Church landscapes in Latvia, Vidzeme region coastal area

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Abstract. Church buildings are visually expressive dominants of the landscape; however, the sacral landscapes have not been extensively researched. In order to reveal the character of church landscapes and its elements, a thorough appraisal of the selection of indicators, of their scale. A particular research method was used for characterisation of the church landscape in Vidzeme, on the coast of the Baltic Sea and along the bay, synthesized by a way of such specific research method as image ability. The research area is a Latvia coastal landscape of the region of Vidzeme. The objects of research are located in a coastal area of Vidzeme – the Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox churches. The research includes 9 churches. The visual identity of the landscape of coastal churches and gardens of Vidzeme as it is found in this research in common can be defined as landscapes of typical small coastal populated areas with certain natural elements and some unique human-made elements that cause neutral and pleasant feelings and emotions. The research on the landscapes of the coastal churches of Vidzeme is a continuation of the research on the landscapes of the coastal churches of Kurzeme.

Keywords: church landscape, sea coastline, image ability, cognitive.

Introduction

The research on the landscapes of the coastal churches of Vidzeme is a continuation of the research on the landscapes of the coastal churches of Kurzeme, that was done in two parts – South Kurzeme and Nord Kurzeme in year 2015 [20,21].

The landscape visual protection on the European level has become current along with an implementation of the European Landscape Convention. Ever since the middle ages the feature of populated area is the buildings of public nature, designed for people gathering, buildings for living and church along with the burial area – as the local religious focal point [2] both in the visual aspect and in the spiritual and planning form. It is limited information available about church landscapes; therefore the determination of the landscape character is included in the fixation of the current state. In turn, determined indicators have been used relatively recently in the research. One indicator provides a little information so it is valuable to use of a system of indicators, where each of them would be representative, available, reliable and efficient [4; 11]. More common use of indicators is for large-scale landscapes [7; 27; 28], however, they can also be used in smaller areas [28; 29].

The historical development and architecture of the landscape of Vidzeme coastal landscape. The coastal stage Carnikava – Ainaži has been inhabited since the 5th, 6th century, when the first Liv settlements appeared there. The 13th century is marked by the building of Bishop Albert's castle and ports, as well as a number of ferries across the rivers next to castle mounds or castles. The areas around Riga were forested and natural. During the period from the 14th to the 19th century, the coastal development was affected by the Northern War and going into the Russian yoke. Several fortifications and castles were destroyed during this period, but church and manor building throve. The period of manor thrive contributed to the increase of the coastal population density and infrastructure development – dwelling houses were built, even whole villages, pubs, factories, windmills, etc. The period of a coastal thrive is the 19th century, which is characterized by a rapid growth of shipping and shipbuilding industry as well as the opening of the Naval School in Ainaži. Several Orthodox churches, pharmacies, outlets, schools were also built in this period. Later, coming across the World War I and World War II, many objects and the infrastructure were destroyed. In the period of occupation and collectivization the fish canneries developed, on concentrating the population in collective farms and artificially created centres, as well as developing agriculture, fur farms and livestock industries. In Soviet times, the coastal section from Carnikava to Saulkrasti developed as summer cottages and resort area, where people from all over the Soviet Union went, but summer cottages were granted mostly to the residents of Riga, forming an original structure of a seasonal in nature landscape [15; 16; 18; 26; 30; 31; 35; 38].

The religion and churches in Vidzeme. The first information about Christianity had reached the Baltic shores, including Vidzeme, well before the arrival of German crusaders. Until the times of Swedish, Latvians remained true to the ancient Latvian spiritual values. In Swedish times, on changing the state power, not only the ancient Latvian traditions were considered combating, but also Catholic traditions that were unacceptable for Swedes, for example, a special honour and adoration of the cross, iconic and a few small cottages prayer – a chapel, which in some places in Vidzeme continued until the 18th century [3]. Although in the beginning of Swedish times throughout the whole

