

Landscape of the Resort City of Jurmala: From Fishing Villages to Planned Urbanization

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Abstract

The article outlines the historic landscape development stages in the resort city of Jurmala, Latvia starting from the fishing villages of the 18th century up to modern times. The article indicates landscape changes today in the City of Jurmala and discusses planned solutions leading to increased urbanization, which in the future could create a considerably different city landscape, and which have alarmed city planners and the residents of Jurmala.

Keywords

Jurmala City landscape, pine “forest park”, bathing places, city structure, urbanization

Introduction

The City of Jurmala has developed on a narrow strip of land between the Gulf of Riga and Lielupe River. The more than 30-km-long, but narrow, peninsula lying between the river and the sea is a very fragile formation of wind-blown sand. It has significant heritage value in terms of nature, culture and history, as human activity from various periods has left its traces in the city's landscape.

In the 19th century, Jurmala developed as a recreation and bathing destination for the urban population. During the first part of the 20th century, and later during the Soviet era, the city was a famous resort. These developments can be explained by natural factors – the sea with its golden sandy beach and dunes, the Lielupe River, pine forests, fresh phytoncide-rich air, peace and quiet, as well as the therapeutic mud and mineral waters.

The city's image as it developed through the centuries is one of a "forest park" city with graceful wooden summer houses featuring carved wood decorations, standing among pine trees close to the golden beach and river. As historian Petersons has said, approximately 150 years of significant capital, as a civil cultural space, has accumulated in Jūrmala, which creates the harmonious feeling that is characteristic of the city: wooden buildings surrounded by nature – pine trees, dunes and sandy beach, the gulf and Lielupe River expanse, where the spacious sky finds its reflection (Blūms, 2004).

Jūrmala is a city with a historically formed tradition of low-storied buildings. Since the 1990s Jūrmala, has aspired to create an image that focuses on the qualities of the historic and cultural heritage and environment as well as its closeness to nature – as a city with a natural beach and belt of pine wood dunes. Today, along with the changes in interests and values, other trends are starting to emerge. As in 1970s and 1980s, multi-storied buildings, that are not characteristic of the traditional city landscape, have started to arrive in and are being planned for Jūrmala. As a result, the various ideas about the future model of the city are colliding. Based on the latest planning documents for the City of Jūrmala, the city intends to move towards increased urbanization, which alarms many Jūrmala residents.

The article outlines the historic landscape development stages in the resort city of Jūrmala, starting from the fishing villages of the 18th and early 19th century up to the modern times, and discusses the planned solutions for city development, which in the future could create a considerably different city landscape.

Development of Jūrmala and landscape through time

Today the territory of the City of Jūrmala comprises the ancient Kurzeme settlement of Sloka, former Kemerī resort, as well as former fishermen's villages along the sea, which were transformed into bathing places in the 19th century, as well as the fishermen's villages and ancient settlements along the Lielupe River.

The name of the most ancient – Sloka – was first mentioned in the treaty of 1255 between the Livonian Order and the City of Riga. In the 16th century, Sloka developed as a sea fishery centre and reached the peak of its prosperity during the Duchy of Kurzeme. As a town, Sloka existed from 1920 to 1959, when it was incorporated into the territory of Jūrmala. Kemerī, however, has developed as a resort town thanks to the therapeutic mud and mineral waters. The Kemerī resort was founded in 1838. In 1928, Kemerī became a town.

The last to acquire city rights – in 1920 – was Rīgas Jūrmala – the city covering the territory from Lielupe to Asari formed as a result of the incorporation of the former bathing sites.

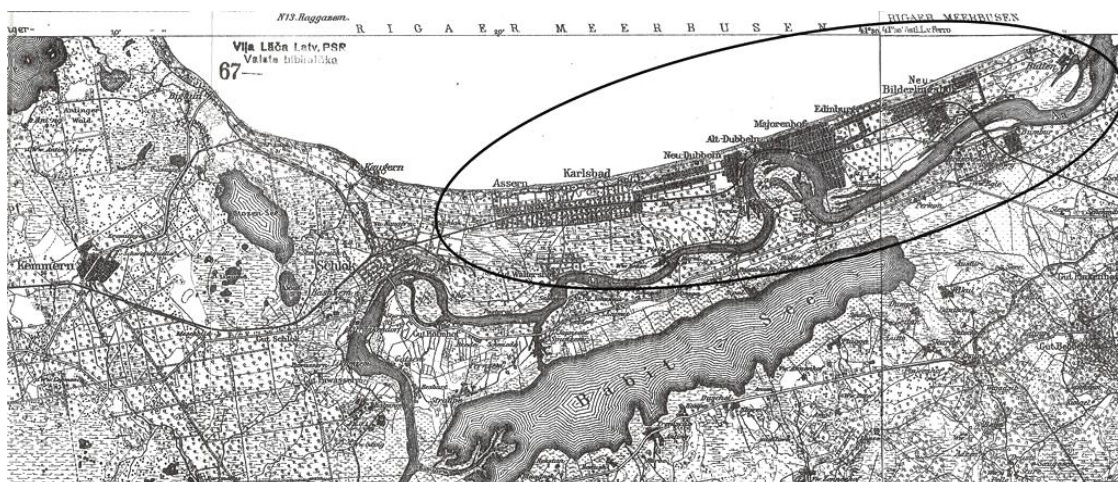


Figure 1. Bathing places in 1917 (from 1920, City of Rigas Jurmala): Bullen (now Lielupe); Bilderlingshof (now Bulduri); Edinburg (now Dzintari); Majorenhof (now Majori); Alt-Dubbeln (now Dubulti); Neu-Dubbeln (now Jaundubulti); Karlsbad (now Melluzi) and Assern (now Asari).

