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BETWEEN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF LANDSCAPE FORMATION

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The processes of landscape transformations have been everlasting, and people started to participate in them, more or less consciously, only recently. This paper is limited only to the review of the role of those processes from the viewpoint of landscape architecture. In the United States, where the formal identity of that profession was born, the profession's history has not been longer than a bit more than one hundred years. The key of that profession is beauty, and, according to the oldest and most consistent definition, landscape architecture is the "art of creating and preserving beauty in human surroundings and in broader land scenery"¹.

We plan here to wander between the theory and practice, so let's try to find answers to the following questions:

- Does the creation of beauty fit any theory?
- What is the relationship between the theory and practice of beauty creation and preservation?
- Who needs beauty (as the landscape architect would like to represent a profession of public trust)?

One can say that people aspire to beauty by instinct, just like plants try to reach water or sunshine. That aspiration is called *kalotropism*². If that is true and beauty is a result of our instinct, one can say OK, wait and look how everything grows beautiful if it is not beautiful yet.

¹Charles Eliot (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

²Maria Gołaszewska, *Estetyka współczesności*, Kraków 2002, p. 14



Photo 1. An Alpine landscape motif.



Photo 2. Isola Bella: a man-made island on the Lago Maggiore, with a mannerist palace and garden.



Fig. 1. A drawing from a satirical publication of 1808 entitled "Dr. Syntax's Trip in Search of Picturesque Areas". Source: E. Barlow Roberts, 2001.

But that is not the case for some reason. Probably, because human beings have other instincts as well: much stronger aspirations e.g. to gain money or power. Moreover, beauty has different faces.

Aristotle said: "Man likes the things which are intelligible for his intellect, senses and memory, the things which are not too difficult for his mind's capabilities, and our satisfaction coming from art depends on our mind's structure."³

We should remember especially the last portion of that sentence. That is a "master key" to the answer to the question about objective vs. subjective roots of beauty, and it is a pity that they are not used by those who have been arguing for years whether something is beautiful because we like it or we like something because it is beautiful.

Apart from the above, presently, a number of similar beauty categories or definitions exist. Especially since the 20th century avantgarde times, "traditional" beauty became unfashionable and boring, and it could be abusive to say to the artist: "You have created something **nice** or even worse: **beautiful!** Therefore, the joy of beauty may have various sources.

If we limit our considerations to landscape, one can say that the biggest

³ Marta Leśniakowska, *Co to jest architektura*, Warszawa 1996, p. 99.

change of landscape treatment came due to the idea of the *sublime*, which is a notion somewhat different from the idea of beauty. And that did not happen quickly. The first preserved treaty on that issue by Pseudo-Lon-ginus comes from the first century A.D. It was translated into English by J. Hall and into French by N. Boileau only in the 17th century⁴. The greatest contribution of extraction and propagation of the "sublime" properties should be assigned to English and German aesthetics, in particular to Edmund Burke who wrote his fundamental work, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757)⁵, and to Emanuel Kant. The *sublime* was explained to be an exciting type of a "luckily survived horror"⁶, or a "distance to what raises fear"⁷.

Kant added that the *sublime* was generated either by something huge or by a natural fury, and we feel that kind of passion coming from the experience of fear⁸.

In the Christian religious circles, the attractiveness of nature was treated distrustfully for a long time. Despite being the *sacrum*, nature was recognized as the opposite *profanum* at the same time. Indulging in natural charms could be sinful and lead to perdition. Only St. Francis broke such prejudice, while the masters of Renaissance returned to the ancient tradition of nature affirmation and developed them. That is when the extraordinary idea appeared that nature exceeded art. Moreover, in several mannerist villas, natural substances were used as perverse "imitations of nature." Nevertheless, even in the 18th century, Burke's and Kant's ideas were rather new since people still claimed that a mountain landscape had not represented anything else than shapeless and dangerous chaos. When Johan Joahim Winckelman, a discoverer of Greek art, negotiated the St. Gottard Pass in the Alps in 1769, he ordered that the coach windows be covered⁹.

Philosophical disputes about the idea of the sublime at the end of the 18th century were very close in space and time to the key notions of what is beautiful and picturesque within the English school of landscape painting, and, by the same, to the theoretical and practical principles of space shaping on a larger and larger scale.

Nevertheless, the then affirmation of nature and natural shapes, partly imported from the Far East, was, what was obvious, an expression of elite tastes. The idea of landscape as a public good was beyond comprehension for the elites.

