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## SHAPING THE TRADITIONAL LANDSCAPE OF RURAL AREAS – PROGRAMS AND METHODS

### *KSZTAŁTOWANIE TRADYCYJNEGO KRAJOBRAZU OBSZARÓW WIEJSKICH – PROGRAMY I METODY*

**Key words:** rural areas, cultural landscape, spatial programs

*Słowa kluczowe:* obszary wiejskie, krajobraz kulturowy, projekty przestrzenne

#### **Abstract**

From historical viewpoint, the character of development of polish village was quite natural, harmoniously fitted into the surroundings, with due respect towards traditional values and the region. This long existing process of tending rural space currently undergoes rapid turmoil causing the loss of primal nature of the countryside. Typically urban elements tend to appear here increasingly more often, when at the same time the traditional architecture, climate and genius loci seem to fade into the past. Hence the need to seek solutions that would counteract the aggravation of traditional rural landscape and support order restoring trends.

In year 2002 the Institute of Landscape Architecture of the University of Life Sciences in Wrocław in cooperation with marshal and municipal offices initiated such action by implementing projects within Countryside Renewal Program and the Rural Network of the Most Interesting Villages. All the work is being conducted in three provinces: Lower Silesia, Opole and Silesia and covers the period from 2002 to 2013.

#### **Streszczenie**

*Historycznie wieś rozwijała się bardzo naturalnie, harmonijnie wpisując się w otoczenie, szanując zastane wartości i miejsce, w którym powstawała. Dotychczasowy sposób zagospodarowania zostaje w ostatnich latach gwałtownie zmieniany, do tego stopnia, że wieś traci swój pierwotny charakter. Coraz częściej pojawiają się w jej obszarze elementy typowo miejskie, a do tego gwałtownie odchodzi w przeszłość tradycyjna architektura, klimat i magia miejsca. Stąd konieczność szukania takich rozwiązań, które by temu przeciwdziałały i pokazywały nowe rozwiązania prawidłowego kształtowania przestrzeni wiejskiej i zatrzymały degradację jej tradycyjnego krajobrazu kulturowego.*

*Institut Architektury Krajobrazu Uniwersytetu Przyrodniczego we Wrocławiu podjął w roku 2002 takie działania rozpoczynając współpracę z urzędami marszałkowskimi i urzędami gmin realizując projekty w ramach Programu Odnowy Wsi oraz Sieci Najciekawszych Wsi. Prace takie prowadzone są na terenie trzech województw: woj. dolnośląskiego, opolskiego i śląskiego od roku 2002 do 2013.*

## INTRODUCTION

Paraphrasing the words of Janusz Majewski from the introduction to the book *Kresy w starej fotografii (Borderland in Old Photographs)* one can say that while looking at old photos of villages, especially the Silesian ones from the former Polish district that once covered today's Cieszyn Silesia, Upper Silesia, Opole Silesia and Lower Silesia (Mizia, 1997)<sup>1</sup>, when studying them without undue exaltation, in silence of contemplation we are looking for some lost and difficult to determine atmosphere of unity of nature and spirit, the direct connection of human activity with the surrounding nature, some unique climate that each picture comprises (Kułakowska-Lis, 2013)<sup>2</sup>. Every village has a different history that many generations built over centuries, the history that is bound to a specific location and encompasses all the chain of events that took place there (Plit J., 2011). On the one hand, we observe the significant relation and subordination to the laws of nature, which results from farming activities, on the other, the inflow of all sorts of civilization facilities and new technologies adequate to the present day requirements. However, there is still a great deal of respect for the history and the former spatial and construction solutions representing the uniqueness of the place.

New elements arising in the existing building arrangements, in the forms of individual buildings or in architectural detail, appear in the countryside in a natural way, harmoniously fitting into their surroundings, repeating the existing forms, referring to the characteristic elements from the existing buildings, using construction materials available in the vicinity, respecting their original place. Also noticeable is a great deal of attachment to the tradition and the values of ancestors.

We should notice that the surrounding landscape, both the urbanized one, with farms and buildings, and the natural one that appears right behind a barn or an orchard, the landscape of fields, balks and dirt roads is what the residents of villages see every day, a view they don't pay much attention to (Chowaniec, 1986; Kuriata,

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<sup>1</sup> Sixth century is the onset of the settlement processes on the area of Silesia. As a result of armed struggles in years 989-990 and diplomatic actions, King Mieszko the 1st takes control over Silesia and Małopolska. This fact is confirmed by the document "Dagomeiudex" from year 991. Finally, by the power of Namysłowski peace treaty between Kazimierz Wielki the King of Poland and Czech Crown the Silesia region is given under Czech sovereignty and Czech monarchs waive their rights to the crown of Poland.

<sup>2</sup> "... I look through these photos of lost lands and try to think of them straight, without exaltation, but still, in my inner silence I keep on looking for explanation for the power of the myth of the Borderlands, what values, climates and charms propelled its existence. I look at the ruins of castles, once proudly guarding our borderlands, at the magnificent, though a little run-down palaces of aristocrats, at the romantic, though crooked pavements in the markets of poor towns, at the beautiful thatched Hutsul huts, at old and noble faces of peasants covered with wrinkles of poverty, and I think that maybe it was the seekers of exoticism who took these photographs, some over sophisticated aesthetes, that they could have hunted traces of the ancient past so rare to see these days, like travelers venturing deep into the Dark Continent – but no, it was the time of their life, their commonplace, it was ongoing, it lasted ...".

1999)<sup>3</sup>. It has always been there and it remained in the memories from childhood, it was the omnipresent commonplace, everlasting condition resilient to the passage of time and generational change.

A neighbor used to build a new residential house, cowshed or barn under the same rules that were applied for the surrounding buildings. There were still valid the unwritten principles concerning spatial situation of buildings on farm plot, position of residential building in relation to the road, or where and how to make the specific constructions, what materials to use and what elements of ornamentation would fit the specific characteristics of the local architecture. Obviously, the construction technologies were changing, there were new building materials, new functional and technological solutions, new ways of managing farms, however, what remained was the desire to create ordered and harmonious spaces. Primarily it resulted from certain conditions concerning running a farm, from the necessity to preserve the proper composition of buildings in order to facilitate work on farm. Hence, a residential house, as the foremost in the yard, was situated on the street side, whereas barns, places for feedings tuffs and granaries full of sheaves stored for latter threshing, all these were close to the fields, at the back of a farmyard, while the remaining inventory and utility buildings were placed between them. Such building arrangement and distances between buildings provided rational space, optimal for minimization of the workloads on farms. Important was also the specificity of each village, preserved in space and related to the natural environment, the character of buildings, local customs, or human preferences as such. Scarce was the desire to change what was previously made and well known, you could observe many tokens of respect to what had already been in use. All the more there were no signs of rapid changes that would fundamentally abolish the existing spatial arrangements. And if so, it would happen through slow evolving, where while building the new objects the attention was paid to their being indistinct from the former ones or not aggressive in its form in relation to the environment, with the appropriate and coherent colors. Generally, they attempted to blend the new buildings into the existing landscape so that the changes were barely noticeable.

This is the image of a village, quiet and peaceful, full of harmony and beauty, that we carry in our memory, whether it's through our parents' tales or watching old photos, paintings or movies about it, or maybe we might have seen them by our own eyes. Unfortunately, these are mostly just memories. And if we even come across villages like these, they are usually preserved only fragmentarily, or even with just one or two original buildings (photo 1, 2, 3, 4).

