



Received: 12-07-2022  
Accepted: 22-08-2022

## International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

### Idbar Valley: Life in the Historical Continuity

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#### Abstract

Idbar is a village in the municipality of Konjic located in the valley of the Baščica river. It is about 8 km from Konjic, about 40 km from Mostar, and about 50 km from Sarajevo (Geographical coordinates: 43°38'47.36"N, 17°52'54.11"E, elevation: 389). The village developed in the fertile valley of the river Baščica, which rises at the foot of the mountain Prenj, one of the largest and most important mountains in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The significance of this mountain is that it is a 'catcher' of rain and snow (which stays there for about half a year) that generate many sources of streams and

rivers that throughout history have attracted people for their livelihood. In addition, the wide expanses of pasture on the Prenj mountain, during the summer season, are the basis for mass animal husbandry (mainly sheep breeding), where raw materials for the life of people in villages and towns, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond (meat, wool, milk and dairy products...).

The aim of this paper is a 'study on sustainability' on the concrete example of a village in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Keywords:** Idbar, Prenj Mountain, Water, Barica River, Bascica River, Sustainability

#### 1. Introduction

Idbar has 235 inhabitants <sup>[1]</sup>. It is located in the southern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Geographical coordinates: 43°38'47.36"N, 17°52'54.11"E, elevation: 389), (Fig 1).



Source: [https://visitmycountry.net/bosnia\\_herzegovina/bh/index.php/turizam/27-vmc/geografija](https://visitmycountry.net/bosnia_herzegovina/bh/index.php/turizam/27-vmc/geografija), Accessed: 7.31.2022., left  
Google Earth: Accessed: 7.31.2022., right

Fig 1: Idbar Valley (Location)

The village of Idbar is located in the Baščica river valley, near Konjic. This is a typical Bosnian village in the river valley, which clearly witnesses the symbiosis of man and the natural environment, above all the symbiosis of man and water. It is

believed that there are about a hundred sources of drinking water in the Baščica river valley. One of them takes its name from the medieval Bogomils and is called Hada ('Divine Water'). Another spring, called Grozničavac, is known for its water used to treat fever. Skin diseases were treated with water from the Vrtlina spring, while women's infertility was treated with water from one of the Idbar springs.

The original name of the village of Idbar was Dbar, while the river Baščica was originally called Dbarčica. We learn this from a letter written to the people of Dubrovnik by the Bosnian king Stjepan Ostoja, in which this place is mentioned as "Dbar na Neretva" (April 8, 1411).

There are a large number of names for this settlement in the people, which reveal its beauty and living conditions: Dobri Do, Idbarska Vala, Duga Uvala, Vala.

In the Middle Ages, there was a Bogomil shrine at the Djedova Glava site.

In this paper, the author deals with the topic of 'sustainability'. In this sense, he visited the entire area of Bosnia and Herzegovina and collected rich material, which he incorporated for the most part into his books [2,3] and scientific works.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is an extremely complex area in terms of the natural and social environment and its population. The three most numerous ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) live here, and thanks to its rich history, numerous people of different origins: Jews, Germans, Poles, Czechs, Italians, Hungarians...

The composition of the population changed over time, but the material and spiritual traces of their life on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina remained. The complexity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is also visible in its architecture. Hence, for elaborating on the topic of sustainability (in this

work using the example of the village of Idbar), the most suitable scientific methodology [4] was the most suitable, which is covered in his book: Hadrovic, A. (2007). Defining Architectural Space on the Model of the Oriental Style CityHouse in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia, Booksurge, LLC, North Charleston, SC, USA.

## 2. Environment

By 'environment' we mean every possibility in the space in which man can realize his existence [4].

### 2.1 Natural environment

By 'natural environment', we mean all those features that nature gave, and on which man (mostly) did not exert his influence: geographical location, geomorphology, watercourses and reservoirs, plant and animal life, available soil, climate [4] ...

The river Baščica rises at the foot of the mountain Prenj, near the village of Idbar, and flows north, towards the river Neretva (into which it flows, in the town of Čelebići), creating a valley in which wide natural amphitheatres alternate with fertile fields and narrow passages with steep hills.

