

Chapter 5

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Transformations of Cultural Landscape in the Context of Socio-Economic Processes, Illustrated with Examples of Selected Regions of Poland and Germany

1. Introduction

The cultural landscape of many European regions is subject to constant changes due to economic and social processes. Such transformations are not a new situation unheard of before, since the character of regions has been developing over many centuries. However, these metamorphoses never proceeded as rapidly, or influenced the landscape as intensely, as at the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st century, i.e. in the age of galloping industrialisation and urbanisation as well as of demographic phenomena. The form and range of the transformations determine how the space is perceived and assessed, and how the values of cultural landscape, that have been harmoniously formed over the centuries, are used. However, adverse phenomena can be frequently observed. These bring about changes which not only result from the need for development, but also, in a longer run, curb this development due to the loss of elements important for the identity of a given place and community.

The research includes rural landscape analyses performed in rural areas of Poland and Germany, specifically in regions with a different character, history, cultural and environmental conditions, and socio-economic potential. This paper also presents the results of comparative assessment of rural landscape. The important thing was to indicate the possibilities as regards active protection of cultural landscape which is both a distinctive feature of a region and a part of its heritage.

Changes in cultural landscapes of many European regions constitute a process which has been going on for quite a long time. They were undoubtedly influenced by external factors associated with the means of shaping and forming the space,

yet also by military operations. As regards the history, however, one can speak of changes which proceeded (with minor exceptions) in a quite harmonious way. Transformations taking place within the space of cities, towns and villages have therefore been noticeable for many centuries. All such changes were (and still are) a source of concern and worry about how the space occupied by man will look like in the future. During the post-World War II period, Tworowski (1946) concluded that "in the meantime, so many changes took place worldwide as regards the methods of construction, that this has certainly had repercussions in our countryside (...). And so the old-time, really beautiful wooden architecture is becoming, in front of our very eyes, a historical document that is only barely preserved here and there. There seems to be no return to the houses erected by the carpenters of the past, when the modern economy of material and time was not known of yet; it was a period when, from the peasant's point of view, the time was standing still and was to stand like that forever. There is no return whatsoever to that architecture."

The most significant fact as regards the ways of transformations, perceived especially at the end of the previous and in the beginning of the present century, is the change of the functions within the structure of both towns and rural areas. This indirectly results from the ongoing socio-economic processes. Respectively, in relation to adverse phenomena one can notice that the elements within the landscape, which are important for the identity of a given place and community, have been disappearing. Socio-cultural changes taking place in a given region are also soon reflected in the changes in the functional and spatial structure of the landscape (Latocha 2009).

At present, the economic, social and spatial transformations are more and more apparent; however, depending on a given region of Europe, they have been taking place to a different extent and unevenly (Jaszczak 2009). In the early 1990s, Stachowitz and Tschudi (1992) wrote about the need to take a new look at the countryside and the galloping changes taking place within the landscape in the context of the potential development of rural areas in the eastern part of Germany (former German Democratic Republic). The example of Germany indicated (and still does so) the problems with a complex socio-economic origin, which directly affect both the landscape and the surroundings. Residential buildings become dilapidated because people, especially young and educated, migrate from the country to urban agglomerations and leave their homes behind; in consequence, this leads to a gradual loss of the architectural fabric and, in an extreme case, brings about complete changes to the arrangement or structure of the countryside.

2. Determinants of the Research

The research was carried out based on the field observations and analysis of the archives, including monographic and cartographic materials. Moreover, the relevant literature and planning documents were thoroughly searched. One of the most important stages was the field diagnosis and analysis. The research was also based on comparative assessment of the landscape, including its

transformations in selected regions, namely East Frisia (*Ostfriesland*), the Lüneburg Heath (*Lüneburger Heide*), and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (*Mecklenburg Vorpommern*) in Germany, and Warmia and Mazury in Poland. The important task was to find the factors causing changes in rural landscape. Furthermore, the possibilities as regards protection of cultural values, including *inter alia* buildings, the system of greenery and road networks were identified.

3. The Research Results

The cultural landscape is a landscape created by activities of man, whereas anthropogenic transformations of forms similar to natural ones have proceeded with a varying level of intensity and at different times, thus leading to a sort of harmony, or disharmony, within the space. This character of changes has resulted in a different classification of the landscape. Therefore, following Bogdanowski (1992), three types of cultural landscape can be distinguished: harmonious, being currently devastated and devastated. The old (historical) cultural landscape should be undoubtedly regarded as the first of the above types. According to the UNESCO/ICOMOS Expert Group (1995), cultural landscapes constitute a blend of the nature's creation and the work of man. At the same time, they illustrate the development of peoples' links with the place of existence due to physical limitations on the one hand, and to the possibilities of making use of the natural environment and the social, economic and cultural impacts, both external and internal, on the other hand.

