



ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE QUALITY OF BORDER TOWNS IN EUROPE ARHITEKTONISKĀS VIDES UN AINAVAS KVALITĀTE EIROPAS ROBEŽPILSĒTĀS

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Abstract. There are only few places in the world, where structurally homogeneous urban patterns are mechanically divided into separate parts for political reasons. After the European Union signed the Schengen Agreement, the physical borders in the centre of border town have been removed and both towns have acquired a single urban space. In this situation it is possible to consider the development of both towns like a united system in future as well as to predict the most essential problems that may hamper development.

Key words: urban landscape, border towns, architectural and landscape quality.

Introduction

A border town is a town close to the boundary between two countries, states or regions. Usually the term implies that it is one of the things the town is most famous for. Border towns can have highly cosmopolitan communities. Currently, areas which are located on national borders contrast both visually and psychologically with their functional climate.

There are only few border cities over the world and one of them is located at the northern border of Latvia. Valka is one of six cities in the world where the border crosses the city centre and divided it into two parts, creating a twin city Valga and Valka. Similar situation is Tornio in Finland and Haparanda in Sweden, Guben in Germany and Gubin in Poland, Gorizia in Italy and Nova Gorica in Slovenia, Gerlitz in Germany and Zgorzelec in Poland, as well as Narva and Ivangoroda in Estonia and Russia (www.tvnet.lv).

For many decades while border town has been developing into the jurisdiction of two states, the quality of townscape and the condition of urban structure has significantly decreased. The picturesque town centre used to be the borderland of two states (Bratuskins, U. 2008). The actual problem of the regeneration of a common urban townscape is to soften borderland impact, defining the establishment of the public recreational area as a priority of the frontier area.

Some authors point out that border towns are unique places with historical, national and social interaction between two different countries. Inter borderspace as a unique urban phenomenon in the historical development is not an obstacle, but overall quality of the property for citizens (www.summerschool.rtu.lv). It focused on developing attractive and public activities in a rich range, it is possible to develop an identity as a mark which will make the city unique attractive to the same citizens and in closer and further guest's eyes.

The **aim** of this study was to analyze the natural areas and architectural environment of development concepts in European border town.

The aim of study can be achieved by setting the following **main tasks**:

- to characterize historical processes in European border towns;
- to describe and analyze architectural and landscaped areas in six European border towns;
- to view the city skyline set-up options.

The following **hypothesis** was highlighted: It is possible to achieve balance in border town which is divided by the current economy, if there is a search for unitary cultural and historical environment and improvement of common landscape.

Materials and Methods

Data output to meet the main tasks of this studies were obtained from the internet. At this study were used National City web sites for tourists and special literature of landscape design.

Data grouping and analysis methods were used to describe architectural and landscaped areas in towns. Qualitative research methods:

Cartographic method – analysis of territorial plans and maps;

Descriptive method – literature studies of border towns' history and general characteristics;

Comparative method – comparison between border towns;

Analytical method – analysis of city silhouettes.

At this study green structure in border towns in Europe was analyzed, and directions for a positive impact on the overall landscape of the border town was determined.

The six European border towns were compared with architectural, landscape and historic properties also using geographical, social and economical characteristics. Considering that two cities differ in terms of population and size of the municipal budget, it is important to discover ways to achieve the advanced level of urban areas landscaping with fewer finance resources. At this study were analyzed following border towns: Tornio – Haparanda (Finland/Sweden), Narva

– Ivangorod (Estonia/Russia), Guben – Gubin (Germany/Poland), Gorizia – Nova Gorica (Italy/Slovenia), Gerlitz – Zgorzelec (Germany/Poland) and Valka – Valga (Latvia/Estonia).

Results and Discussion

General Characteristics of European Border Towns

According to comparison between general characteristics we see that border town with largest territorial area is Gerlitz – Zgorzeletc – 83.1 km² (Table 1). Narva-Ivangorod, Guben-Gubin and Gorizia-Nova Gorica occupies similar 60-70 km². The smallest border towns are Valka-Valga – 30.7 km² and Tornio-Haparanda – 20.4 km². The largest population is in Narva-Ivangorod, because Narva is the third largest city in Estonia. The smallest population is in Valka-Valga and Tornio-Haparanda, because the towns itself are small.

Table 1

	Tornio-Haparanda		Narva-Ivangorod		Guben-Gubin		Gorizia-Nova Gorica		Gerlitz-Zgorzelec		Valka-Valga	
Area (km²)	16.4	4.0	62.0	7.7	43.8	20.7	41.0	19.0	67.2	15.9	14.2	16.5
	20.4		69.2		64.5		60.0		83.1		30.7	
Population	11,241	4,778	65,886	11,900	22,184	15,000	35,980	13,852	56,724	23,278	6,164	14,153
	16,019		89,686		37,184		49,832		80,002		20,137	
Physical border	none		border control		none		none		none		none	
River (separates town)	Tornio		Narva		Lusatian Neisse		none		Lusatian Neisse		none	
Historically separated	1821		1920		1945		1947		1945		1920	

Comparison of general characteristics between European border towns (*en.wikipedia.org*)

After the Schengen Agreement border control is left only in Narva-Ivangorod. Russia is not a Member of European Union. Four of selected border towns are separated with rivers. There are rivers in remaining two towns but the river does not separate town in two parts

Architectural and Landscape Values

These six border towns have common and different landscape values (Table 2). All border towns have river which has important aesthetic quality. The important recreational role played by

river channels reflects both their ecology and appearance (Richards, K. 1982). In four border towns river act as border. Pedele river flows through the centre of town. Soča river flows near border around Gorizia-Nova Gorica.

