

The case study of 10 historical gardens in the Banat region

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Manuscript received, 2018; revised October 15, 2018, Accepted November 30, 2018

Abstract. The object of the research is developed around the historical gardens belonging to certain historical monuments, more precisely in relation to the palaces and manors of aristocratic families from the Banat area. These gardens are selected according to certain criteria that preserve physical and documentary stylistic and memorial values. The aim of the research is the studying of a frequently met phenomenon both as specialists in the field and as simple citizens, that is, the loss of values of a building and its surroundings, which at the time of their construction had a special historical and architectural value, but with the passing of time they lost some of these values due to political, social, and cultural changes. The gardens, manors, and palaces are testimonies of the past. They present a private and urban lifestyle at a certain social, cultural, and architectural level. This paper has the purpose of investigating these still existing landscape arrangements as well as the main factors that lead to their transformation, their problematics being discussed from its historical, architectural, and social-cultural perspective.

Keywords: historical value, research, authenticity, monument

1. Introduction

A recurring phenomenon from the beginning of humankind up to the present is man's will to play the role of the almighty, thus changing and perfecting the environment, which is by definition created perfect and does not accept any man-made improvement that would last forever.

Natural environment works differently – this being untouched, persists and develops naturally, according to its own rules. Gardens created by man, organized and reorganized, are realized after a certain human rule, a conception, vision of the epoch, of the given period's fashion that would persist only up to a certain limit, when it reaches degradation due to natural phenomena. The passing of time says its words and the fashion of landscape arrangements change together with the passing of time, similarly to the cases studied within the frames of this paper.

The object of the research is developed around the historical gardens belonging to certain historical monuments, more precisely in relation to the palaces and manors of aristocratic families from the Banat area.

The understanding of the environment, time as well as the historical and social coordinates of the periods of theoretical and practical patrimonial accumulations represented a great interest to this research; thus, the present paper had an aim to investigate these still existing landscape arrangements as well as the main factors that lead to their transformation.

The transformation sequences of these historical gardens have been studied in comparison with their actual state, the problematics being treated both from historical perspective and under social-cultural aspects.

The realized inventory is addressed primarily to architects, landscape artists, and urbanists, those who implement development and rehabilitation projects of these monuments, but also to theorists. It is addressed to mayor's offices, prefectures, county councils, and ministries. Thus, with the help of the accumulated information, of the obtained historical documents and cadastral maps, specialists in the domain are offered an image of the original historical park that also offers the possibility to partially restore the former historical garden on the site that is currently available, this way being able to contribute to a positive development of attitude towards historical gardens and eventually towards the historical monument it belongs to.

The object of the study was the analysis of the actual state of the historical gardens of the Banat region with the help of a detailed presentation of case studies, where the actual situation of the historical gardens and their evolution over time have been documented. All case studies have been analysed and researched according to the adopted methodology and through the description of all activities that had contributed to the alteration of the original situation after the moment of their construction. Their presentation and assessment from an architectural and landscape art standpoint could be realized with the aid of on-site research and the comparison of their state to the documents identified with archive research [1] and the studied historical maps [2].

2. Materials and methods

The identified case studies have proved to be unitary as far as the chosen project and the research periods are concerned, which is delimited between the 17th and the 21st centuries, covering the territories between the Oriental Carpathians and the Crişana region. The research has been realized concerning architectural complexes already classified as historical monuments [3].

We have visited over 40 sites considered valuable and as having a historical past, outstanding architecture, or landscape art according to the studied documents issued at the moment of their construction [4].

From all the researched sites, I have chosen 33 manors and gardens, three manors being situated in Caraș Severin County, fifteen in Timiș County, and thirteen in Arad County, followed by 10 gardens classified as historical monuments that were to be studied and presented in detail.



Figure 1. Historical gardens classified as historical monuments, studied in detail

1. Banloc – Timiș: park of the Banloc Manor, 2. Lovrin – Timiș: park of the Lipthay Manor, 3. Bulci – Arad: Mocioni Castle Park, 4. Căpâlnaș – Arad: Teleki Castle Park, 5. Fântânele – Arad: Kövér-Appel Castle Park, 6. Macea – Arad: park of the Cernovici-Macea Castle, 7. Mocrea – Arad: Solymosy Castle Park, 8. Odvoș – Arad: park of the Konopi Castle, 9. Petriș – Arad: park of the Salbek Castle

The majority of these manors and castles are left in an advanced state of degradation, being deserted; however, some of them are used to house public functions, rarely in private use.

