

The identity of military heritage areas of the coast of Kurzeme

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Abstract. The coastal landscape of Kurzeme in Latvia is connected with the USSR border and military objects, established in the Soviet Union period that nowadays on losing their function are still on the coast and influence the landscape both physically and visually. These objects can be evaluated in different ways – both different and unfamiliar elements for the coastal landscape, as well as the potential of new landscape development. The research of the factors affecting the coastal development is a key to success for future coastal planning and management, as it helps to identify negative and positive landscape transformation processes, as well as their reflection on the identity of the coastal landscape. In order to understand the role of the military heritage of the coast of Kurzeme in the overall identity of the coastal landscape of Kurzeme, a survey of military areas was carried out by analyzing the physical and visual accessibility of the landscape, identifying the type of the landscape, existing elements, their materials and colour gamma, the current usage and state in common, as well as the emotional side of the landscape – feelings, impressions, atmosphere (sense of place). The information obtained in the survey helped to compile a biography of each of the military area landscapes, also based on the cultural and historical research of each landscape. The comparison of different landscape biographies of the military heritage of the coast of Kurzeme gives a perspective of their inclusion in the common identity of the coastal landscape of Kurzeme and reveals the potential for the development of these landscapes.

Key words: Kurzeme, coast, military areas, landscape biography, landscape identity

Introduction

The Baltic Sea is one of the integral parts of the Latvian national identity; therefore, these landscapes are our world-wide business card with all bigger and smaller cities, protected areas and coastlines, which are in the process of continuous development. In the sustainable development strategy of Latvia, the coast is recognized as one of the values of Latvia, and the diverse and multifunctional development of the coastline is emphasized as a goal, where one of the roles is also for the special and unique coastal landscapes [13]. Factors affecting coastal development directly or indirectly affect the identity of the coastal landscape. The research of the factors affecting the coastal development is a key to success for future coastal planning and management, as it helps to identify negative and positive landscape transformation processes as well as their reflection on the identity of the coastal landscape.

Coastal landscapes are easily subjected to degrading effects of human activity. The initial value of a landscape depends directly on land usage intensity [16]. Human activities on the coast were affected by historical, political and social aspects. For a long time, the Soviet Army was stationed along the coast, which changed the status of this area and restricted economic activity.

The development of each single city and settlement directly or indirectly affected changes of the identity of the coastal landscape. As a result of human activity, relief, river beds, building and vegetation changed [8; 9; 10].

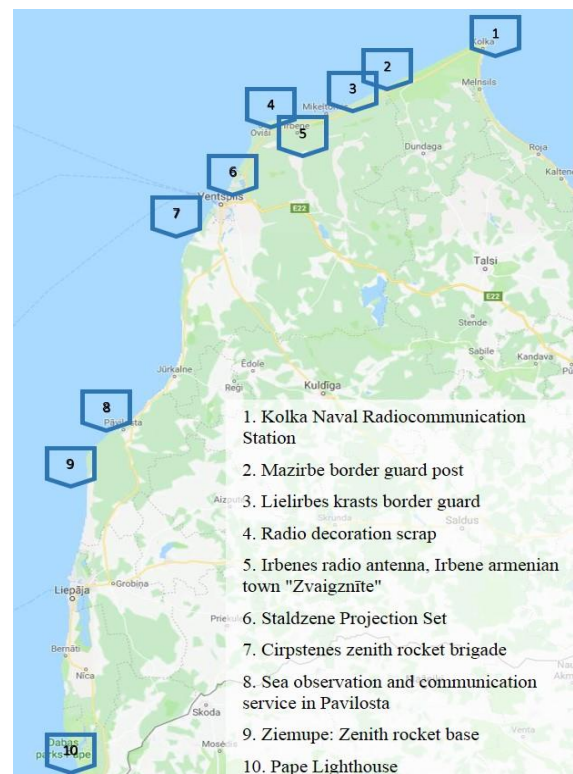


Fig. 1. The location of surveyed objects [on googlemap].

Characterization of the historical landscape and a research of the landscape development make it possible to overlook the trajectory of the past and to conclude what decisions and actions can lead to certain consequences in a particular landscape, which would be a good basis for future planning. Archaeological research, the research of historical archival material, the research of folklore and other

testimonies are also used for the landscape characterization on forming together the scope of interdisciplinary research [11]. New concepts have been highlighted in recent landscape studies such as landscape biography and landscape of the place, landscape reading and development continuity [24].