⁴ Umberto Eco, *Historia piękna*, Poznań 2005, p. 278

⁵ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1756

⁶ Burke, According to Heinz Paetzold, "Pojęcie wzniosłości we współczesnej filozofii sztuki", In: *Sztuka i estetyka po awangardzie a filozofia postmodernistyczna*, Warszawa 1994, p. 108

⁷ Umberto Eco, *op.cit.*, p. 291

⁸ Emanuel Kant, *Krytyka czystego rozumu*, 1790, According to Paetzold, *op.cit.*, p. 109

⁹ Sigfried Giedion, *Przestrzeń, czas i architektura*, Warszawa 1968, p. 462

That approach was expressed only in the American conception of the **National Park**. That conception was a breakthrough innovation among the 19th century planners since land protection and not land exploitation became the object of activity on such a large scale and for the first time.

A characteristic trait of that idea was the fact that it was born on the continent which was richer in natural resources, hardly endangered by urban development or industrialization, which processes were far more advanced in Europe at that time. Even at that time, national pride was growing in the American society calling the new homeland "The Garden of the World". The representatives of intellectual and artistic elites were eager to use that feeling and supplemented the democratic procedures of lawmaking with the ideals of integrated environment and national heritage protection, which conceptions were hardly known or even strange to the majority of the society at that time.

It is difficult to judge, especially from the European perspective, what role was played by the dramatic fate of the Indians in that process. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile quoting from the Speech of the Great Indian Chief declared in Seattle in 1855, in connection with the US President's intention to purchase land from the Chief: "If we sell our country to you, love it as we used to love it, care for it as we used to care for it and keep the memories of the country as you have received it from us"¹⁰.

That was not easy to do for the people oriented for maximum profits to be generated from the occupied lands. Nevertheless, as early as in 1832, the Congress established the first natural reserve of 1,300 hectares, presently the Hot Springs National Park in Arkansas. Thirty years later, the Yosemite Valley State Park was created in California "for public use and recreation"¹¹. The very name of the National Park appeared in 1872. The Yellowstone National Park was created, spread on 1.5 million hectares in Montana and Wyoming, qualified as "*useless for any other purposes but tourism*," which was a useful trick. It was the first National Park in the world. That was the place where more and more tourists could enjoy the domination and violence of nature and recall the "luckily survived horrors" after coming back to cities.

Not more than twenty years later, in 1888, the Polish traveller Bogusław Królikiewicz, referred to his visit in Yellowstone: *Remembering our Tatra Mountains each time I keep asking the recurring question: could our Tatras, although so small, become a National Park?*¹²

¹⁰ According to Edmund Małachowicz, *Ochrona środowiska kulturowego*, Warszawa 1988, Vol. II, p. 514.

¹¹ James P. Delgado, op.cit., p. 10.

¹² According to Jacek Kolbuszewski, *Ochrona przyrody a kultura*, Wrocław 1992, pp. 96-97.

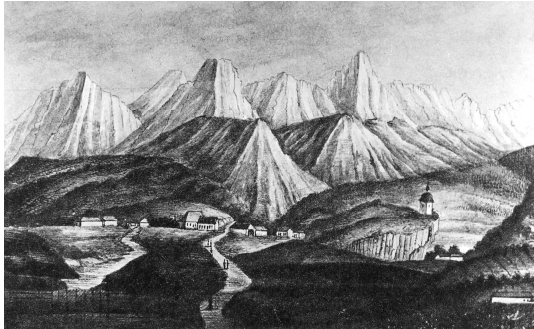


Fig. 2. The Tatra Mountains seen from Szaflary, a sketch from mid-19th century. *Source: G. Ciolek, 1978.*

Only in 1912, the Polish scientist Jan Gwalbert Pawlikowski formed the Tatra Mountains Protection Section among the founders of the Tatra Society. That was the first Polish organization oriented to mountain protection against the factors which obliterated the original nature of landscape. Since those days, the systems of natural protection and of its undeveloped twin, the cultural heritage

protection, were developed step by step. That outright disproportion in the identification of the two types of natural and cultural landscapes is demonstrated by the table below.

Tab. 1. Forms of the legal conservation of nature and monuments.

Statutory forms of landscape protection, based on the Nature Protection Law (2004)	Statutory forms of landscape protection, based on the Cultural Heritage Protection Law (2003)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Park • Natural Reserve • Landscape Park • Landscape Protection Area • "Natura 2000" Area • Natural Landmark • Ecological Land • Natural and Landscape Complex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of Landmarks • Cultural Landmark • Cultural Park • Protected Zone (in the Local Master Plan at the local-government level)

Source: Nature Conservation Act (2004); Monuments Conservation Act (2003).

