

1 Landscape as the tool of coherence in land management of rural commune

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4
5 **Abstract:** *Economic and social transformation of rural areas in Poland after 1990 reveals itself through*
6 *disintegration of previous spatial order. Building a new pattern requires a vision, which would counteract complex*
7 *causes of disintegration. The latter belong to institutional domain of planning strategies and the area of common*
8 *practices. Therefore, agreement on aims and means between spatial policy strategies and tactics of space users*
9 *would favour the protection and sustainable shaping of environmental resources. The attempt which will merge both*
10 *aforementioned life domains may be successfully realized only within landscape and at the level of commune, where*
11 *local development takes place. The article refers to symptoms and causes of deformations in rural landscapes. It*
12 *describes landscape rurality as desired development vision and utility of landscape tools in space management of a*
13 *small commune. The article defines the idea of public space in a landscape aspect and indicates directions and areas*
14 *of explorations, which would need to be developed according to the suggested perspective.*

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16 *Key words: landscape, rurality, land management*

17

18 **Summary:** *Krajobraz jako instrument spójności w zarządzaniu przestrzenią gminy wiejskiej. Transformacja*
19 *gospodarcza i społeczna obszarów wiejskich w Polsce po 1990 roku ujawnia się poprzez rozpad dotychczasowego*
20 *porządku przestrzennego. Budowanie nowego ładu potrzebuje wizji, która przeciwdziałałaby złożonym przyczynom*
21 *dezintegracji. Należą one do instytucjonalnej sfery strategii planistycznych oraz do obszaru codziennych praktyk.*
22 *Stąd wniosek, że uzgodnienie celów i środków pomiędzy strategiami polityki przestrzennej oraz taktykami*
23 *użytkowników przestrzeni sprzyjałoby ochronie i zrównoważonemu kształtowaniu zasobów środowiska. Podejście,*
24 *które scali obie wymienione płaszczyzny życia może być skutecznie realizowane jedynie na płaszczyźnie krajobrazu*
25 *oraz na poziomie gminy, w której przebiega rozwój lokalny. Treścią artykułu są przejawy i przyczyny deformacji*
26 *krajobrazów wiejskich. Opisana została wiejskość krajobrazu w roli poszukiwanej wizji rozwoju oraz użyteczność*
27 *narzędzi krajobrazu w zarządzaniu przestrzenią małej gminy.*

28

29 INTRODUCTION

30

...only problems which can be seen may also be dealt with... [Usher, 2017]¹

31 The role of the commune as a local government unit lies in fulfilling the needs of governmental
32 community and all the actions aimed at improving the quality and safety of living, including
33 providing spatial order and environmental protection. At commune level, both institutional top-

¹ From the letter of Richard Feynman to Koichi Mano (1996)

34 down and community bottom-up actions and interactions are realized and then units affect them.
35 The commune receives effects of external - national and global conflicts. Economic and social
36 initiatives are created and developed in a favourable local environment. The quality of space in
37 the commune faithfully reflects the entangled internal and external social phenomena. Therefore,
38 general concepts of landscape management and its protection need to be considered mainly
39 towards public policy of communes. This rather obvious statement has significant consequences
40 for managing space in Poland, particularly in rural communes, which since the 90s. have
41 remained a traverse of political, economic and cultural transformation of unstable and discordant
42 image [Kowalewski et al., 2013].

43
44 The aim of the article is to prove landscape utility as a tool in public policy of rural communes,
45 initiating special integrity. Firstly, a phenomenon of landscape disintegration in rural areas is
46 described. Secondly, a preventive concept is presented. It is also proven how forming local
47 development visions can be used and why it is important to base them on rurality image. The
48 significance of landscape for rurality and the role of landscape design in integrated management
49 of commune space are also described. Finally, an attempt to root the participation of landscape
50 instrumentation in participatory space management is made.