Rigas Jurmala as a city existed until 1946 when it was merged with Riga and made one of the administrative districts of Riga. In 1959, the resort city of Jurmala was founded by merging the Rigas Jurmala administrative district and Sloka and Kemeris towns (Dimbira, 1996; Jūrmala, 1996).

The development of Jurmala as a city is rather unique. Along with Riga, Ventspils and Liepāja, Jurmala is one of the largest seacoast cities. The development of the first three cities was based on the desire of the merchants and craftsmen to offer their goods and services and the wish of the land rulers to build fortresses and consolidate their power in the surrounding area. However, Jurmala emerged due to completely different considerations. During the season, the diverse and generally agreeable nature on the shore of the Gulf of Riga provided the residents of the big cities refuge from the daily hustle and bustle and from the stone walls of the multi-storied buildings and their constricting living space, as well as gave them hope of regaining their health by taking advantage of the healing properties of nature. The never-ending rustle of waters and pine trees, the beach sand heated by the sun, as well as refreshing baths, leisurely conversations, music from the nearby open-air stage, hours of solitude on the veranda of a villa with a book, or moments of reflection represent the traditional reasons, but not the only ones, why thousands of people in Latvia and abroad have become fond of Jurmala (Blūms, 2004).

This article mainly examines the development stages of Jurmala's landscape on the territory of the former City of Rigas Jurmala, leaving the stories about the landscapes of the ancient towns of Sloka and Kemeris and Soviet building area in Kauguri for a later time.

As famous Latvian landscape researcher Aija Melluma has shown, the landscape development process is not linear – during radical political, economic and social changes, the conditions of landscape development also change and new relations develop between man and the landscape. Therefore it can be said that various landscape stages affect each other through time. At any new development stage, the landscape experiences change specific to that particular period of time or new landscapes are formed. It has happened before and is happening now (Melluma, 2011).

Jūrmala's development can be divided into several stages with a landscape typical to each of them: until the early 19th century – the ancient Jūrmala landscape with the sparse fishing villages, with fishermen/peasant farmsteads here and there, and a pine forest that covers the peninsula; starting from the early 19th century – the allocation of land in the fishing villages, and thereafter, the building of summer houses in the manor forests and the development of bathing places/districts resulting in a flourishing landscape of a town with wooden summer houses; World War I with a devastated landscape; Jūrmala development during the independent Latvian state between 1920 and 1944 – a landscape of a recreation city; the Soviet era with the “sanatoriums” of a scale typical of the Soviet Union; the period post-Soviet change from 1990s to the present day, with diversity and a collisions of interests that are reflected in the landscape.

Jūrmala landscape until the early 19th century

The nature of Jūrmala City features almost all the landscapes typical of Sea Lowlands – there are a shore and beach, forest-covered coastal dunes, the Lielupe River lower with flood-land meadows and low plains with bogs, wet forests and lakes (Blūms, 2004).

As Peteris Belte, the head of Rigas Jūrmala during the 1920s and later a deputy, has written, in the first half of the 19th century 85% of the Jūrmala peninsula was still covered by forests. The forests were old and silver: silver moss shags like goat beards hung on the branches of the dune pine trees. And they were thick – even in the dunes one hiker could not see another a hundred steps away. In wetter places and in the straits, birches grew among the pine trees, along with some black alders and aspen trees; there were also fir trees between Bulduri and Majori on the sunny side. On the edges of fields, one could even see oak trees. Grasses grew in the straits and cattle grazed there (Belte, 1935).

The area has long been sparsely populated. The distribution of population in Jūrmala developed in scattered spots along the river and the sea, the rest of peninsula being covered by forests. The Jūrmala landscape, as we can imagine it, was a sandy beach, dunes, somewhere there were fishing boats, fishing net sheds, pine trees, small wooden huts in sparse fishing villages and individual fishermen/peasant farmsteads on the seashore and riverside, where cattle grazed in the flood-land meadows along the river; the villages and farmsteads were like small islets in the middle of the pine forest.

The river side of the peninsula was more populated. Along the Lielupe River there were the lands of Bulduri, Majori, Valteri and Sala manors with peasant farmsteads around them. There were also some fishermen/peasant villages and farmsteads, taverns, and forester houses. The large forests belonged to the manor. The river was crossed by rafts.

