

The situation of green spaces in Timisoara today

Szekely G.^{1*}, Silivăşan M.¹

¹Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Timişoara, Faculty of Horticulture and Forestry

*Corresponding author. Email:gabi.szekely@gmail.com

Abstract In the last decades the green spaces of Timisoara had changed a lot. Some have developed in time and are today in accordance with European standards. There are many nice green spaces in Timisoara. Nevertheless the present study shows that in most of the districts of the town the green surfaces are insufficient, or are in a bad state. An exception is the central part of the town where green spaces are nicely arranged and cover great pieces of land. The obvious solution for the future will be to grow the surface of parks, especially in certain disadvantaged quarters, using available free land, buying land, redesigning parks, squares, cemeteries, river banks. Rearranging parks for outer quarters is an important issue, especially in order to satisfy the needs of families with children or elder people who need green spaces near to their homes.

Key words

Timisoara, parks, quarters, green spaces

The history of green spaces of Timisoara is at least 150 years long, since the first parks were created during the Habsburg rule. The first such place was Scudier Park, today called Central Park, situated exactly in the center of the town, near the orthodox cathedral. This green space was since transformed many times, till it got its present look. An other important moment was around the years 1900, when Timisoara was profoundly transformed because of the demolition of the walls of the fortress, which had as a result the appearance of great empty surfaces of land around the center of the settlement. A part of this vast piece of land was transformed into green spaces, most of which were situated along the Bega channel. Part of these were later used for constructions, but many remained green spaces to our days. Poporului Park, bordered by Revolutia din 1989 Boulevard, was nicely designed by a famous architect of the moment Székely László, who was chief architect of the town hall of Timisoara in that moment.

Many other smaller or bigger green spaces were transformed, in order to be adapted to the needs of the growing population, and the standards of the moment. Today Timisoara has nice parks, some of which were properly rebuilt in the last decades. A different problem is the size of these green spaces, which don't agree in all cases with the evolution of the population in some quarters. This is becoming a difficult problem, because it is very hard to find new available free space to create the necessary parks. The situation is not the same in the quarters of Timisoara, and is changing permanently because of the evolution of the town.

In following we would like to analyse the situation of different parts of Timisoara, in accordance with the map on which are presented the limits of the districts of the town.

Cetate District - is the center of Timisoara. It appeared 300 years ago as the interior part of the fortress of the town. From the beginning there were many public buildings in this area which include hospitals, schools, town hall, offices, churches. The limits of the quarter are approximately those of the former walls of the town.

There are currently approximately 12 500 inhabitants in Cetate Quarter. Practically the region is used by much more people, because it is a central region of the town. There are some 38 ha green space in the area, with relatively big parks in the region: The Botanical Park, Children's Park, Justitiei Park, Catedralei Park, Rozelor Park, and Central Park.

Some parks like Rozelor and Copiilor (Roses Park and Children's Park), have been rearranged recently, and do not need many new investments in the near future. Central Park is in good state, though the furniture should be partly replaced. In Centrul Civic Park, Justitiei Park, and Catedralei Park the furniture is old and partly missing. In these parks the alleys also need to be repaired or rebuilt. There are trees along the streets and boulevards, some of which are valuable. The private green spaces of the region are small because of the great concentration of buildings, which is characteristic for central areas.

There are some 30,4 square meters of green space per capita in Cetate Quarter, which would be enough in accordance with European norms, but we must consider also that many other inhabitants of the town use the space regularly. In this situation it is obvious that it would be necessary to renovate some green areas, and that green surfaces should grow if possible in the future.

Vii- Fabric Nord District - In the past in this region were only small houses, but in some parts apartment

buildings were built after 1970. There are some 40 000 inhabitants in the region, and 81 ha of green spaces. We have approximately 20 square meters per capita in this quarter. Though there is a great potential of the region because of the existence of the Behela river, with green spaces on the banks, and other places which include sport clubs, the general state of the green spaces is bad, with the exception of some small parks arranged recently. Regarding the problem from an ecological point of view the situation is better because of the great number of private gardens in the region.

Fabric Sud - Plopi District - The quarter is old -, built partly two centuries ago. Other parts have been built much later, and consist in blocks of apartments, or small houses in Plopi, Crisan and Ghiroda outskirts. In this quarter the number of population is approximately 19 000. There are two parks in the region, Poporului Park, and the new park on the river bank along Rozelor street. These two have together some 70 000 square meters. This means 3 square meters per capita. The region has a great potential because of the river banks and free spaces that could be arranged.

Iosefin - Elisabetin District - is an old part of Timisoara, created more than two hundred years ago, which changed a lot during its existence. It is neighbouring the town center on its south western part, and always had a great importance because its main boulevard is leading to the main railway station. The population of the area is 15 000. There are some parks on the Bega Chanel bank - like Alpinet Park, Doina Park and some squares like Clabucet, Crucii Square, Bisericii Square. The green surface of the region is 11 ha. This means that we have some 7 square meters per capita in the quarter. The green spaces are generally in good state, though Doina Park was only partly restored. The furniture is old and partly destroyed or missing.