In some border towns cultural heritage is maintained that appears in forms of buildings (Table 2). Tornio-Haparanda has recognizable Finnish and Swedish architecture, also in Gorizia we can find houses from Italian architecture samples. Germany – Poland has a balance between architecture. Architecture in Germany and Poland is similar.

Table 2

	Tornio-Haparanda	Narva-Ivangorod	Guben-Gubin	Gorizia-Nova Gorica	Gerlitz-Zgorzelec	Valka-Valga
River	Tornio	Narva	Lusatian Neisse	Soča	Lusatian Neisse	Pedele
Architecture	Finnish and Swedish architecture	Fortress, castle, Baroque	historical architecture	Italian architecture	historical architecture	Different architecture
Landscape values	Suensaari island	Watermill, parks	harmonious urban greenery system	mountains, parks	parks	Parks, ponds, open air stage
Vertical dominances	churches, water tower	castle hill, churches	churches	churches, town on a hill	churches, towers	churches, chimneys
Landscape values in European border towns						

Different architecture styles are in Valka-Valga and Narva-Ivanogorod. Most of buildings in Latvia side are low-rise residential buildings but in Estonian side near town centre are low-rise and also multi-storey buildings. As Narva is one of the largest cities in Estonia, it has skyline with many multi-storey buildings and old Baroque houses. There are old soviet style buildings on Russia side.

Most border towns have public green spaces (Table 2). There are natural green structures as mountains, woods and islands in these border towns. Guben-Gubin has very harmonious urban greenery system. Valka-Valga has nice open-air stage that includes Pedele river.

Sometimes the parks would require improvements, for example in Latvia, Estonia, Poland and Russia.

As vertical domination in all cities serve churches and towers. Relief also can be as a unique vertical domain. There are factory chimneys as vertical domains in Latvian and Estonian cities.

The View of City Skylines

The city skyline is the nation's identity index. In developing the concept of city skyline already existing vertical domination is taken into account. The city skyline has to be analyzed from the spatial point of view. It cannot be just grabbed from the top. There is a tendency to set the height limit, based on individual building characteristics of the symbol when paving the city.

The silhouette of the city can be considered as visually important as element of town planning composition. Town planning space contains totality of building elements. Using vertical elements and accents is available to achieve impressive effect.

Fig. 1



Panorama of Tornio-Haparanda (www.haparanda.se/webbkamera/panoramabilder).

In Scandinavian city panoramas water plays important role (Fig. 1). It forms impression of a port like city where ships and boats are located. This makes the landscape more interesting. Scandinavian landscapes have also hills in the background. Clusters of trees appear among the buildings, which visually connects parts of the landscape. The panorama of Tornio-Haparanda is harmonious and balanced.

Fig. 2



Panorama of Narva-Ivangorod (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Narva_panorama_to_west_2008)

Soviet period high-rise buildings in the landscape makes it boring and monotonous (Fig. 2). This is the case when there is too much of vertical domination and it is the same. It requires even higher and more mixed domination of the city skyline, that will make it more interesting. Here the trees will no longer play any role because their scale is two times less than the buildings. Narva-Ivangorod needs more interesting dominances.

Fig. 3



Panorama of Guben-Gubin (www.guben-online.de).

The river divides border town in two separate parts but it looks that this is the same town (Fig. 3). Here are not visually contrasting components. The architecture and landscape looks similar. Panorama is supplemented by bridges that like switch connects the towns. Here are the green wedges which smooths the urban environment. The landscape of Guben-Gubin is balanced but some vertical accents are needed.

Fig. 4



Panorama of Gorizia-Nova Gorica (www.igorbirsa.com/mipresento.html).

Italian cities are characterized by red roofs and mountains (Fig. 4). Since this was first only Italian city, then it has remained homogenous Italian architecture. Italian landscapes are characterized that they can be observed from different height angles. Gorizia-Nova Gorica has beautiful landscape.

Fig. 5



Panorama of Gerlitz-Zgorzelec (www.flickr.com/photos/wilfriedjoh/1138569703/).

Here is a typical architecture of central Europe (Fig. 5). At the panorama we see a couple of churches, which serves as vertical domains. Here also trees participate in panorama, because they are higher than most of buildings. Maybe here could be some modern vertical accents.

Fig. 6



Panorama of Valka-Valga.

Valka-Valga panorama now is monotonous, there is a lack of vertical accents (Fig. 6). Latvian side is gray and dull. Estonian side has multi-storey buildings in different colours. Landscape of trees varies with height. It could be colourful in autumn. Both Latvians and Estonians have to fight with lazy owners of gardens near public areas.

Landscape silhouette serves as a visiting card for town visitors and therefore it should be expressive and exciting, which attracts tourists and countryside checkers.

Conclusions

1. There are a lot of factors that influence the development of city character. Chiefly it is influenced by architectural infrastructure and esthetical resources. Border towns have taste different historical processes. Sometimes the boundary was set down, sometimes put on.
2. Once the boundary no longer exists, border town is usually separated by river, which has high ecological and aesthetic quality.

3. Each border town has different landscape values. However, the majority kept the architectural diversity. Sometimes this diversity includes contrast, which degrades the quality of landscape.

4. In the territory of different border towns there is adequate amount of nature pavement territories. Some of them are not being used properly or they are being ruined. That is why it will be advisable to save current territories and make new there, where the amount of nature pavement territories is low.

5. While making artificial green spaces it will be useful to integrate them and tie with environment.

6. For making silhouette of border town, it is necessary to use vertical accents, that will make boring environment significant. Usage of trees makes panorama harmonious and balanced.

7. This research can be used not only for the two countries border town, but also to balance parts of the city or regions where the nation is facing variety in same country.

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