

Report on the outcomes of a Short-Term Scientific Mission¹

Action number: CA23128

Grantee name: Gabor-Giovani Luca

Details of the STSM

Title: STSM Topic WG2a: What topics and issues are explored in research on the history of landscape architecture in Eastern Europe

Start and end date: 14/07/2025 to 28/07/2025

Description of the work carried out during the STSM

Description of the activities carried out during the STSM. Any deviations from the initial working plan shall also be described in this section. (max. 500 words)

The Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM), conducted between 14–28 July 2025, was dedicated to exploring the topic defined by WG2a: “What topics and issues are explored in research on the history of landscape architecture in Eastern Europe, particularly in countries that were under the Iron Curtain, which had a distinct approach and a more centralized system compared to other European nations.” The work was carried out primarily at The British Library in London, which, as one of the world’s largest libraries, provided access to an extensive range of both printed and digital resources.

The main goal of the mission was to provide an overview of the history of landscape architecture research in Eastern Europe and to document how landscape archives have been employed in scholarship and practice. The work unfolded in several methodological steps, closely aligned with the plan outlined in my application.

First, I carried out a bibliographic survey, consulting both primary and secondary sources relating to the history of parks and gardens in countries of Eastern Europe, especially those once part of centralized political regimes. In total, over 50 publications were recorded (see annex 1). These resources provided a panoramic overview of topics ranging from medieval monastic landscapes to modern socialist parks.

¹ This report is submitted by the grantee to the Action MC for approval and for claiming payment of the awarded grant. The Grant Awarding Coordinator coordinates the evaluation of this report on behalf of the Action MC and instructs the GH for payment of the Grant.

Second, I compiled case studies in accordance with the requirement of the call to provide at least 30 examples from a minimum of 5 countries. The selected case studies cover a wide geographical range for which I have provided relevant data (see annex 2). For a part of the selected case studies, I also identified the types of archives referenced, which provided additional insight into whether textual, cartographic, or visual materials were more frequently mobilised in the research or conservation practice.

Practical challenges were also encountered during the work. Despite the British Library's extensive holdings, some materials were not available due to restrictions, retrieval delays, or limited accessibility of certain Eastern European publications. In addition, a number of works were identified in the online catalogue but could not be researched due to linguistic limitations, as they were written in languages that I do not master and which are not of international circulation. In these cases, the database was consulted and the titles were included in the bibliographic list, but without detailed review. Daily limits on requests also meant that not all titles could be consulted within the short two-week timeframe. Nevertheless, I maximized the number of daily requests, systematically prioritizing works with clear archival relevance, and recorded references to titles for follow-up research.

The outcomes of the mission include:

- A structured list of publications with short reviews and bibliographical data (annex 1).
- A brief report on selected case studies, including contextual descriptions and references to authorship, archives, and illustrations (annex 2).

Overall, the STSM provided a comprehensive survey of how landscape architecture history is studied in Eastern Europe. It also demonstrated the importance of integrating Eastern European perspectives into the broader discourse of landscape architecture history, thereby contributing directly to the objectives of COST Action ConnectLAA.

Description of the STSM main achievements and planned follow-up activities

Description and assessment of whether the STSM achieved its planned goals and expected outcomes, including specific contribution to Action objective and deliverables, or publications resulting from the STSM. Agreed plans for future follow-up collaborations shall also be described in this section. (max. 500 words)

The Short-Term Scientific Mission (STSM), conducted between 14–28 July 2025, reached the objectives set in the application and contributed directly to the aims of WG2a. For me, this was not only an exercise in bibliographic compilation but also an opportunity to engage with the specific challenges of studying the history of landscape architecture in Eastern Europe, a region shaped by centralized political systems and particular archival traditions.

The most tangible outcome of the mission is the structured bibliography of more than fifty titles. It brings together encyclopedias, monographs, edited volumes, catalogues, conference proceedings, and professional reports. Collectively, these publications cover a wide range of topics, from medieval religious landscapes to socialist-era urban parks. For many of these works I was able to write short reviews, while

others, especially those published in languages I do not master and which are not of international circulation, were identified through the British Library catalogue and included in the list without detailed review. Although I could not study them in depth, I considered it essential to register them, so that the bibliography reflects the true diversity of scholarship and offers a solid basis for further collaborative work with colleagues.

A second important achievement is the selection of case studies from at least 5 countries (Poland, Hungary, Romania, the former Czechoslovakia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, and Russia). For part of these, I was able to identify the types of archives referenced, which allowed me to see whether textual, cartographic, or visual materials were more frequently mobilised. Documenting these variations helped me understand not only the content of the studies but also the broader conditions under which they were produced.

Looking ahead, the results will be presented at the COST ConnectLAA General Meeting in Nitra (5–6 September 2025). This will give me the chance to share my findings, to receive constructive feedback, and to refine the analysis. I expect that some parts of the bibliography and case studies will be adjusted after the meeting.

Overall, the STSM has been a highly productive experience. It provided concrete outputs, bibliography, case studies, methodological reflections, but also gave me the chance to reflect personally on the challenges of researching Eastern Europe and to lay the foundation for future collaborations within the network.