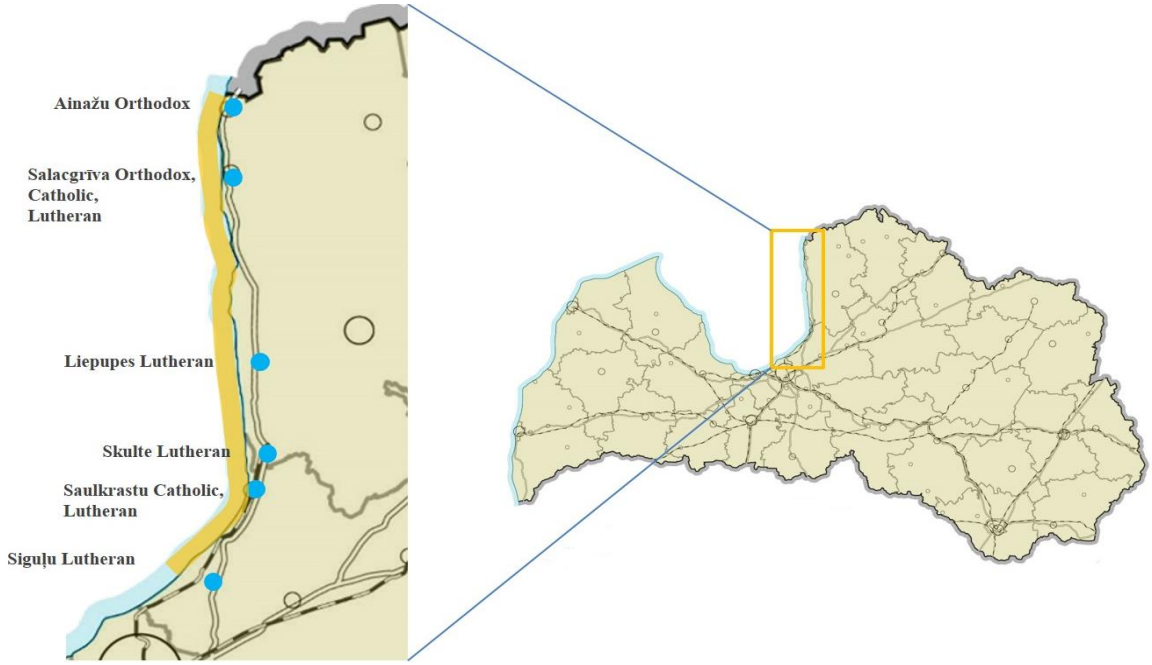

Fig. 1. Research territory in Latvia and objects [Source: scheme by authors]

Vidzeme only 17 churches were more or less in a good condition [8]. In the 18th century Latvia was not still a united territory and different development continued in various different spheres of life in each of the culture-historical districts, including religion. The life of the Latvians of Vidzeme in the 18th century was influenced by Herrnhutism or Brethren church, the only European trend of that time, which directly reached Latvians [3; 8]. The feature of Brothers' action was the simplicity and public worships took place in the holy houses. Such house in Valmiera was built already in 1739. Public worships outside Valmiera were held in special chambers. Later the holy houses had been build after the sample of Valmiera. The religion in independent Latvia was considered as a cultural indicator, the accepted decision of the government took a great importance in the maintenance of spiritual life. Later, the purposeful work of the Christian tradition limiting was carried out in the Soviet Latvia. The Soviet laws significantly changed the functioning of all the religious confessions. All the legal regulations of the Soviet Latvia operated so that the churches would not be able to maintain their properties. Gyms and trade-union committees, warehouses, workshops and even factory workshops were mostly arranged in churches or churches were even blown up. For example, electrical warehouse was arranged in the church of Carnikava in the time of Soviet authority. Often, they remained empty, were demolished and collapsed. In the renewed Republic of Latvia many of destroyed churches came again to the management of Christian churches and thus slowly but with great perseverance and private financial assistance they are reborn again [3].

Materials and methods

Research Area and Objects. The research area is a coastal landscape of the region of Vidzeme in Latvia. The objects of research are located in a coastal area of Vidzeme – the Lutheran, Catholic and Orthodox churches. The research includes 9 churches (Figure 1).

The largest populates areas in the area are Saulkrasti, Salacgrīva and Ainaži, and a number of small villages, such as Carnikava, Liepupe, etc.

Methods. Monographic or descriptive method, based on the existing as well as scientific knowledge and theory acquired during the research, was used for the theoretical foundation for the development, as well as for the compilation, the identification and interpretation of the results.

Several landscape research methods were used to characterize the church landscape of the coastline of Vidzeme: method of image ability; descriptive inventory; definition of the perception criteria of the landscape visual overall image.

The method of imageability. The characterization of the church landscape of the coastline of Vidzeme was carried out by the method of image ability. By Kevin Lynch's thoughts image ability is a quality of a physical object, which creates a possibility to cause a strong impression in any observer [17]. This is a form, colour or an arrangement, which contributes the formation of the widely recognizable, powerfully created, widely used mental image of the environment. Lynch admits that image ability could also be called as image ability or visibility, but in the sense that objects could not only be seen in a landscape, but also could be felt in the environment.

The term "image ability" is being used with the meaning of "legibility" [19].

