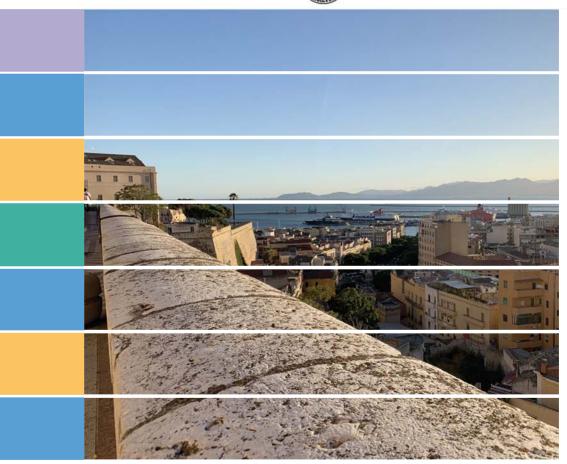
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THE DANUBE RIVERSIDE DEVELOPMENT IN THE IRON GATES GORGE, SERBIA, BETWEEN SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS AND PROTECTED ECOSYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The Iron Gates are the longest gorge of the Danube, a major waterway in Europe. For Serbia, the Danube is both important as a transport corridor and tourist route, which is also applied for the Iron Gates part. In the other side, the Iron Gates are the largest national park in Serbia, with protected river and mountain ecosystems, plus many cultural heritage sites, which significantly restricts riverside development. Third, it is also a region with its local population, settlements, and economy. This overlapping makes any future planning perspective for the Iron Gates Region very complex and with expected compromises. The current spatial plans for the Iron Gates recognise this complexity. This is particularly visible along the Danube riverside. The river is certainly the main access to the gorge and the main driver of desirable socioeconomic development for local communities thereof. However, the development along the river is impossible in many parts due to protected riverside areas or rough terrain. Remaining parts have the other problems with inadequate plot organisation. Therefore, the implementation of the plans carries many challenges at lower levels. The aim of this paper is to present this discrepancy and offer new ways for concrete solutions. It compares the main planning actions to facilitate local socio-economic development and the newest efforts of local authorities to implement them for riverside as a critical resource for the region. The final highlights are dedicated to the actions that are unorthodox and thereby innovative for riverside development in unique ecosystems.

KEYWORDS

Water Infrastructure; Riverfront Development; Tourism; Protected Ecosystem; the Danube; the Iron Gates

1 INTRODUCTION – DEVELOPMENTIN PROTECTED ECOSYSTEMS

Ecosystems and their sustainable use are always an 'old-new' topic for scholars. One of its simpler definitions explains that ecosystems are the specific systems formed in correlation between living organisms and their non-living surrounding in a particular area (CDO, 2019). In the other words, the meaning of a community instead of an individual (species) is in focus (Smith, 2013). Interestingly, this meaning can be expanded to some, at first very different systems, such as urban areas. Considering the structure of cities as a system created in interaction between humans and their built environment (Lynch, 1960), both systems show noticeable similarities in their functioning (Steinitz & Rogers, 1970; Stremke & Koh, 2010).

Completely natural and urban ecosystems are extremes in the meaning of an ecosystem. An academically more researched type is the natural ecosystems that require protection due to challenging natural-human relations. In their essence, all ecosystems are under the influence of different external and internal factors (Chapin, Matson & Vitousek, 2002). These factors can be purely natural, such as topography or climate, or from anthropogenic activities, such as settlements and economy. The ecosystems seen as protected areas are also a subject of international concern. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a protected area as a "clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values" (Dudley, 2008). This definition undoubtedly links ecosystems and protected areas.

The "hotspot" about protected ecosystems in the last decades is how properly managing them to meet protection needs and their viable utilization (Lackey, 1998; McDonald, 2018). Therefore, the IUCN (2010) prioritizes several types of protected areas in its current operative program. One of them is transboundary protection areas. In the case of Serbia, the most important example is the Iron Gates (Serb. Ђердап/Đerdap) protected area, halved between Romania to the north and Serbia to the south (Fig. 1). The Iron Gates are actually the greatest gorge on the Danube River, the second longest in Europe, which implies that this location had significance through history. The gorge with mountainous landscapes at both backsides is a large protected ecosystem. The protection encompasses numerous smaller sites of natural and cultural heritage, as well as the whole gorge as an entity. Hence, the Iron Gates are a sensitive area in which any kind of development must be carefully planned. In the recent years, this has been especially noticeable in the case of booming cultural tourism, because protected areas have preserved the particular character that attracts tourists (Adams, 2008).

