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## Evolution of Architectonic Spatial Environment in Latvian Rural Populated Areas Due to Natural and Human Interaction

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### Abstract

The natural environment of the Baltic Sea coast became the life habitat of people who settled there. By changing the water and greenery systems and creating architectural structures a new functional environment was established. Nature elements began to appear in the architectonic spatial structure of rural populated areas. In the 13th century new administrative political centers in the territory of Latvia were created, and population developed around them. Fortresses lost gradually their purpose, and manor centers and farming developed, where all necessary things and food for daily life were made. Natural environment changed due to human activities, but the planning of inhabited areas and architectonic structures gave every Latvia ethnographic region characteristic features and identity.

On November 18, 1918 Latvia Republic was proclaimed, and since 1920 the land reform was started in the countryside – the structure of national economy and understanding of the environmental aesthetics changed. New administrative centers were created whose architectonic spatial environment was determined by national characteristics. In 1990 Latvia Republic regained its independence and on May 1, 2004 it joined the European Union. The type of land ownership changed in the country. The formation of an appropriate spatial environment for a sustained development of Latvian rural populated areas became topical.

**Topicality of the research:** changing the type of land ownership, transport system and agricultural production traditions, at the same time trying to preserve the cultural heritage and natural values, new conditions have been created in which it is necessary to find successful solutions for the planning which would promote the preservation of the identity of Latvian inhabited rural areas and provide a sustained development.

**Aim of study:** analyze the planning of Latvia rural inhabited areas and evolution of the architectonic space building in order to assess the dynamics of mutual relationships between nature and people.

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## 1. Introduction

The origins of the populated areas and building traditions on the southern coast of the Baltic Sea can be traced back to ten thousand years when moving along the banks of the big rivers the first people came to this area. The number of inhabitants was increased by the members of the Baltic ethnic group belonging to the Indo-European language family, who arrived from the southwest, south and southeast. An inhabited space by the Baltic tribes or minorities was formed.

In the Western Europe in the 5<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> centuries during the feudal state formation no new cities were founded. In the lands ruled by the Baltic tribes a diversity of populated areas existed – rural settlements and with natural barriers protected, but less fortified settlements, as well as hardly accessible castle mounds which were protected by steep slopes, ravines and water obstacles. On the castle mounds fortified wooden castles were built for the chieftains, but at the foothills an urban settlement or ancient town was developed which was different from a rural village with a fortress placement. The planning of the ancient town surrounded by defense buildings was influenced by the placement of the lands allocated for building. The Baltic people were the only ones who made building complexes or farmsteads surrounded by fences: at first there was only one building, but when there was a necessity for other rooms, small, separate buildings were built near the house next to each other without any prior plan. Nature elements began to appear in the architectonic spatial structure of rural populated places, and the natural environment was changed by a human being's activities.

## 2. Fortified Living Space in Natural Environment

In the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century the regions populated by the Baltic ethnic groups got into the Holy Roman Empire's range of interests. Multifunctional buildings – financially and economically independent stone fortresses – were built on the highest points of the navigable river banks for the control of strategically significant water roads and trading places surveillance, at which the front castles were developed in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, where the servants' housing and outhouses were built. The fortified building complexes became the administratively political centers and population developed in their vicinity – an urban settlement with craftsmen and traders' housing. The fortresses gradually lost their defense function and turned into the rulers' homes. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century the knights and vassals, who did not want to live daily any longer in the cramped and uncomfortable homes, were given tenure to build new homes near the fortress: subsistence farms were created in the rural environment for the food supplies and production of the things necessary for household. During the centuries the opinion was established that only a fortified dwelling can be safe, therefore the first fortified manors and freestanding residential towers were built, promoting the formation and development of the building types. The compact construction volume of the fortified manor complex reminded of a fortress: the buildings were placed around the courtyard where one could get in through the entrance built in the gate tower. During the Livonian time the centers of manors and half-manors were formed. Due to the interaction of traditions a qualitatively new living environment was created.

## 3. Regional Living Space amidst Interaction of Traditions

Lots of fortified dwellings and populated places in the Livonian Confederation were destroyed during the Livonian War (1558–1582), which ceased to exist at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. On March 5, 1562 the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia was founded (*Ducatus Curlandiae et Semigalliae*; 1562–1795) under the Polish subjugation. The last Livonian Master Gotthard Kettler (*Godthart Kettler*; 1517–1587) became the first Duke of the new state whose responsibility was to create a new governmental system, providing the integrity of the Duchy's territory and to take care of the dynastic succession. The Prussian Duchy (1525–1618) was chosen as the role model for the newly founded Duchy's development, and in the capital city Königsberg (nowadays *Калининград*) on March 21, 1566 he got married to the Princess Ann (1533–1602), the Duke Albrecht's VII (*Albrecht VII*; 1486–1547) from Mecklenburg daughter. Goldingen became the Duke's place of residence. A fruit and pleasure garden was made near the fortress (German: *Baum und Lustgarten*) with special places where to sit and contemplate and have a rest;

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