

From Historical Landscape Remains to a Tourism Product: Processes and Synergies in Cultural Landscape Development (Case Study of the Tribeč Mountains - Slovakia)

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Abstract

The study addresses the interdisciplinary subject of researching the remains of historical landscape structures and their use in tourism. The main objective of the paper is to demonstrate the importance of studying historical landscape elements and mosaics in the context of tourism development and to identify the relationships that arise in this process, with an emphasis on maintaining synergistic development. The investigation outputs (the Model of processes and Determinants of synergy) are based on a case study focused on research in the Kožová locality in the Tribeč Mountains in Slovakia.

Keywords: cultural landscape, historical landscape elements and mosaics, cultural landscape and tourism, tourism development, process-based model, synergistic effects

1. Introduction

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention defines cultural landscape as: "a combined work of nature and a man" [1]. Mountainous, predominantly forested areas in Central Europe can also be considered as a cultural landscape. The mostly commercial forest cover has often contributed to the preservation of original historical landscape elements and mosaics (HLEM), which are an evidence of human activity in the recent and distant past. In contrast to valleys and lowlands, these remains of historical landscape structure (RHLS) have not been subjected to intense anthropogenic pressure. Consequently, they have been preserved in a more complex form.

Similar processes also took place in the Tribeč Mountains range, specifically within the Veľký Tribeč subrange and the Čerešňový potok valley. In the Kožová locality, the remains of the Veľčice tower house, a mining reservoir, an old gold mining site, and a presumed buried entrance to an adit or a mill are located in close proximity. The mentioned historical landscape elements (HLE) were selected as the object of further research with an emphasis on their transformation into a tourism product.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the importance of studying HLEM in the context of tourism development and to identify the relationships that arise in this process, with an emphasis on maintaining synergistic development. A distinctive attribute of this process is the correlation between scientific research and its practical application.

The main objective is also linked to the research question, which was formulated as follows: What processes and determinants enable the sustainable use of RHLS in tourism, and how can they be conceptualized into a model applicable at the local level?

2. Theory and literature review

Since this study is based on the terminology of two different scientific disciplines, this chapter also presents selected definitions and theoretical principles related to the topics of cultural landscape and tourism.

2.1 The landscape, its categories and structure

Landscape is an entity that is the subject of interest for many scientific disciplines. Each of them has developed a large number of approaches to study it.

According to the European Landscape Convention, we can define it as: "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" [2].

The authors of this article focus on its secondary part – the cultural landscape. Angelis-Dimakis et al. [3] mention that this term was first used by the geographer Schlüter at the beginning of the 20th century. His concept was later successfully developed by Sauer, who claimed that: "the cultural landscape is shaped from the natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result". [4] By the end of the 20th century, this term was already in common use in many scientific disciplines. The cultural landscapes began to be categorized and protected [5].

UNESCO's efforts to preserve specific forms of cultural landscape have contributed to the development of their perception in the context of tourism. The cultural landscape and its "genius loci" create a visual aspect that includes elements of primary and secondary tourism resources, or may itself generate demand for tourism as a whole [7].

In the context of the objectives of this paper, it is necessary to present the structure of the landscape. It consists of primary (natural), secondary (cultural; we divide it into historical landscape structure and current landscape structure) and tertiary (socio-economic) parts [8].

During the research, HLE and historical landscape mosaics (HLM) were the subject of interest. These are found in the current landscape structure but represent RHLS. The HLE identified during the investigation: the Velčice tower house, a gold mining site, an adit/mill, and a mining reservoir, can be described as disappearing because they are no longer actively used, but their form remains from the past. In terms of Huba's typology [9], they can be associated with military and mining activities. Most of them are being point and small-scale technical forms and objects. In terms of the connection of historical landscape structures to the timeline [10], the studied area was classified as a landscape from the High and Late Middle Ages.

2.2 Tourism

Tourism can be defined as: "a set of relationships and phenomena resulting from the travel or stay of persons, where the place of stay is not the main or permanent place of residence and employment" [11].

