

THE LANDSCAPED SPACE OF HISTORIC CENTER OF AIZPUTE

Una Īle, Aija Ziemeļniece

*Latvia University of Life Sciences and Tehnology, Faculty of Environment and Civil Engineering,
Department of Landscape Architecture and Planning*

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Abstract

Historically, Aizpute was first mentioned in the records in the middle of the 13th century. The Order of Livonia, the existence of the Duchy of Courland until the end of the 18th century, and the time of the Courland Governorate until 1918 have produced a very significant overlaying of the landscape space of the town. The river Tebra which enriches the landscape of the town has historically served as the border river between the Bishopric of Courland and the State of the Livonian Order. In turn, in the second half of the 19th century, a dike is constructed on the river and the historic centre acquires a vast waterfront - a mill lake. The left bank as the bluff with the ancient castle, manor brewery, the master's house, and roadside pub form a distinct silhouette of the cultural and historic landscape. Unfortunately, the expressiveness of the silhouette is reduced by a chaotic clumps of trees and a well-considered thinning is required for the existing trees. In summer, when trees sprout their leaves, the main sight lines are hidden. The most picturesque sight lines can be found on both banks of the river along the mill lake. The accessibility to this site remains an unresolved issue. This is one of the first tasks to be carried out in the development plan of the local authority. The scale of the historical building and the trees is particularly well comparable with the photographic material of archives. When researching each of the above sites of the old building in detail, the blue-green structures on both banks of the river Tebra .

Keywords: landscape, historical heritage, silhouette, historical building, blue-green structures.

Introduction

The formation process of Aizpute town is connected with its geographical location and natural foundation, which have shaped the economic development of the town. In the course of eight centuries the urban area has altered along with changing of political and economic situation in the town. It is reflected in the height of buildings, the density of roof planes, gardens, roads. As regards the layers of infrastructure, they develop or spoil the expressiveness of culture heritage. These factors are important for designing Aizpute town development plan. The historic centre is very densely built-up enhanced by natural foundation. The stream of the Tebra river is a dominating feature of this urban area in everyday life as well as from the point of view of the economic development of the town. In the middle of the 18th century the watermill was built on the Tebra river thus raising the water level which diversified the landscape of Aizpute and added a picturesque perimetral building scene. The contour of the mill lake is formed by the slope of the river's left bank which determines the character of the landscape. The road Kuldīga-Liepāja of regional importance curving around the shore of the mill lake plays an important part in attraction of tourism infrastructure.

The aim of the research is to explore the places of clumps of trees around the lake of the watermill on the Tebra river hiding the historic buildings of the town.

The following objectives were set to achieve the aim:

- to evaluate the main sight line from the shore of the windmill lake,
- to analyze visual perception of roof landscape of the historic centre's buildings in sight lines from the river Tebra

Historically Aizpute was firstly mentioned on April 4, 1253, when the land was distributed between Bishopric of Courland and the Order of Livonia, its new owners. The town was formed by merging several settlements during the Middle Ages: the castle and the village of Courland clergy council and the town, the castle and village of the Order Of Livonia (Dzenis). In the 18th century Aizpute became the capital of Piltene county. The Council of Land Advisors and the Court were situated in Aizpute. In 1795 Russia incorporated Piltene County and the whole Courland by establishing the Courland Province (Aizputes novada ilgtspējīgas...).

The map from 1797 is the first historic evidence of the increased water level of the river Tebra and the layout of the town's green structure. It is possible to detect the high building density of the town's central part in the map (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Plan of Aizpute town, 1797 (Source: Museum of Culture Heritage of Aizpute)

During the 20ties and 30ties of the 20th century Aizpute was the town of small traders and craftsmen. There were 103 stores, a brewery, dairy and sawing mill in the town, there was a park on the hill of Misinkalns. After WWII many buildings were demolished due to their bad condition that is why the density of buildings has decreased (Aizputes novada tertiorijas ..., 2012). The mill lake's landscape space includes historic buildings that have survived through the centuries, because the town had not been destroyed during WWI and WWII. This is the reason why many culture heritage and architectural monuments have survived maintaining authentic details in the buildings.

Materials and methods

Historic photos from Aizpute museum have been used for comparing the scenes in the photos with the present situation for the research purpose. A comparative method is used to make conclusions about the transformation processes and anthropogenic load in the historic part of the town that is related to the increased water level zone of the Tebra river. The research accurately explores the historic buildings of the shore line of the mills lake, which includes three dominants of landscape space – the Livonian castle, the church and the ansemler of manor buildings. As one of the most expressive objects of the north part of the Tebra mill lake is the Livonian castle which was originated in the middle of the 13th century as a fortress. The castle was mentioned one century later, in 1341 as a grain barn. The building for dwelling purposes was built in the 14th century (Silārs and Sants, 2014).

