

THE WOODEN STRUCTURE HERITAGE AND THE GREEN BODY OF JELGAVA

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One of the top priorities for any urban municipality is preserving the cultural heritage of its constructional space. This applies to the industrial, wooden structure, churches, architectural heritage of the brick structure, as well as to the body of the green-blue space and development opportunities, creating or expanding the existing areas of public recreation. This task and the positively set objective are not easily reachable, as we are faced with property rights and the utilities network, with the functional security and management of roads and streets. The municipality must ensure conditions that do not impair the quality of the heritage of the structure and its authenticity. It is possible to solve this issue only by a single operation of the institutions of the local government, in seeking linkage with the property managers¹. The cultural heritage, in obtaining a new functional importance, creates around itself a new scale and structure in the urban space. This also applies to the reconstruction of the structure of the adjacent areas, not under the monument protection, but adjacent to the cultural monument. Great importance to the historical heritage of buildings is held by the green body, which may highlight and emphasize the structure, or on the contrary — cover up, and build a disproportion in the urban space.

Introduction

Transformation of the urban spatial structure under the effects of the political and economic conditions is followed by changes in its scale, harmony, silhouette, structure, etc. This applies not only to the characteristics of the structure, but also to the green body, entering the urban space differently at different times. It is based on both the conditions of the economic situation and the public desire to live as green as possible. This is particularly true for areas outside the centre of the city, which form part of the low-rise structure with gardens, street plantings, etc., clearly highlighting the living conditions and identity of the place. The economic upswing comes

up with the pace and scale of construction, which results in the detached structure, and the green areas are expanding in extra-urban areas. In turn, in the parts of the urban centre the low-rise structure and the green areas are shrinking. The heritage is of value to society and it belongs not only to our era, but also to the future². In the old structure of the city, with disappearing of the construction volumes, large groups of trees have broken in, the foliage of which masks the perception of expressiveness of the historic space, narrowing the view angle and suppressing unrolling and silhouette of the street structure. This is particularly highlighted in places where wooden buildings have disappeared from the

continuous structure, and in their place tree seedlings appear, which unless removed in a timely manner, form huge dimensions that hide the facades of buildings, but the root system and the quantity of leaves in autumn destroy the constructive design of buildings. In everyday life we get used to it, the place of the tree is assumed to be correct, and a sawing permit is even more problematic. Without going further into the structure's historic design, a series of faulty assumptions are formed that undermine the expressiveness and the harmony of the historic urban space. The aim of the research is to make the comparison and assessment of the structural changes in the urban spatial structure of Jelgava during the last hundred years, in detail, examining the heritage of the wooden structure in the locations of the old city rampart.

The main assignments of the research are based on the comparison and assessment of the impact of the historical documents, geomorphological aspects and transformation processes of the structure of the city of Jelgava on the urban spatial structure in the period from the beginning of the 19th century until the beginning of the 21st century³. The character of the existing historical wooden structure, the locations of the existing tree planting lines of streets or tree seedlings in the areas of the cultural heritage structure are separately assessed.

Material and Methods

The research concerns the zones of the historic wooden building of Jelgava pertaining to the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The city was

