

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF ACTIVE RECREATION - DIRT PARK

Elisabeta DOBRESCU

University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, Landscape Architecture,
Biodiversity and Ornamental Horticulture Department, 59 Mărăști, District 1,
011464, Bucharest, Romania, tel./fax +4021.318.36.36

Corresponding author email: vera@diviziagrada.ro

Abstract

If at the beginning of the last century the landscape was perceived mostly as artistic, functional, ambient, economical, social, at the beginning of this millennium it gains in addition a new quality, given by cultural weight and the mark it leaves by the utility and the "consumption" of the landscape. Cultural and daily landscape falls within the line of sight of urban and landscape architects, sociologists, geographers, anthropologists, and in all domains of activity that are linked to landscape, requiring special measures for its protection and conservation (European Convention of Landscape – Florence 2000). Representing an important component of ecological, social, and cultural domain, the landscape is also a resource that contributes to improving the quality of human lives, and it could generate economical activities in the context of maintaining the harmonious balance between social, economical and environmental needs. In terms of the super- technologization of most activities, outdoor recreation becomes a physiological need for people in general and teenagers in particular. Social studies show that, in the urban environment, time spent outdoors is greater at the end of the week than during it, and the social groups who frequent these urban and suburban landscapes are mostly teenagers and children (Iliescu, 2003). These social groups (in personal development) need special attractions, capable to spark their interest and to compensate for their need of adrenaline. In this context, our study succeeded in answering social challenges to create in a small place, but sufficiently big enough to be declared the biggest in Romania, the first landscaped Dirt Park that's made by the technical and constructive requirements of spaces for extreme sports on bikes, but also for spending time outside. It's about a landscaping project for a surface of 5000s.m., designed to attract teens from the northern part of the capital, passionate bikers, and thought as a challenge by the fact that we wanted to implement it in a public-private partnership. The landscaping project of the first Dirt Park of this size in Romania was carried out by its construction on the field, so in two months after the theme debut, it was finalized and officially opened.

Key words: landscape theme, extreme sport, partnerships

INTRODUCTION

In this scientific paper a common issue in the contemporary city is addressed: the more and more pronounced gap between the need to diversify forms of recreation in public space and limited supply that can benefit (Oswalt, 2005).

I also watched both the harmful effects of this phenomenon, and (especially) effective ways to counter this situation.

In a context in which most cities do not provide even a minimum of quality regarding public space to the population, and also, their peripheries know a large development period, it is to be observed only paradoxically that an

upward evolution in residential segment is followed closely by that of services.

These new territorial expansions in the city are at best only small local centers of social focus. Even if developers provide these new areas, ensuring an optimal level of functional features designed to head off as many of the needs of the community as possible, the intended effect is far from achieved.

It is frequently found that these extremely important issues are neglected or omitted: encouraging social cohesion, encouraging space engagement, developing a local sense of belonging, *creating a unique center of attraction which is the local identity of the*

territory and could generate an attractive pole of interest city-wide (Kevin Lynch, 1960).

In this context of new regional development authorities looms opportunity to create various objectives in these areas, unique to urban: green feathers, sports and theme parks.

For example, an entire city sports complex offering the benefit of a set that includes a wide range of special facilities long expected by athletes and by users of urban recreational space was founded in the peripheral area of the city of Copenhagen 2009 (Figure 1-4).

The project's title is "Plug and Play", it has an area of about 25 000 square meters and it is the newest and most attractive socio- economic center of the city.

Residential areas surrounding the sports complex have known a flourishing period, and residents on the outskirts are involved in the most active form of social interaction. (<http://www.landezine.com>).



Figure 1. Design proposal



Figure 2. The site, before and after



Figure 3. Day of opening



Figure 4. Dirt Park

Starting from the assumptions stated above we propose a scientific approach whose purpose is to track the impact of a similar resolution such as "Plug and Play" in Copenhagen being applied in the context of Romanian urban civilization.

To clearly underline what is the impact of a project such as this one on the evolution of social life in public space, and the urban space, first a series of specific landscape analysis aimed to identify areas and activities appropriate to the scientific approach were undertaken, then a project that is suitable for the function space and chosen was executed, and finally, the implementation and execution of a landscaping project with special character – a Dirt Park.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The main issues pursued in the analysis were: delimitation of the administrative area of interest, mainly monofunctional spaces (especially residential neighborhoods), accessibility by residents of that area and by all other citizens of the city, openness of the local community the initiatives of this kind, degree of involvement and the level of interest of the locals on the quality of life in public space. (LaGro, James, 2001)

A number of sociological surveys conducted among young people (the main segment that generates the need to diversify forms of recreation and public space typologies of consumption) highlighted the growing interest in alternative transportation, mainly by bicycle. This further advocates the need for establishing a comprehensive system, consistent and safe bicycle lanes and simultaneously, for special areas that provide entertainment and attractiveness of this trend affiliates.

On the other hand general urban plans were studied, zoning and detailed areas in the city, from its periphery or within the perimeter of the Bucharest metropolitan area in order to identify a suitable area in all respects to highlight the impact of implementing such a program.

The summary of the analysis indicated the point of the site, the north of Bucharest metropolitan area, with a very dense residential sector lacking alternative recreation among youth segments. Very suitable in terms of territory and the distance from downtown (38 km - the distance that can be covered easily by bike), the location - Corbeanca residential neighborhood – was designated.

The program was implemented as an interpretation of the results of sociological analysis conducted among young people in the neighborhood and the surrounding areas, who mentioned the Dirt Park as the most suitable theme.

