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**A METHOD FOR
ASSESSING THE VISUAL IMPACT
ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF
PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION, ACTIVITIES
OR CHANGES IN LAND USE**

Vorel, I., Bukáček, R., Matějka, P., Culek, M., Sklenička, P.

Prague 2006

**A method for assessing the visual impact on landscape character
of proposed construction, activities or changes in land use**

(a method for spatial and character differentiation of an area)

in the sense of §12 of Nature and Landscape Preservation Act no. 114/1992 of the
Czech Republic

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The authors thank Doc. Ing. arch. Jiří Löw for his valuable comments on the
proposed methodology.

ISBN 80-903206-8-6

Published by Centrum pro krajinu, s.r.o., Prague, 2006

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A. GENERAL ISSUES

A.1. Introduction, goals of landscape character assessment

(A.1.1.) Landscape character is an important quality of natural and cultural environments, and is therefore protected against deterioration. Landscape character is determined by specific attributes and features that imply its nature - its uniqueness and distinctiveness. Landscape character is indicated not only by the presence of positive features but also by its cultural and spiritual qualities. Landscape character is an expression of the interrelationships between natural and socio-economic settings and the cultural-historical merit of a specific landscape.

(A.1.2.) In order to preserve the character of a landscape, it is necessary to have a **description and an evaluation of the attributes and qualities that form the character of that landscape**. Then we need to describe and assess the **impacts of submitted actions** on those elements and values, **e. g., impacts on the landscape character**, or to make an **evaluation of the landscape character of a particular area** in order to specify landscape character preservation measures.

(A.1.3.) When interpreting Act no. 114/1992 (hereafter, the Act) and the reading of § 12 of the Act, it is necessary to evaluate landscape character in such a way that the conclusion can serve as **grounds for one of the two possible forms of landscape character protection**:

(A.1.3.1.) **Preventive landscape character protection** – which involves describing the landscape character of an area and defining a set of measures to protect it, or, as the case may be, delineating areas of different intensity of public interest in landscape character protection within the given territory and putting forward a proposal to eliminate undesirable objects.

(A.1.3.2.) **Case specific (causal) landscape character protection** – involves an **assessment of the impact of a specific submitted action on the landscape character of a given territory** (impact of constructs, engineering facilities, activities or land-use changes), which involves assessing an **intervention** into the landscape character. This method deals with case-specific landscape character protection.

A.2. Current Czech legislation in landscape character protection

§12, 114/1992 Nature and Landscape Preservation Act (the Act)

(1) Landscape character, which is a natural, cultural and historical characteristic of a place or a territory, is protected against activities which would deteriorate its aesthetic and natural qualities. Interventions into landscape character, especially construction placement and building permission, may be carried out only if it takes into account preservation of significant landscape elements, particularly protected areas and cultural dominants (landmarks), a harmonic scale, and relationships within the landscape.

(2) For construction placement and building permission, and also for other activities that might deteriorate or change the landscape character, approval of the nature preservation authority must be obtained. Details of landscape character protection can be specified by a legal norm promulgated by the Ministry of the Environment.

(3) The nature preservation authority has the right to establish a Nature Park by promulgating a mandatory statute in order to protect the landscape character of significant aesthetic and cultural qualities that are not specifically protected according to the third part of this Act (as a specially protected area) and to regulate types of land use that would lead to destruction, deterioration or disturbance of the character of a given area.

A.3. Definitions of terms

The landscape character impact assessment methodology operates (only) with **terms listed in § 12 of the Act.**

Activities that damage aesthetic and natural qualities

are activities that disturb specific attributes and qualities of an area to an extent that would lead to a change in the value and/or significance of the impacted characteristics.

The aesthetic quality of a landscape

is an expression of both natural and cultural qualities, a harmonic scale and the relationships within a landscape. The prerequisites for the emergence of aesthetic qualities are: the subjective abilities and preferences of the viewer, the actual circumstances during the perception process and the actual characteristics of the given landscape (forms and spatial composition of the spaces and the way that they are organised, the configuration of the elements, the pattern of the components).