51
52 SPATIAL ORDER DESINTEGRATION OF RURAL AREAS

53
54 Structures of non-agricultural functions and new arrangement of public places constitute visible,
55 spatial signs of social and economic transformations. Current estates of migrants or holiday
56 settlements, thematic villages, logistic centers, communication infrastructures and urbanized
57 public spaces introduce a different than developed by agricultural community system of values
58 and disassemble an established order to rural space. Experts indicate the participation of two
59 processes: farming modernization, which has lead to diminishing the number of agricultural
60 employees and excluding large plots from production, as well as influx of people from cities.
61 However, growing migration and multifunctionality of the countryside do not result directly from
62 the market opportunity given to other functions by retiring agriculture or political support
63 mechanisms (such as Rural Areas Development Programme). Increase in demand for rural
64 building areas is also a differentiator of changing expectations of urban middle class towards



65 their lifestyles. They refer to healthy eating, physical activity, clean environment and close
66 contact with nature. These features are permanently associated with the countryside and more and
67 more commonly desired.

68
69 Many analysts notice an ill-balanced course of spatial transformation of the rural areas. They
70 mostly emphasize the irrational (in the long run) spatial policy of communes [Śleszyński et al.,
71 2007; Kowicki, 2014]. In experts opinion excessive dispersion and fragmentation of building
72 development increase the costs of both technical and social infrastructure and transport. They
73 also restrict agricultural productivity and burden sensitive meadow ecosystems. They are a source
74 of life and health threats due to risk of traffic accidents and increase of environmental pollution,
75 as well as rapid natural phenomena (such as floods and landslides) and worsening weather or
76 water conditions. They cause the loss of visual qualities of the surroundings and diminished
77 tourist attraction. They favour decentralization of activity (e.g. places to work, spend free time or
78 study), which inhibits local community integration and creation of new territorial identity among
79 migrants and causes the increase in social exclusion.

80
81 At the same time, the built rural environment with decreasing number of farms is subject to
82 urbanization. It offers fewer smells, tactile sensations and activities linked to agriculture and
83 nature. This restricts the scope of individual and social experiences and reduces the choice of
84 lifestyle in the future. Altogether it causes that predictable costs of changes, including future
85 development lost possibilities, significantly exceed the currently achieved profits. Decisions of
86 local governments, made with influence of opinions and operating economical needs, remain in
87 blatant contradiction with constitutional aim of social and economic policy of the Republic of
88 Poland, i.e. with the principle of sustainable development (Art. 5 of Polish Constitution), which
89 prescribes to optimize environmental and social loss and profit towards achieving high quality of
90 present and future life.

91
92 The assumption that a destructive for life quality spatial policy of the communes results only
93 from managerial mistakes or speculations would be preposterous considering the common
94 character of the described phenomena. It is necessary to search for more basic reasons, which
95 may be found in a deep discrepancy of two inherent spheres of social life, namely the institutional

96 and individual ones [Sikora, 2014]. Local governments create legal framework for individual
97 investment activity. They are a part of the democratic system of the country; they manage the
98 space by using normative tools of spatial planning system and realize aims of government and
99 inhabitants. Each decision, both within public area and everyday life are not made by the system
100 but the man, who weighs the benefits and costs – both the measurable and the uncountable. The
101 man makes a choice guided by own experience: gained knowledge, conviction or habit,
102 association or emotions. If the acquired tactics denies the orderly political idea [Certeau, 2008;
103 Sztompka, 2016], it is the beginning of a conflict, finally perceived as a lack of spatial order.
104

105 In the light of the facts and judgments cited, the likely, though deeply hidden source of the
106 conflict is rooted in the public domain. The thesis is supported by the social illegibility of spatial
107 concepts which refer to sustainability. This matter does not include communication, and therefore
108 agreement between institutions and individuals. One side of the scene involves acting
109 fragmentary and disintegrated legal operations of a system managing the built environment,
110 namely studies of conditions and directions of spatial development, local plans, protection plans,
111 conservation guidelines, environmental impact assessment, energetic audit, building permits etc.
112 (What pays attention is the lack of a real - as opposed to dummy - support mechanism of a social
113 dialogue included in the system, which would incorporate the strategic principle of sustainable
114 development. Sometimes reliable consultations of local plans are conducted owing to support of
115 the non-governmental organizations. The example is a project of the *Our Space. Our Deal*,
116 Foundation for Rural Support, realized since 2015.) On the other side of the stage there are
117 individuals, unconscious of threats and postponed consequences of their own spatial decisions,
118 who therefore take the extremely pragmatic attitude both in private life and public matters. An
119 obvious conclusion is that the successful realization of strategic aims (offered by intellectual
120 elites based on the current knowledge and the common wealth principle) requires procedures and
121 tools which could become a clear carrier of a commonly recognized and accepted development
122 vision.
123

