

Practice of Identification, Protection and Management of Landscapes of National Importance in Europe and Latvia

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Abstract. Landscape variability due to anthropogenic pressure poses a risk to the existence of valuable and unique landscapes. It once became the reason for raising the issue of landscape protection in Europe, paying special attention to landscapes of national importance by giving them a special status. In European practice, the granting of the status of a landscape of national importance to certain territories is based on a long tradition. In England and Scotland, it was started in 1949, separating nature protection and landscape protection directly into laws and regulations, and also later by identifying and mapping the country's most important landscapes, developing guidelines for landscape protection, planning and management, and setting up national landscape protection institutions. Later, in 1992, Finland also granted a special status to its particularly important landscapes. In general, this establishing method is similar to the UK experience. The experience of France, on the other hand, is based on exploiting the potential of the landscape for tourism, by branding specific landscapes and linking them in a single network. The traditions of European countries in identifying and managing landscapes of national importance are different, but they are mainly based on the desire of each country to highlight and preserve its special and important landscapes both as real territories and as symbols of national identity. This article analyses the understanding of national landscapes, comparing the examples of individual European countries, as well as the experience of Latvia, with the aim to determine the best basis and method for Latvia to identify, protect and manage national landscapes.

Keywords: landscapes of national importance, understanding of landscape, landscape protection, landscape management

Introduction

The essence of landscape of national importance includes, on the one hand, a broad and holistic framework of the concept of landscape, but, on the other hand, a very emphasised, symbolic and multi-layered basis of national consciousness, traditions and values. Landscapes include elements created by nature, man-made structures and emotionally-social connections. Thus, the question of studying and evaluating the landscape as a comprehensive phenomenon, which scientists actively used in their work, becomes relevant, recognising that landscape is not just the sum of individual landscape elements or phenomena, but there are more complex regularities between individual elements or indicators and their changes. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed [1; 18; 19; 24]. The holistic approach dates back to the early 19th century, when Alexander von Humboldt, one of the founders of geography, argued that the landscape was a comprehensive description of a region/place (*Landschaft ist das Totalcharakter einer Erdgegend*) [1]. On the other hand, taking into account the holistic nature of the landscape, there is a need for a multidisciplinary approach, where the landscape is not viewed from the point of view of one science, but regularities are sought when several branches of science intersect or meet. Scientists are trying to use the methods of natural sciences, social sciences,

humanities and arts in landscape research, creating new methodologies for landscape research, where one of the tasks is not only to combine different methods, but also to create a deeper connection with society as a whole, perceiving it as an integral part and cognitive process. A multidisciplinary approach is particularly important in the identification of landscapes of national importance, as these landscapes are not only a set of physiographic elements and structures, but also have an emotional, symbolic and ideological dimension, as well as a link between all these aspects. In general, this is also reflected in the process of shaping the cultural landscape, which is in line with the concept of landscape enshrined in the European Convention – an area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. We call the set of emotional, symbolic and ideological dimensions in our daily life the ‘homeland’, which accurately reflects the form of the relationship between man and the landscape. The concept of the ‘homeland’ includes the expression of the relationship between man and nature through symbols, attitude, which is formed as the storage and cultivation of important events and symbols of the past, present and even future through the physical and mental dimensions of the landscape. The phenomenon of collective

memory or consciousness, as a fixed and visualised set of symbols, is most strongly reflected through the concept of the 'homeland' [13]. In this way, the landscape is like a repository that holds events important to the nation on the one hand and inspires or gives ground, a connection to the past, on the other hand.

Landscapes of national importance are often closely linked to the concept of national identity, which is influenced by national political events, the cultural and historical development of territories and the transformation of the landscape, as well as the geographical location of a place. The phenomenon of collective memory actively influences the expression and change of national identity over time [3; 10], which manifests itself in both cognitive and physical symbols in the landscape. The interrelationships and connections between the different social and ethnic groups of the territory are also important in the process of cognition of national identity, which is often studied by landscape researchers in order to find out the development trends of the population and spatial structure of the territory, distinguishing separate stages of landscape development, which are also marked by political and social processes, as well as economic development. Such processes can also explain new symbols of national identity, which are often reflected in the landscape [17]. For example, when studying historical events, the anthropologist Vieda Skultāns points out a close connection with the changes and transformations of the rural landscape during collectivisation, which also strongly influenced people's memories, as most respondents associated childhood with being in the country, because most of the respondents remembered their childhood memories with idyllic rural landscapes and rural works, marking the landscape of Latvia a distinct agricultural country. V. Skultāns calls landscapes 'the warehouses of experience, with significant "luggage" of the past and future of the country and each individual'. There is a fine line here when we perceive the landscape as an objective reality, and when a particular landscape or type of landscape acquires a nuance of personal memories or events. Thus, landscapes of national importance can also be closely connected with experiences and memories important to a nation. For example, it is similar in art, where rural landscapes are depicted through the works of landscape painter Vilhelms Purvītis – as childhood memories – such 'soft, smoky and somewhat dreamy' [28]. The paintings of V. Purvītis "Winter", "Spring Waters (*Maestoso*)", "In Spring (*Blossom Time*)" and Ģ. Elias "At the Well" are included in the Latvian cultural canon and vividly mark the landscape of the beginning of the last century (*In Latvian: Latvijas kultūras kanons*). Along with

