

Multi-purpose Land Consolidation in Macedonia

The benefits of the land consolidation go far beyond the improvement of efficiency of agricultural production although that is the pivotal reason for introduction of the policy in Macedonia. Besides the improvement of unfavorable land structure, the Law on land consolidation envisages use of the instrument in case of public infrastructural investments and nature protection and restoration projects. By game of chance, it appeared that in two of the ongoing land consolidation projects, it is simply imposed we to conduct consolidation in the same area where steam-heat line and highway construction was decided to be carried out (which were not present in the feasibility phase). Extensive cooperation discussions with several state and local authorities are under the way which should hopefully lead to optimal farm structures, saved funds for expropriation due to use of available state land and functional field infrastructure (roads and irrigation/drainage constructions).

Indiana Jones Consolidation

But I would like to give emphasize on another area where the land consolidation can find a large use in the country. Macedonia is dotted with some 10,000 archeological sites dating from prehistory, the classical period, the Byzantine period all to the Middle Ages. Almost all of them are located near current settlements, underneath the intensive agricultural land. The current situation is that the farmers are reluctant to sell the land for archeological excavation, losing by that the sources for their incomes, which of course is not the objective of the state as well (but quite the opposite). Additionally, the responsible institution for protection of cultural heritage struggles with lack of funds for buying out of farmers properties before the archeological works commence or continue where were stopped in the past. Due to this situation many valuable artefacts from the rich Macedonian history remains unrevealed while the local population is deprived from the possibility to materlize the cultural heritage into rural development by diversification of economic activities (rural tourism, services, etc)

Meet ancient Stibera

A classic example of above situation is ancient town called Stibera dating to the 4th and 3rd centuries BC, from the period of Macedonian royal dynasty of Philip and Alexander the Great, and later in the Roman time.



It was a city of 20,000 inhabitants covering significant area of 13 ha. The site is one of the richest in marble statues of prominent citizens, deities and emperors, many of which have been literally found by the farmers while cultivating their land. The Archeological site is near the village of Čepigovo, Pelagonia region surrounded by fertile arable land.



The agriculture is important activity for 160 inhabitants of the village which resist to the idea of giving up of their land. Consequently, less than 5% of the ancient city is currently excavated.



Our land consolidation administration have got in contact with the Cultural Heritage Protection Office officials, presenting the opportunities of land consolidation instrument that seems can work win-win in this situation.





The initial on-the-spot investigation of the potential land consolidation area was carried out which has confirmed that:

- there is vivid agricultural activities around the initial archeological excavations and the land parcels are fragmented. There are no perennial crops or buildings in the fields;
- the farmers are not willing to quit agriculture and have set a high negotiation positions for exchange of the their land (ratio of current vs future land value of 1:2 or 1:3) as a result of previous consultations with authorities. They are not informed about land consolidation policy; and
- there is available state-owned land which can take part in land bank operations in the future consolidation area in order to achieve a new spatial plan that will allows parallel operation of agricultural and archeological activities.

Therefore, the initial findings are generally favorable and promising in terms of future consolidation activities in the area and the site is considered as one of the first where the land consolidation can start playing an another useful role in the Macedonian society.