Tourism resources represent a set of elements that, in various combinations, form tourism goods and services [12]. In our case, the target offer is carried by the destination (the location under study). This represents an element of the primary tourism resources, which, according to Oriška [13], is characterised by the natural and cultural-historical potential of the landscape.

In terms of tourism forms [40], the studied HLE represent potential for recreational and cultural-educational tourism. According to Oriška's [13] categorization, the research site has potential for the development of information, sports and recreational, and cultural and social services.

The development of tourism in the cultural landscape is carried out in order to satisfy the needs of the tourism participants. According to Gúčík [12], this term refers to a person who is the focus of all efforts in tourism, whether they are a resident, a day tripper (travel time less than 24 hours), or a tourist (travel time longer than 24 hours). Needs are satisfied through a tourism product, which may be a single service or a package of services [14].

2.3 Cultural landscape and tourism

The cultural landscape has an important role in the ecological and cultural sphere and is a resource that is beneficial for economic activity, especially tourism [15]. Its use in the economic sector can have a positive impact on global competitiveness and the development of tourist destinations, in the context of its favorable influence on the recognition of destinations and the revitalization of heritage [16]. Terkenli [17] argues that the relationship between tourism and landscape is irrevocable, indisputable, and even essential for tourism. However, this synergy has not yet been sufficiently implemented in research focused on tourism issues [7].

The cultural landscape that forms or complements the primary tourism resources can also be called tourism landscapes. It is a specific category of cultural landscape and often overlap with other categories of cultural landscape, but concurrently, they are a factor in landscape change [18].

Such a landscape represents the interface between humans and the environment, reflecting and creating recreational trends, multifunctional livelihood systems, conflicts, employment and income opportunities, as well as the management and use of natural, human, and cultural resources [17].

O'Hare [18] states that different cultural landscapes are attractive to tourism participants and are subsequently changed by tourism, both physically and perceptually. Rössler [5] adds that such pressure from tourism can also have a negative impact on the development of the cultural landscape and can bring new challenges for the local community in terms of appropriate landscape management. If the fundamental values and characteristics of the landscape resources are violated, not only will the attractiveness of the region be reduced, but tourism itself may disappear [3]. For this reason, it is essential to adhere to the principles of sustainable tourism development, i.e., to respond to the demands of tourism participants and local residents and to ensure the protection and preservation of the tourist resource – the cultural landscape [19].

3. Methodology

The research methodology consists of several phases that were compiled in order to fulfil the objective of this study. In the third phase, we also partially drew from the methodology for assessment of landscape quality and its development potential from Angelis-Dimakis et al. [3].

The first phase involved field exploration, selection of the elements to be studied, and their general characteristics.

The second phase consisted of mapping and studying HLEM. The following research methods were used: Analysis of available published sources focused on scientific and local specialized literature.

The analysis of old map and LiDAR data focused mainly on identifying original historical elements in the landscape and toponyms.

During the field research, the current state of HLE was described based on visual interpretation. Non-destructive field procedures typical for archaeology of Kuna et al. [20] were used.

An essential part of the study was the comparison of the findings and the subsequent conceptualization of the cultural and historical development of the studied area. A general comparison with other sites in the vicinity was also carried out.

The third phase of the research focused on proposing options for tourism development. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to identify the possibilities and limitations associated with preserving RHLS in the context of their planned use as a source of tourism. In this case, an analysis of legislation was carried out. The local, regional, and national levels were taken into account. Possible negative economic impacts and the needs of the local community were also assessed. Subsequently, an evaluation of the researched HLE as determinants of the region's attractiveness in the context of a tourist destination was carried out.

In the fourth phase, a Model of processes related to the use of HLEM in the context of tourism development process was conceived. This also included the identification of determinants of synergistic development. The presented facts represent the output of the contribution – a conceptual model compiled on the basis of a synthesis of the results of the case study and scientific literature. A comparison with existing models was carried out with an emphasis on their conceptual similarity.