Indicators of image ability in the church landscape were defined during field surveys in 2012 and 2014 within the framework of the expedition, on using aerial photographs as a reference. An aerial photograph of the surveyed church landscape was prepared before going to the particular place. A detailed survey of each place was made on scouring the area and all access roads to analyse all the available viewpoints. The place image ability schemes of the landscape of particular churches where this method was used were made on the basis of aerial photograph to be able to clearly define the scope. On the other hand, notably objects in the image ability schemes differ in which elements form the nature of the church landscape and landscape borders. Image ability schemes are made in „AutoCad 2012" program, using a variety of graphical tools, as well as inserting there the aerial photo of a particular church landscape.

Descriptive inventory. A fixation of church garden elements of the coastline of Vidzeme, consolidation of the results and transformation to visual patterns were made by tying a quantitative method with a qualitative method. A descriptive inventory was used in the research of the garden landscape space and elements, which is widely used in the evaluation of visual resources [1]. Descriptive inventory includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative landscape evaluation methods on analysing and describing their components.

The method of synthesis is used in the field research for the broadest possible collection of data, when separate elements of the research object are combined into a single whole, in order to study their interrelationships. The synthesis method is also used to interpret the data. Quantitative and qualitative indicators of the landscape are collected in the matrix used in the field research such as plants, separate landscape elements – benches, fence, crucifix, free standing bell tower and other [19]. Based on the experience of the previous research a matrix of survey and cartographic materials had been already prepared before the expedition using an electronic card system kurtuesi.lv. Survey matrix includes all the most anticipated parameters of the church landscape and elements of the church garden that would be useful for the further research. On surveying the church gardens in the coastline of Vidzeme, there were fixed elements existing in every church garden. Later data obtained in matrixes were summarized in the "Microsoft Office Excel 2007" program.

The identification of essential and distinctive characteristics and qualities is also known as landscape characterization. This approach in this research is complimented with historical situation comparison. In historical pictures we can also find landscape elements and visibility of church in landscape context. This is still a relatively new approach to display and interpretation of the landscape. Landscape characterization approach rooted in England [5; 28], later it developed in Scotland, Ireland and in other places in Europe. Landscape characterization is considered as an effective tool in forming the comprehension of the importance of the landscape [12]. It is possible to use it for variety of scales, from the international up to the local [28; 29]. The reading of the landscape by using the landscape indicators, in this case landscape elements – benches, fence, crucifix, free standing bell tower and other. The physical components of the landscape, related activities, its importance and symbolism are basic formative elements of the landscape identity [12; 28; 29]. The research focuses on the visible physical identity.

Perceptual criteria for the visual overall image of the landscape. Visual formative elements of the landscape identity are closely related with the human subjective perception where are separated several levels of perception – visual availability, scale, natural landscape, use intensity, diversity, consistency or harmony. On the basis on these theoretical visual perception levels of the landscape identity the visual survey matrix of the landscape was designed, which served as the data collection, surveying the research area. The survey matrix includes the total subjective visual evaluation of the landscape [6; 22; 14; 10; 28; 25; 23; 13; 9; 36; 32; 33; 34]. There were determined following parameters for the subjective evaluation of the landscape: the visual availability, scale, topography, colour, materials, texture, diversity, rarity, senses, movement, and natural landscape.

Based on the theoretical group of criteria determined to define the identity of visual landscape, each landscape type specifies the possible criteria that may be slightly different in the urban and rural environment. Determination of the perception criteria of the landscape overall image is described in the detail in the authors' previous researches [24].

Results and discussion

Church buildings in the seaside of Vidzeme are both made of wood (Siguļi) and stone (Ainaži) and brick (the Orthodox of Salacgriva) and masonry buildings (the Lutheran of Saulkrasti (Peterupe), Skulte, Liepupe, Salacgriva), as well as the Catholic of Salacgriva was built in 1997 of reinforced concrete. All of these churches have bell towers, which makes buildings prominent and the silhouette is recognizable in small rural settlements and urban landscapes, neither of these churches are located in the rural landscape. The Roman Catholic church of Saulkrasti is made of unusual material, built in 1998, it is with an iron frame, on both sides of foam.

