

## Chapter 1

Irena Niedźwiecka-Filipiak

# Why Should We Care About the Rural Space?

### 1. Introduction

For many years the rural areas worked in harmony with their traditional character, resulting from a natural layout and the agricultural function, which was them assigned. Villages were a place of habitation and work of people living mainly from agriculture, in which the specific buildings alternated with green, often serving the practical role of the utility point of view. The occurring changes in both the spiritual and material sphere of the inhabitants of these areas cause a change in the specific of village. Today's villages are multifunctional settlements, their old layout typical of self-generated or established villages, is not reflected in current planning. Number of farms, which users conducted an additional non-agricultural activity in the years 1996-2003 increased by 46% (National Plan of ..., 2007).

Entering of a new building with non-agricultural function entails serious spatial consequences for the planning of such localities. For this reason, future actions in these areas should be reasonable and very thoughtful, seeking to highlight the attractiveness of the village and its landscape, taking into account the differences between urban and rural land use type. It is important that in the local land use planning for each locality were taken into account both good functional layout, but also the visual side of the future villages, to as many of them can be called in the future "beautiful". We should provide them not only the place for future buildings, but also to the common rest areas, including the individual elements that may be characteristic of the town's distinguishing features. It also connects with rational management of space. The role of planning in shaping the space indicates the name of the plan, which was established in 1883 in Krakow. It was approved as: "a general plan for beautification of the city", which became the basis for development of public spaces and to create a "line of streets beautification" (Böhm 2006). Many municipalities are looking for new building lands and in emerging local land use plans the maximum possible surface shall be allocated to this

function, what often tends to excessive increase of settlement units, as well as connecting to the villages. This should not be done routinely and everywhere, as it turns out that at present for development in the existing MPZP (the local development plans) area is provided with greater surface than the existing built-up areas, with 25% coverage of the plans of the country (Wiland 2008).

Care about the rural space is manifested at the level of the commune in which responsibility are planning tools of the rural community responsible for the quality of the joint space, but also dealing with a single inhabitant of his own estate. Generally, we can specify that taking care of the village area are:

- good planning functions in the village;
- maintenance and strive to the clear spatial layout of the village carrying on the sense of order and arrangement;
- preservation and displaying of the characteristic elements that cause identification of the village;
- appropriate management of common areas in the village, creating meeting points, aimed at integration of the rural community;
- exposure of symbolic places affecting the growth of a sense of identity and pride in residents;
- caring for the aesthetics of each property, which affects the overall image of the village.

## **2. The spatial shape, building development of village, characteristic elements**

In order to make in the village a better life should be given to increase the quality and standard of living. Very important in this context are economic reasons, but one should not underestimate the visual side of the locality, because it also affects the quality of life, and can also be an element of attracting potential for tourists or investors. Additionally, a man works better in a structured environment. It results in a better mood, as well as a better quality of work, if this applies to the workplace. The concept of governance is complex and has many aspects (Szmidt 2004). However, the order is so important that in the spatial planning its definition appears as a spatial order in the Act of 2003 "It should be understood as such a space shape, which creates a harmonious whole and takes into account in the arrangement relationships all conditions and functional, socio-economic, environmental, cultural and compositional-aesthetic requirements" (The law...2003, Article 2). It is here highlighted attention on a wide variety of conditions aimed at such composition of space, which can be defined as a spatial order.

Activities subjected to so understood the concept of spatial order to clean and organize the space cause the satisfaction of residents, facilitating contacts between neighbors, creating bonds between people. It should be noted that the integrated community functions better, as well as is guarding their interests at every level. Loss of interpersonal relations is characteristic for the urban, especially for big-city communities, where people live anonymously, without knowing about themselves.

An additional, important issue is the sense of security, which is also dependent on the adequate social bonds, because the anonymity significantly affects the increase in criminality (Czarnecki, Siemiński, 2004). Disorder may cause inability to identify or identification of the individual villages. Creation in many places chaotic, random structures make it that all localities are similar to each other. Differentiation disappears between regions; there is no exposure of the characteristic elements.