We must admit that the latest initiatives related to the development and housing in rural areas stand in stark contradiction to our notions of the beautiful countryside full of nostalgic atmosphere of the early morning mists, with cocks crowing

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<sup>3</sup> The most frequent spatial form of rural settlements occurring in the area of Silesia is the linear village with distinctive and functional arrangement of habitat parcels and the infrastructure of communication and business.

at dawn, sparrows twittering in the lilac bushes, hens cackling in the henhouse, cows mooing on the pasture or neighing horses harnessed to a cart (Kuriata, Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2012).



**Photo 1.** View of the village Księginice Wielkie, the municipality of Kondratowice, the province of Lower Silesia.



**Photo 2.** Regular arrangement of building in the village Gołogłowy, municipality of Kłodzko, the province of Lower Silesia.



**Photo 3.** The distinctive building complex in the village Piasek, municipality of Janów, the province of Silesia.



**Photo 4.** The market in the village Złoty Potok, municipality of Janów, the province of Silesia.

In most cases, it's all in the past, though not a remote one, but even so, it takes a long search to find the original landscapes that holds this unique rural atmosphere. On the one hand the agricultural changes we observe have both quantitative and qualitative impact on today's farms, on the other – these are transformations of villages into multifunctional housing complexes with dominant urban-type detached houses, which gives a new quality to these areas. The village with its new design begins to repeat urban patterns both in terms of spatial layout, housing forms, arrangement of individual properties, or even in the way of thinking of people who dwell these residential complexes. In many cases, villages lose not only their individual character, but also their unique atmosphere, incomparable to urban climate (Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, Kuriata, 2010).

In one part of the former area of Silesia (the present Lower Silesia and some part of Opole Silesia) there has been a population exchange resulting from the resettlement

of Polish people from the former eastern lands of Poland to these particular terrains (Kuriata, Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2013)<sup>4</sup>. It should be noted that these people couldn't choose about their staying or moving. They had to leave everything they knew so far and try to domesticate this new, different environment. Fortunately, they were people from the borderlands, East Poles able to cope with a variety of adversities and so they eventually loved this new land, accepted the inhabited spaces and today they create their own new tradition embracing both the culture of eastern Europe and the elements of local tradition, which they adopted as their own. They changed their homeland on the former eastern border into western frontier where they live today. These lands, once belonging to Germany and today belonging to Poland, are still the borderlands, where people are more kindhearted usually have positive attitude towards fate and people. Obviously there were some losses and misfortunes on the way. There was a long lasting conviction that everything would eventually change, that one day they should leave this temporary place of living. Hence, a lot of unnecessary acts of vandalism, devastation, lack of care and respect for the existing objects (Kułakowska-Lis, 2013)<sup>5</sup>.

## CHANGES IN SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE VILLAGE

Currently implemented in Poland models of rural development bring many limitations and hazards that afflict not only the localities situated in direct vicinity of large cities, where aggravations are easily observed, but also these that are far away, in places where even small number of new buildings disrupts the existing order and harmony. The very concept of spatial order has been defined in a number of documents<sup>6</sup> valid in our country, but still there can be seen much chaos and lack

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<sup>4</sup> Rural areas of Lower Silesia were being inhabited after 1945 by incomers from territories with agriculture often quite different from the local one. A lot of new residents from the former Polish eastern areas, for long time regarded their stay here as temporary and had no intention of understanding the local conditions or cultural heritage. See also Niedźwiecka-Filipiak I., Kuriata Z., 2010: 11.

<sup>5</sup> ... At first, childish as we were we shattered our new toys mourning and longing for our lost garbage, as if we wanted to take a desperate revenge on the dead matter for our battered souls and broken hearts, first we demolished everything on our way so that later we could slowly grow up to civilization and recognize that all of it is going to be ours, to understand that we just made a lifetime deal and began to rebuild what's left. Seems that we came back to our senses when we counted our loss and profits and it proved that we were on the plus side...

<sup>6</sup> The Act of 27 March 2003 on spatial planning and development (Journal of Laws of 2003 No 80, item 717, as amended). Article 2 of this act, as follows: under the concept of spatial order – one should understood such spatial arrangement that creates a harmonious whole and takes into account all the modalities and functional requirements, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, compositional and aesthetic. In the announcement of the President of the Council of Ministers of 26 July 2001 of the Concept of National Spatial Policy (MP No. 26, item. 432) on page 536 it is said that in spatial policy the notion of spatial order means both the functionality, logic, clarity and transparency of spatial structures and their harmonization with nature, high usability and efficiency at all scales, from local to national. It is an coherent whole, the sections of which are subject to the universal principles, its

of a coherent concept for the arrangement of particular towns. You can say though, paraphrasing Philip Springer, that "Spatial order is something that everyone heard of, but no one saw for a long time" (Springer, 2013).

Why it happens this way – the answer is simple. An increasing number of urban residents think of moving to quiet and peaceful outskirts of large urban agglomerations. When they cannot afford to buy a building plot in the immediate vicinity of the city, they resolve to take a cheaper one in a nearby village. There are others who, just by definition, plan to reside far away from the city, preferably in a beautiful area, full of charm, with undisturbed view on meadows or forests. But they forget one thing – there are others who have the same plans. They also look for their perfect place to live. In this way, new houses crop up one after another. Not so long ago, there were great views from the windows, but today the houses, one after another, grow in the background of your tiny garden. This small garden used to make sense when in spring and summertime wild meadow was blooming right behind the fence, and a little further there were grain fields rustling, and in the distance, from the morning mist emerged an old pear tree growing on the bank, and somewhere far, far away loomed the outline of dark forest. All this has gone now. The new clusters of residential houses appeared swiftly. All according to plan, but each of them is different, each in a different place, the building line was lost somewhere along the way. Owners of these properties realize their visions and have their own definition of beauty, harmony and order. Hence each house has a different form, one is extensive and ground floor type with small angle roofing; another one, for space saving purpose, climbs upward, has a steep roof; and the third one, despite the tiny parcel reproduces, ad nauseam the form of polish manor house – building plots was supposed to be of residential type in order to highlight the rural character of the place, but somehow it ended up with urban trends.

And so, the new housing estates appear from day to day. It is ok, if they are built as detached housing. There is a future hope that the greenery, even though mostly planted randomly, will cover and remove from sight some part of that architectural disorder. It is even worse when terraced housings are performed by narrow streets. In such case nothing can help and there is no place for greenery. What remains is a grim, endless line of facades with little greenery. These are mostly the housing estates built by developers, and hence the effects of cutting on costs are seen everywhere, the street width, the plot size, the quality of finishing works and materials used for construction.

There's more to it. Rural areas are recently overwhelmed with, as F. Springer puts it (Springer, 2013), "low-budget blocks, which can only be reached by high budget car with four-wheel drive, since no one bothered to build the access roads". But this is not the only drawback of such settlements. In most cases, they lack basic social infrastructure. It should be remembered that during the territorial expansion

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operating logic, functionality and spatial clarity of structure is reflected in all territorial dimensions in the aesthetic qualities of human environment.

of housing complexes and the increase of the number of inhabitants in the same way grows the local demand for commercial services (all kinds of shops), education and health services and common integration sites, playgrounds, sports and recreation facilities. These are the requirements of the future inhabitant of such residential complex, but the presence of such facilities and objects was not considered in the designing plans. If to this we add deficiencies and indolence of the existing technical infrastructure, we get a place that is by no means a favorite one to live.



**Photo 5.** The traditional arrangement of farmlands of Lower Silesia villages. Village Gilów, municipality of Niemcza, the province of Lower Silesia.