The aim of the study is to analyse the situation in military sites in general at the coastal stage without dividing the situation in each area. The general picture of the situation gives an understanding of the common trends in these areas. The transformation of these military territories changes the coastal identity in general.

Materials and Methods

In order to achieve the goal of paper – understanding and analysing the situation in the military areas of the coast, are carried out detail research and inventory of each object, but this inventory data presentation is not the purpose of this article.

Objects

10 coastal military areas of Kurzeme were surveyed in the course of the research:

1. The Naval Radio Communication Station of Kolka
2. The border guard post of Mazirbe
3. The Coast Guard of Lielirbe
4. The radio engineering in Lūžņa
5. The radio antenna of Irbene, the army camp of Irbene "Zvaigznīte"
6. The floodlight troop of Staldzene
7. The zenith missile brigade of Cirpstene
8. The Marine Observation and Communication Service in Pāvilosta
9. Ziemepe: Zenith rocket base
10. The lighthouse of Pape

There are two places in Mazirbe under the same name – the same base and tower / projector dormitories at the sea. The survey of the objects was made in the August 2014.

Methods

The landscape biography of the coastal military areas of Kurzeme consists of two parts of the research: a theoretical research (*landscape biography*) and survey of objects and the obtained data (*landscape spatial structure*).

The task of the theoretical research is to acquire historical stages of the development of the coastal region of Kurzeme and facts, which changed the landscape identity both in general and in relation to individual sites. The research has been selected from 1939 to the present day – this is precisely this period that is full with the events and the beginning of the creation of Soviet military areas on the coast of Kurzeme. Various sources of information – historical books and archive materials, articles and publications, graphical and visual materials for a particular period have been used in this part of the

research. The results of the theoretical research are summarized in the scheme and a brief description of each stage of development is drawn out, highlighting the main events since 1939 to the present day (Figure 2).

The method of survey of the spatial structure of the landscape consists of three parts – arrangements and information gathering; the survey of the object; gathering and analyzing of the data obtained.

Arrangements made before the survey of the object

„The Passport of the Object” and „Assessment Matrix” was prepared for each object before the survey of the object. The passport of the object identifies the data for the period of surveyed object being created, the excellent objects in the complex, the property rights, information about the planned usage, the location on the map, as well as the linking with adjacent objects. The task of the assessment matrix is to get information from what can be captured with the sight and the feeling of exploring the surrounding area of the object. The assessment matrix is divided into five sections. For each section, criteria and sub-criteria are identified. Inventory matrix summarizes general information: date of the survey, name and location of the place. In addition, a common map is developed, which lists all ten objects of the survey, more detailed maps of the locations of the object, and a developed route, when and in which objects the research will be carried out. The matrix includes the following evaluation criteria: physical and visual accessibility, landscape type, existing landscape elements, elemental materials and colour gamma, existing usage of the area and condition in general. In addition the inventory matrix included also subjective factors such as the emotional side of the landscape – feelings, impressions, and the atmosphere.

The survey of the object – the completion of the assessment matrix and the recording of the object in photographs was made for each of ten landscapes on-site facility. In addition, a layout of the area is outlined, showing the most characteristic points, features. During the survey the pre-planned scheme is complemented with the visual accessibility criteria – view types. The matrix sections and criteria are completed in sequence – since it is designed simultaneously taking a photo of the subject.

The collection and analysis of the obtained data. Individual data processing, collection and evaluation of special features of each object are performed after the survey of all objects. After the analysis performed, the objects are compared with each other; the common and distinctive features are sought.