In each locality we can find elements that are more specific and can distinguish it from other villages (Niedźwiecka-Filipiak 2009). It is important to identify and expose them stressing the individuality of each locality. This applies to all elements of rural development.

The characteristic element – discriminant may be its **spatial arrangement**, and in it the specific layouts of fields, preserved rural settlements forms, characteristic layouts of buildings in farmstead, squares representing the town centers, which are legible street frontages. Sometimes in places **building development** is distinctive, in which are important visible in the rural landscape individual objects, such as dominants, accents. They may also be objects important by their function, such as meeting places, schools and also monuments.

We must pay attention to the building material, which imposes color and character of the landscape interiors, a uniform form of buildings in the village, the same type and covering of roofs and original ornamentation and architectural detail. From the type of material used to construction of buildings can come the coherent colour scheme of building development in the village such as "red" village with a predominance of faced with red brick buildings (villages in the Valley Barycz), or "white" village, when in the village buildings are made of brick, plastered, with painted in white walls (villages of Opole e.g. Wierzch, Krzanowice). The small architecture can also be characteristic, which we can join the fences visible along the streets. It also are bus shelters with interesting, tailored to the local character architecture.

In the villages can also be distinguishing features connected with the **greenery**. These are e.g. forests near the village, the mid-field green, post-manorial parks, contemporary rural parks, squares, alleys, double rows. In many places a characteristic element are the fruit trees growing wild along the field roads, visible from afar increase the aesthetic values of the site and provide a specific introduction to the village. Inside the localities are often green groups distinguished in the village, creating accents and individual shrubs or trees having a value in views outside of the village. Great importances for the visual side of the locality are also areas around private properties, including outside garden-plots which management can refer to a traditional or standard urban management (Gawryszewska 2006). Another element that could be a differentiator, it is often underestimated, is **water**. We should pay attention to all kinds of water tanks located in the village for various purposes, such as mill ponds, fire reservoirs, water tanks as a result of human activities, including clay ponds, tanks resulting in flooding of quarry or sand pit, water courses, such as mill waters. Often

interesting small bridges are combined with water; they are over the watercourses, ditches running along roads, connecting estates with communication.

If these elements are defined in a given locality, then they should be taken into consideration in future actions so as not to destroy the individual character of the village. Around the characteristic elements can be build a new identity of the locality, its image, which will take account of new needs of residents, in line with that what has already been created by previous generations, in keeping with the tradition of the place. It raises awareness of residents in the value of that what already exists. Indication of distinguishing features of the locality can raise self-esteem and pride in the place where you live. Determination of the distinguishing features helps to pay attention to what should be considered for renovation, expansion of both private properties and public facilities, and public space management in order not to harm the image of the village, but rather enrich it. By such decisions it may also be helpful to identify the model solutions and not recommended solutions, due to the fact that inhabitants often take the wrong decisions unconsciously, without ill will, and a ready example works on their imagination (Niedźwiecka-Filipiak 2007-2008).

In the years 2001-2010 it was studied in the province of Lower Silesia and Opole in over 150 cities covered by the studies in the framework of cooperation of the Institute of Landscape Architecture at the University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Wrocław with Marshal Offices in Wrocław and Opole in program Renewal of Village (Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, Kuriata 2010). In these places the future image of the village was created that takes account of economic, social and functional affairs related to the life of its inhabitants, but does not skip its visual side, taking into account the distinguishing feature that were determined during the previous inventories and research. For this reason it was important to ultimately develop a coherent concept and development plan for the whole locality, in which all these elements are considered. Such work may be used when creating a local land management plan, which is a useful document in securing the spatial order of village in the future.