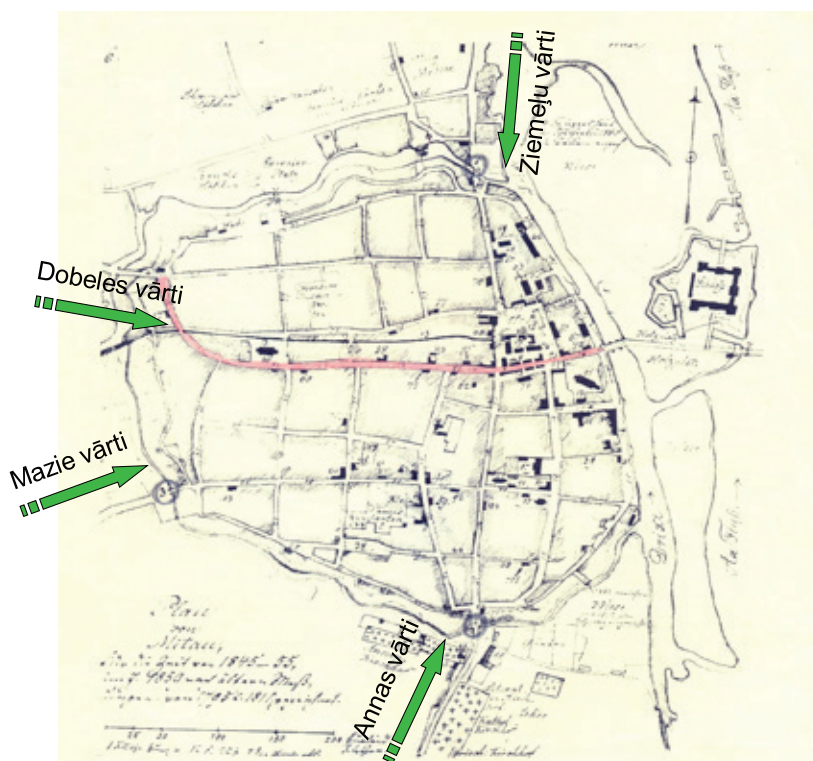


Fig. 1. The historic city gate until the demolition of the ramparts in the beginning of the 19th century. Source: Jelgava History and Art Museum



Fig. 2. The former Northern Gate area of the city and the historic wooden structure (author's scheme)

burned down during the Second World War, the heritage of its wooden architecture is very small, and consists of some mosaic-type areas in the map of the city to highlight the picture of the character, density, street width and size of the parcels of land of the historic wooden structure. The locations of the city's historic borderline or the dismantled rampart line (the beginning of the 19th century) and the former city entrance gate are readable in the character of the street network of the modern city. The gate locations marked the points, where the countryside roads further converged into the city's marketplace (Fig. 1). Each of the road veins created their building structure and the street network, the roadbeds of which are readable even today after 200 years. Each of the gates of the city had

a small wooden bridge, leading across a protective canal that was parallel to the rampart. Accordingly, the geomorphological design or the natural base around the city obtained the significance of the city gates.

In order to clarify the progress of the transformation process, the comparative method is used in the research, when studying materials in the historical archive and analysing the situation in the current urban spatial structure⁴:

- transformation of the historic wooden structure near the former city gates;
- gardens and street plantings in the areas of the historic wooden structure.

The Northern Gate led into the city from the side of the floodplain of the right bank

of the River Svēte. The road from the Northern Gate down the left bank of the River Lielupe led to the sea. In winter conditions, when the Lielupe was frozen, the river was used as a sledge road. The Northern Gate of the city has the most powerfully expressed character of the natural base. It is marked by floodplains of the Svēte, which has historically restrained the expansion of urban spatial structure northward. From the Northern Gate, Ezera (Uzvaras) Street led to the city (Fig. 2), which formed a straight line along the Calvinist Church to the marketplace. The street's character is well readable in the drawing of J. Döring (Fig. 3). Today in the vicinity of the Northern Gate only a few wooden buildings (49 Ezera (Uzvaras) Street; 4, 6, 14 Lapskalna Street) have just survived both in the construction of the pillar frame and the upright frame, forming a two-story structure.

In the inner yards of the buildings along the windows, even in the post-Second World War years there were flower gardens surrounded by a wattle fence. A path to the woodshed over the yard ran along both a well

and small beds. After the city was burned down, trees also were gone. During the restoration of streets, tree lines were created, using fast-growing varieties — poplars, willows, the giant canopy of which overshadowed buildings and in autumns covered their roofs with leaves, so additionally increasing deterioration of the construction of buildings (Lapskalna, Uzvaras, Meiju ceļš, Kazarmes Street). With the dense tree plantations, the wind around the buildings is muffled. In Jelgava, poplar planting in the 1950s was the main “weapon” of the Soviet power to hide the remaining part of the cultural heritage behind the fast-growing trees. And just half a century later, an intense poplar sawing began.