In the final phase, the entire process was evaluated with an emphasis on identifying the contribution of research into the RHLS in the context of tourism development.

4. Results – Case study from Čerešňový potok Valley

In 2024 and 2025, the identification, selection, and research of elements of the historical landscape structure took place in the Čerešňový potok valley in the Tribeč Mountains.

4.1 Selection of historical landscape elements and mosaics

After exploring the field, we decided to study the following objects: the gold mining site, the Velčice tower house, the adit/mill, and the mining reservoir. The reason for the selection was that they form a single complex with a specific “genius loci”. The individual areas were analysed as HLE. They were not marked as a HLM because it is not possible to examine them as a whole.

4.2 Interdisciplinary research of historical landscape elements and mosaics

Subsequently, cultural-geographical research was carried out on selected RHLS, according to the established methodology (second phase).

The Velčice tower house. On a wooded area, enclosed by a low wall and a moat, covering an area of 56 x 115 meters, the remains of the foundations of a rectangular residential tower measuring 6.5 x 7.3 meters have been preserved to this day. It stood on a partially raised hill above a stream. Based on research (brick sample analysis by Nagy [21]), it has been possible to date the construction of the Velčice fortified tower to the 12th to 13th centuries. The fortification also served a guard/control function on the road between the Požitavie and Stredné Ponitrie regions and, at certain times, was used to supervise surface gold mining in the area below the fortification. It is likely that its demise, probably during the 15th century, is related to the economic decline in the area (e.g., gold mining and population reduction).

The remains of an alluvial **gold mining site** cover an area of approximately 330 x 80 m. During field research, irregular heaps and mining cuts parallel to the riverbed were identified. The height of the heaps does not exceed two meters. Their flat upper parts indicate gradual deformation influenced by exogenous processes. The presence of gold was confirmed by panning [22]. Based on a comparison of historical references from surrounding villages [23; 24; 25], it is likely that gold was mined in the focused area in the 12th to 16th centuries.

The adit/mill. In the immediate vicinity of the tower house, there is a cut that may be the remains of an adit and/or a mill. The cut measures approximately 7 x 12 x 3 meters. The existence of a mining work is indicated by two presumed ventilation shafts (now filled with rubble), 50 meters apart. The shafts have a diameter and depth typical of such filled mining works from the Middle Ages (approximately 6 x 1 meters).

Borzová and Borza [26] and Ruttkay [27] assume that a mill stood here at the end of the Middle Ages or in modern times. This fact is also confirmed by a mention from 1856 about the establishment of a glassworks, which states that it was founded in this locality [28].

The mining reservoir. The remains of a dam follow the examined cut. Borzová and Borza [26] state a length of 29 meters with a height of approximately one meter. Based on analogies with similar reservoirs that were the subject of research by Žabenský and Hučková [29] in the vicinity of Nitrianske Pravno, it can be assumed that they are the remains of a mining reservoir. The water from it could have been used to power a stamp mill for crushing quartz.

4.3 Formulation of development strategies

The process of transforming HLE into tourist attractions was preceded by an analysis of the possibilities and limitations associated with their preservation. They were also compared with other tourism products in the Tribečsko micro-region. Emphasis was placed on identifying specific characteristics that could be used to create a new, attractive tourism product.

Possibilities and limitations related to the preservation of historical landscape elements. The possibilities for tourism development in the studied location are determined by legislation, which manifests itself at the national, regional, and local levels, depending on the specific law, decree, or regulation.

The researched HLE are located in the Ponitrie Protected Landscape Area. For this reason, they are subject to the provisions of Act No. 543/2002 Coll. on nature and landscape protection [30] and Decree No. 58/1985 Coll., which declares the Ponitrie Protected Landscape Area [31]. The studied location is situated in the lowest 2nd degree of protection. Given this fact, it is necessary to consult with the responsible persons regarding certain development activities. For example, the plan to build a forest road and the exemption for motor vehicles during the construction of the educational trail.

