



On the Experience of the Urban Landscape: A Commentary on Siegfried Lenz's *Von der Wirkung der Landschaft auf den Menschen*

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to characterize the relation between the urban landscape (the image of the city) and the subject. The landscape is understood here in two ways: as something alien, excluding, and hostile, but also as something that gains new features when in contact with the Other. For it can be said, paraphrasing Siegfried Lenz's famous statement on the relation between man and landscape, that the city is being created through us. The relationship between the residents and the urban landscape has a reciprocal character, in which "I" places itself in relation to a certain "you."

Key words:

landscape, landscape studies, city, urban studies

Moving elements in a city, and in particular the people and their activities, are as important as the stationary physical parts. We are not simply observers of this spectacle, but are ourselves a part of it, on the stage with the other participants. Most often, our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns.

Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all

(Lynch 1990, 2)

Introduction

The active role of the urban landscape (the urban image) in shaping the behavior of the inhabitants of urban areas has been analyzed many times by researchers of cities and urban cultures—especially in physical, aesthetic, political, and functional

aspects (Lynch 1990, Jacobs 1961, Gehl 1987). However, what I want to address here concerns a slightly different level of the relationship between the inhabitants and the city, a level that, although rooted in that which is material, at higher tiers of experience takes on a more subtle form. Let's call it—following Siegfried Lenz—a spiritual relation to the city. I am particularly interested in the urbanity of landscape and in the atmosphere, the aura that the city creates, which, when in contact with the inhabitants, with the Other, acquires new features affecting the quality of existing relations and providing the right conditions for maintaining and developing future connections with the city or for their complete disappearance. Wherein, this Other can also be a subject whose experience of the city is based exclusively on contact with its visual representations (photographs, films, images) rather than its material side, a person staying in the city only temporarily (e.g., a tourist, a migrant)—not “rooted” in the city, or an ordinary resident.

The following considerations take the form of comments referring to the well-known essay by Lenz entitled *Von der Wirkung der Landschaft auf den Menschen* (1998); they constitute an attempt to both popularize the issue of the perception of the urban landscape among landscape researchers (i.e., the issue that is at the intersection of urban studies, landscape studies, and garden studies) and to interpret this text anew. Such an approach obviously has one fundamental flaw—namely, it remains in loose relation to many specific cases not included in Lenz's text. However, it is justified by the general need for drafting the direction of theoretical inquiries that place the issue of the urban landscape experience in the center of the reflection on the Other and the Otherness in the city, which is of most importance to me here. And only then, in a series of papers and analyses, will I be able to focus on particular examples of the relations between the urban landscape and the people who inhabit and experience it.

The influence of the urban landscape on man

Before proceeding to the analysis of the selected theses included in the text of *Von der Wirkung*, let's examine the dictionary definition of *Landschaft* (landscape) proposed by Zbigniew Kadłubek, reflecting the nature of the problem of the experience of the natural landscape:

Landschaft — It is not only a landscape in the familiar Polish sense of an often kitschy image with a view “of.” The term *Landschaft* (also as land-image) is something more than the painterly noun “scenery” of Romanesque origin. Hence, scenery is only an attempt to talk about the land, a report on observation, a description of the land, the arrogance of letters. *Landschaft* bears greater and deeper meaning. According to S. Lenz, *Landschaft* does not exist without man (while scenery does not have to encompass man). *Landschaft* is a *Bruderschaft* with *Land*, with earth, with country; it is the brotherhood of man and space. That is why *Landschaft* is not a view, but an effort to define the bond, the essence

of the relationship. *Landschaft* is a spiritual experience, it is seeing the sacredness of the world and recognizing the work of *genius loci*. ... Scenery is only a fraction, a fragment. *Landschaft* reveals the whole world, even though it does not exist alone; *Landschaft* is always just being created; *Landschaft* is an incident, an event, a meeting. (Kadłubek 2010, 672-673)