The entire analytical process was completed by developing professional landscape designs, studied both from a technical standpoint (ramps and Dirt Park's trails) and the aesthetic. With the goal of creating a coherent whole, which integrated a landscape solution that is to be modern, multifunctional, versatile and meet all the necessities and the specific standards of any dirt park, the final project was selected from three analysed alternatives. These projects were also presented to representatives of the local community, which in turn, reviewed proposed designs and decided, along with the people involved voluntarily in this endeavor, the winning option to be implemented. (Figure 5-8)



Figure 5. Design proposal. Var. 1



Figure 6. Design proposal. Var. 2

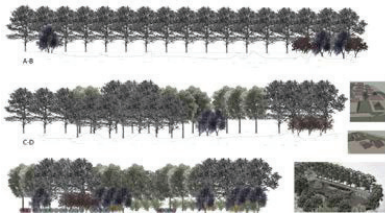


Figure 7. Design proposal. Var. 3



Figure 8. Design proposal. Var. 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The execution of this project involved successive stages of each landscaping project, debuting with site organization, procurement of raw materials and equipment necessary for the execution of terrain and specific buildings, ending with lawn works and finishing touches to the whole ensemble.

The step of site organization and the training of persons who volunteered in this initiative was also a highly significant benefit to the community because of the fact that there was an exchange of experience and information between residents and experts in various fields such as engineering construction, landscaping, horticulture, PR, arts, etc. (Figure 9-11).

The next step was to picket and field tracing of the elements that will constitute the "matter" of the future design. In this stage descriptive geometry and topography knowledge were used in order to make precise measurement of these elements in the field.

Ramps necessary for the execution of varying degrees in difficulty path have been executed both by mechanical means, the main embankment, and hand finishing, the level of detail.

One very interesting aspect of this project was that although ramp parameters, technically calculated in terms of difficulty level of medium and small, meeting all the needs expressed by users of the park, they had to be recalculated and adjusted, along with future beneficiaries of this extreme park to meet an emphasized off-road character.

Circulations and plant components were organized in a natural manner so they meet simultaneously strictly functional purposes while decorative aspect and ambient were also key elements of the project.



Figure 9. Work site management



Figure 10. Beginning the work site

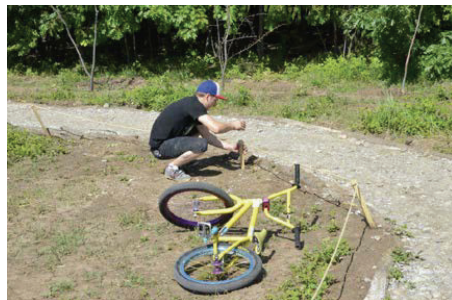


Figure 11. Volunteer helping the construction of pathways

Constructive wooden elements are part of the design, providing a wide range of functions, from the starting ramp of the Dirt Park to the mini stage or exhibition facility.

The official opening day of Corbeanca's Dirt Park took place on May 25, 2013.

Project execution took about 30 days and involved local authorities, various sponsors, local community, local materials and manpower, and not least the work of volunteers and enthusiasts.

The Dirt Park opening event, the largest park of this kind in the country, at the time, was well publicized, both on the internet (websites, blogs, and social networks) and on television stations. This has led to a large number of visitors attracted directly by the new facility that has been made available, but also generally curious people.

Residential District incorporated their new territory. Young people, especially, but also the elderly, were present. They were excited by what they've seen and also thrilled about the new space that is intended for them. (Figure 12-20)

The Dirt Park site is considered by locals, a legible, attractive, open, secure, interactive and versatile space, these being some of the main qualities that public space, or space in general should possess (Lawson, 2001).



Figure 12. Easy wood structures



Figure 13. Planting trees

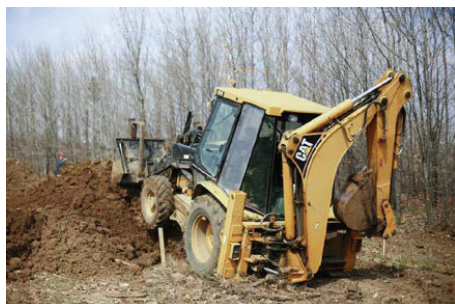


Figure 14. Mechanized execution ramps



Figure 15. Design in middle stages



Figure 16. The ramps

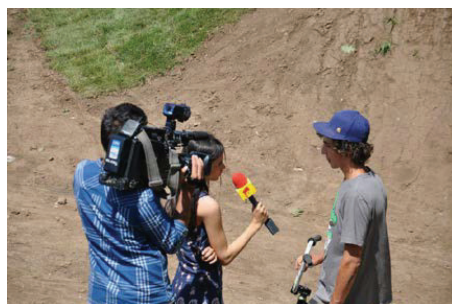


Figure 17. Media involvement



Figure 18. First starters



Figure 19. Alternative uses of space
(music and dance)



Figure 20. Alternative uses of space
(rest)

CONCLUSIONS

With the establishment of the Dirt Park, the local community was strongly encouraged to be involved in such approaches currently scrolling down a number of other projects generated by its own initiators.

These actions are aimed at increasing community improvement issues related to

quality of life, and to solve certain problems faced at the local level.

The most relevant aspect of this research is the fact that the local community has understood and learned the benefit of active and voluntary involvement in identifying and fulfilling the interests of the common law.

People have realized that an overview is generated through dialogue and improvement of community life is determined by personal involvement in view of achieving that vision.

REFERENCES

- LaGro, James A., 2001. Site analysis, Wiley and Sons.
- Lawson B., 2001. The language of the space, British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.
- Lynch K., 1960. The image of the city, Harvard U.P., Oxford U.P
- Oswalt P., 2005. Shrinking cities. Vol. 1. University of Virginia.
www.landezine.com