The positive impact on the protection and preservation of the cultural landscape in the research location is the proposal to include the Velčice tower house and its surroundings in the list of cultural monuments of the Slovak Republic under Act No. 49/2002 Coll. on the protection of monuments [32]. If this process were successfully completed, it would lead to more intensive protection of the landscape on the one hand and more significant restrictions on the development of tourism on the other. For this reason, the proposed project to reconstruct the fortified tower and a mining reservoir is subject to consultation with the staff of the relevant office.

It is also important to obtain the consent of the owners of the land on which the HLE in question are located for the implementation of the project.

Forest management in the studied area can be considered partially restrictive. Logging can disrupt individual elements of the historical landscape structure. For this reason, it will be proposed to the local forestry community that the planned logging of forest be carried out in the most sensitive way possible – through selective logging.

The possibilities for the development of tourism were also discussed with the mayor of Velčice and the municipal council, with an emphasis on compliance with municipal regulations and the Municipality's Economic and Social Development Plan.

During the research, it was also found that most of the inhabitants of the village have little or no knowledge of the studied location. For this reason, it will be necessary to hold a lecture for pupils at the local elementary school and local inhabitants with the aim of forming the identity of the local community and raising awareness of the importance of cultural heritage.

Communication with the tourism investor, who expressed willingness to proceed in accordance with the findings and recommendations of this study, can be considered positive.

Evaluation of identified historical landscape elements as determinants of the region's attractiveness in the context of tourism development. As part of the evaluation, a comparison was made between selected RHLS and the structure of primary and secondary tourism resources in the Tribečsko micro-region. Subsequently, proposals and recommendations for their further development were formulated. Given the scope of the analysis in question, only the essential findings are presented in the following section.

Until now, there has been no interest in developing tourism in the area under investigation – there are no roads or footpaths leading there. Approximately 1 km to the north, there is a cycle route, and 2.5 km to the northeast are the ruins of Čierny Castle, which can be reached by following the yellow tourist trail. About 1 km to the northwest, there is a red-marked hiking trail that leads to the highest peak of the mountain range: Veľký Tribeč. There is no tourism supra-structure within a 5 km radius.

Given that the Velčice tower house, the dam of the mining reservoir, the gold mining site and the presumed buried entrance to the adit/mill are the only remains of the original historical landscape structure. They are less competitive than other tourist attractions in the area, for example the manor house, park and horse farm in Topoľčianky.

Their uniqueness and authenticity can be viewed positively. They represent sources of tourism that have not yet been significantly modified by anthropogenic pressure. For this reason, they can be made accessible as tourist attractions while preserving their “genius loci” and creating a synergistic relationship between the cultural landscape and tourism.

Proposals aimed at developing tourism. In the case of the HLE examined and their transformation into a tourism product, it will be necessary to implement the following phases:

- Ensuring access and connection to existing tourism infrastructure – building a forest road and educational trail.
- Increasing competitiveness through reconstruction reflecting the late medieval period.

The construction of a forest road and educational trail is being carried out in cooperation with a private investor, the municipal office in Velčice, and Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra.

The educational trail is of medium difficulty, with a total length of 13.4 km and an elevation gain of 288 meters. It is intended for tourists with average physical abilities. This tourism product does not include a guide service. Information about the attractions can be obtained from an information brochure and information boards directly in the field. It is a multi-thematic educational walking trail that includes facts about natural and cultural-historical heritage, as well as medieval mining with an emphasis on the Čerešňový potok valley. There are a total

of 11 stops, each focusing on a specific topic. They are marked with the symbol of the nature trail and the corresponding stop number.

The reconstruction project is currently in the preparation stage. It will also be implemented on the basis of cooperation between a private investor, the Municipal Office in Velčice, and Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra. It will consist of the following phases:

- archaeological research,
- preparation of project documentation,
- project implementation: reconstruction of the Velčice tower house, the mining reservoir and the adit/mill,
- marketing, opening to the public and maintenance.

