Opinion

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Vegetation Accompaniment of Small Monuments and its Interpretation in Landscape Archaeology

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ABSTRACT

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Opinion

The major occasion would seem to call for a monumental topic: increasing sea level due to the global climate change; assisted reproduction including in vitro fertilisation during space colonisation with the knowledge of the fact that certain embryology laboratory methods of assisted reproduction avoid the selection pressure of the nature to reduce genetic errors, which becomes apparent sooner or later, for example, in congenital developmental defects in individuals; the topic of definition of love as such in the era of positive tendency towards the so-called legal gender change, meaning in an era when the traditional sexological perception of the solution to what is currently referred to as gender incongruence; the world of technology the man created to control nature, to have power over nature, as it begins to hypertrophy and control the man while creating a highly unusual or even weird environment, in a certain sense terrifying, but certainly not a naturalised environment, where the man becomes an emigrant or perhaps an outcast. However, all of this was bestowed on the civilisation at the very beginning, and the current status is highly logical from the evolutionary point of view. Therefore, we need to seek lessons to be learnt from this and identify the challenges and civilisational tasks for the upcoming decades.

Instead of the previously mentioned monumentality, I have opted for a highly regional or even a miniscule topic from the global point of view: typologisation of the relationship between a small monument and its vegetation accompaniment. Many readers will shake their heads at this point, wondering about the meaning of this. My response will become apparent with increased magnification to facilitate observation of the highly regional topic from the global point of view. There is Upper Lusatia and there is Lower Lusatia; they are located in Central Europe, where country borders tend to change quite a lot; the region of Lusatia includes the so-called Tripoint, a key starting point of the newly determined border between Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia in the Potsdam Conference after World War II. Lusatia is a region with a harmonic landscape, historical and modest beauty of igneous hills often including a rocky point (Lusatia is even a home to chamois) and vast flowering meadows – and it is a region brimming with history. History keeps overflowing from the region as if it were an overheated boiler. Upper Lusatia is a protestant region and therefore lacks small monuments, such as crosses in fields, way-

side shrines, small chapels or statues on bridges. As the catholic spirit dominated in Lower Lusatia, the landscape is Terra Nuova Sancta, populated with small monuments in all of its corners [1,2].

However, instead of standing somewhere in isolation, these small monuments tend to form interesting compositions in time and space from the point of view of landscape ecology and landscape architecture, being accompanied by vegetation, specifically by trees. The herb and shrub layers are missing, as forests or groves are not planted around small monuments, neither are small monuments erected in existing forests or groves. Small monuments tend to be part of artificial autonomous, almost park-like compositions. These are dominating features that structure the composition and meaning of the surrounding landscape. A tree plays a key role in this park-like composition: it multiplies the height effect of a small monument from the perspective of landscape architecture, as a tree, or at least certain species, lasts much longer than a structure built by a human hand. A tree therefore marks a specific place (small monuments are often referred to as local monuments, as their value arises from the place where they stand), where a small monument at the end of its lifetime should be replaced with a new manmade structure. On the other hand, a tree may be struck by lightning and may be burnt down, in which case a small monument marks a place where a new tree can be planted. Most importantly though, a tree as nature mirrors the work of a man and extends its lifetime, not necessarily from the material point of view, or perhaps only marginally, but mainly from the ideological perspective. This is rather specific, as nature in relation to manmade structures is usually represented by erosion, corrosion and degradation processes leading to manmade structures perishing within nature.

This naturally leads one to the task of studying the topic of vegetation accompaniment of small monuments and its interpretation in landscape archaeology. An individual with a thoroughly global approach would argue: we may as well typologise the relationship of a tuna and an ice floe in the Antarctic and derive extensive aesthetic conclusions from this; if only the person presenting this text would choose typologisation of something currently more useful, for example colours and their changes in oceans and seas due to the global climate change – this would at least be useful for the marine art. The same proposition would result in contemplation by a reader used to thinking globally, yet with the conviction that any local action and its global consequences are related. This would be a reader understanding the term glocalization referring to the fact that the global world is inevitably broken down into a global village, therefore is essentially provincial and cannot encompass the objectives of high culture. We can let this reader contemplate, as they are undoubtedly inching towards the realisation that the minute topic of vegetation accompaniment of small monuments and its interpretation in landscape archaeology is not provincial at all. On the contrary, it breaks down glocalization from the inside, representing a key opposition to glocalization, containing a special inner drama that breaks down the globalisation timelessness and makes high culture possible. Let's focus on the story that confirms and externalizes this inner drama.