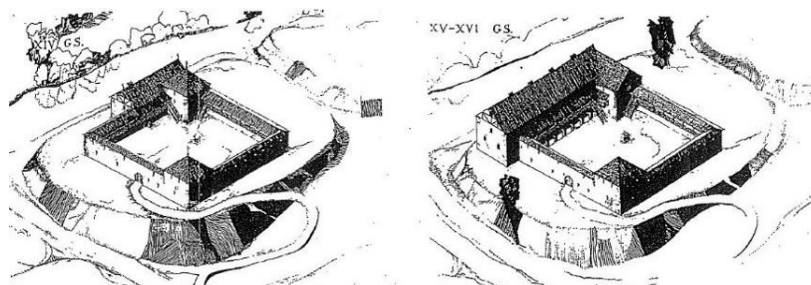


Figure 2. The reconstruction of the castle of the 14th century and 15-16th century (Source: Brūzis, 1997)



Figure 3. Sight lines in the direction of the Livonian castle (Source: authors' scheme)

The old castle has lost the external form of its historic size in the course of the centuries. Specifically it refers to the south side. The remains of the castle clearly outline the scale of the inner yard, the height of the building, the slope of the Tebra left bank as well as a perimatal slope which is adjusted to the castle. The slope is obvious also in the east and west part of the castle. Thus viewing points to the fortress of the castle are located in a vast landscape. The most expressive are the sight lines in the south part from the Tebra's right bank or Pils street, in the east part - it is the sight from the mill lake (Fig. 3). Liepāja street which serves as the main traffic road visually ends in the western part with the castle size on the hill forming a dominant point of the street. Liepāja street curving around the north side of the castle

mound does not visually disturb the perception the historic size of the castle. The castle size with a slope is expressively readable in sight lines from Pavilosta road (at the former roadside tavern). The historic photos give evidence that the clump of trees at the beginning of the 20th century was depressively dense which created a massive shape when the trees were covered with leaves. Currently the visibility of the castle has been recovered at this point, however, a little thinning of branches is necessary in relation to the wing of the left scene from the side of Pavilosta road.



Figure 4. The growth on the castle mound (Source: authors' photo, 2016)

The thinning of the south east slope during the last ten years is a positive example of eliminating clump and the influence of maintenance on the visibility and highlighting of culture objects. However, it is necessary to consider the elimination of many of the remaining trees. The south west side of the slope (in the angles from Krasta street) is covered with intensive growth of trees. The sight lines on the old castle from Liepaja street at the historic stone bridge are partly covered with a two-storied living building, which was built at the beginning of the 20th century. The barns for wood are located there. Since the technical condition of the building is not satisfactory, the local government has to make a decision regarding leaving this house or not in the zone of the castle's slope (Fig. 5, 6). The castle mound with the fortress historically had the purpose of noticing the enemies from its top, therefore sight line could not have been covered by anything. Therefore the restoration of the castle means not only the recovery of its historic size, but also restoration of the true outside space. The above mentioned research regarding the landscape space of Livonian castle serves as the preparation or a matrix for the study of other objects that are located around the Tebra mill lake.

Results and discussion

The second dominating point of the north shore of the mill lake from Liepaja street is the manor's main building with adjacent houses (Fig.7). Similarly to the Livonian castle, the manor buildings are located on the steep slope of the mill lake which is created in several levels. The facade of the manor's main building or the master's house has lost the central rizalite with columns typical of the classicism style thus diminishing the stylistic expressiveness of the building (Silārs and Sants, 2014). The main sight lines in the direction of the owners' house are located on the south shore of the lake in Liepaja street. At present the house is hidden in the overgrown trees and it is difficult to perceive it in summer. The scrubland of the shore's slope formed from seeded trees and bushes has altered the scale of the landscape space of the shore and sight lines in the course of time. It refers to viewpoints in both directions. The terraced slope's inclination of the main facade of the owner's house is the most picturesque landscape element of the mill lake. The sunny side of the slope and the scale of the building create a compositionally strong and harmonious play. Similarly to the previously mentioned Livonian castle, it is necessary to recover the expressiveness of the historic sight lines as well.



