

Tendencies of Recreational Landscape Formation in Southeastern Baltic Seaside Resorts after 1990. Case of the Palanga Resort

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Abstract – The goal is to analyze the tendencies of the formation of recreational landscape of the Palanga resort and, after reviewing the planning experiences of other south-eastern Baltic resorts, present measures for landscape optimization. To achieve this, an analysis of changes of the seaside recreational landscape after 1990, the current state of resorts, scientific literature, and seaside resort planning was conducted. After assessing the changes in the recreational landscape, it has been noticed that for a quarter of the last century, planning of seaside resorts was aimed at attracting and accommodating an increasing number of holidaymakers, which caused an ever increasing need to intensify the construction in the territories, increasing the scale of buildings, and urbanizing natural territories without taking into consideration the existing natural and cultural environment. Natural, anthropogenic and social factors are affecting the recreational landscape of seaside resorts, which are important in the context of resort development and regional development. The article presents the means of Palanga resort optimization based on these factors.

Key words – Identity, seaside recreational landscape, south-eastern Baltic region, restitution of land.

INTRODUCTION

A recreational landscape can be considered as a combination of natural and anthropogenic components of the earth's surface, linked by material, energy and informational connections, a territorial formation, that aids the recovery of physical and spiritual health.

Natural resources of seaside resorts, such as the sea, beaches, recreational forests, undeveloped recreational areas, create suitable conditions for the development of recreational activities. However, „in addition to having picturesque nature, well-developed recreational infrastructure and excursion opportunities have to be reconciled” [9].

According to the Law on Tourism of the Republic of Lithuania, the term “resort” is explained as “a status given to a residential area, which contains scientifically explored and recognized therapeutic natural healing elements (mineral water, healing mud, health-friendly microclimate, recreational plots, water bodies) and special infrastructure that is developed to use these elements for treatment, health, tourism and recreation” [8].

The south-eastern Baltic region comprises Latvia, Lithuania, Kaliningrad Oblast and part of Poland (up to Gdynia). The Palanga resort, which attracts most of the holidaymakers in Lithuania, was chosen for analysis. The selection of south-eastern Baltic resorts that are analyzed in the article was determined by their similarities with the Palanga resort due to similar recreational load (Jūrmala) and seasonal problems (Sopot).

This article gives an overview of the history of Palanga resort planning concepts, including the decisions that have had an im-

act on the urban structure and urban development. The main focus is on the past planning processes and on the issues identified during each planning stage. Experience of the south-eastern Baltic region resorts planning is provided. An analysis of changes in the coastal recreational landscape, the current state of seaside resorts, planning concepts, and of scientific literature has been carried out. The accumulated scientific material makes it possible to present the conceptual offers of resort planning.

The resort of Palanga is described as an all year round resort based on sanatorium treatment, health and beauty services. Although there are currently 8 sanatoriums in Palanga, even before 1990 the city was not solely focused on just sanatorium treatment. In the General Plan of Great Palanga prepared from 1971 to 1972 (authors V. Stauskas, L. Urmonienė, J. Vaškevičius), it was proposed to develop the city as a resort for healthy people, this is why not many sanatoriums, which there were plenty of at the time, were foreseen. In recent years, this resort has developed the image of a noisy summer entertainment destination, attracting tourists from all over Lithuania and abroad. However, the number of holidaymakers in the resort depends on the season, the number of holidaymakers in the summer season can get up to 200 thousand, while when the weather starts cooling the number of holidaymakers rises during the weekend only, during winter season only locals and visitors staying during the holidays remain.

Investigations of the seaside recreational landscape of Lithuanian resorts was carried out before the restoration of Lithuania's independence. A scheme for the formation and restoration of landscape architecture and recreation in Great Palanga was prepared by authors R. Baškytė, G. Čelkienė, L. Dringelis, P. Grecevičius, R. Kviklys, and V. Stauskas in which they analysed and presented the proposals for balancing the construction, recreation flows and natural resources, giving priority to the maintenance of landscape and rational management of the open spaces that are the basis for healthy rest. The aforementioned team of authors prepared the most important studies on the state of urban and architectural conditions of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic in order to prepare a preliminary program for further architectural development (1986), which explores the architectural and landscape space of the resorts, analysing their compositional-aesthetic level, perception and emotional impact. A number of works have been carried out, which deal with the architecture of recreational buildings, by separating typical objects (typological groups), architectural and urban heritage of resorts, landscaping and management of resorts, but after 1990 there is a lack of research continuity.

