

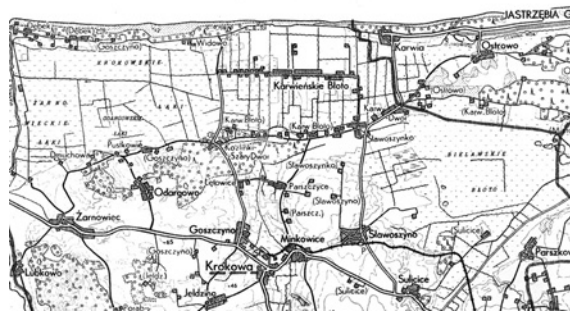
## RURAL HOMELAND LANDSCAPES

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In the theory and history of architecture and building a 'region' is defined as an area possessing visual features which are common and distinct from the surroundings: the type of settlement patterns, forms and styles in architecture and building, types of building materials, forms of vegetation accompanying building complexes, as well as the ways of its shaping or applying. These issues – vital for the research on the cultural specificity of the regions – are taken up by landscape architecture, where the questions of exposition and the visual features of the composition and landscape elements constitute a very important field of research.<sup>1</sup> The exposition is conditioned by the existing environmental forms, including untransformed natural environment, and the visual features – by the local forms which originated in the landscape as a result of the cooperation of man and the natural conditions.

### “Small homeland” and landscape

The current problem of united Europe is how to protect, preserve and popularise regional cultural forms in various countries in order to maintain the regional and cultural diversity, now threatened by globalisation. Poland, like many European countries, observes a phenomenon of copying easily available solutions in space shaping and creating forms. There is an inexplicable desire to replace the local form with the borrowed one, which means replacing something unique with something that can be found everywhere! This phenomenon is particularly unfavourable for the local architectural forms existing in the rural areas, which so far have been considered as predestined to maintain their individual character. Over the centuries, the changes resulting from the civilisation and cultural development have been the slowest in the rural areas, and this is why they have maintained the most of their cultural individuality.



Picture 1 Field structure of the village Karwieńskie Błota: (a) map from 1797 (b) map from 1980

The appealing slogan of the idea of preserving regional individuality and diversity is calling the places which have preserved their local traditions “small homelands” (small homeland –

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<sup>1</sup> J. Bogdanowski, *Wprowadzenie do regionalizmu architektoniczno-krajobrazowego*, [in:] *Wiadomości ekologiczne*, Volume XXXIX 1983, p. 183

the equivalent of German “Heimat”). “Small homeland” is also a sort of “territorial community” created by a group of people living together within a certain area, which is their distinctive feature.<sup>2</sup> Apart from this, it is also characterised by common and unique approach to space management resulting from local natural conditions, history, customs and traditions.

Therefore, the tradition of the place should be understood as the part of community tradition which is reflected in the cultural landscape of the place, namely, architectural and town-planning traditions, as well as other traditions connected with space management. “Small homeland” is also characterised by unique landscape specificity, understood as a set of distinct, particular forms distinguishing its landscape from the other “small homelands”.

Rural areas are recognised as the most valuable and “small homelands” landscape. Rural areas in Poland have preserved a landscape characteristic that is very rare in contemporary Europe: the forms of space organisation dating from the times of medieval settlement and the 17<sup>th</sup> century grange settlement. In the past human activity used to be far more than nowadays dependent on natural environmental conditions. Therefore, the spatial organisation developed by man, like the shape of the homestead, the architecture of buildings or the arrangement of the village were clearly different from each other depending on the geographical region. These forms are still distinguishable, which can be observed in the differences between the settlement patterns in Kaszuby, Kociewie Leśne, fishing villages in Pas Nadmorski and the individual character of the landscape of the Vistula River delta, called Żuławy Wiślane. Each of these cultural regions also possessed the above-mentioned individual ways of arranging villages, crofts, architecture of buildings and details. The ways of arranging gardens, the surroundings of village churches, lining field road with trees were also individual.



