

URBANIZATION OF SLOVENIAN COAST AND PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE

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INTRODUCTION

Slovenia lies in the north-western corner of the Adriatic sea and its territory includes only 47 kilometers of the Adriatic coast (today the northern part of Istria is part of Republic of Slovenia, Slovenia became independent state when separated from Yugoslavia in 1991 and in 2004 join the European Union). Slovenia is lying in traditional zone between north Italian plain, southeastern Alps, Adriatic Sea and Balkan.

The terrain of the Slovenian coast has a characteristic Eocene flysch base. The relief, shaped by the geotectonic base and tectonic and erosive process gives a special morphologic character to the landscape (Stritar, 1990). Together with the Mediterranean climate and vegetation, it gives a characteristic image to the landscapes. The bay of Koper is the largest on the northwestern Istrian coast. The coastline was formed after extensive encroachments by the sea following the last Ice Age. The irregular nature of the coast is the result of the flooding of the lower parts of valleys, whose rivers had run further to the west in the glaciation, when the sea level was some 90 metres lower (Šifrer 1965). The shallows were ideally suited for the creation of salt works (Orožen Adamič 1981).

Slovenian coastal region is covered with lush vegetation, which consist of numerous wild plant species, natural parks and agricultural plans. Like elsewhere in the Mediterranean, the traditional use of the land can be described as "cultura mista" (Typological 1965). The cultivation of these plants is made possible by great quantities of sunshine and high temperatures characteristic for the Mediterranean climate.

HISTORICAL SURVEY

Historically the Istrian Peninsula was populated by tribal groups concentrated around homonymous centers (oppida), in the period that followed after the loss of Histrian independence in 177 B.C Istria became a part of Roman empire until the fall of the West-Roman empire in 467 A.D. As the Istrian peninsula is positioned away from the main roads leading from the East towards Italy, they prospered

economically also after the decline of the Western Roman Empire. The Byzantines dividing Italy into the coastal Byzantine possessions and the inland Lombard state brought the reinforcement of the military organization and the formation of the Ravenna exarchatus. Istria became a part of the Ravenna exarchatus as a special province under the control of *Magister militum*. After the decline of the Ravenna exarchatus (751) Istria may have been under Lombard control. In the last decades of the 6th century and early 7th century the Slavic migrations also expanded to Istria. Following a short restoration of the Byzantine authority at the end of the 8th century it became a part of the Carolingian state (788) until the 11th century when Istrian towns accepted the Venice protection. Venice had considered the Adriatic Sea as its property so much so that it was simply referred to, as the Gulf of Venice and Istria remain part of "Serenissima" for more than Five hundred Years. Istria was part of Austrian monarchy until 1918 and part of Italy for a short period between the first and second World War. After the Second World War Slovenia and Istria became part of Yugoslavia: this period was for northern Istria and its cultural landscape and cultural heritage extremely devastated. After the liberation of Trieste by partisans (Yugoslav army) a certain tension developed in the relations between the allied military administration and the former Yugoslavia and Italy. The two countries could not reach an agreement and the Trieste was given to Italy. The fact is that Slovenia with this act (as part of Socialist republic of Yugoslavia) lost vital and extremely important harbour of Trieste - the economic, trade, social and cultural center, and the only "window" to the world, the largest trade and commercial center in Austrian monarchy from the beginning of 18th Century in central Europe. The natural link between Trieste and Istria as its natural hinterland was cut artificially and Istria as Trieste were separated from its main resources. The common territory which from the ancient time was united and were the picturesque countryside was covered by oak, hornbeam, chestnut, cultivated terraces of olive trees (Culiberg 1997), vineyards, fruits and salt pans, the traditional goods of the region lost the main market place and important cultural center. The short historical survey of Istria is a brief reflection of diversity of culture heritage and how fundamental the

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political and historical decisions are for preservation of historical environment.

TOWN OF KOPER AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

Koper, (*ital. Capodistria*) the most important medieval town in Istria, the former island upon which the historical part of Koper is located has an elliptical shape and resembles a convex lens. Once an fortified island, today a scheduled urban monument protected under regional legislation, where urban structure clearly developed in the 14th and 15th centuries (Bernik 1968) on roman and medieval foundations connected to the tradition of late Antiquity. The Venetian Republic, which for almost five centuries influenced the town material, spiritual and political development, undoubtedly left behind the most visible contribution to the formation and development of the town. According to stylistic elements, the oldest standing building monuments making up the historical center of the town are from the Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque periods. The oldest of these can be found scattered all over the entire historical center of the town that used to be surrounded with town walls lining the island's shore (Guček 2000). The medieval town walls construction as a permanent architectural feature significantly contributed to the town forming itself within a specifically limited area. Although the main buildings have been rebuilt and extended in subsequent historical periods, the predominant Venetian Gothic appearance of this main urban area has been preserved until the present.

The cultural landscape around the Koper environment was intensively settled with very important archaeological monuments and sites from prehistoric, roman up to 19th century remains of cultural heritage. The historical development of an area is recorded on the ground not only by archaeological settlements but with other earthworks, salt pans systems, ridge and furrow systems, landscaped parklands, gardens. Such features give us a link with our past and a better understanding of our place in the world and time. In spite of the fact that Roman structural remains tend to be better preserved, (deep and massive foundations, hard paving, good quality building material), because of which settlement in the Roman period appears predominant on the hinterland and beside the shore.

The Roman settlement system from the 1st century AD was modified spatially the landscape for the first time, intensively especially the coast and lowland areas. The continuity of occupation at prehistoric sites and hillforts even in the Roman period indicates that the various political

and economic changes did not necessarily modify the previously established settlement system. In late antiquity and early medieval period due to the political reasons the towns expanded, while the function and position of small trade centers, farmed lowland landscape, cultivated land, woodland, farm buildings and small settlements on the countryside did not change radically until the beginning of the 20th century.