4.4 Implementation of development strategies, control and revision of the system

After completing the transformation of HLE into tourist attractions, it will be necessary to monitor them with an emphasis on further corrections to the system in order to maintain a synergistic relationship.

5. Discussion: Model of processes related to the use of historical landscape elements and mosaics in the context of tourism development

Based on a critical analysis of the case study results and their subsequent comparison with scientific literature, it was possible to create a conceptual model of processes related to the use of HLEM in the context of tourism, with an emphasis on identifying the determinants of synergy between the cultural landscape and tourism (Fig. 1).



Figure 1: Model of processes for utilizing historical landscape elements and mosaics with an emphasis on tourism development (rectangular panels) and determinants of synergy between cultural landscape and tourism (circular panels)

In the first phase, it is necessary **to identify historical landscape elements and mosaics suitable for research** in the context of their further development in tourism. It is necessary to take into account the fact that they were often formed during different historical periods and may represent remains of different cultural-landscape layers. Their current form is the result of processes that took place during the adaptation of local culture to the natural environment.

The cultural landscape resource assessment model can be used to identify specific elements. According to this concept by Angelis-Dimakis et al. [3], competitive potential, recognisability, authenticity, and uniqueness are taken into account. As stated by Gúčík et al. [33], where the primary tourism resources are attractive, it is the subject of economic evaluation and a tool for tourism development.

Interdisciplinary research into the remains of historical landscape structures represents the second phase of the process. This paper applies an approach based on cultural geography, integrating geographical, historical, and cultural perspectives, which is consistent with both classical and contemporary concepts of cultural landscape studies. These emphasize the need to cross the boundaries of individual disciplines [34; 35; 36].

Multidisciplinary research creates the conditions for identifying specific tangible and intangible features of the cultural landscape and for understanding their layers of meaning in a broader socio-spatial context. In line with the findings of Mujica [37] and Taylor and Lennon [36], the cultural landscape can be understood as a dynamic system in which tangible landscape elements are linked to historical memory, identity, and cultural influences. This approach allows us to interpret the cultural landscape as a complex resource that can be sustainably used in tourism.

As Della Spina and Giorno [38] point out, integrating tangible and intangible features of the landscape into tourism planning promotes synergies between environmental processes, cultural heritage protection, and economic activities. Research conceived in this way goes beyond a reductive understanding of landscape as a passive tourist resource and moves towards perceiving it as an active element of regional development.

Such research should also include semi-standardised interviews with the local community members. This method makes it possible to capture the local perception of HLEM and their significance for local identity, which is essential for the creation of authentic and sustainable tourism products.

Equally important is the analysis of the economic environment from the local to the global level and its interests in the study area, as the development of tourism in the cultural landscape is determined by broader economic and institutional structures [39]. Particular attention should be devoted to local and regional tourism organizations, their development strategies, and priorities, which fundamentally influence the possibilities for applying research results in practice.

Formulation of development strategies. The process of determining tourism development possibilities should be preceded by the identification of opportunities and limitations related to the transformation of RHLS into a tourism product. It is also necessary to evaluate HLEM as determinants of a region's attractiveness in terms of tourism. This issue is addressed by Angelis-Dimakis et al. [3]. Similarly, Della Spina and Giorno [38] emphasize in their study that assessing the cultural landscape as part of a destination's attractiveness is an essential step in creating sustainable and locally based tourism strategies.

It is also important to set up spatial planning correctly, comprehensively addressing the arrangement of space and functional use of the territory, with an emphasis on ecological stability, cultural and historical values of the territory, spatial development, and landscape creation. Its aim is also to protect the landscape from inappropriate use and to create conditions for the lasting harmony of natural, civilizational, and cultural values in the territory [40].

Implementation of development strategies focused on the creation of tourism products. The tourism product is a significant element of the resulting tourist landscape, which, according to Ladik et al. [41], should be a construct of stylistic integrity, should not create dissonance with the surrounding landscape, and should achieve a harmonious relationship within the existing natural and cultural complex. The resulting tourism product must be designed in such a way that it can satisfy the individual and collective needs of tourism participants, with an emphasis on providing a complex experience [33].