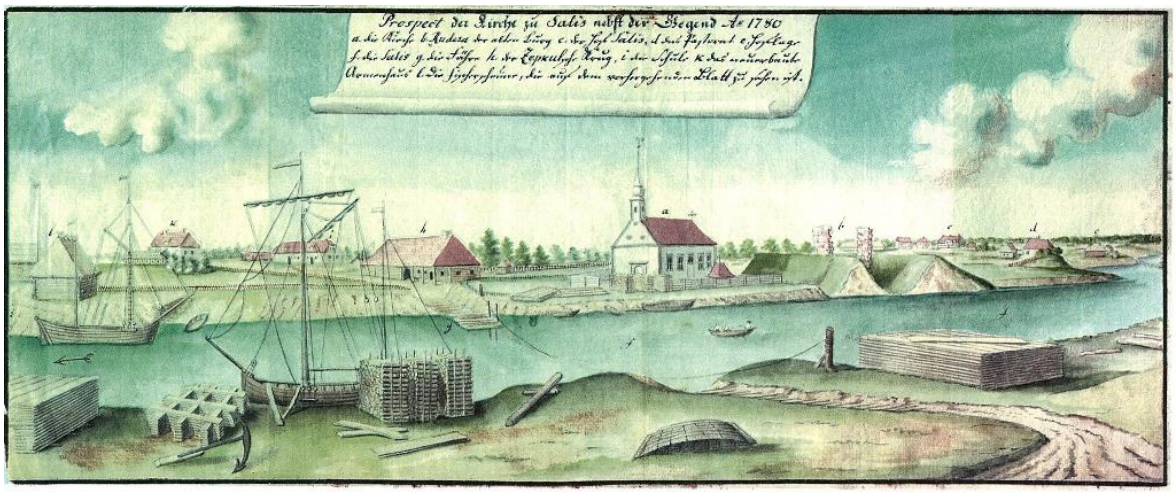

Fig. 2. The landscape of the church of Salacgriva (at that time Vecsalaca) in the end of the 18th century [37]

Fig. 3. The landscape of the church of Salacgriva 2016 [Source: author photo]

Image ability. Image ability is an essential characteristic aspect of the church landscape. Factor that affects the visibility of the church is the height of the church building and expressiveness of the church building bell tower as a dominant in the landscape. All 9 churches of this research territory are above 6 metres high, exceeding the height of the low-rise buildings. Most of the churches (eight) are located in flat places and only one is located in relief. These factors influence that more than a half of the churches are visible from distance.

The view line of the Catholic church of Salacgriva, on approaching from Riga, is more than kilometre long. Other view lines are not so long because of the surrounding buildings, although it is not high, it is quite dense and surrounded by greenery.

The Lutheran church of Salacgriva is located on the right bank of the river of Salaca (Figure 3). The building is surrounded both by trees and greenery and the plant cover of the bank of the river of Salaca. The landscape has been the focal point for the populated area for a long time, since the castle mound is situated near. In the end of the 18th century the ruins of the former stone castle of Riga Bishop Albert, built in 1226, had been expressively visible in the landscape (Figure 2). On the north side the church landscape is surrounded by a mixed-use building.

The landscape of the Lutheran church of Skulte is marked by a typical character of a pine forest and a nature of the 18th-century architecture (Figure 5). This landscape started to develop after 1755, when the stone building was built in the place of the previous wooden church building in this place (Figure 4).

The Lutheran church of Saulkrasti is a dominant, which is visible from the main driveway roads (Figure 7). The existing trees of the church garden obscure the building only partially, and help to stand out among the current surrounding city building. The current church has been already the fourth in this place, and the landscape has developed since the middle of the 17th century (Figure 6).

All of the landscapes of coastal churches of Vidzeme are placed in small cities or villages on the side of the road.

Occurrence of elements in the church gardens. Church landscapes and church gardens in the Latvian regions are formed according to different principles. These differences reproduce regionally different historical development and traditions. In general church gardens of Vidzeme have ascetic nature, where the church building is the most visible as a main dominant.

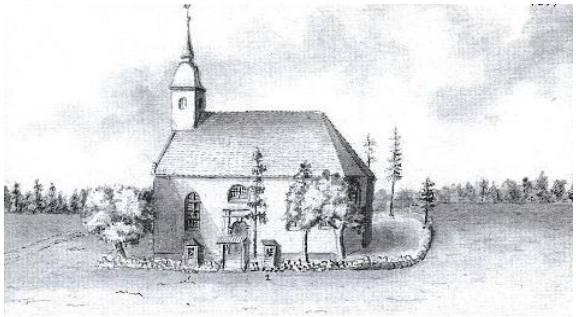

Fig. 4. The landscape of the church of Skulte in the beginning of the 19th century [37]

Fig. 5. The landscape of the church of Skulte in 2016 [Source: author photo]