In the valley there are settlements (one of them is the village of Idbar) with fertile fields where cereals, fruits and vegetables are grown. In the summer part of the year, numerous flocks of sheep grazed on the spacious pastures of Prenja (and produced dairy products and wool). Visoki Prenj is an efficient 'catcher' of rain and snow that ensures the abundance of many springs (and the river Baščica) throughout the year. The highest peak of Prenje, Zelena glava, is at an altitude of 2155 m (Fig 2-7).



Source: <https://www.hit-booker.com/listings/prenj/>, Accessed: 09.06.2018

Fig 2: Prenj Mountain



Source: Author (6.8.2013)

Fig 3: Bascica River and its valley



Source: Author (6.8.2013.)

Fig 4: Fruitful fields in the Bascica river valley



Source: Author (6.8.2013.)

Fig 5: A greater number of public fountains along the Celebici-Idbar road



Source: Author (6.8.2013.)

Fig 6: The fountain at the entrance to the local cemetery of the Idbar village on the Bascica river



Source: Author (6.8.2013)

Fig 7: The 'Barica' source is about 50 m from the Bascica river flow, on the left side of the flow (left) and the mouth of the Barica river into the Bascica river (right)

**2.2 Social environment**

By 'social environment' we mean everything that man has created and that separates him from the world of other living beings [4]. It includes both physical structures (various material, more or less ordered products of their activity) and the immaterial world that we know with the intellect (science, philosophy, religion, law, morality) through an ordered system of abstract symbols (letters, signs).

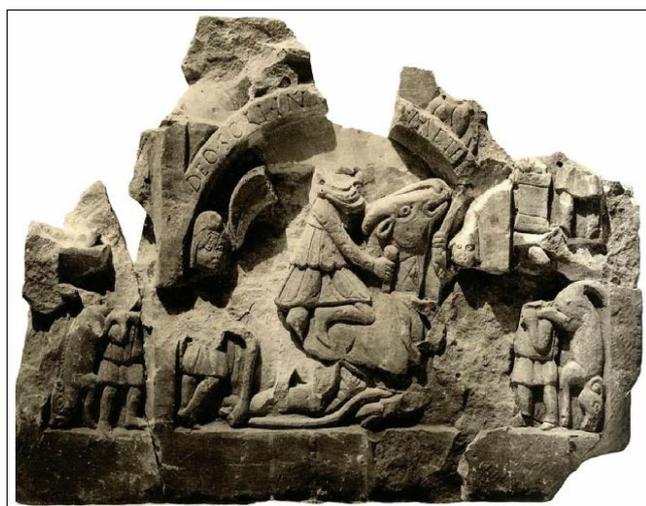
**History of the Idbar Valley.** The settlement Idbar used to be called Dbar and the river Bascica Dbarcica. On April 8, 1411, the Bosnian king Stjepan Ostoja (1378-1418) mentioned „Dbar na Neretva“. The old town of Dbar was located on the site of Gradina, about the origin of which there is no information.

**Architectural cultural and historical heritage of the Idbar valley.** Near this settlement, in the locality of

Gradina, there are remains of a medieval fortress town (Dbar) which was used for a short time by the Ottoman army after this area came under their rule (after 1463 until 1477, when the town was abandoned). The medieval fortress town of Dbar is mentioned in several documents dating from: 1437, 1444, 1448, 1454, 1469...

The town of Konjic, near which is the village of Idbar, has an extremely rich cultural and historical heritage that follows man from the Neolithic era to the present day.

The Konjicki Mitrej is an archeological site near Konjice where there are remains of the foundation of a rectangular sanctuary (9 x 6 m) that consisted of one room, a cella or crypt [5]. A limestone slab (dimensions 59 x 42.5 x 10 cm) with a relief on both sides was found in this place. One relief shows 'the god Mithras killing a bull', and the other shows 'Gozba' (Fig 8).