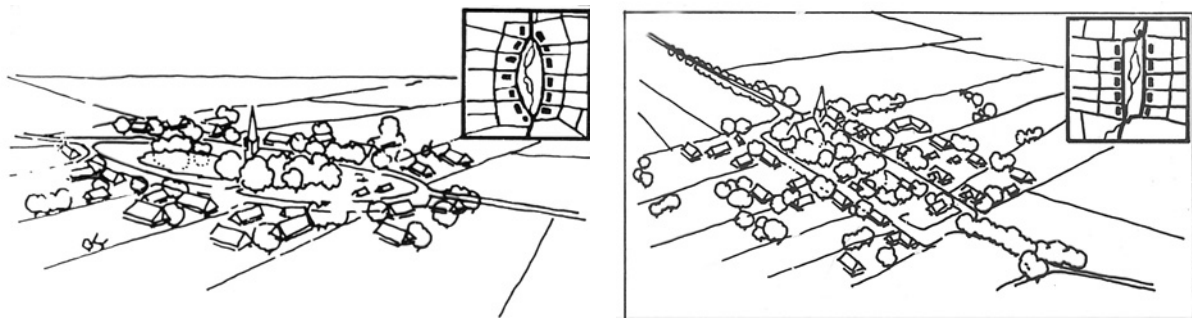
Picture 2 Ethnographic regions according to B. Sychta

<sup>2</sup> K. Pawłowska, *Idea swojskości w urbanistyce i architekturze miejskiej*, Monograph no 203, Politechnika Krakowska, Kraków 1996, p. 15.

### Open landscape and regional specificity

The implementation of the protection and cultivation of the cultural and landscape diversity should begin with identifying the most valuable and individual spatial features, in other words – understanding the essence (*genius loci*) of a given place. Looking for individual spatial features of given areas – counties, rural communities and even particular villages, is a very important and fascinating task. Evaluation systematic used in the research on space, its elements and organisation, as well as the final visual effect in the form of landscape perceived by everybody, divides the phenomena taking place in three-dimensional space into three types of values: (1) spatial, (2) material and (3) non-material. The spatial values in the particular case of rural areas include the following forms of organisation in the macro-scale: villages layout and their field structure, crofts layout, the layout of field roads.

All the elements filling the above-mentioned “skeleton” of the space are considered as material values. These will be first of all vegetation and groups of buildings in the architectural forms differing in function and size (modest buildings of homesteads and impressive mansions, manor houses and palaces.) As far as vegetation is concerned, they are landscape compositions (flower gardens surrounding houses or manor houses with parks).

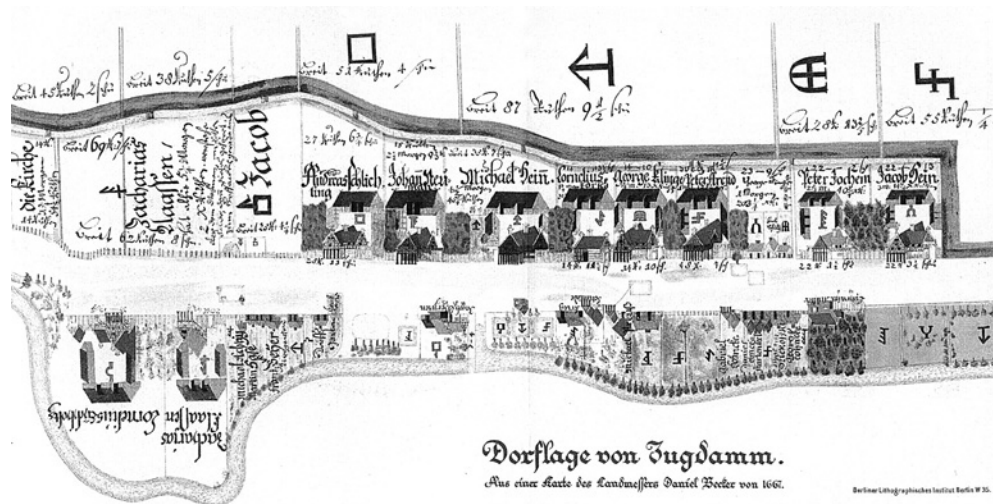


Picture 3 Spatial values – plans of villages

Non-material values, despite being the most transitory, play a very important role in shaping the cultural individuality of the “small homeland”. They are the customs, legends or tales, which are reflected in the local names of hills, brooks, parts of fields, and also particular names of lakes. Nowadays, these unique names are disappearing rapidly, replaced by technical geodetic terms. Today’s spatial planning and management is dominated by meaningless names-symbols (shopping mall, market, motel, hotel, quest house, low density housing developments).



Picture 4 Material values - groups of buildings and vegetation



Picture 5 Non-material values - history

The above-mentioned characteristics of spatial organisation of cultural origin function in the surrounding of para-natural landscape. Here we touch the problem of landscape exposition and its influence on the particular perception of “small homeland’s” characteristics. In landscape exposition the harmony and diversity of perceived forms is one of the most positive spatial features, as it is the first impression of the place we visit. The unification of forms seems not to recognise even the fundamental differences in the natural landscape, and its influence on the development of specific, local forms of traditional land use patterns.