For this reason, it is important to take into account the perception of the resulting tourist landscape by tourism participants. In addition to their actual stay, they also perceive it through photographs, postcards, magnets, and tourism marketing. Terkenli [17] adds that in most cases, it is a landscape whose visual appearance has been staged for the purposes of tourism consumption. In the context of tourism, the landscape often becomes a kind of stage on which a certain form of experience is presented. The intensity of the tourism participant's perception (the overall experience) is often enhanced by the "genius loci" of a particular place, which is the result of long-term cultural and historical development as well as contemporary interventions.

Control: re-evaluation and intervention in the system. The final phase presents options for correctly configuring the functionality of the system. As Rössler [5] states, tourism and its growth put pressure on the cultural landscape, creating new challenges in the area of appropriate landscape management. For this reason, it is necessary to constantly monitor the relationships between the economic environment, the local community, and landscape protection, with an emphasis on synergy and sustainable development.

6. Determinants of synergy between cultural landscape and tourism

As stated by Angelis-Dimakis et al. [3], creating synergy between the cultural landscape and tourism contributes to the sustainable development of tourism in a specific location as well as in the region. To achieve this, the following must be taken into account:

Ecological processes are a significant determining factor in the planning and implementation of tourism in the landscape. A strong focus on landscape protection leads to the exclusion of human activities [3] and a decline in tourism. Gúčík [12] states that one of the fundamental problems with an emphasis on ecological processes in

the landscape is the correct setting of the acceptable load on the country by tourism participants. This problem is often solved by legislation.

In this context, the implementation of environmental development concepts is also important, taking into account the increase in the biological diversity of the area and educational opportunities, which ultimately expand the primary tourism resources.

Processes in local culture. Every cultural landscape is unique and unrepeatable in terms of its genesis, structure, function, and physiognomy, characterized by relevant tangible and intangible features [42]. Yang et al. [43] consider the intangible part to be its core.

Findings from research into the perception of cultural landscape signs by local culture can help to create a comprehensive experience for the tourist. This process of discovery is both objective and subjective. We can describe it as the result of variable interpretations of contacts between the subject and the object. [17]

This variability is significantly influenced by motives leading to interaction between members of the local culture and RHLS. Part of the population sees economic potential in it (forestry or tourism), while others see its recreational value (authenticity and spiritual characteristics). As stated by Gůčik et al. [33], the benefits of tourism for the local population may include, for example, job stability, increased income and living standards, improved infrastructure and amenities in settlements, improved environmental quality, and increased self-confidence and a sense of belonging among the local population.

The perception of the value of HLEM in local culture can also be shaped by appropriate intervention. Examples include the creation of popular educational publications, videos, social media posts, and lectures.

Economic processes and globalization. Economic processes represent activities that directly and to varying degrees satisfy the demand of participants in tourism [12]. The focus on economic development often leads to the destruction of the original landscape structure [3] and also to a decline in tourism.

Globalization is currently having a growing impact on this process [39]. In this case, we can speak of a paradox because RHLS are often the creation of local culture. However, they are used in globalised tourism (often mass tourism), which shapes the current landscape structure. This often represents an effort to achieve synergy between the local and the global. Pritchard and Morgan [6] argue that such transformational processes are becoming increasingly global in scope, although they vary in space, time, and social context. In line with this idea, Hazendonk et al. [44] point to the fact that it is precisely this development that is putting increasing negative pressure on historical heritage, including the historical landscape structure.

Tourism development management processes are essential for achieving synergy between the cultural landscape and tourism. Tourism managers can be considered the most suitable actors in this context. They must strive to create a balanced system of relationships between the protection of historical landscape structures, the development of values and the socio-economic level of the local community, and the profits of investors in tourism. This cannot be achieved without a thorough understanding of the cultural and historical development of the landscape and, above all, its intangible dimension. It is also important to correctly understand the “genius loci” and its significance in tourism.

