

Intervention proposal into the fragment of landscape of Bezdin Monastery, part of the “Lunca Mureşului” cultural landscape

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ABSTRACT

The position of the Bezdin Monastery and its relation with the natural landscape of Lunca Mureşului resulted in considering the built ensemble as part of a landscape fragment, as a component of the cultural landscape found within the limits of the Lunca Mureşului Natural Park. Once the idea of reviving the monastery complex came up, a question of the need for intervention on the surrounding landscape was raised, by integrating the free plot from the church's property. The approach of the intervention proposal is related to the overall image that is to be obtained and aims to improve the already existing landscape fragment, by mixing the existing layers with new elements and emphasizing the value on both the whole ensemble and the cultural landscape to which it belongs.

Keywords: Bezdin, cultural landscape, fragments of landscape, threshold, immersion, limit, perspective, multi-sensory.

I. INTRODUCTION

Any way of approaching the cultural landscape cannot be done without relating to the general concept of landscape, understood in its entirety as an integrative matrix made up of distinct parts - a part that is represented by the concept approached above. In other words, it must be understood from the beginning that the entire concept of a cultural landscape cannot exist without its integration into the concept of landscape itself. If we were to summarize all the definitions that it has received over time, we might find out that the landscape is considered as a fragment of space or territory that has three-dimensional valences in which the natural elements merge organically with the anthropic elements, generating an unique environment, from a physiognomically and functionally point of view [1].

The meaning of the cultural landscape has undergone many transformations since the first attempt to define it - the 1890 statement by geographer Freidrich Ratzel saying that the "landscape is changed by human activity" or later in 1908 Otto Schluter attributes it to the *kulturlandschaft*, which can be translated as a "landscape created by human culture". A more recent definition, which belongs to Richard Schein (quoted by Calcatinge Al., 2013) states that "the cultural landscape is a geographical palimpsest or an accumulation of geographies ... the cultural landscape is everywhere and always involved in a process of cultural and social reproduction". In other words, this similarity to a palimpsest captures both the continuous metamorphosis of the landscape through its culturalization, as well as the heritage it integrates when passing between two different hypostases [1].

II. FRAGMENTS OF LANDSCAPE

Lunca Mureşului Natural Park is a protected area established in Romania, downstream of Arad municipality, up to the border with Hungary, alongside Mureş river, classified as a natural park at a national level and a protected land in the international taxonomy of IUCN. It integrates the embankment enclosure of the Mureş river, respectively the flood zone between the dams on either side of the river and between

the high terraces of the same river. It is an area with periodic flooding, in which the plants and animals that can be found there are adapted to these conditions [2].

Viewed as a cultural landscape within the boundaries of the natural park, it automatically results in a series of fragments of the landscape that determine its general character. Being an anthropic element omnipresent in the natural landscape, the Bezdin Monastery (see Fig. 1) becomes a spatial generator within the landscape of the park, determining the formation of a fragment of landscape.

The fragment of a landscape generated by the Bezdin Monastery co-operates with the Bezdin pond and the free land in the proximity of the monastery complex, being limited by the position of the dam, the watercourse that borders the former monastery park land and the boundary determined by the forest area and the arable land. In the 400 years since the existence of the monastery, the changes undergone by the landscape were determined by anthropic elements, natural elements and elements derived from the connection of man with the nature of the place. The overlaid layers left behind by all the modelling actions, no matter how thin they might be now, can be identified and used in the generation of new layers that integrate in the general structure of the landscape.



Fig. 1. Aerial view of the Bezdin Monastery

III. WIDE-SPECTRUM STIMULUS

The landscape is often perceived as a succession of images and places, creating a complex picture. Yet the greatest emotional impact appears beyond the visual spectrum, through the

choreography of movements, understanding of spatial features, projecting different fragments of experiences, perceiving coded messages and decoding their meaning.

