



THE AESTHETIC ROLE OF VEGETATION ALONG WALKING TRAILS IN FOREST LANDSCAPES

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ABSTRACT

Some conditions and opportunities for improving the aesthetic qualities of forest landscapes and strengthen their visual effect are the focus of discussion in the paper. The panoramic views and attractive landscape fragments and landscape paintings are often the main focus in the construction of trails for hiking, cycling, mountain biking and horse riding. Most of them use the existing pedestrian routes that do not always provide the tourist demand landscape attractiveness. It is a serious study and application of compositional principles for the formation of spaces along the tourist trails to increase the mental-emotional impact of forest landscapes on tourists. The result of the analysis shows the great importance of vegetation as a primary component of the visual space and the importance of an ably trails tracing for the visual perception of the forest landscapes. The article discusses the application of the principles of landscape architecture for environmental friendliness, logical paths, optimal visual quality and landscape impacts on the tourists. Particular attention was given to the role of eco-trails as a prerequisite for creating unique landscape attractions, enhance cognitive nature of outdoor recreation and suggesting respect for nature by tourists.

KEY WORDS: panoramic views, pedestrian routes, recreation, visual quality, forest landscapes, perceptions.

Introduction

This paper should be read as an attempt to clarify some arguments in conjunction with the question "What role does vegetation play in visual impact of the open spaces along walking trails in forest landscapes?". It aim is not to give specific guidelines for landscape design of the forest areas, but only to highlight the key factors for their aesthetic vision, which are determined by surrounding plants. Although the scenic beauty metrics are quite debatable and controversial case it is hoped that the conclusions of this paper will facilitate needed discussion on vegetation appropriateness and usefulness in forest landscape designs. The main objective of the study is to define some principles of forest landscape design the implementation of which would improve the aesthetic qualities and the visual attractiveness of forest landscapes.

Material and Methods

Open spaces along the walking trails provide the best opportunities for visual perceptions of tourists and analysis of forest landscapes in terms of landscape architects. There, the field of surveillance is the most spacious and gives a good choice of perspective. Since each level of monitoring we have a different horizon and a different distance to a pictorial plane. This determines as important different plans in space.

It is very difficult to be summarized and systematized all scientific views on the issue of forest landscape perceptions and especially of scenic beauty.

Here are researched and investigated several models of scenic quality (e.g., Gurkova, M., 2016; Stoycheva, M., 2016) that are based on an combining parts of reconstructive methods, park perspective, spatial composition and painting techniques of imagery. They can make design process much easier and the resulting landscape "picture" - applicable to planning process, respective to forest landscape design. Such a sufficiently simple, fast and effective could be called the park design guidelines published in Kosarevskiy, A. I., 1977. Although visual complexity and aesthetic quality are stretchable concepts the whole picture of a perfect landscape comes from the well thought out and successful park design drawing and is responsible of the subsequent realization in real space. That is why the landscape planning itself as a pictorial space is essential for the panoramic views recovery. The theoretical considerations regarding studied in this paper problems was influenced by similar publications in ecology, especially in Pavlova, E., D. Bezlova 2003, which proposed that increasing ecological diversity is correlated with increasing stability, and hence with environmental quality. Other researchers (Forestry Commission, 1994; Watts, S., L. Tolland, 2005) have explicitly linked these two ideas, proposing that ecologically stable, i.e., healthy, landscapes are intrinsically beautiful. This paper takes one of these relationships, that between visual complexity and perceived scenic quality, here termed scenic beauty, for further investigation.

Results and Discussion

It is very difficult to summarize all visual situations that predispose to stop the movement and static observation, but given previous research in the field of perspective theory and landscape architecture design we can subtract some general principles or more precisely requirements for forest landscape design along walking trails. These requirements generally relate to the design decision of volume-spatial composition of the vegetation and to a lesser extent to the formation of trails.

As the most common such a requirement may be indicated the necessity of compositional design solution and natural conditions consideration. Accordance with the most significant landscape components (relief, rock formations, lakes, rivers, streams, vegetation, etc.) always is a leading factor that ensures an adequate design solution.

Complying a rate in accent saturation is very important aesthetic rule in forest landscape design. Each recreational environment requires a correct accent dosage. This is particularly important in forest landscapes, to preserve its natural appearance and charm.

Another important condition for a positive artistic and emotional effect in forest environment is the proper proportioning of the main highlights.

Regarding the planned structure of the trails on the first place we must be careful that they should not be like axes of symmetry in the open spaces. Viewed in plan, they have to pass closer to a periphery of meadows and forest's border and not in the middle of the open spaces.

The peripheries of forest massifs and tree groups themselves have to be designed by schemes that provide dynamic stirred outlines. Global indentation in the shape of the periphery of forest massifs provides comfortable seating "boxes" for the deployment of recreational facilities. Small finely indentation of forest edge knurling in turn gives them a natural environmental friendly appearance.

