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Scenic values of developing city in Polish spatial planning system. Example of Rzeszów

Abstract

The binding spatial planning system in Poland includes the protection of scenic values in an insufficient way. The progressive, rapid urbanization threatens the existing points and planes of passive exposure, lowering the scenic and landscape values. The paper compares various definitions of landscape and landscape values and analyzes the provisions of the current Study of Conditions and Directions of Spatial Development of the municipality of Rzeszów in terms of the identification and protection of scenic values and compares attractive landscapes with the coverage of the Local Spatial Development Plan.

***Keywords:** landscape protection, city development, spatial planning*

Introduction

Documents providing a legal framework for the protection of landscape and scenic values in Poland are primarily the Act of 27 March 2003 on spatial planning and development (hereinafter: Planning Act) [Journal of Laws 2018, item 194], the Act of 24 April 2015 amending certain acts in relation to strengthening landscape protection instruments (hereinafter: Amending Act) [Journal of Laws 2015, item 774, 1688], European Landscape Convention (hereinafter ELC) and local law acts. In some cases, scenic values are protected indirectly on the basis of the Nature Conservation Act of 16 April 2004 (hereinafter: Nature Act) [Journal of Laws 2018, item 1614], Act of 23 July 2003 on the protection and the care of monuments (hereinafter: Monuments Act) [Journal of Laws 2018, item 2067, 2245; cf. Wójcik 2014, Wójcik 2015] or EU directives (e.g. Birds and Habitat Directives).

The condition of the Polish spatial planning system is discussed by many researchers [cf. Böhm 2016 and 2008; Wagner 2016; Śnigucki 2015]. On the commune level, various documents are prepared, e.g. development strategies, local revitalization programmes, environmental protection programs, Studies of the Conditions and Directions of the Spatial Management of a Commune, Local Spatial Management Plans (hereinafter: Local Plan). One of the most important documents that continuously presents the resources and planned development of the commune is a Study of the Conditions and Directions of the Spatial Management. The study is a compulsory document, covering the whole area of the commune (without closed areas, cf. Planning Act, art. 3.1), but, it is not an act of local law. The study very often analyzes the scenic values. However, they are extremely rarely included in local law acts. Currently, the most unfavorable is the lack of the obligation to draw up the Local Plans [Böhm 2008]. As acts of local law, they may introduce specific, binding provisions and effectively serve the protection of landscape and scenic values [cf. Łasocha 2014, Wójcik 2014, 2015]. The current state of the Polish spatial planning system should be supplemented with Act of 5 July 2018 on the Facilitation of the Preparation and Implementation of Housing Investments and Accompanying Investments, where the article 5.3 states it is possible to locate housing *investments regardless of the existence or provisions of Local Plans* [Journal of Laws 2018, item 1496].

Landscape and its definitions

Landscape is a concept difficult to define unequivocally, which is of interest to numerous scientific fields. It is shaped by natural and human factors: *the image of the land* [Novák 1972: 7-17]; *the physiognomy of a given area* [Mitkowska & Siewniak 1998: 118]; *area perceived by people...* [ELC 2000; Planning Act]. The ELC ratified by the Republic of Poland in 2004, in its preamble highlights the special features of the landscape – its economic function as well as the culture-forming role.

Many researchers also note that the landscape is a source of identification and identity for various human communities: social, ethnic and even national groups, precisely as a picture of the country: landscape, (especially historic) is an expression of local, regional and national tradition [Bogdanowski 1988: 46]; *is a general forerunner of information – it is a picture of creation or documentation of life* [Novák 1972: 7-17]. Landscape as a space inhabited by people, however, also becomes a symbolic space [Feliu 2002: 37], a space of characters that we feel instinctively and sensually and we read intellectually [Palasmaa 2012: *passim*]. Not only material signs, but also those remaining in the imaginary sphere [Królikowski 2017: 22], both individual and entire groups, become their common heritage, and thus a factor shaping their separate identity.

