

# BOOK

ON THE UNEXPLORED  
CULTURAL HERITAGE  
IN COMMUNITIES

BY THE DANUBE

DANURB 2017 - 2019

**BOOK ON THE UNEXPLORED CULTURAL HERITAGE IN COMMUNITIES BY THE DANUBE**

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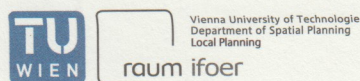
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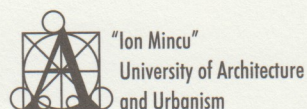
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DANURB

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# CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND LIVABILITY IN SMALLER CITIES

**KEYWORDS:**  
Liveable City,  
Objective and Subjective Aspects  
of Spatial Quality,  
Sensorial Attachment  
to Water Environment,  
Urban Planning Approaches to Livability

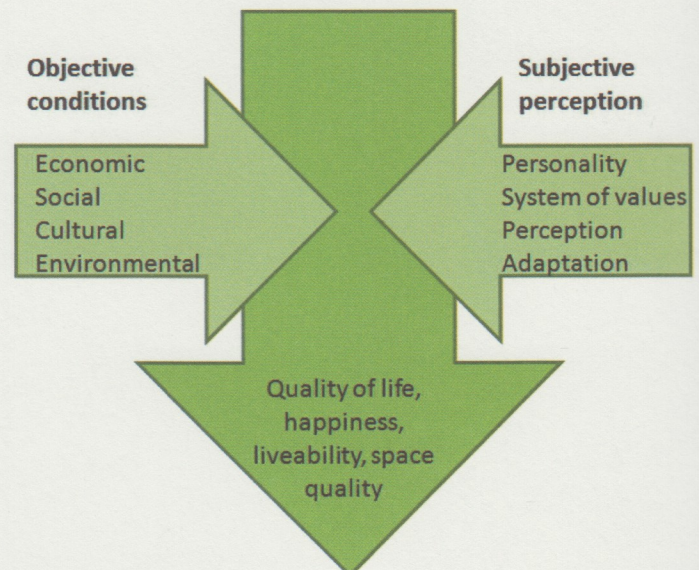
Livable city means a city that can effectively meet the needs of its population regardless of age, gender, social situation or level of education. Many official rankings publish annually a list of the most suitable urban places for life, evaluated according to number of indicators including infrastructure and public transport, urban design and architecture, health and education system, safety and crime, climate, socio-economic and environmental problems, connections to nature, and others. Top 10 places ranked regularly are Melbourne, Vienna, Vancouver, Toronto, Calgary, Adelaide, Sydney, Helsinki, Perth, Auckland. It is interesting to note that the geographic location and climate of these liveable favourites is not ideal; the bad weather, snow, darkness and cold last for at least 6 months of the year. So which values prevail in the selection of people for the quality of life?

The issue of livability or quality of life in the context of urban design and environmental quality and sustainability is of great interest of interdisciplinary academic research, more common since 1960s. Modernist street negation and functionalist ideals of hygienic and lighted settlements supported the creation of impersonal high-rise buildings coupled by roads without active public spaces. As a reflection on modernistic principles in architecture and urban design and continued growth and preference for automobiles, the new theoretical and practical works were born, such as Jane Jacobs' voice calling for the cities humanization or Jan Gehl's theoretical approach and practical design for many great cities, which can be characterized as urban humanism and the return of the city to its real users. Urban design is all about the human dimensions. Not about cars, industry or business. The quality of life must be first, followed by space and buildings - otherwise it does not work. If people perceive positively the city for their life, everything else will come gradually (Gehl, 2014). The quality of urban life is primarily concerned with the qualitative aspects of the city's life as a whole. Simply it is expressed as "friendly relations" of its inhabitants and visitors to the city and to the degree of infrastructure and urban amenities (Bašová, 2014).

Attempts are now being made to humanize cities, to increase their livability, to improve the public space for people and this way encouraging them to walk and cycle. Open public spaces are only attractive for users if there is a certain concentration of people. When an osmosis between open spaces and the city occurs – it is an osmosis of the human presence in the streets with the human presence in public spaces (Djukic et.al, 2018). Factors such as the presence and quality of walkways, safety, isolation from disturbing traffic influences, distances, accessibility, creation of a mixed-function and attractive environment affect user preferences and ultimately affect health, environmental and economic benefits.

## OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE ASPECTS OF SPATIAL QUALITY

Quality of life is a complex and very broad concept. It can be analyzed and judged from many disciplinary points of view. Its essence is human existence, happiness, internal and external factors that influence this essence (Ira, Murgaš, 2008). The interdisciplinary views examine the economic, social, cultural, psychological, spiritual, as well as environmental conditions for a healthy and happy life.



The definition and assessment of quality of life is, in essence, a reflection of the relationship between objective environmental parameters and subjective user responses to them. According to multiple sources, the quality of human life depends on objective and subjective factors (Van Kamp, et.all, 2003). The objective dimension of quality has alternative names such as environmental, urban, residential, community quality, or the quality of space. The subjective dimension of quality is in turn a set of human endogenous factors and a way of perceiving the environment. These are systems of values and priorities, opinions, attitudes, adaptation, perception, feeling, mental state and personality. The quality of life can therefore be understood as a result of the interaction and synergy of external and internal factors.

The central theme of the humanistic perception of the quality of life in space is the spatial feeling and preferences of space by users (Cummins, 2000). Such approach tries to formulate and understand the meaning and values that connect a person to his or her living space. To some places, as it is mentioned as well in the chapter Cultural and natural landscapes... (Pálffy et.all, 2018), the inhabitant or visitor creates a strong positive relationship, to other not.

To the most important factors in the positive relationship to their living environment belong such specifications as, for example that it is a birthplace and there exist family ties; unpolluted environment and tranquility; good transport and infrastructure; quality and aesthetic environment; social relations with the environment and custom. The most important factors in the negative perception of the living environment are: the inappropriate and polluted environment and noise; ethnic and national problems; complicated transport and inappropriate infrastructure; low quality and aesthetics of the environment; lack of social relations (Kollár, 2008).

## DANUBE SPECIFICS TO LIVABILITY

The Danube is the second longest European river. Its river basin area reaches the territory of eighteen states, through ten of them it flows directly or forms a state border. It is the world's most international river. From its origins it connects more advanced west regions with the less developed Middle and East European regions. From the upper flow mountainous surroundings in Germany and Austria, through the middle flow flat environment with the extensive system of flooded forests and side water branches in Slovakia and Hungary, the river continues through the mountainous valley of the Iron Gate and majestically advances toward the giant Danube River Delta to the Black Sea. The permanently changing dynamics of the natural scenery creates a unique environment for life on the water and near the water, for physical and mental interconnection with the flow, narratives and special Danube cultural landscape. Due to the diversity of conditions, a specific and diverse biotope, a large living organism, has emerged. People naturally had to get used to these conditions.



1 | THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE DANUBE ENVIRONMENT.  
SOURCE: L.VITKOVÁ, DANURB.

According to multiple sources (Völker, Kistemann, 2011) and (White, et.all, 2010), aquatic urban or natural environments have mentally stimulating, stress releasing and mood enhancing powers and are great for general well-being. In sensual perceiving of blue space, the colour of water, its clarity, sound, motion and context are significant determinants. Water, as natural mirror, reflects light in special way, creating lines and patterns. These visual properties are attractive and potentially restorative for human brain. Views of water are fascinating for people and different water colours stir different emotions. While blue water is associated with coolness, white water is perceived as powerful and wild. Sounds are significant aspects of aquatic environment, ranging from calm to roaring, and are considered to be restorative. The context of water is also important, connection to natural elements and green spaces rapidly increases its visual rating.

Tactile connection is unique. The term „immersion“ is not only a metaphor, the potential to bathe and swim in water allows a very different interaction with the natural environment than can be achieved on land. The purifying effect of water has great impact on human mental and emotional health. Compared to other environments, aquatic environment has more positive influences on human well-being.

The water flow represents as well the expressive city generating element. From the ancient times it forms the important strategic and transport consequences. Permanently changing water surface as if brought the greetings from other cities, regions, countries and civilizations...and at the same time its reflection, performance and dynamics creates the unique aesthetical component in the city structure. Bridges built over the rivers form the architectural expression of the city. Waterfront areas in the cities offer the optimal conditions for the creation of cultivated public spaces for free time activities, meetings, leisure, culture, sport activities...