The gardens of these constructions classified as historical monuments have disappeared in most cases without any trace of landscape arrangement specific to the original state. In the case of the gardens classified as historical monuments, the

only remaining proof that could be considered as a guiding reference point are elements of tall vegetation, rare species of trees that survived in most of the gardens. As far as low or medium vegetation or landscape arrangement elements are concerned, in most cases, they are unidentifiable. These gardens have acquired their status of historical monuments primarily due to the monument buildings they belong to or to personalities playing an important role in erecting and arranging the given castle-garden complex as well as due to their artistic composition and certain structural elements still existing on site, proving the original landscape character of the park.

In the classification and description of the selected historical gardens, we have adopted an ample methodology, consisting of the realization of a short history of the studied aristocratic domains and families, realized a brief localization of the geographic situation of the locality[5] as well as its short historical presentation, described the local terrain and the placement of the major elements on the site, studied the accessibility of the site and construction followed by the description of the residence and its relation to the exterior arrangements, and finally focused on the exterior arrangements.

All the case studies realized on historical gardens classified as historical monuments have been analysed and researched according to the mentioned criteria all along their evolution, from their creation up to the present. Their presentation and assessment from an architectural and landscape art standpoint could be realized with the aid of on-site research and their comparison to the documents discovered with the help of archive research, the recovered contemporary images [6], and the studied historical maps.

3. Results and discussions

As a result of our research, we can establish that in the majority of the studied cases there have not been major alterations of the historical constructed bases. The basic construction remains the castle, presented in its identical form along the time, without suffering additions and extensions of the original, contemporary layout and volume image. Minor modifications of the constructed base can be observed studying historical maps, where we can identify the disappearance of secondary constructions and in some cases the appearance of other annexed constructions.

The state of these castles varies from case to case. The castles that have a constant function, such as the case of the castles from Căpâlnaş, Mocrea [7], Macea [8], and Șofronea, and thus the maintenance of these castles is permanent. The rest of the castles have no function in the present, some of them being even in an advanced state of degradation such as the castles of Bulci [9] and Odvoș. The accessibility of these castles being relative from case to case, some of them are

accessible due to the functions they serve but in the majority of the cases due to their state of abandonment.

Along the historical periods, only the dimensionally smaller establishments, such as the manors of Lovrin [10], and even Căpâlnaş, do not suffer modifications to their original extent of the domain. In the rest of the visited cases, the establishments suffer major modifications in comparison to the original layout, existent at the appearance of the castle and garden as opposed to their present-day layout.

Few gardens present traces of the contemporary historical gardens, their footprints having disappeared due to the events of historical periods and the transfer of these domains into various ownerships, eventually ending up in the possession of the state, which significantly neglected the state of these castles and gardens. This way, in addition to the advanced state of degradation of the castles, we can talk about the disappearance of the historical gardens, remaining only a few old trees that would stand for proof of the abundant vegetation once existing on the establishment. In most cases, only the tall vegetation has survived, certainly even this being in a wild and unmaintained state. Medium and low vegetation that would prove the historical footprint of the garden can no longer be found on these establishments. In some cases, existing alleys or traces of alleys and pathways prove the existence of former circulation routes, these being visible mostly in the case of castles having a constant function along the time and still having a specific function today such as the case of the castles from Căpâlnaş and Mocrea, both of them functioning today as psychiatry hospitals. This way, due to these existing functional establishments and constructions, the destruction of these gardens proved to be a slower one, and so some specific elements of the historical gardens are still visible today.

The complete visitation of the establishments was impossible in most cases since, although some of them are functional and the garden still serves its interior function as well, these are not entirely maintained, certain areas being inaccessible because of the wild vegetation that does not allow full access and the complete visitation of the domain.

In a few establishments, we can witness certain modifications and new completions of garden rearrangement, of contemporary nature appearing next to the original-historical arrangements that have been undertaken mostly due to the necessities of the castle's interior functional roles extending towards the exterior, rather than out of the will to realize an impressive landscape arrangement with the intention of making it become historical in time, such as in the case of Căpâlnaş, where this impact does not seem abusive, the alteration of its vegetation being minimal. However, in the case of the Şofronea establishment, the functioning of a thermal spa in the former historical garden has led to the deforestation of a significant portion of the original historical garden.

Few of the original valuable architectural ornamental objects can be found, these having been destroyed during the wars and due to the destructions suffered with the passing of time. There have been found some original flower supports on the establishments of Căpâlnaş and Bulci as well as some examples of artesian fountains specific to the era, such as the case of Banloc [11] and Petriş, these being completed by delimitation elements of the establishments with the aid of specific portals such as the monumental portals in the case of the Banloc Castle.