The oldest occupation in Jūrmala was fishing. Fishing took place both in the sea and in the river as well as in Lake Babīte. The flood-land meadows were used for cattle grazing. Jūrmala inhabitants also grew vegetables; the people in Kauguri are said to have grown particularly large and good vegetables thanks to the sea manure (Belte, 1935).

Development of bathing places from the early 19th century to 1914

In the early 19th century, Jurmala was still quiet and sparsely populated (Mence, 1988). Everything changed when recreation at the seaside and bathing became popular. Bathing guests started coming to the seaside villages, mainly from Riga, Jelgava, and other places in Kurzeme. In that respect, the seaside was also “discovered” during Napoleon’s attack in 1812, when many residents of Riga went into hiding in the fishing villages of the present Jurmala.

Thus, in the 1820s, bathing places started to develop in the local peasant-fishermen settlements – in the former fishing villages of Kauguri, Melluzi, Dubulti (on the sea), Vecbulturi and Bulli (on the river). The first summer residents stayed at fishermen’s homes which were adapted for summertime recreational purposes (Blūms, 2004; Mence, 1988).

In the first half of the 19th century, the entire narrow and long peninsula was a continuous line of straits stretching out next to each other with dunes – small hills – between them. Later, when the construction of buildings started in Jurmala, the relief was evened out and the dune and strait profile was sustained only in the forested areas, the name of “Joma (strait) Street” in Majori is a reminder of the past.

Consequently, Jurmala continued its development from bathing places to colonies of individual summer houses. First, the summer houses appeared in the fishing villages, where they were built around the bathing institution – the spa house. When the demand increased, lots were allocated to the manor forests. This is how Jaundubulti, Bulturi, and later Lielupe developed (Figure 2). In the second half of the 19th century intensive building work started in Majori and the first lots were allocated to the Asari dunes.

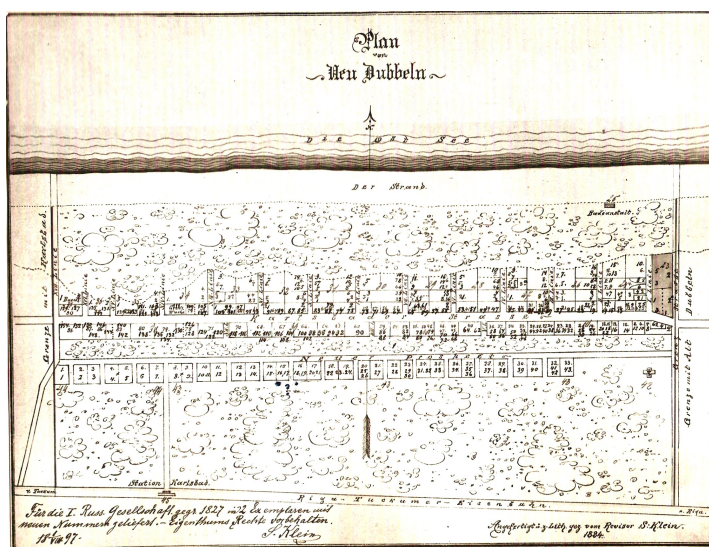


Figure 2. Plan of Neu Dubbeln 1897.

A new type of wooden buildings entered the fishermen village landscape to replace the fishermen’s houses. If in older times Dubulti featured only fishermen’s huts, then by 1839 they could only be seen as collapsed, dark witnesses to the olden times (Belte, 1935; Mence, 1988). The

former fishing villages turned into settlements populated by holidaymakers with bathing houses near the sea, with warm sea water, summer houses, lounges, hotels and parks. The holidaymakers travelled to the bathing places by boats (Figure 3). In the second half of the 19th century, the first villas were built with a special feature – the glass veranda (Blūms, 2004).



Figure 3. Lielupe River near Dubulti. In the middle of the 19th century. Picture from the Vilhelm Zigfrid Stafenhagen album.

The planning of the bathing districts is with regular layout, perpendicular streets and lots of similar sizes. Due to the way the land was parcelled at various times, there are areas where the streets are not directly linked. The roads were sandy and difficult to drive through. The structure of Jūrmala changed along with the construction of the railway in 1877, which connected the bathing places of Jūrmala by splitting the peninsula linearly.

There was not much land suitable for agriculture. The useful land (e.g. meadows) stretched mainly along the river. Still, wherever it was possible, the land owners used the land, unoccupied by buildings and not required for guests' recreational needs, for fruit and vegetable gardens. Horticulture spread in Jūrmala in the second half of the 19th century, when residents started to grow strawberries, raspberries, red currants and other garden produce. The first strawberry plants were imported from France and growing strawberries became widespread in the Vaivari – Asari – Melluzi area (Blūms, 2004; Dimbira, 1996).

The resort reached its peak shortly before World War I – it was popular among the inhabitants of Moscow and St. Petersburg. However, the devastations of World War I left considerable traces in the Jūrmala landscape; summer houses and newly built-up villas were burned down and demolished, and the railway bridge was blown up.