7. Comparison with existing models

The following models were selected based on the highest degree of similarity between the examined elements, or rather for their similar conceptual basis to the model proposed in this paper.

The cultural landscape management model is dealt with by UNESCO. The Cultural Landscape Management Framework [45] presents a systematic approach that focuses on a thorough understanding of the cultural landscape by all stakeholders, subsequent planning, monitoring, and evaluation, full involvement of stakeholders, allocation of necessary resources for capacity building, and a responsible and transparent description of the functioning of the management system.

The Diamond Model for Sustainable Tourism [46] is based on tourism as a global phenomenon. In this model, sustainable tourism represents the optimal way to ensure an appropriate long-term strategy for the development of a tourist destination. Similarly, the output of this study points to the need for balance between industry, the environment, and host communities.

The Ethical Tourism Model [47] is based on similar settings: social, environmental, cultural, and economic. However, it focuses more on morality and ethics in tourism, and can be described as normative – focused on the value-based behaviour of stakeholders.

Based on a comparison with the models presented, it can be concluded that the Model of processes related to the use of HLEM in the context of tourism development is specific in that it does not focus on the cultural landscape as a whole, but on a specific part of it. It also illustrates dynamic links and processes and has practical significance, unlike the analysed models, which can be described as strategic, balanced, and normative. The benefits of our model include its process orientation, the explicit inclusion of the “genius loci” and cultural memory of the territory. Also important is the definition of the role of tourism managers as key mediators of the synergistic relationship between the preservation of HLEM and their development within the concept of sustainable tourism.

8. Conclusions

The presented study focused on researching HLE in the Čerešňový potok valley with the aim of assessing their potential for tourism development while maintaining a synergistic relationship between landscape protection, economic activities, and the needs of the local community. The results confirm that even under-researched mountain and forest areas can be a significant source of cultural and historical values that can be used in the context of sustainable tourism.

Research has shown that the identified HLE (the Velčice tower house, the gold mining site, the mining reservoir, and the presumed adit/mill) represent authentic and unique RHLS, which have so far received only limited attention from scientists. Their preservation has been made possible mainly due to the long-term absence of intensive anthropogenic activity, which increases their informative value in terms of cultural geography and tourism.

Based on an interdisciplinary approach, a model of processes related to the use of HLEM in the context of tourism development was proposed. This model also includes key determinants of synergy between the cultural landscape and tourism, including the harmonization of ecological and economic interests and consideration for the needs of the local community.

The main actors in this process should be tourism managers. They need to have a proper understanding of the natural and cultural-historical development of the RHLS, but also of the entire region, the interrelationships of local culture, the needs of investors, and the applicable legislation. They should implement this knowledge in an appropriate manner within the framework of integrated management. All stakeholders should be involved. A key phase in this process is the process of designing development strategies – planning.

The cultural landscape and its HLEM can be considered the primary attraction for tourism. When adapting them to tourism conditions, it is necessary to preserve the specific tangible and intangible characteristics of the landscape and to integrate tourism infrastructure into them in such a way that the landscape does not lose its “genius loci”. Such synergy can stimulate the creation and effective functioning of sustainable tourism.

The cultural landscape can also be considered a background for tourism, which has the ability to connect elements of cultural heritage into a unified concept, with tourism playing a significant role in this process and in the creation of a new, modified identity for local residents and individuals.

The proposed application outputs, in particular the concept of an educational trail and a framework proposal for the reconstruction of selected HLE, represent a practical example of the transformation of scientific knowledge into regional development.

The study also points to the need for further research, particularly in the area of perception of the RHLS used in tourism by investors, tourism participants and the local population, as well as the need for a more precise legislative and planning framework that would support the sustainable use of HLEM. The results of the paper thus contribute to expanding knowledge about the relationship between the cultural landscape and tourism and confirm the importance of detailed focus on the RHLS as a basis for long-term sustainable development of the territory.

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