The endangered parks of Timisoara

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Abstract Though the town of Timisoara once was famous for its parks, today the green space of the town are more and more endangered by the new buildings which are built in greater and greater numbers on pieces of land that used to be green. Because of the lack of an adecvated legal system and an acceptable urban policy, parks lose parts of their surface year by year in the benefit of new buildings. The cause is a real estate market that doesn't function in an appropriate way. The green surfaces of towns are anyway exposed to pollution, traffic, insufficient number of parking lots. This is the reason why they must be protected and not endangered by introducing on their surface of great buildings. Ecological studies show that it is important to find solutions to this problem in a short time.

During the last century the town of Timisoara developed a lot, and during this development many new parks and green spaces appeared in the central region and in different quarters. After the walls of the fortifications were demolished more than a century ago, a great part of the freed land became green space. Timisoara was in time famous for its parks and flowers, and it really had many nice green spaces compared to other towns of the country. Even if many of some of these green spaces lack any style or are surfaces of land simply planted with trees and bushes, the general image of Timisoara used to be pleasant mainly because of these green areas which spread all around the central part of the town. Surprisingly, even Timisoara with its many parks is for the moment on the list of the towns of Romania where the percentage of green space doesn’t agree with the requirements of the European Union.

In such a situation we would expect that new green spaces should be created in order to achieve the necessary standards. Instead of this in a strange way we are confronted with the reality that the parks of Timisoara are visibly diminishing day by day, and new initiatives appear in order to transform green space into building sites. We should mention some recent cases that can be seen by everyone crossing the town.

One of these cases is Poporului Park, one of the oldest of the town designed a century ago by the architect Szekely Laszlo. With its old oak trees and nice alleys it is a pleasant place of Timisoara, historically the second designed green space of the town. A couple of years ago investors snatched a part of the land and built a hotel in one end of the surface, while the local electricity company built a big office building exactly on the limit of the park with all its windows looking on it. Recently a former cinema situated in the park is on the way to be transformed and connected to an enormous office building which is appearing on the site continuing the front of the already existing building of the electricity company. Though it seems that legally everything is correct, in reality the park has lost territory on all parts, trees have been cut, and is becoming the backgarden of some office buildings. In front of the police office of Timis County, on the opposite side of the street, a former green space is on the way to be sold to an investor who is intending to create there an office building or a block of flats. This way another little green square is disappearing.

Behind the Central Post Office of Timisoara, on the edge of a park, on green space an enormous building is constructed. Green spaces have been sacrificed in Timisoara also for the purpose of building churches in different parts of the town. But the worst of all these attempts, which luckily did not succeed, was the plan to transform the Children’s Park of Timisoara into a kind of Disneyland with buildings all around in order to accommodate restaurants, bars, gambling shops, buildings for fun business and offices.

If this process will continue, on a long term, we can count on a serious impact on the outlook of the urban space of Timisoara, and on the ecological state of the town. We must consider also the devastating effects that these changes will cause because the town will become more and more dense and the problem of parking cars will become more and more difficult to solve. Though the Town Hall is making efforts to protect green areas and to furnish parks with better benches, alleys and playgrounds, these cannot counterbalance the devastating effect of building in green areas. The new buildings not only invade green space, but they influence in a negative way the green territory as a whole, destroying their unity and in many
cases subordinating them. Plants are disturbed also by the great quantities of concrete that absorb water during their solidification. Construction also pollute the green spaces with different chemical substances especially during the building process. Buildings also shade entire parts of the green areas, and take away the view of the visitors.

It is obvious that measures should be taken quickly in order to stop the process before more damage is done to the parks of Timisoara which are already exposed to pollution and to the negative effects of growing population and an ever growing number of cars. The whole problem is created by an out of control real estate market which created enormous artificial prices for any piece of land situated in central town. This resulted in an unprecedented pressure over any available piece of land on which theoretically something could be built. The parks of Timisoara shouldn’t become the victims of a real estate market that doesn’t function in a normal way. Many pieces of land become private property before being used, because they are regained in court by former owners who lost their property during the communist regime. These people or their representatives try to recover their fortune in a natural way. It is regrettable that the state mechanism that should protect public property doesn’t work always as it should, leaving free way to changes that are undesired by the population of the town.

The ecologically fragile parks of the towns, exposed anyway to many dangers as pollution and traffic should be protected in due time by an adequate urban policy and legal system.

Results and Discussions

If the process that began a few years ago will continue, the green spaces of Timisoara will shrink in favour of great buildings which will destroy them. Social, economical, and ecological studies show that dense towns with little and fragmented green spaces are not proper for living in a healthy way. The process should be stopped quickly before it does more harm to an anyway fragile ecological urban system.

Conclusions

1. More and more green spaces of Timisoara are influenced by the way the real estate market works. Certain groups of investors try to transform the parks of Timisoara into building sites.
2. The ecological systems of urban parks with an anyway fragile structure cannot be endangered by the construction of multi-store buildings on their territory. Without immediate action great damage can be made to the green spaces of the town.

References

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