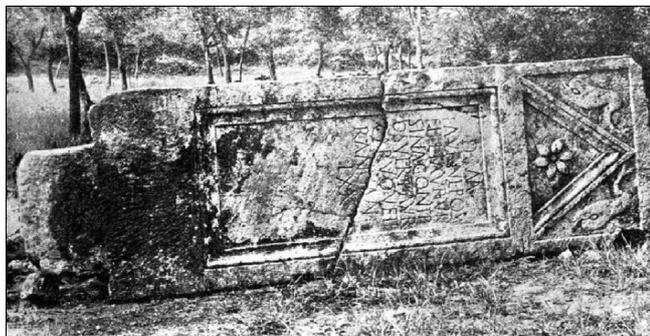
The god Mithras kills the bull (left) and the Feast/Gozba (right)

<https://lacunamag.wordpress.com/2011/05/19/ragib-lubovac-stecci-autohtoni-bosanski-stil/>  
<http://www.anubih.ba/godisnjak/god41/Pages%20from%20Godisnjak%2041-6.pdf> Accessed: 6.23.2018.

Fig 8: Equestrian Mithraeum

In this locality, the remains of an altar were found with the inscription: S(oli) I (nvicto) M(ithrae) V/E/TUR (ius) LUCIUS V(otum) S(olvit), which in translation means: 'To

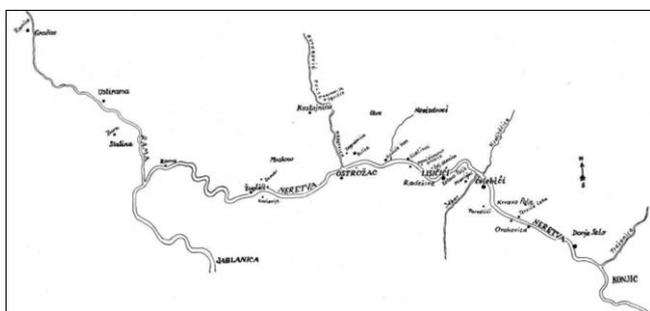
the Invincible Sun of Mitra-Lucia Venturi made a vow' (Fig 9).



<http://www.anubih.ba/godisnjak/god41/Pages%20from%20Godisnjak%2041-6.pdf> Accessed: 6.23.2018.

**Fig 9:** Tombstone of the veteran Tito Aurelija Karvo found in Donji Selo near Konjic (second half of the 3rd century AD)

The area of Konjic municipality is known for a large number of Bosnian medieval stećak necropolises. One of them (with seven stećaks) is located near the confluence of the Baščica river with the Jablanica lake, known as Mravinjac [6] (Fig 10).



