



Social and economic conflicts between cultural landscapes and rural communities in the English and Polish systems

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ABSTRACT

The designation of the concept of cultural landscape to a particular region is often taken in isolation of those who live and work there. Yet, at the same time, this designation has profound influences upon where they can live and the availability of suitable employment, whilst attracting into the area many who desire to 'buy into' that landscape. There is often an extreme contrast between housing that is affordable to the local community and housing that can be purchased by those who have access to the higher levels of finance. This frequently generates conflict between those who have historically lived in the area and those who have recently moved into the area attracted by the cultural landscape.

This paper examines the contrasting situations, rules and regulations that exist in Poland and England, by taking as examples the designated cultural landscape of Wiśniowa together with the peri-urban landscape of Michałowice, both in Southern Poland, and the Lake District National Park of England. In so doing, it will compare and contrast the pragmatic, locally orientated spatial planning policies of Poland, with those of the regulated (although discretionary), top-down, planning policies of England and their implications upon the concept of spatial landscape management through land use controls.

Finally, consequences of these two different approaches will be evaluated in terms of the social and economic development of the respective regions with particular emphasis placed upon provision, or lack of, policies leading to a reduction in conflict.

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Introduction

Cultural landscapes have been shaped by evolving local and regional land use and, in turn, contribute toward shaping regional and local identity since they reflect the history and coexistence of people and nature (Hernik and Dixon-Gough, 2011). One of the most important factors of all landscapes – also the cultural ones – is the way in which they have constantly evolved, which is a feature that must be both celebrated yet viewed with caution since, taking into consideration a conscious impact of humankind on the process of creating them, the rate of evolution in current and future times could lead to the elimination of their characters leading to a greater degree of unification and subsequently loss of diversity. Bogdanowski et al. (1981) comments that “when the changes introduced into the landscape by man are advanced to the level at which its permanent existence can be preserved only by human permanent treatments when we deal with the cultural landscape”. The great question concerning this comment is whether in preserving

the permanent existence of a cultural landscape, we are fueling the generation of social and economic conflicts within it.

From the end of the nineteenth century, the study of landscapes by geographers was based upon three main approaches (Claval, 2005): structure (each type of rural landscape had been shaped by a particular ethnic group from the beginning of history); function (each rural landscape was organized in order to combine cultivation and cattle rearing and ensure a sound crop rotation); or archeology (the observed features were born in the past and reflected the functional conditions which prevailed at that time). These approaches shared the concept that landscapes were organized and could be identified according to rules and whilst the structural and functional elements were relatively clear to geographers, it did not preclude other interpretations of the landscapes, such as symbolic ones that are essentially dependent upon a combination of culture and perspective. For example, in the case of the study area there have been conflicts between the structural and functional elements in the traditional use and function of a rural landscape with the needs of conservation and tourist industry that extends back to the end of the eighteenth century (Wordsworth, 1810:92), for example, described the Lake District as ‘a sort of national property’ for those who admire and visit it, although at the same time there was widespread rural unemployment throughout the region

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as economic pressures brought about an agricultural depression (Helsing, 1994:107).

As the landscapes of Europe matured by the end of the nineteenth century through the completion of transportation networks, the establishment of industry and agriculture, it became possible to study rural landscapes in two ways: as an entity based upon farming artifacts; or as a planned landscape (Smith, 2000; Claval, 2005; Skowronek et al., 2005). Most rural areas throughout Europe up to the beginning of the First World War had a population in occupations primarily related to the land, and even in those areas where there were other industrial activities, the majority of the land was used for farming. The main occupants fell into four main categories: landowners, tenant farmers, small independent farmers, and farm laborers. This traditional landscape was comprised of artifacts based partly on the need to use the land efficiently for agricultural production (such as fields and land parcels – both arable and pasture, grazing land, woods and forests, farms, villages, etc.), but also expressions of the society that lived in the area (e.g. Winchester, 1987; Williamson, 2002a, 2003; Martins, 2004; Martins and Williamson, 1999).

Although there have been many successive and major landscape changes in the past for which there is very little physical evidence (Antrop, 2005), much of the rural landscape of England has been the result of systematically planned, albeit on a local basis, initiatives that took place during the Middle Ages, including land clearance, drainage, and piecemeal enclosure (Muir, 2000; Williamson, 2002b). Other changes in the landscape over the last two centuries have been more regulated and include the drainage and reclamation of land (Cook and Williamson, 1999), and actions such as Parliamentary Enclosure Acts and Awards. It was during the period after 1914 when many rural areas in England began to change with the introduction of agricultural machinery, intensification of production, and the effect of state subsidies for agricultural production that an almost binary divide began to appear between the more productive lands and those upland regions less-suited to arable agriculture.

