

Historic ruins – an important landscape element

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Abstract. This article presents results of a research project whose goal was to find out Latvian attitude towards historic ruins – their preservation, upkeep, inclusion in a landscape of a place, and use in creating public open recreation areas, as well as to decide which visual features of ruins and surrounding elements of landscape make ruins attractive to visitors. Ruins are irreplaceable material for cultural and historical investigations. Besides heritage value, ruins may often have aesthetical value, too. Heritage constructions together with surrounding natural elements create an important recreational place. Ruins of cultural heritage buildings must be evaluated together with their landscape and people's subjective attitude. The research project consists of two parts: a population survey and a student survey with image evaluations. 110 respondents took part in the population survey by answering questions about relationship between historic sites, especially those within historic ruins, and recreational possibilities, and a creation of place identity. Results of the population survey show that people have an interest in history and historic ruins seem interesting places to visit. A reconstruction of cultural heritage buildings or even only maintenance and improvement of ruins, according to respondents, would be valuable gain for their place of residence. 45 post-second year students of Landscape Architecture and Planning program took part in the student survey by answering questions about historic ruins and evaluated images, determining landscape value of depicted ruins. Surveyed youth in most cases valued historic ruins as important element in landscape. Greater scenic value, according to student's opinion, has ruins with distinctive silhouette, high walls and easily guessable previous building's shape. Lesser scenic value was given to ruins whose initial shape was harder to guess from current wall fragments, as well as to remains of buildings with simpler forms and smaller dimensions.

Keywords: ruins, ruins of cultural heritage buildings, historic landscapes, place identity.

Introduction

Historic objects have always attracted people's attention. Arriving in yet unexplored town travelers are welcomed to walk around old town or pay a visit to some historic buildings. Unfortunately, for various reasons, buildings of cultural heritage value may perish. It can happen in an instant or sometimes it takes centuries until a building is gone for good.

Ruins of cultural heritage buildings are much more important than any other partially survived historic artifacts or artworks. Ruins are places where many dimensions overlap – inside and outside, material and abstract worlds, a nature and the Creator of man, a present, a past and what we only imagine [2]. Ruins cannot be fully used as a building but regardless of loss of this practical utility, historic ruins have another kind of value. Ruins are irreplaceable material of cultural and historic knowledge [1, 8, 11]. Ruins' historic, scientific, artistic, architectural, archeological, and ethnographical values can be decided. If a ruin fits given criteria, State Inspection for Heritage Protection includes them in the list of state protected cultural heritage monuments [5].

Heritage ruins besides their cultural heritage value have value coming from their old age. Objects that are old, appear old, and are liked by people because they are old have age value. Fundamentally age is what makes place or thing authentic. Unlike historic value that can be

determined by scientific means, age value can be felt mostly emotionally and intuitively. Every person feels it differently. Physical age of a building is reflected in natural change of state of building materials. There are materials that improve looks with age, for example, stone, brick, and bronze and there are materials that lose appeal, for example, reinforced concrete, aluminum, steel [9].

People gladly visit historic sites and highly appreciate landscapes with elements of cultural heritage. Such places tend to be a source of spiritual renewal, a place to learn, to gain understanding and to draw inspiration. Ruins of cultural heritage buildings are often located in scenically attractive areas and are irreplaceable as environmental elements. Visual aesthetic value of the ruins is in their imperfection and interplay with the surrounding landscape. Nature and time makes them change constantly. They can not be unambiguously regarded as an architectural object or natural element only. A presence of nature is an important factor that helps to create a distance between a visitor and ruins, which to some extent presents decay of all things. However, it should not be allowed for vegetation to completely overtake masonries. A balance must be found between architecture and natural landscape [3, 7, 8, 11].

By looking at ruins one can judge building's former greatness, significance or beauty. They simultaneously attract by their mystique as



Fig. 1. A collapse of building [Source: created by the author, 2014]