In terms of landscape diversity and attractiveness it is very desirable for tourist trails to pass through glades, meadows and other open spaces. When tourists come out of closed spaces in wood massifs and enter in the open meadows and lawns, the trails would be traced in a way that allow a full overview of landscape "paintings" into smaller lawns or provide a smooth and gradual change of nature scenic views during the transition from one to another part of the larger lawns. For larger meadows it is normal to be created internal secondary paths inside them too. They allow tourists a continuous stay in open sunny space and support a dynamic rotation of sights and assist for static observation of attractive landscapes. Generally these internal trails have to follow the peripheral parts of the lawn as occasionally may enter through the trees in the surrounding forest stands and again go to the open spaces forming a closed circular route. With a view to preserve the integrity of grasslands it is not appropriate for these lanes to cross the lawn in the middle, unless there is a special compositional design goal. The main route is not suitable to traverse through the middle of the open spaces and should not be an axis of symmetry in them. Within each open space it would be traced so as to reveal merits of the landscape to tourists.

Right balance between open and closed spaces creates so valuable and attractive dynamics of volume-spatial composition and creates the expression of views (fig.1). The massifs of trees and shrubs build peculiar green "walls" that limit the open spaces and separated them to close-up (30-100 meters) and deep or distant (300-400 m) perspective views.

A great pursuit of every designer is in creating multilayered landscape views. These views are the biggest "prize" for tourists after many time transitions. The creation and maintenance need proper stewardship of forest vegetation which

causes the eyes to focus, but also close the beautiful panoramic views.



Fig. 1. Calmly (to the left) and quick (to the right) alternation from close to deep perspective views.

In settling of forest landscapes as recreation environment is very important to position correctly points of accents. In the example in Figure 2 is defined properly the place in the bend of the river as a focus on composition. There are several secondary accent groups of trees and are also designed several internal linear perspectives along the promenade.

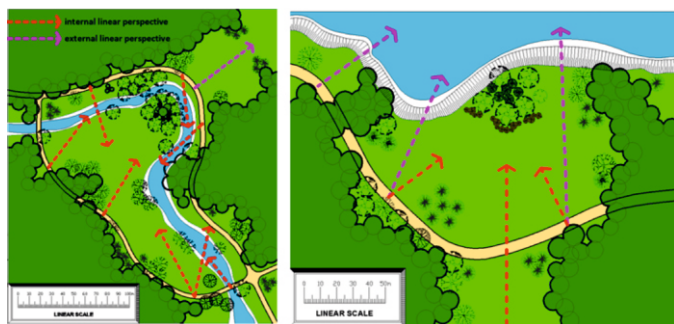


Figure 2. A landscape design project for space planning along a walking trail parallel to a stream (to the left) and near the shore of a water area (to the right)

These favorable aesthetic effects are achieved also in the spatial design of the coastal promenade in Figure 2. There have even made deep and external linear perspectives to the opposite shores of the water area. Among all landscape components woody vegetation to the greatest extent plays the strongest role in shaping the visual perspective views. These views are internal when the visibility is within the meadow or external when the visibility goes beyond the open space where the observer is.

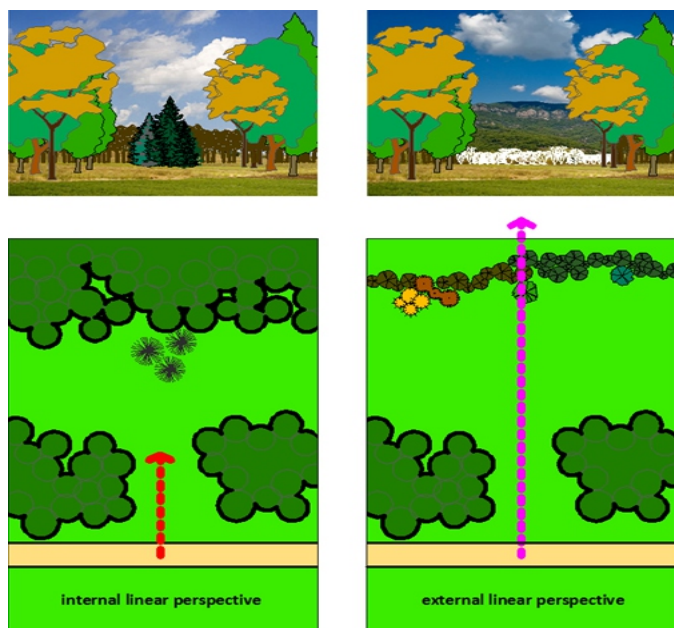


Figure 3. Internal and external linear perspectives

Figure 3 illustrates how the vegetation determines the depth of the view and serves as a barrier to short perspectives or as wings for external perspectives. Even greater is the impact of vegetation in shaping the visual frames, which exhibit perspective views. The visual frames can be on both sides of landscape views, but in some cases these frames can be of the three and even of the four sides of the natural picture. It may even represent an openwork screen that transmits the eyes of the observer beyond.

Conclusions

Artistic process during landscape planing requires creating spectacular views until we get the whole picture of a recreational forest landscape. Unlike urban environment where we have to comply strictly with the architectural framework, in forest areas we have to make much less intervention and to take into account the main environmental features. In order to make the design project more realistic and to ensure its subsequent implementation in real space it is advisable to use existing tree groups and massifs, which immediately or after a partial reconstruction could assume the functions of the relevant part of the perspective view.

In this case, some essential principles, combining parts of park perspective methods and spatial composition can make design process much meaningful and the resulting natural landscape more picturesque and attractive. Such principles must be sufficiently simple, fast and effective to provide an aesthetic forest landscape design.

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