The rural landscape is associated with spatial development of a rural settlement and of the areas beyond its boundaries. Therefore, the issues related to the change in the arrangement, types of buildings and their uses, are of significance. In the age of rational use of landscape resources, based on sustainable development of rural areas, it is vitally important to determine diverse functions which include specific natural, cultural, infrastructural, economic and social conditions existing in numerous European regions. Only an individual approach to the issues related to shaping, protection and spatial development of the space will allow appropriate recognition, assessment and, finally, provision of guidelines for the proper use of its components (Jaszczak 2009b).

In the regions under analysis, problems associated with transformations of cultural landscape have different geographic and historical background. Changes within the space should be considered in a similar socio-economic context, though on a different scale. Firstly, the lack of, or decline in employment in agricultural farms and enterprises involved in agricultural material supplies, results in migrations of young people to cities and thus in aging of the local communities, which in consequence leads to changes in the landscape as well as to deformation of historical arrangements of villages and towns (Jaszczak 2009a). Within the landscape, the state of preservation, as well as the availability of the traditional forms of both native buildings and of management in the countryside, are very insignificant. Creative activities within the landscape should therefore be in the form of widely understood restoration which aims, through rational economy

consistent with the natural conditions existing in the landscape, at continuing the native tradition. This process should be a result of the interrelationship between the regional form and the local climate, material resources and other factors. Restoration of the endangered landscape should consist in different sorts of work related to the passive and active protection of the preserved, valuable improvements on land. Active protection of the landscape must primarily consist in continuation of the local architectural forms (Rączka 1985).

3.1. Landscape Transformations Under Conditions of the North-Eastern Poland

With regard to the specificity of the landscape of Polish countryside, including the Warmian or Mazurian, the occurrence of adverse changes is not a new situation. Shortly after the Second World War, H. Ładosz wrote in the foreword to the book by Tworowski (1946): "(...) the appearance of our villages, with minor exceptions, is just pathetic. Beautiful parts do occur, yet the whole, almost as a rule, demonstrates our poor architectural culture despite the rich Slavic traditions of the folk architecture. Neither controlled nor cultivated by conscious artists-architects, it degenerates into Swiss porches and eyesores made of hollow-blocks being the result of new building materials used in an naive and unprofessional manner." Further on, the author adds: "(...) the war destroyed our villages and towns – let us hope that the reconstruction works will not be temporary, hasty and chaotic." Despite the fact that 65 years have passed since the time when Ładosz proposed his theses on the state of the rural space, his harsh words seem prophetic. Over several decades, the landscape has changed its face irretrievably.

In this context, one can notice that transformations within the space of the Warmia and Mazury region were related to historical determinants, while nowadays they are related to socio-economic phenomena. The major causes of the changes are as follows:

- Degradation of the traditional spatial forms of rural structures (Fig. 1D);
- Expansion of chaotic land development in suburban areas;
- Deformation of rural architecture (Fig. 1A, 1C);
- Expansion of mass tourism, especially within the areas of exceptional, and often unique, natural values;
- Spatial and socio-economic transformations of the former State Farms as a result of the political transformation in the years 1989/1990 (Fig. 1B);
- Too free interpretation of the existing legal provisions regarding the rural space at various levels;
- The lack, or a weak sense, of the regional identity after the Second World War.



Fig. 1. A. A change in the structure of a rural homestead, together with transformations of architectural fabric and detail (the village of Klon). B. Blocks of flats being part of the former State Farms (the village of Kojtryny). C. Devastation of farm buildings. D. Stylistically alien models in spatial development of rural gardens (Wilimy)

3.2. Landscape Transformations in the Regions under Analysis in Germany

In the case of German regions under analysis, the transformations within the cultural landscape proceed unevenly and depend on varied external and internal conditions. The region of East Frisia, located in the north-west part of Germany (the state of Lower Saxony) can be considered as the one where the spatial and social changes are the least noticeable, and which is at the same time exceptional in terms of preservation of features significant for its identity. The region stands out from the others in Germany not only due to its topography (lowland landscape, occasionally turning into a depression), functions (agriculture is predominant, followed by the fisheries and industrial sectors), natural and cultural assets (intertidal zones – the so-called Wadden Sea, coastal landscape, and rural architecture) but also to the linguistic distinctiveness (dialect) and local customs. In spite of the above, in the recent period one can also notice adverse phenomena and changes leading to depletion of the natural and cultural potential, as well as disturbances within both the structure of the countryside and the architectural fabric. This results, *inter alia*, from the overall tendencies occurring in agricultural

areas, different functions, as well as alien, even if global, models.

