

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPE POTENTIAL AND LOCAL STRATEGIES OF RURAL AREA DEVELOPMENT

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### Summary

The article presents results of research and implementation studies conducted at the University of Agriculture in Krakow within the project VITAL LANDSCAPES realized with the support of the CENTRAL EUROPE Programme funded by the EU. The research covered the area of the manor and park complex funded by the family of von Nostitz in Mściwojów. Project activities involved innovative combination of advanced 3D visualizations with the participation of local communities and decision-makers for the valorisation of local cultural landscape assets, which were regarded as important elements of local rural development strategies.

Activities towards developing local strategies are now an important trend in Europe. They usually engage local and subregional stakeholders in the development processes in rural areas with special emphasis on the development of strategy concepts, in accordance with the principles of Agenda 21.

### Keywords

Landscape • cultural landscape • landscape inventory • development of rural areas • 3D visualisation • social participation • CENTRAL EUROPE • Agenda 21

### 1. Introduction

The article presents results of research and implementation studies conducted at the Agricultural University in Krakow as part of the VITAL LANDSCAPES project. In the first place, it is important to mention the development of scientific methodology for the creation of innovative 3D visualizations presenting changes in cultural landscapes. The work, which was regarded as quite a novel approach in Poland, was carried out for the manor and park complex von Nostitz in Mściwojów (study object for the project). However the visualisations, was not the sole object of the study. They were part of an advanced methodology for building public participation within the pilot project, with active involvement of local communities and decision-makers. Important elements included were regional seminars organized in Mściwojów and Krakow as well as extensive studies carried out for the needs of 3D visualizations. From a practical point of view, the aspect of public participation is becoming

increasingly important in enabling the implementation of all investment and development plans: such as local infrastructure investments, local spatial development plans or regional investment plans [Litwin and Pijanowski 2008, Meyer et al. 2008, Spiegler et al. 2008]. This constitutes a significant scientific challenge.

An important element of the project was cooperation of the Agricultural University in Krakow with partners from Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. Intensive communication between the project partners and the involvement of local and regional stakeholders will make project results particularly valuable and ensure their long-lasting impact.

Project work described in this article was a scientific contribution to the new approach aiming at the improvement, protection and development of landscape cultural values in Central Europe. Also, it helped to confirm the thesis that the protection of natural and cultural landscape assets is possible only if we manage to maintain and develop traditional local economies in rural areas, bound to this landscape. This is to be accomplished by generating non-farm jobs and developing potential in the region.

## 2. Objectives and Methods

This article discusses the importance of cultural landscape assets for the creation of local rural development strategies. The recognition of these resources is possible only as a result of an extensive area inventory, while active participation of local communities and authorities is a prerequisite for creating the concepts of local development strategies and applying them. What is important, is the feedback which can make cultural landscape resources the „lever” for the development of specific projects, in which landscape can be used and revaluated, ensuring its conservation or sustainable use.

In terms of methodology, the article is a synthesis of the results of the research and implementation work carried out in Mściwojów during selected VITAL LANDSCAPES project activities. These activities included a broad historical analysis, analysis of the existing situation, creation of the restoration concept for the historic manor and park complex and the surrounding objects in Mściwojów; all with the use of innovative methods of community participation, and advanced 3D visualizations.

## 3. General description of the community of Mściwojów

The community of Mściwojów is located in the district of Jawor (Lower Silesia), and is geographically located at the Sudeten Foreland, including the so-called Strzegom Hills. The commune covers an area of 71.42 km<sup>2</sup> and it encompasses 12 villages. Mściwojów is located 5 km south of Jawor, 25 km south of Legnica and 65 km west of Wrocław. The commune is cut by the Oder tributaries, as well as the river of Wierzbak which flows into the retention reservoir at Mściwojów with an area of 0.7 km<sup>2</sup>.