The character of the wooden structure of the former Northern Gate areas is brightly highlighted on Ausekļa, Kazarmes, and Vārpu streets that form parallelism by repeating the filled up canal and demolished the rampart's line. Ausekļa Street has maintained the historical round cobblestone pavement cover (Fig. 4). It has no street plantations, and orchards extend up to the street building



Fig. 3. The location of the former Northern Gate near the River Driksa with a firewood place, the second half of the 19th century (drawing by J. Döring). Source: magazine “Senatne un Māksla”, 1937)

setback line. The locations where the historical street structure (the intersection with Viestura Street) is lost, in the post-war years, the new building setback line is created with an offset from the street axis, disrupting the historic scale of the street. The adjacent wooden structure of the northern side of Vārpu Street (Nos. 14, 16, 18, 20, 22) has maintained the continuous structure of 70 m in length, thus vividly highlighting the character of the wooden structure of the end of the 19th century. On the southern side of the street, orchards stretch, the shading of which does not reach the opposite or structure side. In the corner of Ausekļa and Blaumaņa streets, on Ausekļa Street (Nos 8, 12) on narrow plots of land, wooden buildings have survived. The width of Kazarmes street is greater and in the eastern part it is

enriched by a regular tree plantation line on the southern side of the street (Fig. 5). Unfortunately, from Lapskalna Street to Kārļa Street trees are overgrown and their branches suppress and shade the historical structure, as well as disrupt the proportion of the street space. In turn, at the intersection of Kārļa and Kazarmes streets, with the tree line to end, a two-storey building (12 Kazarmes Street) with a corner turret is located, so emphasizing the place of the street intersection. Where the tree line ends, it is possible to compare and assess the scale of the historical structure of Kazarmes Street and the proportion of tree branches (Fig. 6). Kazarmes and Ausekļa streets as the fabric are kept together by the structure scale of Viestura Street. A brilliant legacy of the wooden structure is the former Jewish hospital at 15 Viestura Street. At the



Fig. 4. The round cobblestone pavement on Ausekļa Street (2015, photo by the author)



Fig. 5. The tree line on Lapskalna and Kazarmes streets (2015, photo by the author)



Fig. 6. The wooden structure of Kazarmes and Kārļa streets (2015, photo by the author)



Fig. 7. The wooden structure of Kazarmes and Pulkv. Brieža streets (2015, photo by the author)



Fig. 8. The historic centre of Jelgava in the 1930s. Source: Jelgava History and Art Museum



Fig. 9. The Reformed (Calvinist) Church at the River Driksa (author's scheme)

rear of the building, there is a garden area. The old structure along Brieža Street between Ausekļa and Vārpu streets has maintained the historic street width with a cobblestone cover. The narrow parcels of land are with a small inner yard and without garden areas. At the intersection of Kazarmes and Brieža streets two-story wooden buildings have survived (*Fig. 7*). A part of them are hidden behind giant trees. The spires of the bell towers of the Transfiguration Church, Trinity Church, and St. Anne's Church, as well as the palace roof with chimneys were readable from the former Northern Gate area in the silhouette of the city in the view lines from the floodplain of the River Svēte until the Second World War. The Transfiguration Church was compositionally located as a dominant of Dobeles Street at the River Driksa. The spire was visible from the palace, from the opposite bank of the River Lielupe and the marketplace (*Figs. 8, 9*). The furthest point of the structure from the Northern Gate was the old jute factory or flax mill (the 1880s), the location of which alongside the Lielupe was convenient for transportation of raw materials and finished products by the river. In the post-war years (the 1950s and 1960s), a dense allotment district was formed in the northern part of the city.