An expected answer to the previous situation is to set adequate planning actions for an ecosystem, which must make a right balance between its ecological protection and spatial utilization (Steiner, 2002). A proper planning, including both functional and physical design, is a paramount task for the viability of protected ecosystems today (Stremke & Koh, 2010). This dichotomy can be applied for the national parks in Serbia (Jovičić & Ivanović, 2004). The current spatial plans for the Iron Gates Region also recognize this complexity. This is particularly visible along the riverside of the Danube, which is certainly the main access to the gorge and the main driver of desirable socio-economic development for local communities thereof. However, this type of development is forbidden or very limited in many parts due to protected riverside areas or rough terrain. Remaining parts have the other problems with inadequate plot organization. Therefore, the implementation of capital projects by plans carries many challenges at municipal and urban/settlement levels.

The aim of this paper is to present this discrepancy and offer new ways for concrete solutions. It compares the main planning actions to facilitate local socio-economic development and the newest efforts of local authorities to implement them for riverside as a critical resource for the region. For many of them, it can be easily concluded that "ordinary" planning actions cannot enable the capital projects in the Iron Gates. Hence, final highlights refer to the actions that are unorthodox and thereby innovative for riverside development in this unique ecosystem.

2 METHODOLOGY

The concrete subject of this research is the western third of the Serbian Iron Gates, around Golubac Town. The research is developed as a case study, followed by structure and used material. It combines three methods as separate analyses. Before them, the key elements of relevant theory are given.

The analyses are organised by three respective levels:

the first analysis is the research of the main policy documents for investigated area, e.g. three spatial plans of regional and municipal levels. A special focus is on the capital projects in the Danube Riverside. The plans are: (i) spatial plan of the special-purpose area of the international waterway E80 – the Danube (Pan-European Corridor VII)[Serb. Просторни план подручја посебне намене међународног водног пута E80 – Дунав (Паневропски коридор VII)], (ii) spatial plan of the special-purpose area of "Đerdap" National Park [Serb.Просторни план подручја посебне намене Националног парка "Ђердап"], and (iii) spatial plan of Golubac Municipality (Serb.Просторни план Општине Голубац].

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- the second analysis is a field research, including the communication with local experts and representatives from Golubac, regarding the implementation of the capital projects. It links municipal and urban/settlement levels (Golubac Municipality and Golubac Town as its seat);
- the third analysis pertains to plot organisation in the riverside part of Golubac Town, with the emphasis on its (in)compatibility with the capital projects planned for this area.

All three analyses are a matter for a mutual discussion after their explanation. The main findings from this discussion lead to the introduction of the aforementioned "unorthodox" approach proposed by Golubac Municipality, which deals with resolving the implementation of capital projects at the local level.

3 CASE STUDY -THE IRON GATES GORGE IN SERBIA

A case study is the area around Golubac Town, which also administratively concurs with the eastern half of Golubac Municipality. Golubac Town itself is located at the western entrance of the Iron Gates gorge – it has strategic position between Pannonian Plain (west) and the Iron Gates Gorge (east). Nearby Golubac Fortress marks the unique position of the dramatic landscapes change (Fig. 1a).

The Iron Gates are a large transboundary protection area, protected separately by both countries; it is a "Đerdap" National Park in Serbia and "Porțile de Fier" Natural Park in Romania. Serbian park is older, established in 1974, and it is the largest national park in country (Stanković, 2002). Romanian park was established in 1990 and it is the second largest natural park in country (Toniuc et al., 1992). The total surface of both areas is 1,794 km2. This coverage roughly corresponds to the Iron Gates Region.

