

MENDEL UNIVERSITY IN BRNO

Czech Society of Landscape Engineers – ČSSI, z.s.,



and

**Department of Landscape Management
Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology
Mendel University in Brno**



**Public recreation and landscape protection
—
with sense hand in hand!**

Conference proceedings

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of Libor Jankovský, the Dean of the Faculty of Forestry and Wood Technology, Mendel
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of Klára Dostálová, the Minister of the Regional Development CZ,



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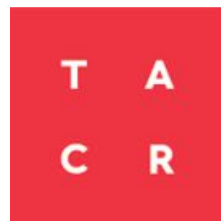
south moravian region

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SINGLETRAILS IN THE FOREST ENVIRONMENT FOR INDIVIDUAL GROUPS OF STAKEHOLDERS

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Abstract

The presented paper came into being as an output of the project named Conditions for the harmonious alignment of biking in the forest environment with the interests of nature conservation and regional development (TL02000505). Mendel University in Brno is the main project researcher, SocioFactor Ltd. and NAKOLO Ltd. companies are the co-researchers. The study presents results of a qualitative part of the research carried out by the SocioFactor company in the years 2019-2021. The research was focused on the analysis of the significance of the monitored singletrails for local residents and selected stakeholders in three monitored localities – Singletrail Moravian Karst – Jedovnice trails, Singletrail Moravian Karst – Mariánské valley trails and Rychlebské trails in the Rychlebské Mountains. A total of 182 semi-structured interviews were conducted within the qualitative part of the research. The vast majority of them took place during six field trips. Each site was visited twice during the research survey. An ethnographic survey with the emphasis on observation took place at the field trips. Stakeholders include (1) representatives of the management of the municipality where the singletrail is located, (2) entrepreneurs, (3) operators of individual singletrails, (4) hunters whose hunting grounds are a part of the territory in which the singletrail is located, (5) local citizens who live in municipalities in the immediate vicinity of the observed singletrails, (6) cyclists who use singletrails, and (7) tourists.

Key words: Ethnographic survey, stakeholders analysis, cycling in the forest

Introduction

The conference paper came into being as an output of the project named Conditions for the harmonious alignment of biking in the forest environment with the interests of nature conservation and regional development (TL02000505) that was supported by the TL – Program for the Support of Applied Social Sciences and Humanities Research, Experimental Development and Innovation ÉTA. The conference paper presents outcomes of the qualitative part of the research that was conducted by SocioFactor in 2019-2021. The research was focused on the analysis of the significance of the monitored singletrails for local residents and selected stakeholders in three monitored localities – Singletrail Moravian Karst – Jedovnice trails, Singletrail Moravian Karst – Mariánské valley trails and Rychlebské trails in the Rychlebské Mountains. In the case of the first two localities, these are singletrails near Brno, the third singletrail is located in Jeseníky. This singletrail has been in operation for the longest time out of all monitored localities, specifically since 2009. Singletrail Jedovnice trails was opened in 2016 and singletrail Mariánské valley in 2018.

Methodology

Within the project, data collection took place both on the quantitative and on the qualitative level. The quantitative part of the research was focused on the preferences of cyclists, their behaviour on the trail, economic side of the use of the singletrail and on questions connected with the impact of the singletrail on changes in the surrounding nature. However, this conference paper is based on the qualitative part of the research and presents the outcomes of analysis of stakeholders. Stakeholders include (1) representatives of the management of the municipality where the singletrail is located, (2) entrepreneurs, (3) operators of individual singletrails, (4) hunters whose hunting grounds are a part of the territory in which the singletrail is located, (5) local citizens who live in municipalities in the immediate vicinity of the observed singletrails, (6) cyclists who use singletrails, and (7) tourists. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with these seven groups of stakeholders in 2019-2021. A total of 182 semi-structured interviews were conducted within the qualitative part of the research. The vast majority of them took place during six field trips. Each site was visited twice during the research survey. An ethnographic survey with the emphasis on observation took place at the field trips.