The goal is to analyze the tendencies of the formation of the recreational landscape of the Palanga resort and, after reviewing the planning experiences of other south-eastern Baltic resorts, present measures for landscape optimization.

I. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. An Overview of the Concepts of Tourism Development

The future of the development of seaside resorts depends on the idea of a resort structure – the concept and further development of recreational landscape, which is the basis for the urban and natural framework. In the general plan of the resort of Palanga, prepared in 1991, the formation of a large resort was foreseen [11]. The basis for the development of the resort was the concept of the General Plan of 1972, which provided for the establishment of a deep-bay resort. The development of separate zones – separate six resorts were planned, where recreational infrastructure would be developed, as shown in the development scheme (Fig. 1). Green spaces were planned to be left between separate zones, to maintain the ecological balance.

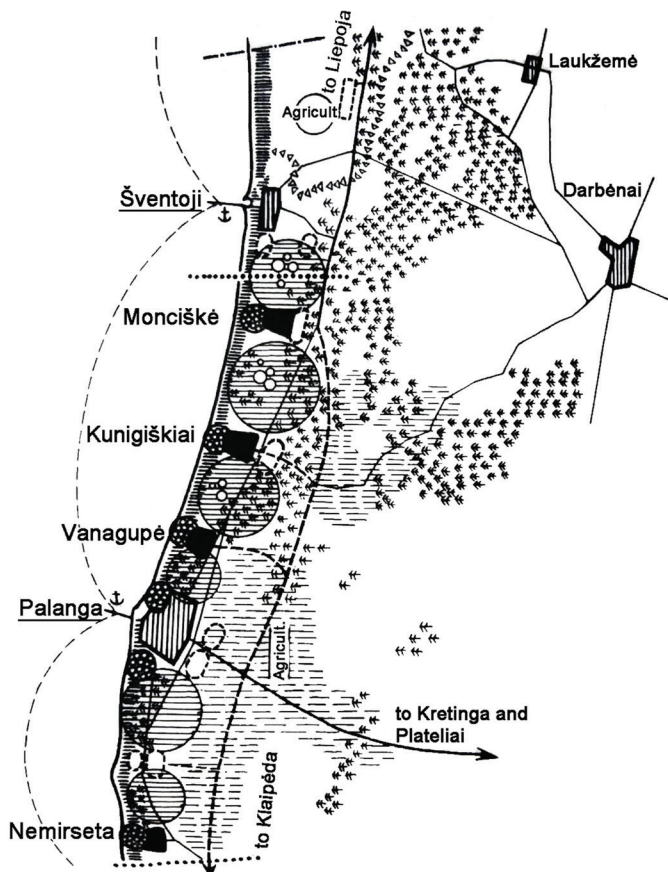


Fig. 1. Plan of recreation area in Palanga resort. Scheme by V.Stauskas [14].

The goal of the concept was to create recreation areas surrounded by greenery, avoiding the development of a continuous

resort. In the general plan, the farthest distances from the sea of residential district borders were estimated at up to 3 kilometres, while further development in this direction was undesirable, as in the area between these districts and the detour highway there were green areas planned, to protect Palanga from the influence of the continent. Residential development reserves were allowed after the planned period in the existing territory of the gardens and in the territory of the southern Kretinga highway.

While preparing the general plan of the resort of Palanga (1991), the concept of a belt-type urban structure was considered, the validity of which was determined by the coastal zone. A hypothetical imperfection of the concept of deep-nesting planning may be the congestion of holidaymakers in the narrow seashore area at the centres, which would cause ecological imbalances (loss of banks, pollution of beaches, etc.). The seaside zone is like an entrance to the Baltic Sea complex. “This circumstance requires the formation of a framework that is capable of performing its environmental function in its structure. This complicates the development of recreation. Thus, it is necessary to look for the most rational ways in which these two conflicting interests could work together” [5]. An idea was put forward that in the conditions of the seaside the requirements of nature conservation and recreation could be met by a natural and urban belt type structure, which should be formed in the coastal belt approximately 3–4 km wide and consist of 5 parallel (coastal) belts.

