

Historic Landscapes in Urban Regions: Recreation and Use Conflicts in Mikhalkovo, Moscow

Elena Petrova

Moscow State Lomonosov University, Russia
epgeo@mail.ru

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Introduction

Historic landscapes are of great importance for development of recreation and informative nature tourism, especially within large urban areas, such as Moscow. We regard historic landscapes as natural and cultural landscapes combined with historic monuments. In other words, a historic landscape is nature combined with history. This landscape category can be added by a scene of a historical event or legend, a country estate or summer-residence of a famous historic person, historic parks, and other places of historic importance. These landscape's images attract visitors as unique areas and areas with "historic memories". Visitors can enjoy the beauties both of nature and architectural ensembles. Simultaneously they can learn from nature and receive historical information (figure 1). Historic landscapes often give visitors the only opportunity for contact with nature in urban regions. That is why recreation and tourism development based on historic landscapes can be a good part of ecological (nature) informative tourism development. Mikhalkovo is our research region. It is one of the historic landscapes at northwestern environs of Moscow. This cultural landscape was formed by country-seat (Russian: *usad'ba*), which was typical for Moscow suburbs in the eighteenth – nineteenth centuries.

Methods

We tried to trace changes in these cultural landscapes during the last century, to study their potential for recreation and informative nature tourism goals, and to find out use conflicts at this area. The main methods of our research were collabo-

ration of historical and geographical approaches, including archive research, historic documents investigations as well as area exploration and maps comparison.



Figure 1: Historical information for visitors in Mikhalkovo park.

Results

The historic landscapes of Mikhalkovo can be a good area for informative tourism development. It preserved many typical features of cultural landscapes in the urban suburbs. At the same time it has a very large, rich, and unique history. It was firstly mentioned in 1584 in documents as "a waste ground that was a village Mikhalkovo". The main popularity of this estate is connected with the names of Duchess Dashkova (a companion of the empress Katherine the Second) and – later – of Graf Panin. In the time of Panin (the eighteenth century) this landscape undergoes great changes. Here, the famous Russian architect Bazhenov built one of the most beautiful and original architectural ensembles in the Moscow province in the pseudo-Gothic style. A large beautiful landscape park with picturesque cascade-ponds on the river Golovinsky was also a part of the country-seat surrounded by a big forest. In the nineteenth century industrial

development of this region began. Many enterprises were springing up here and changed the landscapes greatly. In 1850 Wilhelm August Jokisch bought these grounds and buildings. He established a cloth-mill in the vicinity, but he also did very much for the preservation of the historic ensemble, which had been almost ruined in his time. In the beginning of the twentieth century the cloth-manufacture was enlarged, a railway was build not far from Mikhalkovo. However, the greatest change was brought by the October socialist revolution. In 1919 the cloth-manufacture, the architectural ensemble, and the park were nationalized. The country-seat was devastated. In the 1930th these grounds were annexed by the city. In course of time historic surroundings of Mikhalkovo were completely lost. This historic landscape exists now as a park in the middle of Moscow, as a “historic island” within a modern city (figure 2). Visitors have the possibility both for relaxation and acquiring of knowledge. They can find here the remains of the old forest with oaks that are 200 years old, and the remainder of the old landscape park with linden-walk and cascade-ponds. The Mikhalkovo ponds are ducks’ favorite places. We can see the famous Bazhenov’s tower (figure 3), house wings, and summer-houses in the park. The historic cloth-mill is also a part of these cultural landscapes. No wonder this area is a tidbit for many investors, who try to get hold of it. There are violent conflicts between nature and architecture protection on the one hand, and other use, such as non-ecological recreation, transport use (construction of garages), building, industry on the other hand, owing to shortage and high prices of land in this urban region. Therefore it is very important to protect these historic landscapes.



Figure 2: Cascade-ponds.



Figure 3: Bazhenov/s tower.

Conclusion

In urban region of Moscow such landscapes as Mikhalkovo turn often into “green islands” or “oases in the industrial and transport desert”. However Mikhalkovo itself wasn’t destroyed during the last decades as were many other historic landscapes near Moscow. Informative nature tourism development based on historic landscapes can be a good solution for this landscape’s protection.