124 LANDSCAPE RURALITY AS A COHERENCE FACTOR
125

126 Nowadays, the rationale of the country is its rurality [Wilczyński, 2013; Górka, 2016].
127 Transformation of rural economy and lifestyle change are reasons for it should be perceived as
128 landscape specifics, distinguishing the countryside from the city. Rural character of the
129 countryside involves spatial features and relations shaped in the course of rural usage. It is also
130 made of common images [Taylor, 2001], induced by direct and indirect experiences [Berleant,
131 2011], which decide on perceiving spatial features as rural ones.

132
133 Rurality of the landscape is a kind of image, which may be easily interpreted by the community
134 as different from urban due to e.g. quantity and species composition of the greenery; type, scale,
135 intensity, construction or detail of the development; accessibility of open landscapes; mutual
136 relations between the greenery, development and topography; dominant colour; presence of
137 animals, etc. However, the desired rurality should not be defined only by means of features and
138 relations of a distanced view. The image of the surroundings, which we “keep in mind” may be a
139 significant carrier of various kinds of information on the environment-human mutual influence.
140 The condition of the observed elements of the landscape reflects the quality of the
141 multidimensional relations between them. The commonly recalled expressions, such as “peace
142 and quiet”, “clean air”, “beautiful landscape”, “healthy products” “rural heritage”, “close contact
143 with nature” [Zawadka, 2013] or – rarely - “close relations with people” are used to characterize
144 rural environment. The protection of these valued features is closely linked to following the rules
145 of energetic effectiveness and using technologies restricting the emission [European Commission,
146 2014], counteracting against social exclusion and providing access to enjoyable gardening or the
147 possibility to choose a walking route. The examples of projects aimed at protection of cited
148 features of rural space are: local production and distribution of regional building materials,
149 development of ecological agriculture, preventing scattered building development or native
150 planting policy, etc.

151
152 The idea of landscape rurality covers images, knowledge-based opinions and experiences and
153 emotions resulting from physical involvement in the environment. At the same time, it has the
154 opportunity to build a connection between the image of a rural landscape and ecological, social,
155 economic and perceptive prerequisites of its shaping – a specific, holistic environmental
156 awareness.

157

158 NEGOTIATING LANDSCAPE FEATURES

159

160 The way the landscape is perceived depends on the viewers: their private stories, gained
161 knowledge, opinions, habits and intentions, as well as their sensual experiences, appearing in the
162 environment. Therefore, the same view may be differently perceived. It is influenced by the
163 optics principles, but also a collection of associations induced by landscape stimuli. According to
164 Meining (1979), observers interpret the landscape as nature, history, habitat, artifact, economic
165 value, issue, ideology or system. As they do it depending on different experiences and intentions,
166 various strategies are implemented. Amos Rapoport (1990) presents a similar opinion noticing
167 that conflicting spatial actions result from different assessments of the surroundings and
168 situations, as well as contradictory aims of those who start them. As space users we are stuck
169 mainly in the landscape: through visual and corporal experiences, work, emotions, memory,
170 knowledge, beliefs and images. Landscape perceived directly and in representations remains the
171 only accessible and such a holistic medium of communicating individual and collective meanings
172 of environment, images and visions, and therefore it is the best of all possible common ground.
173 Consequently, social landscape policies, using the image and referring to experiences, would
174 simplify the establishment of attitudes and building a common idea of spatial action in counties
175 (such as commercials in case of spreading fashion tendencies).