**Photo 6.** The landscape around the village Postaszowice, municipality of Niegowa, the province of Silesia.



**Photo 7.** Farmhouse in the village Jełowa, municipality of Lubniany, the province of Opole.



**Photo 8.** Typical residential building in the village Trzebniów, municipality of Niegowa, the province of Silesia.

It should be mentioned that we still discuss here the rural space that should have three crucial functions – economic, living and recreational (Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, Kuriata, 2010). Hence its proper arrangement should be a priority in every initiative, and the above mentioned functions should remain in balance with one another. It shouldn't be forgotten about the essential role of villages, especially the role of their farmlands. These are the production spaces and the bonitation score of the soils of Lower Silesia and Opole Silesia is good and very good, production efficiency of these areas is rated as high. Therefore, on the one hand the aim must be to reduce the scattering of housings, and thereby to avoid allocation of fertile grounds

for construction purposes, on the other hand, in each rural construction plan the attention should be paid to avoid the decrease of the production capabilities of the existing farms. New buildings cannot block or shut down the access to farmlands. Production activity of these farms is a burden for the terrains in close proximity, what shouldn't be overlooked while planning new building areas (photo 5, 6, 7, 8).

## **HISTORY OF COUNTRYSIDE RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAM**

The same problems concerning proper arrangement of rural areas, preservation of cultural landscape, sustaining traditions and the specific climate, were observed in the Western countries in the late 60s of the twentieth century. That is why in the 70's of the twentieth century there were introduced village renovation programs (Bavaria 1976, Rhineland-Palatinate in 1984, Lower Austria 1985). In 1989 there was established the European Working Community (ARGE) for Countryside Development and Renewal. The initiatives focused on saving the original rural landscape that was being urbanized and gradually stripped of its traditional integrity, you could observe the dispersion or excessive concentration of housings, lack of references to the existing spatial arrangements, disregard of greenery and the disappearance of regional architecture (the ubiquitous repetition of typical projects).

The first projects implemented under this program concerned the improvement of the external attributes of the village, which were restorations of facades of buildings, providing public buildings and places for public meetings. In time, the scope of the program was expanding to improve the living and working conditions in rural areas. The emphasis was on rural development towards strengthening their chances for survival and proper functioning in the future. Village reconstruction program was meant not only for village restoration, maintenance or beautification, but also for implementing the processes that allow for balanced development of all elements and functions that make up the rural infrastructure, with full involvement of local communities that can courageously overcome all adversities (Kuriata, 2005).

New project objectives were to strengthen the economy of agriculture and forestry and its relationship with regional management systems, to develop the ecological approach, to stimulate the use of renewable resources and also to protect the cultural landscape of the village (Schawerda, 2004).

Area of influence of village reconstruction program covers four main topics. First, the concern for the economic condition of the village and stimulating economic involvement of the residents. Second, life standards improvement in the countryside, the issue concerns directly the material means and conditions. The third element is about the quality of life, which are all things related to the nonmaterial, spiritual and social needs. But the most important thing is to preserve, on all levels, the identity and integrity of the countryside and save the values of rural life rooted in culture

and tradition (Wilczyński, 2000)<sup>7</sup>. In every moment, you should take into account the local character and tradition that play significant role in the cognition of village landscapes. These elements should not be forgotten, since they build our identity and homeland attachment (Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, Kuriata, 2010).

The required basic condition to be met is to make the village not only an open-air museum, but a living entity; this can be achieved through implementing various functions assigned to the village and provided by reconstruction plans. We should take care to preserve as many existing localities as possible and give them meanings other than the current, since the cultural capital of the countryside is a great legacy and value. At the moment of working out new development strategies we should consider the potential of the countryside and promote it as commodity for sale, (photo 8). The preserved objects of the rural landscape determine the character of the place, what is a value in itself; they allow to keep the continuity of the history of villages, strengthen the cultural identity of the inhabitants of the village, display and uphold the tradition of regional architecture and spatial arrangement within the surrounding landscape.

Human beings are crucial in the whole concept of village renewal program, because they not only identify the space through its landscape features, but also shape its image and give it the specific values (Szymski, Dawidowski, 2006). Hence the need to incorporate the broadest possible representation of local communities in all kinds of activities aiming to adapt to the new socio-economic reality with the concurrent raise of public awareness, as well as with the preservation of rural life value. It is also one of the assumptions of Countryside Renewal Program. Without the grassroots initiative or the involvement of village inhabitants the realization of any project of this type wouldn't be possible. Yet it should be noted that every social initiative with bottom-up origin and each project originating during village counsels should be based on the coherent plan made by the proper team of experts.

A well-organized space cannot be created in short time and hence the successful accomplishment of village restoration plans depends on its timespan (continuity), as well as on the control and surveillance exercised by well-prepared specialists contracted by district authorities.

Village Renewal Program in Poland is being effectively introduced since 1997 in the Opole province, but the very first attempts are dated on year 1991 in the former province of Legnica. Initially all actions were more difficult insofar that they had no financial support from EU funds as they do today. The province of Opole developed its own program implementation method that was divided into four stages: Launching, initial, advanced and holistic (Wilczyński, 2007). Prior was the grassroots initiative of the villagers, whereas obtaining various instruments of support was possible due to the later actions such as the annual competition called The Beautiful

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<sup>7</sup> In year 1997 r. R. Wilczyński successfully introduced the idea of Rural Renewal Program in the Opole region. In 2007 there was celebrated the 10th anniversary of the initiative and in 2012, there was the 15th anniversary of this regional program.

Village of Opole District, scholarship exchanges with various European countries that were successful in Village Programs implementation, or cooperation with the University of Life Sciences in Wrocław in years 2003-2008 and in years 2006-2008 with the University of Wrocław. Overall coordination of the program was then and now the task of Opole Marshall Office.

In 2001 other provinces started implementation of Village Renewal Program: and so there was the Reconstruction Program for Pomeranian Villages (since 2001), for the province of Silesia (since 2002), for West Pomeranian province famous for their thematic villages successfully introduced by Waław Idziak (Idziak, 2004, Idziak, 2008), for Kuyavian Pomeranian province, and (since 2004) for Lower Silesia<sup>8</sup>.

Renovation of rural areas was being carried out in years 2004-2006 as an initiative under the Sectorial Operational Program, "restructuring and modernization of agriculture and development of rural areas", point 2.3 "Village renewal, preservation and protection of cultural heritage." In the Program of Development of Rural Areas provided for years 2007-2013, the problem of Renewal of Villages was marked in working agenda as point 3 – "Quality of life in rural areas and diversification of the rural economy", point. 3.4. "Village renewal and development". It should be emphasized that Village Renewal Program covers a wide range of problems, from maintaining proper living conditions (work), preserving the legacy and respecting spiritual and social needs (tradition) to making the local people aware that their engagement in all kinds of local actions is necessary (education) (Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, Kuriata, 2010).

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM OF VILLAGE RENEWAL IN THE INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES IN WROCLAW**

Origins of the researches carried out by the authors of publication date back to the Institute of Agricultural Constructions, the former Academy of Agriculture in Wrocław in the eighties of the twentieth century<sup>9</sup>. Experiences of that time allowed

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<sup>8</sup> Projects realized with in the Program of Countryside Renewalwereshown in: *Odnowa Wsi na Dolnym Śląsku*, 2008, Urząd Marszałkowski Województwa Dolnośląskiego, Wrocław.