Most of the definitions quoted emphasize that the main means of perception and cognition of the landscape is the sense of sight [cf. Wolski 2017: 68].

Landscape qualities and scenic values

Art. 2 of the Planning Act [2018], mentions architectural and landscape values as an important aspect that should be taken into account in the spatial planning process. The Amending Act [2018] introduces many terms related to landscape values into the legal system. It defines, among others term landscape qualities [Nature Act 2018: art. 5], as natural, cultural, historical, aesthetic and scenic values of the area and related relief, creations and elements of nature as well as civilization elements, shaped by nature forces or human activity. However it should be noted that often a high aesthetic value is a feature of areas with high cultural values.

The Amending Act [2015: art. 7.1] introduces to art. 2 of the Planning Act the term "priority landscape", i.e. *a landscape particularly valuable to the public due to its natural, cultural, historical, architectural, urbanistic, rural or aesthetic and scenic values ...* It also introduces the obligation to carry out landscape audits in each province. In addition, based on the Amending Act [2015: art. 9] the legal definitions of the following terms have been introduced to the Nature Act [2018: art. 13a, 15b, 15c]: the vista, the viewing point, the foreground of the exposition.

Landscape values as aesthetic concept result from the attractiveness of the place itself or from the so-called borrowed views, opening to distant areas [Böhm 2016: 291-292]. The issue of composition and open landscape in modern large cities is addressed by Podhalański [2008; 2013]. According to Kazimierz Wejchert [1984: 36], *scenic connections constitute the attractiveness and richness of aesthetic experiences, the individuality of the city.*

Scenic values of Rzeszów

The landscape of the then small town began to change during the interwar period along with industrial investments under the Centralny Okręg Przemysłowy¹. After the Second World War, the industry developed further, and Rzeszów became the capital of the province. The period of socialism had the greatest influence on the present landscape of the city, when area of the commune enlarged about 7 times, and the population increased almost 5 times [page 1]. At that time, Rzeszów became a strong economic center and its further development after 1989 have caused that the city is still attractive as a place to live. However, many unfavorable spatial solutions from the period of the Polish People's Republic were engraved in the city landscape [Malikowski & Halik 2015: 35].

The advantages of Rzeszów are its location on both sides of the Wisłok River, on the border of several mesoregions [Kondracki 2002] – a greater part of the city lies in the Podgórze Rzeszowskie piedmont, the northern part within the Podkarpacie proglacial valley and the south-eastern part on Podgórze Dynowskie piedmont. The height difference in Rzeszów is about 187 m (the lowest point is 197 m ASL, and the highest point is 384 m ASL) [page 2]. Within the city area,

¹ Central Industrial District – translator's note.

there are several viewpoints for the city. Most of them are located on the Wisłok right .

One of the most famous viewpoints in the commune is the St Roch Hill mound, 341 m high [page 2]. It is located at a considerable distance from the center, in the former village of Słocina, incorporated into the city in 2006. From the hill there is a view of the downtown, above all the Nowe Miasto, a large socialist housing project (fig. 1).



Fig. 1. View from the St. Roch Hill: 1 – Nowe Miasto; 2 – St. J.S. Pelczar church; 3 – the Tadeusz Mazowiecki bridge; 4 – the power plant chimney. Photo by A. Jaworska, edited by A. Wójcik-Popek

Ryc. 1. Widok ze Wzgórza św. Rocha. Widoczne: 1 – Nowe Miasto; 2 – kościół pw. św. J.S. Pelczara; 3 – most Tadeusza Mazowieckiego; 4 – komin elektrociepłowni. Fot. A. Jaworska, oprac. A. Wójcik-Popek

A very interesting, but little-known view point with a high tourist potential is the Bar Confederates' Mound, formerly called the Tatar Mound or Tatar Mountain. Located on the right bank of the Wisłok River, it surpasses the surroundings by approx. 20 m. The name of the hill commemorates the battle fought in the vicinity by the Confederates and Russian troops on August 13, 1769 [Kłós 1979: 81]. The Bar Confederates' Mound had once one of the most beautiful panoramas to the Old Town of Rzeszów (fig 2). *The residents most often go to the hills of Słocina, Matysówka or elsewhere to admire the panorama of Rzeszów from above. However, this is a view from a distance. Meanwhile, the Bar Confederates' Mound is the nearest viewing point to the city center, available at any time of a day* [page 3].