City of Rigas Jūrmala 1920-1946

The City of Rigas Jūrmala was established in 1920 by consolidating the bathing places. The city was developed as a resort; buildings intended for tourism and public use were constructed. The development of the city's residential buildings and villas took place by allocating new lots to the

forest areas. From 1923, nine hundred sixty new lots were surveyed and granted. The planning of Bulduri was supplemented (Belte, 1935, Dimbira, 1992). In 1926, the construction of buildings in the Lielupe Forest Park started – it took place in lines 21 to 25 in accordance with the “General Buildings Design of Jurmala Colony” made by architect Arnolds Lamze.

The resort flourished in a new form. Instead of the wooden houses, stone buildings were constructed. The majority of owners lived in Rigas Jurmala throughout the year. The villas were populated by the Latvian intelligentsia. The social life, recreational activities and entertainment were diverse. Jurmala was internationally recognized. Holidaymakers rested by the sea, and on the days when the wind blew from the sea, by the river. Walking along the beach while waiting for and watching the sunset was popular.

Resort City of Jurmala and its landscape between 1946 and 1991

The years under the Soviet power were full of contradictions. The majority of the residential buildings and villas were nationalized. People with a different approach to things arrived in Jurmala. As Stradins wrote, in 1946, the problem of Jurmala became topical because various institutions tried to create beach sections for their sanatoriums and recreation houses and surround them with fences, as was done in the resorts by the Black Sea. The Council of Ministers of the Republic objected to such actions and requested the Academy of Sciences to make a comprehensive examination of the situation. Thanks to the opinion of the Academy of Sciences, fenced-in beach sections were not created in Rigas Jurmala (Stradins, 1988). There was not much construction between 1946 and 1959, while Rigas Jurmala was the one of the administrative districts of the City Riga. The size and scale of the buildings constructed in 1950s had not lost their human scale.

In 1959, the Resort City of Jurmala was founded by merging the territories of Rigas Jurmala, Sloka and Kemerī. Jurmala quickly turned into a resort typical of the Soviet Union with its organized flows of holidaymakers. The traditional structure of buildings was broken as the summer houses and residential buildings were remodelled for the various health improvement sites. The Soviet convalescence homes and resort buildings belonging to governmental departments aggressively interfered with Jurmala's infrastructure by paying absolutely no attention the ecological and city's building potential; thus when the pine trees were cut down, the loss of the pine forest could be felt (Aparjais, 1988).

Large new sanatoriums were built as well as multi-storied residential housing blocks for their staffs. During this process, the old wooden buildings were destroyed and the structure of the city plan was partly changed. Starting in the 1970s, construction was focused mainly on multi-storied stone sanatoriums in the dune zone (Blūms, 2004).

The landscape of the city was negatively influenced by the construction of these large sanatoriums, as well as the multi-storied residential houses in the historic surroundings. In the new building areas, the old wooden houses were destroyed and pine trees cut down. The new buildings “broke” the scale of their surroundings – they ignored the practice of carefully integrating the buildings in the city structure and landscape. Gigantic buildings rose like multi-storied monsters in the dune zone – restricted convalescence homes and recreation institutions

were created behind fences, thus obstructing public access to the sea and eliminating publicly available recreational possibilities on the southern side of the dunes (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Baltic Beach Hotel. Photo by Lukstiņa 2011.

Buildings increasingly rose above the tops of the pine trees in the panorama of Jūrmala centre (Creative Work House of the Writers Union in Dubulti; hotel “Jūrmala” etc). As mentioned by architect Vaidelotis Apsitis in 1970s, Jūrmala was on the threshold between two periods in the history of architecture. The blocks of the new recreation and convalescence institutions were rising above the roofs of the villas built in earlier generations (Apsitis, 1972).

During the summer months, Jūrmala was not able to withstand the overload created mainly by the visitors staying at the Soviet-scale convalescence homes. Jūrmala was crowded with holidaymakers and summer residents. On the beach, people laid shoulder to shoulder. This can be very well illustrated by the figures. In 1972, there were 100 recreation institutions, 53 sanatoriums, 30 pioneer camps, camp sites, and tourist bases. In the summer, up to 300,000 people were simultaneously vacationing in Jūrmala (Apsitis, 1972).

The specific features of Jūrmala’s landscape from the 1960s to the 1990s were the Pioneer summer camps in the districts of Jaundubulti and Pumpuri. The marching of the Pioneer groups, their recreational activities in the nearby forests and beach; the bathing lines at the beach were an indispensable part of the landscape. When the summer camps were held in the nationalized villas and large shed-like catering and washing halls were constructed alongside, the historic surroundings underwent a significant change.

City of Jūrmala after 1991

The post-Soviet era from the 1990s to the present day in Jūrmala can be described as a lingering period of change with the collision of interests that are reflected in the landscape. The Latvian state dissociated itself from the operation of resort clinics and thus let the convalescence institutions of Kemerī and Rīgas Jūrmala collapse. Private businesses were not able to take over the therapeutic and recreational services. The buildings and lots were privatized (Blūms, 2004).