Therefore, in the case of East Frisia, changes and related problems have been observed, which are primarily associated with:

- The ever decreasing profitability of agricultural production;
- Migrations of people to large urban agglomerations;
- Degradation and destruction of rural structures, especially conversion of buildings in agricultural farms (Fig. 2A, B);
- Seasonal tourism (lack of packages or all-year-round products);
- Standardisation of the development of green areas, including rural gardens (Fig. 2C, D);
- Deterioration of the areas of natural interest (the Wadden Sea and coastal landscapes, Jaszczak 2009a).



Fig. 2. A., B. Devastated buildings and facilities in an abandoned agricultural farm. C,D. Standardised stylisation of traditional rural gardens, being a result of ignorance towards the tradition of the place. The Diztumhamrich settlement, East Frisia.

The Lüneburg Heath is another region in the state of Lower Saxony. It is distinguished by occurrence of saline deposits, heathlands formed as a result of the centuries-old management of man (forest grubbing, sheep farming), woodland areas, and riparian and agricultural landscapes. Within this space the following stand out: village arrangements (ring-shaped villages), architecture typical of the area (the Lower Saxon hall houses; large, in terms of cubage, residential and farm buildings in homesteads), sacral buildings (cloisters, churches, and cemeteries).

Unfortunately, despite the undoubtedly big natural and cultural potential, this is another region where adverse changes can be noticed that are resulting, *inter alia*, from:

- Problems of the agricultural sector, including agricultural production;
- Transformation of the regional structures and architecture, particularly in the areas adjacent to the large agglomerations of Hamburg and Hannover (Fig. 3 A, B, C);
- Problems related to the transport and storage of radioactive waste in the region (Fig. 3D);
- Gradual disappearance of heathlands which are typical of the region;
- Aging of the population.



Pic. 3. A. Abandoned farm buildings in a homestead in Heitbrack. B. Cavities in the building frame filling; a building in Jastorf. C. A damaged barn in a homestead in the village of Kirchweyhe. D. Protests against transport and storage of radioactive waste in the region.

The region, where the most significant changes as regards the landscape structures have taken place, is Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania located in the eastern part of Germany. Its distinguishing features include occurrence of lakes and extensive woodland areas, agricultural landscape (fields under cultivation, meadows and pastures), residential and farm architecture, and numerous manor-and-park and palace-and-park landscaping complexes. Stachowitz and Tschudi (1992) also mention country roads and their surroundings, especially those internal,

i.e. historical and cobbled ones which have been converted into bitumen-surfaced, walled-in roads. They also draw the attention to the alleys along the roads, and the old-time rural buildings, first changed into blocks of flats for the LPG employees, then into the so-called "free-style" ones. Due to socio-economic transformations associated with the political transformation in the German Democratic Republic, as well as to a flexible planning and legal approach, buildings styled as Bavarian, along with more "exotic", namely Tuscanian buildings, started to appear in the region. The above expresses the slogan "Freedom of construction for the free dwellers." Another cause for changes, and in consequence for the loss of abandoned and/or unused buildings in numerous villages is the mass migration of population to large cities in the western part of Germany. In the region of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the changes within the space are a result of:

- Migration of people from rural areas to large cities;
- Reduction in employment in the agricultural sector;
- Degradation of rural structures, including the loss of fabric in buildings (Fig. 4 A, 4B);
- Abandoning homesteads;
- Ill-fitting and poorly implemented revitalisation programmes (Fig. 4C, D).



Fig. 4. Conversion of buildings in a manor-and-park landscaping complex in Alt Rehse near the city of Neubrandenburg. B. Changes to the substance of a historical hall house in Glasin, the Grey Region. C., D. Incompatibility of the plant material and composition in a rural garden. Attempts at a free-style arrangement within the space of a foregarden, Ballwitz

3.3. Possibilities for Active Protection of Cultural Landscape

The character of rural areas is subject to incessant changes. At present, the economic, social and spatial transformations are more and more apparent; however, depending on a given region of Europe, they have been taking place to a different extent and unevenly. It frequently turns out that the countryside is not associated with agriculture and production support anymore; however, its new functions emerge, being different from those original ones. The lack of, or decline in employment in agricultural farms and enterprises involved in agricultural material supplies, results in migration of young people to cities, and thus in aging of local communities, which in consequence leads to changes in, for example, the landscape, and to deformation of historical arrangement of villages and towns (Jaszczak, 2009). Everywhere in Europe the inhabitants of rural areas must adapt their "existence" to new ideas and trends (Stachowitz, Tschudi 1992). It is important to undertake tasks aimed at preserving the entire landscape as well as the individual landscape structures. Specific protection of individual structures and areas must be therefore compatible with the comprehensive protection of the entire landscape.

