closed spatial boundary. The alley along the lookout area passes along a green wall, instead of the historical canopy for enjoying the view. The interaction with the lake created by the viewpoint was turned into a border zone. This offers individual user groups the advantage of being able to extract themselves from social control.

5.1.5 Atmospheric component – exemplified by historical fragments and retreats

Through the analytical method of mapping it became apparent that a significant number of landscape architecture traces and historical garden remains can still be found in a particular section of the park.



Fig. 6: Walls, fences, monuments of the Villa Peripato

5.1.6 Components of movements and atmospheres – video recordings

A relatively new method of analysing open spaces is the viewing and interpretation of video recording taken in the field. The analytical observation of the site using this experimental method of analysis has revealed an additional layer of meaning of this specific section of the garden of the Villa Peripato. This can be seen from the video analysis as used in the project:

With this method a retrospective impact on the analysis method embarked on before could be discerned. Prior to the first on-site video recordings, the following methodical foundations for the video shooting were

prepared: The video shootings were to be carried out in four different modes (long video sequences, video sequences taken during a slow walk, recordings shot in quick passing and recordings altered by editing or trick shots), based on "The Margins of Vision" by Christoph Girot (Girot 2010). Despite this classification of the recordings, the subjective perspective of the person who holds the camera remains: "Video is a modern instrument, which appears as an automatic and detached view in peoples' lives. But do not forget that there is still a subject behind the camera. In simple terms: it is hand made!" (Girot 2010). That much was clear already before the start of the shooting. Yet once in the field, it became obvious that strict adherence to the four recording modes would prevent addressing the actual and specific characteristics of the site. This is evidenced by the results of the video recording methods at the four pilot sites:

The camera meanders through the park of Villa Peripato in Taranto on an unstructured, random route, similar to a walk. Yet the walking trail is not lost in thought, it takes numerous side glances into hidden niches and discrete corners of the park. The recorded version created on site symbolises the substantial heterogeneity of the site. It stands for looking and searching, getting lost, getting back on track and immersing oneself in this space.

In the Italian "Giardino Pubbico" of the Villa Peripato the experimental analysis process using video footage has shown that the specific section of the park where numerous historical fragments are located is precisely the section which has a very withdrawn, remote character with an intimate atmosphere. Hence, a future presentation of the testimony to the historical significance of the park could be realised in this section of the site, since it also offers the opportunity for an unobstructed pursuit of the tracks of the cultural heritage.



Fig. 7: Video still: Historical fragment in the remote section of the park of the Villa Peripato

6 CONCLUSION

The analyses of the layers of meaning of the site presented here are based on conventional site survey methods and are purposely expanded with experimental methods. It is clear that such a mix of methods provides results on different levels. For tourist concepts, these specific results may contain direct information and proposals for action, such as visualisation of the historical mosaic. At the same time, it becomes clear that the interpretation of the entire culture heritage meaning cannot be done without blending and overlapping these results. For a comprehensive communication with visitors, separate narratives can be combined into new tales, as exemplified by the rondel of the Villa Peripato. At the moment when these different levels of interaction come together, the open space under review develops into an independent phenomenon that is hidden from superficial glances, arousing curiosity and stimulating imagination. However, further research into the relevance of the open space for the surrounding urban structure and its society resulting in profound overall narratives were only possible in conjunction with site-related insights. This is true especially if the tourist concepts are based on routes still to be established. Thus the surrounding location is not only to be understood — according to Marc Treib — as an "intersection of people and place", but also as part of the site's historical, spatial and socio-cultural context. Thus the shift from a created object to the meaning of the site (BURRA Charter 1999), as it is reflected in the current discussion of the cultural heritage, is taken into account.

These layered meanings will result in specific touristic products for the sites in order to show their touristic value as an example for the SEE region.

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