letnik 12, št. 2/01

of his life in Izola. The park was renovated in 2001 and reopened to the public on the municipal holiday.

4 Path by the sea.

5 According to data from the Agency for maritime traffic in Koper there was a strong decline of traffic by passenger ships on regular lines between 1953 and 1993 when in stopped altogether and was carried out by individuals irregularly. In year 2000 a new line was reopened connecting towns along the Slovenian coast, but only during the summer season.

6 Edo Mihevc, Slovenian architect and professor, 1911 - 1985

7 First local group: Aleksander Bizjak, Vladimir Vremec, Jernej Černe, Roman Savkovič

8 International group: Mirko Buvinič, Blaž Križnik, Tinka Pre- kovič

9 Slovenian group: Ivan Stanič, Tanja Rus, Nina Toman

10 Second local group: Boris Zuliani, Peter Rijavec, Marko Volf

11 The enclosed garden.

Illustrations

Picture 1: *MUD Izola 2000 - Lonka (Aleksander Bizjak, Vladimir Vremec, Jernej Černe, Roman Savkovič)* ***Picture 2:*** *The story of Lonka (Mirko Buvinič, Blaž Križnik, Tinka Prekovič)*

Picture 3: *Izola - Lonka square - the wider setting (Ivan Stanič, Tanja Rus, Nina Toman)*

Picture 4: *Izola Lonka - The square as a Meditteranean stage - the concept (Boris Zuliani, Peter Rijavec, Marko Volf)*

For sources and literature turn to page 24

Ina ŠUKLJE ERJAVEC

Overlooked potentials of open spaces - new types and categories of urban landscapes

1. Introduction

The aim of the article is to draw attention to numerous overlooked and unused potentials of urban open spaces and green surfaces, but also to give a detailed account of some rarely recognised possibilities that can lead to new types and categories of urban landscapes.

Maybe speaking about hidden potentials of open spaces in cities could appear pretentious and premature, when we are confronted on every step with completely unused and unmanaged known and generally recognised potentials, such as riverfronts, open spaces in residential neighbourhoods and even existing city parks. However the issue is raised at this time, because spatial plans of most city municipalities are in the phase of completion. These municipalities are continuously under pressure by investors, often displaying little regard for open spaces and green surfaces, therefore they need clear and definite arguments to support their decisions. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to open the whole, wide spectre of possibilities, define visions and guidelines in which various differing interests can meet, for the benefit of all inhabitants. The issue is extremely multi-layered and possible solutions for improvements varied and diverse.

The fact stands that values are changing and subsequently the needs and expectations of people concerning the quality of the urban environment as well. Prevailing narrow and usually rigid views on the issue are inadequate. Many important functions of urban green surfaces, which are the consequence of a diverse range of needs, remain unrecognised and are not considered, thus they are not manifested in the existing typological structuring of the urban landscape.[1] Demands for more possibilities of choice can be met only with a broadly set typology of urban spaces.

Open urban spaces are not only streets, squares and parks, and the odd remaining green surface, they are much more complex, a living organism with many intertwined functions and physical forms, inherent internal logic and peculiarities. We have to be aware of the possibilities these places have for improving the quality of life and satisfaction of all inhabitants, co-creating form and structure of the city space and establishing ecological balance within.

There are not many open spaces in cities and in the future there will be even less, after all the direction is compact development. Because of this the rational behaviour in the sense of including and considering all potentials and possibilities of open spaces is extremely important. Improving individual today mainly neglected and degraded spaces simultaneously leads to general improvement of the whole city space.

New wider views on issues urban landscapes and a more extensive typology of pertaining places are important for improving the efficiency and suitability of urban planning. In Slovenia it is especially inefficient in planning urban landscapes.

The most often used definition in recent spatial plans and designs is inadequate and damaging in the long run. The definition of »R« zones, including everything from sports to parks etc., was unsuccessful in preventing building and didn't promote active approaches to planning open spaces and green surfaces. Many of the zones coined »sports etc.«, even urban green surfaces, were built upon, city parks, such as Tivoli in Ljubljana or the park in Celje as well, while new parks weren't provided.