Mehala - Ronat District - is situated West to Cetate Quarter. Its important parts are the main boulevards on which you can find many 8 storey high blocks of apartments. Near to these boulevards are streets with 4 storey apartment blocks. The exterior half of the quarter contains streets with small houses, used generally by a single family. The region used to be inhabited in the Interwar Period mainly by workers. There are some 52000 inhabitants in the area, and 21 ha of green space. This means only 4 square meters of green space in parks for each inhabitant. The green spaces are only little squares, without valuable vegetation or proper furniture.

Aradului - Torontalului District - is situated in the northern part of the town, and owes its name to the boulevard which heads toward Arad. There are two main boulevards in the region - Aradului and Torontalului. There are parts built with blocks of apartments, and other parts with villas and small houses. This quarter of the town was built mainly after the year 1945.

20 000 people live in this area, but there are only 3,14 ha of arranged green space. There are also nearly

15 ha green space used for cemeteries. With 1,6 square meters of green space per capita the situation seems to be very bad, but there is great potential in the region because of the great surfaces of land that are not built yet.

Buziasului- Ciarda Rosie - District - is situated on the extremity of the town on the south -eastern part. The Ciarda Rosie part used to be a village in the past. In the middle of the region can be found Buziasului Boulevard, that was an important industrial region. Together with the partly demolished industrial buildings, in this area can be found blocks of apartments and many small houses, especially in the Ciarda Rosie part. There are practically no arranged green spaces, except some small squares like Ciarda Park, with no furniture or valuable trees. Still the region has a great potential because of the great free green surfaces of the region.

Martirilor Soarelui District - is a relatively new quarter of Timisoara. There were some small houses before 1945, but the blocks of apartments were built after the year 1970. The population of the quarter is 9000. The green surface is a little more than 10ha. In these conditions there are 11 square meters of green spaces per capita. The furniture was partly replaced lately in the green spaces, but many other investments would be necessary. Alleys should be reconstructed, more furniture added, some new trees should be planted.

Fratelia - Freidorf District - is located in the south western limit of the town. Traditionally there were little houses in the past, but in the years 1970 many blocks of apartments were built with four stories, and eight on some boulevards. Freidorf used to be an independent village for a long time. The surface of the green spaces in the region is 2,15 ha, and the population 54 000 inhabitants. In these conditions there are only some 0,4 square meters of green space per capita. There are some little green squares and cemeteries in the quarter, but no properly built parks.

Padurea Verde District - is a region situated near Green Forest which borders the town on the north - east. Small houses for one family were built here beginning with the interwar period. Later in the years 1970 blocks of apartments were built near the industrial region of the UMT factory. There are practically no parks in this part of the town. Still the nearly 4000 inhabitants of the quarter can use as a park the Green Forest, though it is not arranged for this purpose. The forest is appropriate for walks and has great ecological value.

Results and Discussions

Though the central parts of the town have nice green spaces, well maintained and partly renovated in recent years, globally the situation of the green spaces of Timisoara is not so good. One problem is that Timisoara does not have for the moment, according to

European norms, the necessary green surface. This problem could be solved if we include in a general project the Green Forest, which is neighbouring the town and some cemeteries that could become valuable green spaces. Anyway these green regions have ecological value. Many unused surfaces of land in the outskirts could become nice green spaces if they would be used properly. Private gardens also have an important ecological role in the town, especially in the quarters situated on the edge, where are few public gardens, but many private ones. All these efforts should aim to attain ecological standards, considered very important today for the welfare of the population.

Another problem is the lack of proper parks in some districts of the town. The lack of the necessary money, the scarcity of population in the past in some neighbourhoods, the lack of interest from the part of the town hall in various periods of time, conducted to the present situation, when whole urban areas do not have the necessary green spaces. It can be observed that the authorities were interested in the past in the image of the town, especially in central areas, but have always somehow neglected the quarters which are not so near to the center. The new little parks and playgrounds created in the last years in the neighbourhood of apartment blocks are full with children especially during holidays and weekends. This shows how important such investments are. Urban planning neglected in the past many areas, because social problems were regarded in a different way. Standards and expectations have grown very much in the past decades. We would like today to assure good living conditions for all the communities and quarters of a town, including the richer and the poorer neighbourhoods.

Conclusions

Timisoara has nice parks, but there are great problems concerning the distribution of these in the town, their surface and value. It is very important to endow all the districts, including the poorer regions with proper parks, squares and playgrounds. The

apparent aspect of the nice parks of central regions doesn't reflect the whole reality in Timisoara. It will be important to understand that green spaces are not only parks situated in the center of a town. Though Cetate Quarter is surrounded by nicely kept green spaces, the rest of the town is very different, and can hardly meet any European requirements. We propose the creation of new parks by the town hall on pieces of land that are not used, in the outskirts. Some former industrial regions, that were totally demolished should be bought by the authorities and transformed into parks. It could be an occasion that might never return in the future. Cemeteries should be an important issue also. They could be transformed using western examples, into attractive green spaces, used frequently by the population.