The harmonic scale of a landscape

expresses a structuring of a landscape that produces a harmonious relationship between human activities and natural settings. This is expressed by harmony between the scale of the whole and the scales of the individual elements in the physical appearance of the landscape.

Harmonic relationships within a landscape

express harmony in human activities and natural settings (the absence of any disturbances), sustainability of current use of the landscape, harmony among individual elements of the landscape scene.

The historical attribute of the landscape character

is a special aspect of its cultural value, arising from contiguity between the cultural and natural settings of an area or a place. Historical attributes are the key for understanding the logic of the relationship among the natural settings in the landscape, its uses

and therefore its sustainability. Historical attributes may also be traced back to historical events or persons.

A landscape is a part of the surface of the earth with a typical relief, made up of a complex of functionally interconnected ecosystems and cultural elements. (the Act, §3)

The **landscape character** emerges from the natural, cultural and historical character of a place or region (the Act, §12), more precisely from the perceptible attributes and qualities of these aspects.

The **cultural attribute of the landscape character** derives from the way in which human beings make use of the natural resources and the traces that they have left on the landscape.

A dominant cultural feature in a landscape is a landscape element, a component or a relic of landscape cultivation that is of indisputable significance to some historical, architectural or other field of human activity, and has a prevailing influence on the attributes of the landscape.

A landscape character unit space (LCUS) is a relatively homogeneous part of a landscape, in terms of natural, cultural and historical attributes, where we can observe certain aesthetic and natural qualities that distinguish an LCUS from other landscape characters. An LCUS is the smallest area under assessment. It is either an easily definable landscape that is visually continuous from most observation points, or an area typified by the strong distinctiveness of its character.

A landscape character zone (LCZ) is a landscape unit of similar natural, cultural and historical attributes mirrored in a set of typical attributes that differs strongly from the set of attributes of another landscape unit in one or all of its landscape character features, and which includes several landscape character spaces. A landscape character zone is delineated by a border formed either by natural elements or by

man-made elements, or by a transition of some other changing feature.

An affected landscape area (ALA)

is an area where the visual (acoustic, olfactory) impact of an intended constructure or a land-use change is relevant to landscape character protection.

The natural quality of a landscape

derives from the sustainability of the qualitative parameters of the ecosystems of the landscape; the representativeness of their current attributes with regard to the natural conditions; spatial parameters; harmonic relationships between ecosystems and significant natural dominant features of the landscape.

A natural landscape character attribute

derives as a result of long-lasting natural conditions, such as the geological, geo-morphological, climatic and biogeographical setting, and the current ecosystem pattern.

A significant landscape element (SLA)

is a landscape element with valuable natural or aesthetic attributes, of less importance for protection purposes than a particularly protected area (§ 3 of the Act).

A particularly protected area (PPA)

is a highly valuable landscape element due to its natural or aesthetic attributes (§ 3 of the Act)

A.4. Goals of the landscape character impact assessment methodology

(A.4.1.) Decision making in the administrative procedures originating from §12 of the Act is a common duty for officers of the nature protection authority. Landscape character impact assessment is a standard assignment that the authorities are in most cases called on to execute themselves. This methodology presents a case-specific assessment procedure that can be applied in most ordinary cases. Procedures for preventive landscape character assessment do not form part of this methodology.

(A.4.2.) Landscape character assessment makes use of inexact concepts and barely quantifiable qualities. A range of perspectives can be applied, but this limits the objectivity of the assessment. The methodology therefore makes use of procedures employed in architectural and landscape composition, standardized steps in the assessment process, and draws objectified, generally-accepted conclusions. An expert review of the assessment helps to objectify the final conclusions.