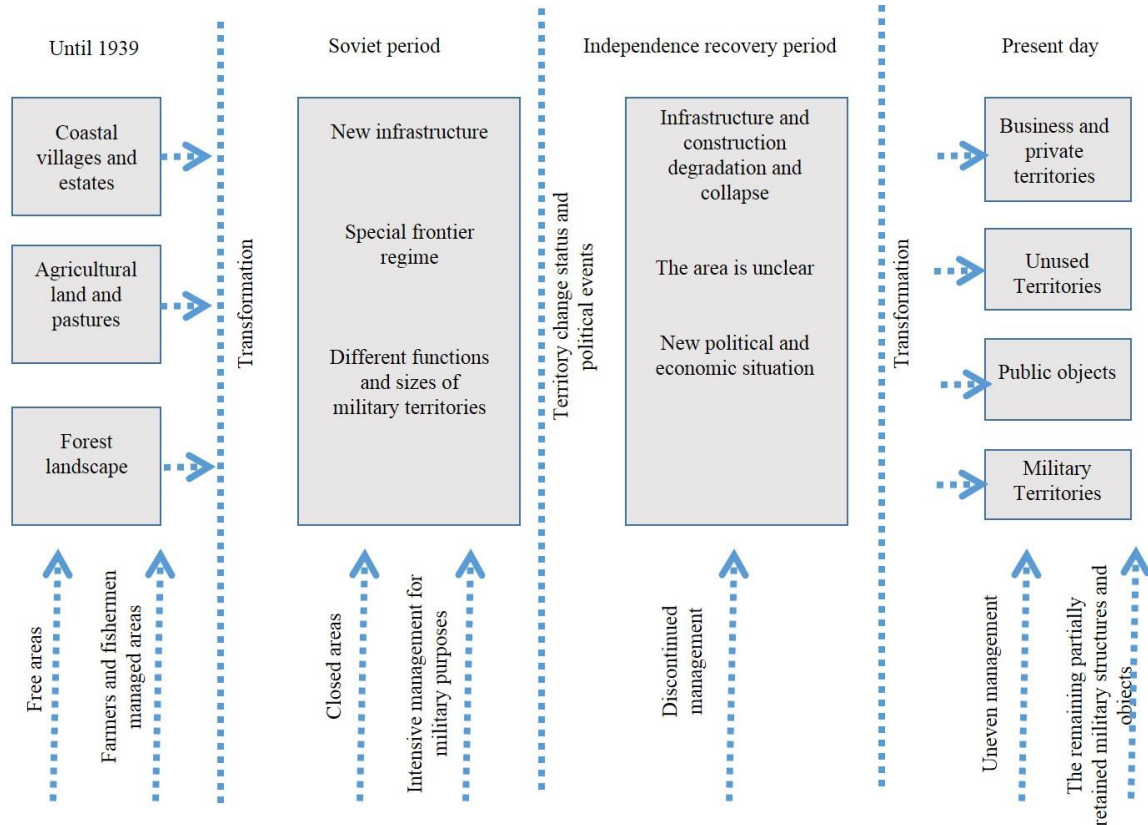


Fig. 2. The biography of the military landscapes of the coast of Kurzeme. Created by the authors.

Results and Discussion

Landscape biography

In order to understand and consistently "to draw" the landscape biography of military areas of Kurzeme, there is a study on the development of a common coastal area of Kurzeme, divided into four periods – the period of freedom of Latvia, the Soviet period, the period of independence restoration, present days. Separate facts indicate common development trends along the entire coast of Kurzeme, and part of the facts apply directly to military areas, but all of this is evident as the landscape biography in common (Figure 2).

The biography of military landscapes of the coast of Kurzeme

The period of freedom of Latvia. In 1939, the situation in the coastal landscape was as follows: active fishing, which was also considered as a traditional type of management on the coast; economic and trade relations with foreign countries were developed. There are both lighthouses and harbours in the coast, as well as developed shipbuilding, the boom of naval and active economic activity. The landscape is formed like a mosaic-shaped structural landscape, with small farms, villages, harbours, forests interchanging – in general, creating a steady landscape development.

The Soviet period in the Baltic Sea coastal areas in Latvia was marked by drastic changes, as these territories became the external border of the USSR. The largest cities of the West coast of the Baltic Sea, Liepaja and Ventspils, became the bases of the Soviet navy [7]. A special frontier regime was created on the coast of the Baltic Sea, where border guard units, items, tank farms, aviation polygons, warplanes, weapons and ammunition depots, military intelligence objects, and so on were concentrated [12]. In order for placing of these objects and the living of the army resources and territories were necessary. This led to the displacement of local people from their native places of residence, the adaptation of several cultural and historical objects for military needs, and the proclamation of the coast as a restricted movement zone. The boundary status of the landscape radically changed the cultural and historical development of this place, both the historically developed way of life and the rhythm, as well as the way of management. The development of the coastal area was no longer possible as before, as it was strictly limited in this period.

Along with these processes in the coast, the Latvian rural landscape was also affected by the land reform, which began already in 1940. Its task was to set nationalization of land, or the creation of a state land fund, reducing existing farms to 20–30 hectares, declaring the land to be state property [23; 4].