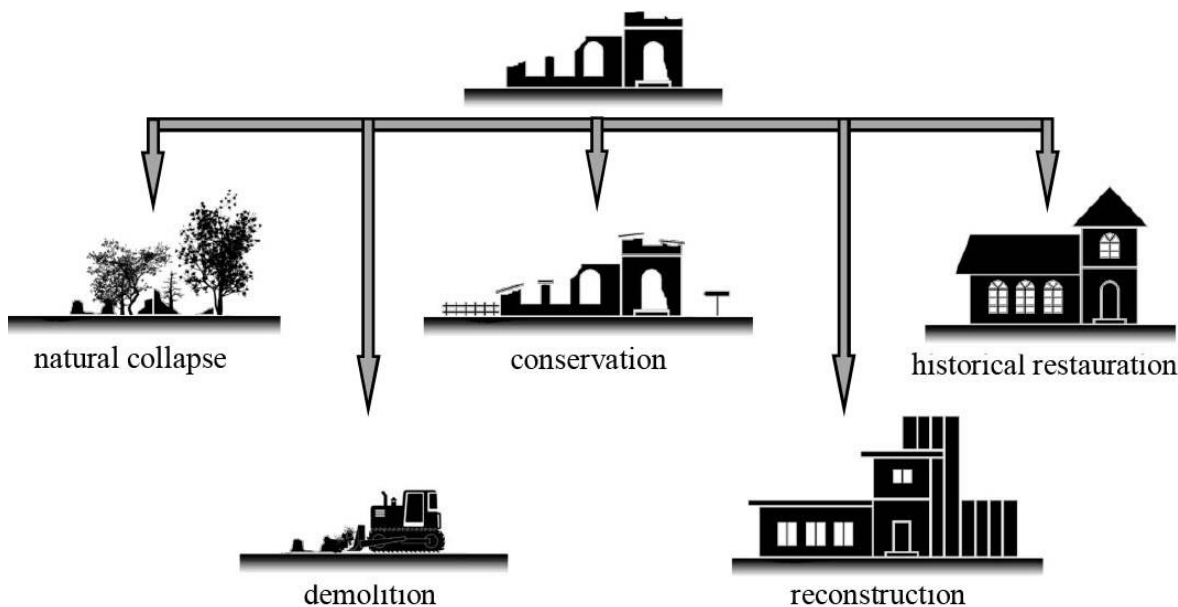


Fig. 2. Scenarios of development of ruins [Source: created by the author, 2014]

well frighten, because they bear testimony to man's inability to protect his own creation. Such sites are often wrapped with legends and tales. In contemporary collective consciousness a specific image of ruins is formed relating wide spectrum of feelings - nostalgia, melancholia, romance, mystery, spooky and scary feelings, and reflections on humanity's past tragedies and acts of heroism. Ruins are rarely seen simply as a heap of stones, mere masonry remnants - it seems important not only what is left at the moment, but actual process of decay. The unsteadiness of the walls and at the same time the endurance, resistance to time, and adverse influence of nature and people themselves attracts. A setting where one meets a past and a present, a living and a lifeless, an exterior and an interior is very suitable for getting creative inspiration and expression. It helps to step over boundaries of everyday life that is necessary to create something entirely new. Ruins have always been a source of inspiration for members of various movements of art. In 18th and 19th century ruins are very popular and often used theme in landscape painting. During this period, the ruins are built up artificially only to enrich the landscape with high value visual objects. Nowadays, not only historic ruins, but also ruins of newer buildings such as abandoned industrial or residential complexes are object

of great interest for creative people - photographers, graffiti artists, writers and others. For such places emotional background plays important role [2, 6, 7, 11].

Taking into account all of the above, even cultural heritage ruins which are not included in the national register of protected cultural monuments and acquired protection status, can be significant and worthy of conservation. Ruins of old buildings is important element of a landscape, which together with adjacent blue-green areas have a potential to develop into socially and culturally significant places of recreation both of local and regional level. Such recreational areas, equipped with facilities, easy accessible, and with interesting sights can attract tourists, promote place's recognizability and strengthen the local people's sense of belonging to their place of residence.

There are different scenarios of development of ruins - the ruins can be preserved by stopping further erosion, restored or reconstructed in their original form, or altered by adding new edifices, etc. If a decision is made to preserve and develop ruins of cultural heritage buildings, it is important to find out the attitude of local people towards the object and its surroundings, because it still remains a part of their living space that could be converted.

Development and execution of the population survey

The questionnaire consists of 17 questions – 4 of which give information about respondent but the remaining 12 questions help to clarify respondents opinions about historical ruins, historical sites in general, and their use in recreation and creation of place identity. A survey was spread in internet, using website visidati.lv. Duration was almost 3 months, from December 15, 2014 to March 12 this year. The questionnaire was filled by 110 respondents. To get a sample most representing opinions of whole society, people from all regions of Latvia, various educational levels, and occupations were asked to participate. All responses were anonymous.