printed literature and magazines, the Latvian rural landscape as a symbol of beauty was already introduced in the 1960s as a popular type of photobook. For example, the book "Dzintarzeme Dzimtene" (*Amberland Native Country*) (*Observations on the Nature and Culture of Latvia*), published in 1937, which was also published in later periods, included landscape views, as well. Later, maps with scenic places and cultural and historical objects were also released. The book "Nature and Landscapes of Latvia" by Kamils Ramans, published in 1971, is also rich in outstanding landscape illustrations. Such publications on the one hand popularised the landscape of Latvia and on the other hand, created a symbolic image of the landscape in people [25]. Even later, several publications were published about certain places, national parks and the Baltic Sea coast. These publications were rich in illustrations and supplemented with detailed descriptions of landscape structure, vegetation, cultural-historical and aesthetic values. For example, the book Gauja National Park by Aija Melluma of 1977 with photos by Aivars Āķis, describing the history, characteristics, zoning, etc. of the national park. The book Ancient Valley of the Gauja (*authors Abolīņš, O., Eniņš, G.*) published in 1979 also provides an extensive description of the landscape of the Ancient Valley of Gauja Valley and its structure, and is rich in colourful photographs of the picturesque landscapes of the River Gauja. There were several such publications, later even whole series on natural values, of which the landscape was an integral part [11]. The promotion of the Latvian landscape through maps, picture books and research has influenced the human visual perception of landscape and strengthened the symbolic image of the 'attractive landscape' in the subconscious, creating a collective memory and understanding of landscape values, including the landscape as part of national identity. In his research, Edmunds Bunkše also notes the symbols of the rural landscape as a strong foundation of national identity, which helped to maintain and preserve it even during the Soviet era. He describes the following as symbolic elements of the rural landscape or landscape spaces: a farm with its own farm buildings, garden and agricultural land, pastures, set-aside, surrounded by forest or located by the sea; meadows full of flowers, where bees are buzzing; trees or tree clusters - oaks or birch groves; forests - diversity of plants and habitats of birds and animals; castle mounds with a long history; sea shore - steep shores, dunes and rocky sea shores; river valleys – the largest river valleys in Latvia – Daugava, Gauja, Lielupe, Venta [4].

Landscapes of national importance can also be a reflection in a regional context, most often through

architecture, culture, the spatial structure of nature or individual elements of the landscape. This link can be defined as two different directions - one with a very clear and distinct dominance of man-made or natural elements – castles, manors or other structures, even technical or engineering networks (roads, bridges, railways, HPPs), as well as very expressive natural elements and sets of elements - steep banks, caves, river valleys, other distinct relief forms, rock outcrops, expressive vegetation, water bodies or watercourses, etc. The second direction is the overall structure of the intangible landscape, which consists of many nuances, layers, both visible and intangible and emotional connections, often referred to as the sense of place, belonging (*Sense of Place/Genius Loci*), and also the identity of the place/landscape. These feelings are closely related to the subjective perception of an individual or a group, belonging to a country, nation, culture and traditions, even the emotional state, the season and the weather. Thus, creating a kind of mosaic-like emotion and physical 'pattern of matter', through which a person perceives the landscape from childhood, remembers it and further forms their own, very intimate associations and symbols. The combination of different factors and aspects proves that the emotional – symbolic representation of the landscape cannot be captured very statically – it is rather a variable and dynamic set of factors [5, 12, 29, 30].

As mentioned above, unique and traditional landscapes in Latvia as an integral part of national identity have been immortalised in paintings and other works of art, photo albums and magazines. But landscape protection began with the designation of Specially Protected Areas and the establishment of Protected Landscape Areas. In Latvia, landscape protection and assessment is implemented through several levels – protecting certain cultural monuments and territories, protecting natural territories, including characteristic and traditional landscapes within the framework of the National Parks; designating specially protected landscape areas; defining the canon of Latvian landscapes; implementing activities such as the Landscape Award and Landscape Treasures, where public participation and opinion play an important role. Landscape protection is a special phenomenon that is to be welcomed, on the one hand, because the state and the people want to preserve their natural and cultural values, but on the other hand, any protection shows a number of constraints that are a burden on both the municipalities and the people themselves. Of particular note is the phenomenon of 'private property' status, which often contradicts the common good of the state and its citizens, protecting only personal interests. The common understanding of the state and society

about the protection of landscapes and the preservation of values, including in the context of various property rights and affiliations, significantly influences the identification of landscapes of national importance and the determination of their special status in Latvia. Landscape Policy Guidelines 2013–2019 include a definition of landscape-valuable territories, which is explained as 'territories determined in the process of development planning, in which, according to the public assessment, landscapes important for the sustainable development of Latvia, its regions, counties, people and places are found'. This definition highlights the value of the landscape that is essential for society, which is revealed through several interrelated levels – regional and local identity, the perception of the subjective landscape values of each individual and society. In addition, these valuable landscapes must be seen in the context of sustainable development, thus being considered as a development potential at the level of the state, regions and individual municipalities.