When comparing the belt type and deep-bay concepts, the two first belts in both concepts would be similar – beaches and dune parks. In the third lane, recreational complexes would run a continuous belt parallel to the seaside, and in the east of it there would be a continuous lane of parks and continuous communal zone. The option of continuous urbanization was not adopted, as a health park was being created between the central part of Palanga and Vanagupė (author L. Dringelis). Also, the negative consequences of the belt-type urban concept were outlined, such as the overload of the beaches in the central part of the resort, and lack of green spaces – parks and forest parks, with no compensation for the loss of them, because the complex would be blocked from the east by residential areas, the comfort level of the central part and Vanagupė resort would be reduced.

One of the analogues of the belt-type urban structure in a resort is the Sopot resort in Poland. At present, according to the Sopot’s Revitalization Program (approved by the City Council on November 27, 1997), the resort is divided into four zones. As shown in the scheme (Fig. 2), the first zone is the SPA resort, located closest to the sea and including the historic buildings that make the city famous (the Institute of Balneotherapy, the SPA House, the Kuracyjny square, the sea bridge, the Grand Hotel, etc.). This is a vacation area with buildings for renting dating back to the 19th century. The second zone is the lower part of Sopot, where accommodation was also being developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. These two zones are in the centre of the city, which is the most visited area by tourists. The third zone includes a racecourse, a tribune, and other buildings that can hold large numbers of people. The fourth zone includes the upper Sopot Terrace, where the local residents live [12].

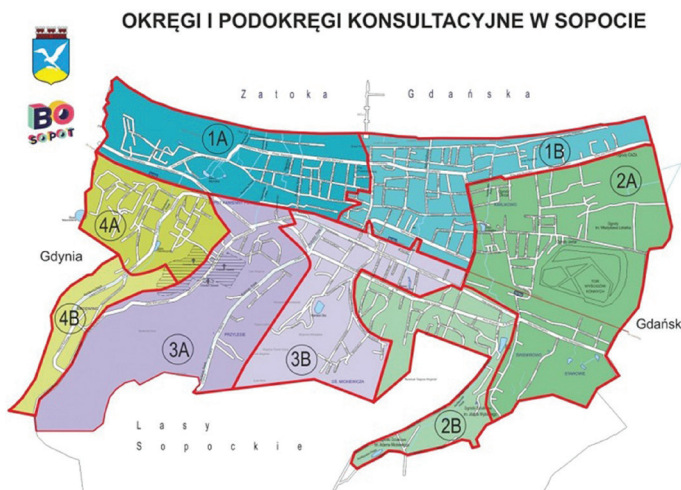


Fig. 2. Sopot resort is divided into four zones [12].

In the case of Sopot, season related problems are apparent when the number of tourists drops significantly during the cold season, while the local residents live far from the central part, making the central part of Sopot empty and unpleasant. So the fact that residential districts are separated from the sea and centre is assessed negatively.

Taking into account the concepts of resort formation and their current states, there is no universal concept for all resorts because the urban structure of the resort is conditioned by the natural framework of the area, urban heritage, social aspects, and the pursuit of ecological balance. “When analysing the Palanga resort, until the release of Palanga General Plan in 1991, the central part of Palanga actually did not develop more neither south or north, than it was anticipated in the General Plan of 1972” [16]. Resort complexes of Vanagupė, Šventoji and Mončiškiai developed in the places where it was planned. Thus, the tendency of continuous urbanization of the seaside resort was not seen until the restoration of Lithuania’s independence.