176

177 High negotiating competencies of the landscape decide on its usage in creating the image of the
178 place by the community. Such collective images direct the development and limit the risk of local
179 conflicts in managing space [Pawłowska, 2008]. Therefore, they constitute the basic prerequisite
180 of preserving continuity, identity and coherence by the community. Creation of image has to be
181 preceded by a collective identification of surrounding spatial features and their imaging on maps,
182 drawings or photographs. Common recognition of qualities in the inhabited area favours social
183 integration around these values and encourages to participation in their development. Sue
184 Clifford and Angela King (1996) emphasizes the significant meaning of the process of creating
185 so-called *parish maps*. “Saving” important places and collecting familiar details (stories, legends,
186 objects related to certain lifestyle, known people) reveals unique relations between a territory and
187 its inhabitants. It also supports their actions made to preserve identity and improve the quality of

188 life. What is more, it brings a lot of joy to everyday life. Only the community, which gives its
189 territory the range of a common ground and makes it a subject of collective knowledge, activity
190 and responsibility has a chance to safely direct its transformations. The base of the process is a
191 common judgement and image, which then transfer to the integrity of spatial management.

192

193 THE TOOL OF LANDSCAPE IN RURAL COUNTY SPACE MANAGEMENT

194

195 Nowadays, there are two approaches to landscape, and they stem from the 19th century. These are
196 protection paradigm and consumption paradigm. The birth of the first one was linked to building
197 national countries. The latter is based on domination of vision and images, and characteristic for
198 the whole western culture; tourism refers to this approach as well. Both perspectives treat
199 landscape as a form of past. The uniqueness of its elements – objects, places and areas – decides
200 on their protection and attractiveness for consumers. As a result, only chosen, rare objects, and
201 not integral entreties and phenomena are protected and perceived as valuable. The features and
202 relations of common places, without exceptional elements, but with preserved specifics of
203 traditional spatial relations and harmonious landscape, are not treated as worth preserving. As a
204 result, they are not reproduced in the course of usage and then disappear.

205

206 Both cited approaches ignore landscape creators and their constant input in its change. Indeed,
207 there is no possibility to protect the unchanged past at present. Even the selection of protected
208 elements is arbitrary and depends on the past created for the use of our times [Ashworth, 2015]. It
209 is proven by contemporary products of rural tourism, which creatively refer to chosen elements of
210 the popular folklore and history of the country. It is therefore impossible to treat landscape only
211 as a type of preserved resources, subject to protection and consumption. Landscape is changeable
212 and constantly produced. It has real and mental dimensions. It is not only a form yet also a social
213 process including a constant creation of new structures and values; a process which can be
214 managed. Moreover, landscape being simultaneously a material subject of action, its conditioning
215 and effect, determines the integrity of social life. The physicality and visibility of the landscape
216 ensure legibility to its planning and course, and therefore favour communication and social
217 engagement. The assessment of landscape character may combine visual perception and
218 impressions, as well as functioning of ecosystems, technical and social structures. It allows to



219 recognize and compare quantitative and qualitative costs and benefits of the planned
220 transformations in a better way. The conducted discussion results in a statement that designing
221 landscape as a social process may be a kind integrated public policy and an effective tool in
222 achieving spatial order.

223
224 The role of landscape design, considered as managing a built environment, would be a creation of
225 a coherent character and visual shape of places. The image of a place is a social value. It builds
226 the impression of durability which the continuity of the community depends on. This statement is
227 particularly directed to design of public spaces, including streets and rural squares, recreation
228 areas [Górka, 2012] and open landscapes. Standardization of common areas and limitation of
229 access to open landscapes are source of spatial and social disintegration, as they inhibit the
230 elaboration a unique image of the place (as the territory with known borders) by the local
231 community. The aim of common places design should be their landscape specifics, compliant
232 with the development vision established by inhabitants.



