

DWELLING CULTURE AT THE EDGE OF BARJE - THE LJUBLJANA'S WETLANDS

“What has been having a strong influence on me throughout my life? My true love for nature, no doubt, the one I inherited from my parents and grandparents. My father was a wood keeper and a hunter and his professional and his personal life never ceased being related to nature and its living creatures. Now, my father has passed away, but I still have his love for nature. The Murgle housing estate, where I have lived since 1985, nurtures my love for nature. So, I am inviting you to come here and I'll be guiding you through the area. Houses open up to nature. The interior space of the houses opens up to be closely connected with the green exterior. It functions both as intimate shelter and as a door wide open to nature. The quality of life here is thereby great, meeting all expectations, making it up for the lost beauties of my birthplace. / Nada, a U3A student, has lived in Murgle for thirty years/.

Nested between Šiška Hill, Rožnik hill, with the Tivoli Parc, Ljubljana castle hill and Golovec Hill on one side, the Ljubljana's Wetlands and the Walking Ring Route encircling the town, the allee promenade on the other side, all the green parts of Ljubljana are connected. In this way Ljubljana's townspeople live close to nature. Nature used to protect us, enabling us to survive. Today, it provides for recreational activities, breathing fresh air, diminishing the harmful effects of the stress and strain of everyday life.

Now, we will be going around Murgle, today still most desired residential area, or at least one of the most desired ones in Ljubljana. Its value cannot be understood without understanding first our attachment to the marshy landscape. Impressions and bits of narrations we collected from the residents of this area demonstrate both the advantages and the disadvantages of living at the edge of Barje. When and how did the inhabitants of the Ljubljana Basin start their close relation with the green nature around them? 500 years ago in the Ljubljana Basin there was a lake. The first dwellers adapted their way of living to the natural conditions, living in cottages suspended over the water surface and built on piles. They were called “koliščarji” or the pile dwellers.

Nevertheless, it was only in the first years A.C. that a town started being built, a Roman military place called Emona. This year we are celebrating the 2000 years since the day when Emona was founded. Looking for safety, the first inhabitants, settled down on the narrow band of territory between the river and the Castle hill. The marshy land kept protecting the medieval town against the invasions of the Turks. The spreading of the town was prevented by the very same characteristics that used to protect the town. Every year the town is flooded in the South. The wetlands were later dried gradually through the second half of the 18th century. In each season the eternal Barje is magic in its special way, therefore Murgle remains the most desired modern residential area, though built fifty years ago. Its low and dense housing suited the marshy soil. Close to the centre of the town, it was a real breakthrough in housing and an alternative to the high-rise buildings prevalently built in those industrial days.

The walking road-encircling Ljubljana, another historical and landscape monument of this town, crosses the housing state. It follows the line of the former military barb wire set up from the Second World War, set up to separate the resistance movement created in the town from the town's

background. Today the walking road is both a symbol of the Slovenian's love for nature and a remembrance.

Despite the marshy land causing occasional difficulties, the townspeople still love to dwell here. They like visiting this area, enjoying its beauties. Let us visit now some parts of Barje, shall we?