The landing and personal ports have arisen in cities on the river banks; and especially the landing ports have been surrounded by the nowadays lasting out industrial structures, which should be regenerated. With the city expansion these structures got to the close contact position to the city centers and thus form the ideal conditions for the urban revitalization and redevelopment of whole complexes alongside the river banks.



2 | DANUBE WATERFRONTS AND BROWNFIELD  
INDUSTRIAL STRUCTURES IN KOMÁRNO.  
SOURCE: V.JOKLOVÁ, DANURB.

## URBAN PLANNING APPROACHES TO LIVABILITY WITHIN THE PROJECT DANURB

Project DANURB is mapping the cultural regions along the Danube with the emphasis on smaller and middle sized cities. Except the Germany and Austria regions these cities are currently facing the crisis of post-socialist economic transformation, the closure of state-owned enterprises and thus reducing job opportunities and the overall decline of the population. A positive change can be achieved by the effective use of the cultural

potential of settlements and their transformation towards the creative cities with a higher share of creative industry, services and creative human capital. Tourism is a very significant aspect in the development of the area, which depends and in the same way can influence the quality of life in the Danube regions. Nevertheless local inhabitants must be at least as balanced as tourists or visitors to strategies for improving the spatial quality of life. Identification of inhabitants with their locality raises their interest in its functioning, creates a relationship with the environment and leads to a greater willingness to participate in its development, to participate in local activities.



3 | INVOLVING CITIZENS IN SPATIAL REDEVELOPMENT PROCESS INCREASES INTEREST AND CARE FOR THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT. SOURCE: E.DAVIDA, DANURB.

The central theme of DANURB's activities is to understand the specific cultural heritage and cultural links of the communities along the Danube and to indicate the strategy of their development. For that reason, local stakeholders, such as civil NGOs, local authorities, entrepreneurs, owners, interest associations, citizens, are key partners in the creation of local cultural ecosystems and cultural networks. The project's activities include exploring and addressing potential actors in the area and outlining their impact on the development potential of a specific cultural heritage along the Danube. The micro regional or settlement level focuses on analyzes and concepts of development of settlements along the Danube, including their surroundings and regional links and focuses on medium and small towns, not on major cities. The river is a natural border, and at the same time, often the state border, which, however, underwent significant changes in the socio-political structure in the past. As a result of this development, there are often twin cities, divided by the Danube and the state border, but which in the past were often constitutionally incorporated into one.

As the emphasis on identifying possible development scenarios that enhance the cultural, tourist and spatial potential of the project focuses on smaller cities along the Danube, it is interesting to mention research on quality of life in small and medium-sized cities (Frantál, Vaishar, 2008). The survey conducted in the Czech and Moravian towns at the beginning of the 21st Century tried to find out what is the attractiveness of small towns for their inhabitants, for which social and demographic groups of the inhabitants are attractive. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the life in smaller cities. The methods of geographic research used can be divided into a space specified methods, such as a specific location, natural conditions, urban environment, infrastructure of every kind, and a methods of space perception, which is the subjective phenomenological aspect of the character of the site. The basis of such methods is the relationship between inhabitants and their everyday living space. The quality of life is then characterized by the degree of conformity or inconsistency between the inhabitants and their environment, and to what extent the city environment satisfies their physical and psychological needs.

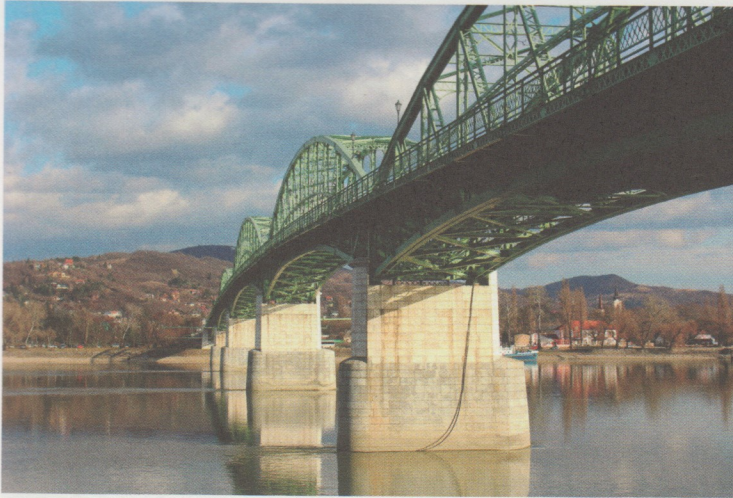
Unlike large cities, medium and small towns have usually smaller environmental ballast and provide a much higher level of social control, which is in the big cities replaced by the anonymity. Social control increases the sense of personal safety. The substantial disadvantage in the