Results and conclusions of the population survey

The questionnaire was filled in by 60 females and 50 males. Most of respondents are adults from age 18 to age of retirement. Almost half of respondents have higher education. Most respondents have marked a city as their place of residence; about 30 % live in smaller towns or villages, and only little more than 10% dwell in rural areas.

As shown by the results of the survey, it is important for people to know a history of their surrounding area – a municipality, city, village or other area where their daily life happens. For 40 % of respondents, their area's history seems very important. For 50 % of people have moderate interest about such facts. Less than 5 % think it is of little importance. More than 30 % of the population estimates their knowledge about area's history as "quite good".

85 % of the population admits that proximity of objects of cultural heritage value makes places of recreation more attractive and interesting. Only 2 out of 110 responded that proximity of such objects don't seem important for them. Almost all respondents would gladly visit well-maintained but not well known historic sites. According to respondents, two main benefits from development of such areas are an advance of place identity of surrounding city, village or other populated area, as well as increasing pride and sense of belonging to their place of residence (Table 1).

40 % of the respondents think that historic ruins are interesting sights, especially if they are well-maintained and with developed infrastructure (Table 1). It is more important to females than males that remains of cultural heritage buildings and its surroundings would be well-maintained. Only 5 respondents admitted that such object would have no interest for them. Responses of the survey show that ruins seem more attractive to visitors if they are surrounded by green areas of recreation – a park, a garden, water elements, orchards etc.

Additional interest is created if there is some tale, legend, story related with visited site.

Most participants of the population survey think that ruins of cultural heritage buildings are valuable elements of landscape because they supplement and make more interesting landscape space, as well as can become good recognizable symbol, a recognizable sign, of a city, village, or other residential area. More than 80 % of the respondents are for popularizing ruins of cultural heritage buildings and their inclusion in tourist routes. 14 % of the respondents hold a view that a large influx of visitors will break a spell and mystery of ruins. Questioned about scenarios of future development of ruins more than 60 % participants of survey are for restoration, reconstructing building in the original form (Table 1). 30 % of respondents think that remains or cultural heritage buildings could be conserved and preserved as ruins.

In the closing question of the survey respondents were asked do they know any ruins that are worth of notice and interesting but are forsaken currently. More than half could name such objects and also gave information about their location. Most commonly people mentioned ruins of castles and manors but several mills, churches, joinery shops, a shop, a library, a stable, and other buildings that have had transformed into ruins but still are interesting enough and attract attention were named.

From results of the survey it could not be resolved if opinions of people living in cities, towns, villages, and rural areas differ about ruins of cultural heritage buildings, possibilities to use them and their importance. Larger number of the respondents living in rural areas would be needed in order to mutually compare given answers by type of area of residence. Also, it cannot be decided how age and level of education influences answers because of insufficient number of the respondents in some groups. Comparison based on data from this survey would have low level of statistical significance. To find out if and how social factors influence answers about given topic, larger number of the respondents in each group would be needed.

The results of the population survey show that people have an interest about history that appears as a desire both to find out history of neighborhood and travel and get to know various heritage sites. Ruins seem interesting sights, especially, if they are supplemented with good-looking surroundings, well-maintained infrastructure, and possibility to gain new knowledge in an attractive way. Even though ruins attract attention, most of surveyed would like to see remains of cultural heritage buildings in restored way. That may have several reasons, for example, an opinion that a building is usable in more ways, or that an edifice reborn from ruins will testify to general growth and progress of the area.

TABLE 1

Opinions of respondents [Source: created by the author, 2015]

1.	What in your opinion will be the most important gain from maintenance of little know historic sites?		
	Versions of answers		The number of answers from 110 respondents
	Increase in number of visitors		15 respondents
	New recreational possibilities for locals		10 respondents
	Stimulation of place's identification		41 respondents
	Pride and sense of belonging to their residence for local people		41 respondents
2.	Do ruins from cultural heritage buildings seem interesting place to see for you?		
	Versions of answers		The number of answers from 110 respondents
	Yes, they really would get my attention		47 respondents
	Partially, only if they are well-maintained and with developed infrastructure		46 respondents
	I am interested several ruins that I had an interest in earlier for some other reason		12 respondents
	No, it does not interest me		5 respondents
3.	What in your opinion must be done with ruins of cultural heritage buildings?		
	Versions of answers		Students, % Population, %
	To conserve, keeping as ruins		64.4 28.8
	To restore / reconstruct building, renew in the original shape		44.4 62.7
	To rebuild, add new premises to the building		24.4 7.3
	To dissmantle and build a new building		4.4 0.0
To dissmantle, clearing a place for green areas		2.2 1.8	

As well as well known, popular tourism sights, a large part of surveyed were able to name ruins of cultural heritage buildings that are worthy of attention and interesting but currently neglected. These answers testify that there is no shortage of ruins of cultural heritage buildings in Latvia. Many of objects mentioned by the respondents are located in territories of cities or villages, included in "what to see" lists, and are visited quite often, but, however, respondents regard them as insufficiently well-kept. Answers to the last question contain valuable information about little-know, interesting objects and their location. Often only locals know about those ruins, because there is no information in the list of protected monuments or in tourist guides.