(A.4.3.) Goal of the methodology is to **unify the procedures of case-specific landscape character impact assessment, and to create a single procedure that is as standardized as possible.**

A.5. Assessment outputs

(A.5.1.) The assessment takes the form of a written document that may if necessary be combined with graphics (map schemes, cartograms, documentation of historical conditions, documentation of identified qualities). The comprehensiveness of the documentation derives from the nature of the submitted intended project, and from the extent to which it may impact the landscape (the impacted area, and the extent to which the significant landscape character attributes will be affected).

(A.5.2.) An important basis for the assessment is a visualization of the submitted intended project on to panoramic prints of the landscape (if the intended project is a viewable structure). The visualization should be done on prints of entire panoramas

as they are perceived from node positions in the landscape, and coupled with visualizations on prints of minor scenes observed at shorter distances from the relevant landscape character unit spaces. The investor usually adds these visualizations as an appendix, together with the documentation for the submitted intended project. The authority and the investor should come to an agreement on the locations for which the visualizations should be done. Construction visibility modeling on 3D landscape models is a powerful tool for the assessment process.

(A.5.3.) The output of the assessment is a statement of the **extent to which the submitted intended project interferes** with the landscape character. The landscape character derives from:

- natural, cultural or historical attributes
- natural and aesthetic qualities
- significant landscape elements (SLE)
- particularly protected areas (PLA)
- dominant cultural features
- a harmonic scale and harmonic relationships

The intensity of the interference with attributes and qualities of the landscape character determines how serious the impacts are.

A.6. Uses of the method

(A.6.1.) The method can be used for making a unified and standardized landscape character impact assessment of a submitted intended project. An assessment elaborated with this methodology provides case-specific, objectivised grounds for decision-making in accordance with §12 of the Act.

A **case specific assessment** (of an impact on the landscape character) can form:

- part of the preparatory documentation for an intended project as a basis for consultations or for an approval statement from the relevant authority
- part of the design documentation presented for a planning inquiry or for a building control
- an appendix to documentation for landscape character impact assessment according to §12 of the Act
- part of, or an appendix to, or documentation for an environmental impact assessment according to act no. 100/2001

(A.6.2.) The conclusions of a case-specific assessment offer a sound basis for conceptual work in landscape character protection or decision-making in specific cases. The authority can (but does not have to) identify with the argumentation used in the assessment, and can use it in justifying its decision and also as an argumentation deriving other expert sources. The conclusions of the assessment are not binding on either party, and proposals for regulation and protective measures are not legally binding.

**B. THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER IMPACT
ASSESSMENT PROCESS AND
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER
IMPACT EVALUATION**

B.1. Assessment principles

B.1.1. Principles of landscape character protection

(B.1.1.1.) The method for assessing the landscape character impact of a particular intended project is **based on protection of the attributes and qualities of the landscape character of a given landscape, and also on eliminating the impacts that reduce these values.** Last but not least, it emerges from the principles of landscape ecology, which take landscape as a part of the surface of the earth, with a characteristic relief composed of functionally interconnected ecosystems; a landscape pattern is therefore understood as the spatial distribution of landscape components and the relationships among them.

(B.1.1.2.) As § 12 is included in the second part of the Act under the title “Overall Nature Protection”, **landscape protection according to § 12 is applied over the whole territory of the Czech Republic.** This correlates with the definition of a “landscape” for the purposes of the Act. This means that there are natural or harmonic (cultural) landscapes, on the one hand, and urban or urbanized landscapes, on the other. The landscape character of **undeveloped landscapes, which are unique for their natural and aesthetic qualities, historical traces of their settlement and cultivation and a strong harmony of scale and relationships in the landscape,** is in most cases protected.

