

# The Role of Small Towns and Villages with Urban Traditions in the Cultural Landscape

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Rola małych miast i wsi o tradycjach miejskich w krajobrazie kulturowym

## Introduction

### Wstęp

Having in view the occurring changes in the culture and landscape of inhabited terrains it is important to preserve a different character of localities which officially are villages but their tradition and shape of small towns have remained to our time. This may be achieved when one gets acquainted with their history and their present social, economic and demographic conditions. Therefore it is advisable to describe such procedures for selected examples, and in this manner to pave the way for development of similar places.

Localities situated in a close vicinity of town influences are developing by a stepwise construction of dwelling houses for town inhabitants. It is observed that former small towns situated near large towns are searching for various possibilities to gain tourists and holiday makers for short excursions in the town outskirts [Bagiński 1998; Drobek 1999].

It is known that the panorama so of a small town as of a village is unique for their landscape. Similarly the sight axes coming out from a market place which end by a church tower, a castle or a mill create a landscape which ought to be preserved for the future time [Borcz i in. 2009; Eysymontt 2009] .

Many present towns which in the past lost their civic rights have now recovered them. In Poland, after

the end of the Second World War due to political, social and demographic transformations, involving replacement of population from East to West part, the changes in the town system occurred.

These changes had their reflection especially in the condition of small towns. Immediately after the military operations the small towns were depopulated, many buildings were burned down or destroyed. It is noteworthy that some localities which have lost civic rights have recovered them after twenty years i.e. in 1965.

Such example is **Brzeg Dolny** which, similarly as other towns in Lower Silesia, is a town which after the end of the Second World War in 1945 has lost its civic rights and regained them relatively promptly in 1954 (fig. 1). Brzeg Dolny is situated ca 30 km west of Wrocław at the Odra river. Initially Brzeg Dolny, was a fishing settlement, with a ferry and mills. In 15<sup>th</sup> century the knights' castle was erected, and in 1663 the locality received civic rights [Kozioł 1996].

The Brzeg Dolny inhabitants at first were mostly fishermen and rafters; in 17<sup>th</sup> century the chapel, the school and the printing house have been built (fig. 2). In 18<sup>th</sup> century the palace was enlarged and a wide park was founded. During the Second World War the factory producing war gases was installed, after war it was transformed into a plant of chemicals. Due to the existence of this factory