The development and execution of the students survey with image evaluation

The questionnaire consists of 6 questions – 2 out of which give information about respondents, 1 question includes visual evaluation of various ruins and their surroundings, but last 3 questions help to find out respondents opinions about significance of ruins of cultural heritage buildings. Post second-year students of Landscape Architecture and Planning program in Department of Rural Engineers in Latvia University of Agriculture took part in the survey, because those prospective specialists have faced evaluation of various landscapes from images and are prepared for doing this specific assignment in the process of

studies. The results of survey were obtained in 3 meetings with students, in which respondents answered the few questions and from demonstrated photo materials evaluated landscapes with ruins. Respondents in 5 grade system where 1 is the worst evaluation but 5 – the best, evaluated 18 images. Every image consists of a collage of 3 photos that in the most all-around way depicts ruins of cultural heritage building and its surrounding area. It was not indicated what object is or where it is located. Photos were taken in autumn and winter of year 2014, carrying out auditing of ruins of cultural heritage buildings in regions of Riga and Vidzeme. It is best to evaluate ruins in the rest period of vegetation – walls are not covered up by crowns of trees, terrain becomes distinctive, lines of view open up that are otherwise overgrown. There were 10 seconds given to evaluate each image.

The results and conclusions of the student survey with images

In the survey participated 10 third-year students, 17 fourth-year students and 18 fifth-year students. 50 % of participants live in cities, 40 % in town or villages but residence of 10 % students are in rural areas.

According to results of image evaluation by respondents, an average scenic value of every ruin visible in images was calculated in 5 grades (Table 2). The best calculated valuation was grade

TABLE 2

The results of image evaluation [Source: created by the author, 2015]

No	Object	Average grade			
		3. year	4. year	5. year	Total
1.	Ķekava Watermill	2.7	2.7	3.1	2.8
2. *	Lāde Manor	2.9	1.6	1.9	2
3.	Limbaži Bishop Palace	3.3	4	3.6	3.6
4.	Lauvas Watermill	3.6	3.1	3.5	3.4
5.	Svētciems Watermill	2.2	2.4	2.7	2.4
6.	Rozbeķi Bishop's Vassal Palace	2.4	2.7	3.1	2.7
7.	Augstroze Bishop's Vassal Palace	3.5	2.8	3.8	3.4
8.	Mujāni Archbishop's Vassal Palace	3.8	3.5	3.9	3.7
9.	Valmiera Order Castle	3.8	3.8	4.2	3.9
10.	Valmiermuiža Manor	4.5	4.1	4	4.2
11.	Little Jumpravmuiža	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.2
12. *	Vecdole Bishop's Vassal Palace	1.2	1.8	1.7	1.6
13.	Āraiši Order Castle	2.7	2.7	3.1	2.8
14.	Rauna Bishop Palace	4	3.7	4.1	3.9
15.	Smiltene Bishop Palace	2.4	2.4	2.3	2.4
16.	Trikāta Order Castle	3.5	2.4	3.4	3.1
17. *	Zaube Order Castle	1.5	1.7	2	1.7
18.	Ropaži Order Castle	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.6
Total:		55.2	51.9	56.2	

■ Top graded objects * Bottom graded objects

4.2, but the worst – grade 1.6. To find out what kind of ruins respondents find more aesthetically attractive all images were decreasingly ordered according to evaluations and features of given ruins were described and elements of surrounding landscape enumerated (Fig. 3). Bearing in mind the short time interval for image demonstration – 10 seconds, that is enough to notice essential but not enough to dwell into details, only most significant elements were listed. Images, where shown ruins had more expressive silhouette, easily noticeable contours of decayed building, and preserved high walls in many places were graded better. Ruins that have preserved various architectural elements – roofs, towers, frames of doors and windows, received more positive evaluations. Images where visible walls of ruins are hugely deteriorated and original shape of building is badly understandable were graded worse. Ruins with very simple contours get worse evaluations also. Most but not all better graded ruins are located in impressive terrain – at noticeable hill or on a side of a steep slope. It seems that otherwise surroundings of ruins have not substantially influenced grades because similar landscape elements recur in images of both top and bottom grades. Therefore, mainly, evaluation of images depends on domineering element of landscape – ruins, but surrounding have secondary role.