From the formal point of view, we have a huge area, nearly 30% of the Polish territory, under legal protection. In practice, however, effective landscape protection tools can be applied on much smaller areas. With respect to natural protection, such areas includes 23 National Parks (388.5 hectares) and 120 Landscape Parks (2.5 million hectares), amounting to less than 1% of the territory of Poland. The remaining portions are composed of pieces of natural reserves, ecological lands and natural landmarks which are numerous but oriented mainly on species protection.

Bigger areas, such as "Natura 2000" or Landscape Protection Areas, have not been covered by suitable executive orders.

We should add to that modest 1% the cultural heritage landscape protected in the zones established in Local Master Plans. Such Plans are not obligatory for the Polish local governments to adopt, and only 15% of the governments have approved them, covering about 2% of the Polish territory, or 0.3% in total. The Register of Landmarks is a collection of separate objects, e.g. natural landmarks, hardly significant for landscape planning. Consequently, although we have a large 30% of the protected area in theory, the real protection of the Polish landscape is performed on the territory not exceeding 1.2% of the country.

Those figures concerned the beauty protection. However, as to the beauty generation, or the generation of the beautiful landscape wherever it is missing, we can use the data concerning Local Master Plans. Those are the only instruments applied to the landscape planning policy outside the National Parks and Landscape Parks. They are further integrated with nature protection plans. Since 2003, our local governments do not have to develop or approve spatial plans as local law. That strange relief was immediately used by 85% of the local governments, which means that development continues there without physical plans, only based on limited procedures called Planning Permit Decisions. The degree of discretion contained in such Decisions should be discussed separately because the process amounts to the so-called "levy en mass attacking the landscape" in the majesty of the democratic rule of law which may not exist in a civilized country.

That is especially visible in the surroundings of the most attractive landscape regions covered by some form of statutory protection. The competences of the Polish local governments do not reach there, although the government can protest against the determination of protection zones, e.g. around National Parks, and thus get closer to the "turf". That process is even easier since the governments usually do not have Master Plans in place and they do not have to make any spatial arrangements with their neighbours, including National Parks. Such a situation is very comfortable and it proves that people do aspire to be close to beauty.

The problem is, however, that such trends pose threat to the objects of desire being common goods, not only commodities owned by the neighbours. In addition, wealth has been inherited as a creation of nature or the heritage of previous generations since our generation has hardly participated in such creations. Still, our contemporaries feel free to share profits. That is why the conduct of such "consumers" reminds us of the poachers who are interested in gaining trophies, regardless of their origin and for how long they will last.

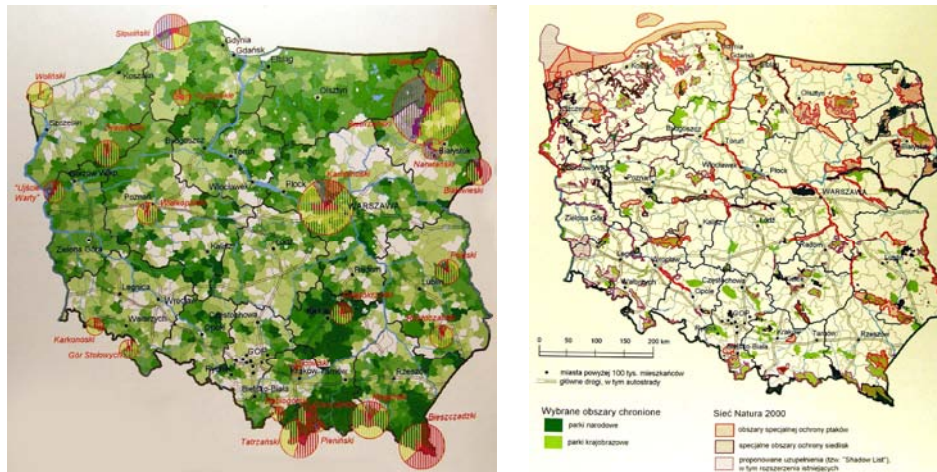


Fig. 3. A. Theoretically protected areas. B. Effectively protected areas, with the "Natura 2000" areas.
Source: "Polska Przestrzeń", Raport o stanie zagospodarowania przestrzennego kraju, Warszawa 2007.