Figure 5. Sight from Liepaja street to the castle and brewery (Source: author's photo, 2016)



Figure 6. The master's house at the front (Source: author's photo, 2016)



Figure 7. The sight line to the brewery, the master's house and water mill (Source: Spāģe, 2017)

The second important factor that should be evaluated is the fact that the foliage of giant trees cover the sights from the master's house to the rooftops of the old town. In the future when the local government change gray slate roofs of the city's old houses to red tiles, as well as paint tin roofs in red, there is an opportunity to regain the town's ancient roof scenery. The nearby town Kuldīga, sometimes called the big sister of Aizpute, may serve as one of the examples of recovering roof scenery (Pilsmuižas Dzirnavu dīķis..., Sv. Jana baznīca). The historic pictures studied during the research signify that the master's house did not have any trees on the south slope. In the post-war years seeded trees created a densely grown scrubland, covering the building from sight lines from Liepāja street. In 2016 trees were partly eliminated, and currently the sight towards the slope and building is more open. The exterior angle of the façade has to be re-evaluated, adjusting the distance of both wings from the building's corners. The manor's ensemble contained different functional buildings which were located around the mill lake. The next strong dominating point in the sight lines from Liepāja street was a brewery building. The brewery was built in 1880 as the steam brewery. In 1887 daily output reached 22 l of beer. The beer was sold in the town and the neighbourhood. The brewery employed 9 workers, 6 from them lived in the same building. The brewery produced not only beer but also kvas, lemonade and fruit water drinks. The building contained 6 production rooms, ice storerooms and apartments (Silārs and Sants, 2014). In the post-war period the roof of the brewery was reconstructed by changing its inclination and adding the third floor. The height of the roof ridge and chimneys of old bricks have retained their historic form. As regards the façade of the building, the end gable's fill, outer walls made of red brick and the tile cover have disappeared, thus reducing the colourfulness of the building and its architectural expression. The building size is located next to the Livonian castle mound and it creates visually strong accent in the sight lines from Liepāja street (Fig. 12). Its expressiveness is diminished by a group of trees between the brewery and the Livonian castle as well as separate trees at the brewery's façade. The park's trees create landscape balance with the flow of lake shore line in the right wing of the viewpoint between the brewery and the slope of the master's house. Historic photos (Fig. 11) depict the intensive use of water border revealing its historic functional usage. At present the intensity of the production has declined and the shore line does not reveal any business activities. The town plans may envisage the development of the embankment from the brewery to the water mill by creating the promenade for walks and several landscaped terraces at the shore line for recreation. From this point it is possible to see sight lines to Baznīkalns hill and the Livonian castle. The above mentioned water mill was built on the opposite side of the lake next to the slope of the owners' house. The house has maintained its original appearance. Their present owners are implementing restoration works. The water mill and nearby building along the road create a lineary distinct building. All the buildings have retained their historic size, which outline the urban build-up identity. It is possible to compare it with the historic photo materials (Fig. 13,14). The brewery and water mill as functional zones were built at the bottom of the slope, but the master's house with the park was built at the top of the hill. The north shore of the lake with the manor buildings are a peculiar witness of the economic boom at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries. The third strong dominating point of the mill lake's landscape space is Baznīkalns hill. The increased level of the Tebra river includes a peninsula with the steep hill where the St. John's Lutheran Church of Aizpute was erected. At the bottom of the north part of the hill there is a curve of Liepāja street with a very intensive transport movement; at the south side there is Krasta street which is a popular pedestrian promenade. A steep slope of Baznīkalns hill (around 50 degrees) is densely covered by a clump of trees and bushes. The historic photos give evidence that at the beginning of the 20th century there were densely located trees around the church. Their height was not huge therefore the bell tower of the church was visible. After 100 years branches have expanded immensely covering the church in any perimetral sight line. Densely grown trees have a serious effect on the structure of buildings. When the green chlorophyll leaves cover the roof of the church and limed walls, the porous surface of the exterior wall gradually greens and deteriorates. The tree foliage, when it is close to the outer walls, does not enhance draught in wet weather. The sight from the church diminish sight lines to the old town, the master's house, the old castle and the mill lake. Similarly to the research conducted for the renovation of the Livonian castle landscape space, it is necessary to carry out a detailed research for the reduction of Baznīkalns hill growth. However, if the trees are sawn and their roots become rotten, the erosion of the slope is possible. Therefore it is necessary to perform technologically relevant work for the strengthening of the slope against sliding due to precipitation (Fig. 8, 9, 10). The old stone bridge with a semi-circled stone arch cover serves as a uniting link for the mill lake shore line. The stone bridge across the Tebra river

was the property of the manor, from 1752 until 1920 the border between the manor and Aizpute town was not along the middle of the river, but along the right bank of the river.