**Source:** <https://www.fmks.gov.ba/download/zzs/1954/16-1954.pdf>, Accessed: 7.31.2022.

**Fig 10:** Stećak Necropolis around Jablanica Lake

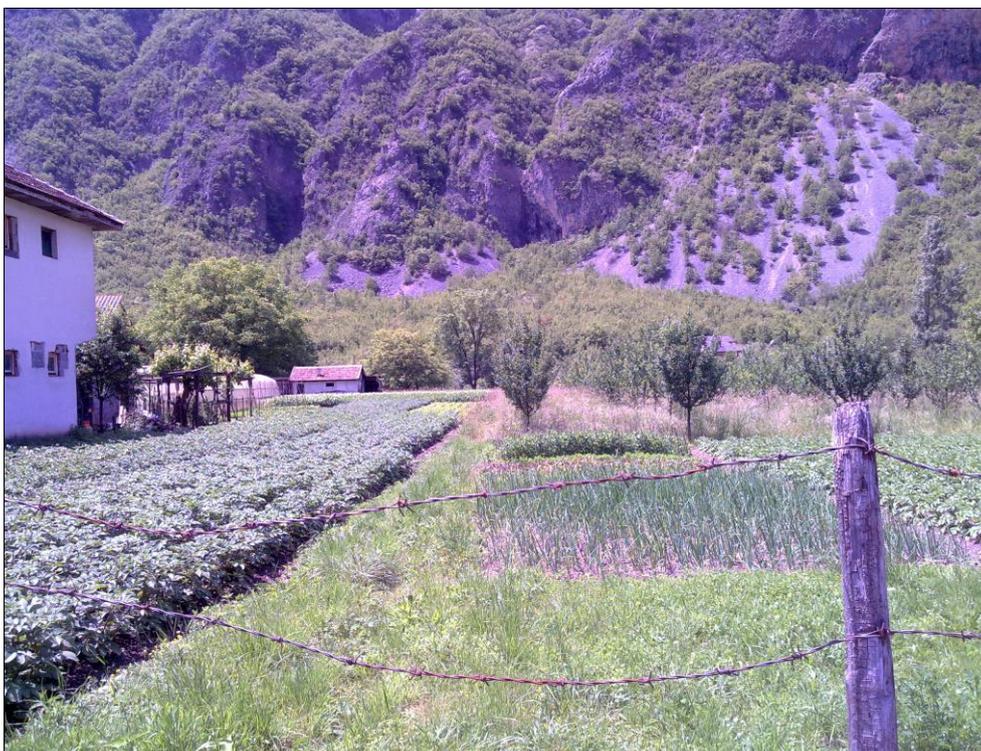
During the Austro-Hungarian administration (1878-1918), iron ore was mined in the hills around Idbar and transported from here to the ironworks in Vares. At this time, two water-powered sawmills also started operating in Idbar. Later, these sawmills were merged into one company, and it is interesting that the sawmill is still working today.

**3. Man**

Space acquires meaning only if it stands in some relation to man. This relationship ranges from the relations of the already known dimensions of space, through those that can be sensed, to those that are currently beyond the reach of human imagination. The term 'man' is a huge question, the essence of which he himself tries to decipher within his own limits, within the limits of the Earth and the limits of the Universe [4]. Together with the rest of the living world, it participates in the process of circulation of matter and energy in nature, sharing the same fate with it, being born and dying against its will. Endowed with reason, will and feelings, he is the only one in the living world who can discover the given laws of the organization of nature. The works of these people are woven into the overall 'embodied energy' of this city.

**4. Boundaries: architecture as a framework of life**

Boundaries are those places in the environment where the situations encountered are controlled according to very specific human needs. Conditions are all those discovered and undiscovered phenomena in space that have a stimulating or degrading effect on humans. Borders, therefore, have the task of enabling the selection of influences. In an architectural sense, they enclose, but also include a person in the conditions of a certain environment [4] (Fig 11-14).



**Source:** Author (6.8.2013.)

**Fig 11:** The Idbar village developed in the fertile valley of the Bascica river



Source: Author (6.8.2013.)

**Fig 12:** Idbar village. Along the main village street, a water course has been arranged (a channel diverted from the main course of the Bascica river)

It is interesting that a hydroelectric dam was built (in 1959) on the Bascica river, which would have resulted in the submergence of the Idbar valley. However, the inhabitants of Idbar soon after 'drilled' the dam so that the Bascica river

would flow unhindered, and the Idbar valley would remain preserved. This event became a metaphor for people's struggle for the natural environment, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina but also in the world (Fig 16).



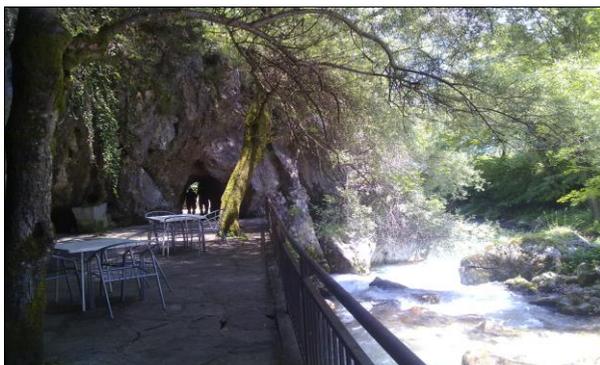
Source: <https://energypost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Idbar-dam-slider.jpg>, Accessed: 7.31.2022.