The situation in Poland is more complex since much of its territory from 1772 to 1918 was divided amongst three major nations, Prussia, Russia and Austro-Hungary. However, the area that forms part of the case study was formerly part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and benefited from links to Vienna and, as such, much of the landscape planning was based upon the regulations of that system. A highly formalized system of land taxation, introduced in 1817, led to the 'Stabile Cadastre' and the classification of land into different classes of net yield. This was followed in 1848 by the liberation of land from feudal service, which ultimately resulted in tenants becoming free owners of their land. However, by the latter part of the nineteenth century falling grain prices, as a result of massive imports from Russia, led to wide-scale rural poverty and a lack of development that characterized the region for almost a hundred years (Mansberger et al., 2000). This resulted in widespread economic migration from rural areas. During the twentieth century the effect of agriculture upon the cultural landscape of southern Poland was characterized by the break up of the large estates larger than 400 ha between 1919 and 1925, the effects of hyperinflation during the 1920s, and the survival of the Polish peasantry. In addition, there was a general lack of suitable tools to increase production. These factors all resulted in a landscape that has been largely preserved as a result of state intervention.

Despite the generic comments, above, in many regions it is evident how humankind has interfered with the environment to create a landscape that is both unique, regionally indicative, and something that should be conserved wherever possible. Apart from negative examples of such influences there are also such instances that establish positive influences where humankind shapes landscapes by means of traditional land use, in conformity with natural

conditions, as well as conscious care. Such landscapes were preserved especially in rural areas. The traditional landscapes had evolved over many centuries and changes were local, gradual and largely integrated within the existing landscape structures to provide a form of cultural stability. Consecutive generations had lived and worked in the same landscape and had tried to improve and preserve it. Valuing and accepting the land and the, then unknown, concept of sustainable development were inherent in this form of development, which is referred to as involution by Klijn and Vos (2000). It is referred to as a traditional landscape by Antrop (1997) and contains the complex history of a place or region, which still can be read from its composition and structure. It is, however, difficult to assess the landscape of a region without considering adjacent regions. For example, they may have social ties (as in the case of recreation for those who work and dwell in urban areas) or economic factors such as land values, which can take into consideration a wide range of elements such as the income of those who live and work in the area, land and property values, and the desirability of the landscape when viewed from the perspective of those who may wish to relocate to the area.

Nowadays, in the communities where such valuable cultural landscapes are present, there may appear problems in the processes of their appropriate and responsible management. However, the existence of cultural landscapes cannot prevent or impede the economic land use since those who live within cultural landscape regions must also be permitted to benefit in a similar manner to those who simply visit those landscapes. These landscapes cannot be the subject of an uncontrolled expropriation. To date, in particular in Polish communities, actions that have an impact on the cultural landscapes have frequently been conducted on an uncoordinated manner that have resulted in significant changes taking place that are both accidental and have been the subject of diverse interests by many unrelated groups (Skowronek et al., 2005). Many of these actions have been the result of initiatives by those who live within the areas of cultural landscapes (Hernik, 2009). This approach may be contrasted with the highly regulated planning processes that have effectively preserved such landscapes, particularly in the case of National Parks in England, often to the detriment of those living and working there, in which the regulation is largely been determined by those who either live outside the area or who have recently moved to the area.

In order to protect and preserve such landscapes the Council of Europe initiated the European Landscape Convention (Spigler et al., 2008; Dejeant-Pons, 2009; Council of Europe, 2000) through which landscapes shall be granted a legal status and shall be acknowledged as a fundamental protection for the quality of life, as a base for building regional and local identity, and as an expression of natural and cultural diversity. Landscape protection, management and planning shall be guaranteed, no matter whether it is a natural, cultural, or urban landscape, if the landscapes are degraded, or if they are of outstanding beauty, or just every-day landscapes (Stoeglehner and Schmid, 2007). Fundamental to this is spatial planning and it is essential that land managers utilize the powers of the respective spatial planning instruments of their jurisdiction to the best advantage of conserving the integrity of cultural landscapes whilst benefiting the lives of those who live and work within them. One particular element that will be the subject of this investigation will be the provision (or lack of it) of suitable affordable housing for local people, together with impacts upon the cultural landscape.

The aim of this paper will be to examine the two approaches – the top-downwards approach of England according to the instruments and amendments of the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act and the more pragmatic systems of Poland. Both seek to define, establish and work with local communities and land users to create forms

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