Revival of the countryside is a programme of rural area development, whose beginnings go back to the 1970s and 1980s of the 20th century in the West European countries, mainly in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Increasing problems within the structure of the countryside and agriculture have generated the need for changing the direction of thinking about the society, economy and the space. The transformations related to a reduction in agricultural production and agricultural support, and thus to a decrease in the number of farms, and new social and economic conditions have led to a loss of income. The consequence of the found situation was the increasing unemployment rate and migration of people to cities for money.

It is the conviction that modernisation of the countryside in line with the urban model, and agriculture based on industrial production methods, fail to solve the problems of the countryside and even exacerbate these problems (Wilczyński 2005), that lay at the basis of the revival of the countryside as a separate trend of the rural area development. Therefore, the development in a new perspective depended on a reference to regional identity, the natural and cultural potential, and multidirectional approach to social affairs. The assistance, provided by institutions responsible for revitalisation at various levels, conditioned the proper shaping of rural areas as well as of the built-up, recreational and service-providing areas. At the same time, it was necessary to take account of the protection of the above-mentioned potential, and also prevention of both degradation and deformation of structures.

While taking account of the principles of the improvement of the living conditions in the countryside, the possibilities for economic and social development, and the simultaneous protection of the areas whose main function has so far been agricultural, all measures should be taken that aim at identifying the

existing conditions, diagnosing the state of natural and cultural environment, and preparing guidelines for further functioning, including their implementation. The legal and planning provisions emphasize the need for performing the above-mentioned tasks. One of the key documents on shaping the space is the European Landscape Convention of 20 October, 2000. It entails a legal obligation to perceive landscapes in relation to the environment of man, being the foundation of the cultural and natural heritage. It emphasizes the need for carrying out research within the arrangements of native landscapes, including "identification of own landscapes throughout the territory, analysing their characteristics and the forces and pressures transforming them, taking note of changes, and assessing the landscape thus identified." As regards the landscape research in Poland, it is worth referring to the achievements and methodological approach of German centres, the European pioneers in the research on cultural (and agricultural) landscape, the landscape transformations, spatial planning, shaping the environment, and monitoring and evaluation of the landscape. This is why the analyses performed aim, on the one hand, at referring to the already existing German studies, while on the other hand they aim at continuing the research extending beyond the national scope, especially when it comes to studies on the methodology of planning, programming and managing rural areas in selected regions with different natural, cultural, and socio-economic conditions. Moreover, it would be important to develop a spatial and functional model of the use of units, with particular emphasis on functions different from typically agricultural ones, as well as to develop scenarios of its evolution in rural areas in a long-term perspective.

4. Summary

In the age of rational use of landscape resources, based on sustainable development of rural areas and small towns, it is vitally important to identify new functions which would take account of specific natural, cultural, infrastructural, economic and social conditions existing in the regions formerly considered to be typically agricultural ones, in which it was just the agricultural production that was the leading factor. Taking into account the transformations of the space in the countryside, which result from the socio-economic situation in the analysed regions of Poland (Warmia and Mazury) and Germany (East Frisia, Lüneburg Heath and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania), all measures should be taken that aim at curbing the adverse phenomena influencing the cultural landscape. It seems important to make good use of the possibilities provided by all programmes in the field of revival, or revitalisation of the countryside, and the protection of cultural landscape, as well as making use of the already developed and tested methodologies and techniques. Undoubtedly, the priority is to protect the harmonious elements, while on the other hand one should prevent the adverse effects of the activities of man which lead to landscape disturbances. The space of small towns and villages in many European regions, including those described above, is subject to changes as regards the spatial development of the centre of an urban, or rural, arrangement, as well as of the areas beyond its boundaries.

On the other hand, the inhabitants of these areas have to adapt themselves to the new "image", but they also have the right to a decent life, with account taken of the technological and material development. Therefore, it is important to adapt the newly arising structures to the traditional form and the architecture typical of the given area, while at the same time using, for example, architectural templates, as well as to create the functional and spatial cohesion between what has been "found as existing", old and historical, and what is new.

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