



**INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DESIGN FOR
THE STRENGTHENING OF IDENTITY AND CULTURAL
TOURISM IN THE DANUBE CITIES - **SMEDEREVO****

INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND DESIGN FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF IDENTITY AND CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE DANUBE CITIES - **SMEDEREVO**

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3 **IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE PLANNING OF SMEDEREVO TERRITORY THROUGH CONCEPTS OF AGRO TOURISM AND HEALTHY CITY**

Biserka Mitrović, Tamara Vuković

IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE PLANNING OF SMEDEREVO TERRITORY THROUGH CONCEPTS OF AGRO TOURISM AND HEALTHY CITY

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ABSTRACT

The chapter presents the process, methodology and results during the development of Master thesis and Master project in 2017-18., at the Master course Integral Urbanism – Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, under the topic: Sustainable urban and spatial planning as a support for cultural identity development of the territory of the city of Smederevo. The focus of the chapter is to enlighten the pedagogical methodology, and educational and creative process which led to high quality results – projects for, and with the support of the local community of Smederevo.

The background research is rooted in ecological sustainability as the most important and possibly the most developed and implemented aspect, while other aspects of sustainability are treated as secondary. Although the ecological sustainability was mentioned 30 years ago, it remained one of the biggest concerns for the territory development and planning, equally important in urban, as well as in protected natural areas. Having in mind the resources, but also constrains of the territory of Smederevo, it was a challenge to test the applicability of different sustainable models through the development of Master thesis/projects. The complex structure of this case study of the territory showed conflicted land uses, and underutilized or derelict zones, which urged for a specific approach, detailed information base and insight into the valid planning documentation. At the same time, it was an exhaustless source of inspiration and ideas. The result was a comprehensive and multi-levelled approach to the urban planning and urban design solutions, which are feasible, implementable and acknowledged by the local authorities and experts.

KEYWORDS:

Ecological sustainability, healthy city, agro-tourism, urban planning; educational process; pedagogical methodology

1. INTRODUCTION

Under the broad topic 'Strengthening the cultural identity in Danube basin: case study of Smederevo' at the Master class within the master course Integral Urbanism at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade, various sub-topics were developed during spring semester in 2018. The scheme (Fig.1) shows the interconnection between the overall international project, topics and sub-topics.

The chapter focuses on the topic related to the sustainable urban planning as a support to cultural identity development of the territory of the city of Smederevo, which was the research area for the master thesis and projects. The first part, master thesis was based on a theoretical research grounded in broad ecological sustainability framework, as well as on the analysis of the current conditions of the territory of Smederevo. The results of the thesis created a starting point for the development of the master project, which showed the possibilities of the transferability and applicability of the chosen sustainable territorial development models on the territory of Smederevo. The aim of the master studio (Mitrović and Vuković, 2018) was to address the sustainability and educational methods in high education, as well as to promote the sustainable approach to urban planning.

Main goals were to research and test the possibilities of the implementation of the sustainable models of healthy city, eco-park and agro tourism, as well as to examine the possibilities of an advanced activation of suburban green areas in the territory of Smederevo. The other important goals were focused on implementing the principles of the integrative and sustainable urban planning, creating feasible solutions that follow a realistic planning assignment, while showing full understanding of the complex feedback between the built and natural environment.



Fig. 1 Diagram setting up a thematic framework; Author: Stanojević, M. (2018)

2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH: ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY AND ITS APPLICATION

2.1. Sustainability framework

The starting point for the creation of a concept for the Master thesis research was the ever actual and present framework of ecological sustainability. On one hand, it remains one of the most important pillars of the urban and territorial development, creating the conditions for the quality of life and preservation of nature. On the other hand, the ecological sustainability seems to have been seriously neglected in the territory of Smederevo, bearing in mind its poor ecological characteristics, low air quality and under-developed green areas. Finally, it was an inspiring way to think about the possible rebranding the Smederevo identity, through testing the new developmental models during the Master thesis and project course, aiming to contribute to the general goal of the international project related to the fostering Smederevo's cultural identity.

