

Spatial identity of Latvian cultural landscape within regional context

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Abstract. The value of the cultural landscape heritage, its accessibility, preservation, landscape protection zone rating, avoidance of blocking or releasing viewlines (silhouettes, panoramas) etc. – these are the issues which are very little reflected in municipal documents.

The documents mainly consist of decisions and support to meet practical or business-friendly needs. Along with the increased attraction of EU investment in agriculture, the mentioned issues become even more aggravated – at which expense the areas and the respective payments are increasing? The answer is one – at the expense of the landscape.

In each of Latvian counties, there are territories that cannot lose historical value and we must search for a mutually beneficial algorithm.

EU funding projects must contribute to the preservation of the cultural landscape heritage, i.e. to the introduction of Europe's best philosophy and practices. The recovery of the cultural landscape, including maintenance works and its progress in postsocialist areas, is not an easy task, knowing the existing ownership and the economic situation in the country. Will we really get a greater contribution to the state economy from the amount of threshed centners than from the preservation of landscape values in the long term?

A task of crucial importance is the research of each region's landscape space, the development of a concept and elaboration of project documentation. As the study shows, Latvian greenfields and cultural heritage calls for the actions to form several areas of the museum reserve.

Keywords: cultural-historical landscape space, compositional axes, functionality, harmony, visual psycho-emotional highlight in landscape

Introduction

Cultural-historical heritage is a cultural landscape that forms a part of the human life quality and characterises the level of public intelligence in general.

This is more relevant to the present moment, as the beginning of 21st century is characterised by the manners of the consumer society. The prevailing values are the property values of society rather than the ability to assess the life space, the cultural landscape, the elements that form it and the context that creates an expression of the landscape space identity. This is attributable to each region of Latvia and its architectural landscape values.

This is also defined in the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, stating: “...*cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.*”

Thus, cultural landscape as a historical heritage is formed by a greenfield and objects created as a result of human activity at different times. They are visually and functionally linked and must be harmonised in the environment.

Already in 17th, 18th century, a unique building of a cultural space was created by human labour in the territory of Latvia, which was closely complied

with a greenfield features – terrain, waterside, climate, floodplains, forest compartments, viewlines in the landscape.

By increasing the visual aesthetic of the building volume, it was based on the balance of architecture and nature context.

At the end of 19th/beginning of 20th century in Latvia, due to wars and the turmoil and variability of the state political system, the economic stability and values get lost, fragmentation is developed, targeting against the preservation of the cultural space by creating disbalance. This applies to the scale, protection zones and visual aesthetic quality in the spatial structure in general. The hardest hit on cultural landscape of Latvia was made by the political turbulence of 50s-80s of the 20th century.

On the other hand, the year 2021, on the contrary, convincingly brings the landscape into the Latvian cultural canon. Along with the most distinguished values of such fields as popular traditions, architecture and design, stage art, literature, visual arts, music and cinema, eight canonical landscapes of Latvia – the landscape of Daugava, the landscape of Zemgale plain, the landscape of Gauja, the landscape of Latgale, the landscape of Latvian forests, the seaside landscape, the landscape of Vidzeme hilly areas and the landscape of Abava old valley.

The context of the spatial identity of the cultural landscape consists of forest landscapes, watersides,

agrarian landscape scale, sacral landscape, manor ensembles landscape, urban roof landscape. Architectonical spatial forms in the rural landscape are subordinated to nature elements as a single ensemble. For example, the shape of Vidzeme's rooftops imitates picturesque hills; the nature of Zemgale's wind loads can be found in the industrial dominants of windmills; the seaside fishing villages represent the seashores with fishing net sheds, boat steaks, the Latgale's architectonical landscape identity highlights the half-shaped wooden buildings with several yards nestling along a lake shore or a pasture ground road.

Cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time (from the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, 27.10.2005.).

Research goal – to evaluate the transformation processes of the cultural and historical landscape influenced by economic and political situation.

Research objectives

- to examine the factors contributing to changes in spatial identity;
- to define the conditions for the development of the transformation processes in visual-aesthetic qualities of the historical cultural landscape both in rural landscape and urban areas;
- to evaluate the landscape as one of the art branch, which creates the synthesis of a greenfield and architectonical artistic values.

The relevance of the research is based on the insights of the recovery of cultural and historical landscape identity in the regions of Latvia.

