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THE “LANDSCAPE EXPERIENCED” IN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY LUBLIN SCHOLARS

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The landscape is an external expression of the geographic environment shaped by natural factors and human activity. It reflects a complicated system of its components and their interrelationships. The landscape is inscribed in the natural space, but is shaped in a cultural context. Dobrowolska (1947), who studied the dynamics of the cultural landscape, indicated the following factors determining the development of the landscape:

- natural factors (geological composition, relief, groundwater and surface water, soils, climate, flora and fauna), shaped by natural cycles, enhanced or neutralised by anthropogenic activity;
- historical factors (political relations, administrative divisions and borders, areas of influence of the particular cultures and states, the accompanying legal and political systems);
- social and economic factors (forms of settlement, ownership and professional structure of the inhabitants, social relations);
- factors related to spiritual culture (behavioural patterns, systems of values, rituals, traditions, religion and beliefs, fashion, emotional ties with the surrounding space);
- technological and civilisation-related factors (technological inventions, devices and tools for the transformation of the natural space, new architectural forms).

The structure of the cultural landscape has been becoming increasingly complex as a combined result of the environment's natural evolution and the development of space by man.

The landscape is a synthesis of four fundamental kinds of space or four dimensions (also with regard to functions, the circulation of matter, energy and information) and their reflection in a form perceived by human beings, i.e. permanent space, semi-permanent space that changes during the year, impermanent (periodic) space as well as interpersonal relations and relationships between environmental and non-environmental elements (Krzymowska-Kostrowicka, 1993).

Such a broad understanding of landscape makes it a study subject of various scientific disciplines that examine its material structure, its functioning as well as its non-material sphere that encompasses meanings, symbols and classifications existing in the awareness of both the community and individuals. Although more difficult to describe and evaluate, these non-material aspects are important in defining the actual value of the landscape. The landscape is not only a scientific category. Being a commonly experienced phenomenon, it is a perceived or imagined component of space, an integral part of life of individuals and communities.

A growing interest in the landscape is reflected in the signing and ratification by many countries (including Poland) of the *European Landscape Convention (2000)* that emphasises the direct relationship between society and the landscape. According to the *European Landscape Convention (2000)*, landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. The landscape influences the quality of people's life regardless of their place of residence: whether it be in the countryside, in environmentally valuable and degraded areas, in beautiful as well as ordinary areas. Priority is given to the preservation of the quality and character of the landscape construed as an individual entity within the framework of adequately identified characteristic regional features.

Landscapes are classified according to their character, assessed by identifying their peculiar features distinguishing them from other landscapes and by defining the type and conditions for the introduction of changes and development of investment. The experience, i.e. the perception of the landscape plays a significant role in the process. It is usually multisensory perception that relies primarily on sight, but under certain conditions it can be dominated by other senses, e.g. hearing (in the case of high noise levels) or smell (in the case of an unpleasant smell). Besides visual stimuli, sound stimuli play an important role in the perception of the landscape (e.g. Bernat, 1999; Carles et al., 1999; Hedfors, Berg, 2005; Pietrzak, 1998). According to one of the supplementary reports to the *European Landscape Convention*, the sound and smell, and even the touch and taste, contribute to the appreciation or rejection of landscapes (*Landscapes and individuals...*, 2003).

At the turn of the 20th century, Finnish geographer J.G. Granö raised the issue of a subjective experience of the environment. He published several works presenting the concept of landscape as a subjective experience of the environment based on the sensory perception of the immediate neighbourhood (Granö, 1929, 1997). Also according to Tuan (1987), an interpretation of the landscape should delve into the details and subjective meaning of everyday life and experience of a place. This approach has been translated into specific schemes such as the Campaign to Protect Rural England Tranquillity conducted in the United Kingdom and aimed at the conservation and visualisation of tranquillity defined as beauty, peacefulness, calm, balance, diversity, audibility of the sounds of nature such as the singing of birds, the splash of water, etc. The preservation and strengthening of rural stability through strategic planning and individual development decisions is indispensable for ensuring a happy life. Tranquillity serves as a useful indicator of the quality of the countryside and defines the character of landscapes. A high quality of the countryside depends on the presence of natural landscapes with forest areas, rivers, open spaces and wildlife (birds), the absence of the danger of noise and landscape transformations (infrastructure, urbanisation). The significance of tranquillity in shaping the character of a region was recognised in the Rural White Paper for England indicating the necessity to strengthen the system of planning, management and preservation of tranquil areas. The preservation and enhancement of the quality of rural areas through the understanding, evaluation and protection of the diversity and character of the countryside is a very important part of rural policies in the UK (*Our Countryside...*, 2000).