The concept of sustainability is well known over decades and it has proven itself as the main foundation of contemporary urban and territorial planning. Along with the social progress, the overall development of the civil society, the efficient and locally sensitive economy, natural conservation and care for the environment remains one of the most important features of the long

term general development (Haughton and Hunter, 1996). Ranging from theoretical discussions to the results and outcomes in the planning practice, the ecological sustainability is being renewed by introducing new models, defining new set of goals, and addressing arising problems, such as climate change combat, deforestation, declining quality of urban life and many more. The UN HABITAT (2004) brings the attention to the sustainable urbanisation, giving a new meaning to the relations between the aspects of sustainability and urban-rural territory. At the same time, different authors give priority to the self-sustaining communities and use of renewable resources (Choguill, 1996; Hardoy, 1992).

Globally adopted framework - Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the UN in 2015, offered the new platform for the development by 2030 and created a set of priorities. The importance of the environment is emphasized in several SCGs, targeting healthy living, sustainable cities and human settlements, protection of eco-systems, etc.

The further elaboration and applicability during the master thesis research was done in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals no. 2, 3, 11 and 15, all referring to the different development of the ecological aspect. Goal no. 2 draws attention to achieving food security and promotion of the sustainable agriculture, while Goal no. 3 is devoted to ensuring the healthy living. Goals no 11 and 15 emphasized the sustainable city and human settlements development, and protection, restoration and promotion of sustainable use of ecosystems and forests, respectively.

The global agenda on Sustainable Development Goals indubitably drew attention to the topics of interest related to the case study area of Smederevo and inspired the students and teachers to work together on new concepts that would promote and implement the core idea of the SDGs.

2.2. Healthy city concept

As it was aforementioned, the Sustainable Development

Goal no.3 (UN, 2015) was a foundation for further research of a healthy city concept, taken as a very broad approach to the city and territory development. It starts for the understanding the necessity of a healthy environment and good quality of life in urban areas (Edwards and Tsouros, 2008). The improvement of the conditions of the public health is seen as an overwhelming and constant process (WHO, 1999), while the same organisation (2009) later emphasizes that the health of population depends on conditions in the local community and the environment.

By broadening the different local community resources, improving and preserving health by enabling the citizens to be physically active in everyday life, the community is able to transform to a healthy city (Živković, 2015). According to World Health Organisation (WHO Europe, 2010), the three main characteristic, significant to the urban planning and design are: healthy living, healthy urban design and supporting environment, while at the same time it is important to ensure the adequate infrastructure and physical and social surrounding. It is necessary to develop strategies and interconnected programmes of urban development aimed at establishing a healthy urban environment. These programs need not to imply big planning interventions, rather a series of small, but intertwined actions, including preserving and reactivating of the existing green areas (Mitrović and Vuković, 2018).

The healthy city concept, as a fresh global approach offered various possibilities for the research and implementation within the Master thesis and Master project, from raising the awareness of the need for healthy lifestyle to the overcoming of the negative impacts on the Smederevo environment.

2.3. Eco-park concept

During the research phase of the Master thesis and Master project that focused around the creation of a healthy green network, a connection between the healthy city concept and the eco-park model was found.

Eco-parks primarily fall into the domain of ecological sustainability, preserving the natural elements of an area while adapting to climate change and changes in the biosphere, while also offering solutions that are economically self-sufficient and being able to convey specific characteristics of a local culture (Rahnama and Razzaghian, 2012). They are a way to create a specific type of activity within an urban or non-urban green area, which can incorporate very different functional elements and open green spaces meant for recreation and public use, such as in Fig. 2. These parks can be implemented anywhere and also function as a way to minimize the effects of different types of pollution and preserve the local flora and fauna, while trying to avoid the integration of new, non-native species. (Cranz and Boland, 2003).