One of topical issues of the research is the evaluations of the activity carried out by the National Cultural Heritage Administration of Latvia in 2020, emphasizing: *to develop a society-friendly and professional cultural heritage protection system which, in line with internationally recognised principles, helps owners and users of cultural monuments to preserve values in good quality and prevents activities degrading cultural and historical value, ensuring that the values of the cultural and historical environment of Latvia are a part of a high-quality living area which is understood, evaluated and protected by the local community, which helps to create sustainable growth. The increase of the role of cultural heritage as a substantial part of the human life quality and its creation. Preservation of cultural heritage for future generations. Use of cultural heritage as an economic resource for the economic development of*

the country. Creating the image of Latvia with the help of cultural heritage [NKMP (State Inspection for Heritage Protection) 2020 activity report].

Materials and Methods

The Florence Declaration on Heritage and Landscape as Human Values (2014) makes it clear that “... *it is time to challenge the artificial distinction between conservation and innovation*”.

In Latvia, so-called *cultural corridors* can highlight the values of historical research and cultural significance by restoring traditional paths. One of them is the *Northern String (Ziemeļu stīga)* – the territory of common interests in the Latvian-Estonian border area.

The second one – *the Jacob's Road (Jēkaba ceļš)* – the reign of Jakob Kettler, Duke of Courland and Semigallia.

Nowadays, the biggest challenge for the cultural space or cultural landscape is to ensure the Florence Declaration's requirement that “... *the application of technologies to cultural heritage responds to well-defined key objectives, avoiding the risk of only making progress in the technological sector without improving conservation practice*”[2].

A landscape space is a place where the picturesque nature of greenfield and the compositional spatial elements meet together through rhythm, dynamics, form and colour in the seasons of a year.

American sociologist Toffler states: *acceleration of the pace of change acts as a psychological factor that radically changes the perception of our lives and the surrounding space, destroying the balance of the human soul. External acceleration transforms into internal one. In order to survive, people must become much more plastic and suitable, much more flexible than before. We must constantly look for new ways of stabilizing life* [11].

The development of the acceleration in society affects the **cultural environment**, which must be brought along without losing historical harmony, scale and balance.

The Latvian landscape is distinctly marked by three periods:

- 20s-30s of the 20th century, following the agrarian land reform, when the ideology of nationalism gained new boost in Latvia. That means – from the Baltic German cultural space to the Latvian landscape space. The landscape space and architectural monuments became **cultural symbols in political terms** [11]. The visual and functional harmony of the cultural space began to reflect the political ideology of the state. It influences the change of the cultural and historical landscape space heritage;

- 50s-80s of the 20th century. The decrease in visual expression of Latvian landscape space and the formation of a so-called irreversible transformation processes (high-capacity HPPs, continuous amelioration, dismantling of farmsteads, creation of large-scale cropland territories; promotion of overgrowth of churches and manor ensembles);
- beginning of the 21st century – a trend of rapid economic pulsation in the Western Europe.

The uniqueness of Latvian nature in all its regions maintains a high level of ecological quality. The same high position can be attributed to the visually-aesthetic quality of the landscape space.

Thinking about modern concept of time and space and its understanding problems, the level of time abstraction is incomparably wider. The above-mentioned elements of the cultural space development have been accumulated over time [11].

The level of political and economic development – the Middle Ages, abolition of serfdom, redemption of land, devastating wars, occupation of power, struggles for freedom, development of the international level – all these pulsates within cross-section of time, too. Nowadays the creation of any spatial environment is linked with the time factor supplemented by the political situation, which undoubtedly gives rise to the processes of landscape transformation.

The **regional character of the landscape** is formed by the historical influence of different styles, which has arisen from the **landscape-spatial influence** of urban and rural settlements, which has assimilated local traditions in the process of forming [9].

The landscape exists as a source of inspiration for the preservation of regional design principles, where the **synthesis of the greenfield, architecture and urban planning space is created.**

The landscape context is the most basic, the easiest for comprehension type of context, the understanding and respect of which is a prerequisite for the maintenance of the regional landscape.

Architect, Professor Ivars Strautmanis writes: *today, the concept of landscape context cannot be considered in isolation from the effects of human activity. Cultural landscape is a concept that is synthesized under the influence of nature, construction and economic activities, as well as art and culture. The landscape context is a complex concept that includes the cultural landscape developed in a given region over a century with aesthetic quality of different degrees of construction* [12].

The surrounding spatial environment can affect the spiritual level of society.

Our ancestors, living very close to nature, were able to look at the environment with great attention and read all information necessary for their existence, which helped them in hunting, forecasting weather etc. By losing contact with nature, we have not lost the ability to react sensitively enough to our immediate surroundings. Speaking about the ability of people to percept the surrounding environment, it must be emphasized that physical perception cannot be separated from physical perception. The perception of space is influenced by the total memory accumulations, the level of human culture and the mental structure. It means that the emotional and aesthetic evaluation of the information perceived depends, to some extent, on the level of social and intellectual development of a person. The amount of aesthetic information depends on the OPPORTUNITY to perceive and feel the landscape in a greater or lesser degree.