The mound and its surroundings have been neglected for many years, and its slopes are overgrown with trees, which slowly loses its scenic significance. Once it was a place willingly visited by the residents: *Even 30 years ago, the mound looked good (...) Today, the mound is in a deplorable condition* [page 5]. *The question of what to do with the mound appeared many times during city council sessions. The main problem was the lack of a Local Plan for this area.* [page 4].



Fig. 2. A view from the Bar Confederates' Mound: 1 – towers of Holy Cross Church, 2 – Farny church with belfry; 3 – the culmination of the Lady of Rzeszów Sanctuary; 4 – Revolutionary Act Monument; 5 – the dome of the Church of Christ the King. Photo by A. Wójcik-Popek
 Ryc. 2. Widok z Kopca Konfederatów Barskich: 1 – wieże Kościoła Św. Krzyża, 2 – Kościół Farny z dzwonnica; 3 – zwieńczenie kopuły Sanktuarium MB Rzeszowskiej; 4 – pomnik Czynu Rewolucyjnego; 5 – zwieńczenie kopuły Kościoła Chrystusa Króla. Fot. A. Wójcik-Popek

The third place to be analyzed is Lisia Góra, a hill about 17 meters above the water surface of the Rzeszów Bay. This is one of few points in Rzeszów, from where one can observe the panorama towards the east – not only the Wisłok valley, but also the distant hills of the Dynów Foothills and the Rzeszów Podgórze piedmont. The hill itself is also an attractive sight object with many ravines and escarpments, in a large part, protected as a forest reserve. The subject of protection is a deciduous forest, mainly oak-hornbeam, with numerous monumental English oaks [Ćwik & Ćwik 2011: 441].

The problem of maintaining the scenic values of the Lisia Góra is important because in the recently proposed protection plan of the reserve, they were not taken into account [Plan 2017]. An important factor in these considerations is also the popularity of the reserve among the residents of the city as a place of recreation [Wasilewski i Szulczewska 2017: passim; Study 2000: ANX 26]. Strong anthropopressure degrades both nature and landscape of Lisia Góra reserve [Ćwik & Ćwik 2011: 444-448], but also its passive exposure zone.

The provisions of the Study

The current Study of conditions and directions for spatial development of the City of Rzeszów (hereinafter: Study) was passed on 4.07.2000 (Resolution of the City Council XXXVII / 113/2000, with later amendments). The last changes came into force on 28.08.2018 (Resolution of the City Council of Rzeszów LXIII / 1466/2018). Study analysis is difficult due to the fact that the subscriptions on the

lands included after 2006 from neighbouring communes have not been included in this document, they still function as references to separate documents.

Study [2000] of the city of Rzeszów in annex No. 18 and 72 'Conditions resulting from the condition and functioning of the cultural environment – landscape values' are analyzed the landscape values of the city including viewpoints, axes, openings, distant panoramas; architectural dominants; spatial disharmony points. 160 landscape units were separated in the city space and divided into 5 groups:

- containing important landscape features requiring preservation,
- “special attention” in the creation of new buildings due to the importance of scenic values on the scale of the city,
- containing some scenic values that require their exposure,
- requiring action aimed at improving scenic values,
- devoid of significant scenic values.

In addition, there is an annotation “other areas are areas where access to the city scale is limited or managed in a harmonious manner”. Areas that have been classified into any of the groups occupy a total of 3948.27 ha, which is approximately 32% of the current area of the commune.

