

KULDIGA OLD TOWN IN VENTA RIVER VALLEY – PROBLEMS AND EXPERIENCE TO PRESERVE CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Jana JĀKOBSONE

Department of town planning, Kuldīga Municipality, LATVIA
jjakobsone@gmail.com

The development of a town is a continuous process; plans and concepts are changed, but substantial is the common idea of development and its compliance with the ongoing processes. It is written in the development programme of the Kuldīga town that the development strategy of Kuldīga is “[..] to preserve its unique cultural heritage – the complex of old town and nature [..]”. Planning the development of the Kuldīga old town must envisage preservation of the cultural and nature heritage. Sustainable development of the town has to be ensured, which is also one of the UNESCO requirements for including the historical centre of the town in the World Heritage List. The aim the municipality has to achieve is a meticulously renovated historical town environment in a preserved cultural landscape. The question is how to develop the Kuldīga old town to preserve it as an “alive museum” that continuously grows and changes, meanwhile preserving the cultural and natural values.

In accordance with the document “Criteria to Be Included in the World Heritage List” (UNESCO, 1998), the cultural heritage value of the Kuldīga old town is a “remarkable example of building a model or an architecture, or a technological ensemble, or a landscape that shows important periods of human history” [39]. In the harmonic landscape of the Venta River Valley at the Kuldīga old town, a human-built urban environment and a nature complex is integrated.

The River Venta, its valley and waterfall are the nature values of Kuldīga. In the landscape, there are preserved testimonies of human intentions to change nature objects, for example, the Venta Channel, as well as historical objects of different ages. The medieval historical centre around the Alekšupīte River is unique, the only such small town ensemble preserved in the Baltics from the 17–18th century. The municipality has devised a complex of activities to protect and preserve these values and to educate inhabitants.

KEYWORDS: cultural and nature heritage, sustainable development, Kuldīga old town.