(B.1.1.3.) The landscape/cityscape character of **urban areas**, where it represents a significant quality, should also be protected. This refers not only to particularly protected areas or natural parks but also to other elements in the system of the natural part of the environment of a city – natural complexes along river corridors, undeveloped elevated areas and forest patches, large recreational forest areas and agricultural land; and also parts of urbanized areas where the character of the spatial setting is strongly influenced by landscape structure elements (e.g. relief horizons, plantations, planted slopes, rocks and other relief features).

(B.1.1.4.) Landscape character is defined by the natural, cultural and historical aspect of a place or a region. This means that the **character of a certain landscape segment is the result of the interplay of natural attributes**

(especially morphology, water bodies, character of vegetation), **cultural attributes** (land use, form and structure of built-up areas, individual buildings and their relationship with the surrounding landscape, the cultural value of the place) **and historical attributes** (the presence of elements and textures that bear witness to the historical development of a landscape and its continuity). Landscape character can involve either the **physical presence** of certain elements (e.g. localities of high natural value, traces of landscape cultivation and transformation, historical entities) or a **display** (generally visual) in the landscape structure and therefore in the landscape setting, or both.

Landscape character (LC) is expressed by:

- **the presence of natural, cultural and historical attributes**
- **a sensual (generally visual) display of the attributes of particular elements in a landscape**
- in a landscape structure (interrelations in the landscape, according to §12) in LCUS and LCZ
- in configurations of elements within partial landscape settings

(B.1.1.5.) Any constructure or radical change in land use may have (and usually has) an impact on the landscape character. This might mean that any intended project referred for landscape character protection is liable to be rejected. According to §12, landscape character is protected with a view to protecting significant landscape elements (SLE), particularly protected areas (PPA), dominant cultural landscape features, a harmonic landscape scale and relationships, and the natural and aesthetic qualities of a landscape are protected against deterioration. Not all parts of a landscape that are influenced by a given intended project display the attributes and qualities mentioned above. Some landscape segments are of indistinguished or indifferent landscape character, with no pronounced and positive attributes (the landscape has no specific character).

Landscape character protection must focus on

- **protection of the typical attributes** (natural, cultural and historical) of a given region that constitute **qualities** of landscape character in accordance with §12

- **protection of the natural and aesthetic qualities** that are protected against deterioration in accordance with §12
- **preservation of SLE, PPA, dominant cultural landscape features, harmonic landscape scale and relationships**, in accordance with paragraph (1) of §12 of the Act

B.1.2. Methodological principles

(B.1.2.1.) The principle is methodologically based on **dividing the assessment process into several separate stages**. The **separate stages**, which all include a transparent statement of results, **lead to considerable elimination of subjectivity in the assessment process**, and provide some space for discussion. Uncertainties and divergences resulting from more or less subjective reasoning can therefore be set aside.

(B.1.2.2.) The basic principle of the method is **spatial and character differentiation of a landscape** – delineation of distinct landscape parts, each homogeneous in character. Landscape character zones and unit spaces are differentiated with regard to natural conditions (morphology, land-cover type, climate), structure and land-use pattern (character of colonisation and other traces of landscape cultivation) in their historical context. When delineating the unit spaces of landscape character, it is above all spatial factors and landscape scene uniformity that are taken into account.

(B.1.2.3.) The process consists of three stages:

a. Delineation of the assessment area (ALA)

That is, delineation of the affected landscape area based on the character of the assessed intended project (constructures, land-use changes).

b. An evaluation of the landscape character of the area

The purpose of this evaluation is to list and describe the attributes of the landscape character of the affected landscape area.

c. Landscape character impact assessment

This assessment evaluates the extent to which the intended project can impact the landscape character of the given area, and considers the acceptability of the changes.