Table 1 presents the classification of areas of the city in terms of landscape based on the Study. Interestingly, many of the places identified as important viewing points according to annex No. 18 are located in areas not classified as areas with significant scenic values. In addition, the majority of viewpoints and their immediate surroundings are not within the currently functioning Local Plans (Fig. 3).

The highest were assessed landscapes associated with visually attractive relics of historical urban and rural layouts (Old Town former villages Słocina, Zalesie, Staroniwa), monuments (Pobitno Cemetery), open areas and green areas (Pope's Park with adjacent protected position of the autumn crocus, undeveloped areas in the Wisłok valley and its tributaries, small public parks or allotment gardens). The historic rural layout of Staromieście or Pobitno, despite the high degree of preservation [Study 2000, ANX 16] was assessed as a “special landscape” when creating new buildings.

Area 44, associated with the Bar Confederates' Mound, belongs to the landscape unit associated with the right-bank part of the Wisłok valley, mainly poorly developed. It was classified as a group of areas with the highest landscape values. The Study introduces prohibition of building in this area and an order to introduce dense woodlands masking unattractive areas of the power plant [Study 2000, ANX 72: 12-13]. The panorama of the Old Town can be observed from the Mound, however, it is disturbed by disharmonious elements on closer planes – above all, industrial and warehouse buildings. The Study [2000, ANX 72: 15] classifies this area (site No. 107) as an area of “special attention” due to its exposure. Therefore, investments should be architecturally interesting and aesthetic, and there should not be green areas in its various forms [Study, ANX 72: 15].

The area of Lisia Góra and its immediate surroundings (area No. 1) together with the greater part of the left bank of the Wisłok River were described as an *extremely attractive landscape and scenic area*. The area was indicated for development for recreation and relaxation purposes, *with visible scenic connections*

with the areas of the Wisłok Valley and the Strzyżowsko-Dynowskie Foothills (Study 2000, ANX 72: 5-6). In the foreground, the naturalized Rzeszów Bay can be observed (not classified into any of the groups, and thus defined as the area where the view on the scale of the city is limited or managed in a harmonious way, slightly further green areas on the right bank (area 54) along with residential buildings on the layout of the former village of Drabinianka (area 86 and 87) and areas of developing housing (area 131). In the distance the slopes of the so-called Matysówka Łan – the hills with significant scenic values (area 24 and 92) can be recognized.