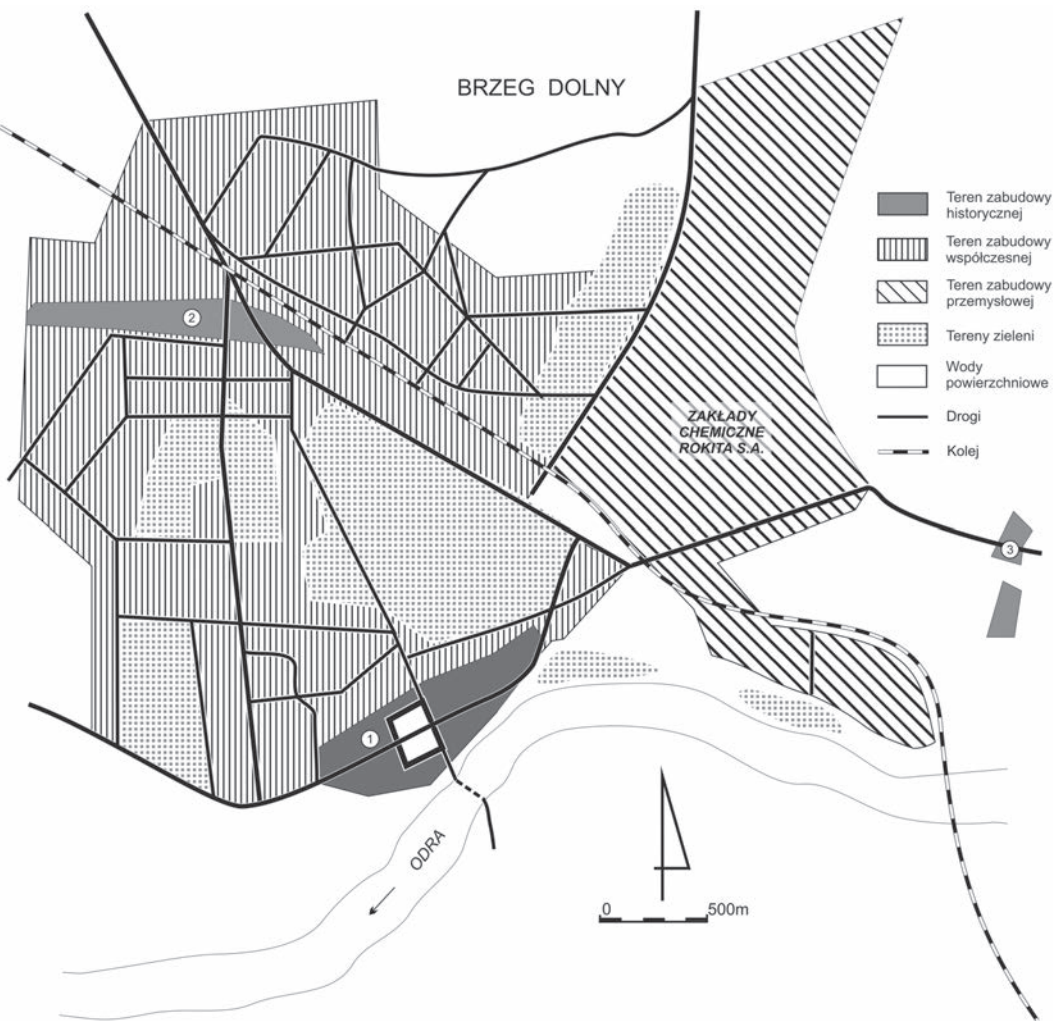


Fig. 1. Plan of Brzeg Dolny  
 1 – the old town with market square  
 2 – the former Warzyń village  
 3 – the former Kręsko village

Ryc. 1. Plan Brzegu Dolnego  
 1 – stare miasto z rynkiem  
 2 – dawna wieś Warzyń  
 3 – dawna wieś Kręsko

The names of former small towns remain as official names of districts or settlements of large towns, it may be mentioned here Psie Pole, once a name of the small town near Wrocław, now the name of the Wrocław district.

Examples are Leśnica, Psie Pole and Brochów included into Wrocław and Cieplice Zdrój included into Jelenia Góra.

**Leśnica** situated near the knights' castle came into being in 1138. Since this time Leśnica could organize fairs, up to 13<sup>th</sup> c. it was a village localized along a road, it had a residence of a sovereign and his court. Leśnica received civic rights in 14<sup>th</sup> c., and then its rapid development is to be seen. Since ca 1450 the town began to decline and to adopt character of a village, in 18<sup>th</sup> c. it lost civic rights. Today Leśnica has the railway line, two churches and a palace surrounded by a park (figs 4, 5, 6).

## Large towns formed by fusion of two small ones

Duże miasto utworzone przez połączenie dwóch mniejszych

Often two small towns join as equivalent entities into a larger town, an example is **Nowogród Bobrzański** (fig. 7). It is a town created by fusion of two small towns, namely former Nowogród Bobrzański and Krzystkowice. Nowogród Bobrzański had



Fig. 2. View of an old fragment of Brzeg Dolny  
 Ryc. 2. Widok starej części Brzegu Dolnego

the rapid development of the town took place. Today Brzeg Dolny has 12 thousand inhabitants (fig. 3).

## Towns formed by incorporation of small towns into larger ones

Miasta włączone do sąsiednich aglomeracji

It is possible that in small towns incorporated into neighboring large towns their urban character disappears; in the course of years they enter into the system of larger towns. However often the historical continuity of the small town remains, one can find market place form, the frontage houses as well as the town dominants and sometimes alleys or parks.