Students gave best grades to a landscape with Valmiermuiža Manor (grade 4.2), a landscape with Valmiera Order Castle, a landscape with Rauna Bishop Palace (both got grade 3.9), and a landscape with Murjāni Archbishop's Vassal

Palace (grade 3.7). Worst grades were given to a landscape with Vecdole Bishop's Vassal Palace (grade 1.6), a landscape with Zaube Order Castle (grade 1.7), and a landscape with Lāde Manor (grade 2.1). A tower of Valmiermuiža Manor has been preserved in quite well condition but from the rest of building only low wall fragment and heap of stones in a park has stayed. It is possible that good grades of this image were given because of many details of the tower – interesting roof and ornamentation of façade that for most other ruins have not remained or were not there originally. However, Lāde Manor that receives one of the worse grades has preserved several fragments of ornaments of façade and other specific details. This object generally does not belong in bottom graded group according to several features.

30 out of 45 respondents believe that ruins of cultural heritage buildings increase a value of a landscape. One respondent answers negatively, but the rest of students have noted that scenic value increases only in several cases. In a question about possibilities for future use of ruins respondents chose best, in their opinion, one or few ways to use ruins of cultural heritage buildings. As for the best case development of ruins of cultural heritage buildings questioned students mention conservation of ruins. This is marked by more than 60 % respondents. But more than 40 % of the respondents think that ruins are better renewed by restoring building or reconstructing.

Almost 70 % of respondents could name ruins that are worth attention and interesting but currently neglected. One has to say that, just like in population

← **Top graded objects**



Valmiermuiža Manor
grade 4.2



Valmiera Order Castle
grade 3.9



Rauna Bishop Palace
grade 3.7

Bottom grade objects →



Lāde Manor
grade 2.0



Zaube Order Castle
grade 1.7



Vecdole Bishop's Vassal Palace
grade 1.6

Fig. 3. Top and bottom graded objects [Source: created by the author, 2015]

survey, there appeared several names of ruins that are currently supposedly maintained and freely accessible to visitors. That makes one to think that maintenance of those objects is imperfect and development of area must be continued.

Surveyed young people in most cases evaluate ruins as important element for creating landscape. Greater scenic value, according to student opinions, is inherent in ruins with high walls, impressive silhouette, and various renewed or preserved parts of buildings, for example, roofs and towers. Respondents believe that lower scenic value has ruins whose original shape is harder to visualize from fragments of masonry, as well as ruins with simpler forms and smaller dimensions.

One needs to take into account that it might be very different thing to grade ruins while visiting them personally and from seeing images. While being present in the object, a landscape is sensed not only visually but also by other senses. Evaluation is influenced by 3D feel, special spirit of ruins, emotional background, previous knowledge about ruins, even road to the object and many other aspects. While evaluating scenic value of ruins from image the most important is a visual shape of the object. Therefore, it is crucial that all graded objects are recorded in as similar conditions as possible – same season, same perspective, similar time and light environment. A grade of image can be influenced by a mood of grader as well. It would be easier, and perhaps, more efficient, to evaluate ruins

in photos if all pictures would be seen simultaneously. Then one could compare them handily and, perhaps, a grade would change. Several students recognized some ruins in images and then, in addition of pure visual evaluation, there were young people's associations and memories about visiting the object. It would be interesting to find out if grades differ depending on whether student has seen ruins in the image for the first time or knows the object. When making similar survey, one should include a question if a respondent knows particular ruins and if has visited them [3, 4, 10].

Students prefer keeping decayed cultural heritage buildings as ruins (Table 2). by conserving them, but participants in the population survey think that it is better to renew ruins to a building or reconstructing. (Table 1). Perhaps, this difference in opinion can be explained by the fact that knowledge gained by students of landscape architecture and their interest in specialty let them better value scenic value of ruins and see its high potential for creating interesting public open space. However, results of image evaluation testify that students still see higher scenic value in ruins that have preserved better or their specific details are renovated. From that one can conclude that while keeping remains of a building as ruins it is important to conserve masonry to avert further degradation. Then renewal of ruins or their parts is preferable and a level of renewal must be evaluated individually for each object.