<sup>9</sup> Previous researches were performed by the Institute of Agricultural Building of the Agricultural Academy (today it is named the University of Life Sciences in Wrocław), which was in 2000 renamed the Institute of Building Engineering and Landscape Architecture, which in 2006 was divided in two independent research units, one of which is the Institute of Landscape Architecture. Within the Institute of Agricultural Building in years 1980-1985 there were conducted studies of farm buildings in the municipality of Stara Kamienica: Z. Kuriata, 1987: *Modele powierzchniowe ośrodków gospodarczych (zagród) specjalistycznych gospodarstw chłopskich*, typescript of doctoral dissertation, the Department of Environmental Engineering and Geodesy of University Agriculture in Wrocław. In next year's, students from construction department ventured in scientific camps organized by the Scientific Society of Civil Engineering under the auspice of Z. Kuriata, they performed the urban and construction inventories of the selected villages from the province of Wrocław. The work was performed in the following municipalities: Krośnice, Niemcza, Bardo Śląskie, Łądek Zdrój.

to create the study on conditions and guidelines for the protection of cultural heritage of the village Pilszcz belonging to the municipality of Kietrz in Opole province. The village inhabitants together with local authorities, in cooperation with Kietrz Municipal Office and Marshal's Office of the Opole Province, got involved in the village renewal program of Opole province, committed themselves to organize workshops for scholars and students from branches of landscape architecture and construction in Wrocław Agricultural University, now called the University of Life Sciences<sup>10</sup>. The workshops were held in summer 2001, in that time there was also made the urban inventory of the village. Based on the collected materials there were carried out studies and analyzes of the selected topics related to spatial arrangement and the resources of cultural heritage of the village.

In years 2003-2008, pursuant to previously concluded agreement (agreement of intent), new agreements were annually concluded between the University of Life Sciences in Wrocław (former Academy of Agriculture) and the Marshal Office of the Opole Province; the agreements concerned making studies on the protection of rural cultural landscape within the Program of Village Renewal in Opole province, which has been implemented for several years in this region. Due to the agreed contracts, research workers from the Institute of Landscape Architecture, together with landscape architecture students created the development plans for the localities chosen by Marshal Office. 10 villages were annually chosen for the study and these were the winners of contest "Piękna Wieś Opolska" (Beautiful Village of Opole District) in the category of the most beautiful village<sup>11</sup>. It was a reward that would get villagers to participate in the contest and at the same time, giving them opportunity to co-create the scientific document and thereby influence the environment of their village. Of great value was the possibility to make use of the large amount of information stored in new documentation about all examined villages, the same concerns the knowledge and experience of people working on it. In years 2003-2008 58 villages from Opole province has been described in this way (two of them were qualified two times for the examination) (Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2003).

At the same time the cooperation between university and national economy was increasing, especially through projects realized together with municipalities, which in the initial period of the process did not participate in the competition organized

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<sup>10</sup> In the spring of 2001 the Agricultural University in Wrocław was invited to the meeting of the leaders of countryside renewal organized in Opole by the Marshal Office. The university delegated Z. Kuriata who made the presentation of the profile of the Institute of Civil Engineering and Landscape Architecture, and explained its potential for the scientific work in the subject of rural areas development. During the debate, Z. Głogiewicz and Walter Misnankin, two leaders from village Pilszcz, offered accommodation and alimentation to the scientific staff of the university in exchange for their research work on cultural resources of their village. Both sides agreed and thereby, in the early summer of that year they organized the pilot project workshops where they made their first studies that was later named the plan of village development.

<sup>11</sup> There was the principle that, in each time, mentoring over 5 villages was the duty of I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, and another 5 was mentored by Z. Kuriata. In this way, both of them were piloting research work for 30 villages. In case of village Pilszcz mentoring was exercised by them both.

by Marshall Office of Opole Province. And so it led to signing contract with municipality Branice, lying in the southern part of Opole province right next to Czech Republic border. This was the place where they created research documents for all 21 rural administrative units belonging to the municipality<sup>12</sup>.

Altogether in Opole province in years 2001-2008 there were made development plans for 80 villages. In 2008, according to another contract signed with Opole Marshal Office, there was an attempt to assess the effectiveness and extent of use of new documents with plans for development and protection that were handed down to the individual villages. Reassessment was made for 48 villages, where they earlier, in years 2003-2007, performed field works and analysis of their cultural resources. During another field trips to each of these villages much attention was paid to their visual changes in recent years, especially since the time of first research. The research mostly focused on the general visual reception of the locality, condition of buildings, objects of small architecture, greenery and the stage of implantation of the Country-side Renewal Program.

Apart from that, there were discussions between the makers of the program and village authorities and municipal representatives, especially the people responsible for program coordination. In the course of discussions they were focusing on how local communities refer to the content of the documents they were given, if people are interested in it, if they want to make use of the conclusions the documents provide, what conclusions and feedbacks they evoke. During field trips they were surveyed the current state of spatial arrangement, development stage of the planned village spots and the level of completion of urban projects carried out by municipal authorities (Municipal Study updating, making up a new plan or changing the existing local plan of spatial arrangement) (Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, Kuriata, 2010; Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, Kuriata, 2009).

Based on the performed analysis it could be stated that only some part of the materials that were transferred to individual localities was used properly. For many reasons, majority of design concepts of public facilities, even though suggested by residents themselves, didn't come into fruition (63% of the total number of surveyed villages). Unfortunately, the municipal offices didn't make use of the information and recommendations contained in the studies in any case<sup>13</sup>.

In parallel with the work carried out in Opole province they were working on a study concerning Reconstruction Program for Rural in Lower Silesia. In the initial period, when there was still no cooperation between University and Marshal Office of Lower Silesia (2004-2009), the discussed work was contracted and signed between the University of Life Sciences in Wrocław and the individual municipalities. Municipalities often commissioned one or two of their own local villages for examination.

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<sup>12</sup> Surveillance and mentoring over the entire work was appointed to Z. Kuriata. Each document consists of several or dozen of analytical board and result charts presented in large format. The work started in the autumn of 2003 and in May 2004 municipal authorities organized the exhibition of these documents and the seminar on cultural potential of the chosen villages.

<sup>13</sup> Work results were fully discussed in the publication Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, Kuriata, 2010.

Only one municipality, Radków, situated at the foot of Stołowe Mountains, resolved to make rural development plans for all villages lying in the area of its jurisdiction. Thus, having full recognition about culture-landscape related resources in their 12 administrative units<sup>14</sup>, in next years the municipality could apply for EU funds from various sources and spend them to raise living standards and improve the image of the region (Kuriata, 2013)<sup>15</sup>.

Two municipalities have established regular cooperation with the Institute of Landscape Architecture, requesting for the research of one or two villages within the next few years. It was Dzierżoniów district, where they worked out development plans for nine villages and Żórawina, where the same was done for eight villages<sup>16</sup>. In total, based on the amount of contracts signed with municipalities in Lower Silesia, 52 villages were examined and described in terms of cultural landscape studies<sup>17</sup>.

In years 2007-2008, within the agreement with Odra Valley Partnership and Wrzosowa Kraina (Heather Land) Partnership, another 6 villages by Odra river were studied in terms of establishing ecomuseums in these localities. These works were also carried out under the Village Reconstruction Program.

Parallely, within the course of third year landscape architecture students, there were carried out analytical-designing researches that also included village renewal issues. In this way, in 2005 researches were accomplished for 16 villages from municipality Żarów<sup>18</sup>.

Since 2010, after signing the agreement of intent between University of Life Sciences in Wrocław and Lower Silesia Marshal's Office, villages highly ranked in Lower Silesian Village Beauty Contest undergo the research and documentation.

In years 2010-2011 it was 6 localities and in 2012-2013 two villages. The purpose of all these research efforts was to draw up the inventory list of rural cultural resources, and on that basis, to determine the strengths and weaknesses of each village, and also to determine the essential features – traits of architecture and landscape

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<sup>14</sup> The work took place in 2004 and the person responsible for making development plans for all villages was Z. Kuriata. From the information received, it proves that that the municipal authorities rigorously complied, and still do, with the recommendations from the obtained documents in their attempts to preserve the spatial order in the subordinate local administrative units. In August 2012 in village Ratno Górne, there was the new common room put into use for the purpose of Sport-Culture-Recreation Centre. It is designed by Z. Kuriata. Recreational received the award: First place in the competition NRN "Friendly village of 2012" in the category of technical infrastructure. The project author is Z. Kuriata. The common room won the first place in KSOW contest „Friendly Village 2012” in technical structure category.