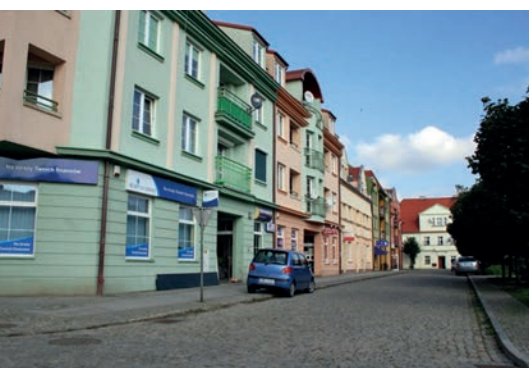
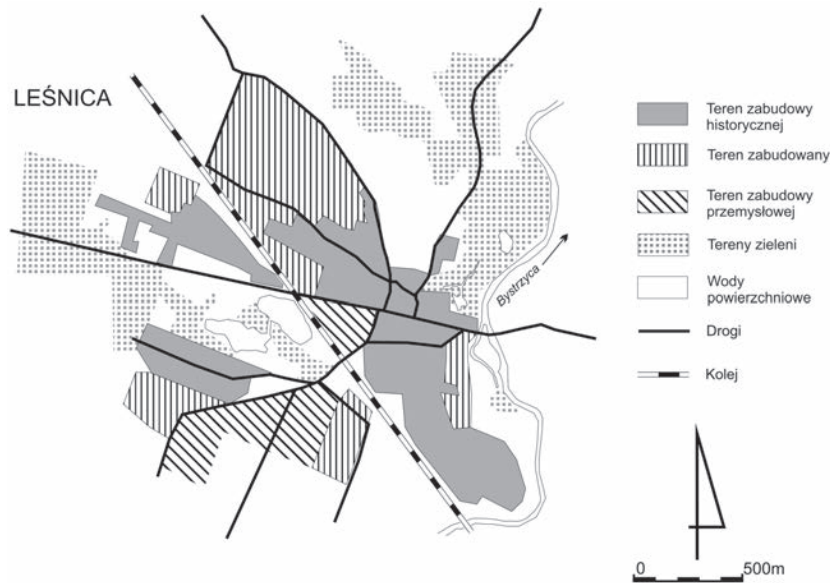


Fig. 3. View of a new buildings of Brzeg Dolny  
 Ryc. 3. Widok nowej zabudowy w Brzegu Dolnym

Fig. 7. Plan of Nowogród Bobrzański with Krzystkowice  
 1 – the old town Nowogród Bobrzański  
 2 – the old town Krzystkowice

Ryc. 7. Plan Nowogrodu Bobrzańskiego z Krzystkowicami  
 1 – stare miasto Nowogród Bobrzański  
 2 – stare miasto Krzystkowice



civic rights since 13<sup>th</sup> century, however its development was rather slow. In the course of years Nowogród Bobrzański was under administration of Silesian Piasts up to 1472, then of Saxon princes. Since 1549 Nowogród Bobrzański was a propriety of Czech State, then of Brandenburg, since 1559 of Habsburgs and since 1742 of Prussia.

In 16<sup>th</sup> century the pottery, cloth- and shoe-making manufactures, and in the 17<sup>th</sup> century the beer making developed in Nowogród Bobrzański. In the 1860 to 1883 period Nowogród Bobrzański had the nickel foundry, and in 1877

sources of mineral water have been discovered.

After the end of the Second World War Nowogród Bobrzański lost civic rights. In 1988 Nowogród Bobrzański had 2310 inhabitants; in this time the annexation of the neighboring small Krzystkowice having 2020 inhabitants took place. Krzystkowice in 16<sup>th</sup> century had iron works and a big farm. In 1657 many Protestant emigrants from Silesia came to Krzystkowice and in 1959 Krzystkowice received civic rights.

Today the town consisting of former Nowogród Bobrzański and of incorporated Krzystkowice has the