life quality in smaller towns is the limited choice, whether in job opportunities, education, services or cultural offers. According to the results of the analyzed survey, the inhabitants of selected small towns mostly appreciated the natural environment around the city and the quality of social contacts. This has been followed by the appreciation of the quality of urban environment, the presence of historic buildings and the personal security. Worse rating had the offer of cultural and transport services and the possibility of obtaining own housing. The limited option of job opportunities has been the biggest problem. The most important factor influencing the tendency to relocation has been the age with an average of 34% of young people aged under 29 considering resettlement from small and medium towns to larger cities.

During the first year of DANURB project, university partners have explored the spatial, architectural and urban planning contexts aiming to specify the problems and potentials to enhance the livability concepts in mid-sized or small cities along the Danube, starting with the most developed touristic region Wachau in Austria, continuing with the twin cities Komárno/Komárom and Štúrovo/Esztergom in Slovakia and Hungary, the cities Golubac in Serbia and Giurgiu in Romania. University partners together with their students and in collaboration with local municipalities, citizens and local actors in the area examined the problems and potentials of the urban revitalization and redevelopment aimed at improving spatial functionality and quality and improving the quality of life in these cities. An integrated approach based on the principles of quality of life is beneficial in deciding on the future of the territory and assumes that the territory is an integration area of the qualities and values that need to be maintained for the future. The urban redevelopment strategies can be generally characterized either as long-term and more expensive, or low cost and achievable in a relatively short time, nevertheless which can as urban acupuncture increase the spatial quality and start the revitalization process in the area. The first one addresses the overall re-development strategy of the city or its part, including the optimal solutions of transport infrastructure and its relocation from urban centers, the revitalization of waterfronts and design of optimal spatial connections with the city and surrounding landscape. The second one deals with the revitalization of public spaces, squares, street profiles, pavements, creation of community gardens, design of small architecture and furnishings, revitalization of courtyards or waterfronts. Both strategies have been designed in these cities and we provide the examples of cities Štúrovo, Komárno, Golubac and Giurgiu.

## ŠTÚROVO EXAMPLE

Štúrovo is the southernmost situated city in Slovakia, on the Danube riverside, which represents as well the state border with Hungary, with the opposite twin city Esztergom and its magnificent cathedral of Our Lady and St. Adalbert, which is also the largest church in Hungary (Fig.4). Although Esztergom and Štúrovo are real twin cities on the opposite banks of the Danube river their urban history cannot be viewed as a parallel process. Esztergom's urban fabric is represented by the compact historical forms developed mostly till the beginning of 19th Century, while Štúrovo was until the beginning of the 20th Century a small town with about 3,000 inhabitants. After the Second World War the situation changed radically. Fast industrialization together with a strong housing program increased the number of inhabitants of Štúrovo to 14,000 until 1990. Nowadays the city is shrinking, and due to post-socialist industrial and demographic changes the population counts about 11,000 at present. The urban character of Štúrovo was formed in the second half of the 20th Century in the socialist era using its forms, and the city thus has a relatively modest historical center of provincial character surrounded by panel housing estates and a less compact structures of family houses and partly functional industrial areas.



4 | BRIDGE OF MÁRIA VALÉRIA CONNECTING THE TWIN CITIES ESZTERGOM AND ŠTÚROVO ACROSS THE DANUBE AND THE MAGNIFICENT VIEW ON ESZTERGOM BĂSILICA FROM ŠTÚROVO WATERFRONT. SOURCE: V.JOKLOVĂ, DANURB.