The main purpose of the strategy is to promote the creation of multi-sensory experiences for visitors following the routes of the monastery visit. In order to create a strategy at the level of the monastery complex that has the capacity to arouse an emotion in the visitor, we started from Pieter Desmet's scheme (see Fig. 2) related to the key elements in producing an emotion: concerns, stimuli and cognitive evaluation [3].

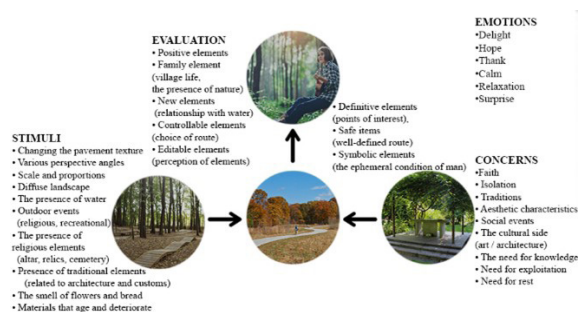


Fig. 2. Scheme of the implemented strategy realized according to the scheme of emotions by Peter Desmet [3]

III.1. Concerns

Every object, image or event creates an emotion if it matches the particular concern behind that emotion. The variety of possible concerns is directly proportional to the typological diversity of the human being, so in the case of implementing a strategy, it is impossible to satisfy the entire group in a similar way. Given the wide range of possible concerns, these being influenced both by the individual's personality, as well as by his previous culture and experiences, we chose to focus our strategy on three main concerns: motivation, values and sensitivity. In addition to these are the concerns about basic needs, which are valid on a large scale: food, rest, safety [4].

Analyzing the motivational concerns, the group of people visiting the monastery complex is divided into two categories: those motivated by faith and those motivated by the need for iso-

lation and meditation. Taking this into consideration the key point on the pathway should have religious themes like the relics, the altar, the cemetery, the old crosses. As well, secondary places intended for isolation and introspection in the middle of nature should exist.

Taking into consideration the value concerns that the target group may have, we identified four such values: religious values through the need of respecting the tradition and old customs related to the Serbian church, aesthetic values linked with the need of finding a visual unity at the level of the monastery and cultural and social values introduced by the concepts of art and architecture into the natural space.

From this point of view of sensitivity, we focused on people who are vulnerable to the natural elements, religious elements, lived experience, or the need for knowledge.

III.2. Stimuli

The world lives through stimuli; people connect with the environment by exploring sensations given by stimuli through the senses: sight, hear, smell, taste, touch. Each of these senses has its particularities, and in order to achieve a multi-sensorial experience, they have to work together, each of them at a different level.

The sight is the most used sense when it comes to perceiving a landscape; it operates at a distance and offers general information about the subject.

In contrast to sight, hearing is dynamic and uncontrollable. If in the case of sight, we can look at a static element, when hearing comes into operation, we have the certainty that an action is taking place somewhere around. The smell is another sense that can easily trigger an emotion because it is generally connected to the memory of previous events. Taste and tactile senses are more intimate senses that appear when visitors feel the need for a more detailed knowledge of the stimulus.

"Sight also turns into taste. Certain colors and delicate details evoke oral sensations" [5].

III.3. Evaluation

Evaluation is a process through which the perception of an event or a stimulus is connect-

ed to an emotion. Following the process, the events can be evaluated as positive or negative, familiar or new, controllable or uncontrollable, modifiable or definitive, safe or insecure [3].

After analyzing the concerns and stimuli, we developed the emotion scheme suitable for the strategy (see Fig. 2). The concerns are faith, isolation, traditions, aesthetic characteristics, social events, cultural elements, the need for knowledge. The stimuli are changing textures, perspectives, diffuse landscape, the presence of water, outdoor events (religious, recreational), the presence of religious elements, presence of traditional elements (related to customs), different smells and materials that age. The evaluation process should determine positive elements, family element (village life, the presence of nature), new elements (relationship with water), controllable elements (choice of route), changing elements (perception of key points).