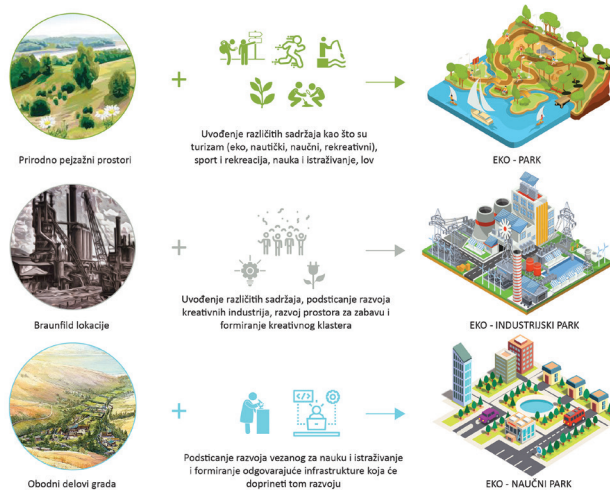


Fig. 2 Typology of Eco-parks (Author: Mila Stojanović)

After a broader and thorough theoretical analysis in the Master thesis, the model identified as the preferable type of eco-park was determined. It was seen as an open public green space that would meet the needs of its users, while also emphasizing the qualities of the natural landscape. Activities such as research and education

can also be incorporated within it, and they can help in making the area more attractive for different types of visitors. Each eco-park should work on developing a connection between different open space fragments, striving to create a cohesive and clear network that should work towards the increase of social and individual well-being as well as benefit the natural environment. (Razzaghian and Rahnama, 2012)

2.4. Agro-tourism concept

The other students' work on Master thesis and project dealt with examining the potential benefits and developmental possibilities of rural areas within the municipality of Smederevo through the agro-tourism concept as one of the possible ways to promote sustainable agricultural and rural development.

In the last decade, several ways of defining and understanding the term of agro-tourism have emerged. The topic remains widely debated by experts, leaving the concept without a clear and widely accepted consensus over its meaning. The main cause of this debate is due to the many overlapping and intertwined terms that can be and are used to describe tourism in rural areas. Terminology such as 'rural tourism', 'farm based tourism', 'agritourism', 'farm tourism' or 'agro-tourism' is very often used interchangeably by different authors, whereas others underline the importance of distinguishing these labels that should be meant to define different conceptual frameworks and spatial or functional typologies that encompass a specific form of tourist activities in a non-urban setting. (Phillip at al., 2010)

Agro-tourism is mainly seen as a tourist activity specific for rural areas, where the service providers are individuals whose main occupation is within the field of agriculture, where certain authors emphasize its typically small scale and family or co-operative organization model as some of its defining characteristics. (Phillip at al., 2010) The scope of activities that can be present in such complexes can vary greatly and can range from just basic accommodation for the visitors, to a more participation based framework

where the tourists engage in day to day farming activities to a different extent, while sometimes including other activities, such as education. These different variations of the concept and its typological variety can be seen on the diagram below (Fig.3).

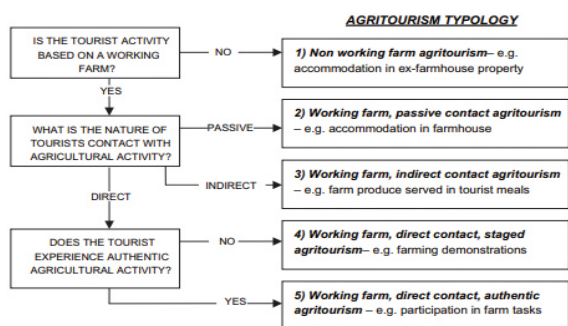


Fig. 3 A typology for defining Agro-tourism(Source: <http://ma-caulay.webarchive.hutton.ac.uk/LADSS/papers/AgritourisAgri-tourismTyp.pdf> / Author: Sharon Philips at al (2010))

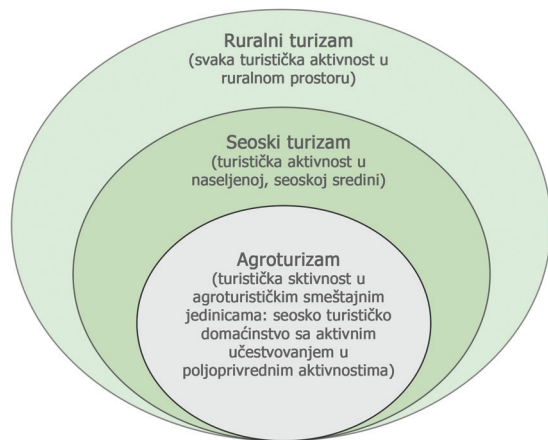


Fig. 4 Simplified diagram showing the relationship between the different theoretical frameworks of different types of tourism in rural areas (Author:Nevena Čirić)