The entire region presents a huge and rich ecosystem. First, the gorge is not uniform; it contains of four inner gorges ("narrows" or canyons) and three inter-valleys. This allows the change of the elements of natural and cultural landscape with many specific segments of the scenery (Fig. 1b). Geologically, "the Danube [in the gorge] offers a rare, unique glimpse in the geology of the South Carpathians, as it crosses transversally the folded structures of this alpine chain" (Popa et al., 2004, p. 7).). Unique flora and fauna, mostly emphasised in the deciduous forests follow this (Niculae, 2002). On the other side, human-made parts of landscape are visible, but with a different impact across the gorge. The most important change by humans is certainly the formation of large Iron Gates artificial lake in the early 1970s. This led to the flooding the lowest part of the gorge with all previous islands and the reallocation of several settlements (Orşova, Donji Milanovac) and the most valuable heritage

sites (Tabula Traiana, "Lepenski Vir" archaeological site), leaving old settlements to be flooded. The destiny of "Lepenski Vir" with the remnants of the oldest permanent settlement along the Danube is particularly interesting (Fig. 1c). Its site is dislocated by 100 meters away from its original location, with the intention to preserve the previous ambient in ecosystem (Pavlović, 2017). The artificial lake is thereby a prominent new element of landscape (Stanković, 2002). Accordingly, formation of the lake formed a new riverside, too. These lower parts of the gorge, next to the Danube are more under human influence, which mirrors through settlement formation and agriculture, especially orchards and pastures (Niculae, 2002). At the end, the historic remoteness and contemporary socio-economic problems have made the region more attached to tradition and with preserved tradition and local customs (Antonić & Đukić, 2018). Therefore, human influence in the Iron Gates can be considered as mixed – both positive and negative (Popa et al., 2004).



Fig. 1 The Đerdap (Iron Gates) National Park: its position in Serbia and the location of the main heritage sites in it, including the most prominent ones: Golubac Fortress (a), Kazani Narrows (b) and "Lepenski Vir" archaeological site (c) (Author: B. Antonić; Author of photos:

B. Antonić; Supplementary maps: Google Maps).

4 ANALYSES AND RESULTS

4.1 ANALYSIS 1: THE INPUTS ABOUT CAPITAL PROJECTS FROM STRATEGICPLANS

The first analysis considers Golubac area from national perspective, because all three mentioned plans are developed at national level.

Spatial plan of the special-purpose area of the international waterway E80 – the Danube (Pan-European Corridor VII) (Hereinafter: the Danube Plan): In this spatial plan from 2013, it was mentioned that a passenger dock at Golubac Fortress will be built (as it was done). Within this area, there is already cargo dock in Golubac (in bad state, for reconstruction). It was also planned to build a nautical centre in the central part of the Danube Riverside in the Iron Gates gorge (Serbia), but this has not yet been implemented. Several minor projects, such as marinas and new border crossings for ferry transfers, are also mentioned and mapped. The Danube plan also underlines the direct positive effects of the corridor development of the Danube waterway and its surroundings are expected from tourism. For the development of sustainable tourism, it is necessary to provide the marking of directions of movement through the forest complex, to build the necessary infrastructure facilities, to present the tourist offer and to monitor the visit (NASP, 2010).

Spatial plan of the special-purpose area of "Derdap" National Park (Hereinafter: Derdap Plan): This plan was purposely created and enacted for the park in 2012. It foresees several capital projects for the area. One visitor centre was built (more is planned), the Golubac Fortress is reconstructed, with new road bypass. Priority is given to the development of conservation conditions and projects for the preservation, improvement and sustainable use of immovable cultural assets and their protected environments in the context of tourism development. The construction and modernization of the road network, the development of river passenger traffic, the promotion and development of cycling traffic within EuroVelo 6 corridors is planned (and partly implemented). In terms of tourism, the realisation of nautical-tourist infrastructure (marinas, docks and nautical centres) is planned and this is accomplished with a minor part. Five tourist spots are planned on the "Road of the Roman Emperors" section in the gorge. One of the priorities is the construction of tourist facilities with respect to ecological criteria, bio-climatic architecture, the use of renewable energy sources, and compliance with the landscape (NASP, 2009).