How should one understand the “brotherhood of man and space” evoked by Kadłubek? What would this brotherhood consist of? Brotherhood is a familial relationship, an organic community, a blood relation, an interdependence; it is an attachment to the land, water, and clouds of which one is a part; it is a sacrifice and care, and so the strongest relation (unless broken up by death); it is a mutual responsibility for each other forever, which manifests itself in the sense of concern for that which is different than I; it is a constant effort to protect one’s identity from outside forces; it is caring for the identity of the Other, and therefore the influence on, but also consent for, someone else’s autonomy; it is finally a spiritual experience characterized by love and sensuality; it is longing and satisfying the longing—the experience of absence and the fulfillment of a promise of seeing; it is seeing oneself in that which is different, which is not me; it is looking at each other, and finally—as Kadłubek writes—it is the experience of the sacredness of the world, a spiritual thing, *res sacra*. Particularly noteworthy is the final part of Kadłubek’s definition, in which he talks about the eventfulness of *Landschaft*, its temporariness and dependence on someone who is outside, who is watching. For the landscape does not exist independently. What does this mean? It is worth referring here to a musical analogy. For a symphonic piece to resonate, it needs a focused listener. The same is true for the landscape: before it comes into being in the consciousness of the observer, it constitutes, at best, merely the promise of an intimate encounter (of intimacy, satisfaction in relation to the observed object), which has not yet happened and which requires two. Moreover, if, as Kadłubek writes, the whole world (all things visible and invisible) is revealed in landscape, it becomes a bearer of meanings, for example those related to its history, and therefore it also becomes an object of interpretation, understood as an attempt to decipher the language of nature, which speaks also to the condition of our being-in-the-world (if a man still thinks of himself as an important part of nature). Although Lenz uses primarily the term *Landschaft* in his text, I will endeavor to show that his comments may also apply to the urban landscape and its relationship with man.

At the very beginning of *Von der Wirkung*, the author hits a high note and leaves no doubt about his understanding of the relationship between *Land* (earth, land, ground) and man. He writes explicitly: “*Landschaft* gibt es nicht ohne den Menschen. Ohne unsern Blick, unsere Empfindungen, ohne unsere Unruhe und unsere Sehnsucht wäre das, was *Landschaft* genannt wird, nur ein charakteristischer Ausschnitt der Erdoberfläche” (Lenz 1998, 51). There is no reason why we could not repeat after Lenz that without man there is also no city, no urban

landscape (which will become clearer in the course of the argument). It sounds just as strong and convincing as Lenz's original thesis, mainly because man is in fact the "father of cities"—their builder and administrator.

How else does Lenz see our role in being in contact with the landscape? Why does the landscape need us? Well, the landscape needs a viewer. What does that mean? Being seen is a necessary condition for the existence of landscape (of course, in a different sense than in solipsism, where *esse est percipi*). Seeing is a co-creation of its (the landscape's) semantic field. What is more, observation allows the subject to notice the passage of time, and so a change and decomposition; it becomes the source of knowledge that enables the creative transformation of the landscape and enables subduing it. We make changes in the physical world according to our preferences (as a matter of taste), our fears (for our safety), when we want to return to the past (from longing), and under the influence of the environment—rationally and irrationally at the same time! So, let's look somewhat differently at the opening sentence of Lenz's text; let's try to accentuate it. After doing so, it turns out not only that "without man there is no landscape" (*Landschaft gibt es nicht ohne den Menschen*), but also that there is no man without landscape! Man always remains in relation with some sort of external, which has certain physical properties (height, thickness, width, color, temperature, taste, smell, texture) "bombarding" him with sensations. If the landscape is friendly to man, he will survive. If not, he will die. Moreover, our ability to experience (to feel experiences) makes us constantly confront reality, and the more complex and alien it is, the more it affects our sense of comfort and self-confidence (without landscape there are no Others!). I will return to this topic. Meanwhile, Lenz develops his concept of landscape and its impact on man. He writes further that:

Unter schöpferischem Aspekt entsteht Landschaft also zweimal: bestimmt von Zufall und Notwendigkeit, formt sie sich anfänglich als autonomes Gebilde, das nur für sich ist, und sie wird von neuem erschaffen durch die Erlebnisfähigkeit des Menschen. Ob wir ihr gegenüberstehen oder aus ihr herausgucken: Landschaft entsteht durch uns. (Lenz 1998, 51)

Cities are also created by chance (*Zufall*) and from necessity (*Notwendigkeit*); however, they cannot exist as a fully autonomous structure (Rykwert 2011). "Cities also believe they are the work of the mind or of chance, but neither the one nor the other suffices to hold up their walls", wrote Italo Calvino (1974, 44) in a somewhat poetic spirit. Here the urban landscape clearly connects with *Landschaft*. Although the "multi-appearing" of the city assumes the existence of many ways of capturing the city, only the presence of man and his "ability to experience" ultimately creates the urban landscape, giving new meanings to the existing form. The landscape of the city is also created through us. Let's follow this idea further and examine the role and significance of the natural (and then urban) landscape for man. How does the landscape "work," and how does it affect us? Lenz explains:

Landschaft — und ich meine zunächst Naturlandschaft — hat dem Menschen seit je das Angebot gemacht, in ihr die Chiffren seines Daseins zu sehen. ... daß von der Landschaft eine erweckende Kraft ausgeht, die sich sowohl an das Gefühl als auch an den Geist wendet. Wozu sie schon früh inspirierte, war vor allem dies: sie bot sich an als Ort wesentlicher Ereignisse. Sie taugte zum erwählten Illusionsraum mythischer, göttlicher, historischer Begebenheiten. (Lenz 1998, 51)

However, it is not clearly shown in the quoted passage how “the landscape has a reviving power” (*der Landschaft eine erweckende Kraft ausgeht*) that affects the spirit. In my opinion, it is worth looking for the answer to this question in Kevin Lynch’s *The Image of the City* (1990), devoted to the theory of urban form. In the introduction to his book the author writes as follows: “A vivid and integrated physical setting, capable of producing a sharp image, plays a social role as well. It can furnish the raw material for the symbols and collective memories of group communication” (Lynch 1990, 4). The key to understanding the “activity” of the landscape might be its unique visuality, visibility, its sharpness, but also, as Lenz has emphasized, its history—what happened there, what left a mark—the fact that previously the landscape “offered itself as a place of significant events” (*sie bot sich an als Ort wesentlicher Ereignisse*). What does it mean that it “offered itself” (*sie bot sich an*)? What is the role of the subject here—its individual story, knowledge, sensitivity? Are they not meaningless for the “offering” of the landscape? Lenz sets some conditions:

Um Landschaft erleben, um ihre Wirkung erfahren zu können, bedarfes offenbar gewisser Voraussetzungen. Damit sie etwas in uns hervorruft — eine Stimmung, ein Gefühl oder gar eine Erkenntnis —, müssen wir uns in sie versetzen; wir müssen etwas hinzusehen, — uns selbst mit unserer Befindlichkeit, mit unserer Geschichte. So nur können wir sie als unser Komplement erfahren. (Lenz 1998, 52)

Do we always have to first know ourselves before we can “experience the landscape” (*um Landschaft erleben*)? Can it make the landscape an integral part of our identity? Do we see in landscape only as much as we ourselves “put” into it? Lenz seems to suggest that the experience of the landscape requires concentration and silence. And what about the city where noise and haste dominate? It is hard to find oneself in the city. It is even harder to experience and see the city in its entirety. The urban landscape is challenging. For us and for any visitor from the outside, it will always be a type of chaotic collection of more or less familiar elements at first, which form an imagined city—namely, a city image that we carry in ourselves created as a result of the work of memory, associations, fantasies, and experiences, and only later will it become a source of deep intimate experiences, provided that we devote time and attention to it. In fact, when we enter a new city, we enter a space and only much later do we give it particular meaning. The initial feeling of alienation accompanying us is only temporary and disappears along with the progressive process of appropriation of space by language. Lenz explains it as follows:

Sie [Landschaft] löst den Wunsch aus zu vergleichen, und es wundert nicht, daß, wenn wir einen Namen für eine Landschaft suchen, diesen oft im Vergleich finden. Seltsam, daß wir uns nicht damit abfinden können, eine Landschaft namenlos zu lassen; das Bedürfnis, sie zu bezeichnen, ist aufschlußreich genug. In jedem Fall verrät es etwas über unser Verlangen, Welt kenntlich zu machen, um auf diese Weise Sicherheit zu gewinnen, Orientierung, oder sogar heimisch zu werden. (Lenz 1998, 52)

Giving names to landscapes brings to mind biblical connotations. Here we see the first man in the Garden of Eden, who subdues the visible world by naming its individual elements. The act of naming equals here taking possession (appropriating), but also taming things; as a result, the experienced world ceases to be alien and formidable. The landscape of Paradise becomes an uttered landscape. The word creates the world. Likewise, giving meaning and value to things has its source in our way of perceiving them and talking about them. The word creates the landscape. However, as Lenz writes further:

Die wesentlichen Wirkungen der Landschaft erfahren wir als inneres Erlebnis. ... Auch darin kann die Wirkung einer Landschaft liegen, daß sie einem vor Augen führt, was dem eigenen Wesen entspricht. Wir werden angeregt, uns selbst zu definieren, und nicht nur dies: in Zusammensicht mit der Landschaft wird uns die Eigenart von Menschen verständlich. (Lenz 1998, 53)

The landscape, including urban landscape, is a mirror before which we stand, in which we look at ourselves, in which we recognize ourselves or not. This is what we mean by “consistency with the landscape” (*Zusammensicht mit der Landschaft*). Due to the landscape, we get to know ourselves and other people better. The landscape deprives us of the pretenses of life—wakes us from a dream; we have to define ourselves in the face of it, take a stance, agree with it or oppose it, surrender to its charm or fight its ugliness. The stake in this confrontation is being authentic, so being aware of one’s finitude and one’s obligations, but also creating a man-friendly environment for living, in which people can survive and in which they will be able to develop their abilities. The wide range of ideas we have about landscape is helpful in this undertaking:

Jeder einen gewissen Vorrat an Landschaftsbildern besitzt, — erlebten, nachempfundenen, imaginierten Bildern. Wir können sie auf Abruf oder auf Stichwort hervorbringen so charakteristisch, daß ein anderer sie unmittelbar wiedererkennt. (Lenz 1998, 54)

Hence, we can “speak” landscape. The landscape evokes in people numerous associations that are often close to their hearts. Until it is tamed, it continues to refer to what we know as well as to fantastic and terrible imaginings. It provides the material of collective memory that serves group communication. The landscape is “spoken,” “uttered,” it is significant (*signifiant*). Each *Landschaft* is almost automatically classified to the already existing set of meanings that we have at our disposal. The need for classification, for naming the place where we find ourselves, is also a way to organize our being-in-the world, our inhabiting the world. “Each of

us is equipped with a certain supply of landscapes” (*Jeder einen gewissen Vorrat an Landschaftsbildern besitzt*) that already represent something. Changing one’s place of residence, traveling, looking at photos, learning the history of a given place, fantasizing about unknown lands—all these activities add new layers of meaning to the images of landscapes already in the semantic pool that we use when we are in a new spatial and cognitive situation. This also applies, and perhaps predominantly so, to being in cities. It is ever more difficult to get lost in one’s own city, yet there are still moments when we look at familiar spaces as if we were not from there. Of course, experiencing urban landscape requires strenuous effort and continuous concentration. The city forces us to exercise our seeing:

Wir müssen disponiert sein, uns von einer Einsicht unterwandern, von einer Erkenntnis überwältigen zu lassen. Was Landschaft uns echohaft beweist: unsere Vergänglichkeit, unser Harmonieverlangen, unsere Sehnsucht nach Dauer — wir müssen offen genug sein, diese Beweise anzuerkennen. (Lenz 1998, 55)

And we read further:

Es steht außer Zweifel: die Wirkung, die Landschaft auf den Menschen ausübt, hat vielfältige Ausdrucksformen: Andacht und Ängstigung, Staunen und Schwermut, Glücksempfinden und Ewigkeitsschauer — wir kennen den Widerhall aus eigenem Erleben. Und solange sich unsere Erlebnisfähigkeit erhält, können wir der auslösenden Echos sicher sein. (Lenz 1998, 56)

Obviously, it is not always possible to precisely determine what the landscape does and its impact on us; Lenz is not that optimistic. There is also the area of the unspoken—feelings and moods that accompany our encounters with the landscape, which we cannot name, which create a mystery.

On the margins of the reflections on the influence of the natural landscape on man, Lenz finally writes about the urban landscape; however, he devotes only three brief remarks to it. The first concerns the city understood as the cultural landscape, the second is about the urban landscape used as a tool of power, and the third is devoted to the city understood as a “cityscape” (*Stadtschaft*)—namely, the exemplification of the image of destruction and decay. Let’s start with the first one:

Längst ist die Kulturlandschaft eine vollendete Tatsache. Fontane selbst zählte zusammen, was zu ihrem Bild gehört, und erwähnte Raps und Weizenfelder, üppige Wiesen, er sah die roten Dächer eines Dorfes hinzu und Flöße und Kähne auf den Seen und Kanälen. Wir können das Bild von uns aus erweitern, lassen Wege durch die Weidelandschaft laufen, spannen eine Brücke über den Fluß, legen Hecken und Garten an, schaffen einen von Bäumen eingeschlossenen Platz. Kulturlandschaft läßt die gestaltende und pflegerische Tätigkeit des Menschen erkennen, sie stellt uns vors Auge, mit welchen Absichten der Mensch die selbstgenügsame Eigenart der Natur veränderte. Um leichter zu leben, um effizienter zu leben, hat er planend eingegriffen, hat reguliert, bereinigt, gegliedert, und mitunter glückte ihm das Organisationswunder einer Stadt, die wir selbstverständlich als Kulturlandschaft ansehen. (Lenz 1998, 57)

What does the cultural landscape (*Kulturlandschaft*) say about man? First of all, it allows for recognizing his intentions—“a creative and nursing activity” (*gestaltende*

und pflegerische Tätigkeit), which can also be destructive, for people's intentions are not always noble and their effects desirable. Two important characteristics of the city stand out in the quoted passage. First of all, the cultural landscape has begun to displace the natural landscape (and today, we must admit that we live in a reality that is urbanized and degraded as never before); the city is an assault upon nature by man—it was created against nature. To live more easily, to indulge oneself, man “in a planned way, attacked” (*hat er planend eingegriffen*) the self-sufficiency of nature, he “regulated” (*reguliert*), “settled” (*bereinigt*), and “structured” (*gegliedert*) nature.

Der Mensch sich mit der Vorgefundenen Eigenwilligkeit der Natur nicht abfinden wollte. Er gestaltete sie nach seinen Bedürfnissen, mit seinen Möglichkeiten um immer darauf aus, ihr etwas abzugewinnen. (Lenz 1998, 58).