Due to the challenge of this topic, the work on the Master thesis project set a significant focus on defining the terminology of the theoretical framework in and by itself. The conclusion that emerged from the research determined that agro-tourism was as a specific subgroup of rural tourism, defined as any type of tourist activity in the non-urban setting (Ammirato and Felicetti, 2013), that is primarily located within an rural settlement, that offers the visitors to take a part in the agricultural production through a wider array of educational and recreational activities (Shembekar, 2016, p.2) trying to emerge them into the 'rural way of life' (as seen on Fig.4).

3. METHODOLOGY APPROACH

The topic: 'Sustainable urban and spatial planning as a support for cultural identity development of the territory of Smederevo', conducted by B. Mitrović and T. Vuković was a general framework for the Master thesis and project. The aim of this studio was to foster and promote sustainability and contemporary approach to the urban and territorial planning in high education, as well as to achieve the development of skills on specific knowledge. Furthermore, it was important to address the understanding the relations between natural and artificial surroundings (Mitrović at al, 2017).

Master thesis comprised of two parts: research related to the case study of Smederevo territory, and theoretical discussion about the relevant sustainable concepts. The content research was related to the valid plans and studies of Smederevo.

The main task of the master project was to use and implement the above said research results and to offer feasible and implementable solutions, which are both contextually specific and modern.

While the research model for the master thesis was based on the case study methodology approach and analysis, the master project was mainly based on the educational model used in a studio. This model is commonly used in architectural and urban planning studios and is

widely approved, since it is most appropriate form for enhancing students' levels of expertise through practical learning and applying learning-by-doing approach. Though this methodological approach was criticized, it has been proven that students achieve high levels of expertise through practical learning, as students are the best inspired to learn while engaged in solving problems (Schön, 1983; Gibbs, 1988; Casakin and van Timmeren, 2014; Mitrović and Vuković, 2018). The importance of the studio in architectural and urban planning education is the reason why it represents the core of its curriculum.

The three main pillars of the work in studio are: the theoretical part skills, taught by practice and demonstration and creating (Chakradeo, 2010).

The master project enabled the creation of solutions at different planning levels, thus presenting the strategic and general approach as well as regulatory detailed solutions. It covered the diversification of the activities, but also the proposals for the future capacities, in accordance with the realistic conditions of the chosen case study area.

4. CASE STUDY OF SMEDEREVO

Due to its many developmental possibilities as well as challenges, the city of Smederevo was chosen in collaboration with Interreg and the DANUrB project as a fitting location for the realization of the 2018 Master course. With a very diverse range of areas that showcased mutually unsupported land usage, as well as an even greater amount of underdeveloped or underutilized areas, the case study territory presented itself as a very fertile ground for implementing contemporary and sustainable planning solutions. By utilizing the existing spatial framework, available detailed information base, official planning documentation, and by examining the complexity of the region, the students could test out new and diverse theoretical concepts, which could directly or to a certain extent, be spatially implemented through multi-level solutions.

4.1. General characteristics

Located in the Podunavlje District of eastern Serbia, Smederevo is a city defined by medieval history, heavy industrialization, agricultural tradition and the Danube river. All of these elements combined, make the area a cultural and social melting pot with undeniable developmental potential and regional importance, identified and further emphasized by the current Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (2011), while also of international importance due to it being an integral part of the European water transportation network.