The art of creating space is the highest degree of human activity [10]. In terms of meaning, the most important information is provided by the silhouette or shapes of the spatial ensemble, as well as by its plastic structure.

The elements of any spatial environment and their overall image in the silhouette represents the most visually saturated and emotionally active information.

The landscape designer must assess the objectivity of society's development forecasts and have a good knowledge of sociology. In the creation of new spatial structures, he must be able to use the consistent patterns of society development. As practice shows, it is not so easy to go into details of public life.

Sociological surveys reflect information about past, about the developments in the spatial structure that already exist. Therefore, for the sociological forecasts to be realistic, they need to be made in a far-sighted manner and with a sound vision for development. This equally applies to both the rural landscape and the development of urban infrastructure [12].

In recent years, along with intensified environmental protection, we hear with increasing frequency that it is not allowed to build rural villages in areas with significant landscape quality. Therefore, there are many places where new buildings are developing in a less landscape-expressive environment.

On the contrary, new building can and should be designed in the areas with the smallest possible landscape significance. Of course, by maintaining tolerance as to the main viewlines, overall silhouette, trees, historic alleys, terrain, water basins etc.



Fig. 1. Along with the progress of the urban load, the rural cultural landscape around the urban space transforms.

Jelgava / Mitau and its surrounding manors at the end of the 19th century [authors' diagram]

When the local landscape becomes a part of a new spatial structure and the buildings become more attractive in terms of local identity, the attitude of the society changes as well, forming a harmonious dialogue with the living space [12].

Creating a living space, public space, architectural forms of buildings and functionality workload (agricultural load, industrial load, etc.) at an aesthetically high level, we create **a continuation of the cultural environment, which brings along the identity of a landscape space**. The architectural spatial shaping, which is different for each region of Latvia, plays a certain role in the recovery of the mentioned context. The regional identity of the 21st century tries to create a synthesis of cultural, historical and modern aspects. Without understanding of the language and peculiarities of local and regional architecture, it is not possible to create contemporary architectural trends and their harmony in the modern landscape space.

The Latvian cultural landscape is characterized by the LATVIAN SPACE. At the beginning of the 21st century, it must be open to time and changes in social life, yet not losing the experience gained by the people over the centuries.

It may be necessary to develop a new concept: SYNTEGRITY = Synthesis + Integrity = creation of a new spatial quality, combining both local and global practices and spatial design techniques tested in social life, integrating them into a material spatial and landscape context [11].

The proposed line in the perception and development of the local spatial landscape context is by no means simple. Syntegrity not only requires respect and sensitive attitude towards local traditions, but also a creative spirit and courage to look at

traditions with a modern innovative approach. The modern Latvian space is a product of syntegrity, which includes the heritage of achievements of the people's spiritual and material life over the centuries, respecting the perception of modern people, as well as their dreams and visions about living space [13].

A bright illustration of this is the second half of the 20th century. The prevailing tendentious nature of politics has almost completely eliminated the double-pitch roofs, which vividly characterize the regional peculiarities of the Latvian rural landscape, climatic conditions and construction traditions - clay tiles, lime plaster, chalk whitewash.

The 21st century enters Latvian regions by restoring historical cultural landscape, and we can already see the first results. For example, the bends of the Daugava river near Kraslava – the steep bank has been cleaned from the overgrowth of seed plants, and a small section regained its viewlines on water and the coastal slope.

On the other hand, the structure of the new building - its density, height of buildings, architectural form, colour, green areas, pole and wicker fences reflect the search for the seaside landscape of Pāvilosta and its historical expression. The landscape space of the new village represents vivid reflections of the compositional nature of the former fishermen's farmsteads and the interplay of the greenfield site identity. One more example.