With the disappearance of the historic wooden structure on Uzvaras Street near the Northern Gate, in the post-war years, this site has remained relatively empty after the removal of ruins. A new marketplace with small pavilions is created here in the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1960s–1980s, at the Northern Gate, at the intersection of Uzvaras and Ausekļa streets, a five-storey residential blocks were built with buildings of a public nature. The new boundary line of the said structure is the historic structure of Ausekļa and Lapskalna streets. In the intersection of Kazarmes and Brieža streets, horsemen cavalry barracks and a pond for horse washing was located at the end of the 19th century.

During the time of the first independent State of Latvia, the barracks were used for the needs of the Latvian army. Traces of the historical use of the area are still readable today. The continuous free greenfield area is alien to the structure and scale. In the eastern part, small plots of land with detached houses are connected to the area. Approximately 200 m in radius around the former barrack zone, buildings of a public nature (offices, a kindergarten) and a four-storey school volume were built in the 1970s.

The area of the Dobeles Gate (called the Western Gate) dates back to the connection of the southern part of Ausekļa Street to the building zone of the Old Town (*Fig. 10*). The wooden structure at the intersection of the two streets was burned down during the Second World War (*Figs. 11, 12*). The linden line planted in the empty place of the post-war time is carefully groomed, thus hiding the architecturally low-value structure of the 1970s. The tree height does not compete with the adjacent historic structure (*Fig. 13*). The block of buildings of Vecpilsētas Street is concluded by a wooden structure along Jāņa Asara Street, which in the southern part is covered by overgrown tree branches, thus hiding the expressiveness of the old structure in any season. The historic location of the Dobeles Gate and the adjacent wooden structure are not visible, thus depriving the panoramic view lines, when entering into the city from the side of Dobeles. Vecpilsētas, J. Asara and Mazā Dambja streets form parallelism that repeats the old rampart line of the city. Approximately 50 per cent of the wooden structure has been lost between these streets, and the plots of land are intensively taken over by a tree seedling and shrub cover. The continuation of J. Asara Street after the intersection with Dambja Street also belongs to the historic area of the Dobeles Gate. In the perimeter, the volume of the wooden building of 15 Jāņa Asara Street is surrounded by trees that are more than three times the height of the



Fig. 10. The northern part of Vecpilsētas street (2015, photo by the author)



Fig. 11. The intersection of Vecpilsētas and Dobeles streets at the Western Gate, the 1930s.
Source: History and Art Museum



Fig. 12. The Soviet army comes in Jelgava, July 1944. Source: History and Art Museum



Fig. 13. The tree line of Vecpilsētas street at the Western Gate (2015, photo by the author)



Fig. 14. The wooden buildings structure in the area of the former Western Gate (author's scheme)

building. In the adjacent block of buildings behind Sakņudārza Street, in the intersection of Skolotāju and Dambja streets, the valuable wooden structure is hidden behind the tree lines of Dambja Street. There are no longer many wooden construction monuments left in cities and in the shaping of the landscape, sometimes they have only a subordinate role⁵. The wooden structure around the Western or Dobele Gate at St. Ann's Church functionally formed a very branched structure in its character, the axis of which was determined by the canal, that connected the rivers Svēte and Driksa (Fig. 14). The canal supplied drinking water to the city. From the middle of the 19th century, the canal was used as a trade road for the delivery of goods to the marketplace. At the former Dobele Gate, the canal formed an extension to be able to turn boats for a return journey. The former Dobele Gate was as a crossroads place, where M. Dambja,

J. Asara, Vecpilsētas, Kr. Barona streets met. A countryside road wended through this gate location from the surrounding areas, which had very fertile soils.

The Small Gate (Southwest Gate) leads into the Old Town from Svēte and the palace of Zaļenieki side. The location of the old gate is the intersection of Sakņudārza and Raiņa streets (Fig. 15).