Along with this set of processes, collectivization took place in Latvia. Since 1946 collective farms had been established in Latvia as a socialist model farm. Collective farms unified land, equipment and animals previously owned by farmers and deprived in the period of land nationalization. The economic development of collective farms varied, which contributed to the migration of people from the less developed rural areas to the cities. Between 1940 and 1985, the rural population in Latvia decreased from 65 % to 30 %. After collectivization the number of estates in the territory of Latvia decreased from 89.8 % (in 1948) to 3.5 % (in 1950) [23; 4].

This period, characterized by forcible industrialization, the collectivization of agriculture, also caused the migration of citizens from other Soviet republics, changing the ethnic composition of Latvia. The development goals of the new government affected the existing structure of the building, there were changes in the sphere of urban development, standardized architectural solutions entered [5; 6]. Later in 1959, the construction of new industrial enterprises began. The number of military industrial complexes increased in Latvia, but issues of environmental protection issues were considered relatively small [23; 4].

Starting with 1956, the First Secretary of the Soviet Party, N. Hruschev, condemned I. Stalin's totalitarian regime and began partial liberalization, which was reflected in many areas of life. This period was characterized by the improvement of cultural and social life. During the migration, newcomers in many places lived in barracks, so in the 1960s, mass construction of residential houses started in accordance with standard projects. The housing stock increased twice from 1960 to 1985, but all the needs of the population were not satisfied [23; 4].

The enormous changes of *the Soviet period* planned and later realized by the government, brought great changes in the cultural landscape of Latvia. Today, researchers are still returning to the study of this issue, surveying different landscapes in Latvia, their former appearance till the arrival of Soviet power by cartographic materials and effects, which are also reflected in the contemporary landscape. The group of authors studied the changes in the cultural landscape during the Soviet period and its effects today. As a result, it was found that several elements of the landscape have been lost –

most often estates, small fragments of the landscape that formed the mosaic-shaped landscape structure. There is still the question about the preservation and usage of the impress left in the Soviet period or the return to traditional landscapes. The authors conclude that it is necessary to adopt the modern landscape as the current cultural landscape and, as far as possible, to maintain traditional management where state support is needed [1; 2].

The period of independence restoration. After the restoration of independence of Latvia in 1990, the Soviet military forces left their bases. Several thousand hectares of vast areas in the coastal areas were abandoned without inhabitants, but with rocket bunkers, submarine ports, descent cultural and historical monuments that previously served for the needs of the army, soldiers' barracks and other structures. Often these areas were contaminated [14]. Upon the departure of the Soviet military forces, military areas often came under the management of local governments. There was not enough money to manage and protect them, so they were most often plundered [3]. Some of these areas were denationalised or privatized.

In the early 1990s, collective farms were transformed into share societies or were liquidated [23]. Areas of collective farms and the army remained ownerless legally, which contributed to the degradation of these territories, vandalism, destruction of nature and cultural and historical objects and violation of laws, because new legislation had not been ready yet to protect these areas. During this period, the most frequent violations on the coast were car-damaged dunes and illegal construction in the protection area. Despite the fact that Soviet legislation banned construction on the dunes, local governments considered these laws to be out of date [15]. In general, these times of change had changed the policy of urban development, as the form of new private property and market came into force in both urban and rural buildings [6].

The former border of Eastern and Western Europe also gained value with the great biodiversity of these areas, which was facilitated by the limited availability of this area. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the idea was to create a Green Belt project that still works nowadays. The Baltic Green Belt project works under this project, which was implemented by 15 national and non-governmental organizations from the five eastern and southern coastal states of the Baltic Sea as well as the International Union for Conservation of Nature in Belgium and the Coalition Clean Baltic in Sweden. The purpose of this project is to preserve, to use and to develop the natural and cultural heritage along the coast of the Baltic Sea; to establish an international cooperation platform for organizations

of nature conservation and sustainable coastal development; to demonstrate good examples in tourism, field of ecological agriculture, and public involvement in regional planning [21; 22]. Another project that took place in the 1990s was co-funded project of the European Union INTERREG IIB – Sustainable Reintegration of Post-soviet Military residential territories as a Challenge and Opportunity for Regional Development – ReMiDo. Territories were evaluated within the framework of the project, certain development trends were determined, the experience of other countries were evaluated, action plans have been developed at the state and local government level, some pilot projects have been implemented [14].