Contemporary practice has even in Slovenia and especially amongst landscape architects widened attitudes to the issue and begun introducing a much more extensive and consistent typological structure of urban landscapes, which this article is complementing even further with additional arguments.

2. Hidden potentials of cities

Hidden, unrecognised potentials of the city are defined as all those open spaces and green surfaces in the city that have, in view of their position and/or content and above all inadequate use, substantial potential for improvement, but are not listed as generally accepted spatial potentials (even

these are unfortunately often inadequately used), such as waterfronts, green residential surfaces etc.

Hidden potentials of the city are often »semi-public spaces«, in principal at present outside the interest of planning and generally undesired as a category. However this is a name given to numerous open spaces in the city and very appropriate, after all it points out their essential nature, which is, that they belong to a certain content/building/owner and the city, i.e. all the inhabitants.

Typically these spaces usually are not independent, in comparison to urban parks, but directly tied to a specific building or wider thematic area. Their potential can be seen in their specific content, large number of people in it, potentials for connections and in certain cases also the quantity of the open space.

2.1 General starting points for defining the »hidden potential«

In this phase of establishing potentials it isn't important whether the space has adequate function or pleasing as a place. Even type of property or its size is not exclusive. With suitable position small places can also be seen as potentials. The main starting point is nevertheless whether a certain open (vacant) space still exists[2], i.e. whether reconstruction of the place will enable its establishment, e.g. unused public greenery, remaining spaces between buildings and large vacant spaces within large building estates, completed or partially completed open spaces (playgrounds, parking lots ...), that are not used during the whole day. Therefore the main starting points are defined by setting (position), quantity of users or possible ties to pertaining programmes and availability of space.

Setting
The position in the city, within the built structure or as part of the green system, is an extremely important aspect for defining potentials. Its importance lies in the spatial structure, symbolic-representative aspect (e.g. entrance node to P+R areas, city gateways, green belts along the main access roads etc.), but also possibilities for connections that these spaces can provide. Possibilities for optimal ties to important elements of the green system, the latter's hinterland and to more extensive recreation areas of the city only strengthen their potentials. In larger areas or emphasised linear spaces, potentials lie also in possibilities for structuring and ecological aspects.

Attraction for visitors - suitable nearby content
Even the fact that a place and its immediate vicinity are used by a large number of people is an important aspect for establishing it's potential. The vicinity of buildings should always be manifested even in the open space. These spaces are those that connect to central functions and their potential is therefore immense, but also thematically specific places, such as production areas, transport nodes etc. For general improvement of living culture in cities special emphasis should be given to planning »less visible« urban spaces that are inevitably and on a daily basis experienced by numerous inhabitants.

Availability of open space
The main condition for determining availability of space is that it is vacant, i.e. devoid of specific use (there are many such places in cities and include all greenery, abandoned areas, unplanned parking areas) and poorly or incompletely used (only in specific periods), such as open spaces of schools and kindergartens, parking lots of shopping malls, office buildings and centres etc.
Ownership of space is an important aspect of availability, but it is not decisive. If the proper approach is followed with clear proposals for comprehensive reconstruction, arrangements can be made with the owner or primary user concerning joint planning and maintenance. From examples we can establish that this is not an unusual approach or solution method for addressing such issues even in developed capitalist countries, with all respect to private property. For example the criterion dealing with enforcing public interest on private property was included in the criteria for analysing the state of green urban surfaces.[3] The method includes the establishment of a register of all private surfaces that are in public interest, extant or potential instruments for stimulating improvements of private properties and possibilities for public access, but also the presence of officials qualified for conducting dialogues between private owners and the local authority.

3. Review of several typical places (possibilities)

3.1 Open spaces of primary and secondary schools

Open schools of schools are amongst the most important and generally »overlooked potentials« of the city. It is a type of space, regularly and relatively equally appearing in the city's structure with exceptionally good accessibility, numerous users and in principal can attract the attention of a wide range of people.[4]

Simultaneously they are places (or at least should be) well equipped open spaces with a range of facilities also adapted for the use of elder children and adolescents, that generally have very few possibilities of choice and use of safe and attractive open spaces.