(B.1.2.4.) Stage procedures:

ad a) The delineation of an assessment area consists of the following steps:

- **A description of the intended project** (construction or land-use change) – an analysis of the potential of the intended project to affect the landscape character physically and/or visually.
- **Delineation of the affected landscape area (ALA)** by analysing the ring of potential visibility and visual barriers.

ad b) The evaluation consists of the following steps:

- **Delineation of LCZ and LCUS** – a general description of the landscape character of a larger area (LCZ) and its role in the landscape context (biogeography, geomorphology, land cover, settlement, culture, history), and delineation of LCUS. LCUS are delineated only in the ALA.
- **Identification of natural, cultural and historical attributes** of the landscape character, and a **classification** of these attributes. The attributes should be identified and evaluated separately for each LCUS.

ad c) The impact assessment comprises the following processes:

- **An evaluation of the extent of the impacts** of the intended project on the identified attributes and qualities.
- **An assessment of the acceptability of the impact** from the viewpoint of landscape character preservation (deriving from the uniqueness of the landscape character of the area or region).

B.2. Assessment procedure

GENERAL SCHEME FOR ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF AN INTENDED CONSTRUCTURE OR LAND-USE CHANGE ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE STEPS	EXPLANATION	BASIS
STAGE a. DELINEATION OF AN ASSESSMENT AREA		
1.	DESCRIPTION OF THE INTENDED CONSTRUCTURE OR LAND-USE CHANGE, DEFFINITION OF GOALS AND BASIC QUESTIONS	A description of the potential of the intended constructure or land-use change to affect the landscape character; a description of possible conflicts between the intended object and landscape character preservation. A definition of the goal and of basic assessment issues based on a general description of the affected area and the anticipated influence of the intended structures or land use on the landscape character.
2.	DELINEATION OF THE AFFECTED LANDSCAPE AREA (ALA)	Delineation of the ALA (space or group of spaces of landscape character) that is definitely or potentially affected by the intended constructures or change in land use. Barriers to visibility (horizons, forest edges, plantations outside a forest area, built-up areas) and circles showing the coverage of sensual effects (visual, acoustic, etc.) due to the intended project.
Blueprints of the intended constructures, land use planning documentation (e.g. land use plan or urban study).	A field survey, a topographic map, an analysis of panoramic landscape photos, terrain sections, visibility diagrams.	

STAGE b. AN EVALUATION OF THE LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF AN AREA			
3.	DELINEATION OF LCZ AND LCUS	A general description of a larger area (LCZ) in the landscape context (biogeography, geomorphology, vegetation cover, settlement, culture, history); a list of places of landscape character within the ALA. In the simplest case, the whole ALA is a single unit of landscape character.	Land survey, aerial photography, biogeographic mapping, water bodies, previous landscape assessment documentation, geological maps, geobotanic maps, information on settlement, history, etc.
4.	IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ATTRIBUTES	Identification of attributes and traits of the aspects of landscape character within ALA, for LCUS – natural, cultural and historical attributes; presence of aesthetic qualities, harmonic scale and relationships. The attributes should be classified according to their importance for the character of each LCUS.	Land survey, aerial photography, borders of PPA, SLE, biogeographic zoning, a list of cultural heritage entities, borders of historic preservation zones, historical maps and documents, historical photographs, etc.
STAGE c. AN IMPACT ASSESSMENT			
5.	EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT ON IDENTIFIED ATTRIBUTES	An evaluation of the extent to which the intended structures or land-use changes influence the identified landscape character attributes of ALA.	Conclusions from the previous analyses.
6.	AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ACCEPTABILITY OF THE IMPACT, BASED ON ITS SEVERITY; CONCLUSIONS	A summary of the above assessment stages; a specification of the acceptable extent of the impact on each recognised attribute, an evaluation of the impression, importance and rareness of each attribute (positive, neutral, negative; fundamental, significant, marginal; unique, rare, common), and the formulation of a conclusion (acceptable, unacceptable, highly unacceptable), and, in some cases, recommendations for minimising the impact on landscape character.	Conclusions from the previous analyses.