Spatial plan of Golubac Municipality (hereinafter: Municipal Plan): This spatial plan (2011) prioritise the improvement of Golubac Town as a municipal seat, primarily with public services and tourist facilities. Priority activities in rural settlements along the Danube are: increase of traffic accessibility, development of eco-agriculture, start of development of capacities in the field of rural tourism (renovation, arrangement and equipping of villages suitable for the development of eco, ethno and gastronomic tourism). These types of tourism would play a major role in the development of cultural tourism by learning about the local tradition and cuisine of this region. Rural tourism in the Iron Gates is still underrepresented, but incentives for Dobra village are mentioned. The main projects are: the town marina, new border crossing, new tourist pier for the fortress, and the

modernisation of the town beach in its western outskirts (Arhiplan, 2011). The summary map of the capital projects in Golubac area (Fig. 2) distinctly presents where national level should control the development of the area. It is obvious that most of these projects are located on the Danube Riverside and that they are functionally dependent of the river. Nevertheless, the prioritisation of the projects varies between the plans. Finally, some collisions about the location or character of intervention (new/renewal) are also noticeable in these plans. For illustration, it is questionable by the plans should the pier of Golubac Fortress be new or renewed or where is an exact location for a new marina in Golubac Town – in the existing western of eastern small ports.



Fig. 2 The summary map of capital projects in Golubac area from strategic plans (Author: B. Antonić).

2.2 ANALYSIS 2: FIELD RESEARCH

Field research was conducted in 2017 and 2018, integrating two types of research: fieldwork with data collecting and professional communication with local representatives and experts. The topic was the general development of the Danube Riverside in Golubac Municipality. The outcomes of this research show a stance from local/municipal tier. One of the main observations is the distinction of the development potential regarding the areas inside and outside the national park (Fig. 2- green area), due to the regulation of a protected ecosystem.

The main goal of local representatives and experts is certainly the development of tourism, with a special emphasis on cultural tourism. The reconstruction of Golubac Fortress is in progress but has already fuelled tourism; according to a local tourist guide, about 50 cruisers docked in front of the fortress and about 80,000 tourists visited the fortress in 2018. However, the main problem in local tourism is that the majority of tourists just pass through the town to reach the fortress, where they spend maximum 2-3 hours. They rarely spend more time in this area due to still weak supportive tourist service and infrastructure. Thus, local revenues are still low comparing the attractiveness of Golubac Fortress and the

Iron Gates in its background, which is an issue for this shrinking community. The main local observations regarding new capital projects for Golubac urban zone are:

- the reconstruction of Golubac Fortress with the construction of supplementary visitor centre with parking and cruiser pier is almost completed. The last step is the revitalisation of the fortress vicinity, including an apartment village ("fishermen village" project);
- new big-format tourist facilities in Golubac Town are a very challenging issue for a municipality. "Golubački Grad" Hotel on the main town square from the 1980s was privatised after 2000. However, new owners are not capable to modernise it, so the hotel offer is substandard. Public sector has a limited influence in the private ownership. Hence, municipal authorities estimate that the construction of a completely new hotel in a different location in Golubac is a more probable solution;
- the proposed project for the main road bypass around the town is contested, too.
 The town is currently under the pressure of dense traffic because the Iron Gates
 Main Road (National Road No 34) passes through the centre of Golubac. However, this road also brings travellers and tourists and support local retail;
- a new 7-km long quay with pedestrian and cyclist path along the Danube Riverside in Golubac is 70% done. The path is a part of "EuroVelo 6" Route. The remaining part between the town and the fortress, which is technically the most complex due to cliff terrain, is left for the future;
- a project for a new marina is the first stage of preparation. After long negotiation, western port was chosen for this facility, but available land is too small for the format of a modern marina;
- a new border crossing by ferryboat is almost completed in the western outskirts of the urban zone (Usije). Serbian part was completed, but Romanian border crossing is still in preparation;
- the upgrading of the town beach in Vinci weekend-house zone at the north-western edge of the urban area is a long-waiting project. The existing beach is used, but mostly by the local population. This upgrading for tourism purposes request a complex technical intervention, to secure the beach facilities from strong winds and waves during winter months.