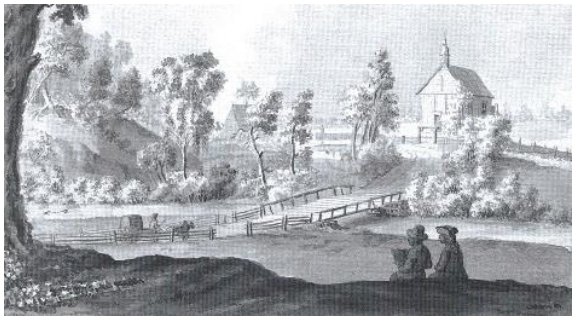

Fig. 6. The landscape of the church of Pēterupe in the middle of the 17th century [37]

Fig. 7. The landscape of the church of Pēterupe in 2016 [Source: author photo]

TABLE 1

The occurrence of elements in church gardens in the coast of Vidzeme [Source: constructon by M. Markova]

No.	Element	Occurrence of the element in the church garden, %
1	Bench	55
2	Fence	44
3	Household building	44
4	Decorative facade lighting	44
5	Memorial sign	44
6	Outdoor toilet	33
7	Tree perimeter	22
8	Bicycle racks	22
9	Crucifix	11
10	Burials next to the territory of the church garden	11
11	Flagpole	11
12	Free standing bell tower	0
13	Burials inside the territory of the church garden	0

Most common elements in church gardens of costal landscape of Vidzeme are bench, fence, household building and decorative facade lightning and also memorial sign. Quite often in church gardens there are outdoor toilets, tree perimeter and bicycle racks. Crucifix, Burials next to the territory of the church garden and flagpole could be found only in the one of nine churches. Also the elements are mentioned here that are usually found in church gardens, but in coastal church gardens of Vidzeme they were no free standing bell tower and Burials inside the territory of the church garden (Table 1).

The results of the percentage distribution of the occurrence of the elements in church gardens are rounded to the whole numbers to obtain greater transparency.

Criteria of the perception of the visual landscape overall image. The visual availability of the landscape of the coastal church garden of Vidzeme on the results of the research is open (25 %), restricted (25 %) and partly available (25 %), more rarely narrow and restricted (Figure 12). It is based on typical coastal landscape structures of Vidzeme in rural areas or on fully enclosed areas formed by coastal forests and a structure of a small town, as well as the medium scale of the church building. It is proved by the landscape scale on the results of the research which in 58,33 % of cases is medium, 8,33 % – close, 8,33 % – intime. (Figure 13). The scale of the landscape and the visual availability is closely linked to the characteristics of the terrain, where 25 % consists of flat areas, 16.67 % of each

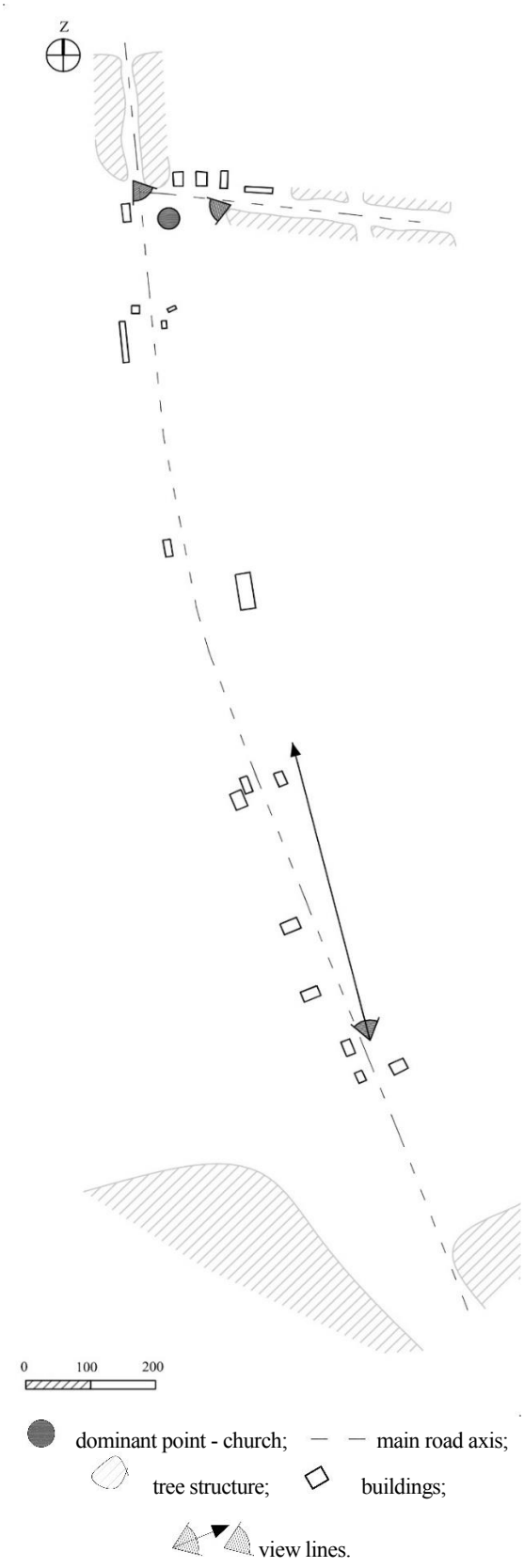

Fig. 8. The image ability scheme of the landscape of the Catholic church of Salacgriva
[Source: scheme by M. Markova]