Fig. 4. Plan of Leśnica, the town incorporated into Wrocław

Ryc. 4. Plan Leśnicy przyłączonej do Wrocławia



Fig. 5. View of palace in Leśnica

Ryc. 5. Widok pałacu w Leśnicy



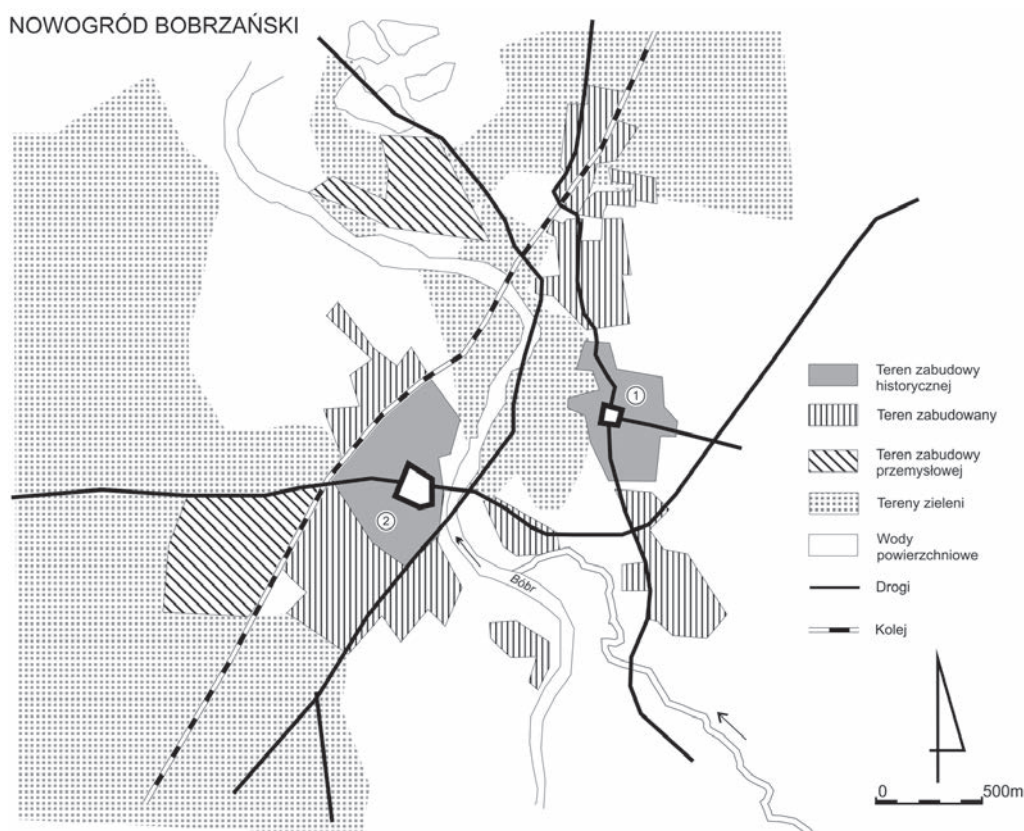
Fig. 6. View of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. building in Leśnica

Ryc. 6. Widok zabudowy z lat 20. w Leśnicy



Fig. 8. View of a street in Nowogród Bobrzański

Ryc. 8. Widok uliczki w Nowogrodzie Bobrzańskim



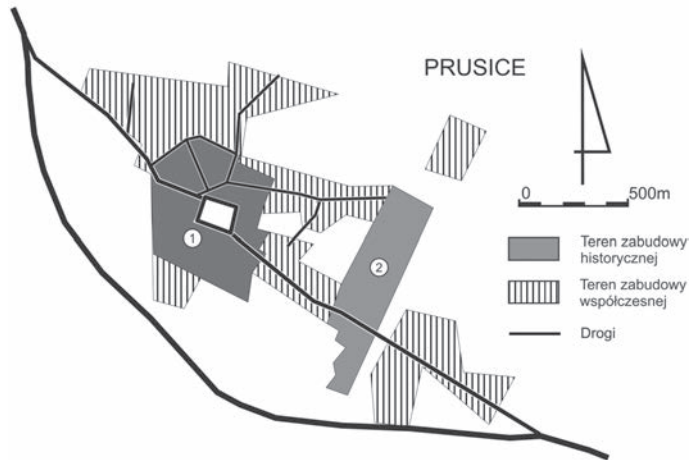


Fig. 9. Plan of Prusice with village Górkowice  
1 – the old town with market square  
2 – the former Górkowice village

Ryc. 9. Plan Prusic z przyłączoną wsią Górkowice  
1 – stare miasto z rynkiem  
2 – dawna wieś Górkowice

It should be mentioned that the incorporation of villages to the neighboring small town often helped in the recovery of their civic rights [Czemak, Załęski 1999; Niedźwiecka-Filipiak 2008]. An example is **Prusice** situated 35 km from Wrocław, of a characteristic town panorama with several dominants of an ancient urban system, they are town hall tower and church steeples (figs 9, 10).

## A town formed by fusion of villages

Miasto utworzone przez połączenie kilku wsi

After the Second World War, due to development of a local industry one or more villages with no urban traditions have formed towns, example was **Stronie Śląskie** on (figs 11, 12) [Staffa 1993]. Stronie Śląskie came into being by fusion of three villages: Goszów, Stronie Śląskie – village and Strachocim. About 1950 the settlement Morawka was annexed. In 1890 the glassworks and stone-pit were established. In 1977 the railway line was founded to Strachocim, and in 1945 the crystalglassworks began to operate.

In Stronie Śląskie the marble quarry and the timber mill exist. At the confluence of Morawka and Biała Łądecka rivers the centre of the settlement emerged. Stronie Śląskie has also tourism and recreation functions.