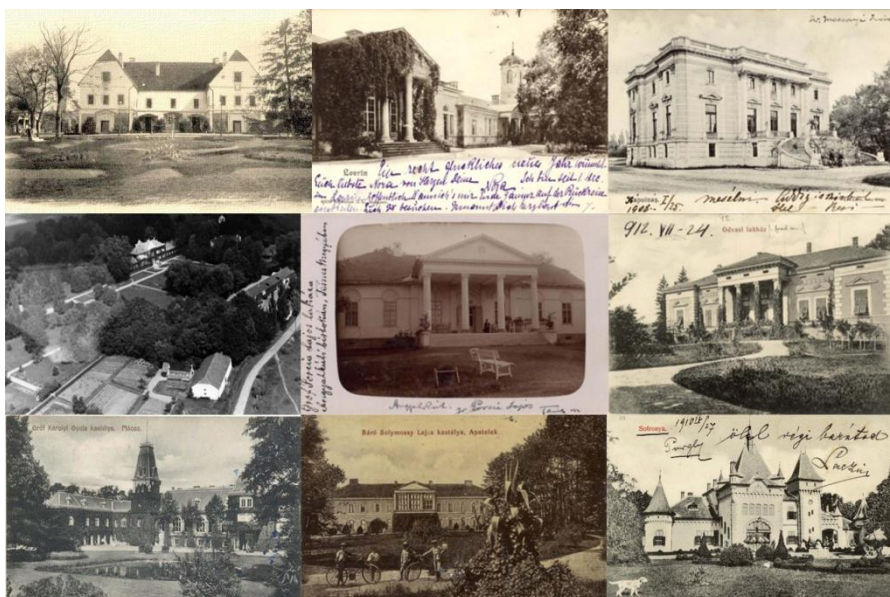


Figure 2. Contemporary postcards and images of the studied historical gardens of the Banat region

The studied castles and the adjacent gardens have been built approximately in the same historical period and are characteristic of the neo-classicist style that manifests itself in the case of the garden arrangements as well. However, in the case of the establishments with larger dimensions, next to the neo-classicist style present in the immediate vicinity of the castle, we can find extensions of the park towards the landscape style such as the case of the parks from Bulci, Petriş [12], and Odvoş.

A special case is the garden of the Csekonics Castle from Macea, which is under continuous maintenance due to its function as a dendrological park. The establishment does not keep its original extent, this increasing and then decreasing in surface, while, due to these layout modifications, a periodical rearrangement of the park can be identified as well along its history. Thus, the attribution of a certain

arrangement, studied on historical cadastral maps, the state of the original historical garden is difficult to define since this park had been in a continuous evolution along time, and it reached the status of a dendrological park only in the second half of the 20th century [13].

4. Conclusions

Any planning or intervention regarding the restoration of historical gardens must be preceded by historical research. The monumental value of a site is given by an ensemble of different historical layers that would help us understand the message of the garden. New interventions should consist of additions that continuously improve the value of the architectural complex and that permit the authentic restoration of the park in the light of new possible sets of information. Thus, during the revitalization intervention, decisions concerning the stylistic period to which it is possible/permitted to return to as far as the garden (or part of the garden) is concerned shall always be made based on the available information, considering the principle according to which the destruction of any element dating from various historical periods in favour of presenting a different era is not permitted.

The historical gardens researched within this study present currently available historical documents that prove the existence and evolution of these gardens, thus their restoration not presenting any problems for the specialists in the area. Concerning the studied ten historical gardens of the Banat region within this research, in most cases, we have found significant and veracious documents, out of which especially the detailed documentation and preservation of these values in the cases of the castles from Banloc, Bulci, Macea, and even in the case of the Căpâlnaş Castle are worth mentioning. All these examples include cartographic information, contemporary images, memories, and descriptions that present a clear picture of the contemporary garden.

Flexibility is the key for the conservation of historical gardens, and it is the only realistic answer to the inevitable forces of change. For the conservation specialists of the gardens, it is essential to understand the types of the gardens and their behaviour, which is significant in each case, be it a historical, botanical, artistic, or any other standpoint, as the gardens evolve in time, with different owners who introduce their own personal ideas, both formal and social, which modify the aspect of the garden [14].

This study presents itself with an open topic, free for ulterior completions both at the level of the researched and presented documents and from the standpoint of the problematics of authenticity, followed by theories and possibilities of restoration, rebuilding, and conservation of these historical gardens.

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