As an example, a village Mierczyce in the municipality Wądroże Wielkie, in which there are many distinguishing features associated with well-preserved farm buildings, the palace-park setting-up, and other historic elements of the village. The character of the village building development, greenery and water were analyzed and then specific elements were identified that must be taken into account by any planning decisions in the village (Fig. 1). However, as the most important distinguishing feature, which it can be submitted a future vision for the development was determined the nearby settlement, which could become an inspiration to the promotion of the village such as under the slogan: "Mierczyce – a village with a stronghold" (Fig. 2). From this may arise a local product, cyclical events attracting both local society, but also with the right advertising supra-local society, the rural tourism can be also developed.

# PLAN ROZWOJU MIEJSCOWOŚCI MIERCZYCE PLANSZA NR 8 - NACHYLENIE I KONSTRUKCJA DACHÓW

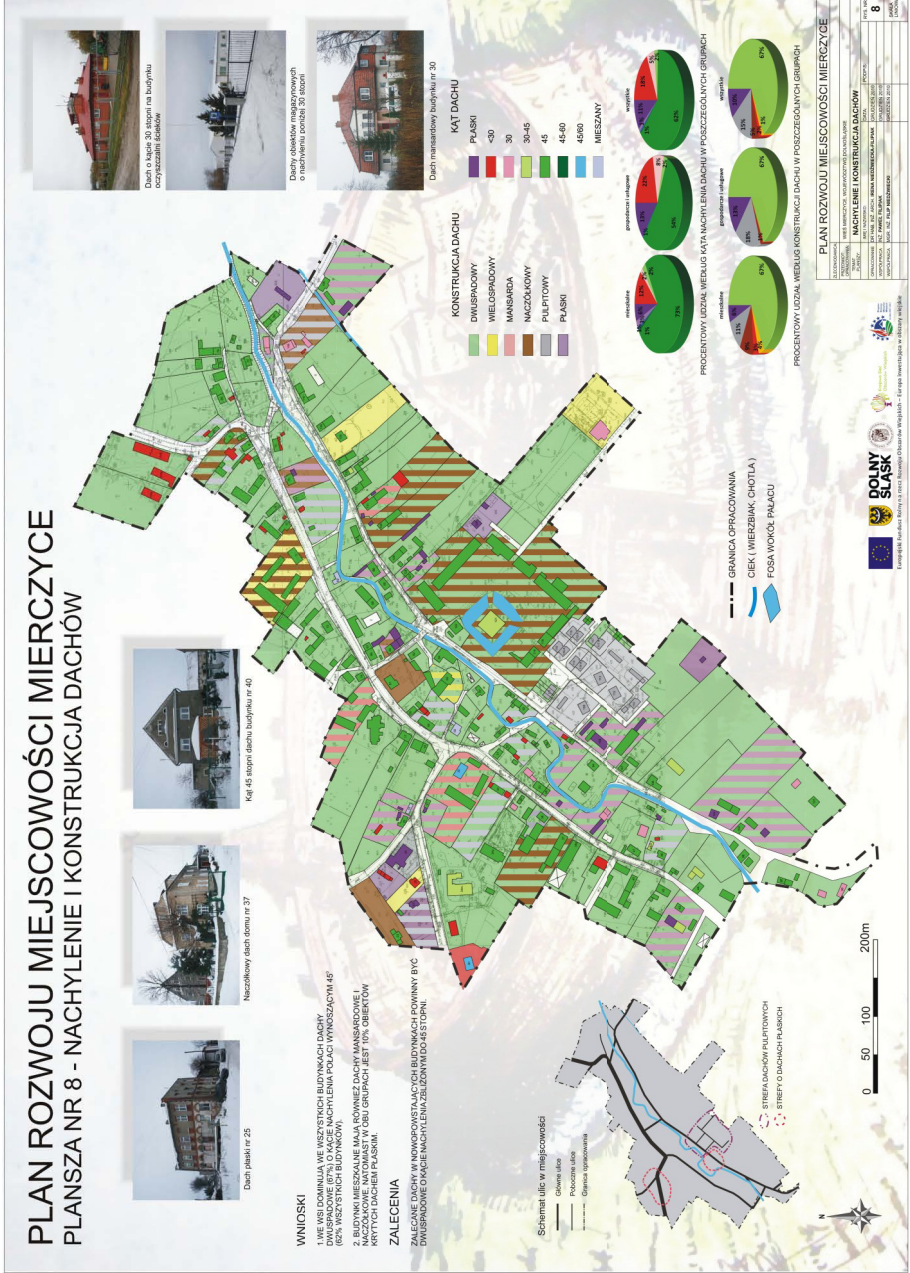


Fig. 1. Development plan of the village of Mierczyce, an example board with an analysis of the roofs (2010)



### 3. Symbolic places, symbolism of greenery

One of the characteristic elements of the village may be symbolic places. They are often invisible; they exist only in the mind of residents, as passed from generation to generation informations and legends. If they bind to specific places it should be provided them the proper management, to remind all the stories that are assigned to them. They can become also distinguishing features, with which the given locality will be in the future associated. In many villages there are places that are important for the residents, both because of the importance of events, often associated with the stay of significant persons in history, as well as with small stories connecting directly to the life of the inhabitants. On the role of symbolism in the shaping and preservation of landscape indicates among others Dąbrowska-Budziło (2007). Such places can be divided into:

- places commemorating short stay of important persons,
- places associated with historical events that took place in this village,
- monuments placed in the squares in honor of the in the wars fallen inhabitants of the given locality,
- places commemorating the birthplace or life place in the village of well-known people,