B.2.1. Specification of a proposed constructure or land-use change

(B.2.1.1.) The assessment is based on the information in the documentation of the intended project. The extent of the project, the potential physical, visual, acoustic and olfactory impacts on the landscape character, and also other direct, related or incidental impacts on a given landscape are to be taken into consideration. The first step in a proper assessment is to specify the potential impact of the intended project on the landscape character. This description therefore indicates what the assessor is basing his assessment on, what data he can use, and which features of the intended project he is focusing on.

(B.2.1.2.) When assessing an intended project, other intended projects or plans prepared in the neighbouring area need to be taken in account, especially finalised structure placement findings and intended projects in approved urban development plans. The timing for the realization of the intended projects in the area needs to be taken into account.

B.2.2. Delineation of the affected landscape area (ALA)

(B.2.2.1.) Any intended project has an impact on the landscape character of a limited area only. This is the space that is influenced by the direct physical or sensual (visual, acoustic or olfactory) characteristics of the intended project. This limited part of the landscape is referred to as the **affected landscape area (ALA)**.

(B.2.2.2.) The following ways can be used to delineate an affected landscape area:

- **delineation of ALA using the visual barrier method** – horizons of geomorphology, forest stands or built-up areas
- **delineation of the potential visibility radius** – this is empirically delineated in two ranges: the radius of strong visibility and the radius of clear visibility
- or, in some cases, **outlining the ranges of non-visual sensual impacts** (acoustic, olfactory)

ALA is almost always delineated by visual barriers, but where there are vistas from the locality of the intended project, it is necessary to use the potential visibility radius method. If the acoustic or other impact of the intended project spatially exceeds the range of the visual impact, it becomes decisive for delineating ALA.

B.2.3. Delineation of landscape character zones and unit spaces

(B.2.3.1.) Landscape character unit spaces can be delineated, if it is purposeful and practical to do so from the point of view of landscape character assessment within ALA. When delineating these spaces, it is necessary to keep in mind that the borders of landscape character areas can be different of those of ALA. The next step in the methodology is to make a general description of a wider area, to delineate the landscape character unit space/spaces, and to make a description of the characteristic attributes of the unit spaces. The impact of the intended project under assessment can affect more than one landscape character space.

(B.2.3.2.) The borders of LCUSs can be formed by morphological horizons, by natural and man-made structures or by transition zones with changing landscape character qualities (natural, cultural or historical), which always play a role in the character of a landscape. These characteristics can be the shape and configuration of the relief of the landscape, the species composition of its vegetation cover, or the importance and quality of the history of the water bodies in the area (periods of substantial changes in the landscape character of the area), and current land use. A combination of all these features, or the feature that is most important, can identify the border of the LCUS. When delineating the LCUS, two approaches are important:

- Inside the space – a visual display of the spatial composition and configuration of the elements that create the spatial characteristics
- Outside the space – vistas into neighbouring areas, openness and demarcation by visual horizons

(B.2.3.3.) A general description of LCUS is used as the basis for an analysis of the context of the intended project under assessment, and also for identifying the

general attributes of the landscape character of the space. The output of this analysis is a written document divided into chapters on Natural Characteristics, Cultural and Historic Characteristics, and a comprehensive chapter on the Main Landscape Character Attributes. These chapters summarize the most significant attributes of the intended project. The list of characteristics is not provided with a commentary.

(B.2.3.4.) Within the affected landscape area (ALA) delineated in the previous step, the character of the LCUS is defined. This shows the visually delimited landscape spaces that are visually continuous from most viewpoints within the space, that are perceivable from places outside the space, or places that are perceived as distinct due to their special character. Landscape character spaces are distinguished not only by their visual limits and the specific qualities of their settings, but also by their specific natural, cultural and historical characteristics. ALA can in some cases be identical with an LCUS.