Until now, the promotion and protection of values of national importance in Latvia has been considered in the context of natural territories for natural elements and objects under the control of the Nature Protection Board, as well as historically significant cultural monuments under the responsibility of the National Cultural Heritage Board [16]. One of the challenges of the future in Latvia is to develop an integrated approach to the landscape of national importance for identification and granting status, taking into account not only the natural and cultural-historical aspects but also the landscape holistic and versatile (multifaceted) nature, which also includes other important aspects. Thus, the aim of the article is to analyse and compare the existing experience of identifying and strengthening national landscapes in Europe, highlighting the approaches that can be adapted to the conditions of Latvia in accordance with the existing regulatory framework, available data, landscape research traditions and public understanding.

Material and Methods

Method

Based on the research of the scientific literature presented in the introductory part, as well as the common experience of the authors' teams in landscape research [15; 20; 21; 22; 23; 34], a model for understanding landscapes of national importance has been developed. According to the model, the experience of other European countries is analysed with the aim of summarising the best approaches and adapting them to the conditions of Latvia.

In the sense of national landscape, cultural history (events, personalities, periods), traditions,

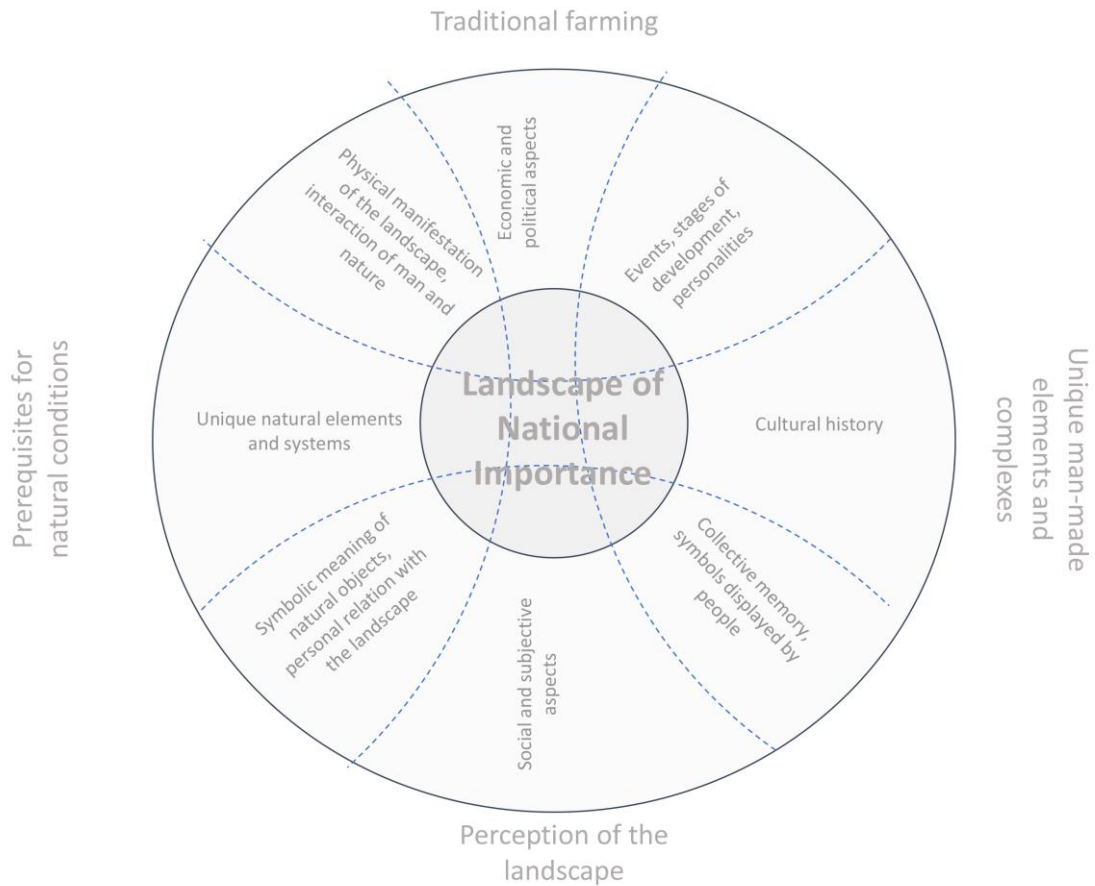


Fig. 1. Model for understanding the landscape of national importance [created by the authors]

culture, traditional management, social aspects, symbolic significance of natural elements and man-made objects, cognitive landscape awareness, collective memory, each individual's close connection with his and her own place of residence and other aspects of ancestors, in general creating a significant national heritage for the country, which is reflected in the multifaceted and holistic nature of the landscape (Fig. 1).