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Kopsavilkums. Šis raksts iepazīstina ar pētījumu, kura mērķis ir noskaidrot Latvijas iedzīvotāju attieksmi pret kultūrvēsturisko ēku drupām – to saglabāšanu, uzturēšanu, iekļaušanu apdzīvotu vietu ainavā un izmantošanu publisko brīvdašas atpūtas teritoriju izveidē, kā arī noteikt kādas drupu vizuālās īpatnības un apkārtējās ainavas elementi padara kultūrvēsturisko ēku drupas pievilcīgas apmeklētājiem. Drupas ir neaizstājams kultūras un vēstures izziņas materiāls. Bez kultūrvēsturiskās vērtības tām bieži vien piemīt arī ainaviski estētiska vērtība. Kultūrvēsturiskā apbūve vai tās fragmenti kopā ar tai pieguļošajām dabas vērtībām veido svarīgu rekreatīvo telpu. Drupas ir jāvērtē kontekstā ar ainavu un iedzīvotāji subjektīvo attieksmi. Pētījums sastāv no divām daļām: iedzīvotāju aptaujas un studentu aptaujas ar attēlu vērtēšanu.

Iedzīvotāju aptaujā piedalījās 110 respondenti un atbildēja uz jautājumiem, kas atspoguļo vēsturisku vietu, sevišķi to, kur atrodas kultūrvēsturisko ēku drupas, saistību ar rekreācijas iespējām un vietas identitātes veidošanu. Iedzīvotāju aptaujas rezultāti parāda, ka cilvēkiem ir interese par vēsturi, kas izpaužas gan vēlmē uzzināt savas tuvākās apkārtnes pagātni, gan apceļot un iepazīt dažādas kultūrvēsturiskas vietas. Kultūrvēsturisko ēku drupas šķiet interesants apskates objekts, it sevišķi, ja tās papildina skaista apkārtni, sakārtota infrastruktūra un iespēja atraktīvā veidā iegūt jaunas zināšanas. Lai arī drupas ir uzmanību piesaistošas, tomēr vairums aptaujāto nopostītās kultūrvēsturisko ēku paliekas vēlētos redzēt par ēku atjaunotā veidolā. Pēc respondentu domām, kultūrvēsturisko ēku atjaunošana vai pat tikai to drupu uzturēšana un labiekārtošana būtu apdzīvotai vietai liels ieguvums. Attīstot šādas teritorijas tiktu veicināta apdzīvotās vietas atpazīstamības, kā arī vairotos vietējo iedzīvotāju lepnums un piederības sajūta savai dzīves vietai.

Studentu aptaujā piedalījās 45 ainavu arhitektūras un plānošanas specialitātes vecāko kursu studenti, kas atbildēja uz jautājumiem par kultūrvēsturisko ēku drupām un veica attēlu vērtēšanu, nosakot tajos attēloto drupu ainavisko vērtību. Respondenti 5 baļļu sistēmā, kur 1 ir vissliktākais vērtējums, bet 5 - vislabākais, novērtēja 18 attēlus. Katrs attēls sastāv no trīs fotogrāfiju kolāžas, kas pēc iespējas vispusīgāk ataino kādas neidentificētas kultūrvēsturiskas ēkas drupas un to apkārtējo ainavu. Pēc respondentu attēlu novērtējuma rezultātiem, tika aprēķināta katru attēlos redzamo drupu vidējā ainaviskā vērtība. Attēli pēc to vērtējuma tika sarindoti dilstošā secībā un pēc tam aprakstītas katru attēloto drupu īpatnības un uzskaitīti to apkārtējās ainavas elementi. Pēc pazīmēm, kas biežāk atkārtojās labāk un sliktāk vērtētajiem attēliem, var noteikt kāda veida drupas respondentiem šķiet estētiski pievilcīgākas. Aptaujātie jaunieši vairākumā gadījumu uzskata kultūrvēsturisko ēku drupas par nozīmīgu ainavas elementu. Lielāka ainaviskā vērtība, pēc studentu domām, piemīt drupām ar izteiksmīgu siluetu, augstiem mūriem un viegli apjaušamu ēkas kādreizējo veidolu, kā arī drupas, kurām saglabājušies dažādi arhitektoniskie elementi – jumti, torņi, fasādes rotājumi, durvju un logu ailas. Zemāka ainaviskā vērtība tika atzīta drupām, kuru sākotnējo apveidu no mūrējumu fragmentiem ir grūti iztēloties, kā arī vienkāršas formas un mazu dimensiju ēku paliekām.