Huge industrial steps of the 19th/20th century in Jelgava, the former capital of the Courland Governorate, have brought the processes of transformation of the historic urban space. Until the middle of the 19th century, there was a dense network of rural manors around the city [Fig. 1], creating a rural road infrastructure and a peculiar

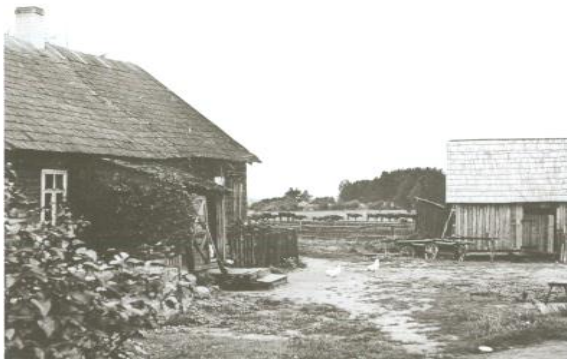


Fig. 2. Farmstead "Pļavu Vonogi" in Likсна parish, Daugavpils county [15]. The landscape foreground, middle ground, background - the clumps of lilacs, the yard, pastures



Fig. 3. The language of regional features in the urban space. Roof landscape [11]

green cultural and historical ring with parks. During the period of the rapid expansion of the city in the post-war years and in the middle of the 20th century, the ring of heritage has been destroyed and replaced by multi-storey residential districts, production and storage areas, etc., thus creating a so-called urban ring. The nature of regional identity in the urban space disappeared.

Results and Discussion

One of the most important preconditions for the realization of the processes of synthesis is the creation of a common spatially harmonious concept with the aim of creating an emotionally saturated landscape space ensuring visually aesthetic and functional quality. It allows for increasing the level of spirituality in a given region, highlighting the national identity and the traditions of the place [13].

Economic and political situation and transformation processes in the 50s-70s of the 20th century provoked spiritual degradation and loss of self-worth of the nation; while the low infrastructure threshold in the 90s of the 20th century contributed to the outflow of the Latvians from the countryside to the cities, where they could find work for themselves and schools for their children.



Fig. 4. The search for a synthesis of historical spatial identity and modern stylistics in the urban landscape, 2019.

[the authors' photo archive]



Fig. 5. Return of the wooden heritage in Pavilosta. Shape, colour, proportion, gardens, 2019 [the authors' photo archive]

As a result, the concerns about the maintenance of natural scenery, local traditions and local identity changed. The above aspects are inseparable from one another, because the landscape creates a comprehensive synthesis process between the new and the old, the traditional and the contemporary, between nature and man. It is expressed in the above-mentioned need for **contextual thinking and searching on the landscape** in order not to diminish the visual aesthetic quality, which is the case, for example, with the ancient valley of Abava river between Kandava and Sabile, where bushes are covering long picturesque viewlines across the valley.

To obtain a good quality attribute in creation of spatial environment, the professional training of the cooperation partners is no less important. It is not just a matter of acquiring the traditional skills of one's profession, but of balancing spatial sense of interdisciplinary professionals, which is mandatory for anyone who wants to cooperate in the design a spatial environment and its elements. It sets the requirements related to the peculiarities of spatial structure and its compositional aspects, means of

artistic expression and transformation processes in the landscape space. Personal experience gained in cooperation with specialists in various fields in solving tasks related to specific forms of the spatial environment, as well as the ability of creative interpretation of the means of expression in accordance with the scale and nature of a given landscape space is of vital importance. The nature of the spatial identity of the region in the circumstances of a pluralistic cultural space requires mutual understanding and a certain degree of compromise from all cooperation partners. However, it is not enough for a good specialist who understands and knows the landscape. He or she must be able to think in a specific landscape context [11].

This is based on the design work, which, first of all, is developed during detailed planning performed by interdisciplinary specialists, creating an argumentative basis for the landscape vision. Unfortunately, a well-started planning work is not moving forward because the legislation requires a new procurement to be organized. New participants or specialists enter the project, bringing new ideas. Municipality members change and the plans that have been previously set collapse. Thus, at the administrative strategic level, the cycle of continuity in the progress of planning is broken.

At the beginning of the 21st century, as the pace of life and the travelling speed increased accordingly, the perceptions of movement dominate in the everyday life, providing more and more information in a shorter period of time. This increases the viewer's / citizen's demand for harmony, scale and spatial proportionality more and more.

In the perception of the landscape space, there is a problem related to the language of spatial design, its comprehensibility and visual aesthetic quality.

The nature of regional identity can also be read in the **urban or town planning landscape**. The height, density and stylistics of historical buildings are different in Varaklani, Cesis, Jekabpils and Aizpute. This equally applies to roof slopes, roof coverings, exterior wall materials and colour.

The restoration of the Republic of Latvia at the end of the 20th century gave rise to a new situation in the protection of cultural heritage in order to continue the commenced work, which was discontinued in the 40s of the 20th century, by joining the cultural heritage protection convention (the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, etc.), as well as promoted the restoration of private property rights. The new acquisitions also brought new challenges, for which there was no previous experience.