Modern, typical objects of tourist infrastructure raised all around Poland may serve as an example. (e.g. Mc Donald’s pavilions, wooden souvenir stalls built on a large scale in timber factories, or poor-quality recreational houses). As far as landscape macro-composition is concerned, whose forms result from shaping the geometry of space in a larger territorial scale, a lot of nonchalance and planning mistakes can be observed. They are often irreparable, thus the more dangerous. The beautiful, historical spatial geometry of rural geodetic divisions is commonly ignored, which can be observed not only in “planning“ the recreational estates, but also in planning the territories that are developmental for the countryside. The original field structures with balks, common coppices, and pastures formed over the centuries are being destroyed through the implementation of secondary geodetic divisions, often very primitive, but highly economical. Especially the suburban areas are filled with hectares of new, inexpressive residential estates characterised by disturbed spatial continuity with the place where they are being raised. The objects built on such geodetic divisions highlight in the third dimension the mistakes and carelessness of the planner, when this contemporary, “modern” neighbourhood destroys a positive landscape effect of the most carefully preserved historical village and its panorama.<sup>3</sup>

### Landscape case studies

The identification and analysis of the features and characteristics of “small homeland’s” landscape - according to what has been said above – should be done on the basis of regional physical and geographical division.<sup>4</sup> In the studies of landscape architecture, according to the

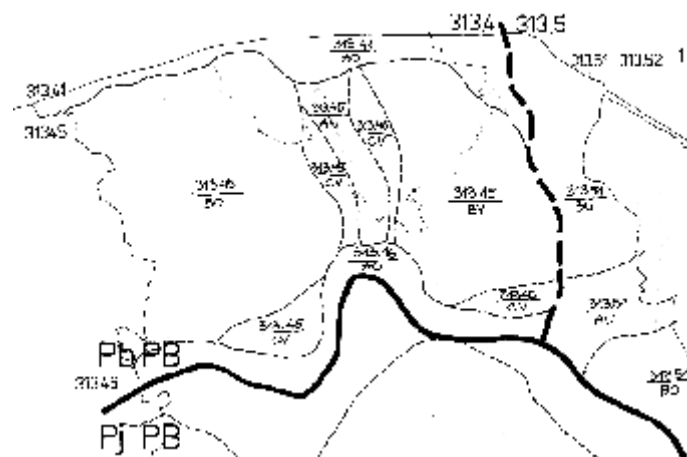
<sup>3</sup> B. Lipińska, *Kultura użytkowania przestrzeni – degradacja krajobrazu wiejskiego*, [w:] *Zachowane – ocalone. O krajobrazie kulturowym i sposobach jego kształtowania*, (ed) Wspólnota Kulturowa „Borussia”, Olsztyn 2003, p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> J. Kondracki, S. Lencewicz, *Geografia fizyczna Polski*, PWN., Warszawa 1964.

method developed in the Cracow school of landscape, the division into architectural and landscape units begins on the basis of spatial divisions used in natural sciences.<sup>5</sup> The problem will be illustrated by two examples.

The first area that I want to introduce is situated in Pomerania Region and is linked to the Baltic seashore, which is also called Pas Nadmorski. As a detailed illustration of the problem I have chosen one of the seaside communities – Krokowa. In this case it can be observed how diverse the cultural landscape of a single community can be, conditioned by its geographical location. The choice of the region and the community was influenced by its specific feature, namely, a strong influence of a bigger region from beyond the “small homeland” on the local features. The bigger region is the border zone of the Baltic Sea, where the above-mentioned geographical location and the natural environment has a stronger impact on the character of cultural features than the national or social status. A part of this community’s area is located by the seashore and its landscape features – both natural and cultural – are closer to the whole Polish Pas Nadmorski (seaside coast strip), partly Scandinavia, and even German and Danish coasts. The second presented case is the cultural landscape of Żuławy Wiślane, “built” by the Dutch immigrants, for whom in the XVI century this area became the second “small homeland”. Also here, the natural environment and geographical location had primary influence on the features of the cultural landscape. The models of the land use patterns brought by the colonists were shaped in the environmentally identical, although located thousands kilometres from the Vistula River delta, territory of the Netherlands.