IV. STRATEGY

The implementation of a landscape architecture solution aims for its integration into the existing landscape by connecting existing landscape elements from the site with new proposals. Starting from the intention to fill the Bezdin pond with mechanically transported water from the Mureş river, the landscape modelling intervention focused on the already existing land of the monastery, which was used partly as a park. The limits have already been preserved due to the existing vegetation as well as the water stream, the cemetery that has a central position on the plot and the two alleys that intersect at a right angle - alleys inherited from the old park arrangements that are represented in older maps.

IV.1. Strategic points

Considering the whole site as a blank canvas, for the generation of new routes, it was found necessary in the first phase, to position a series of points of interest, attractive for visitors of the monastery. The positioning of the points of interest came as a result of the need of clearing the interior yard, which gathered elements of religious worship which at certain times would have led to the overcrowding of the yard. Therefore, the attractions became: the orchard (1),

the cemetery (2), the holy cross (3), the open-air altar (4) and the pavilion that houses the relics of Saint Kiril (5), the bridge over the river (6) and the floating platform (7) (see Fig. 3).

The most important landmark of the park is the monastery building. A monastery is a refuge, having this role due to the presence of symbolic elements that communicate with the Divine Light. Its form, with the vertical line defined by the tower, has precisely the purpose of connecting the earth with the sky.

IV.2. Visual Unity

In the implementation of an immersion strategy, the absence of anachronisms is essential. Because of this, all the elements introduced in the ensemble must have the same language.

In order to create a visual unity, themes such as the paths, the character of the places, the atmosphere, the orientation and the perception have been approached.

IV.2.1 Place definition

In order to satisfy man's physical and psychic needs, there are two important points in defining a place: orientation and identification.

Kevin Lynch in his book *The image of the city* treats elements like paths, region, node and landmark as essential in creating orientation. People feel more confident and safe to explore if they have elements of orientation. Based on this, we organized the paths, regions and landmarks so that they connect and can be easily recognizable. From each key point, the visitor has a perspective to the other objectives. The paths material is different from those that take the visitor to a recreation spot and lead him to a key point [6].

The identification idea is related to psychic safety because people feel more comfortable in a place with whom they identify. In order to do this, the park has to contain elements that people are familiar with, elements inspired by the genius loci of the place or its history and traditions. By restoring the old traditions such as those related to baking bread, picking fruit from the orchard and traditional events, the visitor identifies with the place that reminds him of childhood [7].

IV.2.2. Atmosphere

Every place, according to some particular circumstances, has its own identity. These circumstances can be determined by natural factors such as topography, water, light, vegetation or can be related to the man-made elements which transform the natural landscape into a cultural one. When it comes to portraying a natural landscape, there are four major concepts that influence the result: things, order, character and light. Things and order are related to the spatial dimension, while character and light give the atmosphere of a place [7].

The spatial borders of the park are vague and are represented by the natural elements such as the lake, the river and the forest. The sequence in which the visitor encounters the various natural elements depends on the route he chooses to travel. In addition to the park interventions, there is the proposal of implementing a floating platform whose level changes at the same time with the increase or decrease of the water level.

The meaning of the platform is to present a perspective in which the church is reflected into the water. The character is defined by the purpose of each place: the meditation places and the key places are isolated, surrounded by vegetal elements. The light is filtrated, and the shadow spots blend with the light ones.

The gathering places like the outdoor altar are opened and filled with light. They have perspective views to the monastery.

Light is the symbol of knowledge and artistic inspiration in Greek culture, but it is also associated with God and the divine light, being the manifestation of spirit.

IV.2.3. Alleys

The parking for visitors is 500 meters away from the main entrance of the monastery, which frames by the alignment of trees, the main facade and directs the visitor, pedestrianly, towards it. At point 8 (see Fig. 3), where the information centre is placed, a two-way route



Fig. 3. Area plan regarding the landscape proposal for the monastery's site

was positioned which plays a double role in the discovering of the whole site, being at the same time the beginning or end of the trip, offering different sensations and thresholds depending on the intention of immersion into the landscape of every visitor.