As the result of the decreasing number of holidaymakers from Russia, in the 1990s, some of the larger former recreation sites remained empty; some were rebuilt into residential apartments, thus not only losing their function, but also their architectural quality. Already in 1987, concerns were expressed that after Jurmala would cease to be a resort, it would become a residential district of Riga (Lejnieks, 1987). Gradually, the landscape of historically formed low-storied buildings was changed by multi-storied apartment houses. As in Soviet times, they introduced a new scale, thus decreasing the integrity of the historic structure and marking other traits in the landscape. The buildings with five or six stories have already become typical for Jurmala and the city is gradually losing its image of “pine forest park” city (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Typical buildings of Jurmala. Photo by Lukstina 2011.

The next tangible loss was the decrease in public outdoor space during the land reform, which included the green territories of the city. Because the pine trees, which created the uniqueness of Jurmala's city space were disappearing, the landscapes of the private residential areas were starting to resemble those of nice, but ordinary, towns. Already in 1935, Belte wrote that there were ever more lots without any pine trees (Belte, 1935). Today there are even more of them. The intertwining contrast between nature and the areas covered by buildings is disappearing.

The landscape features a diversity of places and situations. During the season, mass culture dominates in the very liveable pedestrian Jomas Street and around the Dzintari Concert Hall. The entertainment industry site “Livu akvaparks” and a Rimi chain supermarket create the first impression of Jurmala – they form the city gate when coming from Riga.

There are successfully renovated wooden villas, interesting reconstructions (Figure 6) and new residential buildings that have been integrated into the landscape with the “taste” specific to the seaside. However, in other places, mainly through the Vaivari - Asari district, heavy stone buildings often inspired by southern country catalogues have reached Jurmala.



Figure 6. Wooden villas in Jurmala. Photos by Lukstina 2011.

Landscape typical of the lingering change process can currently be seen in the historic part of Jurmala – the Dubulti summer house area and Dzintari – Bulduri, which during the Soviet times hosted sanatoriums and recreation houses. In some places, the area is a physically shrinking city landscape with abandoned houses (shacks) and unused lands.

Why is Jurmala's landscape developing so diversely today? Maybe we should search for the answer in the diverse community of the city and the rapid political changes. Among the inhabitants of Jurmala, there are locals of various generations – the “old” inhabitants, who mainly live in the private house districts; “the locals from the Soviet era” – the employees of the Soviet-time sanatoriums and their descendants – in the multi-storied buildings; in Jurmala there are also properties that belong to the former inhabitants of Jurmala, who recovered their property during the land reform. At the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century, new inhabitants started to arrive in Jurmala – the owners of residential and holiday houses and flats, who came from Riga or Moscow and had their own perceptions of the landscape. The development of Jurmala's landscape is also determined by the wishes of the holidaymakers and tourists (who want both entertainment and quiet rest), the politicians' opinions about city development, and the investors' drive for profit. And finally, the landscape of Jurmala exists in the memories of the inhabitants of Latvia.

The perception of the Jurmala landscape is as an area where the interests of the various “old” and “new” locals, politicians, holidaymakers and big business collide. Thus, radically different interests rush to form the Jurmala landscape of today – the wish for an exclusive living environment – VIP apartments in fenced-in multi-storied residential houses with their own yards forming gated communities, as well as particularly well-off people wishing to have private villas on the sea dunes and along the river overlooking waters; there are buildings surrounded by explicitly well-arranged environments decreasing the access and movement along the water. Less well-situated people are looking for the possibility to build in the forest areas, and residential houses are invading the wetlands as well. Businesses, however, are searching for the possibility to earn with larger sized constructions in the dune zone of the seacoast.

One of the most painful issues for the “old” locals of Jurmala is the transformation of the previously public coastal dune pine forest into building sites. One after another, the dune

territories are being fenced in and covered with villas in the Vaivari – Melluzi, Dzintari – Bulduri area. The public outdoor space that used to be available for everybody is now lost. Behind the fences, the natural dune cover has been replaced by mowed lawns.

A gradual fight is taking place for the transformation of the Marinska's Park of the Tsarist Russia period into a building zone by renting the state property. During the Soviet years, the pine forest served as a recreation area for the many holidaymakers and featured walking paths along the southern slope of the dune. The first constructed *Villa Adler* has already been followed by another. The so-called "Golden Mile" zone is developing by fencing the coastal dune and psychologically closing the outdoor space (Figure 7).



Figure 7. The "Golden Mile" zone. Photos by Lukstina 2011.

Today, the beauty of the natural coastal dune pine forest landscape can be experienced in the Raga Kapa Nature Park, where the seashore accumulation processes are still taking place along the coast – new pre-dunes are developing and are gradually being covered by new pine trees.

The role that the disappearing Jurmala railway plays deserves a special attention. The railway has lost its role as the main carrier of the holidaymakers and the bustle around railway stations is fading out. Instead, every morning and evening, car flows develop on Jurmala's main motorway formed by Jurmala's residents commuting to Riga. Cars, rather than the railway, also represent the main means of transport of the holidaymakers coming to Jurmala. Consequently, during the summer and other seasons, cars form the landscape along the seaside avenues and the side streets near the sea.