There have been few empirical studies in this field in Poland. This paper presents the results of questionnaire surveys on the quality of life and the cultural landscape, conducted between 1998 and 2007 among the inhabitants of the Lublin Province and aimed at finding answers to the following research questions:

- What are the links between man and the landscape? What is the significance of the landscape?
- Does the landscape influence the quality of life?

The conclusion presents the prospects for research connected with studies on the "landscape experienced" in the light of programmes already under way.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE STUDIES

Recent years have seen an increasing interest in cultural landscape studies. In the studies conducted, the cultural landscape is treated as a spatial quality having certain functional and aesthetic values (perceived by several senses) as well as

distinctive regional traits; a quality that developed from the superimposition of man's material and spiritual activity on the natural landscape (cf. Wojtanowicz, 2002).

Taking into account the contexts mentioned above, twentieth-century transformations of the cultural landscape of the border stretch of the Bug valley (a relatively pristine area of high cultural diversity) were studied between 1999 and 2004. The studies included an analysis of the relationships between man and the landscape (Bernat, 2004, 2005). These relationships were examined based on a questionnaire survey of the inhabitants of the Bug valley area in the spring and summer season of 2003. 133 questionnaires were collected, providing a cross section of the local population. The majority of the inhabitants polled were in working age (mainly 40 to 50 years). With regard to professions, the most numerous were clerks (more than 30), teachers and cultural centre employees (approx. 30) and farmers (approx. 20).

The scenic values of the Bug valley area were repeatedly emphasised by those questioned (Bernat, 2004, 2005). It is not surprising given that landscape was regarded as highly valuable by approx. 80% of the respondents, whereas it was of little significance for less than 3%. Approx. 50% of the respondents considered "elements of the environment" as the most important aspect of the landscape. More than 20% indicated nature, approx. 10% valued beauty and harmony, whereas sounds and tranquillity were important for more than 5% of those polled. Cultural values and historic monuments were significant for only approx. 3% of those questioned.

More than 80% of the respondents emphasised the emotional bond with the landscape of the Bug valley. The presence of the Bug river plays an important role. The river is a source of food (fish), leisure (recreation) and income (agritourism). The river unites and attracts people. Negative connotations were attached to the river as a national border.

The respondents did not regard the landscape as a homogenous entity; just the opposite, they distinguished individual landscapes and evaluated them according to a range of criteria: functional, aesthetic, ethical and existential (Bernat, 2004, 2005). Attractive and unattractive landscapes were distinguished among them (fig. 1). The former can be described as extraordinary and magical. The magic of those places is entirely subjective and unique. There are landscapes whose uniqueness is discerned by numerous inhabitants, frequently by successive generations. Thanks to the originality of their content, form or function, these places can be easier to remember, they stir up emotions, attract attention and sometimes become a symbol. The respondents selected specific sites, or landscape features (elements), without associating them with specific places. According to the survey results, the village of Kryłów with a castle on an island, and the "Łęg Dębowy" nature reserve near Janów Podlaski were the most scenically attractive. Furthermore, the respondents valued

the landscape attractiveness of the unregulated channel of the Bug river, its old river beds (called **bużyska**) and floodplains waterlogged in the spring, bird sanctuaries, beaver lodges, picturesque riparian forests and meadows in the Bug valley, ancient oak trees, unique flora, ruins of old bridges on the Bug as well as the clean air and water. The unattractive landscapes indicated by the respondents included the sewage treatment plant and sugar factory in Strzyżów, the mobile phone mast and architecture in Wola Uhruska, the neighbourhood of the tannery in Orchówek and the sewage treatment plant in Włodawa. Other factors reducing the landscape attractiveness of the Bug valley included illegal dump sites, architecture, the “new houses” in particular, the border infrastructure, dirty water, littered bathing sites, the existence of arable fields within meadows as well as thickets and bushes.