**Fig 13:** Dam on the Bascica river in the Idbar village

Restaurant “PECINA” (“CAVE”) is located along the Bascica river, not far from the Celebici settlement. Due to its special location, the clear Bascica river and its smaller and larger waterfalls can be observed from the restaurant's summer garden. A special feature of the restaurant, after which it takes its name, is a large natural cave located next to the building, which guests can visit. This restaurant has a long tradition of serving various grilled dishes. A special

specialty of the house is grilled fish from its own ponds, which are located next to the building, and 'pura' (cornmeal dish, with cream) made from homemade corn flour from the mill. Guests can visit the mill themselves and see how corn flour is made.

Various performances are held in the “PECINA”/“CAVE” (drama performances, chamber music concerts, painting workshops...).



A natural cave along the Bascica river (left) and a view from the cave of the Bascice waterfall (right)



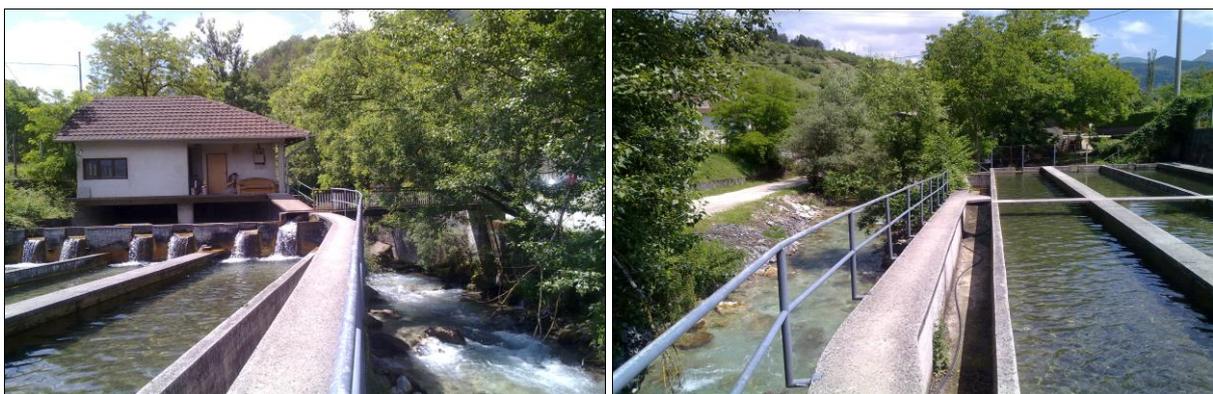
Redirecting part of the Baščica river flow to the “PECINA” (“CAVE”) complex (left) and the waterfall in the “PEĆINA” complex (springs from the rock, on the left side of the Bascica river), (right)



The remains of an old mill on the Bascica river (in the immediate vicinity of the „PECINA“ complex), (left) and 'skewer/razanj' (water powered), fireplace, fountain (with spring on site) in the complex „PECINA“ (right)



The restaurant garden of the „PECINA“ complex (with a view of the Bascica river), (left) and fishpond in the „PECINA“ complex (right)



The fishpond in the „PECINA“ complex



Garden-restaurant in the „PECINA“ complex



Source: Author (6.8.2013.)

Watermill in the „PECINA“ complex

**Fig 14:** PECINA“ complex on the Bascica river (between the Idbar villages and Celebici)

**5. Conclusion (Perspectives)**

By the term 'perspective' (in the framework of the theory of Architecturally Defined Space) we mean „that dynamic relationship that connects now - future, existing - possible, realized – desired“ [4]. The emergence of a settlement (hamlet, village) or architectural-engineering structure is never accidental, but rather the result of a synergy between the natural and social environment-man.

The extremely rich natural and social environment of the Idbar valley on the Bascica river today initiates many human activities, from the construction of eco-villages to mass events that promote nature conservation and healthy living (Fig 15-17).