242 FIGURE 1. Common space, Brzeźno Wlk., Pomorskie
243 Voivodeship, Poland. Autor's photo

244 FIGURE .2. Nobody's space, Rybno, Pomorskie Voivodeship,
245 Poland. Autor's photo

245 A mission of public spaces design formulated in such a way is associated with the postulate
246 towards the science. It would be necessary to start research over the integrated assessment of
247 landscape quality method. This kind of judgement should take collective images and opinions
248 into account and compare space user's expectations to their satisfaction. The connections
249 between common spatial use, land development as well as features and relations of natural
250 environment, should be searched for. The results should be applied at the local level. It is



251 particularly important to stop the progressing unification and primitive urbanization of many
252 villages (Fig.1, Fig.2).

253
254 Management of the built environment through designing landscape requires expansion of the
255 instrumentation. The need for counteracting fragmentation and providing integrity at commune
256 and town level is the reason why the landscape as a tool may be potentially used bidirectionally
257 and simultaneously in (a) *top-down* and (b) *bottom-up* approaches. Records of local plans have to
258 realize mental and image vision established by the community. It is created as a result of (a)
259 external stimulation and (b) bottom-up recognition of territory resources.

260
261 (a) The legal system of public planning in communes should be complemented by the concept of
262 shaping landscape character, which would serve coordinating and integrating roles, as well as by
263 a collection of dissemination developments (so-called good manuals), which would thoroughly
264 and vividly present and explain the aims and principles of sustainable spatial policies in different
265 aspects of life (e.g. the connection between developing common spaces with the aims of rain
266 water management or the influence of wayside and private garden planting on saving energy,
267 etc). On the basis of reliable social consultations, communes would be responsible for
268 recognizing attitudes of space users and conducting series of trainings, workshops and meetings
269 dedicated to negotiating a consensus. Truly process of social consultation, covering opinion
270 surveys, presenting developed plans, finding agreement and final choice of spatial solutions,
271 definitely needs an expanded (digital and traditional) visualization mechanism, which would
272 include photographs, various cartographic developments, hand sketches or models. By using
273 landscape instrumentation, the local government would more successfully realize the established
274 sustainability strategy and stimulate desired changes.

275
276 (b) The aim of the *bottom-up* approach in landscape management would be to build social (civic
277 and educational) attitudes of the process, and particularly a community-developed, specific set of
278 images, opinions, beliefs and habits related to its surroundings. It would involve a collective,
279 landscape model, with specified forms and functions and spatial relations. It would constitute a
280 certain desired pattern or reference for the conducted investment actions. Common drawing of
281 mental maps of town, student or civic landscape monitoring [Landscape identification. A guide to

282 good practice, 2006], thematic exhibitions of town photographs and drawings, various
283 performative events and finally participatory planning and plans' implementing would allow to
284 create or reveal and continue landscape expectations, beliefs and associations of individuals and
285 groups, which is a preliminary condition to establish the local principles of shaping space by the
286 community. These actions would develop "thinking through landscape" and "landscape
287 awareness", give the opportunity to communicate aesthetical judgements and lay foundation to
288 local spatial culture. They would allow to set a base of social trust and local knowledge towards
289 building an agreement platform regarding issues of development directions and spatial
290 development. It is a domain of a so-called third sector (i.e. non-governmental organizations) and
291 informal leaders.

292

293 CONCLUSION

294

295 Landscape protection and management cannot remain the only domain of a legislator and
296 professionals. If this is the case, the actions are doomed to failure or temporary effects. The
297 landscape is a mirror, reflecting the linked results of political strategies and common investment
298 practices. As a distorting mirror, it deforms political ideas, transferred to the educationally and
299 consciously unprepared social ground. The restoration of spatial order in communes should be
300 then started from establishing social development vision, aligned with local images and opinions
301 and consistent with top assumptions. Harmonization of political ideas and spatial images,
302 judgements and habits of people would have to be entrusted with a landscape instrumentation
303 which could be the most effective tool of coherence in the spatial policies of communes. Its
304 implementing to land management system depends on government initiative but its effectiveness
305 depends on civic awareness and participation. Both landscape approaches - *top-down* and *bottom-*
306 *up* - lead to establishing local principles of sustainable management of rural areas, supporting
307 identity, integrity and durability of the local communities.

308

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