B. Impact of Land Restitution Processes on the Development of the Resort

Palanga resort saw its biggest numbers of visitors up to 1988, after the restoration of independence the resort was left deserted. The growth in recreational flow began again in 1993–1994. The quality of the development of recreation was greatly complicated by the imperfect property privatization policy adopted by the state. Since 1992, high construction rates and the era of new large buildings have changed the recreational landscape of the Palanga resort. “The restoration of ownership of land up to 20 Ares” [7] immediately created an urban problem, if the state had other forms of restitution – securities, money or apartments, the seaside would be less urbanized. At the beginning of 1998, the Palanga City Board determined the size of the new land parcels, which, as a remuneration to citizens for land ownership, of residential buildings and parts thereof, are to be transferred for individual construction and other purposes according to the importance in the context of the city: in Šventoji – 20 Ares, in

Nemirseta and near the review wheel – 15 Ares, and in the central part of the city – 10 Ares, but no more than had owned.

After March 11, 1990, the economic and social reform began, with the adoption of laws on property, land reform and privatization of state property (1991). The aforementioned law practically destroyed the concept of the Grand Palanga resort. “Without a new concept, with the return of land, the natural framework was destroyed, the values of the historical heritage were lost, the unique coffin of the seaside was ruined. The essential schemes of undeveloped areas in the town’s general plan were violated” [2], so were the provisions outlined in plans for the central part of the city (building plots in unplanned green areas, violation of the requirements of the resort sanitary zones by construction of residential buildings in the first protection zone) as well as the procedure of a flawed land parcels appointment. Even objects that were supposed to be demolished were privatized.

During the urbanization of important areas of the resort, a large number of construction works were carried out at the expense of the former green zones, the city plots dispersed the planned Health Park, valuable greenery in the Green Square near Vytautas and Žvejų streets was damaged and disposed of. When the prefab line was privatized, the structures were meant for the service of holidaymakers, most of them were demolished, while the remaining ones were neglected and were no longer used for their intended purposes (Fig. 3). On the spots of demolition of the aforementioned sites, according to the approved projects, construction of new buildings began, which had little in common with the previous objects, and were of considerably larger volumes. Some buildings had a residential function, although in the projects the room functions are shown as serving the beach visitors.



Fig. 3. New buildings in non-urban coastline [Picture: A. Jankauskaitė].



Fig. 4. Contemporary architectural forms change the recreational landscape. Jūrmala, 2017 [Picture: A. Jankauskaitė].

During the first decade of the restored Lithuania's independence, negative phenomena and causes in the Palanga resort urban trends were observed, especially the aspect of interaction of the new architecture and nature, which is one of the most important elements of Palanga:

1. In the historic part of the city, in the zone near the dunes the purpose of privatized buildings was usually changed to residential. The beach infrastructure was destroyed, while the natural environment and the city seaside composition was damaged – the reconstructed and enlarged structures, as well as new ones damaged the eastern part of the dunes, they began to discord with the environment.
2. Užkanavės street was incorrectly formed. Užkanavės St. was the former Kunigiškės village, which had been planned in the second half of the 16th century as a one-sided volok village, which became a village of lone scattered farmsteads. The farmsteads stood mostly in one row on the west side of the road (now on the street), to the east of the dunes and along the forest lane that stretched along them. This formed an organic and mutually meaningful interaction between the structures and natural elements: the buildings did not intrude the forest, while dunes and the forest effectively protected the population from the prevailing western winds. This type of building format remained until the beginning of privatization. Once the land parcels on this territory were privatized, in many of them the old buildings were not demolished, but new ones were built by cutting the forest and intruding on the dunes and the forest lane.
3. The architecture of many of the reconstructed and enlarged buildings has left an undesirable visual impact on the resort's image. The main reasons are the improper scale of buildings and the discord of their elements and forms with the environment.

The processes of territorial privatization and urbanization that have affected the recreational landscape of the Palanga resort are also visible in Jūrmala and other seaside resorts. After the resto-

ration of Latvia's independence, Jūrmala had a decline in tourism. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, because of widespread information in the countries of former Soviet Union about the revival of Jūrmala, intensive resort development began. This is when in Jūrmala, along huge sanatoriums and historic wooden architecture buildings, contemporary architectural forms have emerged [3] (Fig. 4). The scale of new buildings often is in discord with the heritage architecture and the size of the land plots, thus having a negative effect on the recreational landscape.