The wooden structure inside the historic rampart has been destroyed. In turn, before the location of the former gate 100 m in distance a dense wooden building structure has survived on Filozofu, Raiņa, Tērvetes, and Sakņudārza streets. The tree plantations along Raiņa Street are groomed and thinned, making it possible to read the architectural design of the buildings. This applies to the buildings at 40 Raiņa Street and 36 Raiņa Street. A corner bay window has survived in the latter of them. The wooden structure



Fig. 17. The wooden buildings structure in the Anne's Gate at St. John's Church. Source: Jelgava History and Art Museum

between the two buildings has been destroyed, and the plot of land is taken over by high tree canopies. The scale of the structure of the small wooden gate is readable around the hospital, Ūdensvada, Mātera, Zirgu, Veidenbauma, Pētera, and Vaļņu streets. The green body of the streets consists of orchards, and the streets are characterized by tree line plantations.

The former Southwestern or the Small Gate, like the former Dobele Gate linked the city with the fertile clay lands in the direction of Svēte, Ūziņi, Jēkaba, and Zaļenieki manor houses. Around the beginning of the 18th century, the above road also served for the needs of the duchy, as the winter palace in Jelgava was linked with the summer residences in Svēte and Zaļenieki.

The Anne's or the Southern Gate next to St. John's Church — upstream the River Lielupe — similar to the Small Gate, lead to the summer palace of Rundāle, as well as served as a place where roads converged

from the rich clay lands on the left bank upstream of the Lielupe.

In the area of the Anne's Gate at the Lielupe, the wooden structure has little survived. It has been influenced by several aspects. Among the most important ones is the location of the city gate adjacent to the station building. During the two world wars, when the station and tracks were destroyed, the adjacent wooden structure also suffered.

The urban spatial structure should be mentioned as the second aspect, because next to the gate there was the cemetery land of St. John's Church, creating a wide green space. As the last important moment is to be mentioned that the place of the station building dates back to the first boulevard creation in the 1880s and 1890s, taking up about 200–300 m in length in the direction of the marketplace. The stately high-rise buildings of the 1880s and 1890s, along Vaļņu Street and Zemgale Prospect pushed out the low-value wooden structure (Figs. 16, 17).

One of the last wooden buildings along Zemgale Prospect is the building at 2 Sliežu Street, opposite the former Red Cross and the prison building, together with them highlighting a clear scale and character of the historical building of the southern part of the city. The wooden structure area of the Anne's Gate on the western side links to the residential two-story building, at 2 Stacijas Street, where a corner bay window with a turret has survived. The building's ornate facade is not hidden by tree plantations and it is highly visible on the city's skyline from the southern side. As another example, the wooden structure of the western and northern parts of St. John's Church at Jāņa Street (Nos. 1, 3) is to be mentioned. In this section, Jāņa Street forms a pedestrian zone along the park or the former edge of the cemetery, so maintaining the building and tree planting proportion.

Conclusion

The locations of the city's historical gates and the urban spatial structure around them during the period of 150 years have been transformed several times under the influence of the war, political, and economic activity. At the present situation regarding the urban construction, the preserved wooden building is only a tiny part of the building density still readable until 1944. Currently, the preserved wooden architectural heritage at the places of the city's historic entrance gates is characterized differently.

In the former North Gate area, separate wooden housing has been preserved — at Ausekļa, Kazarmes, Vārpu, Viestura, Dobeles, Lapskalna, Uzvaras, Kārļa, Meiju, pulkv. Brieža streets. A large part of the above areas is surrounded by orchards. The seamless structure of the wooden building is disrupted by the expansion of the wedge-shaped post-war building with a different scale and form creation.

In the former West Gate neighbourhood, the wooden building has survived —

at Dambja, M. Dambja, Skolotāju, Egas, J. Asara, Vecpilsētas, Kr. Barona, Dobeles streets. The street building, which was closer to the former Jēkaba Canal, historically developed as an extra-urban cottage building zone. The “canvas” of the said building is held together by the domination of St. Anne's Church Bell Tower.