2.3 ANALYSIS 3: MAPPING OF LAND ORGANISATION

The previous section scrutinises local view on the capital projects in Golubac area. Capital projects, such as a new marina or a hotel, certainly require large land plots. The problem is

the current land organisation (Fig. 3). In the town centre, all available plots are small and individually inadequate for any capital project thereof. The process of land consolidation among many owners is very complicated in Serbia, so it is always the last option. Several larger plots along the riverside are suitable by size, but they are in public ownership and in public use (town park, local education centre). Outside Golubac centre, the only large land plots are at its eastern outskirts. Nevertheless, these plots are in state ownership and belong to "Derdap" National Park, which defines them as the part of a protected ecosystem and restricts their future use and development without any construction.

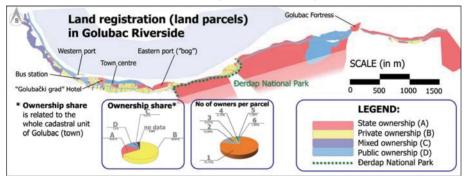


Fig. 3 The map of land registration (land parcels) in Golubac Riverside / Resource: Municipal cadastre (Authors: N. Mandić, M. Kostadinović & S. Mićanović / Customised by B. Antonić).

5 INSTEAD OF AN ORDINARY CONCLUSION. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ACQUARE A LAND FOR THE NEW RIVERSIDE DEVELOPMENT

A general notion from three elaborated analyses presents a sharp dichotomy between national and local levels. To summarize, the capital projects in analyzed spatial plans are generally greeted by national level as a key element to the foster long-awaited socio-economic development of Golubac. In the other side, their implementation faces big obstacles at urban level, considering the current land organisation in Golubac. Knowing that small municipal government, such as Golubac, has limited resources, possible ways for land consolidation are even more questionable. This situation demonstrates significant discrepancies between different vertical levels of "classic" territorial planning. Golubac municipality thereby aspires to find some "unorthodox" solutions for its capital projects. This is related to a unique position at the end of artificial Iron Gates Lake, where the current Danube Riverside is also new, from the 1970s. Without this limit, land reclamation is proposed as a model to fully or partly obtain land plots for capital projects from the lakebed. This is also an innovative approach for Serbia. Some on-going projects have already used

land reclamation; the new visitor centre of Golubac Fortress was built on reclaimed land. Local authorities are planning the following land-reclamation interventions:

- the land for a new big-format hotel with more exclusive facilities should be developed on the land reclaimed from the town eastern 'port', which is actually a bog and without any use today. The position of this new land is excellent for this type of a hotel, because it is next to the main road and between the town centre with historic fabric (western) and the national park and the fortress (eastern);
- in the case of the town road bypass, a middle solution is backed by local level. This
 refers to the new bypass road just for the most problematic transport (heavy vehicles
 like regional buses and lorries), while the other vehicles will use the current route, to
 support local economy;
- the last and the technically most contested eastern part of the Danube quay with pedestrian-cyclist path is to be resolved by the construction of a bracket-structured path, inclined in the cliffs along the river;
- a project for a new marina is already in preparation. The location is the existing (western) port, which will be further enlarged and upgraded with the new technical and leisure facilities. A part of the future complex will be built on the land reclaimed from the riverbed;
- the new border crossing is intentionally built at the western part of Golubac area –
 Usije Settlement, to make balance in the spatial development of the Danube Riverside. The municipality dedicated a bigger plot for the border crossing, as a reserve for the future needs;
- similarly, the existing beach in Vinci northwest area is to be resolved through land reclamation. This is less drastic, in the form of a several-meters wide "belt" with concrete sand boxes that will gradually descend to water and preserve the sand from strong winds and waves.

Many of explained interventions are still in the form of proposals. It is also evident that most of them are financially, technically, and professionally demanding due to compromise with the protected ecosystem of the gorge. This means that local level cannot implement them without external influence. Therefore, the next step for local authorities is to promote these projects and related interventions externally, but not just to national government. New approaches should be made to access to the private incentive, which will bring a new energy in local development.

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