In view of their setting these spaces in principal »less contentious places for noisy use« and are very well suited for active programmes tied to the interests of young people.

Substantial potentials are hidden in the content and conduct of a school's activity, whose creative potentials can significantly add to the management of the open space in the school's vicinity. A good example is the participation of schools in the new years embellishment of Ljubljana, which could be translated also to local centres and day-to-day purposes.

An important aspect is also the typical time of use and availability of the space during weekends and vacations. These are the periods when other inhabitants of the city have time and interest to use them. If adequately designed and with a proper ratio between the enclosed, intimate part of the space used for the school's activities and the common space jointly used by the city, these spaces could be seen as the most vital parts of urban open spaces, as well as »focal points for events« for the whole city. The fact that school infrastructure was an under-utilised possibility for organised more active and relaxing leisure for adolescents, was stressed even in sociological research (Ule, Rener 1998)[5], but

also proven by practical domestic and foreign experiences. Analyses of conditions and physical possibilities in Nova Gorica and Ljubljana[6] for example proved, that with adequate approach to managing these spaces numerous possibilities arise for improvement, both for the benefit of the school, as well as the city.

The present circumstances in Slovenia however are not inclined to initiatives for opening and joint use of such open spaces. Quite the contrary, the predominant goal of most schools in cities is to erect fences around them with gate them off. The stated reasons are issues of security, pollution and vandalism. Often access for other inhabitants of the city is limited or even totally denied; schools are erecting high, insurmountable fences enclosing the whole school property, affecting users and visitors in a negative and even disturbing manner (the image of a cage and surrounding violent environment).

In the short run and locally this approach can solve the worst »external« problems, met by a school, such as damage to equipment, pollution, inadequate use etc., but in the long run erecting a fence cannot improve the space's management nor utility for the school's needs. Much more is needed than simple security. Practical examples also prove that fencing off doesn't effectively protect from vandalism[7], (fences are clambered over or even partially removed); solutions have to be found in other causes and removed from the wider environment.

In the long run and from the urban planning aspect, erecting fences is the wrong solution. Problems mostly remain intact and translate to other places in the city. For the city as such it doesn't make sense to remove relatively well- equipped open spaces from public use with such solutions. Enclosing open spaces of schools is a great loss of important spatial potentials for the city and diminishment of offer (possibilities for choice), especially for elder children and adolescents, who lose the most.

Another fact is that not all spaces or activities tied to schools are equally vulnerable when in public use. It is therefore necessary to set priorities and establish different levels of privacy (enclosure) in the school's space, determined for each specific case separately.

3.2 Open spaces of faculties and student dormitories

Open spaces next to faculties and student's halls are a specific issue, which in Slovenia hasn't been dealt with in detail as yet. Certain basic characteristics of potentials are very similar to those of primary and secondary schools, above all in the sense of specific contents and needs, as well as typical time phases of use or the contrary. They are spaces used by many people and are often very expansive, giving them exceptional significance in the city. In the future they should be granted much more attention.

3.3 Open spaces (playgrounds) near kindergartens

Open spaces of kindergartens are usually well-equipped playgrounds for small children. As with schools even here the time phases of use are typical, as is the disuse during the afternoons and weekends, when interests of other inhabitants are greatest. Their potential is higher because of their relatively equal and dense distribution throughout the city, good access and security. Often they are integrated in residential neighbourhoods, which seldom have high quality and maintained children's playgrounds, whereby their joint use is of utmost importance. The principal policy in Ljubljana is to enable use of children's playgrounds of kindergartens (and schools) in the public domain, but the trend of fencing off and enclosing, thus consequentially eliminating possibilities for other users is also strong and still growing.