The landscape is based on four layers/groups, which are intertwined and cannot be separated in the common definition of the understanding of the national landscape:

- Prerequisites for natural conditions – the base of nature, which is unique and can be a whole complex of nature – a wide area, as well as a unique natural formation;
- A set of man-made elements that is related to the cultural and historical development of the landscape, human economic activity, and can be both a complex of objects of outstanding architecture and individual unique and outstanding structures in the context of the surrounding landscape;
- Perception of the landscape, in which both the collective memory and the subjective perception

of the landscape of each individual, as well as the symbolic meaning of the landscape are layered;

- Traditional farming – affected by economically-political aspects and traditional farming within the framework of natural conditions characteristic for each region, traditions and culture, community and place, resulting in unique or traditional landscapes for a given place.

All these layers are interconnected and influence each other, thus forming a holistic and development-orientated understanding and definition of the spiral landscape of national importance, rather than linear or sequential.

Research objects

The publication analyses four different approaches to the identification, protection and management of landscapes of national importance, analysing the experiences of England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, France and Finland. Each of the analysed experiences in the identification, protection and management of landscapes of national importance is different. Thus, in the search for the most appropriate approach, which could be applied in Latvia in the

future, a brief description of each country's experience and traditions is given, further carrying out analysis in three blocks – identification, protection and management of national landscapes, each of which is analysed through a model for understanding the landscape of national importance.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been designated with government support. These landscapes are defined as unique and distinct landscapes with a natural or landscape appeal that are of sufficient value at the national level. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 46 such landscapes have been identified. They cover 18 % of the country's territory and are mostly located on the coast in the south and north, less in the middle [2]. It should be noted that the very existence of the concept of 'natural beauty', which is not precisely defined in documents, has always been a contentious issue, based on the prevailing view in the 18th century that many man-made objects, landscapes and the human body itself are considered to be 'natural beauty'. Such a concept has influenced many judgments and definitions in the legislation of the past, as well as in public opinion; today the concept is legally unprotected and easily disputed.

In Scotland, the National Scenic Areas are distinguished as outstanding scenic values in the context of the country with the need to protect them. The aim of this status is to identify/determine landscape values and a set of protection measures aimed at monitoring and managing the development of these landscapes. In 1978, a total of 40 Protected Scenic Areas were identified by the Countryside Commission for Scotland, publishing it in a single document – 'Scotland's Scenic Heritage' [27]. In total, these landscapes cover about 1 million hectares (13 % of Scotland). For each landscape area, the boundaries are marked on the map M 1:50000, including settlements, natural areas and water areas. In Scotland, the status of a National Landscape Area is equivalent to that of the status of a National Park. These landscapes symbolically reflect the Scottish traditional landscapes directly through associative perception as the canon of national landscapes. No new landscapes have been added to this list since 1978, also without changing the boundaries of the landscapes. It was only in 2010 that a new report was prepared based on the research carried out in 2007–2009, repeatedly surveying all territories and characterising their quality [26].

In France, on the other hand, the Grand Site de France landscape quality brand has been awarded to several territories and their number increases. The Réseau des Grands Sites de France (*Network of Outstanding Landscapes in France*) is responsible for granting the status. Granting the status promotes the development of tourism and additional support

for the development of territories. This brand is owned by the State of France (*registered in 2003*), which applies the principles of sustainable development in landscape management. The 'Grand Site de France' brand guarantees that the site is preserved and managed in accordance with the principles of sustainable development, which combine the preservation of the landscape, the special aura of the landscape (Sense of Place), the quality of the visitor experience and recognition. Residents and entrepreneurs who operate under this brand or in accordance with the development plan are supported, thus maintaining the status of a landscape value area [32]. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development performs the administrative function. It was an important step in showing that the State of France recognises the importance of these truly inspiring landscapes and is committed to the long-term management of such areas [32].

In Finland, the tradition of landscape research is more than 100 years old. In 1920, the geographer Johannes Gabriel Granö carried out a systematic analysis of landscapes, influenced by the German experience (Landschaftskunde), with an emphasis on the importance of visual criteria for landscapes. J. Grano created a mapping of landscape regions, as well as defined the meaning of the landscape in the Finnish context, which influenced the understanding of the landscape and the use of the concept in the country as a whole. In addition, the dimensions of the spatial structure of landscapes were defined, as well as their representation in cartography, introducing a new concept – micro-environment, or small-scale landscape (*Finnish – Nähe*). Already in the 1980s, the concept of landscape ecology was introduced in Finland, which facilitated the expansion of landscape research into ecology, and later into the study of the sociological and cognitive aspects of the landscape through multidisciplinary research [14]. There are 156 areas in Finland classified as landscapes of national value/importance that were marked in 1995. Their value is based on culturally and historically significant natural diversity, traditional agriculture and architecture. According to the Finnish Land Use and Construction Act, valuable landscapes must be taken into account when planning the site. However, rural landscapes are threatened by the loss of biodiversity, the collapse of buildings and unsuitable new construction projects that do not respect traditional architecture. In addition, the landscape is threatened by changes in traditional agriculture, extinction. By designating landscape areas as a value on a national scale, the aim is to ensure significant and viable rural landscapes and to stimulate public interest in sustainable landscape management [9].