<sup>15</sup> The Presentation was given at the Conference on the Innovative Use of Infrastructure in Rural Areas, summary of the fourth edition of the "Friendly Village" contest for the best design of technical infrastructure implemented in rural areas with the support of EU funds, Warsaw, 04.12.2012.

<sup>16</sup> This work was carried out in 2004-2008, and mentoring and organizational supervisor was Z. Kuriata.

<sup>17</sup> From this number of research studies the 43 of them were supervised by Z. Kuriata and 9 of them by I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak.

<sup>18</sup> The entire inventorial-designing work in this municipality was supervised by I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak.

(<sup>34</sup>Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2009). This gave basis for pointing out the opportunities for their development, with regarding the cultural resources determined in studies of particular villages, as well as for taking the direction towards their proper arrangement while maintaining the heritage of architecture and landscape.

In years 2004-2013, 82 villages altogether were described with the use of this method<sup>19</sup>.

The village is situated very picturesquely on top of the hill, which makes it attractive for tourists. Thus, in the course of documentation procedure there came an idea for touristic slogan: "Kisielów-oknem na Beskidy" (window towards Beskids) (fig. 1, fig. 2)<sup>20</sup>.

All efforts within countryside renewal program weren't confined only to the province of Lower Silesia and Opole. In the same period they signed the agreement with Silesian Union of Municipalities and Districts in Katowice requesting pilotage documentation for village Kisielów lying in Golezów municipality, in Cieszyn Silesia at the foot of Beskid Mountains. The village is located on the sidelines, away from the main road, near the junction of S1 expressway leading from Katowice agglomeration to Wisła and to the so called old royal track from Bielsko Biała to Cieszyn and further on to the Czech Republic.

Wealth of cultural heritage of the surveyed villages is enormous, in many cases all of it is almost entirely preserved, especially in Lower Silesia. The values it keeps cannot be overstated and this is why we should make every effort to know and use them well and take under complete protection.

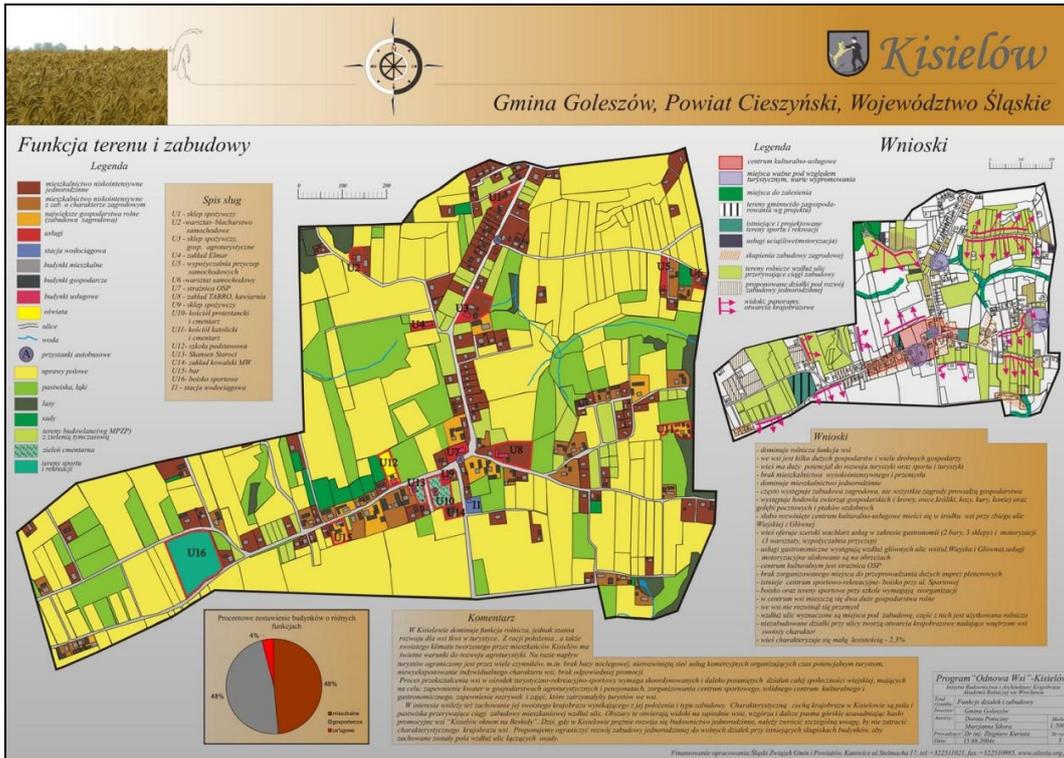
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<sup>19</sup> In the 82 villages Z. Kuriata was responsible for work supervision in 46 of them, while in the other 28 it was. I. Niedźwiecka-Filipiak. In 8 of the villages they led the work of students together.

<sup>20</sup> The people who greatly involved in promotion and implementation of Village Renewal Programme in Silesia were F. Morski – office director, and W. Magryś – Rural Areas Development Manager, Head of the Project and Program Implementation Office.

There is also a great appreciation for the immense support from the village authorities: S. Bojda, K. Plinta, W. Szczypta. For this particular village the operation took place in 2004 and was supervised by Z. Kuriata.

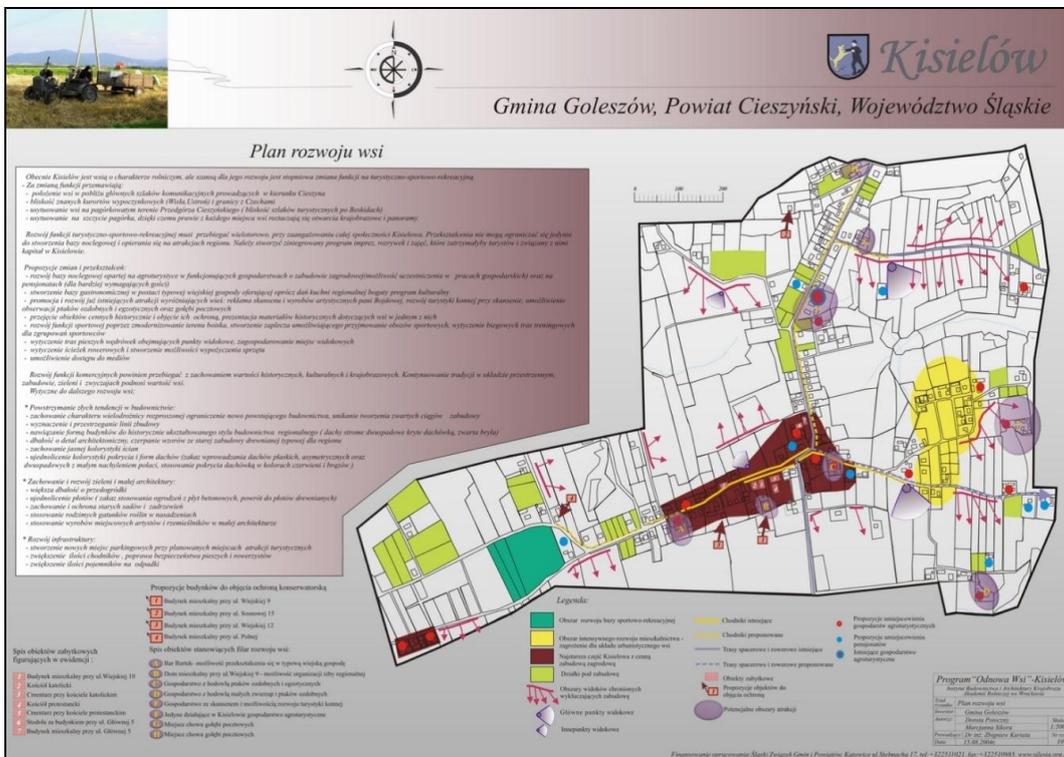
There were two groups of students involved, in the first was A. Kuriata and M. Kuriata and in the second D. Potoczny and M. Sikora, together they developed the final version of the rural development plan (fig. 1 i 2).