B.2.4. Identification and classification of landscape character attributes

(B.2.4.1) For each LCUS it is necessary to:

- **specify the attributes** that are most significant for the landscape character, which can be either the mere presence of elements and features or the impression of their spatial and aesthetic setting
- **identify significant attributes of spatial relationships and scenery**
- **identify the aesthetic qualities** of an area of harmonic scale and relationships
- **classify the discovered attributes** according to the impression that they make (positive, neutral, negative), their importance (fundamental, significant, marginal) and their rareness (unique, rare, common).

(B.2.4.2.) **Natural attributes** can involve the presence, character, pattern and visual impact of natural elements and phenomena such as relief, forests and forest

edges, scattered vegetation, meadows, wetlands, water bodies, lakes and riparian zones.

(B.2.4.3.) **The presence of natural values protected by law** (e.g. Particularly Protected Areas) can indicate and/or objectify the presence of positive natural qualities within the ALA.

(B.2.4.4.) **Cultural and historical attributes** can involve the presence, character, pattern and visual impact of the following attributes and phenomena: a place of cultural, historical and/or spiritual importance, structures and sets of structures that bear witness to historical uses and the evolution of land use, settlement structure, urban structure and the image of settlements, the cultural and historical significance of buildings, integration of a settlement within its natural setting.

(B.2.4.5.) **The presence of architectural values and historical monuments** can indicate and/or objectify the presence of positive historical or cultural values.

(B.2.4.6.) The **aesthetic value** of a landscape emanates from:

- **spatial relationships and scenic settings (the spatial composition and character of the spaces, the configuration and character of the elements, distinctive features of the landscape)**
- **harmony in relationships and scale**

(B.2.4.7.) **Spatial relationships and scenery setting attributes** can involve the character, structure and visual impact of the following elements and features: landscape mosaic, patterns of patches, lines and spots within the landscape, the color scheme of the scenery, contrasts in the transitions between landscape elements, the geometry of the landscape elements, the horizons and the spatial definition of the scenery.

(B.2.4.8.) The **presence of positive values** in the ALA can also be indicated by the presence of some specific qualities of the spatial structure of the landscape.

(B.2.4.9.) The **attributes of harmonic relationships in the landscape and a harmonic scale** can appear from harmony between human activities and natural conditions in a landscape. In other words, means harmony among natural, cultural and historical attributes. It also involves harmony between the scale of the whole

and the scales of the individual elements, in the forms of the spaces and the proportion of natural and near-natural elements and components of the landscape.

(B.2.4.10.) The identified landscape character attributes and qualities of a landscape area (ALA) are not all of equal significance. Some of them may be of **fundamental significance** for the landscape structure and scenery, while others may be less remarkable.

(B.2.4.11.) **Significance** is defined as a measure of the extent to which an attribute or quality contributes to the overall character of a landscape. Three levels of significance are differentiated: **I. fundamental; II. significant; III. marginal.**

A fundamental attribute is a landscape feature that is crucial for the character of the landscape

A significant attribute is a landscape feature that contributes significantly to the character of the landscape

A marginal attribute is a landscape feature that adds something of lesser importance to the character of the landscape

(B.2.4.12.) It is clear that any negative impacts on positive attributes that are of fundamental or of significant importance will be recognized as more serious than impacts on attributes of lower importance.

(B.2.4.13.) **Rareness of attributes** – the identified landscape character attributes and qualities of a given area (ALA) are not all equal in **value**. Some can be classified as **unique**, some as **rare**, and some as **common**.

A unique attribute is a landscape feature that is unique within the relevant area of landscape character, region or state.

A rare attribute is a landscape feature that is of infrequent occurrence within the relevant area of landscape character, region or state.

A common attribute is a landscape feature that is of frequent occurrence within the relevant area of landscape character, region or state.

(B.2.4.14.) It is clear that any impacts on unique or rare attributes and qualities that would change or degrade them will be recognized as more serious than impacts on common attributes and qualities.