Results and Discussions

According to the National Landscape Understanding Model, which includes four main blocks: nature, man-made objects, management and landscape perception, four different approaches to the identification, protection and management of national landscapes were analysed (*examples of England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, France and Finland*).

Approaches to identifying landscapes of national importance

In England, a methodology for landscape assessment and management has been developed. This legal status of the landscape is equated to the status of National Parks and Protected Nature Areas, where landscape protection decisions are a priority and binding on local governments. In general, the landscape assessment methodology in England for the protected areas is based on the worldwide Landscape Character Assessment. However, the following criteria have been set for the inclusion of landscapes on the list of outstanding landscape areas:

- a qualitative indicator of the landscape, where the natural or cultural-historical landscape is of authentic quality;
- the visual quality of a distinctive landscape, such as distinct coastal terrain;
- relative 'authenticity/naturalness', with minimal interference with modern buildings and infrastructure;
- relative 'peace/quiet', where natural sounds are not suppressed by industrial ones;
- distinctive features of 'natural assets/heritage', such as different geology, species or habitats;
- cultural heritage that includes buildings or their remains and is a unique human formation [2; 31].

In Scotland, the authors of Scotland's Scenic Heritage document, examining a number of landscape assessment methods and achievements so far, as well as the expert method developed specifically for landscape assessment (*based on the analysis of cartographic materials*), recognise that they do not consider it to be fully useful, and the landscape assessment is often a subjective assessment. In assessing the landscape, the developers relied on a kind of beauty canon with the features characteristic to landscapes – a diverse landscape structure, expressive and impressive relief forms, coastline, lakes and rivers, as well as culturally and historically significant landscapes. Such parameters can be very briefly defined as 'landscape grandeur and excellence' – distinct geological forms, naturalness and peace, cultural and historical significance and man-made elements. It must be acknowledged that these landscapes may not have a pronounced diversity of ground cover or

vegetation, but may be compensated by the presence of pronounced terrain or water. Most of the landscape was identified in the north of Scotland (*Highland area*). The assessment is based on a survey based on an analysis of various sources and information on landscapes that could qualify for landscape areas of national importance – a survey of a number of professionals who are in the landscape or manage and plan them on a daily basis, including both public authorities and non-governmental organisations, and surveyors who visited various landscapes during the surveys.

In France, the landscapes awarded this brand are described as authentic, remarkable, outstanding, scenic, attractive and iconic, with an exceptional, unique, singular character and a close link to the history and development of a given place, preserving the traces of the past, but also in dialogue with the future, which is the key to landscape development. Of particular note is the combination of two terms for these valuable landscapes – 'landscape' and 'heritage', with an understanding of the value of nature, but without emphasising the importance of biodiversity or geological values and uniqueness, because other laws and territories are in operation, where the focus is on the protection of natural values. Great emphasis was placed on the concept of the Sense of Place, which was one of the hallmarks of establishing an outstanding landscape brand. The aura of place lies in both tangible and material, as well as spiritual and mental values, combining both objective evaluation and the sensual and subjective evaluation of the individual, or the 'experience' of the landscape. Phrases such as 'breath-taking' or 'feeling small compared to the majesty of nature' have been used to describe this subjective assessment; landscapes that emotionally thrill, inspire and evoke a range of feelings and experiences. Preserving these intangible assets requires a great deal of experience and understanding of the landscape, seeing those elements of the landscape that allow each visitor to clearly feel and experience the place by seeing the elements and symbols of the landscape. It is emphasised that the protection of the landscape does not involve excessive restrictions and efforts to create 'landscape museums', but to allow the place to be alive and to place part of the responsibility for landscape values on the shoulders of the French people as part of patriotic values.