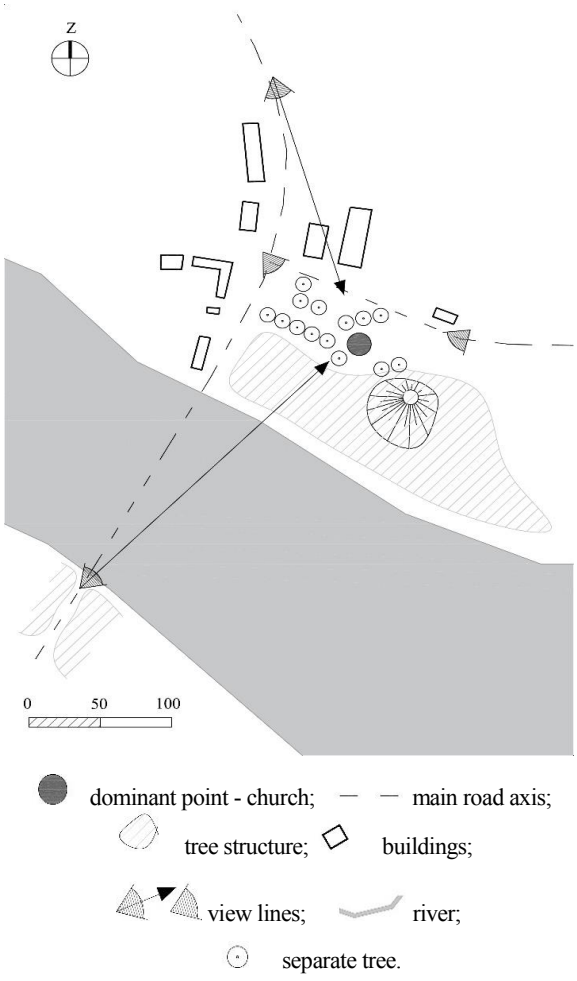

Fig. 9. The image ability scheme of the landscape of the Lutheran church of Salacgriva
[Source: scheme by M. Markova]

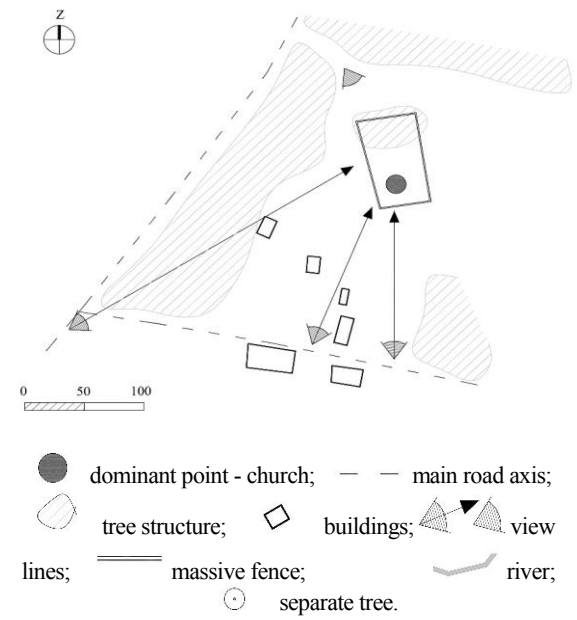

Fig. 10. The image ability scheme of the landscape of the Lutheran church of Skulte
[Source: scheme by M. Markova]