URBANISATION AND INDUSTRIALISATION OF THE AREA

In Slovenia like elsewhere in the world in late fifties and sixties of 20th century (before Venice charter was adopted) the major public works as motorways, pipelines, urbanization, agricultural development poorly regulated suburban industrial and infrastructural developments transformed the cultural landscape, many times without any environmental impact assessments and cultural heritage was many times destroyed, especially in suburbs and on countryside. From the early beginning we could recognize that the predominant national interest concerning the development of Slovenia was and still is the development of Koper harbour, urbanization, industrialization of the region and the development of tourism industry. In town of Koper in the late sixties consequently led to the construction of new buildings – few skyscrapers beside medieval town, expansion of the industrial zone and shopping centers outside its fortification walls, and the sub-urban expansion is still not concluded.

The Koper salt pans and those near Sermin had begun to decline economically by the end of the 19th century, and by the time of the First World War, this activity had almost entirely ceased. The salt flats turn into marshes, and with this into malarial areas. Thus, for economic as well as health reasons, canalization was undertaken in 1932-1939. The course of Rižana river was diverted for a length of 5 km because of frequent flooding (Plut 1981). Drainage ditches can be identified on the aerial photographs.

Large scale construction projects began after the second world war, in 1950. By 1977 42 drainage ditches had been dug and some 93 assorted buildings had been constructed on the land beside the Koper outskirts. The result of all these interventions is that many archaeological sites were destroyed without records the same as salt-pans (Stokin 1997). Encroachments into agricultural areas for limited period also included the expansion of Koper harbour and the construction of a railway station. Terminals of oil and gas were built beside the hill near by archaeological settlements. The economic exploitation and development of the area has

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not ceased. A sand extraction plant has been active on the eastern side of the hill from the early of eighties. The harbour expansion blocked off the rest of the Bay of Koper-from the open sea with large embankments. The result of these interventions is that the area has been modified to such an extent that its earlier topography has virtually been destroyed (Stokin 1997). The historic, romantic landscape around Koper was lost.

MANAGING CULTURE HERITAGE

In the last thirty years the Slovenian management of cultural heritage in the context of conservation policy is based on preventative measures to avoid conflict between heritage and redevelopment. Nowadays the cultural heritage and landscapes are in Slovenia protected. There are in force international conventions, charters, recommendations and the legislation system (Law for the protection of cultural Heritage in Republic of Slovenia from 1999) but the main issue is that irreversible damage done in the past is not replaceable. A wide variety of conservation projects have been modified: motorways and roads have been diverted, oil terminals and other industrial installations moved elsewhere and besides that cultural heritage is protected “in situ”.

The essence of conservation of cultural heritage in Slovenia is planning for the best term long use of cultural resources and that monuments should be protected in their own right and in all their variety, as far as possible and should never be assessed on political, economic or individual interests (Kristiansen 189, 27). The example from Istria typifies that many times the national, political and economic interests are more important against the interest of conservation policy. It is certain, that the impact on cultural heritage, townscape and landscape should be an issue for sustainability but the main question remains: how to manage the relationship between damaging economic activities and the cultural heritage?

CONCLUSIONS

In the present situation the most important issue is how to manage the degraded cultural heritage and the monuments and sites between urbanization, industrialization and cultural tourism. From the prospective of English Heritage “the management of change and the irreversible damage that can be done to heritage places to justify short-term economic gains are the key points. Emphasis are places upon actions that are detrimental to the setting of historic buildings, and on the need for a “finely tuned characterization of the whole resource” as a prerequisite for effective historical

management. One strategy that is explored is the setting of limits on how much of the resource could be consumed by each generation. (Clarke 1993). In the presented case study this is not feasible anymore. Much more applicable approach is offering Egloff. He states that ” we need to explore the character and extent of the degradation of our cultural heritage from the past; secondly we must determine if it is the system and what we plan to manage the conservation of a sustainable cultural heritage that is flawed, whether it is individual personalities and situations that create or exacerbate problems or whether it is some combination of both that could heighten rather than moderate the impact of tourism (Egloff 2005, 30-31).

Without political and other interests the managing of cultural heritage cannot be properly effective unless the tourism, industry and economy recognize the importance and the needs for the revitalization of Koper town and its cultural heritage (hinterland) and new management plans for the important monuments and sites. But it is not enough for the state or municipality alone to produce the program, and provide than the impetus to begin revitalization. It must become second nature to all citizens, who should be inspired by their own sense to place and attention to various aspects of local cultural heritage to make it happen (Graham 2001).

ABSTRACT

Throughout the past and present cultural heritage and cultural landscapes have been regarded from many different angles, ranging from reverence to the evaluation of their different values but in reality, the interest was always somehow the domain of ideological, political, economic and individual pressure. Intensive natural and anthropogenic changes in the last thousand years and especially, in the last decades made intensive impact on suburb landscape and urbanization in the territory of the Slovenian coast. After large-scale construction projects they partly destroy the natural and medieval urban environment and has been modified to such extent that its earlier landscape has virtually been changed completely. Irreversible damage made in the past and the new globalization process -to justify fast economic gains, are the main problems how to manage the relationship between economic activity, tourist industry and the cultural heritage. In spite of the fact that the impact on archaeological heritage and landscape should be an issue for sustainability, the economic interest is still decidable. From this point of view the paper will present the practice of a comprehensive strategy for the conservation of cultural heritage and landscape in this region.

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