**Fig. 1. Analytical chart – Land use, functions of construction sites and buildings.**

Village Kisielów, municipality Golezszów, Silesian province.

Source : prepared by: D. Potoczny, M. Sikora, 2004, Lecturer: Z. Kuriata. Archive of the Institute of Landscape Architecture, University of Life Sciences in Wrocław.



**Fig. 2. Result chart – Development Plan for the village.** Village Kisielów, municipality Golezszów, Silesian province.

Source : prepared by: D. Potoczny, M. Sikora, 2004, Lecturer: Z. Kuriata. Archive of the Institute of Landscape Architecture, University of Life Sciences in Wrocław.

## THE METHOD OF DESIGNING VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In the course of research and analysis on rural cultural landscape under Village Renewal Program, the Institute of Landscape Architecture of the University of Life Sciences in Wrocław in years 2001-2013 developed a method allowing to describe rural cultural resources and to formulate guidelines for further rural development initiatives. The primary focus has been on material elements that constitute the landscape of countryside, especially in its urbanized parts.

For the appropriate specification of rural development plan we need the detailed analysis of the development of localities; it takes the examination of spatial arrangement, existing buildings, greenery, social and technical infrastructure and other environmental conditions. Precise field diagnosis is the basis of all projects, especially those that concern large areas shaped by generations, hence the first thing to do was carrying out the urban inventories that included the above-mentioned elements of the examined locality. On the one hand, the fieldwork gave the possibility of noticing all spatial phenomena occurring in the examined village; it also gave the opportunity to confront the data records on the basic map with the factual state, and at the same time it was a good occasion for making direct contact with the local residents, the first beneficiaries of the program.

There was a rule that before going to the field you should get quite familiar with the place you go to; you could use the existing literature and studies on the area, the websites of each of the municipalities, the available iconographic and cartographic<sup>21</sup> data and previous planning studies made by municipal offices<sup>22</sup>. The results of inventory work were marked on master maps at a scale of 1:1000 and tables dedicated for this type of data. Tabular record allowed for accurate description of the selected subjects examined in the field, increased the reliability of the results of work, and in final stage of work, enabled for quantitative determination of the occurring phenomena.

Field collected materials and data were later analyzed in the course of preparing documentation. In order to determine the unique character of the village they performed analysis of the available resources dividing them into separate thematic areas. Studies and conclusions were organized thematically and presented on study boards, and in the catalog of characteristic elements (Kuriata, 2005; Kuriata, 2005; Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, Kuriata, 2010). This type of data presentation was much better

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<sup>21</sup> They were using old maps and photographs presenting various fragments of the village, they obtained these materials from various places like: municipal archives and websites, schools, fire departments, private resources and other institutions.

<sup>22</sup> Particularly they took into account study of the Municipality and local plan of village spatial arrangement (if the place had one), which is the source document of the local legal regulations. Countryside recovery plan is a document that includes nothing more than indications and recommendations regarding the proper handling of the village, but it takes into account the assumptions of Village Renewal Program. In the case of study of the Municipality, it always included graphic and written extract from the document.

organized and clearer in displaying all the problems that were occurring in a given locality, and thus it facilitated finding ways to solve these problems. Graphical representation of particular thematic issues allowed for the detailed description of the initial state, proper assessment of the components of the examined field, and in consequence, making the specific diagnosis and formulating appropriate conclusions for further use in planning restoration of a village (Myga-Piątek, 2012; Myga-Piątek, 2008).

Each of the thematic boards included:

- graphical record of the current condition,
- descriptive analysis of the presented problems, conclusions and recommendations.

Later, the analytical boards were modified towards graphic representation, even in the section of conclusions. With regard to the above, every updated board is divided into four basic sections:

- graphical representation the current condition,
- description of the current condition,
- graphical conclusions of the examined issues (those that can be presented in this way)
- final conclusions and recommendations.

Additionally there are shown quantitative values of the examined phenomena.

Before making decisions about the shape and content of village development plan it is necessary to determine its strengths and weaknesses and to make summary statistics of all of the conclusions drawn from analyzes of the selected elements. This gives the possibility to choose the correct direction of locality development, both in cases, when conclusions are consistent and when they are mutually exclusive. In such situations, the right solution can be found thanks to the thorough knowledge of the locality, its planning documents and problems and needs of the residents.

Majority of renovation plans ended up with two or three design concepts for public places indicated by residents of the locality. There were always attempts to make these documents closely related to major trend of village development outlined in countryside renewal plan; they should also meet the needs of residents and consider local conditions, characteristic features and local tradition of the countryside. Historical context of this really existing place must be considered in development plans so that its modernization was coherent and wouldn't interfere with the surrounding landscape and eventually would contribute to strengthening the original image of the place (Eco, 2013).

Another important element of the whole enterprise was the dialogue with local community (Pawłowska, 2008). In each of the villages, there were organized two or three meetings, where people were presented with research results, comments, suggestions and requests were carefully listened, there were collected information related to the history of the village, and there was a discussion about the possible directions and ways of managing their place of living. Representatives of local authorities

also attended these meetings. However, there were much more occasions to talk to local authorities. One of these were meetings organized in municipal offices, where they discussed plans and chances of development for the given locality based on the updated records in planning documents, they also discussed research conclusions and listened to suggestions of various departments. So this is how the ultimate shape of development plan document was brought to life, later it was submitted for voting in form of resolution on meetings of rural councils.

## **THE NETWORK OF MOST INTERESTING VILLAGES (COUNTRYSIDE TREASURES NETWORK) – THE WAY TO SAVE THE BEAUTY OF RURAL LANDSCAPES**

The transformation of many villages is nowadays run in a spontaneous manner triggering the onset of a considerable spatial chaos and causing the vanishing of characteristic spatial elements. Hence the proper shaping rural landscape as a unique aesthetic and cultural dimension is increasingly becoming a frequent subject of discussion and debate throughout Europe (Fuhraman, 2013). Obviously the cultural panorama never ceased to change, it is always temporary, never eternal, it merely reflects a moment in time and suspends between past and future (Burkhard, 1994). The attractiveness and beauty of cultural landscape depends largely on its volatility. Back in the days the changes used to come slowly and gradually, and the upcoming pieces of the puzzle were organically identical with the old ones<sup>23</sup>.

New technologies, rapid flow of finances and commodities together with the availability of all goods cause abrupt acceleration and formation of brand new cultural qualities, the function and meaning of which are still unknown and undefined nowadays. Hence the desire to protect these amazing villages that uphold the preserved historical cultural landscape with all of its unique features. The renewal program itself in its current formula is no longer sufficient.