We had to keep in mind that the activity of cultural institutions will be affected by the same conditions as

the developed countries of Europe come across – the tendencies of cultural globalization, fluctuations in the economic environment, the level of development of tourism infrastructure, engineering communications etc. At the end of the 20th century, the above-mentioned problems became even more acute for rural areas. Country churches, country manor complexes with a park, access ways. In addition, the construction of old manors in the post-war years was subordinated to the needs of collectivization, creating farm premises, mechanical workshops, grain storages, silage pits, treatment facilities in the park. The historical silhouette of a manor was most often covered with grain towers, cattle farms, etc., thus degrading the cultural and historical landscape both visually and functionally.

The year 1991, which rapidly brought a change in the political situation in the country, failed to restore the cultural environment in the rural landscape. Everything happened fast, including the privatization process. In the 1960s-1980s, in the rural landscape, large-scale agricultural and industrial production building increased, obscuring the silhouette of historical buildings. The scale of the rural landscape has changed.

Half a century later, in the 20s of the 20th century, serious wood overgrowth has developed. Most often, the tree cover affects cultural and historical sites rather than large-scale production areas. This is especially true for the visual loss of viewlines in the geomorphologically pronounced areas.

Sacral landscape

The highest manifestations of the interaction between the expression of the greenfield site and the formation of architecture, which are maximally approaching the level of synthesis, are usually associated with various social rituals of spatial environment, the emotional tension of which approaches the level of peculiar catharsis.

Church can be mentioned as a classically strong element in the rural landscape, which starts the emotional uplift with a visual bell tower dominant in the distant viewlines. Further emotional uplift is continued by closer viewlines of the sacral landscape, where the architecturally decorative elements can be read. The next impressions are the interior with lighting, paintings or sculptures, the means of musical expression and the message to the churchgoers. On the other hand, when leaving the church, the emotional uplift is formed by the expression of the distant viewlines of the rural landscape, which create synthesis with the content of the church ritual. The perception of this emotional uplift of the sacral landscape, where different elements of the landscape, scales and view angles are concentrated, develops differently for each region, which is reinforced by the characteristic greenfield site [12].



Fig. 6. Lost viewlines in the perception of the cultural and historical landscape.

Dominance of agrarian landscape. Kabile Manor ensemble, 2021 [the authors' diagram]



Fig. 7. The overgrown trees obscure the elegance of the church. Kabile church, 2021 [the authors' photo]

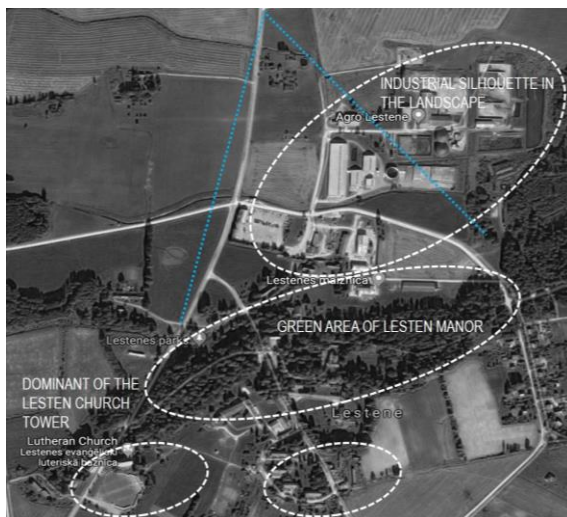


Fig. 8. The manor's ensemble, the church, memorial, industrial production area, residential area. Lestene. The search for the culmination elements in the landscape space, 2018 [the authors' diagram]

This level of comprehensive synthesis in the landscape space and visually compositional balance must be created in both urban and rural landscapes. The synthesis of different scales, line lengths, colours and shapes is mentioned above – the search for SYNTEGRITY in the rural landscape, where the main task is to ensure the functional and emotionally aesthetically harmonious interaction of all its elements. The emotional aesthetic unity of the spatial environment does not arise by itself as a logical result of the functional and technological complex of all elements of the landscape space. It requires a purposeful action and a certain programmatic orientation that would reflect all the society's demands for a full-fledged environment which stimulates for development.

A number of examples must be mentioned. For example, rural churches – Evangelical Lutheran churches of Kabile, Mezotne, Sesava, Salgale, Vircava, etc. include a huge scale of agrarian landscape. However, the volumes of churches are hidden in the branches of large trees.

The spatial landscape concept is characterized by three main criteria:

- the most important functional areas in the landscape space, directions of movement and possibilities of landscape perception;
- groups of relevant premises and their nature;
- level of the landscape's emotional aesthetic saturation.