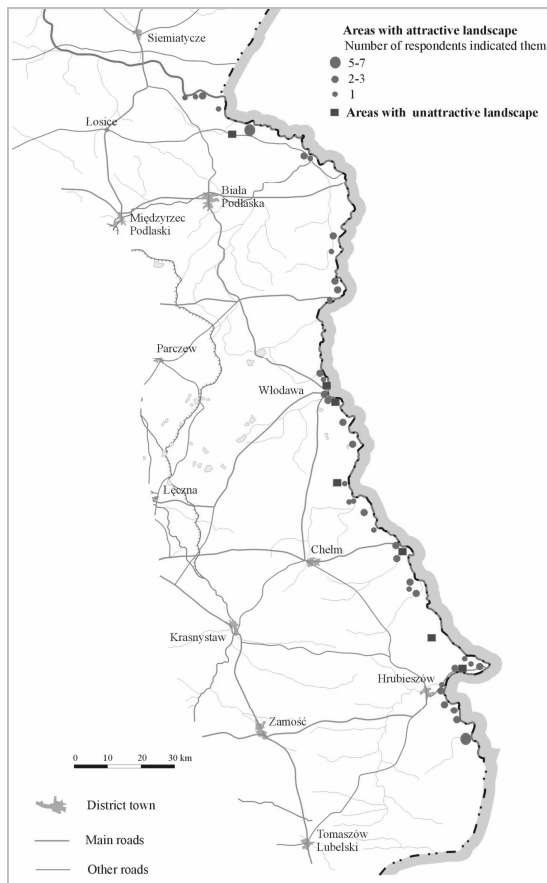


Fig. 1. Areas with attractive and unattractive landscapes according to the respondents. *Source:* S. Bernat 2005.

The survey results prove that the landscape is very important to the inhabitants, it is part of their lives. More than 85% of the respondents felt an emotional bond with the landscape, compared to approx. 12% who did not relate to it. Besides vision, hearing is an important mode of experiencing the landscape. Among the variety of sounds, the most important are the sounds of nature, e.g. the singing of birds, croaking of frogs, the murmur and splash of water, the rustling of trees, particularly characteristic of the river and its vicinity. However, cultural sounds (the sounds of everyday life) were underestimated, probably because they were associated with noise (the sounds of civilisation). It was observed that over the last 50 years harmonious cultural sounds and the buzz of human voices had been replaced by silence.

STUDIES ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE

Issues related to the evaluation and experience of landscapes have also been the subject of studies aimed at defining quality of life indicators in relation to features of the geographical environment. It is worth mentioning that the term "quality of life" is a relatively recent research category that initially appeared as a journalistic term in Western countries in the 1960s in the wake of a discussion on a new, improved development model where the fulfilment of material needs should be accompanied by spiritual development. In its broadest and most general meaning, "quality of life" combined the notion of well-being and success. It also comprised the positive aspects of economic growth achieved so far and the return to lost values, i.e. the possibility to live in a clean natural environment and friendly social environment as well as the possibility to satisfy various needs in the future. Such a definition was sufficiently general to encompass an entire set of living conditions of individuals and society as well as the spiritual aspects that had been underestimated until then (Allardt 1993; Cutter 1985; Drewnowski 1974). "Quality of life" soon became a very popular term and was incorporated into official international documents, including those concerning environmental protection, because the quality of life, perceived and measured by means of adequate indicators, was itself recognised as an indicator representing the efficiency of the implementation of sustainable development. The importance of the link between the quality of life and the surrounding landscape was stressed by the European Landscape Convention mentioned above.

Studies on the relationship between the quality of life and the quality of the environment have been conducted for several years at the Department of Environmental Protection of Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin. The most extensive studies in this respect were carried out in the Lublin Region on the threshold of the 21st century (1998-1999). They encompassed a group of 500 respondents and aimed at determining quality of life indicators in connection with environmental features for the selected rural areas. The study area comprised the western part of Lublin's suburban zone; the commune of Dzierzkowice, a typical rural commune situated in the western part of the Lublin Upland and characterised by upland landscapes; and the commune of Michów in the northern part of the Lublin Province, comprising a denuded morainic plateau and ice-marginal valley of the Wieprz River (Kałamucka, 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2004). Several groups of indicators, representative of the phenomenon on commune level, were used to describe the quality of life. They included groups of indicators reflecting the standard and conditions of living, lifestyle and the quality of the environment as well as indicators based on synthetic evaluations.