The relevance of this problem was noted in Western Europe in early eighties of the twentieth century, when in France thanks to mayor of Collonges-la-Rouge Charles Ceyrac there was founded the Association Les Plus Beaux Villages de France (the most beautiful villages of France) that currently brings together a total of 157 villages. It is an elite organization, whose purpose is to secure and preserve as much

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<sup>23</sup> Also in Poland there is a debate on how to stop the rapidly progressing degradation of rural spaces. Authors of this report attended the council meetings organized by the President of Poland within the Public Debate Forum. The first one was held on 19 April 2012 – Public Debate Forum “Potential of Rural Areas as a Chance for Development” due to the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Village Renovation Program in Poland. The topic of Forum was: Village renewal as a chance for development of rural areas. During the meeting there was a lecture presentation: Drabiński A., Niedźwiecka-Filipiak I., Kuriata Z. 2012. *Odnowa wsi sposobem na zachowanie i wykorzystanie dziedzictwa kulturowego i krajobrazowego obszarów wiejskich*. Forum materials, Kancelaria Prezydenta RP, Warszawa. Another took place on October the 3<sup>rd</sup> 2013. Topic Forum: Network of the Most Interesting Villages – a way to preserve rural heritage in Poland. In the course of this meeting there was a lecture presentation: Niedźwiecka-Filipiak I., *Zasób kulturowy wsi – zagrożone dziedzictwo*.

as possible of the rural heritage, they promote and propagate that legacy through investing in agrotourism. It's a chance to maintain this cultural treasure in its unaffected form and, at the same time it is the possibility for the development of tourism sector and the expansion of the market of local goods, which altogether, in turn, causes the growth of regional income (Wilczyński, Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2013)<sup>24</sup>. The quality of urbanized space mainly decides about membership in the network, architecture, history, climate, surroundings, tourism infrastructure.

Strategy of the association was based on three elements: quality, image and development. The quality of rural space is here in the first place due to high requirements that the network puts upon the potential members. Initially the conditions to be fulfilled concern the preserved cultural values, quality of landscape and architectural resources and the number of local initiatives carried out in the given village. Market image of the most beautiful villages is built in various media, websites and social networks, by using various strategies of promotion and with the use of logo of the association, which is a trademark informing that the given locality meets high quality standards. Development and its observable effects are the last element in the strategy of networking the most beautiful villages, where the sustainable development of the localities becomes crucial. The procedure for admission to the network is in fact very difficult to pass.

The idea of The Most Beautiful Villages is not confined to the territory of France. In recent times the advanced village networks were built in Wallonia (in 1994), in Quebec (in 1998), Italy (in 2001) and Japan (in 2005). In the years 2010-2012 village networking began in Romania, Spain and Saxony.

Having assessed the cultural potential of countryside regions of Poland, our country also resolved to begin preparations for making such network. The primary objectives of this initiative are to preserve the most valuable resources of rural heritage, to perform its entire revitalization, to support current conservation work and above all, to stimulate the development. Due to small (on national scale) number of localities having remarkable cultural resources they decided to give it the name The Network of Most Interesting Villages. Therefore, for the purpose of networking, they determined two types of localities: Type A – villages of cultural heritage, with outstanding cultural, historical and natural values and the well preserved spatial arrangement. These villages are meant to be the network basis. Type B – thrill and adventure villages. This type is characterized by overall governance and tidiness in rural space arrangement, but it has no precious cultural resources or may have some that are scarce and scattered all over the locality. Hence, in order to increase the attractiveness it needs some thrilling attractions.

The Network of Most Interesting Villages should function as high quality brand of tourism products and services. B-type (thrill and adventure) villages are meant

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<sup>24</sup> The article uses excerpts from the publication *Sieci najpiękniejszych wsi. Opracowanie eksperckie projektu –możliwości utworzenia sieci*. Opole 2012, editor Wilczyński R., editorial team: Niedźwiecka-Filipiak I., Kuriata Z., Solisz I., Rybak K., Mazurkiewicz M., Nowowiejski R. [http://www.dziedzictwosiopolskiej.pl/upload/users/krybak/files/opracowanie\\_koncepcji](http://www.dziedzictwosiopolskiej.pl/upload/users/krybak/files/opracowanie_koncepcji).

for active recreation while ensuring good standards of residence, whereas A-type localities offer high quality recreation and satisfaction from encountering rural culture, folklore, tradition and history.

Village admittance to the network requires to meet the entrance criteria. It is recommended that network recruitment procedure should examine three main categories: resources, specificity (regionality) and atmosphere; these three qualities govern and organize a number of subcategories (a total of 23 elements). Category of resource is understood as village spatial layout, which includes build-up area with contiguities and adjacent areas covering open landscape with its all components. This category also include recreational infrastructure and the potential of the resources of villages. The specificity (regionality) of the village is a complex of elements distinguishing the given locality from all others. Each area has objects that determine its uniqueness and originality. These objects give the venue its specific identity and recognition; the tradition of the place also can be its hallmarking feature. The atmosphere is a complex of elements that determine the sensual perception of a place and the impression it gives. Here, we take into account the immaterial, emotional and symbolic values that influence visitors and above all, the deeper level of significance of the landscape<sup>25</sup>.

Each category includes a number of subcategories of minor importance, the nature of which depends on the specificity of a given locality. To measure the value of individual villages, their qualities require estimation by giving them the appropriate importance (percentage share in the whole of the assessed elements) in relation to the assumed significance for the potential recipient. For the proper quality assessment of the village there was created the Evaluation Form for Rating Locality Values (later replaced by: Criteria for participation in the Network of the Most Interesting Villages – Locality Assessment Chart) containing the division of particular assessments into their smaller components (Wilczyński, Niedźwiecka-Filipiak, 2013).

It was assumed that thanks to some financial investments the quality of the countryside and its touristic offer would satisfy the expectations of the visitors, and if the level of their satisfaction with rural adventures and holidays proves sufficiently high, the village or region will be regarded as touristic product for sale (fig. 3, fig. 4).

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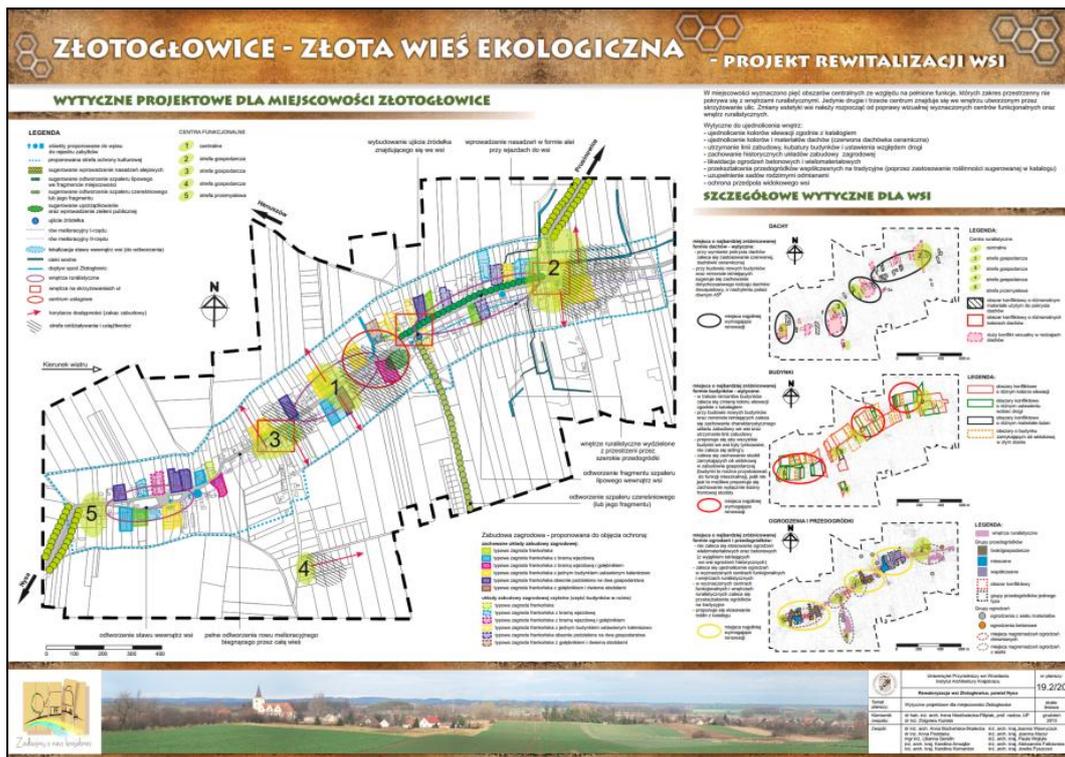
<sup>25</sup> The notion of homeliness and identity of landscape is broadly discussed by K. Pawłowska (2001); canon the place is discussed by Z. Myczkowski (2003).



