



Transformation of a Cultural Landscape with Modern Vineyard Terraces in the Jeruzalem Hills, Slovenia

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The terraced landscape in the Jeruzalem Hills lies in northeastern Slovenia, between settlements Ljutomer to the north and Ormož to the south. This contribution examines the creation of the new landscape layer of modern cultivated terraces and studies their disappearance and the return to a condition similar to the original state.

The creation of modern cultivated terraces in the Jeruzalem Hills goes back to the communist social order, which made it possible to concentrate land in two collective farms through the nationalization of farmland. The creation of this layer of the cultural landscape lasted for a quarter century – from 1965 to 1991. The extent of modern cultivated terraces was at its greatest before the transition from communism to a market economy. This is a very brief layer that has nonetheless left a very striking aesthetic impression in the landscape.

This terraced landscape, which was created at a certain point in time due to a need for greater functionality, went beyond this during its quarter century of existence and also became important because of its aesthetic value. The aesthetic aspect became more important especially after the collapse of communism, when people had become used to its new appearance after a quarter century.

Because of their outstanding aesthetic value, the terraces in the Jeruzalem Hills were also recognized by the state as worthy of protection. After the collapse of communism and the subsequent denationalization of collective farms and the restitution of farmland to its former owners, the erasure of this landscape layer of modern cultivated terraces began. Nowadays, the appearance of the landscape is drastically changing for the second time in the past fifty years.

The analysis is based on interviews and visual interpretation of aerial laser scanning (lidar) data. It focuses on the state of the landscape before terracing, the creation of terraces and formation of a terraced landscape, and its most recent transformation into slopes without terraces. It is determined that, despite the recognized aesthetic value of terraces, legal protection in the form of a landscape designated area has not impacted their preservation because 56% of them have already been leveled. With the conversion of vineyards to vertical plantations, a new challenge is arising: increased erosion.