In September 2022, LANDSCAPING ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE. Vatra Dornei (onsite) LAC 2022 Onsite was held. September 2022 was extreme from the deepest core; it combined the subsiding COVID-19 pandemic, which began to acquire a chronic character, with the intensifying drama of the war in Ukraine. In that year, most of the Landscape Archaeology Conference, which has been organised in an impressive series of annual events since 2010, was held in the virtual space. The exception to this was one small segment, which took place in a traditional tangible setting, onsite, specifically in a former spa town of Vatra Dornei in the Romanian region of Bukovina. Oh! The Romanian Bukovina? A landscape of steep hills with many forests, but mostly idyllic. Bukovina with its majestic sweeping horizons (observed from the Rarău mountains) brims with history the same way as Lusatia. As soon as I arrived, it seemed that the great history was still spilling out of the landscape of the Romanian Bukovina. The difference compared to the past events was almost drastic; at the start of the onsite conference, we were very few in the small room of the training centre, ten, perhaps twenty people. No great banquets as in LAC2018 in Newcastle and Durham, UK. However, I drove there more than thousand kilometres across Slovakia and Hungary, while, for example, Sjoerd Kluiving flew there all the way from Amsterdam. I delivered a presentation accepted for the conference program based on the following abstract:

***Vegetation Accompaniment of Small Monuments and its Interpretation in Landscape

Archaeology

Barbora Dohnalová (Department of Landscape Planning, Faculty of Horticulture, Mendel University in Brno), Aleš Rudl (National Institute for the Protection and Conservation of Monuments and Sites, Czech Republic), Tomáš Hájek (The Economic and Social Council of Most Region, Czech Republic)

In the geographical and historical space of Central Europe, small monuments or built artefacts connected with trees are generally considered a typical identification feature of landscape. Besides the connection between the built object and its vegetation accompaniment, the presented paper points out to the significant relation to the specific place and landscape. The text covers a phenomenological definition of such places defining the space (landscape) towards a structural understanding of the relation of place – small monument – tree. Small monuments and trees explain the space that is concentrated within them, and their mutual interconnection reflects the character of the landscape, history of the place, perception, and preference of values.

On a background of the basic historical excursion covering vegetation as an accompaniment of small monuments, the methodology concentrates on structural investigation and covers the aspects of ty-

pology, evolution, and landscape design. In terms of typology the text presents a basic listing of woody species that commonly accompany small monuments in the Czech Republic and defines the prerequisites of a relation between the individual species to a specific type of built monument. In terms of evolution, basic model situations are outlined that characterise the dynamic of places, small monuments, and trees in the landscape. In the perspective of time, a place in a landscape is understood as a domain of transformations in the relation between the small monument and a tree. The paper characterizes partial principles of these evolutionary dynamics on selected model sites. In terms of landscape character assessment the paper identifies and summarizes key model situations documenting how places with small monuments and tress manifest in a landscape. The presented paper is a result of long-term continuous research of a collective of authors. It issues from already delivered as well as currently performed field surveys and documentations in an unbuilt landscape and in the countryside of small rural settlements in the Czech Republic.

Conference: Landscape Archaeology Conference, Iasi – Romania, 2022

Topic: Defragmentation, Cooperation

The conference continued. Additional attendees, such as the well-known experts Erle Ellis of the University of Maryland, and William Keeton of the University of Vermont joined online.

Please allow me to proceed from the combination of a presentation and a story to the closing propositions:

a) Great and small topics are equally important. Great and small topics form compositions in the landscape of knowledge similar to those formed by small monuments and trees in Lower Lusatia and elsewhere. This is the reason why we should study the topic of vegetation accompaniment of small monuments and its interpretation in landscape archaeology carefully – to understand the overall composition of knowledge, the ratio between the cognisable and incognisable, the completed reality as an element that needs to be taken seriously, the overall purposefulness of being.

b) Scientific knowledge as a presentation cannot be subtracted from the story, as they are always intertwined. Archimedes was killed in Syracuse by Roman soldiers, as he defended his (supposed) scientific autonomy, Galileo Galilei stole (in some sense) the discovery of the telescope – after all, the genius must march ahead, no matter what it takes, and if it weren't for Max Planck, Zeitschrift für Physik would probably have not paid much attention to Einstein's special theory of relativity (which was a key prerequisite to the general theory of relativity), since it was rather hard to find out that the man was right and measuring the orbit of Mercury was only to happen much later. Scientific knowledge is deeply historical and therefore intensely reflects the dialectics of the truth and lie, genuineness and fraud.

c) The topic of vegetation accompaniment of small monuments and its interpretation in landscape archaeology is also diachronic in its essence. Why else would these monuments and their accompaniment occur so frequently in the boiling pot of history called Lower Lusatia? Why else would I have driven more than a thousand kilometres in dramatic times, only to present this topic to several attendees at the training centre in Vatra Dornei in the Romanian Bukovina, specifically in Centrul de Pregatire si Formare Continua Vatra Dornei, Universitatea Suceava, Distance Education and Long-Life learning Office Vatra Dornei, University of Suceava, in a romantic, yet god forsaken place, where a lively mountain river flows next to the former casino and a railway is still operated, but is hardly discernible in tall grass? We can probably thank Marcel Mindrescu from the university in Suceava for making the onsite conference possible at all. In this context, I would like to note that the issue of truly real reality may be increasingly problematic for science. Indeed, science is a deadly serious matter, the same way as the topic of vegetation accompaniment of small monuments and its interpretation in landscape archaeology.

d) The miniscule Central European topic of vegetation accompaniment of small monuments and its interpretation in landscape archaeology may provide an essential correction to globalisation stereotypes and stereotypes in general, as it may contribute greatly to the depth of thought and knowledge. The topic of vegetation accompaniment of small monuments and its interpretation in landscape archaeology is a major topic for interpretation of the world in its current global and globalising form.

e) I hope a reader principally keeping to the global dimension and considering the topic of vegetation accompaniment of small monuments and its interpretation in landscape archaeology to be a miniscule one has at least read this text in full.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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