Results

The most significant impact of the existence of singletrails on stakeholders from the management of the municipality was registered in Rychlebské trails, specifically in the municipality Černá Voda. A participant from the administration of Černá Voda stated that singletrails had changed the character of the municipality completely and that they had had direct impact on development of local tourism,

economy and even on employment. Their construction led to the sale of building sites which led to an increase in prices of these sites. While the price was about 50 CZK/m² in the past, according to the communication partner, the price in the present day could be around 700 CZK/m². The operation of singletrails in the municipality led to the construction of new accommodation capacities as well as to the opening of new restaurant facilities – approximately 11 new restaurant facilities and 30-40 new accommodation capacities were created. This led to a decrease of unemployment of local residents and also to the fact that some locals do not have to go to work to other municipalities or towns. What is more, singletrails contribute to the municipal budget through an accommodation fee within which an average of 200,000 – 250,000 CZK is collected annually. On the contrary, representatives of the management of Jedovnice and Brno-Líšeň do not believe that singletrails greatly contributed to the municipal budget or that they had a significant impact on the increase of tourism in both localities. Both localities were already frequently visited by tourists before the construction of singletrails and communication partners in these localities perceive singletrails more as another attraction for tourists. The impact of the existence of singletrails on the environment of the town Jedovnice is not very noticeable, according to communication partners from the management. According to them, the creation of singletrails did not increase the interest in buying building sites in this locality nor did it increase the number of new residents. The communication partner also did not register any decrease of unemployment in connection with the construction of singletrails. The same applies to the second monitored locality Mariánské valley. According to them, the construction of singletrails contributed to intensification of conflicts between locals and cyclists, which mainly concern parts of the road where singletrails intersect with a tarmac road and access roads leading to ponds.

The construction of singletrails had the greatest impact on entrepreneurs in the municipality Černá Voda. Participants from this locality stated that the increase of the cycling activity in the municipality was the main reason for their entry into business. One of the communication partners who does business in the hospitality industry stated that local residents made approximately 15% of total sales, the rest were cyclists or tourists. All approached entrepreneurs started their business after the construction of singletrails and the biggest part of their income comes from users of singletrails. On the other hand, entrepreneurs from Jedovnice and Mariánské valley stated that they had pursued their business activity before the construction of singletrails and that the opening of singletrail tracks had not contributed significantly to their sales. According to communication partners, both localities are frequently visited by cyclists and tourists on a long-term basis so by the construction of singletrails not much has changed.

In the locality of Jedovnice trails operators of individual singletrails think that the construction of the singletrail has a very positive impact on the development of tourism in this locality, mainly on the occupancy of the camp Olšovec which increases every year. However, this opinion of the operators is not shared by the participants from the town management and it is also not confirmed by the results of our field trips. From the data collected by us, it is clear that the singletrail in Jedovnice is predominantly visited by cyclists from Brno and the surroundings (13 out of 16 approached cyclists were from Brno) who visit singletrail only for a day so they do not use any accommodation services. As for the finances, communication partners came to an agreement that maintaining singletrails is very expensive for them and financial subsidies are not sufficient. Operating costs are not covered even by voluntary contributions made by cyclists. The biggest source of income is the Base where bicycle rental and bicycle service is in operation, the Base also offers a wide range of refreshments. In Mariánské valley one of the operators stated that tracks in this locality were more attractive for local residents and cyclists from close surroundings who could visit singletrail after work. For this reason, there was no increase in tourism thanks to singletrails in this locality as it had been planned. During interviews the cyclists from Brno stated that they preferred to visit the singletrail in Jedovnice, whose circuits design was nicer, over the tracks in Mariánské valley. By contrast, Černá Voda was not very attractive for cyclists or tourists before the construction of the singletrail Rychlebské trails, according to operators, the development of tourism in the municipality took place only after the construction of singletrails. An important element when maintaining singletrail circuits is, according to operators of Rychlebské trails, voluntary work that maintains community. Voluntary work takes place regularly once a month and, according to one of the communication partners, is a well-attended event both by locals and by cyclists. The goal of this voluntary work is primarily the alteration of singletrail tracks. Even in this locality operators agreed on the fact that maintaining singletrails is very expensive and neither voluntary contributions made by cyclists, nor the incomes from the Base are sufficient for operation and maintenance.