The contemporary social, economic and environmental problems that emerged in this area are closely tied to its course of urban and industrial development in the mid and late 20th century. The then built heavy industrial facilities left a great impact on the region, and also determined its current course of progress while shifting the primary focus away from its historical and natural resources. Today the City of Smederevo is a highly polluted environment and the importance of adequate regulatory actions are stressed, as well as the implementation of the general principles of sustainable development. (Miladinović, S., et al. 2013)

Preservation, renewal, and densification of the existing green areas were identified as one of the courses of action that can be taken as a good step in this more environmentally friendly direction, going hand in hand with other actions focussed around the improvement of human health and overall quality of life. This problem corresponds with the idea of refocusing certain aspects of local economic growth towards other means of production, utilizing the city's many agricultural and natural resources. The spatial analysis, done through the course, showed that through natural and untouched green areas within the municipality of Smederevo are scarce, there is a considerable amount of areas that are used for farming (approximately around 81%), thus this aspect was also identified as one of the possible ways of stimulating development in the area.

The two aforementioned issues identified through

extensive research during the course of the Master thesis/project also represented the initial sparks that later on formed the students' final conceptual and theoretical framework.

4.2. Specific characteristic regarding reviving tributary green areas

The analysis of the territory of the city of Smederevo, in accordance with the Spatial Plan of the City of Smederevo, 2010 - 2015 - 2020, shows that there are four distinguished types of landscapes within it:

- Natural,
- Urban,
- Suburban, and
- Cultivated

Within the plan there is a special category classified as natural and cultural landscapes, all of them being areas that showcase a representative aspect of the city's cultural heritage and identity. These specific locations have suffered greatly due to human influence and are scattered throughout the borders of the area of Smederevo most being in bad shape or underutilized. (Mitrović and Vuković, 2018)

The Regional Spatial Plan of Podunavlje and Braničevo Administrative District (2015) underlines that the city of Smederevo is a 'black spot' with highly polluted and endangered environment. The untouched natural green areas of the municipality are very scarce and confined to the Danube river's tributary spaces, the very few areas that fall into the category of the mentioned natural and cultural landscapes and even fewer protected natural areas.

It is important to underline that the Smederevska Ada, an island located in the Danube river in the close proximity to the city's urban centre, which was identified as one of the most important natural resource and locations for potential development in the Spatial Plan of the City of Smederevo, 2010 - 2015 - 2020, does not fall under the jurisdiction of the city of Smederevo and administratively

belongs to the municipality of Kovin (located on the other side of the Danube river).

4.3. Specific characteristics regarding potentials for agro-tourism

One of the most distinguished qualities of the municipality of Smederevo is its vast amount of agricultural areas, and the majority of its population resides in non-urban settlements. A deeper analysis of this region showed that the very favourable climate, fertile soil and other natural resources contributed to the development of this phenomenon. The most predominant activity in this production sector is focused around pomiculture and viticulture in the western regions of the municipality, while the presence of animal husbandry and olericulture is more dominant in its eastern parts. The strategy for agricultural and rural development of the city of Smederevo for the period of 2015-2020 defined the most suitable areas for further growth of this area of development, defining the south-western territories of Smederevo as the most important ones.

Though spatially prevalent, further research determined that agriculture does not represent a dominant field of work for the local population, thus leaving space for further exploration of this phenomenon and also left the possibility to broaden the scope of possible and implementable rural activities.

5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

As aforementioned, the urban area of the city of Smederevo is characterized by a high level of pollution, which urges for action towards creating a healthier and more sustainable environment. The creation of a green network that would spread from the city's urban centre to the farthest outskirts of the municipality area was proposed as a solution to this ever growing concern. The diagram below shows the key elements of the concept of green route (Fig. 5), starting from the city core, stretching by Šalinac lake and Šalinac grove

[Serb. Šalinački lug] and ending at the Great Morava [Serb. Velika Morava] confluence.