Source: [www.msciwojow.pl](http://www.msciwojow.pl)

**Fig. 1.** The centre of Mściwojów with the retention reservoir “Mściwojów” at the background

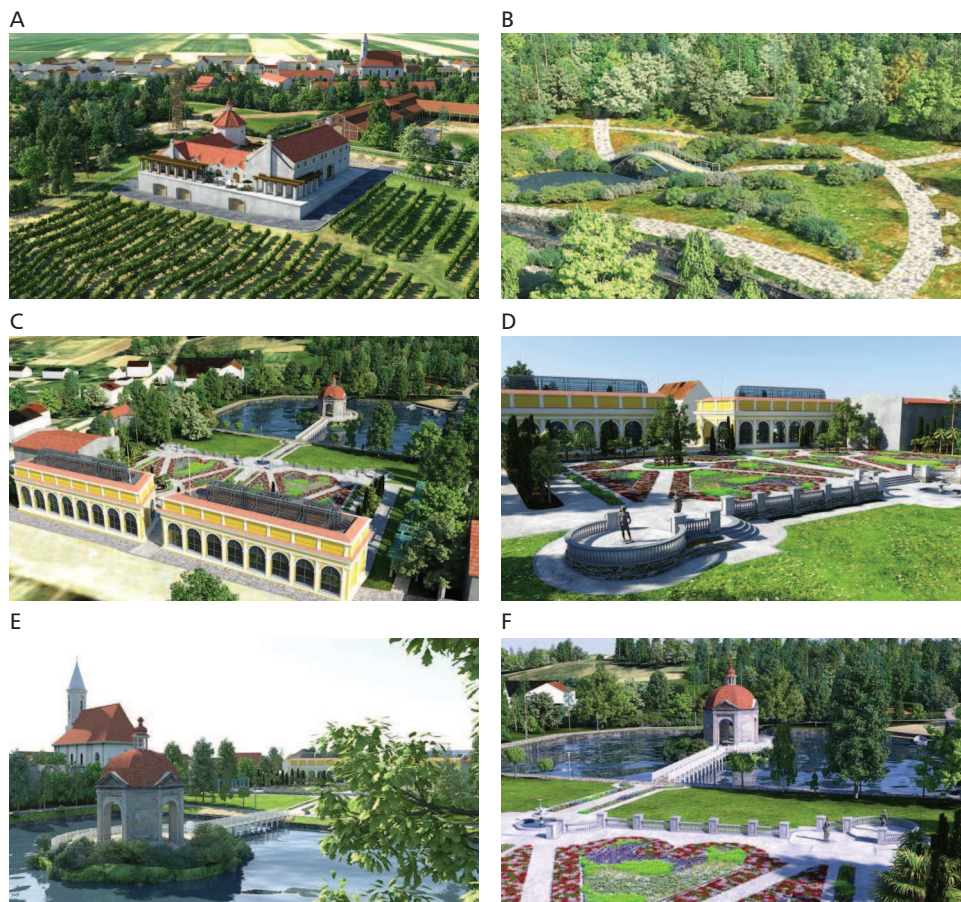
The community has a population of 4,250 inhabitants. It is a typically agricultural community, mainly because of very good soils (chernozem, podzolic soils, brown and alluvial soils), favourable climatic conditions and the limited number of jobs in other sectors of the economy. Natural resources of the community include extensive deposits of sand and gravel, and rich deposits of granite.

#### 4. General description of cultural landscape assets in Mściwojów

The first mention of Mściwojów comes from the thirteenth century. It was referred to then as: *Provin, Profen, Provyn* or *Profin* [Graber 1930]. The village was originally situated in the former Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor and later in the district of Jawor (*Jauer*) [Koiwchwitz 1910], as it is today. In the 15th century, Mściwojów and the surrounding areas belonged to the families von Bibran and von Profen, while in the middle of the 17th century it became the property of the family von Nostitz. The most prominent period for Mściwojów began in 1654 and lasted about 300 years. At this time when Baron Otto von Nostitz, the governor of the Duchy of Świdnica and Jawor, founded a large manor-park complex with a conservatory and a vineyard [Brożek et al. 2011].