The spatial composition is mainly based on the contrasting coordination of individual elements. In addition to the above said, LATVIAN SPACE can be formed if regional peculiarities in the greenfield site are purposefully synthesized and rooted in the traditional forms and structure language (construction, architecture, art) [13].

When the visual and functional balance of the sacral landscape is lost, it loses its aesthetic quality. There is a number of such examples, especially in the areas of fertile cropland territories, dominated by the agricultural and industrial load over the cultural landscape (Lestene, the historical centre of Lielvircava, etc.). The trees planted in the beginning of the 19th century around the country churches were the symbol of holiness. Today, the trees are 200 years old and exceed the height of the church.

For example, the sacral landscape of Kabile church, which has lost three main expression means: the size of the church, the size of the vicarial manor and the expression of the tree alley.

Farm

The major part of the *Latvian space* will be associated with a traditional farmstead and a mosaic-type scale around it - an apple garden, a sauna with a pond, a flower garden with a pale fencing and a sweep well. During the post-war period, in the 60s-80s of the 20th century, the political situation suppressed the expression of the *Latvian space* and the nature of the identity of the regional landscape.

At the end of the 20th century in Latvia, after the liquidation of the Soviet system and the restoration of independence, the traditions of living and building in the countryside were gradually returning.

It is not possible to restore the historical scale and structure characteristic for Latvian countryside.

Funding is being attracted that is subordinate to the economic pulsation of the European Union, which brings a different scale and management methodology.

Considering the traditional sense of the environment and scale typical for the Latvians, ... Doctor of Arts I. Lancmanis states: *the core of the Latvian people lives in the countryside; therefore, I am afraid of the current process of rural depopulation, the closure of small schools. Unfortunately, the Soviet occupation regime destroyed normal agriculture by imposing a collective farm system. If our country had not been occupied, the Latvian countryside could have developed naturally, and farmers would have cooperated and formed cooperatives. However, the blow was too severe and now we see the consequences ... Many village schools used to be located in the buildings of former manors and castles, and after the closure of the schools they are left with no life ... Yes, this is sad. But not so much because of buildings as because of the changing rural environment and human relationships. A village school has always been able to foster children's love for their land and work, respect for traditions. When schools are merged and children have to move to another environment, some part of it gets lost inevitably ... It is obvious that there are no more chances to restore Latvia as it was in 1940, the Soviet regime destroyed it and crippled the Latvian soul. This regime did*

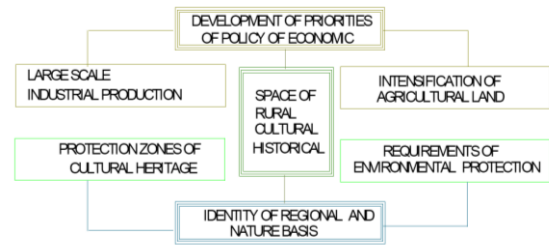


Fig. 9. The search for the harmony between economic policy and regional identity [the authors' diagram]



Fig. 10. The search for the formation of the greenfield and architectural elements in landscape. Mazmezotne. The left steep bank of Lielupe river, 2018 [the authors' photo]



Fig. 11. Farmstead in Vabole parish, Daugavpils county, 2015 [15]

something that the Germans could not do in 700 years. The Germans oppressed us, but they could not burst into the soul of the Latvian.

A classical Latvian farmstead – a model of high degree environmental harmony created by nature and human hands. Unfortunately, in today's industrial construction conditions, this traditional link of local craftsmanship has disappeared. This inevitably leads to the loss of local originality, to impersonal, indifferent landscape.

The landscape context is the most basic, easiest type of context. Understanding and respecting the landscape context is a prerequisite for maintaining the regional landscape.

Architect, Professor Ivars Strautmanis states: *Today, the concept of landscape context cannot be considered in isolation from the effects of human activity. Cultural landscape is a concept that is synthesized under the influence of nature, construction and economic activities, as well as art and culture. The landscape context is a complex concept that includes the cultural landscape developed in a given region over a century with aesthetic quality of different degrees of construction* [11].

Latvian farmsteads created yards, backyard root crop and flower gardens, fruit tree plantations. Latvian rural areas have acquired a visually strong landscape composition.

Along with the amelioration rate, the agricultural load increased in the 1960s, reducing the historical ditches and shrub cover and acquiring new cropland areas. The mosaic scale of the regional landscape space and the identity of the place gradually extinguished.