After discussing the negative urban phenomena, one can conclude that a flawed privatization policy was adopted, the scale of buildings remains large and is still increasing, the number of large residential blocks is increasing - these resting blocks have a negative effect on the resorts image, and the quality of recreation suffers. In the Lithuanian resort Palanga, this process began with an incorrect sequence of privatization practices. Before the privatization, a list of non-privatized territories and structures (and if it existed, it was not detailed) was not prepared and legally formalized, which undoubtedly should have included the entire area and infrastructure near the dunes, i.e. also the dune and forest belt on the seaside, near the village of Kunigiškės (Užkanavės street). "Also the building regulations for the zone near the dunes were prepared unprofessionally and architectural quality control of reconstructed and newly built buildings was insufficient" [2]. Palanga was increasingly losing its most important resort features: comfort, nature, with maximum density in building areas.

C. Ways to Optimize the Recreational Landscape of Seaside Resorts

Natural, anthropogenic and social factors that interact with each other affect the recreational landscape of seaside resorts. Natural factors are landscapes, the sea, beaches, mineral resources, climate, and green areas, as well as ecological accessibility – clean environment, air and water – a source of treatment and recreation in resorts. Anthropogenic factors include the cultural landscape that forms the local spirit, the region's identity, as well as the development of technologies and infrastructure that improve the quality of services in resorts. Social factors range from human resources, demographics, geographical and social accessibility to a legal framework that directly and indirectly regulates the concept of resort development through legal constraints and incentives. The mentioned factors are important in the context of resort and regional development. The means for optimizing the recreational landscape of seaside resorts are selected according to natural, anthropogenic and social factors.

C.1. Natural Factor

From the very beginning of the resort spatial planning, the focus is on nature, this is especially seen in the seaside, balneological areas where holidaymakers go and have rest in their own or leased villas. "The interwar period, was based on the principles of functional zoning, the urban-garden concept was applied, thus improving the quality of the tourist's interactions with the environment, creating impressions of the holiday. In particular, a lot of resources were devoted to the management of the park, as one



Fig. 5. Greenery in Palanga resort [Picture: A.Jankauskaitė].



Fig. 6. Infrastructure in Liepāja beach [Picture: A.Jankauskaitė].

of the most important urban elements of the city, and to getting meaning as a resort” [10]. The latter was not oriented to the restructuring of the territories but more to their explicit functional zoning and the development of recreational activities. To this day, the priority of nature remains important in resorts, it is also defined by legislation: “... the total area of recreational green areas per capita is 45 m², twice more than in other urban areas” [6]. It is important not only to highlight the value of nature, but also to pay attention to preserving aesthetically most attractive landscape, which determines the attractiveness of recreational areas. Spatial development in resorts should be shaped primarily by revitalization of existing neglected territories, avoiding natural areas and unjustified urbanization of new areas.

C.2. Natural and Anthropogenic Factors

In Palanga, as well as in other seaside resorts, the beaches with their surrounding zones (Fig. 5) being of great value, attract the largest inflow of holidaymakers is. In order to meet the recreational needs near the seaside, proper use of the beaches is necessary without causing damage to them. Essential services – toilets, showers, rental of objects and storage of objects, etc., that are evenly spaced along the beach, are needed. However, the need for comfort cannot affect the aesthetic potential of beaches. In search for design solutions, alternatives were analyzed in foreign resorts. Putting mobile toilets on beaches was considered in Palanga. However, this example was implemented in Liepāja, and has had a negative effect, which was noticed during the current research of conditions of the Liepāja resort. Although the objects are aesthetically designed the holidaymakers avoid getting close to them (Fig. 6). Although there is a debate about construction in the area near the beach, it is clear that a developed beach infrastructure is needed. These can be larger, properly reconstructed or newly built buildings that meet functional and special aesthetic requirements, it is important that objects in the foreground do not disrupt the seaside landscape.