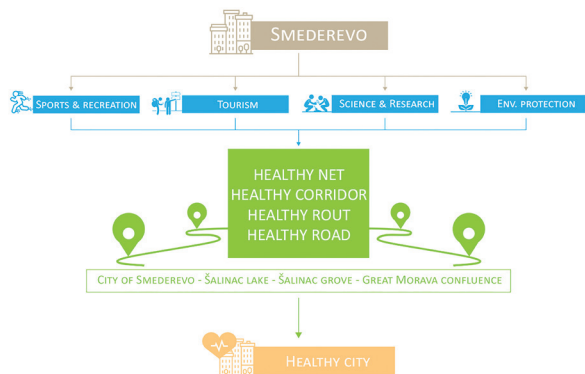


Fig. 5 Diagram of the key elements of the green route concept (Author: Mila Stojanović)

The improvement of this environmental, but also social aspect, was chosen to be implemented through the use of principles of the healthy city concept. The basis of the theoretical framework was the starting point for determining the needed dominant activities and spaces suitable for such an endeavour, which enabled the development of a contemporary and feasible solution and final project. Through the analysis of the Spatial Plan of the City of Smederevo, 2010 – 2015 – 2020 and the important existing natural and cultural landscapes that were identified through it, main points of the envisioned green route were determined, with the most distinguished one being the Šalinac grove [Serb. Šalinački lug] - one of the few protected natural areas in the city of Smederevo.

A detailed proposal was given for the four points of the network (Fig 6), each encompassing a very diverse list of activities meant for different groups of users – both inhabitants and visitors, such as: recreation, leisure, entertainment, culture and education, as well as new forms of tourism, with a detailed program and

assessment being given. The main goal was to connect places with different, but compatible attributes, thus achieving attractiveness in different ways. The attractiveness ought to be achieved through the set of criteria: identity, diversity of ambients and activities, compatibility, optimal capacity related to the environmental protection, uniqueness, and branding the green places.

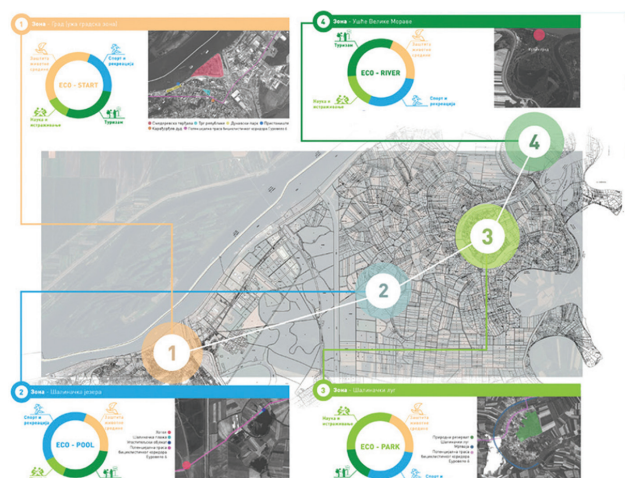


Fig. 6 Illustration of the proposed 'eco-route' concept (Author: Mila Stojanović)

These green nodes were treated as mix-use areas with one distinct predominant function based on their existing characteristics and their location within the network. These four main nodes of the network were:

1. The urban centre of Smederevo – 'Eco-start', seen as a place of gathering which offers a variety of educational, recreational and cultural activities. It was named a starting point because of its potential for raising awareness of a healthy lifestyle and environmental preservation and improvement, as well as of its importance.

2. The Šalinac lakes [Serb. Šalinačka jezera, named 'Eco pool', being close to the city centre, can serve as a highly active, sports and recreational centre. It was aimed to be visited and used both by the tourists and farther visitors, as well as by the local community. 'Eco pool' is planned to contain open courts, areas designated for sports manifestations, playgrounds, recreational tracks, healthy food restaurants and shops, but also tourist capacities (hotels). It included the revived beach area by the lake as well.
3. The Šalinac grove [Serb. Šalinački lug] was named 'Eco park' because of its rare natural features and protected resources and serves as the main point along the green route. Its basic and dominant activities and land uses include science, research and education. There were several specific planned capacities for accommodation, designated for scientists, researchers, experts and specific types of tourists. Within the highly protected area of the grove the building capacities are prohibited.
4. The confluence of the Great Morava [Serb. Velika Morava], called 'Eco river' represents the last point in green route and marks yet another specific type of green area - untouched natural beauty, combined with the important archaeological site of Kulič city [Serb. Kulič grad]. Other than existing cultural heritage, the area includes museum and the space for cultural manifestations, in the way that they correspond well with the untouched greenery.