It is true, that open spaces of kindergartens are extremely vulnerable, with high-proscribed security standards, but their exclusion from public use isn't in the interest of the city. Another question is, how many suitably equipped playgrounds for small children do we have in our cities and settlements. Adequate treatment and concepts of these spaces could enable uncontentious access and use for other inhabitants. Similarly as with schools, different levels of privacy and protection have to be defined and in their concepts joint use, investment and maintenance and ties to the wider area as well. In this way better equipped playgrounds in kindergartens could be provided and offer for small children in cities improved.[8]

3.4 Open spaces of homes for senior citizens

Open spaces of homes for senior citizens are a thematically very interesting and important potential for the whole city, while the site (setting) of the home as such should affect design of open spaces in it's wider neighbourhood (specific demands on accessibility, facilities etc.).

An applicative research titled Open spaces next to schools and homes for senior citizens[9] pointed out that these areas inherently contain substantial hidden unused possibilities, both in the sense of opening up and joint use and improving the space itself. Completely introverted areas are neither sensible nor wanted, as was proven from the habits of their users. They usually stay near the home's entrance, whose structure is often completely unsuited for such use, and appears contentious and degraded. The fact stands that parks belonging to the home are often appropriated by other inhabitants or have already become parts of the public space (an example is the home in Šiška, Ljubljana), implying different management and maintenance to avoid conflicting uses (especially with youngsters who are often noisy).
With carefully planned layouts and for the benefit of the general public, parts of such places could be interesting thematic or even local/neighbourhood urban parks, thus improving the home's offer, but also general conditions in the city.

3.5 Open spaces of cultural and other public institutions

Usually they are small green or paved surfaces belonging to such buildings. However the content and significance of the building gives them representative and symbolic functions, as well as thematic content, which can be achieved within the framework of adequate planning of the open space. Such places are open-air galleries, various didactic displays attached to museums and content pertaining to the building, open-air theatres etc.

A very interesting example of content is the expansive open space attached to the Museum of modern arts Lusiana (Denmark), that functions exceptionally well as a combination of an open air art gallery with a playing/didactic park for children, which attractive in itself. Because of the wide expanse it occupies the idea is physically unique, however it can represent an inspiration for possibilities in different contexts and smaller scales.

In Ljubljana for example there have been recent attempts to revitalise the park in front of the Gruber palace. Occasional events - sculpture exhibitions are surely interesting, but the place lacks recognisable (albeit minimal) elements of design and suitable facilities, which could change it into a new quality (thematic park), thus the effort was short-winded. Then again the issue is raised whether the place's potential was sufficiently and adequately used with such (mono-functional) content in view of its position and needs of the wider area.

3.6 Open spaces attached to local and neighbourhood centres

Green surfaces and open spaces attached to central public functions, such as shops, post offices, local government premises, libraries, as well as schools, kindergartens and medical facilities are seen as potential. In short, all functions tied to contents intended for servicing the people and operating as possible local or neighbourhood centres.

They can be very small spaces since classical recreation functions of parks (such as long walks, relaxing in nature) in cities can be supplied in larger recreation areas or with good access to the natural hinterland. Their position is important, as well as direct ties to central functions, attraction for various and numerous population groups and good access.

In comparison to urban parks, these places are not »self-sufficient«, but always tied to other contents. They can be organised as squares (basic function of gathering, identity, meeting etc.) or parks, the latter being preferred and more responsive to contemporary needs and values of people. An important aspect is also multi-functionality enabling use by various population groups.

3.7 Open spaces and parking lots In shopping centres

Their main characteristics are it's expansive asphalt surface (primarily intended for parking), good accessibility and masses of visitors. Because of their disposition and character these areas have immense potentials for the introduction of attractive, spatially more aggressive leisure functions, such as places for rollerbalderrs and borders, sports pitches, polygons for cyclists etc., which usually cannot be placed in city parks without causing conflicts.