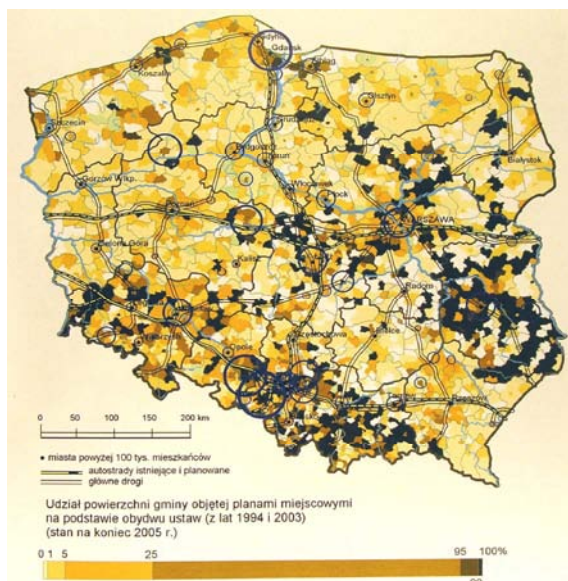


Fig. 4. Local Physical Plans in communes (2005 status).
Source: "Polska Przestrzeń", Raport o stanie zagospodarowania przestrzennego kraju, Warszawa 2007.

Neighbourhood with a National or Landscape Park is very tempting as no obligations are related to it. There are many followers of such neighbourhood and they create lobbies to enforce subsequent regulations intended to weaken the rules applicable to landscape protection.

After the said relief of the local governments of the obligation to develop physical plans, the Regulation of 02.10.2007 removed the Department of Spatial Order and Architecture in the Ministry of Building. Even earlier, there was an ineffective conception proposed by the Ministry of the Environment to transfer some of the Park authorizations to the State Forestry management.

The most recent ideas of the Ministry of Infrastructure call for the spatial plans to be prepared by the developers or individual



Photo 3. Surroundings of the "Willa pod Jedlami", Koziniec Hill in Zakopane, planned for a cultural park.



Photo 4. Surroundings of the Mirów Castle, "Eagles' Nests" Landscape Park, Polish Jurassic Region.

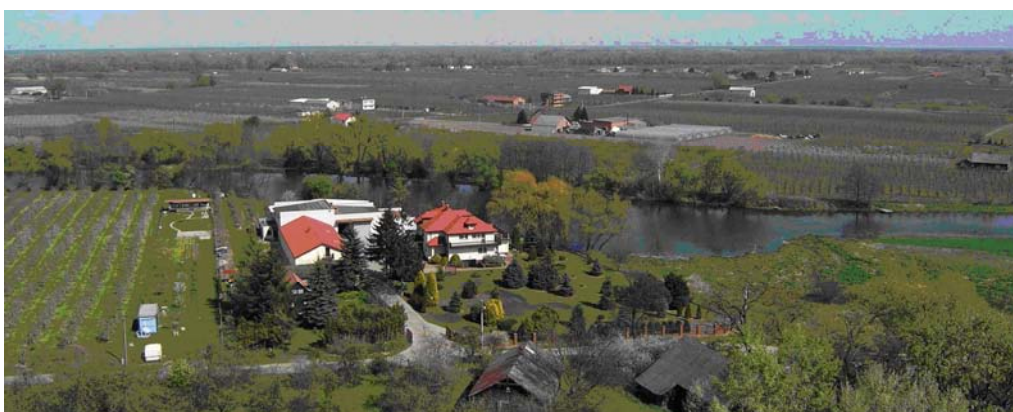


Photo 5. A view from the Czerny Castle to the Vistula River Protected Landscape Area near Warszawice.

investors and submitted to the local governments for approval¹³. Consequently, our theoretical works on landscape formation are becoming nostalgic hobbies hardly ever applied and rather remaining as mere theories. Who needs so-mething which can block the aspiration to win easy money?

Even if we have reduced all the landscape forming aspects to one, maximum profit generation, the profit would depend on the standard of goods being offered. And the standard will be evaluated through the property of life quality, which is always derived from the comfort of the place of residence, work or travel. The view from one's window constitutes ca. 25% of the market value of such locations. The goods inherited from previous generations or received from nature will rather disappear. They can be replenished by the transformation of unattractive locations into attractive ones. That process would obviously increase the value of neighbouring real estates, as well as the consequential tax paid to the authorities.