The 21st century started with intensive EU funding for Latvian farmers, which has increased the agricultural load. The capabilities of huge heavy-duty machinery allow to free up space for farmlands, gardens are levelled and sown.

Cropland areas are also being increased on account of old manor parks, plowing the land up to the branches of old trees, also plucking the roots of the trees. The search for regional and national identity in the landscape space. Understanding and respecting the landscape context is the main condition of the regional landscape. A merit of the everyday spatial environment is its compliance with the sense and requirements of the contemporaries, or the realisation of applicability, comfort. Not always it is possible to determine precisely the level of quality and the time of becoming outdated, so it is necessary to take a so-called “test of time” into account.

The aesthetic soul of our nation is the basis and the only primary source of the Latvian style [architect, prof. Osvalds Tilmanis, 11].

Country manors

In the rural scenery of Latvia, the visual perception of most country manor buildings is disturbed by the giant trees, and the buildings are not visible in the distant viewlines.

The trees planted during the agrarian land reform in the 20s-30s of the 20th century in the middle of the honour courts of manor houses were chosen with the aim to obstruct the recognition of the Baltic German cultural space. Most often these are pyramid cedar trees, as well as oaks, lindens, etc., which symbolized the succession of the Latvian environment and clearly indicated the political affiliation of the country. A century has passed, and the post-war understanding of cultural values has increased the dramatics of the situation.



Fig. 12. Plain cropland, which replaced the historical mosaic-type landscape with clusters, ditches, shrubs. Zemgale plain near Bauska, 2020 [the authors' photo]



Fig. 13. Distant viewlines across the Lielupe river ancient valley to the park of Mezotne Palace, 2020 [the authors' photo]



Fig. 14. Rural road to Mezotne Palace On the left bank of Lielupe river, beginning of photo the 20th century [private archive]

With the formation of collectivization in Latvia in the 1950s, the urban load ring around the former country manor ensembles gave even heavier blow. Treatment facilities were built in parks, next to them – multi-storey residential buildings, which obscure the view of the heritage space, and so on.

The most dramatic scale represents the industrial areas – mechanical workshops, cattle farms, water towers, grain dryers, weighbridges, transformers, silage pits, etc. After privatization in the 90s of the 20th century, the infrastructure was not dismantled but modernized. For example, the deprived gates left from the kolkhoz times, which block the viewlines from the

Skede road to the historical buildings of Kabile Manor [Fig. 6].

The historical mosaic-type landscape has changed its scale over the last 100 years. While farmsteads disappear, extensive fields and pastures arise in the landscape. To prevent the wind load from causing erosion of the fertile land, protection zones or groups of tree plantations are created without considering the viewpoints in the cultural landscape.

An emotional and visual uplift, which was created by the alleys with honour courts as the culmination point as far back as 1950s, was deliberately obscured by tree plantations and by placing monumental sculptural works (Laidi Palace, Kazdanga Palace, Vecauce Manor, etc.).

The visual load of the urban ring around the old manor centres was increased by standard residential buildings erected in the 60s-70s of the 20th century.

... in the rural cultural landscape, the manor is something important – just like the church and the pub. It has historically dominated the landscape and created a very good balance between the green environment and the things that man has put in it. The heritage is very beautiful, but it does not really have a sense of spiritual heritage. It appeared in an interesting way already after the agrarian reform in 1920. Then, there were a number of Latvians who could live as lords, as young barons in a deprived manor of a bankrupted baron. There were only a few exceptions. Only Mrs. Benjamin's character was strong enough not to be afraid of being called a Latvian baroness, and she lived very elegantly in Valdeki Manor... Latvian cultural landscape – Baltic German, Baltic, Latvian. The majority of Latvian society was indifferent or even disliked the cultural and historical significance of the former manors [I. Lancmanis, Interview with V. Gailītis in 2014].

There are several positive examples of recovering distant viewlines at both banks of Lielupe: The Mezotne Church, the left bank valley of the Lielupe river with a group of linden trees opposite the architect Berlitz's Mezotne Palace park on the right bank of Lielupe. At the bottom of the castle mound, the water landscape has been restored – the old port of Zemgale.

A few kilometres upstream the Lielupe, the Jumpravmuiza grotto grows into trees and bushes by the picturesque dolomite steep bank of the Lielupe river opposite the Bornsminde Manor. This is a prominent territory of the manor's museum reserve, which is supplemented by Kaucminde, Rundale, Svitene, Berstele, Gravendale, Salgale, Stalgene manors.