Present days. Upon the departure of the Soviet Army, there are many territories with obscure status and disorderly surroundings. Former military areas in the coast are contaminated and dangerous. This is not only the pollution of groundwater and soil, but also unexploded ammunition that is in the ground. Currently, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Environment, local governments and the National Armed Forces (NAF) are responsible for cleaning up these territories.

Currently, there are more than 100 000 hectares of such areas in Latvia, which is the seventh part of the territory of Latvia. About 80,000 units of marine ammunition are located in the Baltic Sea, including in territorial waters of Latvia. Since 2003, the State Agency of Property Protection has been operating, which also carries out and organizes environmental protection measures also in military protection objects. Planned exploration of these areas was made together with the NAF, while the implementation of protection and clean-up measures is delayed by the need for large financial investments [20].

More and more tourists are interested in military heritage. And many specialists consider this area as a unique and competitive tourism destination with their target audience. Several objects have already been surveyed nowadays and recommendations for the sustainable management and usage of military heritage in tourism have been given – Natura 2000, which is a network of protected areas created for conservation of natural diversity of the European Union, as well as in other protected areas.

Often military buildings of the period of Tsarist and military building of the period of the World War I were used for the USSR military bases. There is also created a database of these military heritage objects and a map of military heritage tourism objects. The recommendations are compiled and prepared in the "Guidelines for the Usage of Military Objects", which includes information on the database from various states [17; 18; 19].

Spatial structure of the military landscape of the coast of Kurzeme

Summarizing the results obtained after the survey of military heritage objects, common trends were indicated. For example, the existing type of land usage, which is closely related to the set of landscape biographies, is very different, but still 36% of the territory has not been used yet (Figure 3). Former military territories are also used as public objects (14%), for various types of economic activities (14%), for science (7%), for living (7%), and part of the objects were also used for the needs of the army (14%). So, there is generally a positive tendency to use these territories instead of leaving them abandoned.

The objects are characterized by three types of the landscape: forest landscape, forest and marine landscape, marine landscape. Only the coniferous forest – pine forest – is the only one to be found in all these objects of the forest landscapes. The type of forest landscape is located at the objects of Lūžna and Pāvilosta. The objects in Kolka, Staldzene and Mazirbe are surrounded by a forest on the one side, but on the other side by the sea landscape. The marine landscape occurs in the object of Pape, which is surrounded by a zone of bent-grass, osier dune and sandy beach.

The concurrent attention was paid to the existing contours of the forest landscape around the object aroused as a result of human activity, by installing and constructing military-type areas. There were two distinct groups – expressive / rigid and partially readable / almost invisible landscape contours. Strong / rigid landscapes are characterized by straight pine forest areas, where the existing overgrowth, which seeks to re-integrate the transformed area, is very minimal. The contours of such character are found in objects in Staldzenē, Pāvilosta, as well as in Mazirbe. The infrastructure of existing road, other human-made elements, object management are some of the reasons why nature does not "take over" the free territory. Partially readable / almost invisible landscapes are characterized by the fact that the outline of the forest

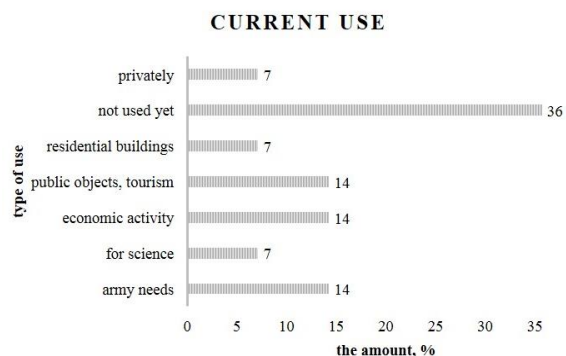


Fig. 3. The current way of usage of military objects.
Created by the authors.

is readable, but the young pine forest stands and their clusters began to form a natural border of the forest. It is typical in Kolka and Lūžņa. The criteria of physical accessibility are divided into two sub criteria – the populated area and outside the populated area. In objects located besides or in the populated areas there have been found both gravel pavement (Lūžņa) and asphalt pavement (Kolka, Staldzene, Pāvilosta). In objects such as the Lighthouse of Pape and the Tower and the projector building of Mazirbe that are located outside the populated area the only gravel pavement infrastructure is provided. Objects are outside of populated areas, which can be reached by concrete slab or gravel pavement. The concrete slab pavement is in Irbene and Cirpstene. Although the object is not immediately visible, the pavement makes it clear that you are travelling to the area of the military heritage. The existence of roads and parking places provides physical accessibility to objects, which is an important factor in their further development. It should be noted that all the objects have supply roads and half of them have the parking lot either.