Natural landscape forms can be characterised by identifying the location of area within units of geographic division. It can be said that, according to this division, the whole territory of Krokowa community is located within the sub-province of Pobrzeże Południowobałtyckie (313) and the macro-region Pobrzeże Koszalińskie. (313.4). Within the community area there are further regional divisions, namely, the mezzo-regions: Wybrzeże Słowińskie (313.41) and Pojezierze Drawskie (313.45). A more precise division introduced by the landscape analysis of forms of morphology places five morphological units within the community’s territory (marked as follows: AO, BO, CV, AU, BV, where A – flat area, B – wavy area, C – hilly area, O – with no extra features, sort of “clear form”, U – “soft” structure of forms, V – “sharp” structure of forms)

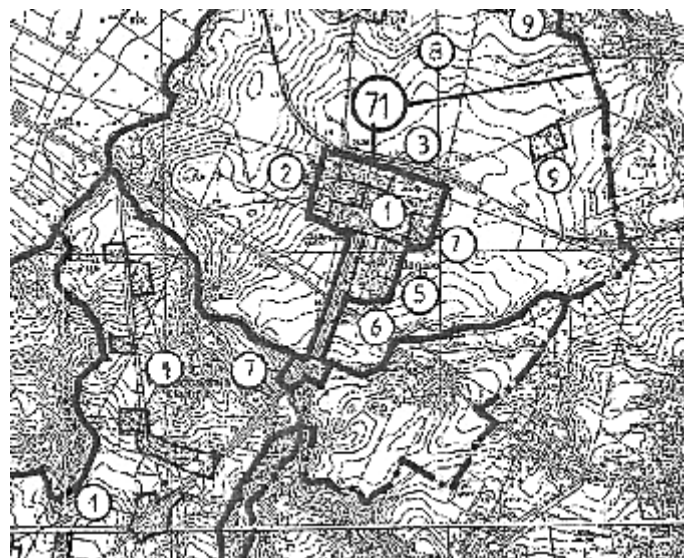


Picture 6 Location of Krokowa community within geographic divisions of Poland

<sup>5</sup> J. Bogdanowski, *Kompozycja i planowanie w architekturze krajobrazu*, Ossolineum, Wrocław 1976, p. 53-60; J. Bogdanowski, *Konserwacja i ochrona krajobrazu kulturowego (ewolucja metody)*, [in:] Teki Krakowskie, no VI, Kraków 1998.

The territory of Żuławy Wiślane is also entirely located in the sub-province of Pobrzeże Południowobałtyckie (313), but within the macro-region Pobrzeże Gdańskie (313.5) It can be further divided into mezzo-regions: Mierzeja Wiślana (313.53) and Żuławy Wiślane (313.5). Within the landscape analysis of the land use forms the whole territory was marked as a flat area with no features. The above, first approximation of the kinds of landscape forms of natural origin allows to establish the scale of diversity or similarity of cultural landscape. A narrow coastal strip (marked with a symbol 313.41/AO), where the forms of land use turned out to be similar to the forms from beyond the territory of the community, region or even the country, may serve as an example. The next step in the detailed analysis of the landscape was to establish the type and intensity of forms introduced by man. The subject of analysis was the form and range of compact and dispersed settlements and the share of natural elements (e.g. forests, coppices or meadows) in the local landscape.

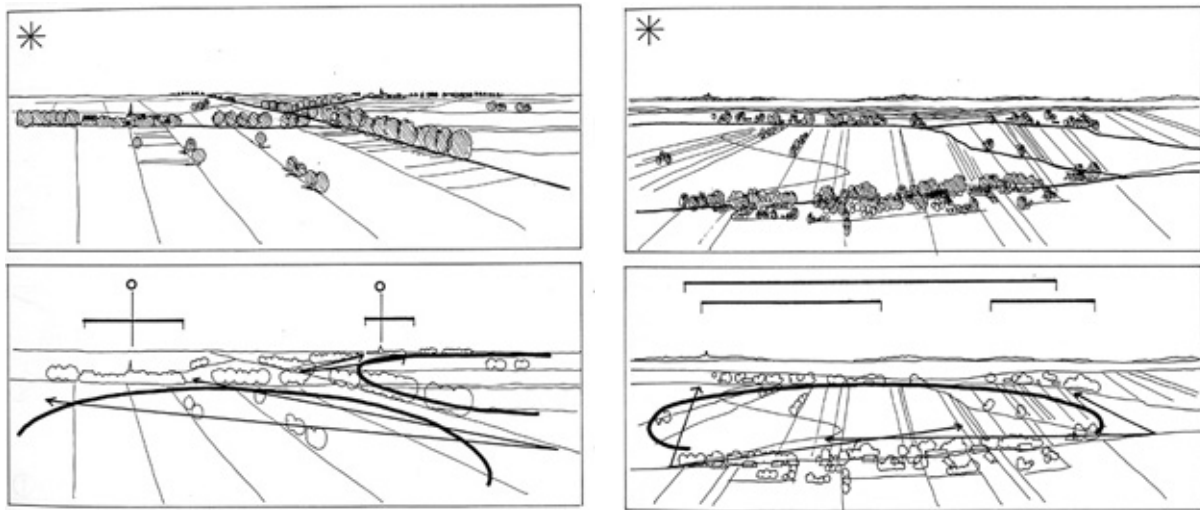
On the territory of Krokowa community, some interesting examples of the above analysis's results are: a village located in the coastal strip of a fishing village origin (Dębki), two differing in terms of landscape villages of a big free peasants village origin, the first one of a layout adjusted to forms of the terrain (Wierzchucino) and the second regular oval village forms (Sławoszyno), as well as two examples of big farm estates with complexes of manor houses with parks and villages of farm estate workers (Krokowa and Kłanino).