The study revealed a very high level of satisfaction with life (approx. 90%) as declared by the inhabitants of the Lublin Region despite the low quality of life indices in comparison with other regions in Poland. The findings of the study indicate that such a positive attitude was significantly influenced by factors related to the quality of the environment: belief in the purity of the natural environment and its favourable influence on health, the acknowledgment of positive transformations taking place in the environment, a sense of security, the perception of the neighbourhood as an attractive place to live, a strong bond with the environment. In this context, the experience of the landscape enhanced the satisfaction with life, which was ascertained based on opinions concerning the perception of inconveniences directly related to the local environment. The deterioration of weather conditions was perceived by more than 70% of respondents in the commune of Michów, almost two thirds of the inhabitants of Dzierzkowice and 38% in the environs of Lublin. Table 1 presents the inconveniences reported by individuals participating in the survey, grouped according to the components of the environment. It must be emphasised, however, that these inconveniences were not regarded as a particular nuisance, but rather as part and parcel of life in the countryside. The need to change the situation was mentioned to a limited extent.

A surprisingly high index was achieved with regard to the assessment of the local landscape. No less than 93% of the respondents declared that they liked the landscape of the area where they lived. Differences between regions were insignificant. Nearly all respondents indicated their favourite places and the prettiest places in the neighbourhood. Typically, places close to one's home (a garden, orchard or allotment) were considered the prettiest.

Tab. 1. Types of inconveniences resulting from environmental features in the immediate neighbourhood.

Type of inconveniences	Commune of Dzierzkowice	Lublin's suburban zone	Commune of Michów
Resulting from geology conditions and relief	48,6%	13,1%	40,4%
Resulting from soil erosion	7,5%	12,1%	0,0%
Resulting from local climat	6,4%	4,7%	12,7%
Resulting from hydrography condition	10,6%	4,7%	46,4%
Resulting from nature animate	11,0%	4,7%	1,1%

Source: W. Kałamucka 2001a.

Particular natural sites or landscapes of a specific kind (a forest, a forest in autumn, a river valley, a water spring, ravines, a field) as well as scenic views from a particular vantage point (e.g. a view from a cemetery) were also fairly frequently mentioned as the respondents' favourite places. Individual sites such as churches, monasteries, manors, manorial parks or houses representing modern architecture, were mentioned less frequently.

The sense of hearing also played a certain role in the experience of the landscape, thus influencing the assessment of the quality of life. Sources of sound were evaluated both positively and negatively. Roads, junctions, schools, shops, bars, discos, construction sites, garages, workshops, barns, kennels and even trees with woodpeckers searching for food were mentioned as noisy places. Noise nuisance was more frequently indicated by men and people living in the neighbourhood of roads or garages. With regard to its positive dimension, sound did not represent a separate category, but it was part of a broader range of concepts related to the feeling of comfort: peace and quiet, tranquillity, an observation that "the neighbours are not a nuisance".

Opinions on the landscape and the surrounding nature were also found in answers to the question about the advantages and disadvantages of living in a particular place. More than one third of the respondents recognised the advantage of living in a clean environment and away from sources of pollution, every third person emphasised the natural values of a particular area (climate, health and scenic values), whereas 40% of those polled indicated the feelings they experienced (a sense of freedom, tranquillity, space, security).

The above-mentioned qualitative dominance of advantages ascribed by respondents to their current place of residence was reflected by answers to the following question: "Would you like to live somewhere else?" Only 21% of the respondents answered "yes" to the question. There were no major differences between the areas analysed. 25% of the respondents residing in the communes of Michów and Dzierzkowice would like to live elsewhere, compared to 19% of those living in the environs of Lublin.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

The conducted studies on the quality of life and the cultural landscape confirm the emotional bond existing between the inhabitants of the Lublin Region and the countryside. Various stimuli impact the way we experience the landscape. We acquire most information through our eyes, but sounds and smells are also important as they complement images on the basis of synergy. The landscape is experienced not only as an impersonal objective space, but also as places to which certain

meanings are ascribed and places that evoke certain emotions. The sense of belonging to a specific place helps us define our own identity in the world and influences the quality of our lives. Valuable landscape contributes to a high quality of life and can thus attract new inhabitants and investors who need this quality. It can also convince the existing inhabitants of a place that it is worth staying there.

The aesthetic values of landscape constitute another significant component of the quality of life and play an important role in the shaping of several significant spiritual qualities of a human individual (Wojciechowski, 1986). The variety of positive experiences originating from the landscape enriches the human psyche, thus enhancing the passion and joy of life, whereas mental poverty leads to aggression and violence or apathy. The beauty of the landscape regenerates man's physical and moral strength, it is conducive to the cultural development of nations and the general health of the inhabitants. A beautiful and harmonious landscape indicates the regularity of developmental processes taking place in a particular space.