Development plans of Jurmala and their influence on the landscape

Just like the former plans allocating the lots in manor forests influenced Jurmala's current landscape, similarly today's plans and decisions will serve as a basis for the future changes in the city image.

Although building codes and development schemes existed for Jurmala's different parts before, the planning causing the city's urbanization can be said to have started in the 1970s. The first development plan for Jurmala City was made by the Latvian State Institute of City Planning under the management of architect Aina Titmane. According to the plan, the city development was

aimed at meeting the resort needs of the Soviet Union and great attention was paid to the improvement of utilities. Along with the development plan, the city zones were established, which envisaged that the central part of the city would be allocated for the recreation of the inhabitants of Riga; the sanatoriums located between Priedaine and Vaivari were to be transformed into increasingly standardized recreation institutions; and the curative institutions and sanatoriums were to be located between Vaivari and Kemerī.

The number of places in the various institutions was to triple. The territories along the Lielupe River were reserved for recreational purposes. The plan foresaw that, in the summer season under good weather conditions, 350,000 people would simultaneously visit the city. The building of flats for the service staff was planned in the Sloka – Kauguri district, Kemerī, Asarī, Dubulti and Bulduri. The plan stated that the historic buildings were depreciated and should gradually be eliminated and replaced with modern buildings (Apsītis, 1972; Blūms, 2004; Lejnieks, 1987).

The architectural community objected to the plan. So, in order to discuss the planning and building problems in Jūrmala, the Latvian Union of Architects convened an expanded plenary board meeting in 1972. During the plenary meeting, there were heated discussions regarding the Jūrmala landscape. Leonids Alksnis, the chief architect of the city, objected to the chaotic appearance of the vertical emphasis in the city's landscape. Architect Tranins stated that the concentration of recreation buildings in the vertical direction was not necessary and "the silhouette was not to be searched for where it is not necessary". Architect Gunars Melbergs indicated that nature represented a specific feature in the character of Jūrmala and the work of the architects should be subordinated to that. One of the best known Soviet representatives of recreational architecture, the landscape architect Stauskis, stressed that "the landscape organization rather than the buildings was the main thing in the city's development. Jūrmala was not created by buildings, but rather by nature. To maintain the dune belt, it must be gradually vacated" (Apsītis, 1972).

More sensitivity regarding the value of Jūrmala nature and cultural/historical heritage was demonstrated in the Jūrmala city development plan for 1988–2005 designed by the Latvian State Institute of City Planning under the management of architect Janis Lejnieks. The plan foresaw decreasing the previously planned city capacity, improving the environment, protecting the flood-land meadows and renovating the old wooden buildings. The adoption of the plan was postponed until 1991, since the complex scheme for territorial nature protection had not yet been completed (Jūrmala, 1988; Lejnieks, 1987).

In the late 1980s, along with the city development plan, a study of the cultural and historical heritage and landscapes of Jūrmala was started in situ and using archival materials. It was done to maintain the character of Jūrmala, the landscape and town planning environment specific to the city and the most valuable parts of the historic architecture (Mence, 1988). Based on the results of the study, the state established six town plans for heritage areas of national importance and five of local importance. Most of the territory along the Gulf of Riga and the oldest settlements on the Lielupe River were included among the town plans for heritage areas. The city also boasts of 104 nationally important and 310 locally important architectural monuments. The majority of Jūrmala's architectural monuments are unique wooden buildings (Jūrmalas, 1996; www.jab.lv).

After the restoration of Latvia's independence in the early 1990s, Jūrmala was the first city in the country to start the city planning process. In 1992, the temporary building regulations came into effect in Jūrmala. It was assumed that a new development plan would be prepared.

Since Jūrmala's natural heritage and environmental quality were considered the most important conditions for the existence of the resort city, the blue and the green infrastructure of Jūrmala – *the Nature Area Plan* – was created. The plan was prepared by summarizing the information previously included in the green, blue, landscape analysis, mineral water and degraded territory maps. It established the task of preserving and protecting the natural/nature's values of Jūrmala. The authors of the plan considered it important to substantiate the significance of the natural environment for the creation of Jūrmala's image and development. The designing, public discussion and political approval of the *Nature Area Plan* for environmental preservation before the development of the City Development Plan with its provisions for land use can be regarded as an innovative solution. After the public discussions, the *Nature Area Plan* was adopted by City Council in 1994 (Lukstiņa, 1995).

The City Development Plan of Jūrmala (approved in 1995) demonstrated a caring attitude towards the values of the environment and cultural/historical heritage, basically providing for the preservation of the existing city structure and the scale of buildings. The main long-term values of the city were defined in the plan by a more detailed elaboration of the chapters devoted to the long-term development: *Nature Area Plan* and *Cultural/Historical Heritage*. These values were repeatedly stressed in the Jūrmala City Plan of Environment Protection Policy (approved in 2002 as a part of the City Development Plan) where one of the priorities is "Preservation, protection and development of qualitative natural and cultural environment by paying particular attention to the alignment in the use of the dune zone and land in the city, as well as the protection and development of valuable nature territories and the cultural landscape" (Kalvāne, 2011).