Nearby the former Southwest Gate area there can be still found some wooden buildings — the wooden building heritage of Filozofu, Tērvetes, Raiņa, Sakņudārza, Slimnīcas, Svētes, Jāņa, Ūdensvada, Mātera, Zirgu, Vaļņu, Skolas, Jēkaba, Veidenbauma streets. Like the nature of the wooden building area of the former West Gate, in this part of the city as the vertical accent the St. John's Church spire must be mentioned.

Today, the former South or Anna's Gate zone contains only a few wooden buildings — at Sliežu, Stacijas, and Palīdzības streets. This part of the city suffered the most from aircraft attacks, because it was located beside the railway station. This area is now without orchards, because in the post-war years a high-rise residential building has been located close to the wooden one. Only the adjacent park area (former John's Church and Writer's Graveyard) makes this urban construction part aesthetically attractive.

The research on the historical wooden heritage is continued to include in the city's development plan even more detailed research on the protection and restoration of the historical building.

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About the Author

Dr. arch. Aija Ziemeļniece is a professor of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Planning of the Faculty of Environment and Construction Sciences, Latvia University of Agriculture. The themes of her research — the cultural landscape space and the study of its transformation processes attributed to the impact of the study of the anthropogenic load on the cultural landscape. In the study of the cultural landscape, a material on the historical heritage of the rural landscape space and the urban building environment has been summarised, taking into account the prospective trends. Overall, it represents the search for synthesis and harmony between the cultural and modern infrastructure requirements in the development plans of municipalities in order to achieve an aesthetically high quality of the living space.

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Dr. arch. Aija Ziemeļniece ir profesore Latvijas Lauksaimniecības universitātes Vides un būvzinātņu fakultātes Ainavu arhitektūras un plānošanas katedrā. Pētniecisko darbu tēma — kultūrvēsturiskā ainavtelpa un tās transformācijas procesi, izvērtējot antropogēnās slodzes ietekmi uz kultūrainavu. Kultūrvides izpētē tiek apkopoti materiāli par lauku ainavtelpas un pilsētbūvnieciskās vides vēsturisko mantojumu, kā arī aplūkotas perspektīvās tendences pašvaldību teritoriju attīstības plānos.

JELGAVAS KOKA APBŪVES MANTOJUMS UN ZAĻĀ STRUKTŪRA

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Anotācija

Atslēgvārdi: *apbūves blīvums, pilsētbūvnieciskā struktūra, ainavtelpa, vizuāli estētiskā kvalitāte*

Pētījums skar Jelgavas vēsturiskās koka apbūves zonas, un ir attiecināms uz 19. gs. beigu un 20. gs. sākuma posmu. Otrā pasaules kara gados pilsēta nodega, tāpēc tās koka arhitektūras mantojums mūsdienās ir niecīgs un veido tikai atsevišķus mozaikveida laukumus pilsētas kartē, tomēr tas iezīmē virspusēju priekšstatu par vecās koka apbūves raksturu, blīvumu, ceļu platumu un zemes gabalu lielumu. Jelgavas vēsturiskā robežlīnija jeb demontētie aizsargvaļņi (19. gs. sākums) un bijušo pilsētas iebraucamo vārtu vietas fragmentāri ir saizmējamās mūsdienas pilsētas ielu tīklā. Vārtu vietas iezīmēja punktus, kur lauku ceļi tālāk satikās Turgus laukumā. Katra no pilsētā ienākošajām ceļa dzīslām veidoja savu apbūves “audeklu”, kurš pilnībā vairs nolasāms tikai fotomateriālos. Atsevišķi tiek aplūkots ielu esošo koku stādījumu raksturs un to atrašanās vieta kultūrvēsturiskās apbūves tuvumā.