In Finland, the tradition of landscape research is more than 100 years old. In 1920, the geographer Johannes Gabriel Granö carried out a systematic analysis of landscapes, influenced by the German experience (*Landschaftskunde*), with an emphasis on the importance of visual criteria for landscapes. J. Grano performed mapping of landscape regions, as well as defined the landscape in the Finnish

TABLE 1

A summary of the main principles for the approaches to the identification of landscapes of national importance [created by the authors]

Countries whose approaches have been analysed	Prerequisites for natural conditions	Unique man-made elements and complexes	Traditional farming	Perception of the landscape
England, Wales, Ireland	Widely included (natural beauty, authenticity, peace, tranquillity)	As the harmonious coexistence of nature and man	There is a direct link with traditional management, the landscape as a potential recreational resource	Landscape aesthetic quality criteria, 'Sense of Place', positive image and symbolism
Scotland	Are included, but emphasising that diversity is not always the determining factor, comparisons of landscapes are not allowed	Based on gathering expert opinions, however, without emphasising each object, but the holistic nature of the landscape	Opinions from managers and administrators have already been taken during the evaluation phase	The subjective component of landscape assessment is recognised, as experts relied on their subjective beauty canon
France	Emphasised to a smaller degree. There is no emphasis on the quality of biodiversity	The importance of heritage is particularly emphasised	Less emphasis is placed on landscape valuation, but adherence to sustainable principles is essential	Great emphasis is placed on the existence of 'Sense of Place' and goodwill
Finland	Emphasis is also placed on regional differences to represent all types of landscapes	Great emphasis on traditional architecture	The preservation of agricultural land in open landscapes was important in the evaluation	The meaning of a harmonious image that is able to reflect local characteristics

context, which influenced the understanding of the landscape and the use of the concept in the country as a whole. In addition, the dimensions of the spatial structure of landscapes were defined, as well as their representation in cartography, introducing a new concept – micro-environment, or small-scale landscape. Already in the 1980s, the concept of landscape ecology was introduced in Finland and the landscape research into ecology direction was expanded, and later into the study of the sociological and cognitive aspects of the landscape through multidisciplinary research [14]. Landscape assessment is based not only on the peculiarities and characteristics of the territories, but also on the regional division of landscapes. The division was established in 1992, dividing Finland into ten regional landscape areas/districts based on regional differences in natural and cultural characteristics. Landscape areas/districts are selected to reflect the most important landscape features of

each region. The working group, chaired by Antti Haapanen, a Finnish landscape researcher, produced two reports in 1992 and 1993 on descriptions of the values of valuable landscape areas and on landscape protection. The Working Party emphasised that landscape protection can be achieved through landscape management and that these two documents are an integral part of the common goal of landscape protection.

A summary of the main principles for the approaches to the identification of landscapes of national importance is presented in Table 1.

Protection of landscapes of national importance

Protected landscapes of England include a variety of natural sites, determined by the diverse nature of England – mountains, river valleys, coasts, forests, hilly ridges. Landscapes are not only valued as a view or image, but also include the diversity of relief forms, geological objects, vegetation and

living organisms, as well as the history of human-nature interactions. In the example of England, it is the person and their activities that are emphasised as important in the existence of the landscape, and it is mainly the farmers who take care of the management of the landscape. Maintaining the authenticity of the landscape depends on them, as landowners, also supporting the development of tourism through the attractiveness of the landscape [2].

In **Scotland**, the status of a National Landscape Area is equivalent to that of the status of a National Park. These landscapes symbolically reflect the Scottish traditional landscapes directly through associative perception as the canon of national landscapes. No new landscapes have been added to this list since 1978, without changing the boundaries. It was only in 2010 that a new report was prepared based on the research carried out in 2007–2009, repeatedly surveying all territories and establishing their quality [26].

In **France**, the aim is to combine the protection of landscape values with the hospitality of a place and the preservation of life, so that populated rural areas are not abandoned. It is dynamic preservation, where the locals and their occupation are the key to success in developing and preserving the landscape. In addition, emphasis is placed on the availability of landscapes, independence from cultural affiliation and income. No less important is an opportunity to simply 'just be' in the landscape without restrictions or ready-made programmes, to communicate with the population and feel the values of the landscape, create one's connection with the landscape, return someday and share emotions and memories. Despite the attractiveness of the place, the development of outstanding landscapes must maintain proportionality and balance without transforming these areas into mass tourist destinations, which can permanently disrupt the intimacy of the landscape and the aura of the place [6]. Giving a brand to a particular place is a guarantee of its sustainable development, limiting uncontrolled urbanisation processes, prioritising the well-being of the population and the interest in the existence of the landscape. However, developers see a number of risks – speculation in the value of property in such areas, as well as excessive commercialisation and pressure, as these landscapes cannot be commercial projects with huge profits, but economic growth must be able to keep people interested and participate [6]. In France, there is a Policy of the Grand Sites of France, which provides a basis for combining the efforts of the state, local authorities and owners to protect, plan and manage these areas, based on the experience of the last 30 years of cooperation. According to this policy, a development plan is prepared every

10 years, which includes the main directions of activity, and which also combines the action strategies of the stakeholders and allows them to act more specifically in each of the landscapes, but below the big goal and tasks. The landscape development plan describes the specific values to be preserved in each landscape, which are approved by the management and the parties involved [6].