In turn the visual accessibility is different, and it is closely related to the location of the object and the type of the surrounding landscape.

Covered / partially obscured object view

These objects are located more inland, but there are exceptions. Narrow, distant, partially covered / obscured views are found in such objects:

- The border guard post of Mazirbe – base,
- The Coast Guard of Lielirbe,
- The radio antenna of Irbene, the army camp of Irbene "Zvaigznīte",
- The zenith missile brigade of Cirpstene
- Ziemepe: Zenith rocket base.

All the objects are surrounded by a forest landscape. Four objects are covered by a pine forest, but Mazirbe is characterized by a mixed pine-deciduous tree forest. This group is characterized by landscapes with pronounced and rugged forest contours. They are characteristic for all objects, especially for the territory of Ziemepe and Irbene. Although views of these objects are covered, wide and open view lines are opened up on entering the area. Military objects are often stationed away from highways, which are strategically important for maintaining the safety of objects, and therefore 40% of objects are still not visible and 30% are only partially visible. The open landscape (30%) is more related to the type of the landscape and the size of the objects (Figure 4).

Landscape biography can often be read only from preserved elements of the landscape, which are witnesses of past events and feature not only the former nature of the landscape, but also the spatial

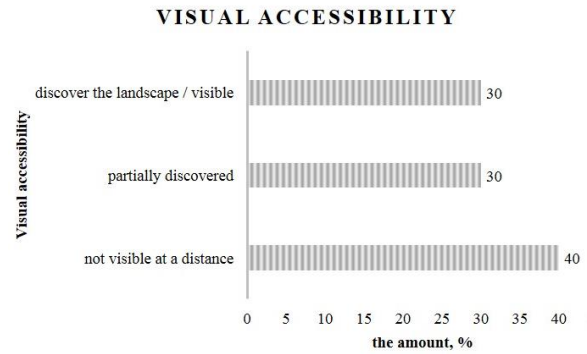


Fig. 4. The visual accessibility of military objects of Kurzeme Created by the authors.

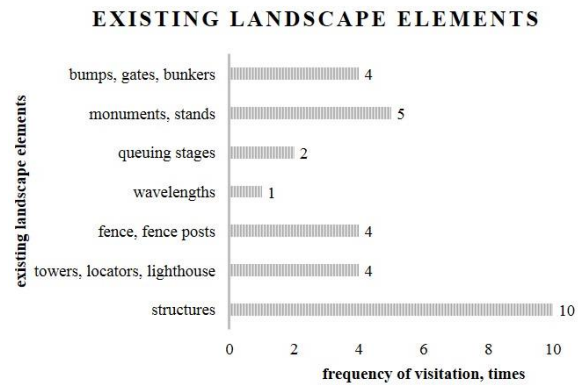


Fig. 5. Existing landscape objects in military objects of Kurzeme. Created by the authors.

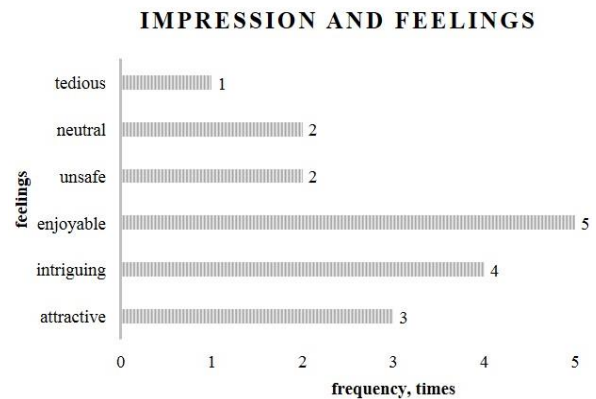


Fig. 6. The assessment of emotions and feelings of military objects of Kurzeme. Created by the authors.

structure that could change in time, both under the influence of a human being and the natural environment – by overgrowing the open space, by constructing the new infrastructure, or the decomposition and dismantling of individual objects.

Military territories are rich not only with elements of military heritage, but also with elements related to the previous functions of the landscape, for example, Lielirbe was once a manor, and part of its buildings remained unchanged along with military structures.