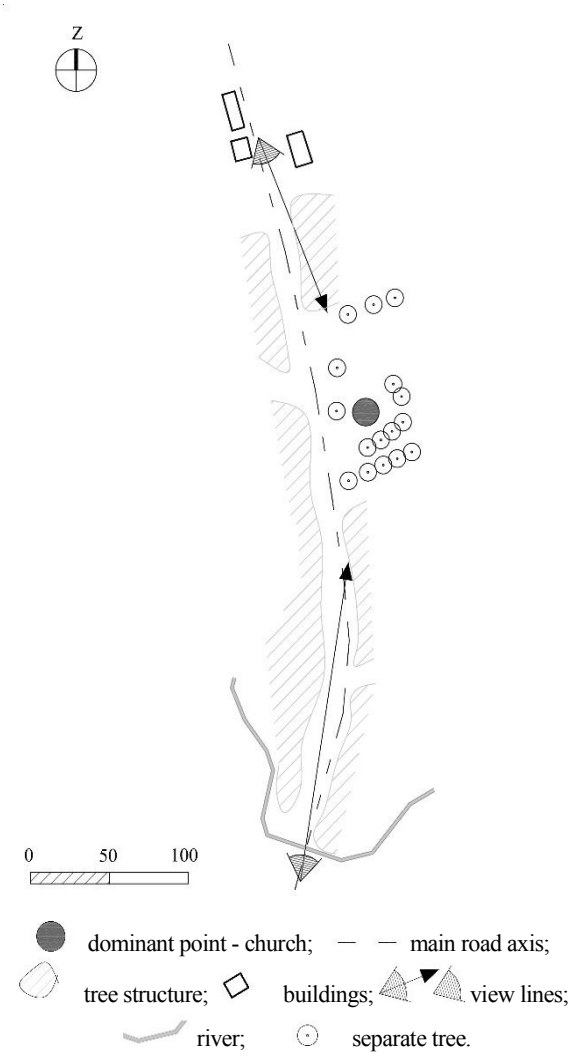

Fig. 11. The image ability scheme of the landscape of the Lutheran church of Saulkrasti (Pēterupe) [Source: scheme by M. Markova]

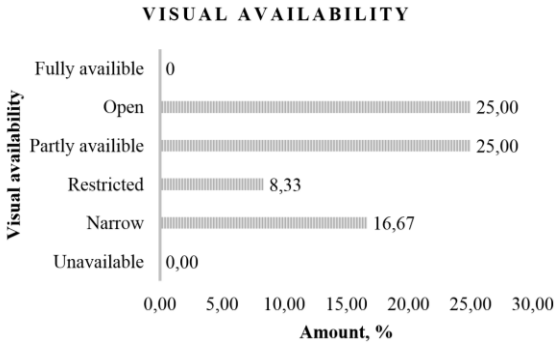

Fig. 12. Visual availability [Source: scheme by N.Ņitavska]

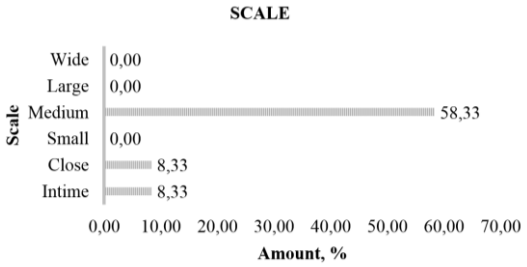

Fig. 13. Landscape Scale [Source: scheme by N.Ņitavska]

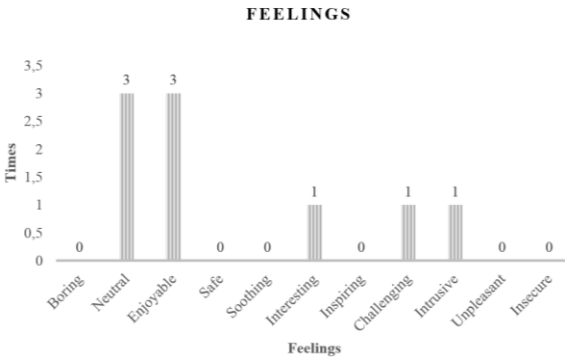

Fig. 14. Feelings [Source: scheme by N.Ņitavska]

consists of plain areas with some hills and gently undulating terrain and the only one of the churches (8.33 %) is located on expressed castle mound. The identity of the coastal church landscape is also closely connected with the used materials, which here is represented by a brick (in 4 cases), plaster with stones (in 6 cases) and stone (in 4 cases) and metal elements (in 5 cases). The texture of the landscape is generally rough (58,33 %) and fine (16,66 %).

The landscapes of coastal churches fundamentally are natural landscapes with some human-made elements (50 %) or natural landscape with some human made elements (25 %), because they are mainly located in small coastal villages or near village boarders. Thus, the landscape movement is also explained, which at the results of the research is defined as quiet (33,33 %) or active (33,33 %). Landscapes feelings and emotions are the resultant summary of all elements of the landscape and the landscape characteristic peculiarities – the landscape of the typical church of small settlements is characterized as neutral (in 3 cases), pleasant (in 3 cases) feelings, and rarely interesting, challenging or obtrusive emotion (Figure 14). On evaluating the landscapes of the coastal church of Vidzeme they are defined as peculiar (33,33 %) and typical (33,33 %), which in turn is connected on the one side with the typical architecture with the church tower to the most of the buildings, but in return with a common readable elements that bring this typicality and peculiar landscape features. Consequently, the whole landscape diversity is characterized as simple (41.67 %) and in some cases complex (16.675) or different (16.67 %), the reasons for this fact is based on the existence of traditional church gardens and in some cases the church garden area is used much more widely than just for the needs of the church, but is integrated in the common infrastructure of villages and small towns.