The eco-village „Raj u raju“ („Paradise in Paradise“) is located along the river Bascica in the Idbar village. It is 8 km from the town of Konjic, and 2 km from the Jablanica

lake. Sarajevo Airport is located 41 km from this tourist resort. The main bus station is located in Konjic, and the local bus stop is 3 km away. The resort „Raj u raju“ offers a small outdoor pool and a restaurant with dishes made to order. The facility is surrounded by pristine mountains and rivers and is the perfect starting point for numerous outdoor activities. Guests can use WiFi for free throughout the property. All bungalows have a patio and a small refrigerator. All rooms offer a view of the mountain Prenj and the river Baščica. A tennis court and a fitness center are available within the eco-village. Other facilities include a games room and a kids' club. Within the facility and in its surroundings, guests can enjoy numerous activities such as cycling, hiking, organizing rafting (on the Neretva river) and hiking trips (Fig 15).





Source: <https://www.booking.com/hotel/ba/turistiako-selo-raj-u-raj-u.hr.html?activeTab=photosGallery>, Accessed: 7.31.2022.

**Fig 15:** Ethnic settlement “Raj u Raju” („Paradise in Paradise“) in the Idbar village

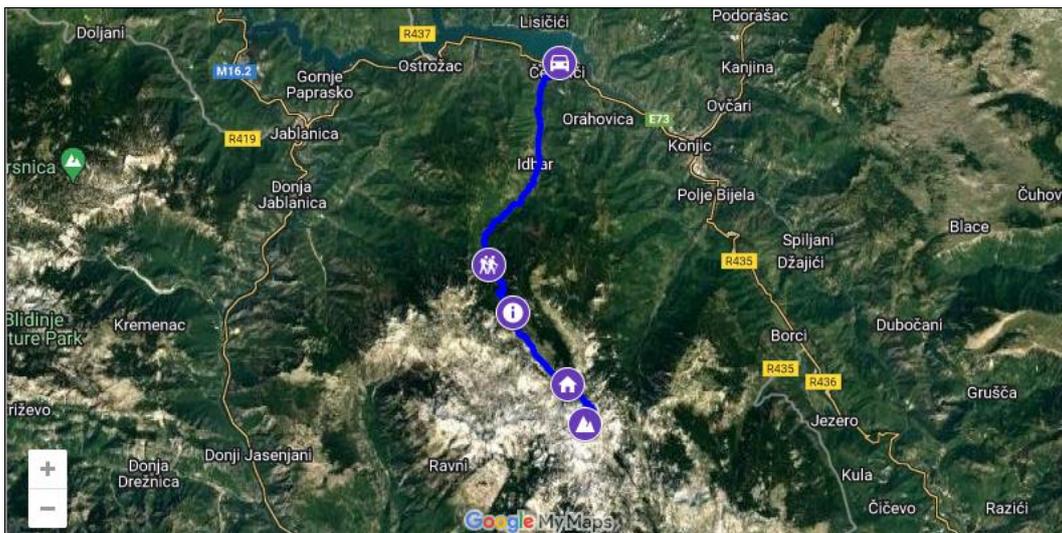
In the spectacular backdrop of the Idbar dam, the film “Blue Heart” premiered (April 29, 2018). About 500 people attended the world premiere of the film, which documents the fight against the frequent construction of dams in the Balkans and the efforts to protect these unique rivers in Europe. The forty-minute documentary supports the “Save the Blue Heart of Europe” campaign and focuses on opposition to hydropower projects in Albania, Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. “Blue Heart” was produced by

Farm League on behalf of Outfitter Patagonia. It has been translated into 14 languages and will be shown in more than 500 locations worldwide. The Idbar Dam was deliberately chosen as the location of the premiere because of its history: built in 1959, the dam burst shortly after construction. Investors and construction crews ignored multiple warnings from the locals. The residents then broke through the dam wall to restore freedom to the river (Fig 16).



**Source:** <https://riverwatch.eu/en/balkanrivers/news/world-premiere-%E2%80%9Cblue-heart%E2%80%9C-film-dam-wall-bosnia-and-herzegovina>, Accessed: 7.31.2022.

**Fig 16:** The world premiere of the film “Blue Heart” on the banks of the Bascica river in the Idbar village



**Source:** <https://planinarenje.hr/staze/idbar-tisovica-ps-vrutak-zelena-glava>, Accessed: 7.31.2022.

**Fig 17:** Mountain trail Celebici-Idbar-Prenj

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