The opening hours of such retail places are generally long, meaning that these expansive surfaces are vacated only for relatively short periods during the day, mainly at night and Sunday afternoons. However with detailed research suitable time-spatial potential can be found. Important principles for planning such spaces should therefore be flexibility and multi-functionality, such as added lines drawn on the asphalt surface for sports pitches, additional equipment that doesn't occupy much space and can be used occasionally, such as basketball hoops, climbing walls etc. Above all comprehensive layouts are needed with multi-purpose structuring of surfaces, on which the city should enforce it's interest. Despite the great significance and »financial effort« of these buildings, they generally manifest very low »living culture«, devoid of basic spatial and experiential qualities, but also incredibly low effort put into their representative image, proving the narrow-minded interests of the landowners, which could nevertheless be expanded with good examples and stimulation.

3.8 Open spaces in industrial zones

A special potential are often expansive but completely neglected and unused open spaces and green surfaces in old industrial zones. Because of low attraction for other uses, often tied to unattractive activities, general spatial image and security measures, these potentials are not obvious. They are important however, because of their size and position, especially older industrial zoned that have already been integrated in the city.

In these areas usually minimal transformations (in conjunction with security arrangements) open numerous possibilities for their improvement, as well as the conditions in the whole city. Some of these possibilities are: cycling and other paths passing through the areas, organising educative-exhibitions as thematic parks displaying industrial and manufacturing activities, special interventions for sustainable physical planning

- ecological and structuring passages and corridors.

3.9 Large parking lots - especially park and ride spaces

Large parking lost similar to those in shopping malls (dealt with earlier), business and sports centres etc., but also dedicated parking lots services entrance and exchange points in the city, such as P+R systems, are because of their character and size a specific and important potential.

They are very expansive paved surfaces with immense significance for the city, not only because of their visual image, but also affecting micro-climatic conditions and water (large quantities of water runoff). Their potential for structuring is also strong, with possible planting of trees, sowing structuring greenery, alternative drainage with wells etc., which can positively affect the image and ecological conditions in the city in comparison with the present state, whereby their effect is inadvertently negative!

Besides being parking lots, many of them are also entrance nodes, where the number of users (visitors) changes constantly. This is why they should be adequately designed as places with content, making them into vital attractive places with some representatively designed and distinct identity.

Unequal occupancy of the place opens possibilities for mul- ti-functional use.

4. Conclusion

From the hidden potentials it is possible to draw several new types of places in the urban landscape, which can significantly improve the quality of life in cities, such as local parks, thematic parks with differing content and thematic vistas.

Local centre parks

The starting point for determining content are ties to the central public functions, which the local residents can identify as their centre. The most logical solution follows »potentials of vacant open spaces in local and neighbourhood centres«, although limited their number is relatively small. Practice shows that in certain cases they can be effectively tied to open spaces adjacent to schools, kindergartens, homes for the elderly, large common surfaces in residential estates etc.

Thematic parks and thematic vistas

As a type they mutually differ in their spatial form and certain specifics, such as emphasised connections in vistas, although it is only a supplementary aspect of thematic content. Typically they are tied to more specific thematic buildings, whose content can manifest itself even in the external design. Such parks are for example youth parks, adjacent to faculties and sports centres. Possibilities for organising such parks are also present in well-connected production zones or shopping centres, both of which can be suitable environments - uncontentious and susceptible for free spatial expression. One of these zones is the industrial zone in Trzin, another the BTC in Ljubljana, which could become ideal settings for such parks. Accessibility from the city is good, while the general tendency there is mixed use, including contents attractive for younger individuals. Simultaneously the areas cannot be contentious for more active uses, since'they have no residents, who could be disturbed. The character of the areas isn't vulnerable for new development

- joint management is possible - spatial writings by young people, according to their own likings.

Parks with special experiential content, with special features for the physically disabled, blind or with impaired vision could be planned adjacent to homes for the elderly, schools with special programmes, day care centres, hospitals etc. An important aspect is that they can be used by »primary spatial users« and other residents. Therefore, they mustn't become introverted specific enclosures, but places with possibilities of choice and new experiences, even for other people (bowling grounds for the blind, scented gardens, sound gardens). The pertaining building would also gain, open outwards and enable people to accept being »different« as something ordinary.