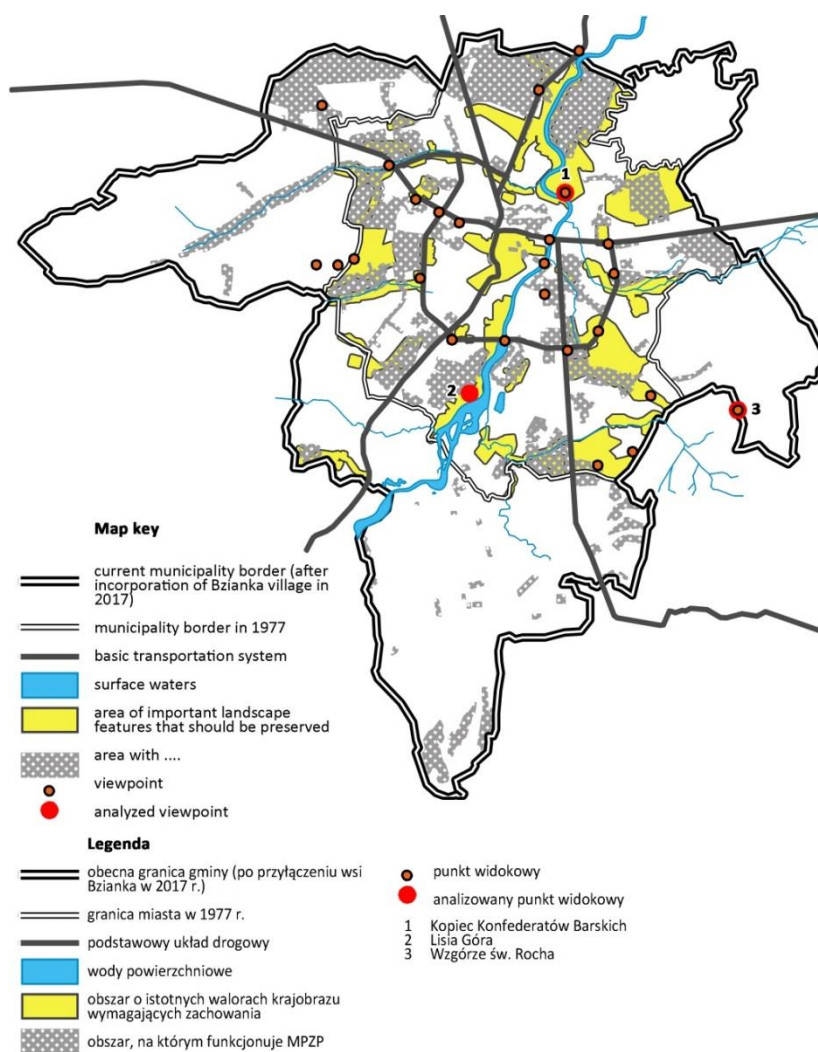


Fig. 3. Analysis of landscape and binding Local Development Plans. Ed. A. Wójcik-Popek, based on the Study

Ryc. 3. Analiza walorów krajobrazowych i funkcjonujących MPZP. Oprac. A. Wójcik-Popek na podstawie Studium

Tab. 1. Classification of areas of the city of Rzeszów in terms of landscape. Ed. A. Wójcik-Popek, according to the Study of the City of Rzeszów [Rzeszów Study: Annex 72, 2000].

Category of areas	Percentage of area subject to classification in the Study	Characteristics of matched areas	Guidelines
containing important scenic values that need to be preserved	28%	attractive views and harmoniously managed: – urban green areas and attractive areas due to the terrain, – area of the center of Rzeszów	– drawing up an analysis of landscape and scenery connections
“special attention” in the creation of new buildings due to the importance of scenic values in the scale of the city	32%	located in exposed areas designated for development (near entry roads, bypass, in the center)	– drawing up the urban and architectural concept, taking into account the compositional-scenic connections, protecting the axes and openings, special care for spatial order
containing some scenic values that need to be displayed	3%	neglected and undeveloped part of the Wisłok valley	– formulation of the development concept, taking into account the needs of the city's inhabitants as well as landscape and natural values
requiring activities aimed at improving scenic values	10%	located in the exposed parts of the city: – near the main entry roads, – city center of Rzeszów	– improvement of aesthetics through actions organizing the space and exposing or concealing individual views
devoid of significant scenic values	27%	– warehouse and storage and industrial areas, – areas of scattered farm and single-family housing with agricultural land, meadows, fallow land and wasteland.	– preservation of spatial order and the maximum possible biologically active area

The study emphasizes the scenic values of the right bank of the Wisłok River (including area 54), but also indicates that these are areas that require certain activities to further expose them. Preference is given to recreation and relaxation with pedestrian and bicycle routes and places of rest in attractive locations. The

study imposes the obligation to develop a coherent concept for the development of the entire area and to adapt the dimensions of the investment to the conditions of exposure [Study 2000, ANX 72: 14]. Scenic protection in areas 86 and 87 is expressed by ordering the appropriate location of facilities and limiting their dimensions [Study 2000, ANX 72: 16].