**Fig. 3.** Revitalization project of village Złotogłowice, Nysa municipality, the province of Opole.. Collecting chart with conclusions for the village area.  
*Source:* development – team under the direction of I. Niedźwiecki-Filipiak and Z. Kuriata, 2013, Archives of the Institute of Landscape Architecture, University of Life Sciences in Wrocław.

Rating of the place on the basis of criteria included in the mentioned Evaluation Form is the final stage of network admittance process. But before that, there must be a preliminary reconnaissance of the village applying for network membership. In case of Opole province, network creation started in early 2008, when Opole Governor, within complementary initiatives for countryside renewal program, took measures for enhancing the protection of countryside cultural heritage of Opole province<sup>26</sup>. In 2009, this has been formalized through the appointment of the Advisory Unit for the Conservation of Countryside Cultural Heritage and Protection of Rural Landscape, the unit that exists up to this day and operates by Opole Provincial Office. In result of several years' work of this unit more than 120 villages were verified and evaluated in terms of their cultural resources. Due to the huge amount of work they had made, it is so far the only province in Poland that has the knowledge of cultural potential preserved in the villages situated on its territory.

<sup>26</sup> Opole governor R. Wilczynski invited cultural institutions and universities to cooperation. See A. Sałyga-Rzońca, M. Burian (2011).



**Fig. 4.** Revitalization project of village Złotogłowice, Nysa municipality, the province of Opole. Collecting chart with conclusions for the village.

*Source:* development – team under the direction of I. Niedźwiecki-Filipiak and Z. Kuriata, 2013, Archives of the Institute of Landscape Architecture, University of Life Sciences in Wrocław<sup>27</sup>.

Preselection of villages should be made with another, easier method, where it won't be necessary to engage such a large number of people, as well as financial resources and time. Due to that, the Institute of Landscape Architecture of the University of Environmental and Life Sciences in Wrocław accepted the proposition of Silesian Union of Municipalities and Districts in Katowice for carrying out the pilot work concerning the preliminary assessment of the selected villages of Silesian province. The locality selection was based on information obtained from Provincial Conservator of Monuments in Katowice and Silesian Cultural Heritage Centre. The first institution pointed 9 villages, the second one chose 7, which gave a total of 16 localities situated in 3 regions of the province. These were north-east area near Częstochowa, central-western near Racibórz and southward from Bielsko-Biala. From all the selected 16 villages, within two days of November there has been visited 14 villages, plus one village chosen by the municipality from the vicinity of Racibórz. For reasons

<sup>27</sup> The latest work carried out at the Institute of Landscape Architecture of the University of Life Sciences in Wrocław concern revitalization projects, in this case it is for the village Złotogłowice in municipality Nysa, the province of Opole. This project was launched at the request of the Regional Office for the Protection of Monuments in Opole. Apart from the team members of the Institute, the project involved the group of students of landscape architecture, they were acquiring additional knowledge and skills in designing, in the field of protection and development of the cultural landscape for one chosen village (autumn 2013).

of time (only two days in the field) site inspections couldn't be made for two villages lying in the southern part of the province. A total of 15 localities were visited and cursorily inventoried in terms of their cultural resources, there was also made photographic documentation of characteristic elements<sup>28</sup>.

On the basis of field-collected material and the information obtained from municipalities and websites of municipalities and villages there was carried out the evaluation of cultural resources of the chosen villages. The analysis covered all the information obtained in the field and taken from the available written materials: iconographic, cartographic or planning documents, all was divided into three thematic groups of problems: general information (basic functions, village area, forests included, number of farms, number of inhabitants), historical and ruralistic data (period of origin, spatial arrangement, countryside interiors, typical building layouts, number of historical objects), elements of rural development (characteristic objects: religious, service-oriented, industrial, historical homesteads, infrastructure, other elements of development: hiking and biking trails, local land development plans, typical buildings).

All elements in the group were given numerical values and allocated to the particular localities. On this basis, the total number of points was calculated for each village. Three of the surveyed villages achieved number of points qualifying for further analyzes and assessments specified in the admittance form – Criteria of Participation in the Network of Most Interesting Villages – Village Evaluation Card.

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<sup>28</sup> Z. Kuriata, as an expert, was indicated to carry out this work. The orderer, Silesian Union of Municipalities and Counties in Katowice provided transportation and delegated Ms. I. Kłosowicz, Specialist of rural development as a person assisting in the field work. They took the principle that before visiting each village they obtain information about it in local Tourist Information Center. In each of these centers, apart from the necessary information, they could get tourist map of the region, very helpful in the ongoing work. The initial stage of the visit was a drive through the locality and, on the basis of glancing at the urbanized landscape and noticing the distinctive elements, they qualified the place to the next stage of research. In case of significant changes in architectural structure of a village (modifications made in modern times, without any architectural values) they decided not to proceed and finalize work.

In case when there was preserved the original historical arrangement of a village, whether entire or partial, they moved on to the second stage – village exploration and photographic inventory documentation of its characteristic elements. Based on these assumptions, in stage 1 they documented 5 villages, they made it to the second stage only fragmentarily in two villages, and 8 villages were qualified for the entire cycle of research. The next step of the evaluation process is the study work pursuant to the procedure discussed in the article. The results of analyzes and evaluations were presented at the IX meeting of regional leaders of rural reconstruction from the province of Silesian region, the meeting was named The Cultural Heritage of Villages from the Province of Silesia and it took place on 9-10 December 2013 in Częstochowa. Kuriata Z., *Zasoby kulturowe województwa śląskiego – próba oceny*.

## CONCLUSION

In view of the long-term research being conducted at the Institute of Landscape Architecture of the University of Life Sciences, in relation to various entities of national economy, in the matter of proper development of rural space, at first it should be noted that rural areas should be restored to their original roots, values and functions, furthermore, all countryside renewal initiatives heading for this direction should be highly ranked and supported. Competent surveillance over the development of our environment, in line with the principle of balance between the old and the new order, between natural world and civilization, serves the well-being of those who live today and future generations as well.

Rural space is a value that deserves high appreciation, cultivation, protection and admiration for its uniqueness and cultural richness. Its distinctive features can be a starting point for building new strategies of countryside development with respect for the heritage that previous generations passed on to us.

Comprehensive studies on the development of rural landscape should be the very basis for corrective actions of any kind. Studies made by teams of specialists have to be created in close cooperation with villagers, whose contribution to the making of such documents is necessary. This is a difficult task, and hence the initiation of such process is preceded by long-term, multithreaded education of villagers and local authorities. Specialist training courses are organized by marshal offices and organizations or associations acting for the preservation and improvement of cultural landscape of the countryside.

Forming beneficial and human-friendly environment is the process unfolded over the years, and for this reason the well-structured development plan itself is not enough. It requires continuity and consequence of implementation, hence the need for the involvement of municipal offices in professional supervision over the work in its entirety. Efforts must be made to build the system, where people would satisfy their material needs in the easiest way possible, yield the best results in respect for the tradition of the place, live and work in harmony with nature and other people with whom they share their surroundings.

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