- places associated with residents who had a unique impact on village,
- places commemorating disasters such as flood,
- places commemorating the old way of life of the residents,

In the Opole region one of those places is created by the same inhabitants so-called Kozi Rynek (Goat Market) in Żyrowa in the municipality Zdzeszowice. It is a square, on which formerly goats were gathered, water carrier came bringing with trolley with barrel water for local residents and the life of rural community went on. In Pietna the square near the pond is a symbolic place. There was set a monument-obelisk, commemorating the flood that hit the village in 1997. Its height is equal to the level of water that flooded the village at that time.

It is worth noting in the villages on such elements as monumental trees and single trees specimens that are of importance in the landscape of the village creating a dominant or accent. Of the past in the villages were located at the crossroads, in the squares, also on the road, chapels or crosses symmetrically planted with two or four trees, mostly linden trees, chestnut trees, oaks, hawthorns (Borcz, 1999). Trees had also formerly a symbolic meaning for the villagers, thus additionally resulted willingness of planting them to care e.g. about the homestead. Examples are linden trees which are trees of the Mother of God, oaks symbolizing God and ash trees deterring vipers (Trzaskowska, Sobczak 2004). They were also attributed healing powers, which increased the sense of security of rural residents. Among the Slavs oaks, lindens, maples (sycamore maples), elms, ashes, which were considered sacred, were under the protection (Michałowski 2000). The springs were also attributed healing power, which flowed near them. Currently, it happens that these trees are cut, because of their large size, and in their place are planted various evergreen species e.g., thujas, junipers or yews or there

are planted at all no trees. Single specimens of trees can become the distinguishing features of village, if they are dominant or accent of the interior of the locality, and if they commemorate an event, becoming a symbolic place, such as oak, planted to commemorate the stay of Kaiser Wilhelm in Żyrowa. The exposition of places and symbolic elements makes people proud of their place of residence and, to some extent, increases the sense of security.