Fig. 11. Plan of Stronie Śląskie, the town formed from three villages  
1 – the former Stronie Śląskie village  
2 – the former Strachocin village  
3 – the former Morawka village

Ryc. 11. Plan Stronia Śląskiego, miasta utworzonego z trzech wsi  
1 – dawna wieś Stronie Śląskie  
2 – dawna wieś Strachocin  
3 – dawna wieś Morawka



Fig. 10. View of market square and town-hall in Prusice

Ryc. 10. Widok rynku i ratusza w Prusicach

name Nowogród Bobrzański; it possesses two churches, two railway stations and two market places divided by the Bóbr river. Now Nowogród Bobrzański has 5100 inhabitants. The building system of this town is expanded, the distance between both market places is so big as 1 km (figs 7, 8).

## A town formed by fusion of a small town with a village

Miasto utworzone przez połączenie miasta i wsi

Sometimes a small town which has lost its civic rights and then regained them may join with a neighboring village.

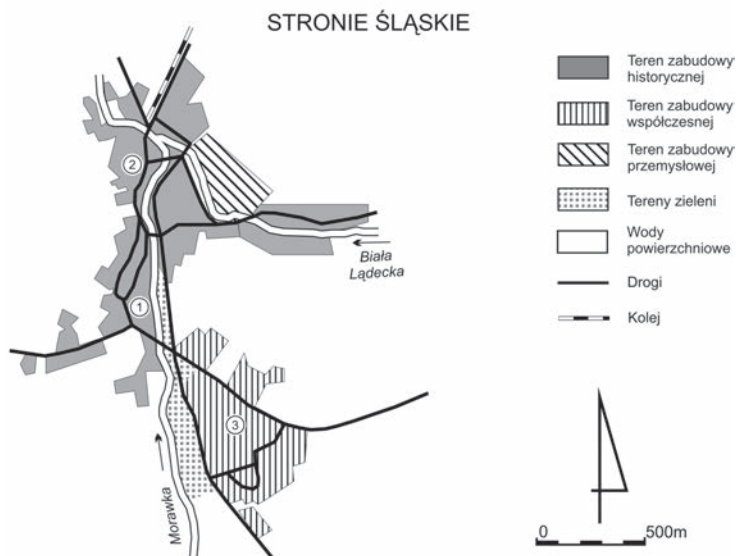


Fig. 12. View of a street in Stroniu Śląskim

Ryc. 12. Widok ulicy w Stroniu Śląskim



## A town formed from a village

### Miasto utworzone ze wsi

Such towns were formed from villages without urban traditions only rarely, examples are Siechnica transformed from a village with a power station and steelworks and Olszyna transformed from a village with a furniture plant.

In 1903 **Siechnice** then with the population of 600 inhabitants, was a typical farming village, with homesteads and a manor house. The erection of a power station and steelworks at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. resulted in transformation of the locality into a farming-industrial village. The Siechnice inhabitants were employed there and combined that activity with work in their own farms. In 1997 Siechnice received civic rights, and since this time housing, housing-service, industrial and recreational areas became predominant [Gonda-Soroczyńska 2008]; the multi-family housing has increased along with areas for service, industry and recreation (figs 13, 14).