A participating hunters and forest keepers named two biggest downsides that he perceives in connection with the operation of the singletrail in Jedovnice – firstly, it is a difficult way of using the forest economically and secondly, there is a high occupancy of the locality in relation to the increased number of tourists and cyclists mainly in the summer season which is linked to worsened conditions for hunting in the locality. Because of the combination of the above mentioned there are conflicts between hunters, cyclists and operators, according to the participant. These conflicts are most apparent in the locality of Mariánské valley trails. A participant from this locality complained that operators of the trails in Mariánské valley had not discussed where the trails should lead before the construction. According to them, the problem of singletrails is the fact that trails lead through need zones for animals. The result is the disturbance of animals that occurs during the day and the night hours, which makes hunting problematic. What is more, according to the participant, trails lead past feeding racks and tree stands. Animals are being disturbed mainly by the cyclists who do not respect the opening hours of singletrails and who go there even during the night hours. At the same time, the participant stated that they did not see any interest in resolving the problems from the operators' side. However, operators of the singletrail do not agree with this statement and during the interview one of them said that they had tried to resolve the situation with hunters. Problems with the disturbance of animals in the forest and difficult hunting were also mentioned as a problem by participants from the Rychlebské trails. According to them, the next problem is worsening of working conditions in the forest that concerns wood logging because of the fact that there are more cyclists, there is a higher chance of getting hurt. At the same time not, all hunters had the same opinion on singletrails in this locality. One of the respondents stated that the trails had been created sensitively on an old hunting trails so it had not been a big intervention into the landscape and, according to them, the trails work very well and they do not see any problem in their operation.

Local citizens who live in Jedovnice identified several positives and negatives that are, according to them, connected with the operation of singletrails. On the positive side, according to the majority, singletrails bring new opportunities for entrepreneurs and the municipality, and in their opinion, Jedovnice are getting rich thanks to this. On the contrary, approached entrepreneurs stated that the construction of singletrails in the locality had not had any fundamental influence on their business and even participants from the town management did not confirm that the municipality would get richer because of singletrails. The biggest problem mentioned by the locals was worsening of the traffic situation in the municipality, especially on the shore of the Olšovec pond, where the camp and the Base are located. Locals then mentioned that they limited their leisure activities, such as walks in the forest, mushroom hunting, walking dogs, etc. because of cyclists and tourists in the locality who cause overcrowding during the tourist season so the forest is no longer quiet. According to locals, Mariánské valley has always been attractive for tourists, there have always been various attractions and the singletrails are, in their opinion, just another of a number of attractions. Owing to the increasing number of cyclists, some locals do not feel safe in the locality. They stated that cyclists rode very fast on the roads and that they ignored children and dogs that were being walked. According to one of the participants, this is the main reason why frequent accidents occur in the locality. Otherwise, locals stated that singletrails were not an important topic for them because the locality had always been busy with tourists. In Černá Voda two main topics resonated between locals – a great increase of tourism that causes big profits and the loss of quietness that was in the municipality before the construction of singletrails. Local residents stated that singletrails had a fundamental influence on the transformation of the municipality, they contributed to the development of tourism and provided many locals with a chance to start business. The impact of the existence of singletrails on local residents is the most noticeable in Černá Voda where the construction of singletrails led to the complete change of locals' lives.

Cyclists who use Jedovnice trails appreciate the most the fact that they are located near Brno so the accessibility is for most of them very good. Cyclists usually visit the trails alone and they stay in the locality only for a day. They prefer to go on working days when there is not such traffic on the singletrail. The vast majority of the approached cyclists stated that they used only the services of the Base so their economic benefit for the locality is limited only to the Base. The singletrail in Mariánské valley is visited by people from a greater distance, in most cases they are not regular visitors of trails but they are cyclists who are on the local singletrail for the first time. Because there is no the base in Mariánské valley, cyclists buy refreshments in local businesses and by doing that they increase businesses' economic benefits for the locality and local entrepreneurs. For cyclists heading to the locality Rychlebské trails, the distance of the singletrail from the place of their residence does not play a big role, according to them, the singletrail is so popular that it is worth going there even from more

distant places. This is connected with the length of the visit – compared to previous localities where the length of the visit was usually only a day, in the case of Rychlebské trails, cyclists stay for three to five days. This increases their economic benefits for the region because in addition to refreshments, cyclists also use accommodation services.

The vast majority of tourists in the surroundings of Jedovnice trails and in the surroundings of Mariánské valley stated that they were not aware of the existence of singletrails and that they were not attracted by this type of sport. On the other hand, most tourists in Černá Voda knew about the existence of singletrails, although they were not further interested in them. The existence of singletrails was not a reason why tourists visited the specific locality. Compared to other groups of stakeholders, the impact of the existence of singletrails on tourists is very small.