In 1689, Friedrich Lucae called it one of the finest and largest (9,295 ha) estates in Lower Silesia, along with the gardens of the von Hochberg family in Pełcznica and Ciernie. Nicolaus Henelius described this property at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. He especially admired the wonderful and numerous trees and exotic

plants. Also, the garden was adorned with allegorical or mythological sculptures. In the central part of the complex, there was a cave in the form of a rotunda with artificial water equipment, including a fountain and a statue of Diana holding corn flowing with water. In the 19th century, the complex was purchased by Johann Joseph von Nostitz-Reneck and in 1931 it became the property of Konstantina von Pfeil [Jastrzębski 1973].



Source: 3D-visualisation by I. Szelest 2011

**Fig. 2.** 3D visualisation of the manor and park complex with the farm and vineyard in Mściwojów from its prominence period (A – the vineyard, B–F – manor garden with conservatory, pond, island with a pavilion and a church)

The complex was considerably devastated during the war and declined. Its condition became deteriorated after the war. In 1953, the manor burnt down under mysterious circumstances and the wonderful garden suffered ultimate devastation.



Attempts to rebuild the complex in the 1970s failed [Brożek et al. 2011]. Despite its major damage and signs of devastation, after the years of being used for the needs of the National Agricultural Holdings (PGR), the entire complex is still impressive. Unfortunately to this day, it has not been restored to its former glory. The project group from the Agricultural University of Krakow conducted intensive research, in order to find comprehensive information about the manor and park complex, along with the vineyard from the time of its prominence. Unfortunately, they encountered a number of difficulties in obtaining historical materials, especially those related to the flora of the park. The main reason for this was the fire from 1953, which destroyed the manorial library.

The most important existing local cultural landscape assets include the following: a part of the manorial garden with the conservatory. (This is well-preserved but rebuild in the period when it was occupied by PGR). The adjacent pond with an island and a pavilion, the ruins of the manor house, church and its surroundings, and the well-maintained farm buildings and remains of the buildings adjacent to the vineyard. Also, the new landscape element is the water reservoir of Mściwojów, which has a strong impact on the character of the area were well preserved.

Unfortunately, Figure 3 presents fragments (mostly hypothetical), of a digital reconstruction illustrating former glory of the manor complex.

## 5. Creating a local strategy for rural area development based on cultural landscape assets

Most rural communities in Poland suffer from the same socio-economic problem, which is a limited local employment opportunity outside of agriculture. As a result, many people of working age migrate to urban centres in search for work. This is because many of the local decision-makers in Poland perceive development opportunities only in seeking investors in the production, industry or services sector. In peripheral rural areas especially, it is difficult (if not impossible) to find these opportunities. Often local authorities, do not take into account the possibility of using the hidden “potential” inherent in the field of cultural landscape. Often, just as in the case of Mściwojów, decaying cultural objects wait unused for incomprehensible reasons.

Even the most of inconspicuous villages are in the possession of such hidden potential, both in the material and immaterial dimension. They stem from the historical past and are usually difficult to recognize at first glance. Often, due to the poor condition of the buildings, they are not taken into account as a potential tourist attraction at all. However, if the potential of such an object is “excavated” and properly “marketed” it can become a “lever of development” for the community and region. Mściwojów could be an excellent example: at first glance it is a plain, dilapidated, uninteresting village. The perspective changes dramatically, when we look at it through the prism of its history and neglected today its cultural resources. Upon doing that, we see a flourishing village full of life. Nearby, we see a magnificent manor and park complex with a vineyard and a farm.

The project VITAL LANDSCAPES was aimed at building a local rural development strategy for the area in question and for applying an innovative combination of activities involving local communities and authorities. This is quite possible with the most modern techniques of 3D visualization. The main objective was to show, by means of visualizations, the hidden potential in the landscape to the local population and decision-makers (see Figure 3).



Source: wroclaw.hydral.com.pl

Phot. M. Możdżeń 2011

**Fig. 3.** Fragments of the eastern manor elevation (A), the view from the west towards the pond and a pavilion on the island (B) and fragment of the northern elevation of the conservatory (C) in the 1920s and in 2011

An important element of the study was to create special software VITAL LANDSCAPES Tools which is the product of an extremely innovative design team. The software filled the gap between the existing programs used for building Digital Terrain Models (DTM) and high-end software for texturing and visual exposure in High Definition (HD).