## Commune villages formed from a town

### Byłe miasta obecnie wsie gminne

From among degraded towns nearly half of them are commune

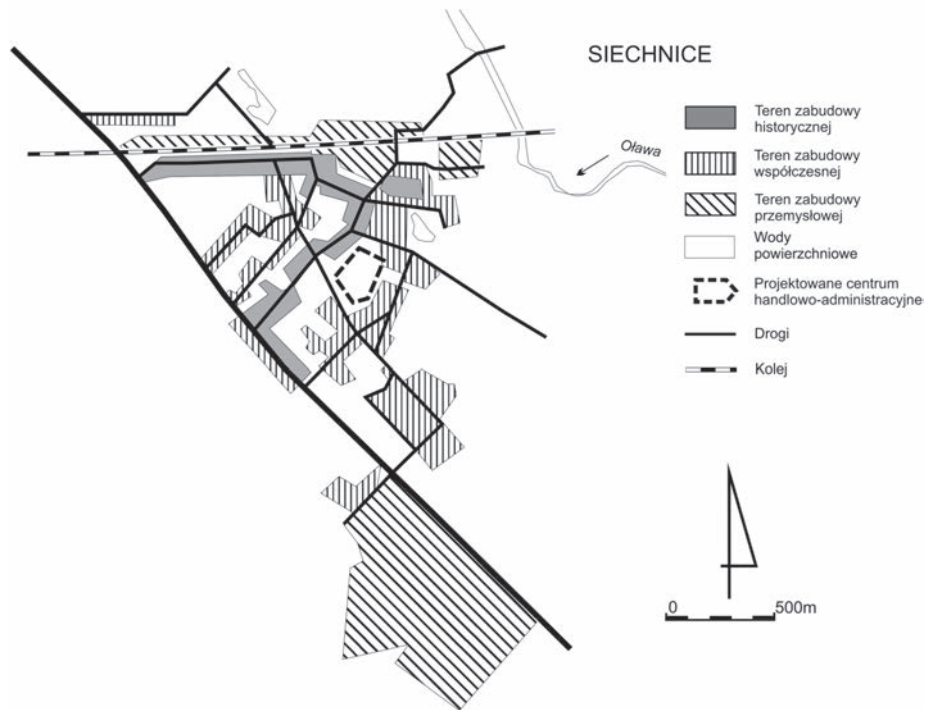


Fig. 13. Plan of Siechnice, the town without urban traditions

Ryc. 13. Plan Siechnic, miasta bez tradycji miejskich

villages. They are more important than other villages; there the official and administration buildings of the commune are situated. These localities are differentiated in the aspect of their situation, number of inhabitants, spatial and landscape systems .

In order to obtain a general insight into conditions of villages having urban traditions it is necessary to understand their history. The devel-



Fig. 14. View of the steelwork in Siechnice

Ryc. 14. Widok na hutę w Siechnicach

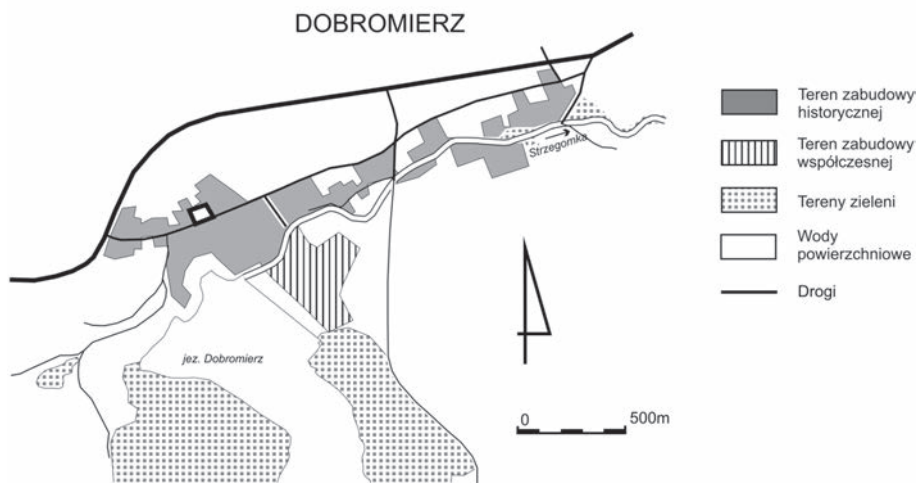


Fig. 15. Plan of Dobromierz, the commune village, formerly a town

Ryc. 15. Plan Dobromierza, wsi gminnej, byłego miasta

opment of these former small towns was bound often with handicraft, mainly weaving, with localization at trade routes, installation of coal mines, construction of fortresses and with other enterprises. The decline of small towns resulted mainly from numerous wars, fires or exhaustion of natural resources .

In most cases the urban character was retained, i.e. there remain the distinguished market place with branching streets, public service buildings, dominants mainly in form of church towers, palaces and sometimes the parks. The market place frontages were formerly built in a compact way, today however the gaps between houses are to be seen. They were caused by war damages and demolition resulting from bad technical condition; one should mention also that many former buildings were not appropriate for new enterprises [Borc 2008; Borcz, Niedźwiecka-Filipiak 2008].

It should be pointed out that an important feature characterizing the development of a given locality is

the number of inhabitants, changing in the course of years. The increasing number of inhabitants indicates the possibility of existence of new workplaces, of erection of dwelling houses and even creation of whole settlements.

Considering commune villages, one can see the differentiation in view of their possibilities for return to urban status. Commune villages mostly have adapted to their present role, however a minor part of commune villages tries to recover civic rights.

There exist commune villages which preserved their urban tradition so in the aspect of spatial as of an architectural system. In the centre of former small towns one can see the market place of a square or resembling a square shape, often ca 70/90 m large. Mostly they are uninhabited, having in the centre a lawn and a group of trees. Today in the market place instead of a former trade centre the car parks or sometimes also a bus stop are to be found.