A new turn in the development of Jūrmala towards the urbanization was marked by the Development Strategy of Jūrmala City for the years 2010 to 2030 (approved in 2010) and the first reading of the Territorial Plan of Jūrmala City for the next 12 years.

What does the Development Strategy and the new Territorial Plan envisage? One of the most important indicator that describes the intended city growth is the forecast for the growth for tourists over the next 20 years which calls for a quintupling of their numbers – from 95,000 tourists in 2009 to 500,000 visitors in 2030. Consequently, the need has been outlined to find places to build new multi-storied resort sites in the central part of the city and to enlarge the resort areas in Jaunkemeri. The plan also implies the need for enlarged residential areas (also at the expense of the forests). The new provisions establishing the green areas as individual nature complexes emphasize the importance of the waterfront to the city and provide for a Large Promenade along the sea and a Small Promenade along the Lielupe River.

Among the many good suggestions that would facilitate the growth of the city, the Development Strategy and new Territorial Plan contain several disputable ones, especially the suggestions related to the influence of the intended multi-storied buildings on the preservation of the cultural and historic environments of the city, its future image and landscape as well as the artificial hydro-

technical constructions for decreasing the dune erosion together with the *Large Promenade* to the landscape of beach.

In the *Jūrmala City Landscape* chapter of the new plan, the term “city landscape” has been used to describe the visual landscape of Jūrmala. Its silhouette and panoramas have been examined and suggestions for new city planning and architectonic emphases have been prepared based thereon. Disregarding the statement that the maximum height of buildings in various parts of the city and its functional zones has been determined to make the new buildings integrate harmoniously in the historic town planning structure and landscape, there have also been suggestions that do not coincide with this statement. Thus, the strategy indicates the need to improve the landscape emphasis and provides for the possibility to build multi-storied buildings in the coastal dune zone in close proximity to each other. The landscape of the Gulf of Riga has been described as difficult to recognize and perceive, and therefore, the authors have recommended that it should be supplemented with a centre or core with denser and higher buildings that would not only *not* harm the spatial composition of Jūrmala but would even favour it. The new city plan provides for the possibility to construct buildings that are 44 meters high, for example.

It suggests that after the assessment, the multi-storied buildings could become architectonic centres in the gate areas of Jaundubulti, Lielupe River bridge area and the mouth of the Lielupe River arguing that this type of city planning emphases would renew the monotonous landscape of the river bank, and when travelling by ship or boat, would inform the travellers that they are approaching Riga, the metropolis of Latvia and the Baltics (Jūrmalas, 2010). Many other recommendations for the landscape improvement provide for creating a new city plan with emphasis on new buildings.

Jūrmala's landscape and its intended changes in the eyes of the development plan assessors

Similarly to the City Development Plan prepared under the management of architect Aina Titmane in the 1970s, today many inhabitants of Jūrmala, city planners and scientists are also worried about the recommendations included in the Development Strategy and new Territorial Plan. The future image of Jūrmala has come into focus again and the planning documents have been evaluated by many city planners, including experts invited by the Jūrmala Protection Society.

Most of the evaluators object to the need outlined by the strategy to improve the landscape emphasis of Jūrmala with the help of new high-rise buildings, including the development of new 10-storied buildings in the green pre-dune belt and changing the architectonic emphasis by envisaging the possibility of locating multi-storied buildings in the “city gate” territories. There are particular objections to the planned artificial hydro-technical constructions for decreasing the dune erosion together with the *Large Promenade* with a possible length of more than 10 kilometres. Coastal researchers Lapinskis and Eberhards state that the coastal zone is a constantly evolving environment, and this should be taken into account and the constructions against the sea bank erosion must be based on scientific research (Lapinskis, 2008).

City planner Andris Roze considers the green areas to be the greatest value of Jūrmala and describes the suggested *Large Promenade* as a heavy wooden/concrete architectonic mega-

structure that risks changing the natural dune and flora system, initiating a different kind of building, and changing the image of the city, which until now has aspired to be one with the pine forests, the coastal dunes and a natural beach. Roze believes that the beach represents a naturally made promenade – the value enjoyed by both Jurmala's inhabitants and the tourists (Kalvāne, 2011; Roze, 2011).

Historian Rihards Petersons, who is a resident of Jurmala, is most worried about the changes envisaged by the new strategy and plan in the landscape of the beach and the nearby territories. With concern he states that the pre-dune and the traditional cultural landscape of the city are being prepared for changes. If up to now, especially in connection with the years of the Soviet occupation, the construction of multi-storied buildings at the seashore was criticized, now new arguments are sought for Jurmala's development, especially in the direction of urbanizing the most valuable areas of the city's territories located closest to the sea. This can seriously change the existing impression about the cultural environment of the city, including its main value – the beach and pre-dune (Petersons, 2011).