Section 5 of the Nature Conservation Act sets out the procedure, status and protection rules for the creation of protected landscapes in **Finland**. Landscape protection zones in Finland can be established to preserve and manage natural or cultural landscapes of outstanding 'beauty', historical or other special value. The Landscape Protection Order may be revoked or allow deviations, if the landscape value has significantly decreased or if its protection does not allow implementation of the project of national interest that is of great public interest. The Ministry of the Environment is responsible for the overall supervision of nature and landscape conservation. The Centre for Economic, Transport and Environmental Development promotes and monitors the conservation of nature and landscapes within its jurisdiction. Provisions necessary for the preservation of the characteristic features of protected landscapes may be included in the decision on the establishment of the site, but it is also important to balance the interests of the owners. In certain cases, the Centre for Economic, Transport and Environmental Development may grant derogations from the prohibitions in force in the relevant landscape protection area – Amendments to the Nature Protection Law. The amendments to the act provide that the Centre for Economic, Transport and Environmental Development may, in certain cases, grant an exemption from the regulations relating to a landscape protected area. In addition, the rights of the responsible institutions have also been adjusted – the Ministry of the Environment decides on the creation of a nationally important landscape territory and the purpose of its preservation. The decision on the territory of other landscapes based on the proposal of the regions is decided by the Centre for Economic, Transport and Environmental Development [8].

A summary of the main principles of landscape protection approaches of national importance is presented in Table 2.

Landscape management of national importance

In **England**, the management function is assigned to the following institutions: Natural England – in England; Wales Natural Resources – in Wales; Northern Ireland Environment Agency – in Northern Ireland. In partnership with local authorities, Natural England is responsible for all

TABLE 2

A summary of the main principles of landscape protection approaches of national importance [created by the authors]

Countries whose approaches have been analysed	Prerequisites for natural conditions	Unique man-made elements and complexes	Traditional farming	Perception of the landscape
England, Wales, Ireland	Management plans have been prepared in the context of adjacent areas	Are included with a stronger emphasis on the link between objects and the overall picture of the landscape, Charities are also involved	There are recommendations and guidelines as well as support mechanisms	Included to a small extent with more emphasis on specific activities and elements, less on the importance of perception
Scotland	Implemented by the NatureScot agency with an emphasis on the seamless protection of nature	In general, construction, as well as the building of new roads is governed, but the restoration of cultural and historical objects is supported	Emphasis is placed on preserving the values of each landscape through a variety of protection mechanisms	Preserving the emotional component of the landscape is important
France	The awarded Landscape Quality brand as a guarantee for landscape protection	What matters is dynamic preservation, not conservation, with an emphasis on the local population	Conservation status is at the same time support for local businesses operating in accordance with landscape protection requirements	Preservation of the sense of place
Finland	Accent placed on the interconnection of natural elements, emphasising the ecological and geomorphological links of the landscape	The protection of historic buildings is especially emphasised	Traditional management techniques are included	Role in preserving national identity. Strengthened every year by celebrating Landscape Days

regulatory processes, coordination and establishing borders. A landscape management plan is also developed for the area, which is revised every five years.

The landscape management plan includes a description of the landscape, distinguishing uniqueness according to certain criteria; linking with existing planning documents; descriptions of scientifically important sites and possible activities; development and action plans with the responsible parties and the allocated funding; monitoring plan and reports [2]. Landscape management plans are published on public websites. Each site has its own

website, where detailed information about the site, possible activities, management plan, other binding documents, as well as information about the involved projects, etc. is available [33]. The documents and guidelines emphasise the importance of partnership, which allows for the more successful and optimal development of strategic documents, defence of landscape protection interests, implementation of both joint projects and daily landscape management works, sharing of experience with each other, as well as ensuring more successful education and information, advertising and fundraising activities in different territories.

TABLE 3

A summary of the main principles of landscape management approaches of national importance
[created by the authors]

Countries whose approaches have been analysed	Prerequisites for natural conditions	Unique man-made elements and complexes	Traditional farming	Perception of the landscape
England, Wales, Ireland	The management function is assigned to the agencies - Natural England Northern, Ireland Environment Agency, Natural England	Individual management plans for each element, involving owners, managers and society	Directly related to management, landowners, leaving room for innovative types of management	Landscape management plans include a description of the landscape, emphasising its uniqueness, based in particular on the importance of partnership - hence the common trade-off between landscape perception
Scotland	Closely related to man-made elements as a common image of landscape	Associated with protection and regulations relating to construction	Municipalities are entitled to develop their own management plans, but traditional farming is not emphasised	Through the preservation of the overall image of the landscape, which provides specific emotions
France	Gentle development of the landscape, understanding that unique landscapes are a process of interaction between nature and man	Balance between cooperation, development and conservation, open communication, with an emphasis on tourism development	Emphasis is placed on management according to sustainable development principles	A special concept 'just be' has been introduced, bringing of landscape in intangible level is important
Finland	Already listed in the management plans and in accordance with the Nature Protection Law	Emphasis is placed on promoting the public interest in traditional architecture through tourism	Essential coordination and balancing of the interests of owners and operators	Through public interest and co-responsibility

In addition, communication with the public in various directions is provided. The members of this partnership set a number of goals to be followed by the staff of the management organisation – coordination, strengthening of priorities and objectives, distribution of impact, introduction of advisory and support principles (*for local producers, artisans, farmers, etc.*) and monitoring [2].