(B.2.4.15.) **Classification of positive and negative impressions.** Each aspect of a landscape makes an impression, in addition to its contribution to the landscape character. This impression can be **positive**, meaning that its role in the landscape scenery is pleasant, **negative** or **neutral**. For a positive landscape character evaluation, in accordance with the Act, sustainability of the feature represented by the evaluated attribute is decisive. The impression is crucial for subsequent evaluation of the landscape character.

B.2.5. Evaluation of the impact of the intention on the landscape character

(B.2.5.1.) Although identifying the landscape character attributes and qualities of an area provides a considerable amount of data, and it would be possible to include more than the three basic (natural, cultural and historical) categories to define landscape character, **it is necessary to narrow the outputs in the sense of the requirements of §12 of the Act.** This is because in most cases an assessment in accordance with §12 can serve as technical grounds, or expert evidence, in administrative procedures. It is therefore practically useful when the formulation of the conclusion corresponds with the phraseology of the Act. The output of the process is therefore a conclusion that expresses **the extent to which the intended project impacts the**

- natural attributes
- cultural attributes
- historical attributes
- natural qualities
- aesthetic qualities
- significant landscape elements (SLE)

- particularly protected areas (PPA)
- dominant natural features
- dominant cultural features
- harmonic scale
- harmonic relationships

(B.2.5.2.) It is important to detect whether the intended project has a **positive, negative or neutral** impact on the landscape character.

(B.2.5.3.) Disturbances that degrade the positive natural and aesthetic qualities of a landscape, or that accentuate existing negative landscape attributes, are of particular importance for landscape character protection. These are **negative impacts**, the intensity of which is then evaluated. **Positive impacts** on landscape character attributes are always in harmony with landscape character protection, so there is no need to evaluate their intensity.

(B.2.5.4.) The intensity of negative impacts derives from the intensity of the conflict between those impacts, on the one hand, and positive landscape character attributes, landscape scenery and parts of landscape sceneries in a landscape character zone or unit spaces that were identified during the assessment process, on the other. The intensity of the impact is assessed empirically on the basis of on the assessor's expertise. Six levels of impact intensity are used: **positive impact, no impact, low impact, medium-size impact, strong impact, devastating impact**.

(B.2.5.5.) Impact intensity is not the only criterion for evaluating the impact of an intended project. The **significance** and **rareness** of the identified landscape character attributes are also taken into consideration.

(B.2.5.6.) The impact intensity assessment of an intended project, and also the classification of the identified attributes can be summarized on a single summary sheet.

SUMMARY SHEET OF THE CLASSIFICATION OF IDENTIFIED ATTRIBUTES AND THE INTENSITY OF THE IMPACT OF THE INTENDED PROJECT ON THESE ATTRIBUTES

		Classification of identified attributes			Intensity of the impact of the intended project on the identified attributes
		According to attribute impression	According to attribute significance	According to attribute rareness	Positive impact No impact Low impact Medium-size impact Strong impact Devastating impact
Attributes of landscape character	Specifically identified attributes and qualities	Positive Negative Neutral	Fundamental Significant Marginal	Unique Rare Common	
Natural attributes, including dominant natural features					
Cultural attributes, including dominant cultural features					
Historical attributes					
Aesthetic attributes, including scale and relationships					

B.2.6. Conclusions and objectivization of results

(B.2.6.1.) On the basis of the steps set out here, we can evaluate the frequency of the identified attributes and values, the impression that they will make, their significance and rareness, and also the intensity of the impact of the intended project. These facts provide a sufficient basis for a final statement on the acceptability of the intended project in terms of landscape character protection.

(B.2.6.2.) The conclusions of the assessment can be objectified by instituting an independent expert inquiry to reassess the findings. This inquiry will lead to a document in which, based on their assessment, the experts discuss the crucial issues of identifying and evaluating the landscape character attributes and qualities, and also the intensity of the impacts that the intended project will have.

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**A method for assessing the visual impact on landscape character
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Centrum pro krajinu, s.r.o.
ISBN 80-903206-8-6
Prague 2006