C.3. Anthropogenic Factor

In resorts, territories that are linked to the history and identity of the resort stand out, as well as the ones that assist in the formation of an urban structure. The Palanga resort is characterized “by a set of material (landscapes, locations, buildings, etc.) and non-material elements (memories, narratives, written documents, etc.), which make a significant contribution to creating a place and giving spirit to it” [13]. The locations that reveal the identity of the Palanga resort are located in the historic part of the city. These are: villas that remind of the times of the rule of the family of count Tiškevičiai; fully formed Meilės and Birute Alleys, where the buildings stand in well-formed spacious plots of land away from the red line of the street; the holidaymaker attraction – Jonas Basanavičius street, which is visually formed by constantly thinning building density right up to the sea bridge; Vytautas street; the Church of the Virgin Mary; Kourhauz, and other objects. In recent decades, to meet the needs of tourists, planning has been carried out in a hurry, resulting in considerable damage. The scale of buildings has increased, the constructions are built in the sites of the planned green areas, thus due to urbanization and eradication of green areas, Palanga is in danger of losing its uniqueness. Also, positive emotional impact of the resort is reduced by the buildings in a state of disrepair in the most representative areas, this problem must be managed (Fig. 7).

Another “consequence of copying fashion is the emergence of homogeneous, “international” landscapes” [15]. The facades of the aforementioned buildings on Jonas Basanavičius Street are hidden under advertising stands, umbrellas and portico glass or plastic porches.

The architectural artistic expression of Old Palanga has accumulated the stylistic approach of all the times during which it evolved, which corresponds to the technical possibilities of an era and the understanding of art and represents the identity of the resort, but its perception is blocked by visual contamination (Fig. 8), which has to be removed.



Fig. 7. Ruins of Jūrātė swimming pool in Palanga [Picture: A. Jankauskaitė].



Fig. 8. The effect of visual pollution on representative architecture of Palanga resort [Picture: A. Jankauskaitė].

C.4. Social Factor

One of the major causes of conflict in Palanga is the Palanga summer-winter relationship, which represents the ratio between the Palanga resort (150–200 thousand people in summer) and Palanga city (15.5 thousand inhabitants year-round). The problem emerges when the city centre has an absence of permanent inhabitants, when residential houses are replaced by rest houses. The seasonality is largely due to climatic conditions due to which there is a great deal of entertainment in summer, but an important aspect is the popularity of having a second home. The owner rests or rents out his property during summer and does not reside there during the cold season, thus the town becomes deserted and has a small number of permanent residents located far from the central part of the city. A mix of zones for rest and for permanent living is required.

An international environment is an important factor, that has a significant impact on the whole system of resorts, international trends and agreements have an impact on the development of resort regions. On the one hand, the system of Lithuanian resorts is affected by the tendencies in the development of international resorts, on the other hand, the image of Lithuanian resorts has been developing in the joint resort system of the Baltic Sea coast region. “An analysis of international environment allows to avoid the mistakes made by other countries and to create a unique model for resorts” [1]. A resort can be characterized as an object for health, tourism, sport and recreation. It is one of the pillars of the image formation of a country. In order to attract tourists to resort towns, it is necessary to develop an industry with a wide range of recreational services, maintain the natural priority of a non-urbanized seafront, to represent the local identity and to create a high-quality infrastructure to service tourism, which can be used by both Lithuanian and foreign tourists.

CONCLUSION

After examining both the belt and deep-nest seaside resort planning concepts and the current state of the resorts, the main aspects that determine their urban structure is the natural framework of the area, urban heritage, social aspects and the pursuit of ecological balance.

After 1990, the qualitative development of recreation in resorts was complicated due to insufficient policies of privatization of state property. Land restitution began without a developed new concept, thus destroying the natural framework, damaging valuable historical heritage, destroying a unique coastal dune landscape. The high construction rates and increased scale of buildings began to threaten the recreational landscape of resorts.

Intensive development of Palanga has gone far from the provisions of the approved planning documents. A continuous urbanization process is taking place along the seaside. Most of the new and reconstructed buildings negatively affect the resort's landscape and construction takes place in green areas. There are violations of the requirements of the resort's sanitary zones and the urban density of Palanga historic part has increased. Due to these reasons, the resort's comfort and naturalness suffer.

The means for optimizing the recreational landscape of the seaside resorts are selected according to natural, anthropogenic and social factors. When using them, it is important to preserve the priority of nature, to rationally form recreational infrastructure, to represent the identity of the resorts and to create a high-level infrastructure for serving tourists.

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