During the research phase and through the Master thesis a connection between the healthy city concept and the eco-park model was found, and each of the segments was examined in details in order to conduct a study of planning possibilities that would accommodate such a complex model within it. The final outcome was a detailed regulation plan of the Šalinac settlement where the protected area of the Šalinac grove [Serb. Šalinački lug] is located. The aim was to

preserve, reactivate and redevelop the existing green and built areas, while also developing a new and very specific function within the treated space - the eco-park complex. This way it was possible to introduce a new and contemporary uses in ecologically sustainable and implementable manner.

The concept based on the improvement of agricultural areas was examined through the other Master thesis and project in the course, and it was focused on the betterment of the local economy by introducing agrotourism as a new means of developmental focus in the area. The main idea was to determine the most suitable locations throughout the territory of the Smederevo municipality (Fig. 7)

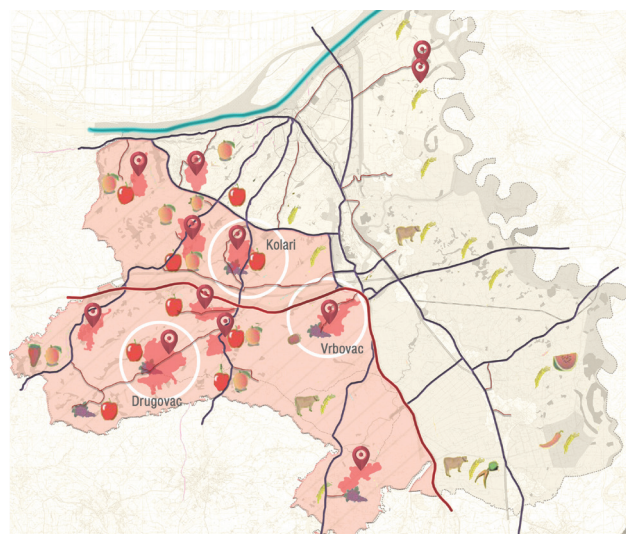


Fig. 7 Diagram depicting possible suitable locations for the development of agro-tourism with the three most favourable ones visually highlighted (Author: Nevena Čirić)

These areas would serve as a possible testing ground for the development of an implementation model conceived during the course of the Master thesis and

previous phases of the Master project. The mentioned model represented a detailed list of possible structures and activities in such complexes and their optimal spatial distribution, and capacities, desirable stylistic characteristics, and all their possible interconnections. The goal was to create a common scheme that could be implemented within different types of existing settlements found in the area of Smederevo. During this phase, the possible users of such agro-tourism complexes were also determined through a detailed analysis, with the focus never shifting away from the needs and benefits of the local population. The settlements of Kolari, Dragutinovac and Vrbovac were chosen to test out this concept, resulting in a project that showcased the implemented model in its optimal proposed form, using the previously established guidelines within one of them.

The main quality of this approach and project is that they opened up a great topic concerning the possibility of creating solutions that can be directly put into effect by the members of local communities in rural areas and also scratched upon an even wider topic of standardization of the existing and currently non-uniform concepts of agro-tourism and its many different possible spatial practices.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The presented theoretical approaches, methods, case study and results show the advantages of the implementation of the chosen integrated approach both to the field of urban planning as much as to the educational model. Combining different educational methods has proven itself as efficient and effective to the students and teachers, as well as to the local community of Smederevo.

Though being led through the firm methodological structure, students were able to develop their own unique concepts and to express their affinities, at the same time beneficial to the local authorities.

The special quality of the results is tied to the fact that the local professionals were involved in the educational process from the very beginning till the end. The collaboration was expressed through the information basis, guided field work, the discussion of the chosen topics and areas, and finally through the discussion about the results and projects. This has given the students the chance to feel as a part of the planning process, so the educational model worked as a simulation of a professional practice in the area of urban planning.

The approval of the chosen approaches is shown through the extended interest of the local community and their planning experts and authorities, though the exhibition of the students' master thesis and project, as well as through the public presentation in the City hall of Smederevo.

The addressed locally specific problems and the interdisciplinary approach to solving it prepared the students to tackle future professional challenges.

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