In the course of the research, on surveying the territory landscape elements of the military nature

were mainly characterized – such as buildings, towers, locators, lighthouses, fences, fence posts, waves, square plantations, monuments, stands, embankments, protective walls, bunkers (Figure 5).

In addition to the visual assessment of the landscape, there was also an emotional assessment of the landscape, which is an integral part of landscape identity. It should be noted that thanks to / due to the magic of the coastal nature, even the ruined objects did not leave a bad impression, as the presence of the coastal nature softened the emotional background. The emotions were rated on the following scale: attractive, intriguing, enjoyable, unsafe, neutral, tedious (Figure 6). Sometimes emotions were partite and therefore there were marked several positions from the scoring scale. Summarizing the results, emotional assessment is given by how often one or another item was marked

Conclusions

Areas of the military heritage of the coast of Kurzeme are an integral part of the entire landscape identity of the coast of Kurzeme – these are areas with a rich landscape biography, which has changed over the last 80 years due to political and natural conditions, very active and cardinal. Separate areas of the military heritage of the coast of Kurzeme have a distinct initial function of the landscape – they were both manor territories, settlements and fishermen's villages, and forest landscapes, and meadows and pastures. As the political situation has changed, such different landscapes have come down in a similar situation – the function of landscape usage, spatial structure and management has changed, and the link with the local population has disappeared as it was restricted territory. The future usage, transformation and management of the

landscape in the Soviet period are different from the traditional usage of the coast of Kurzeme and the management of the landscape, which left irreversible changes in the landscape identity. After the abandonment of the Soviet Army, areas remained unclear and unmanaged, where, in turn, on vandalism and deliberate extermination of military objects natural factors caused, which continued the changes in the landscape identity, partly reducing the radical changes of the Soviet period. Today, after surveying the objects, it can be safely declared that these areas have a great potential for development, involving these areas into the tourism, which has been already active in other European countries today. The development of tourism could be facilitated by the existing satisfactory infrastructure – roads and car parks, there are still a number of preserved military objects and the attractiveness of the natural landscape in common and delightful emotions provided by the elements of coastal nature, which are an integral part of these areas of the military heritage of the coast of Kurzeme. The visual accessibility of the landscape, which is associated with both the different location of the objects and the different landscape structure and the different landscape types, provides a variety of landscapes that are more likely to hold the tourists' interest.

It should be noted that the identity of the coastal landscape of Kurzeme now should be strengthened and more existing opportunities should be exploited, as well as the emotional connection of people with the coastal landscape should be strengthen, where tourism development could be one of the tools of preservation and development of landscape identity nowadays.

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Kopsavilkums. Kurzemes piekrastes ainava Latvijā ir saistīta ar Padomju laikā šeit izveidoto PSRS robežu un militāriem objektiem, kas zaudējot savu funkciju, mūsdienās vēl joprojām atrodas piekrastē un ietekmē ainavu gan fiziski, gan vizuāli. Šos objektus var vērtēt dažādi – gan ka atšķirīgus un svešus piekrastes ainavai elementus, gan kā jaunu ainavas attīstības potenciālu. Piekrastes attīstības ietekmējošo faktoru izpēte ir veiksme atslēga turpmākai piekrastes plānošanai un pārvaldībai, jo palīdz izziņāt negatīvus un pozitīvus ainavas transformācijas procesus, kā arī to atspoguļojumu uz piekrastes ainavas identitāti. Lai izprastu Kurzemes piekrastes militāra mantojuma lomu kopējā Kurzemes piekrastes ainavas identitātē, ir veikta militāro teritoriju apsekošana analizējot ainavas fizisko un vizuālo pieejamību, nosakot ainavas tipu, esošus elementus, to materiālus un krāsu gammu, esošo izmantošanas veidu un stāvokli kopumā, kā arī ainavas emocionālo pusi – izjūtas, iespaidus, atmosfēru (*sence of place*). Apsekojumā iegūtā informācija palīdzēja sastādīt katras militārās teritorijas ainavas biogrāfiju, kuras pamatā ir arī katras ainavas kultūrvēsturiskā izpēte. Salīdzinot dažādas Kurzemes piekrastes militārā mantojuma ainavu biogrāfijās, ir sniegts priekšstats par to iekļaušanos kopējā Kurzemes piekrastes ainavas identitātē un atklājas šo ainavu attīstības potenciāls.