Other nations understand that better. Possibly, that is a reason why more and more Poles go abroad for holidays. Just across our border, in Lausitz, one of the most interesting landscape projects is presently being implemented. Long-term extraction of brown coal during the DDR days caused that man-made lakes developed on the surface area of nearly 127,000 hectares. That area, similarly to the Ruhr Basin, became of interest to the International Building Exhibition, with more than one hundred years of history. In 1999, a project whose name referred to the nearby parks established in the 19th century by Prince Pückler-Muskau, the Fürst-Pückler-Muskau-Land was developed. It is part of a wider programme called Idea Quo: Creating the Axis of the Tourist Region Identity and Quality between the Baltic Sea and the Aegean Sea, as part of the INTERREG II B Project to be finished in 2010.

What is essentially new in Lausitz is the denial of the well-known practice of reinstatement of previous natural appearance to post-industrial areas. People came to the conclusion that the threatening post-industrial landscape deformations open way to the idea of the **New Sublime**.

Consequently, gigantic landscape transformations resulting from open-pit mining and industrial structures created a new and specifically attractive landscape which may catch the attention of tourists.

The spatial structure of *Fürst-Pückler-Land* is composed of "landscape islands" located in a rectangle between the towns of Guben, Bad Muskau, Elsterwerda and Lübben. The post-industrial landscape, called the "landscape in motion," has been reinstated only partly to its original appearance (e.g. in respect of water treatment or natural succession) and supplemented with tourist facilities to be completed in 2010.

¹³ "Rzeczpospolita" daily, 17.12.2007



Photo 6, 7. Economic improvement of the areas surrounding the legally protected landscape.

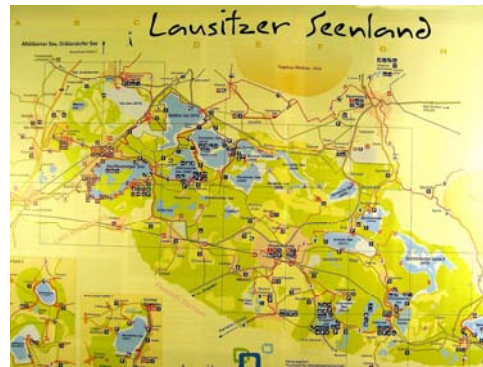


Fig. 5. A. *Idea Quo* – Creating the Axis of the Tourist Region Identity and Quality between the Baltic Sea and the Aegean Sea. B. Lower Lusatia: *Fürst-Pückler-Land*. *Source: Brennweite 2, Leipzig 2006.*



Photo 8. Post-industrial landscape in Lausitz and its tourist availability on the "Trip to the Mars" route. *Source: Brennweite 2, Leipzig 2006.*



Photo 9, 10. Post-industrial landscape reclamation near Klein Partwitz and first project results in the form of recreational facilities.



Photo 11. IBA Tarasen: viewing terraces in Grossräschen and the exhibition hall of the *Fürst-Pückler-Land* Project in the Lausitz area.

That huge landscape project has been raising considerable interest on the part of tourists, although it has not been completed yet, and that is skilfully used for both promoting the region and building pro-landscape social attitudes. The unusual "landscape performance" enabled by special viewing terraces will be connected with

the displays of other aspects of the land, from geological formations to prehistory to modern history to ethnography and regional folk culture.

One of the elements of present-day identity of that area is its location on both sides of the Polish-German border. We are connected by the geology of the so-called Mużakowski Arch, the Sorbs (Lusatians), and the Mużakowski Park entered on the UNESCO List of World Heritage as a trans-border object, and divided by the Nysa River. Bad Muskau is situated on one bank and Łęknica on the other one. The German spa, which is flourishing after a period of investments which were typical for the DDR, proposed the Polish Łęknica government cooperation in the areas of landscape protection and tourist development. That required reorientation of the local priorities concerning the revival of diminishing border bazaars and heavy industry. Respective negotiations are difficult and they remind us of the third question specified above: "Who needs beautiful landscape?" The previously quoted Greek answered the question 25 centuries ago: "Man likes the things which are intelligible for his intellect, senses and memory, the things which are not too difficult for his mind's capabilities..."

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SUMMARY

The process of landscape transformation has age-long history. People participate in it since not long ago – more or less consciously. The paper is limited only to the role of landscape architecture in this process. History of landscape architecture as a self-dependent profession - even in United States, where it was established - is no longer than 100 years. According to the oldest and most consistent definition, the landscape architecture is primarily a fine art, and as such its most important function is to create and preserve beauty in the surroundings of human habitations and in the broader natural scenery of the country. It means that the beauty is a key word here.

Wandering between the theory and practice, we will try to find the answers for the following questions:

- Does the creation of beauty fits to any theory
- What is relation of theory of preservation of beauty to the practice
- For whom the beauty is needed