Conclusions

The visual identity of the landscape of coastal churches and gardens of Vidzeme in common can be defined as landscapes of typical small coastal populated areas with certain natural elements and some unique human-made elements that cause neutral and pleasant feelings and emotions. This medium-scale landscape spaces can be characterized by nuanced colour palette and the rough texture, which is closely linked with commonly used range of materials – plaster, stone, and brick and metal roofs. Church landscapes and church gardens in the Latvian regions are formed according to different principles. In general church gardens of Vidzeme have ascetic nature, with most common elements – bench, fence, household building and decorative facade lightning and also memorial sign. On making the research of the landscape of all Latvian coastal churches and gardens it is observed the most pronounced signs of globalization for the stage of Vidzeme that have affected the landscape of populated areas, bringing elements and functions of a modern landscape in the church gardens also, this could be explained as a fact that at this stage all the church areas are located within the populated areas.

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Kopsavilkums. Lai gan dievnamu ēkas ir vizuāli izteiksmīgas ainavas dominantes, sakrālās ainavas nav plaši pētītas. Lai atklātu ainavas raksturu un tās elementus, veikta rūpīga indikatoru izvēle un to mēroga noteikšana. Indikatoru metode pielietota Vidzemes dievnamu ainavu, kas atrodas gar Baltijas jūras piekrasti, raksturošanai. Izpētes teritorija ir Latvijas piekrastes ainava Vidzemē. Izpētes objekti ir izvietoti piekrastes teritorijā – luterāņu, katoļu un pareizticīgo dievnami. Pētījums aptver deviņas dievnamu ainavas. Vidzemes piekrastes dievnami ir gan koka (Siguļos), gan akmens (Ainažos), gan ķieģeļa (pareizticīgo – Salacgrīvā), gan mūra (luterāņu – Saulkrastos (Pēterupē), Skultē, Lielupē, Salacgīvā), kā arī dzelzbetona (katoļu – Salacgrīvā). Visiem šiem dievnamiem ir zvanu torņi, kas izceļ dievnamus ainavas siluetā starp mazām lauku apbūves struktūrām un arī pilsētās. Neviens no Vidzemes piekrastes dievnamiem nav izvietots lauku ainavā, tie ir tikai lauku apdzīvotajās vietās vai pilsētās. Dievnamu ainavas un dievnamu dārzi ir veidoti pēc atšķirīgiem principiem katrā no reģioniem. Šīs atšķirības atspoguļo reģionāli atšķirīgo atttīstības un tradīciju vēsturi. Kopumā Vidzemes piekrastes dievnamu dārzi ir askētiski, ar dievnamu kā galveno dominanti. Vēl dievnamu dārza ainavā sastopamie elementi ir soli, nožogojums, saimniecības ēkas, dekoratīvais fasādes apgaismojums un piemiņas zīmes. Samērā bieži dievnamu dārzos ir arī āra tualetes, perimetrālie koku stādījumi un riteņu novietnes. Savukārt krucifiksi, apbedījumi ārpus dārza teritorijas, karogmasti ir reti sastopami elementi – katrs tikai vienā dārza teritorijā no deviņām. Citviet Latvijā baznīcu dārzos ir sastopami brīvstāvoši zvanu torņi un/vai apbedījumi dārza teritorijā, bet Vidzemes piekrastes dievnamu dārzu teritorijās tie nav. Kopējā piekrastes dievnamu ainavu vizuālā identitāte Vidzemē, kas tika atklāta pētījuma gaitā, var tikt raksturota, kā tipiska mazo apdzīvoto vietu piekrastes ainava ar konkrētiem dabas un unikāliem cilvēku veidotiem elementiem, kas izraisa neitrālas un patīkamas sajūtas un emocijas. Šīs vidēja mēroga ainavtelpas var tikt raksturotas ar niansētu krāsu paleti un raupjām tekstūrām, kas ir cieši saistīta ar izmantoto materiālu klāstu – apmetumu, akmeni, ķieģeļiem un skārda jumtiem. Šis pētījums ir turpinājums pētījumu sērijai par piekrastes dievnamu ainavām.