Two cities that are separated by the Danube are connected by the re-constructed bridge of Mária Valéria, serving as a border crossing between Slovakia and Hungary and allowing good relations between nationalities and relatives living on both sides of river. A wonderful view of the enlightened Esztergom Basilica can be experienced only during the evening walk on the banks of the Danube in Štúrovo. The city is surrounded by agricultural land and beautiful nature and has also an exceptionally warm climate, its inhabitants can enjoy the most sunny days in Slovakia. Štúrovo disposes the wealth of thermal waters and in contact with the city center is located a thermal swimming pool Vadaš, which is the largest of its kind in Slovakia. With a precarious urban policy, the city has the property of the grounds under the swimming pool and the wider area, where it is possible to extend the spa services.

Structured SWOT analysis outlined the potentials and problematic aspects of city development. To the weaknesses belong the missing connections of the city with the river, so as many private lots with family houses or companies form a barrier near the waterfront, interrupted pedestrian zone not leading to the waterfront, overall low quality of public spaces, walkways, benches and city furniture, car preference and non existing bike paths, although the size and character of the city is ideal for cycling. Parking is located at one of the most exposed places on the Mária Valéria Bridge.



5 | THE OFFENDING PAVEMENT DETAIL AND THE DISCONTINUANCE OF CULTIVATED PEDESTRIAN ZONE WITH THE DANUBE WATERFRONT IN ŠTÚROVO. SOURCE: V.JOKLOVĂ, DANURB.

The advantage is the favorable location of the city on the river Danube, the presence of thermal sources, recreation and summer tourism, visual and historical attractions of Esztergom and the good railway connection, so as the city was one of the most important transshipment station in Slovakia and still represents important international railway node. The development potential of the city includes mainly the access to and development of the Danube riverbank with the creation of promenades, recreational and leisure areas (Kristiánová, 2018). Important issue is the

use of traditional activities to enhance the identity of the site as well as the development of farm tourism, small businesses in agro-tourism and the associated off-season tourism, the sale of local specialties, markets, exhibitions and cultural events



6 | CULTURAL EVENTS ENHANCING THE COMMUNITY LIFE, LOCAL IDENTITY AND LIVABILITY. DANUBE DAYS 2018. SOURCE: E.DAVIDA, DANURB.



7 | CULTURAL EVENTS ENHANCING THE COMMUNITY LIFE, LOCAL IDENTITY AND LIVABILITY. DANUBE DAYS 2018. SOURCE: E.DAVIDA, DANURB.

These problems and potentials have been widely explored by the team of Faculty of Architecture Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava as DANURB project partner for the spatial, urban planning and architectural contexts of urban regeneration strategies of the city. Urban designs of



students have been tutored by professors and supported by the Štúrovo municipality. Together with Hungarian partners and students the possibilities to accommodate new functions and uses in the area, which might enhance the quality and livability of the urban environment, offer attractive public spaces and green corridors, with recreational and environmental functions have been tested. The designs have been presented before the public on Danube Day exhibition and will be collected in printed catalogues. Štúrovo has great potential, amazing atmosphere and deserves quality public spaces. The overall strategy and vision of proposed solutions can be summarized in enhancing the spatial quality to enhance the quality of life of its inhabitants and to attract more visitors and keep them longer in the city (Fig. 8-10).



8 | URBAN STUDIO DESIGN AIMING FOR ENHANCING THE SPATIAL QUALITY OF ŠTÚROVO. FA STU STUDENTS: L. BAKOVÁ, N.BISOVÁ, TUTOR:V. JOKLOVÁ. SOURCE: V.JOKLOVÁ, DANUR.B.



9 | URBAN STUDIO DESIGN AIMING FOR ENHANCING THE SPATIAL QUALITY OF ŠTÚROVO. FA STU STUDENTS: L. BAKOVÁ, N.BISOVÁ, TUTOR:V. JOKLOVÁ. SOURCE: V.JOKLOVÁ, DANUR.B.



10 | CONCEPTUAL DESIGNS FOR ENHANCING THE LOCAL LIVABILITY IN ŠTÚROVO. BME STUDENTS: L. CSERESZNYÉS, A.VÖRÖS, T.TANSZÉKY, P.DECSÁK, B.HORVÁTH. SOURCE: DANUR.B.