A special type is the »Sunday sports park« on large parking lots, used when they are empty. Multi-purpose layouts of parking lots are beneficial, meaning nothing more than lines drawn on the asphalt (examples are known from abroad) and uncomplicated facilities, such as seating arrangements or special equipment, such as goals, basket ball hoops or places for roller bladders and boarders (similar to those on the parking lot near the shopping mall Interspar in Vič, which needs just a few small corrections to gain in quality), walls for climbing on firewalls etc. The fact stands that some of these places have already been spontaneously revitalised - youngsters have taken them over and use them when vacant. Unfortunately most of their potentials are not used to the full, with minimal interventions they could be improved and made attractive with features better suited for the city.

Educational experiential parks and thematic exhibition places next to open spaces of schools (primary, secondary, faculties) or other educational and research institutions, galleries, museums, but even industrial buildings etc.

Possibilities are numerous and with a more flexible aspect, can be seen everywhere. Therefore it is necessary to become aware of their potential, research them thoroughly and integrate them in all visions of a future urban development.

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Notes

1 **Šuklje Erjavec, I.: The relation between function and shape in landscape architecture, Masters thesis, Department for landscape architecture, Biotechnological Faculty, Ljubljana 1994.**

2 **In Slovenia at least, a lot of time will pass before we decide to demolish buildings because of redesign of open urban spaces.**

3 **Varese, G. B., Berteli, U.: Planning criteria. In: Development of Urban Green Spaces to Improve the Quality of Life in Cities and Urban Regions. URGE project 2001. (draft proposal)**

4 **Schools, especially primary schools, are always inseparable parts of the city or neighbourhood and because of their content and role in tight interdependency with their surroundings.**

5 **Ule M., RenerT.: Leisure time of the youth in Ljubljana, research report, Faculty of social sciences, Centre for social psychology - youth studies, Ljubljana 1988.**

6 **Šuklje Erjavec, I: Open spaces near schools and homes for the elderly - Phase 1 - part 1 - research project, Urban planning Institute, Ljubljana 1999.**
Šuklje Erjavec, I: Open spaces near schools and homes for the elderly - Phase 2 - part 1 - research project, Urban planning Institute, Ljubljana 2000.
Šuklje Erjavec I., (project leader) et al.: Open spaces of schools in Nova Gorica - presentation of possibilities for improvement, the case of primary school Fran Erjavec, Nova Gorica/Ljubljana, Urban planning Institute, 2000/2001.
Šuklje Erjavec, I., Erjavec A.: Primary school Kozara in Nova Gorica - design proposals for the fence, Urban planning Institute, Urbi Ltd., Ljubljana 2001.

7 **Experiences from abroad show that problems from vandalism diminish significantly when open spaces are maintained and the public participates in the planning process. Enabling entry and use improve their perception by the neighbourhood and increase public care of such spaces.**

8 **Simoneti, M.: Children's playgrounds in Ljubljana, LUZ, Ljubljana 1999. Maja Simoneti points out that similar acts are taken abroad as well, however these spaces are defined as semi-public that are surveilled and managed. In addition problems with vandalism are avoided by including their users in their design and building.**

9 **Šuklje Erjavec, I: Open spaces near schools and homes for the elderly - Phase 1 - part 1 - research project, Urban planning Institute, Ljubljana 1999.**

Illustrations

Picture 1a: *The Gradaščica River is a significant, unused and neglected, although clearly recognisable potential of Ljubljana. Photo: I. Šuklje Erjavec*

Picture 1b: *A similar example is the area of the confluence - Špica that is despite having clear significance and masses of visitors, completely mismanaged. Photo: I. Šuklje Erjavec*

Picture 2: *A review of several vacant, under-utilised places in the city of Ljubljana, which could be seen as overseen potentials. (Source: Spatial analysis for the project Green system of the city, Spatial development concept, Urban planning institute, Ljubljana 2001)*

Picture 3: *Expansive green area between the primary school Ledine and residential estate Ledine in Nova Gorica is an under-utilised place in the city with potential for improving the quality of life of neighbourhood residents and the school itself. Photo: I. Šuklje Erjavec*