By taking the directions given by the key elements of the area (cross, info point) we created in the first part of the route, from the info point into the park, a rectangular plot that gradually turns into an organic one, with spontaneous development, thus marking the change of landscape from a domestic one with vegetation specific to orchards to a wild one like the forest.

The positioning of the elements of interest in the generation of the routes also aimed at creating perspective connections between them in order to be able to suggest a certain scenography. By introducing secondary paths between these main alleys that connect the important areas, it offers the possibility for each visitor to experience a different route than the regular ones. These secondary paths connect the main objectives with isolated spaces of meditation.

IV.2.4 Perception

The perception of stimuli is strongly influenced by the conditions of the environment in which they are, by previous personal experiences with those stimuli and their change in time and space (change in colour, change in size, their disappearance or appearance, etc.).

The strategy includes concepts related to the perception of the elements within the monastery complex, so at a visual level the various key elements located in the park change their visual perception as people get close to or move away from them. The front view of the church is perceived differently from the water having no visual barrier and in a completely different way from the park where besides the trees that partially obscure the perspective, it is also covered by the secondary building bodies, leaving only the tower visible. Shadow and light are two key elements in visual perception. Dark trails with diffused light help visitors focus on the other senses: hearing and smell, while illuminated textures and materials, invites to touch and discovery. At the hearing level, along the route, a

succession of stimuli appears: in the transition areas from one element to another the pavement is made of small stones to remind the individual that he is in a transition zone, search and discovery, while in the areas dedicated to the key elements the pavement changes, the noise being replaced by the silence necessary for meditation. The smell and taste appear mainly in the monastery, where the fresh smell of bread baked in the oven invites the visitor to a snack. "A specific smell makes us enter without realizing it in a space completely forgotten ... we enter enchanted in a daydream. The nose helps the eyes to remember." [5]. From a tactile point of view, the materials used to design meditation areas and interventions in the park are natural, being affected over time by natural phenomena, thus creating the passage of time and the ephemeral nature of life. "The skin reads the texture, weight, density and temperature of matter." [5].

IV.3. Thresholds

Due to the wide spectrum of space typologies, the transition zones called thresholds are key areas in which the visitor gradually adapts to the new space they enter. On the one hand, the thresholds have the role of connecting two areas with different characters, facilitating the transition between them and on the other hand they have the role of creating a mental barrier between them.

In the case of the current strategy, a bridge is made between the profane and the sacred, so along the route, the visitor goes through a series of thresholds that gradually disconnect him from the everyday world, transposing him into a calm, meditative and healing world. The thresholds are physically marked in different ways: the crossings over the water, changings into the typology of vegetation, changings into the texture of the pavement, changings into the height level, etc.

There are several thresholds in the landscaping proposal. The main two thresholds mark the beginning of the two possible routes: through the park or on the water. The first threshold is, in fact, a succession of two thresholds and is formed by the route from the proposed parking

to the info point, area in which you are forced to look alongside the main entrance axis, having the visual field limited by the alignment of the trees that lead the perspective towards the main facade of the monastery. The next threshold starts from the info point and passes through the access point and the former courtyard of the monastery, being marked by low vegetation and flower bushes.

The second main threshold is the bridge over the stream that connects the river with the monastery park and gives the visitor enough time to calibrate their mood according to a worship area. The other secondary thresholds would be the following: rising and lowering from the water platform, passing through the info point, the cemetery, the orchard.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the strategy was to create delight, gratitude, and fulfilment through an immersive experience that transposes the individual into the sacred world characteristic of church ensembles. At the same time, we aimed to achieve emotions such as surprise and relaxation that the visitor may experience, by introducing elements of fusion with nature and interaction with natural elements (crossings over water, nature trails), given the context in which the monastery is located, that is in the cultural landscape of Lunca Mureşului.

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