#### **4. Meeting places**

It is not enough that people will care about appearance and surrounding area of their property. In the localities are still communal areas, which also have a huge impact on the image of the individual villages. Lack of proper management of squares at the crossroads or plazas at the entrances to the locality, covered spontaneously with self-sown plants, has an effect on their image and causes a feeling of chaos. There are more such sites in the villages. These are among others the undeveloped spaces in villages that are part of oval-shaped or square villages, the old market places, squares at churches, areas around the community centers, cultural centers, plazas at retail, gastronomic and service centers, sports fields areas with the environment, the old post manorial parks, ponds inside the village with its surroundings or riverside areas. They do not have to disfigure, and on the contrary - their proper management can improve the quality of the image of the locality. One of the important possibilities of development of such spaces is to organize in them meeting places for the inhabitants, which foster the integration of the rural society. It is possible to spend here the time on discussions, but also common fun. These are the places where they inhabitants can develop their interests, uphold traditions, and organize exhibitions. It is therefore important that each village has as many of the places where they could meet in groups with different interests, in different ages, and all together, for example, celebrating the harvest celebrations. The contemporary meeting places can be divided into two main groups – located in various buildings and organized in an open space. The first group includes first of all churches that for centuries are a meeting place for residents, as well as rural schools and libraries. At the moment, after the reform of education, many old school buildings were adapted to the rural community centers, which are another important element in this group. In Lower Silesia and Opole region after 1945 the rural community centers were often located in the old "gasthouses", but many of them were closed at the end of the last century. It was only recently seen the need to return to the location in the village reading rooms, so now in many localities new facilities are built intended for this purpose. As a meeting place could also serve the social- service centers proposed by Kowicki (1997), which in addition to this that they become an essential element of the village landscape they have to form the social ties of residents.

In the second group - places organized in an open space can be given:

- Place, which form the center of the village, though a substitute for the urban market. The most common in the villages, which are former old small towns with the lost municipal rights. But they appear also in typical



villages, as a multifunctional square centered around itself the various services. This rural market with a meeting place was organized in the village Wiry in the municipality Marcinowice.

- Playgrounds located in the different parts of the village. They can be located at the sports fields at schools or kindergartens, but also independently, e.g. on the squares, at bus stops, rural communities.
- Parks - former, post manorial or contemporary village parks. For the old parks organizing in their place of rest for the inhabitants, including their historic layout may be a chance for their maintenance. An example can be Biała Nyska, where the old park formation was managed with an eye to residents, but also for tourists who come for rest to a nearby Nysa reservoir. In the locality Pilszcz, however, a new Schuman park arose, organized at riverside areas, in the site of the old orchards. The locality is also trying to include into those areas a private pond, which could become an additional, indisputable pride.
- Playing fields with associated objects. They fulfill very important functions, because they are a place of training for the People's Sport Teams, the nonattached youth meets also here and spends his free time "running the ball." They are also used for sport meetings, big events for the residents of the village or regional e.g. for harvest festivals, festivities.
- Leisure places at ponds, water reservoirs, rivers.
- As a meeting place can also be given surroundings of the rural stores with a bench sometimes a small table. In some villages these are the only places of integration of inhabitants.

The mentioned meeting places are often overlooked in the local land management plans, especially if they are created for the construction of new housing developments in villages

## 5. Summary

The properly developed space in the village is a place where we can good live, work and rest. It's not just elevation aesthetics of the residential buildings and their surroundings, but also a common place, favourably for the integration of the rural society. It are also activities which take into account the tradition of the place and existing values, which as a result contributes to the feeling of pride of the residence place, increased sense of identity and individuality of his village. The strength of rural society lies in its integration and joint activities aimed at improving the image of the locality, as well as allowing earning money by, for example, the popularisation of local product. The meeting places play here an important role, so that human relationships are formed, and thus a sense of security and peace increases, as well as there arise new ideas for earnings activity. It is important to take care of the entire rural space, in which there are both private estates and facilities and public spaces. It must be remembered that the village should retain its rural character, different from the urban building development because the rural

areas are addition to the urban areas and vice versa. The blurring of these differences will result in negative effects in the landscape, but also the loss of village identity.

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Irena Niedźwiecka-Filipiak

University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Wrocław  
Institute of Landscape Architecture