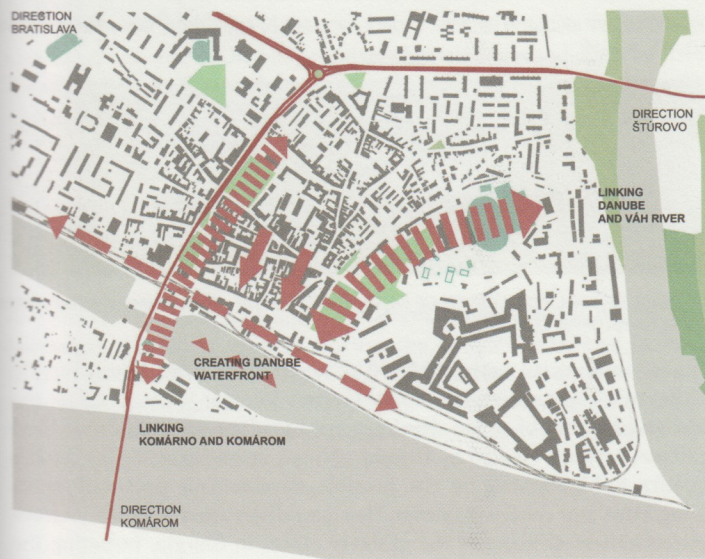
## KOMÁRNO EXAMPLE

Komárno lies on the confluence of the rivers Danube and Váh and is one of the oldest permanently inhabited localities in Slovakia. It was built in place of a ford across the Danube, which was used by merchants and the locals benefited from it. The city has a rich history documented from the Bronze Age. The outer border of the Roman Empire and the province of Pannonia - Limes Romanus passed through these territories. From this period comes the Roman military camp in Iža (Celemantia), which protected the border around Komárno. Further impulses for the development of the city arose during the Turkish expansion, when the city formed the border fort of the empire. The need to protect the territory and population initiated the construction of a military fortress that has become the foundation of the city's defense system. The diverse historical and natural contexts give the city a characteristic image, which, together with its twin - Komárom on the opposite side of the Danube, has a spacious fortification system, the largest of its kind in Central Europe. Further development of the city was influenced by the construction of a large shipbuilding yard after World War II. New housing estates were built for their employees. Komárno is currently a busy border town with approximately 34,000 inhabitants. The extensive but not always corresponding development of the city caused the current state of the city structure, when the former Komárno remained virtually only its historic core invaded by mass settlements and the main road infrastructure. The post-war industrial development benefited from its strategic position on the Danube and resulted in the absolute isolation of the city and urban structures from the waterfront as it is currently reserved for significantly declining industrial activities (Figure 11). The most interesting point, namely the confluence of rivers, is barricaded and marked as private land and cannot be reached.

Figure 11.: Surveys in the area documenting industrial character of Komárno waterfront. Source: V.Joklová, DANUR.B.

The main objectives in urban designs for enhancing the spatial quality and livability in Komárno represented the efforts to link the city urban fabric with the inaccessible brownfield waterfront areas and to bring the life and attractiveness to this area. To open the space that could offer the best for the city and tourism as well. To create diverse riverfront functions, including the live poly-functional neighbourhood in contact with the city center, the green landscape and park solutions in contact with the historical architectural monuments of old fortress, the sightseeing

architecture on the exceptional place of the confluence of Danube and Váh rivers, more natural oriented landscape design for the Váh riverfront, where residents are accustomed to relax and sport. To create new and revitalize old urban structures and objects for the everyday life of people. All proposals have strong respect for historical objects and provide an effort to revitalize and incorporate them into new structures. More proposals enhance the university campus and widen the possibilities for students accommodation, which in summer holiday can be utilized as the accommodation for tourists. Komárno has high quality thermal sources, which could be further used for the spa and wellness activities. They can be exploited for the production of domestic greenhouse vegetables. The wealth of water is being proposed to be used as well for the local transport of goods to busy local markets, so personal ports and equipped marinas are designed on the river banks (Fig.12,13).



12 | URBAN DESIGN CONCEPT DEVELOPING MISSING CONNECTIONS IN KOMÁRNO WATERFRONT.

FA STU STUDENTS: M. FRIDRIKOVÁ, L. HRICOVÁ, J. JANČOVÁ, TUTOR: V. JOKLOVÁ. SOURCE: V. JOKLOVÁ, DANUR.B.



13 | VISUALIZATIONS OF THE RE-VITALIZATION OF URBAN STRUCTURES IN THE AREA OF SLOVAK SHIPYARD IN KOMÁRNO.