Picture 7 Settlement of Kłanino: (a) aerial view (b) architectural landscape units

The presented division expresses distinct diversity of landscape according to the presented village. Similar studies carried out in a slightly different scale for Żuławy Wiślane have clearly shown territories of a homogeneous character of their cultural landscape, for example the

areas of big medieval free peasants villages, and differing in landscape areas of the Dutch colonial settlement. In each case non-material values, like the archaeology of landscape, or the history of landscape transformations over the centuries, play a considerable role. The material gained from the analysis of forms of the land use and the history of the area allows to make a detailed evaluation of each fragment of the territory, and formulate conclusions and proposals for the directions of modern space shaping, with regard to the protection of the existing values of cultural landscape. These conclusions are precious, as they are based on the analysis of the slightest indications of the regional individuality, expressed in landscape composition and visual effects.



Picture 8 Landscape analysis

### The economics of landscape

In the existing definitions of landscape, the one defining it as the reflection of human management in the environment seems to be the most precise. All human activities leave a trace in the surrounding environment, and are most distinctly recognised in the landscape. Its “harmony is the reflection of good human management, and disharmony - of the bad one”<sup>6</sup>. Rural landscape requires exceptional care in transforming its rich natural and cultural environment expressed in historical, strongly defined forms of land use (especially in reference to the types of village structure and the localisation of its elements, like the square, church, cemetery). For such sensitive environment and its landscape expression it is essential to be recognised and understood by the local community that uses it every day. The conception of “sustainable development” proves helpful in differentiating between the good and bad management, and in creative approach towards contemporary shaping of the visual landscape. It draws attention to the fact that space – and also landscape – should be perceived as welfare, and stresses the significance of integrating and harmonising the targets of development, aiming at reconciling natural laws and human intervention.<sup>7</sup>

The northern and western parts of Poland are the areas which are nowadays most frequently visited by tourists from western Europe. They are mostly interested in the rural areas. The impression of the visited country is thus shaped on the basis of what the visitor notices in the landscape – the image of the country and the “small homeland”. It is easy to predict that the

<sup>6</sup> H. Gutersohn, *Harmonie in der Landschaft*, Vogt-Schild A.G., Solothurn 1956, p. 60.

<sup>7</sup> A. Baranowski, *Projektowanie zrównoważone w architekturze*, Monograph no 2, Politechnika Gdańska, Gdańsk 1998

lack of care about wise and based on deep analyses transformations of space (and landscape) results in negligence and poor quality of the observed forms of landscape. Nowadays, for economic reasons, the land is often perceived only in terms of its market value. The rural community struggles with basic everyday problems, which are often solved at the cost of landscape, whose value is limited to the price of a building lot. Being unable to earn their living, farmers are trying to improve their economic situation by selling their lands. As a result, country residents, who are in western countries often referred to as landscape guardians, cause its massive destruction. (the very expression “landscape guardian” is completely incomprehensible in the Polish countryside) The situation may be changed only by changing the way of thinking and the recognition of the true value of possessed landscape goods, for example by realising that the decrease in sights value results in smaller income from the land. The awareness of possessed “goods”, and, what follows, greater desire to present them, has a chance to result in widespread protection of the visual, landscape values of rural space. The landscape will reflect growing culture of its users – the inhabitants. The protection and wise shaping of “small homelands” landscapes, apart from undisputed influence on the “big homeland’s” landscape condition, also means potential improvement of the inhabitants’ economic situation , as long as they want to become the “guardians” of their “small homelands” landscape values.