It is noteworthy that many commune villages introduce the tourism and recreation development to their future perspectives.

An example of a village with a well preserved urban character, formerly a town is **Dobromierz** situated at the foot of Wieżyca mountain, at the Strzegomka river (figs 15, 16). On the Wieżyca mountain the tower with a view terrace from 19<sup>th</sup> c. has remained. Dobromierz, since 1403 having civic rights, for a long time did not possess town walls and had only



Fig. 16. View of market square in Dobromierz

Ryc. 16. Widok rynku w Dobromierzu

wooden buildings. In the course of years Dobromierz was destroyed by many fires and warfare. In 19<sup>th</sup> c. the restoration of Dobromierz occurred and by then the wooden houses began to be stepwise replaced by brick ones. In this time two churches have been erected [Staffa 2005; Knie 1845].

The present Dobromierz has a large market place, in the centre of the market place stands the big town hall from 1908 year, and there is a square with a group of trees. The frontages of the market place are of a similar outline, the two-storied houses are situated by roof-ridges. Due to the slope of the market place frontages, along adjacent streets the steps with flower pots were installed. In the town panorama the steeples of two churches, the tower on Wieżyca and the mountain range in the background are to be seen.

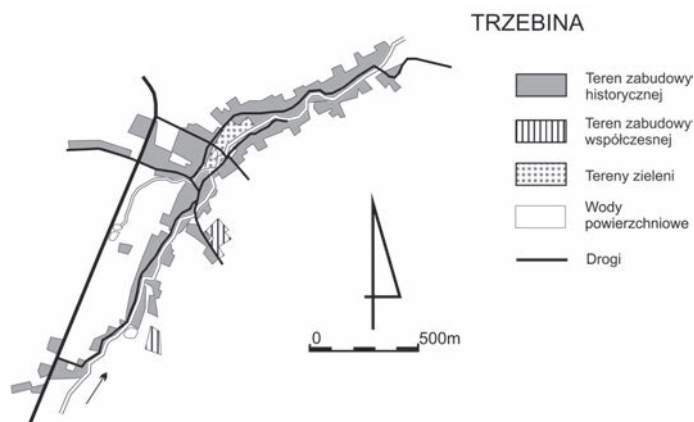
## Farmstead villages formed from a town

Byłe miasta, obecnie wsie sołeckie

Some small towns which lost their civic rights have not returned to a higher range than a farmstead village, i.e. the lowest entity in the settlement system hierarchy. They belong to communes having their seat in a village or in a town. It happens often that in the aspect of tradition and building manner they surpass

Fig. 17. Plan of Trzebina, formerly a town

Ryc. 17. Plan Trzebiny, byłego miasta



commune villages, however from the administration viewpoint, officially they are only farmstead villages.

One should point out that the existence of mineral sources, therapeutic peat or a mild climate in the Sudety foreland localities have contribution in their development. Among villages which formerly had civic rights and were active health resorts one may mention the locality **Trzebina** situated near the Czech border. Trzebina has received civic rights in 16<sup>th</sup> century and lost them after 30 years' war in 17<sup>th</sup> century. Other villages having mineral sources developed rapidly and most of them are now big towns (figs 17, 18).

It is of interest that some farmstead villages, in spite of their low range in the settlement system try to recover their civic rights; Sułów in the lowland terrains of Barycz river and Srebrna Góra in Sudety mountains may serve as examples. One should mention that some farmstead villages having no conditions to develop became only hamlets annexed to larger villages.

Fig. 18. View of an old fragment in Trzebina

Ryc. 18. Widok starej zabudowy w Trzebinie

An example of a village unable to regain civic rights is **Strupina** situated ca 30 km from Wrocław. Strupina received civic rights in 13<sup>th</sup> century, it had a market place, two churches and streets built in a compact way. In 19<sup>th</sup> century in Strupina existed two windmills, dye-works and tobacco manufacture; many inhabitants were craftsmen, mostly weavers.

After the Second World War the market place went to ruins by warfare, only buildings situated far off from the ancient centre, among them two churches and a school, have escaped destruction. Due to warfare and frequent fires Strupina lost civic rights in 1945.