FA STU STUDENTS: M. JELÍNKOVÁ, R. PETREK, TUTOR: V. JOKLOVÁ. SOURCE: V. JOKLOVÁ, DANUR.B.

## GOLUBAC EXAMPLE

Golubac is a small town in Branicevo District of the eastern Serbia located at the entrance of Iron Gates (Djerdap in Serbia). It is located on the Danube River, on the border with Romania, on the other side of the Danube River. Iron Gates is the longest gorge and probably the most picturesque area along the Danube. It is appreciated by its incredible and unique landscape. Bearing the myriads of cultural and natural assets, the whole area is protected at national level as a national park. However, The Djerdap region is of greater European significance and has many characteristics for which it can be considered an exceptional cultural landscape. Despite this view, it is still underestimated internationally, and it is not officially included in the list of cultural landscapes by UNESCO. The Golubac Fortress was a medieval fortified town 4 km downstream from Golubac. It was abandoned for centuries and nowadays it is reconstructed and it will become the milestone for the cultural tourism.

Golubac, as well as Djerdap region, has faced socio-economic problems for decades. For comprehensive regional development, the most noticeable problem is that the protection of the area has not been adequately supported with sustainable space-related regional development. As a consequence, the region is marked with the sharp decline of population, overall isolation and the weak interconnection of its main localities.

Golubac is a typical small sized shrinking town which has lost more than a half of its population during the past six decades. Consequently, the other demographic indicators (emigration patterns, aging, educational attainment, computer literacy, etc.) are generally negative and more severe than at national level. The state of local economy in Golubac follows demographic patterns. The municipality belongs to 20% of Serbian municipalities which economic performance was below 50% of national average last years. Golubac shares the destiny of its region, despite the fact that medieval fortress is on its border and that important European bicycle route Eurovelo 6 are located along the riverbank. However more than 100,000 tourists are passing through the fortress and more than 15,000 bicyclists use Eurovelo 6, but just a few of them decide to spend time in Golubac.



14 | THE CENTER OF GOLUBAC.

SOURCE: BRANISLAV ANTONIC, DANUR.B.

The main objectives in urban designs for enhancing the spatial quality and livability in Golubac are: regeneration of the city center; revitalisation of the contact zone along the riverside (the major street and the rest of Golubac are in bad condition and without attractive and vibrant facilities) (Fig. 14); strengthening the existing viewpoints towards the Danube and opening the new one; enhancing the development of eastern part of Golubac and connection with the fortress.

There is a great difference in livability between the western and eastern part of the town centre. The problem is eastern part, because it is closer to

major tourist assets, but it lacks the facilities and space by means of which it could make it more vibrant and attractive for both locals and tourists. Regarding the research carried out during 2017, with the Master students of Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, the next potentials regarding quality of life were recognized: urban part of the riverside (Fig.15.), including the quay and the town park, is generally refurbished and in good shape, but links (small streets and paths) between it and the main street are not attractive and functional; prospective viewpoints exist, for instance, the picturesque view opens during the entrance to Golubac from west – viewers can see the full picture of the town with the fortress and the Danube in its widest position; there are similar places in the upper part of Golubac, too; there is of facilities in open public places and in the ground floors of the buildings along the riverbank.



15 | STUDENTS AT RENOVATED RIVERBANK ALONG THE DANUBE IN GOLUBAC, SOURCE: BRANISLAV ANTONIC, DANU.rB.