More and more frequently citizens recognise the danger that the quality of life and, consequently, the value of space may be reduced as a result of the devastation of landscapes. More and more people perceive the landscape as an asset enhancing the quality of life, which translates into higher prices of properties located in scenically attractive areas. There is a growing demand for flats offering fine views in a peaceful and safe neighbourhood.

Various methods (objective and subjective) should be employed in landscape studies and the findings should be compared. The objective and subjective approach complement each other in the solution of problems connected with the management of landscape resources (Porteous, 1996). The combination of quantitative and qualitative research techniques enables an exhaustive and comprehensive description of the problem. Such an application of research methods will ensure a complete, multi-faceted view of the landscape.

Studies of the "landscape experienced" are indispensable. Sensuous geographies examine landscapes of the mind, sonic landscapes or soundscapes, smellscapes, touchscapes and tastescapes (Rodaway, 1994). The landscape is treated as a whole, but it is discerned based on a variety of stimuli. We distinguish between the senses in order to develop a certain keenness of perception and sensitivity to the particular stimuli. It is important to recognise the sensory complexity of landscapes. The diversity of landscapes results from the diversity of experiences. Synergy (all senses complement each other to produce a comprehensive perception of landscape, their combined impact being more effective) and synaesthesia (association of sensations perceived by various senses, a condition in which the stimulation of one receptor evokes the sensation of another type, e.g. "hearing" colours, "feeling the taste" of

sounds) are important aspects of the aesthetic impact of the landscape. Hence, one should not limit oneself to visual perception. When initiating this kind of studies, however, one encounters certain methodological problems related to the absence of unequivocal evaluation criteria and parameters (indispensable to carry out an objective evaluation).

Studying the “landscapes experienced” is a conceptual tool both for the development of landscape ecology as well as the preservation and shaping of the environment. Therefore, such studies open up new vistas of development (cf. Bartkowski, 1985). Sounds and smell can be regarded as an indicator of landscape quality. A comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach is needed that will take advantage of the most advanced methods as well as human experience, i.e. the context for perception.

In order for the landscape to be conducive to a high quality of life, it has to be maintained in a proper condition, which can be achieved through the elimination of threats as well as the preservation and adequate management of landscape. The essential instrument for landscape preservation is the development and implementation of relevant policies, including the spatial policy and environmental protection policy. Landscape impact assessments play an important role as a preventive instrument for the preservation of the natural environment, developed out of concern for the quality of life (Sas-Bojarska, 2006). The significance of environmental assessments for the preservation and shaping of landscape has been recognised in many countries, including the United Kingdom.

Particularly noteworthy is the method of landscape assessment that examines impact in its functional, formal and semantic aspect (Sas-Bojarska, 2006). Thanks to the comprehensiveness and simultaneity of assessments, this method helps balance the technical, environmental, social, compositional and cultural aspects. By combining objective research with a subjective evaluation of non-material phenomena, it goes beyond the inflexible Environmental Impact Assessment procedure.

The landscape is a valuable natural resource that can shape the local cultural heritage and consolidate local and regional communities. The emotional bond between man and the landscape as well as the sense of familiarity and rootedness can make an effective contribution to the preservation of the landscape as a source of non-material values enhancing the quality of life.

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SUMMARY

According to European Landscape Convention (2000), landscape is an area perceived by people, whose character is the result of the activity and interaction between natural and/or human factors. Landscape influences quality of people's life, irrespective of the place they stay at: in a town, in the countryside, in the areas of great natural value or polluted, beautiful and ordinary – everyday areas.

As the most important demand, protection of quality and character of landscape is coming into prominence. Landscape is treated here as an individual within properly identified regional features. Landscape is classified according to evaluation of its character. This assessment is based on identification of specific attributes of the landscape that differentiate it from other landscapes. Another way of classification of landscapes is designating types and conditions of: changes introducing into the landscape and development of investments. Experience of the landscape, it means its perception, plays a crucial role here. The perception is usually multisensoric, with dominance of eyesight (visual impulses) but in some conditions it may be dominated by other senses, eg. sense of hearing (when noise is especially loud) or sense of smell (in the case of unpleasant odour). Along with visual impulses, sound impulses have also great importance for landscape perception.

In the article, results of survey on life's quality and cultural landscape were shown. The survey were carried out in the years 2000-2007 among inhabitants of the Lublin voivodship. At the end of the work some prospects for landscape researches were also suggested.