Picture 4: *A similar example is the green area between the residential estate Draveljska gmajna and the primary school Dravlje in Ljubljana. Photo: I. Šuklje Erjavec*

Picture 5: *A typical example of a fenced open school attached to a school - primary school Trnovo in Ljubljana. Photo: I. Šuklje Erjavec*

Picture 6: *Green surfaces between the senior citizens home Tabor, boarding school and hotel in Ljubljana that is despite the lack of suitable open spaces in the wider area, completely useless. Photo: I. Šuklje Erjavec*

Picture 7: *A pleasant and well-equipped open space attached to the kindergarten in Nova Gorica. Photo: A. Erjavec*

Picture 8: *Park adjacent to the senior citizens home in Šiška, Ljubljana, can also be used by residents of the nearby estate and is a rare example of sensible cohabitation in the city. Despite careful maintenance it lacks certain contents, (e.g. children's playground), to achieve full vitality Photo: A. Erjavec*

Picture 9: *Park in front of the Gruber Palace in Ljubljana is a park only by name. In reality it is a completely barren grass surface without design or content. Recently it is trying to present itself as an open-air gallery for sculptures, but the place lacks distinction and usable design. Photo: I. Šuklje Erjavec*

Picture 10: *The design of the small Paley Park near the Fifth Avenue in New York proves that even very small places can be made into attractive and effective parks. (Source: Ogrin, D. (1993) Vrtna umetnost sveta, Pudon, EWE, Ljubljana, pp. 382)*

Picture 11: *Suitable design could change large parking lots in shopping malls and business zones into interesting, ecologically friendly places, much more attractive than they are today. Photo: M. Slaček*

Picture 12: *The industrial zone Rudnik in Ljubljana is a typical example of an industrial zone with relatively expansive, but completely unused green surfaces. Photo: M. Slaček*

For literature and sources turn to page 34

Davorin GAZVODA:

The role and significance of green spaces in recent Slovenian residential estates

1. The problem of high quality in residential environments

Urbanisation is gradually causing the demise of small green and open spaces in Ljubljana, relieving the city of possibilities for creating public parks. Simultaneously conditions for the survival of animal and plant species in the city are deteriorating, as are the general ecological conditions (Concept of spatial development, 2001: 15). The statement stands for Ljubljana although it could be valid in any Slovenian town. Public parks are indeed emphasised even though they are only a part of the complex urban space. Public city parks are the least contentious since they are clearly defined and as such protected by explicit urban ordinances. Besides parks there are many other green surfaces, e.g. sports and recreation parks, thematic gardens, even greenery on infrastructure - planted street greenery etc., that have a particular role and significance in the complex urban structure. Despite being subject to various pressures public parks nevertheless remain preserved and clearly distinct.

More complicated are the conditions for those types of »green remnants« whose ownership or primary function are hard to determine, therefore they are in constant danger of being lost. Unfortunately green surfaces in residential estates are also amongst such places. There are many reasons for such development, the basic one being change of ownership and thus conditioned property management, which should nevertheless also include preservation and maintenance of green surfaces in residential estates. There are too many multi-apartment buildings, whose owners still haven't registered their properties in the »land register« (property owners), while the functional area of the building still hasn't been determined or sub-divided. The consequence is, that there is nobody to be held responsible for preserving or maintaining green surfaces in older residential estates, the property managers refrain from these costs, since it is difficult to charge them to property owners (or renters). The results are deterioration of greenery, illegal parking and usurpation of open spaces or as social scientists would say, »atavistic« battle for space (Kos 1996: 14-17).

In new estates the conditions are slightly better, because owners of apartments also pay for all the facilities of the estate including available common open space - residential greenery. The question is, to what extents are green surfaces actually included in residential estates (physical - qauntitative) and how are they designed (programme - quality criteria). Unfortunately domestic planning is limited to housing construction and seldom to planning public spaces, greenery, parking spaces and communal infrastructure (Drozg, 1999:19). What are the practical implications will be enlighte-ned upon in the article, also with comparison of several new residential estates and especially between new design and high quality old estates, built some thirty years ago.