## GIURGIU EXAMPLE

The city of Giurgiu is located in the southern part of the Romanian country, on the left bank of the Danube, surrounded by a typical low and flat Danube floodplain. It is located 64 km from Bucharest capital and serves as old commercial node on the Danube River at the intersection of important communication networks: road, rail and naval. Giurgiu is an urban centre in the South Muntenia Region with the population of about 70,781 inhabitants. Urban development of the city started in the second half of the 18th Century under the Ottoman Empire rule. The fortified town was situated in the southern part of the city along the Plant canal and included an Ottoman port in the shape of a Vauban fortress. The city has undergone extensive expansion in the 19th Century, when doubled its surface by incorporating the Slobozia village and by extending its industrial area. The communist period brought a new town planning system with the building of panel housing estates. Due to the proximity of Bucharest metropolitan area and to the economic importance of the city of Ruse, the most developed city in the Bulgarian cross border region, the area of Giurgiu – Ruse micro region represents nowadays a strategic point between the two countries with important traffic flows through the Danube Bridge (opened in 1954) (Fig. 16.). Ruse and its 150,000 inhabitants is the main urban pole in the Bulgarian cross-border area, which attracts the regional workforce due to its industry. On the contrary Giurgiu shares the common cross-border decreasing demographic trend and suffers from the young workforce emigration to Bucharest or to foreign countries. Although the Danube River represents a powerful natural element which favoured the development of all human activities along its basin, it is also a space of social and economic gaps and disparities, being still tributary of the influences due to local economies and borders between the different states crossed by it. Though in a strategic location, the Giurgiu city structure is isolated from the waterfront by the decline industrial activities. Thus the Danube waterfront, blurred and imprecise, is very difficult to access, but has the high potential for improving the life quality and livability in the city (Fig.17.).



16 | FRIENDSHIP BRIDGE IN GIURGIU, SOURCE: MIHAELA HĂRMĂNESCU. SOURCE: DANU.rB.



17 | IMAGE OF THE CURRENT STATE OF GIURGIU WATERFRONT. SOURCE: ANA OPRIS, CLUSTER 4.

The research carried out by the DANU.rB team of UAUIM Bucharest/Faculty of Urbanism was structured in four clusters in order to make visible the hidden potential of urban development, based on valorisation of local cultural heritage created by Danube and has demonstrated that the life quality is highlighted by the possible development potential in an integrative and coherent system. New narratives are needed to improve attractiveness of many of the obsolete places in Giurgiu, including the connection of local settings to the larger context of the entire Danube. As the potentials regarding the quality of life were recognized: 1. Establishing new relations at the regional level of the Giurgiu-Ruse Danube micro region with Giurgiu as a pivotal point for development; 2. Developing a conceptual scheme of sustainable urban mobility in consensus with the opportunities existing in the European context, with emphasis on connectivity and gentle mobility; 3. Identifying and designing the possibilities of architectural and urban design valorisation of former industrial heritage in Giurgiu; 4. Reassessing the cultural landscape as the resource for finding the (lost) cultural identity of the city.

Former industrial sites, which best represent the city, but nowadays are abandoned, are considered as important land reserves with the potential to reveal their hidden architectural value and to rehabilitate the Danube waterfront. The selected areas, which are in essence a reflection of life quality assessment, recycle & reuse value and environmental approach are: the textile factory (near the north train station which is a historic monument and a part of the Orient Express Route since 1883); the sugar factory (located on the Danube shore with strong relationship to the river, Park and the Museum of the city); the naval shipyard (a central point between the city and the Danube River).



18 | INVOLVING CITIZENS IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES INCREASES THE FEELING OF SPATIAL LIVABILITY; EXPANDED GARDENS IN GIURGIU. SOURCE: E.DAVIDA, DANU.rB.

Developed projects try to change the invisible landscape elements into visible and thus to enable the inhabitants to discover the surrounding environment, unknown or forgotten over the years and to improve it through the maps that keep the sound of a place before it disappears. The city model was constructed by sequential sections in order to highlight the radial structure of the city and to identify city silhouette, to mark the main attractions, landmarks, historical monuments; underlining their distribution in the depth of the urban tissue. The purpose of this sensory experience is to allow people to discover the specific environment of the city from a distance, to recognize the atmosphere of some of the key places in the city through deciphering sound intensity and the way they intertwine. Also, the sound map encourages stakeholders to appreciate the balance or imbalance created in different city areas.

## EPILOGUE

Liveable cities provide the full potential of possibilities and opportunities for people's lives. Successful cities are the ones that allow people to be what they want; unsuccessful ones try to force them to be what others want them to be (Sudjic, 2008). Research conducted in DANUrB regions and cities has shown that the scenarios for the micro regions which revitalize urban structure, rehabilitate cultural potential, develop (tourist) economy and integrate nature and green solutions are increasing their potential of the livability, attractiveness and accessibility.

An extensive source of local and international students urban design and landscape proposals created during the project with the fruitful collaboration with local authorities, communities and stakeholders, represents the unique pool of ideas aiming for the revitalization of urban fabric, which can be used in the future for the enhancing the livability in small and medium cities along the Danube.

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