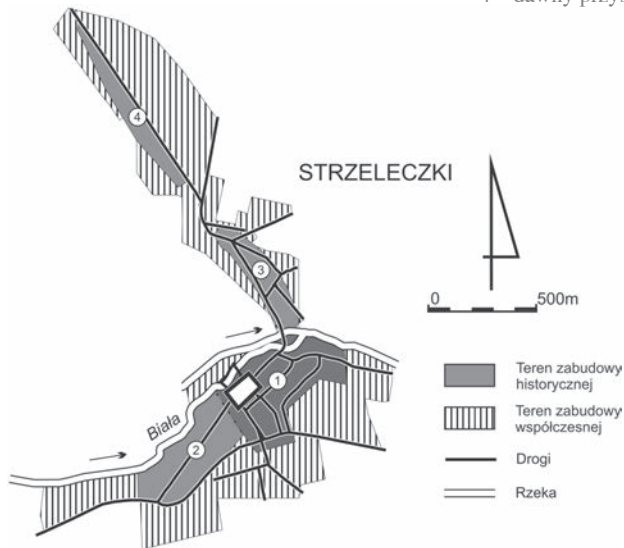


Fig. 19. Plan of the village Strzeleccki, formerly a town

- 1 – the old town with market square
- 2 – the former Oracze village
- 3 – the former hamlet Karlshof
- 4 – the former hamlet Zbychowice

Ryc. 19. Plan wsi Strzeleccki, byłego miasta

- 1 – stare miasto z rynkiem
- 2 – dawna wieś Oracze
- 3 – dawny przysiółek Karlshof
- 4 – dawny przysiółek Zbychowice



Today the church situated on a hill dominates the Strupina landscape. In recent years Strupina is expanding by constructing new settlements between Strupina and neighboring big village Skokowa having a railway station. Presumably in the future these both villages will join.

## Farmstead villages formed by fusion of a degraded town with villages

Byłe miasta, obecnie wsie, utworzone przez połączenie miasta i wsi

An example is **Strzeleccki**, originated in 13<sup>th</sup> c. as a trade settlement situated at the road from Krapkowice to Prudnik. Strzeleccki possessed the civic rights in the 1327 to 1742 period. Neighboring village to Strzeleccki was Oracze. In 1894 Oracze, and subsequently also the Zbychowice settlement were annexed to Strzeleccki.

Although Strzeleccki lost civic rights in 1742, up to 1919 it was still a market settlement which could elect a mayor. In 1898 in Strzeleccki the brickyard was built, and in 1986 the railway line was founded (figs 19, 20) [Tomczyk, Miązek 1999].

## Farmstead villages formed from a town once degraded into a hamlet

Byłe miasto obecnie mała wieś

As examples may serve **Radzimowice** and Jerzyków. Radzimowice originated in 13<sup>th</sup> c., up to ca 1750 it was a village, then became a mining town; gold, copper and arsenic were mined here. Radzimowice strongly declined, today only ten homesteads exist and a square, called by inhabitants a market place.

Up to 2003 Radzimowice was a hamlet, then it achieved a farmstead village status. Today it is expected that in Radzimowice the tourism, especially connected with mining traditions will develop (figs 21, 22).



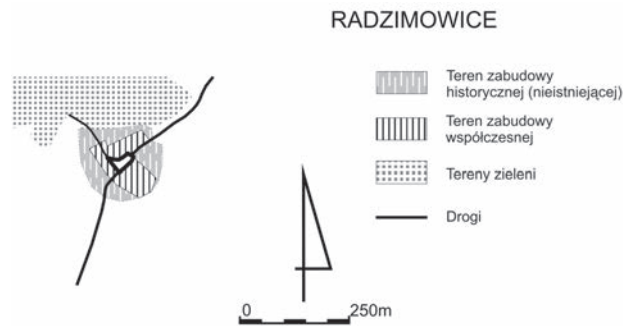
Fig. 20. View of the village Strzeleccki, formerly a town

Ryc. 20. Widok zabudowy Strzeleccek, byłego miasta



Fig. 21. Plan of the hamlet Radzimowice, formerly a town

Ryc. 21. Plan małej wsi Radzimowice, byłego miasta



## Conclusion

### Wnioski

The work deals with small towns and villages changing in the course of time their status, i.e. loosing or gaining civic rights; it is noteworthy that these transformations are important for the unity of the whole settlement network.

The study concerns the historical character of described localities, taking into account the present state of hierarchical settlement network. Considering the examples of town – village and village – town transformations, one can see that these fluctuations result so from the external conditions as well as from the inside factors.

Photos 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 16 by Z. Borcz; 10, 12, 14, 18, 20, 22 by I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak

Graphical layout of plans by P. Filipiak

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Fig. 22. View of the hamlet Radzimowice

Ryc. 22. Widok zabudowy małej wsi Radzimowice