Area 131 has been declared an area devoid of significant scenic values in the scale of the city, but the development of high-intensity buildings developing there may disturb the of the panorama seen from Lisia Góra. Area No. 24 (the western slopes of the Matysówka Łan) has significant landscape and ecological values, it is mainly cultivated. In this area, it is postulated to prohibit the development and to introduce of a recreational and leisure function. Changes should be preceded by analyzes of view links [Study 2000, ANX 72: 10]. Eastern slopes of the Matysówka Łan (area 92) were designated for the development of *housing in the most attractive areas of the city*. Planned investments in this area should be preceded by an urban development concept. The protection of scenic connections (mainly with the Wisłok valley and the Old Town) should be expressed in adjusting the height and the form of buildings [Study 2000, ANX 72: 16].

The third of the viewpoints analyzed in the article – the St. Roch Hill and the first panorama plans (Fig. 1) were not included in the detailed records and analyzes of the Rzeszów Study as an area attached to the municipality after 2006.

Changes in the landscape of Rzeszów after 2000

Currently, Rzeszów is a rapidly growing city both in terms of spatial-urban and socio-cultural conditions. It is the capital of the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, the largest and most important city in the region (with an area of 126 km² and population of above 191,000 [News Bulletin of Rzeszów City Hall]).

After the political system reform, the pressure of private investors is strongly visible [Malikowski & Halik 2015: 35]. The city is characterized by the largest positive balance of migration and the highest rate of natural increase among voivodeship cities of Poland [Bulletin 2018: 33]. Free areas in the city center are diminished by new, intense housing or large-format trade objects (eg. a new shopping center and housing estate in the area defined by the Study as an area of “special attention”, in fact expanding the monofunctional commercial area, classified as requiring activities to improve landscape values).

Investments include areas that are difficult to built-in so far as former peat-land or the upper Wisłok terraces. In the areas of the commune with a persistent rural landscape type², we observe the development of housing estates, mainly terraced houses and blocks (usually up to 4 storeys) on small plots. Sometimes, however, even ten-storey blocks are built on such areas. These new spatial dom-

² Analysed 1 and 3 viewing points are located in areas subjected to intensive suburbanization, as well as area of passive exposure of viewing point 2 [according to Palak 2016:38].

inants were also created in protected areas of downtown, designated as containing significant landscape values requiring preservation.

The observed changes lead to the unification of the city landscape, the loss of specific features and the reduction of green areas, and, consequently, the impoverishment of the cultural landscape. New spatial dominants are located randomly, without considering the entire composition of the housing estate, district or part of the city. It causes a progressive loss of cohesion and degradation of the landscape.

Discussion

It is known that it is necessary to protect beautiful views, because they determine the attractiveness and value (also material) of the area (...) These values are difficult to define and protect unequivocally. This is evidenced by numerous normative acts that regulate this issue ... [Łasocha 2014: 74]. In recent years, the legislators actively took up the topic by adopting the Amending Act in 2015. However, it seems that in the planning practice landscape values are still not sufficiently taken into account. This is caused not only by the desire to reconcile many conflicting needs of stakeholders, but also the disadvantages of the Polish spatial planning system [Wagner 2016: *passim*]. In the realities of strong investment pressure, it seems that the actual legal protection of scenic values is implemented extremely rarely.

In the analyzed Study, landscape features were presented and evaluated (although in part of the territorial scope). It seems that in many cases high assessment of the landscape of a given area in this document is directly related to significant natural or cultural values, not scenic ones. So, should a small city park, with no view links and little visual significance for the city landscape be protected due to scenic values or rather due to its natural and social significance? Similar considerations accompany the assessment of the landscape of allotment gardens.

The landscape study in the Study is prepared in detail. However, “white spots”, defined as “areas to which the insight in the city scale is limited or managed in a harmonious way” arouse anxiety. Thus, they can be areas developed in a disharmonious way, or with little significance for the city landscape. Even the best developed study documents entries do not guarantee their implementation. Lack of obligation to prepare the Local Plan (and introduction of homogeneous, legally binding solutions in a given area) is a threat to maintaining scenic values. To preserve them, it is extremely important to consistently carry out planning activities by municipalities, in accordance with the principle of sustainable development, while maintaining an appropriate time horizon.