Hidden in giant trees, the left steep bank of Svitene river near Jaunsvirlauka Manor, Abava ancient valley between Kandava and Sabile, the ancient valley of Tervete river between Tervete and the steeple

of Zalenieki Church, the arches of the Daugava river below Kraslava – these are the viewpoints from the old castle. A few kilometres downstream, there is a very dense shrub cover, which has taken over both steep banks and forms a peculiar tunnel of trees and shrubs, without even giving a hint of the picturesque slope of the river banks. Huge branches have bent into the riverbed by strong wind gusts.

Conclusions

The attempts of small nations to preserve their cultural space are not easy. Politics, economics, urban, agricultural and industrial load, ability to preserve the scale, shape, place identity – these are the tasks that must be considered in the development of detailed plans for the territory of each Latvian region. Picturesque landscapes must not disappear.

The nature of spatial environment becomes more and more internationally chaotic. The transport load and its speed, modernization, road straightening, huge viaducts, traffic noise suppressing and non-transparent walls, protective animal barriers etc. In general, it reduces the perception of the silhouette of the cultural landscape. It applies to both rural and urban landscapes.

In nature, a landscape architect acts as a competent film director, a scenographer, creating an epoch-appropriate landscape space expression in terms of functionality and composition. This applies to the creative activity of architects in both the 18th and the 21st centuries. The scale, the compositional structure of the outdoor space or landscape design and the harmony of the form are the most important conditions for creating an aesthetically high cultural space able to exist convincingly in today's market conditions.

In everyday life, when landscape architects face the practical work of preserving cultural heritage, the weak points are visible:

Such concepts as the value of cultural heritage and its accessibility to the public, conservation, non-obscuring / freeing of viewlines, suppression / elimination of degraded viewlines, etc. is underestimated in municipal documentation. This needs to be promoted very intensively among rural entrepreneurs, looking for mechanisms to achieve a favourable result.

A balance needs to be found in meeting the business needs – it applies to the enlarging of cropland areas in the countryside, as the increase of EU investments on account of landscape is not a good idea. The territories that must not be transformed due to cultural landscape values must be defined in each region.

A mutually beneficial algorithm must be developed by including a part contributing to the restoration of the cultural space identity in the funding target.

EU funding projects must contribute to the preservation of the cultural landscape heritage, i.e. to the introduction of Europe's best philosophy and practices.

The restoration of the cultural landscape must be well-conceived, led by professional teams and accompanied by authorial supervision.

In order to reach a high-quality research result, the assessment of the landscape space, the development of the concept and the elaboration of the project documentation are crucial. It is necessary to create the museum reserve areas, which are already strongly showing its presence.

Acknowledgment: the article was developed within the scope of the research project (No. VPP-VARAM-ITAZRI-2020/1-0002) "Sustainable land resource and landscape management: challenges, development scenarios and proposals" (LandLat4Pol) of the National Research Programme "Sustainable Spatial Development and Rational Use of Land Resources".

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Kopsavilkums. Kultūrainavas mantojuma vērtība, pieejamība, konservācija, ainavas aizsargjoslas ievērtēšana, skatu līniju (siluetu, panorāmu) neaizklāšana vai atbrīvošana u. c. – tie ir jautājumi, kuri maz atspoguļojas pašvaldību dokumentos. Vairāk dokumentos dominē lēmumi un atbalsts praktisko vai uzņēmējdarbību veicinošu vajadzību apmierināšanai. Pieaugot ES investīciju piesaistes kāpinājumam lauksaimniecībā, saasinās iepriekš minētais – uz kāda rēķina pieaug aramzemju platības un to maksājumi? Atbilde ir viena – uz ainavzemju rēķina.

Katrā Latvijas novadā ir teritorijas, kuras nedrīkst zaudēt vēsturisko vērtību dēļ, ir jāmeklē abpusēji izdevīgs algoritms. ES fondu projektiem ir jāveicina kultūrainavas mantojuma saglabāšana – Eiropas labākās filozofijas un prakses ieviešana. Kultūrainavas atgūšanas, arī uzturēšanas darbs un tā virzība postsociālisma teritorijās nav viegls, apzinoties pastāvošās īpašumtiesības un esošo valsts ekonomisko situāciju. Vai patiesi uz nokulto centneru daudzuma mēs iegūsim lielāku pienesumu valsts ekonomikā nekā uz ainavzemju vērtību saglabāšanu ilgtermiņā?

Izšķiroši svarīga ir katra reģiona ainavtelpu izpēte, koncepcijas izveide un projekta dokumentācijas izstrāde. Pētījums liecina, ka Latvijas dabas pamatne un kultūras mantojums rosina rīkoties, lai veidotos vairākas muzeju rezervāta teritorijas.