Discussion and conclusion

From the outcomes of the qualitative part of the research, it is clear that the biggest changes in connection with the singletrail were made in the locality Rychlebské trails in the Rychlebské Mountains. The changes affected Černá Voda the most, this municipality went from a peaceful place to one of the most visited singletrail localities in the Czech Republic in just a few years. It is interesting that although the biggest changes were registered in Černá Voda, through our research we discovered that most conflicts were detected in other two monitored localities – in Mariánské valley and in Jedovnice. Tourism was typical of both localities even before the construction of singletrails so it should be expected that locals would be accustomed to higher noise. However, it was the local residents in Jedovnice and Mariánské valley who complained most often about the traffic around singletrails and about inconsiderate cyclists. This raises the question of whether it is appropriate to build singletrail circuits in localities that are already full of tourists, which will contribute to an even greater strain on the locality, or to choose a more remote locality in which the necessary infrastructure and tourist facilities would be built only in connection with increased tourist interest in the locality.

Another topic of discussion are the conflicts between operators and users of singletrails on one side and hunters to whose hunts singletrails interfere on the other side. In all three monitored localities hunters pointed out problems that were connected with the operation of singletrails – it is more difficult way to an economic use of the forest; problems with hunting of animals that are, according to hunters, disturbed by the increased traffic in the forest or by the indiscipline of cyclists who do not respect the opening hours of singletrails or who do not respect the closures in forests. The questions that arise in this context are: Do singletrails disturb animals in forests? Are singletrails causing damage to the biodiversity? Are animal deaths increased around singletrails? These (and other) questions should be answered in the other part of the project that will be implemented by the Mendel University. The results should be then shared with the operators of singletrails and with the hunters. This could lower the tension and conflicts between these two groups of stakeholders that are closely influenced by the operation of singletrails. In the end, one of the goals of the project is to describe the conditions that are necessary for a harmonious combination of cycling in the forest environment with the needs of nature conservation.

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Souhrn

V rámci projektu Podmínky pro harmonické skloubení cykloturistiky v lesním prostředí s potřebami ochrany přírody a rozvoje regionů (TL02000505), který byl podpořen v programu TL – Program na podporu aplikovaného společenskovedního a humanitního výzkumu, experimentálního vývoje a inovací ÉTA a jehož spoluřešitelem je firma SocioFactor s.r.o., proběhl v letech 2019-2021 výzkum zaměřený na analýzu významů sledovaných tratí pro místní obyvatele a vybrané stakeholdery ve třech sledovaných lokalitách. Těmito lokalitami jsou: Singletrail Moravský kras – Jedovnické stezky, Singletrail Moravský kras – Mariánské údolí stezky a Rychlebské stezky v Rychlebských horách. Tento příspěvek je zaměřený na výsledky kvalitativní části výzkumu a předkládá výsledky analýzy vybraných stakeholderů, se kterými v rámci výzkumu probíhaly ve všech třech výzkumných lokalitách polostrukturované rozhovory.

Z výzkumu vyplývá, že největší dopad má existence singletrailů na společenské prostředí a stakeholdery v lokalitě Rychlebské stezky v Rychlebských horách. Stakeholdery z řad vedení obce, podnikatelů, místních i provozovatelů během rozhovorů shodně uváděli, že výstavba singletrailu zcela

proměnila ráz obce a měla na lokalitu významný ekonomický dopad. S provozováním singletrailů se všech třech sledovaných lokalitách pojilo také zvýšené riziko konfliktů mezi jednotlivými skupinami stakeholderů. Konflikty mezi skupinami stakeholderů jsou pravděpodobně nejvíce patrné v lokalitě Mariánské údolí stezky, kde se konflikty dotýkají jak provozovatelů tratí, tak myslivců, dále pak cyklistů, místních i turistů. Z výzkumu tak plyne, že existence singletrailu v této lokalitě má na společenské prostředí a stakeholdery spíše negativní dopady, způsobuje mnoho konfliktů a vznik singletrailu neměl na okolní stakeholdery z hlediska zisku významný ekonomický dopad. Co se týče poslední sledované lokality (Jedovnické stezky), ta je využívána zejména cyklisty z Brna a jeho bezprostředního okolí. Cyklisté v rozhovorech uváděli, že Jedovnické stezky preferují před těmi v Mariánském údolí zejména kvůli podobě jednotlivých okruhů. Tím je ekonomický dopad singletrailů na lokalitu eliminován převážně na Základnu. I v této lokalitě jsou patrné konflikty, které se s provozem singletrailu pojí, konflikty ale nedosahují takových rozměrů, jak v lokalitě Mariánského údolí.

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