Figure 8. Sight lines to Baznickalns hill (Source: authors' scheme)

In 1907 the new bridge was built by K. von Manteufel, the new baron of Kazdanga manor. Both outside handrails were decorated with the coat of arms of the von Manteufels family (Silārs and Sants, 2014). The arch shape of the bridge was possible to read from Krasta street. After the war the street was broadened, and the historic arch of the bridge was hidden by the concrete structure. The territory around the mill lake requires the improvement of the movement of vehicles and pedestrians. There is no bypass in the town and the vehicles move along the most picturesque shore of the mill lake damaging the romantic feeling of the valley. Liepaja street serves as the road of regional importance which links Kuldīga with Liepāja, as well as Aizpute with Pavilosta. The shortest road leads from Pavilosta through Aizute to Liepāja Rīga highway. The heavy vehicles have an impact on the landscape which divides the landscape space physically and emotionally into two parts.



Figure 9. Viewpoint from the Livonian castle mound to the church (Source: authors' photo, 2016)



Figure 10. Buildings on Baznickalns beginning of 20th century (Source: Museum of Culture Heritage of Aizpute)



Figure 11. Viewpoint to the brewery beginning of 20th century (Source: Museum of Culture Heritage of Aizpute)



Figure 12. Viewpoint to the brewery (Source: authors' photo, 2016)

The tree vegetation research shows that species characteristic to the landscape of Latvia is found in the territory of the mill lake. Maples (*Acer platanoides*) and oaks (*Quercus robur*) dominate on the top of the hills, also there are ash trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Ash trees grow near the brewery casting a shadow and covering the building's facade. Dense growth has appeared next to the stone bridge on the bank of the river consisting of overgrown ash trees willow bushes. The height of the trees exceeds human height by several times. The growth zone spoils sight lines to and from the Livonian castle (4). At the bottom of the Baznickalns hill at Krasts street there is a row of spruce trees (*Picea abies*), which influences significantly the visibility of the culture heritage building behind them. Apple trees (*Malus domestica*) and plum trees (*Prunus cerasifera*) dominate behind the church in the territories of private houses. Consequently, the type of trees and their height determine the functional role of the specific urban space Spāģe (2017).



Figure 13. The water mill beginning of the 20th century
(Source: Museum of Culture Heritage of Aizpute)



Figure 14. Town's roof landscape, view from the owners' house
(Source: Museum of Culture Heritage of Aizpute)

Conclusion

The historic building around the shore of the mill lake has the shape of a ring, where building line is linked with the historic stone bridge across the Tebra. The distinctive features of perimetral building in the landscape space is determined by the characteristics of the natural foundation – the size of the lake, shores and the relief. The synthesis of architectural forms and natural foundation in the landscape space is formed by developing building on the shoreline slopes. The analysis of the landscape space of shorelines of Aizpute mill lake lead to conclude that slopes are covered by the growth of seeded trees that hide the overall expressiveness of building and the relief. Thus dynamics of landscape space which is its main compositional value has been lost. Losing an opportunity to read the slope inclination and its soil cover diminishes the effect of light and shadow play of the relief. The dense clump of trees creates one-piece shadow. A large water surface of the mill lake together with the relief form a picturesque valley which is visually marred by the exaggerated amount of trees and height.



Figure 15. The landscape of red tile roofs. Kuldīga (Source: Kuldīgas municipality, 2013)

The development solutions of historic urban space requires the reconsideration of the building of historic heritage and solutions of the nearby visual conflict of degrading building. It refers both to random functional buildings and architectural forms of separate buildings. The town has not solved the problem of a bypass, and transport movement through its historic centre. This situation should be re-evaluated by the local government for improvement of tourism infrastructure. The beauty of the mill lake suggests the development of a recreational zone with summer terraces near the water and distant sight lines to the valley of Courland's "Switzerland".

In order to implement the above mentioned recommendations, it is necessary to attract investments for the improvement of culture heritage objects. Not only the funding but also cooperation among property (the mill, brewery, craftsmen workshop, guest house etc.) owners might promote creation of tourism infrastructure.

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Data about the authors:

Una Īle, Dr. arch., Assist. Prof. in Latvia University of Life Sciences and Tehnology, Faculty of Environment and Civil Engineering, Department of Landscape Architecture and Planning, 22 Liela iela, Jelgava, Latvia, LV-3001. E-mail: una.ile@llu.lv

Aija Ziemeļniece, Dr. arch. A. Ziemeļniece is an prof. in Latvia University of Life Sciences and Tehnology, Faculty of Environment and Civil Engineering, Department of Landscape Architecture and Planning, 22 Liela iela, Jelgava, Latvia, LV-3001. E-mail: aija@k-projekts.lv