Experts indicate that such intentions contradict the previous policy of Jurmala and the provisions of the Spatial Planning of Riga Region for the coast of the Gulf of Riga – to preserve and develop green belts and green corridors and prescribes that the new buildings should not interrupt the homogeneous green panorama view from the seaside, as well as ensure that the buildings do not rise above the tops of the pine trees (Kalvāne, 2011; Rīgas, 2007).

In connection with the Lielupe River, the concern is that the interpretation of the planning could transform the bank of the Lielupe River into a kilometres-long belt of buildings and include building on the flood-land meadows. The scientists at the Riga Technical University stress that both the seacoast and the banks of the Lielupe River create a unique landscape, and therefore from this viewpoint, the buildings on the coast and river banks should be significantly restricted. They insist that from the inhabitants' point of view, the banks and coast covered with buildings do not represent value (Atstaja, 2011; Roze, 2011).

One of the key conclusions by the experts is that Jurmala's vision for development described in the new Development Strategy has lost its continuity – the long-term environment preservation plan with the blue and green infrastructure essential for the city ecosystem have been almost completely forgotten. The plans also emphasize the preservation of the large forest areas. However, no significance is given to the preservation of the small woods – some of them are allocated for buildings, thereby parcelling out Jurmala's forests and destroying the landscape typical to Jurmala where building areas intertwine with pine woods. It is stated that the new plans envisage allocating the large municipal forest areas in Vaivari and Asari for building private houses (Kalvāne, 2011.)

The question is still open whether the proponents of the 2nd edition of the new Territorial Plan will take into account the aforementioned opinions by the experts and many other objections from Jurmala's inhabitants who have asked for the buildings not to be constructed in the green areas.

Conclusions

The development of Jūrmala as a Latvian resort city and its future plans are not only an issue for Jūrmala, but rather one of general interest for Latvia as a whole.

In Jūrmala, the period of post-Soviet change from the 1990s to the present, with its diversity and collision of interests that are reflected in the landscape, is still continuing. We can see new residential landscapes, lingering change process landscapes and a decrease in the uniqueness of the city. Modern elements are not always harmoniously woven into the fabric of Jūrmala. Despite the fact that low buildings are more protective of the Jūrmala landscape, as in the 1970s and 1980s, the historically formed low wooden type buildings are being changed by the scale of multi-storied apartment houses that are not characteristic to the traditional city landscape. They destroy the cultural and historic structure of the city, which has been preserved through the previous time periods.

The development of buildings is taking place on the coastal dune belt decreasing the natural pine wood landscape. The transformation of the pine forest to building developments is underway and the previous public outdoor space is being lost, and the access to the sea and river is becoming more restricted.

Jūrmala is losing its image as a “pine forest park” with buildings surrounded by nature, due to the scale of the new developments and different landscape perceptions of its new inhabitants and the owners of the residential and holiday houses.

By ignoring these processes, the new planning documents foresee solutions – multi-storied buildings in the dune belt and the “city gate” areas, new residential private house and multi-storied areas as well as the possibilities for building hydro-technical constructions along the sea and river – that can seriously change the existing image of the cultural environment of the city, including its main values – the beach, pre-dune and Lielupe River landscape.

The current processes and planned urbanization solutions contradict the provisions of the Spatial Plan of Riga Region for the coast of the Gulf of Riga that prohibit building development in the dune belt, the destruction of forests, as well as the transformation of the publicly accessible forest areas into private territories.

Disregarding the fact that the European Landscape Convention has been effective in Latvia since 2007, when designing the new development plan, the city landscape has been viewed from the visual point of view, and consequently, the legally adopted provisions of the European Landscape Convention have not been followed.

For the development of Jūrmala as a resort city it is important that city policy re-examines and re-includes the things that are essential for the blue-green structure of the city's eco-system, which have been lost in the new planning stage, and develops a strategy for creating public outdoor space.

Only a combination of cultural and historical heritage can form the identity of the City of Jūrmala. This cannot be postponed, Jūrmala's landscapes must be determined during the planning process in accordance with the current conditions and based on a repeated examination of the

environmental and cultural and historical values, as well as the possibilities for their preservation and development.

There are many unanswered questions regarding Jūrmala's landscape: What should the landscape of Jūrmala be like in the new era? Will Jūrmala use its landscape's potential for its economic development, and if so, how? What changes should be allowed in the landscape evolution during the course of urbanization of Jūrmala? Where does the border lay for human activity in nature?

What kind of city image will best facilitate the prosperity of Jūrmala – a city rising above the tops of the pine trees or a “forest park” city where the buildings have been integrated into the landscape? Will the intended changes resulting in multi-storied landscape create a city identity that is attractive to globally experienced tourists?

What are the typical, or unique, landscapes in Jūrmala? How can the changes brought on by the social, economic and environmental processes be harmonized in the landscape of Jūrmala?

Jūrmala, as well as landscape researchers, and managers and planners of new landscapes, are expecting answers to these questions. Only the sea with its constantly changing moods remains unchanged.

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Biography

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