Taking all these into account it appears that Timisoara needs on a long term at least three plans. One for the ecological development of the town, one for the restoration of certain parks in the center, and a third for the creation of new green spaces in the outer quarters, using free land, agricultural land, or abandoned industrial areas.

References

1. Benevolo Leonardo, „Orașul în istoria Europei”, (The City in the History of Europe) ed. Polirom, Iași, 2003
2. Choay Françoise, "Pour une anthropologie de l'espace", Édition du Seuil, Paris 2006
3. Choay Françoise, "L'allegorie du patrimoine", Édition du Seuil, Paris 1992
4. Harouel Jean-Louis, „Istoria urbanismului”, (The History of Urbanism) ed. Meridiane, București 2000
5. Howard Ebenezer, "Garden-Cities of To-morrow", ed. Swan Sonnenschein, London 1902
6. Kovács Kázmér, "Peisaj cu grădină și casă”, (Landscape with Garden and House) ed. Simetria, București 2011
7. Swaffield Simon, "Theory in Landscape Architecture", University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia 2002.

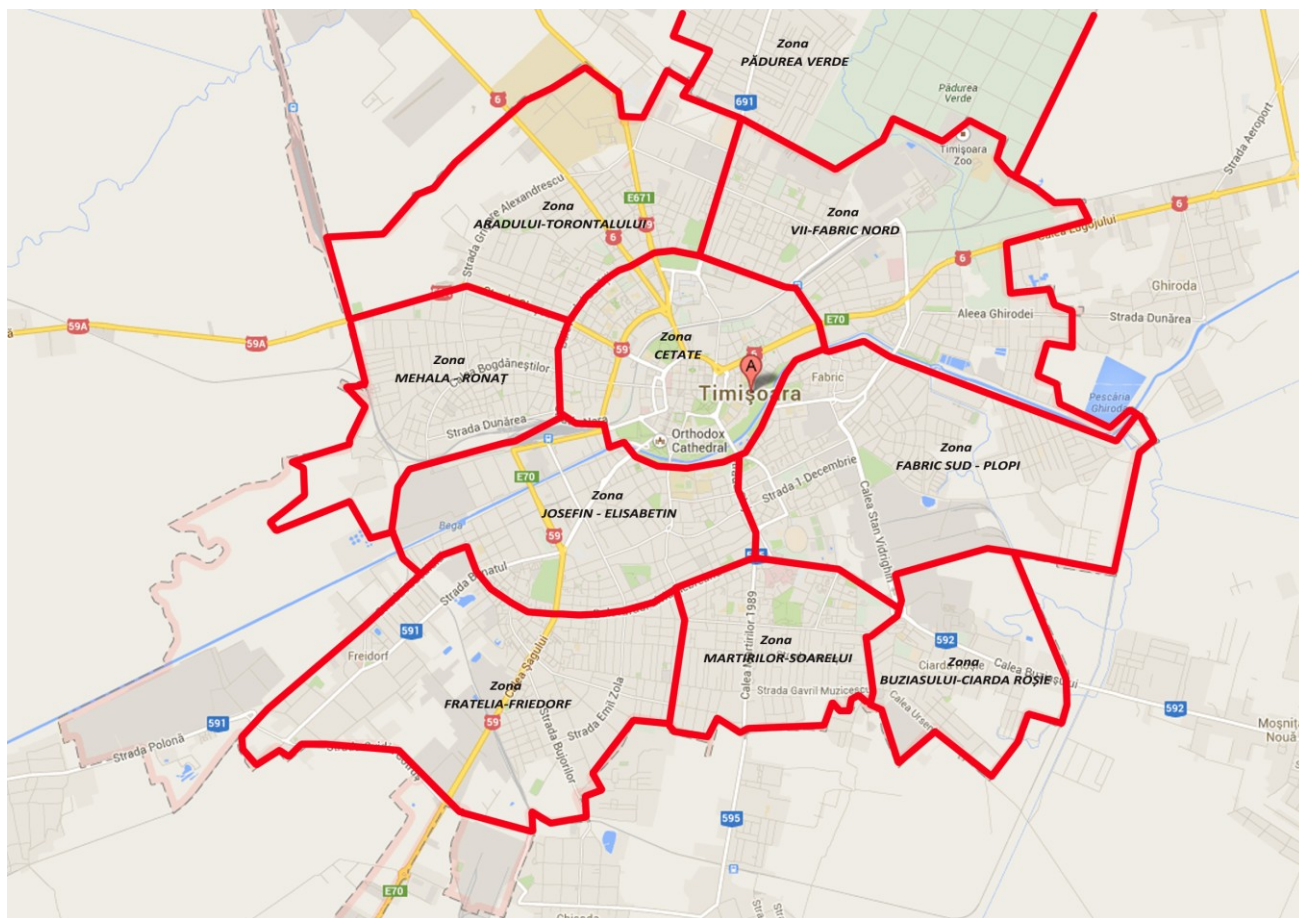


Fig.1 The map of Timisoara with the ten districts marked