It is managed by **Scotland's** Nature Agency (*NatureScot*). Additional control has been established for national landscape areas for certain activities - construction of farm buildings over 12 m, as well as construction of new roads and railways, if this has not been agreed in previous plans and exceeds a specific budget. Municipalities may develop additional landscape protection,

development and management strategies, but by 2018 only three of such strategies have been developed. The act provides for the free use of these areas by the public, regardless of affiliation (except in some areas), which includes a wide range of activities related to active tourism, but with a responsible attitude towards landscape values already regulated by other legislation (*Scottish Outdoor Access Code*) [26].

The management of the outstanding landscapes of **France** is a collaborative activity where the balance between development and protection, open communication, meeting the public interest and anticipating the impact of possible actions is the key to success [6]. In general, landscape management is closely linked to the development of tourism.

A number of materials and programmes have been prepared for tourism development to help locals engage with traditional or unique products and services. Landscape management as a process is an integral part of landscape protection, which allows the landscape to be gently developed through a set of actions, creating a balance between the influences of different interests. A relatively large part of landscape management activities is occupied by educational activities, which allows the avoidance of mistakes in the implementation of landscape management and uniting of stakeholders, helping to develop an adequate perception and understanding of the landscape through cultural, historical, ecological and spatial values.

In **Finland**, the landscape management system involves a number of interest groups; not only the owners of the site, the administrative authorities, but also society, where educational activities and access to information play a no less important role. Recognising that landscape management requires financial investment, the Finnish government diverts funds intended as subsidies for overproduction. In 1995, a government decision was prepared on the protection and management of protected landscape areas by agreement between several ministries, forest and rural development and support institutions, research institutions and the municipal association [7; 9].

A summary of the main principles of landscape management approaches of national importance is presented in Table 3.

Analysing the different national approaches to the identification, protection and management of landscapes of national importance, it should be noted that information resources, political commitment, a clear separation or delegation of the necessary functions, as well as public participation are important. As the experience of other countries proves, also in the context of Latvia, the establishment of a normative framework and granting of the status of landscapes of national importance alone will not be able to ensure the sustainable development of such territories. At the same time, support mechanisms/programmes for the development and conservation of these areas need to be promoted and established, as well as public awareness and participation in these processes needs to be facilitated.

Conclusions

Experience of Europe in identifying, conserving, planning and managing landscapes of national importance varies from country to country and is based on planning and nature conservation traditions, national administrative divisions and management tools, as well as the regulatory framework. However, some basic principles can be put forward that are common to all countries:

- landscapes of national importance must be preserved, and their status has been approved in

regulatory documents, in many places equivalent to the status of National Parks;

- the methodology for determining landscapes of national importance includes several stages – compilation of a list of potential landscapes to be assessed, collection of information, participatory assessment, survey of landscapes in nature, expert assessment, definition and approval of landscape values;
- administrative, consultative and co-operative organisations and units have been established for landscape management, which are responsible for the conservation, planning and management of the landscape, organising the whole process as an open type of communication, co-operation and participation process;
- the landscape management plan is one of the documents to be developed for each landscape of national importance, as an integrated medium-term planning document with an action plan, its own budget, the legal framework of the parties involved and cooperation partners.

Experience of Latvia in identifying and protecting landscapes of national importance has begun with the designation of Protected Landscape Areas, continuing landscape protection in several Specially Protected Areas, as well as protecting cultural heritage sites, later ratifying the European Landscape Convention and approving Landscape Policy guidelines, as well as working in parallel on multifaceted studies and projects that reflect the ecological, social and cultural aspects of the landscape. In general, wide and varied experience is difficult to summarise and analyse due to the lack of uniform methodologies or quality criteria, but it is a good basis for identifying and evaluating potentially valuable landscapes with a wide range of information. Experience of Latvia in landscape conservation is mainly based on the nature protection regulatory framework and focuses more on the protection of species and habitats, looking at the landscape as an ecological basis, thus, in Latvia, it is necessary to develop and integrate the regulatory framework for landscape conservation, planning and management into the existing laws and regulations, as well as into the existing spatial planning system. Support programmes for those involved in the management of landscapes of national importance are also important in order to promote the sustainable development of these areas while preserving their values. The education and participation of decision-makers and the public will be crucial in this process. Thus, the process of landscape planning and management of national importance can be realised with the overarching goal of preserving the values of each landscape by setting quality criteria and developing landscape planning and management tools for each criterion, respecting the principles of participation and understanding of the landscape, and ensuring regular landscape monitoring.

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