

GREEN PLANTATION SYSTEM IN CITIES OF WESTERN REGION OF LATVIA

Silvija OZOLA

Riga Technical University, Liepāja branch, Latvia

Abstract

The natural environment of the Baltic Sea coast became the life habitat of the people who settled there. By changing the water and greenery systems and creating architectural structures a new functional environment was established. Nature elements began to be included in the architectonic spatial structure of the cities. In the first half of the 19th century the first public gardens were established in the cities of the western region of Latvia. Several decades later urbanization and transport development changed the urban environment, thus reducing the proportion of nature elements. The natural landscape was replaced by artificially designed green plantations—squares, boulevards and public parks became part of the amenities. Greenery for recreation purposes was even arranged at hill forts.

At the time of Latvian Republic the agrarian reform—division of the state land fund, allocation of new land for urban construction, and alienation of manor properties—provided cities with an opportunity for planned development. Green spaces in urban areas were complemented by manor parks. Gardens were established in the land plots allotted for family house construction. Decorative and functional green plantations were introduced in urban areas, including monumental works of art, and fields for sport and active recreation were created. Special attention was given to the greenery for resident's recreational purposes. In forest-plantations and nature areas open air stages for song festival were built.

After the restoration of Soviet power in 1940 Latvia was annexed by the Soviet Union. During World War II the buildings in the city centers of Liepāja, Jelgava and Kuldīga were destroyed. They were revived in the post-war years due to ideological considerations. The grandiose industrial, agricultural and transport facilities were not compatible with targeted remediation of environment. Nature transformation projects were environmentally imprudent and many urban areas were considered as a dimensionless trash bin. Information on the city environment quality was concealed. The proportion of greenery in dense residential areas fell sharply: Ventspils, Liepāja, Jelgava and other cities did not have a sufficient amount of green plantations. Greenery was arranged at completely new constructions of a different scale without previous practical experience, while low level of maintenance of green plantation had a negative impact on people's quality of life.

After regaining independence and accessioning to the European Union, Latvia became involved in the processes taking place in Europe. It became urgent to develop a central spatial planning system for environmental protection, efficient use of resources and balanced and sustainable urban development. Physically and mentally wholesome living, and work and leisure environment for city residents is provided by developing territorial plans. They determine the distribution and use of land for specific purposes, which in turn affect the presence of elements of nature. Cities of western region of Latvia need to improve the architectonic spatial structure to maintain the proportion of green plantations. The open

space created by nature elements, such as water basins and greenery system, will provide favorable conditions for the healthy living and an artistic touch to the urban environment.

Existing studies on green plantation systems in the cities of western region of Latvia are fragmented and inadequate. Comparative analysis and results will be obtained using cartographic and photo materials.

The aim of the study is to analyze the formation of green plantation systems in the cities of western region of Latvia. To determine the necessary architectonic spatial structure transformations for preserving the open space created by water basins and green plantations in city environment. The long term goal of this study is to ensure a positive and sustainable environment for life, work, and leisure.