The aim of the working group established at the beginning of the project, was to implement the above methodical assumptions. The team consisted of local community leaders, representatives of community authorities from Mściwojów and experts from the Agricultural University in Krakow. The aim was accomplished through a series of regional seminars, devoted to the following issues:

- 1) analysis of the Mściwojów area,
- 2) based on the above, definition of its resources and potential for non-agricultural economic development;
- 3) based on the above, suggestions of potential development objectives,
- 4) the conclusion that a renovated manor and park complex with adjacent objects (the farm, the vineyard, and the water reservoir) will be the main development axis for Mściwojów.

The next step, after the working group concluded the concept work, constituted intensive inventory activities focusing on:

- cultural resources of the village, particularly the park and manor complex with adjacent objects,
- spatial patterns of the village and surrounding agricultural grounds.

The inventory confirmed the great non-agricultural potential of Mściwojów, based on the ruins of the old manor house of von Nostitz and the surrounding objects. These could be transformed into a large holiday resort with a hotel and recreational facilities.

The panel of experts conducted all activities in such a way, as to stimulate active participation and initiative in the local inhabitants and authorities. Due to the involvement of experts from Germany and the presentations of similar already implemented concepts, it was finally decided to follow the proposed direction and transform the complex into a recreational facility, on the condition that an external investor is found.

The final concept was to restore the park and manor complex with the vineyard, transform the farm objects into a modern hotel complex and create facilities for sports recreation. This will include a stable and an observation tower. The area would then act as an important weekend recreation centre for the Wroclaw agglomeration (64 km, including 39 km on the highway). Also, with good marketing, it would be in the reach of the Upper Silesian agglomeration population (240 km from Katowice, including 220 km on the highway).

That goal can be achieved only after a detailed examination of possible environmental impact (mainly the water reservoir "Mściwojów") and the analysis of preliminary actions studies. These reports need to prepare the community infrastructure for



the investment of this size. Good preparation of the report and plan will be crucial for obtaining an external investor.



Phot. M. Brożek 2011

**Fig. 4.** Selected photographs from regional seminars with inhabitants and local authorities from Mściwojów held in 2011

Consequently, the analysis of hydrological conditions was carried out, including environmental aspects of the water network and the reservoir, as well as accompanying infrastructure, as the key conditions for sustainable development.

It was extremely important to engage local inhabitants and authorities in this process. Social support is the prerequisite for effective activity by the local authorities. In turn, local authorities are usually the ones who are responsible for concept



implementation. This is obtaining an investor, providing support in legal and formal questions related to investment preparation and lastly including changes in the local spatial development plan.



Source: 3D-visualisation by I. Szelest 2011

**Fig. 5.** Selected fragments of the 3D visualisation presenting the development concept for the complex in Mściwojów (A – the complex seen from the south, B – recreation area at the water reservoir, C – horse stable between the recreation area and the park, D – observation tower, E – hotel facilities in the former farm buildings)

In this area, the inherent potential was illustrated by the experts by means of advanced 3D visualisations. This increased interest of the local members of the working group. Also, thanks to the visualisations, it was possible to improve the concept along the way and add new elements.

## 6. Conclusions

The project VITAL LANDSCAPES was aimed at building a local rural development strategy for the village of Mściwojów. The group applied an innovative combination of activities involving local communities and authorities, as well as the most modern techniques of 3D visualization. A special emphasis on the development of strategy concepts in accordance with the principles of Agenda 21 was applied.

It has become an important trend in Europe and it combines the methods of involving local and regional stakeholders into development processes in rural areas.

From a practical point of view, the aspect of social participation is becoming increasingly important, to enable the implementation of all investment and development plans in the area. This applies from community infrastructure facilities to the local spatial development plans and regional investment plans.

Activities described in this article were a scientific contribution to the new approach aiming at the improvement, protection and the development of landscape cultural values in Central Europe. This helped to confirm the thesis that, the protection of natural and cultural landscape assets is possible only if we manage to maintain and develop traditional local economies in rural areas, by generating non-farming jobs and developing potential in the region.

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