The city is organized in a rational manner, while nature is wild, autonomous, and therefore free. There is something fake (phony) about the urban landscape, while the natural landscape is real. The city is the domain of culture, which is served by nature. At the same time, according to Lenz, the city is “an organizational wonder” (*Organisationswunder*) that was “successful.” Just like that? Could it have failed? Today we know that it could have. There are cities that function better or worse, but there are also those in which life has died out—so-called ghost towns. Contemporary, great Chinese ghost cities are the best example of this phenomenon. While on the topic of ghost cities and towns, let's read another remark by Lenz:

Viele muß Landschaft über sich ergehen lassen; Heide und Wattenmeer, Flußtal und Moor: sie sind einem Planungswillen ausgesetzt, dessen Wirken nicht folgenlos bleiben kann. Und immer deutlicher hebt sich eine Erscheinung in unser Blickfeld, die es nur noch verdient, Stadtschaft genannt zu werden: rostende Industrieanlagen, schmauchender wandernder Müll, zum Abbruch freigegebene Wohnsiedlungen, verödete Plätze, über die der Wind Plastikketzen treibt, hinüber zur Kleingarten-Kolonie. Es liegt auf der Hand: auch diese Stadtschaft übt eine Wirkung auf den Menschen aus; wir haben sie als Trauer und Erbitterung erlebt, haben sie auch in allen Formen der Selbstbeziehung wahrgenommen. Das Mitleid mit der gefährdeten Landschaft wächst, es wächst mit zunehmendem Wohlstand. (Lenz 1998, 60)

Lenz seems to suggest that human activity has mainly harmful effects on the natural landscape. A new being comes to existence. If *Landschaft* was *Bruderschaft* with *Land*, with earth, “the brotherhood of man and space,” then what will *Stadtschaft* be? The breaking of those friendly ties? An assault on *Land*? Abandoning responsibility for the Other, which is the landscape? An irreversible separation from nature, that is, from the original ontic belonging of man? A source of mourning after a lost, once inhabited, and thus tame, home? A source of bitterness, anger, and remorse due to the damage done? Interestingly, the negative image of *Stadtschaft* is related here to an increase in prosperity, and so to consumption (the production of trash), to the development of new industries (pollution of the environment, deforestation),

and the bystander effect—passively observing a catastrophe, passing responsibility for the landscape on to others. However, nature continuously calls for what belongs to it; it keeps trying to break into cities, trying to regain them. Lenz's last remark concerns, as I have already mentioned, the spaces of power in the city:

Doch es hat auch nicht an Versuchen gefehlt, Landschaft zu benutzen, um den Menschen aus dem Gleichgewicht zu bringen, ihn klein und gefügig zu machen. Erdrückt von monströsen Dimensionen, eingeschüchtert von kalter Leere, sollte der Mensch nach dem Willen von Mächtigen zu einer einzigen Funktion hingelenkt werden, zur Funktion der Brauchbarkeit. Gewaltige Aufmarschgelände, Achsen, eintönige endlose Straßen, riesenhafte Bauwerke ... Die beabsichtigte Wirkung zeigt sich in einem Verlust des Selbstbewußtseins, in einer Bereitschaft zur Unterwerfung. (Lenz 1998, 58-59)

This is an example of landscape influencing man in a negative and aggressive way. The landscape that dominates an individual, that delights and terrifies at the same time, has long ceased to belong exclusively to the realm of dreams of more radical visionaries of architecture (Sudjic 2005). The urban landscape that “takes away the sense of balance” in order to make man “small and docile” (*klein und gefügig*) was one of the curses of the twentieth century (Jencks 1973). Lenz warns that a man that loses his confidence because of the city is far from his humanity—having lost it, he can only serve. Unfortunately, the bold visions of city planners that reduce the individual to the role of a cog in the machine of progress, despite the assurances of specialists in sustainable development, still persist. In the end, hope for the improvement of the quality of urban space remains in the hands of architects serving the people.

Conclusion

Is it even possible to talk about urban landscape, or should one talk about the landscape of one particular city? Are all cities in fact similar? Are they representations of one idea? What does the city have to do with the wild space that is trying to settle in it? Does the city need man? Is the urban landscape just another variation of the natural landscape, and therefore can it be experienced in the same way? Tadeusz Ślawek, in his essay “Miasto. Próba zrozumienia” (City: An Attempt to Understand), writes as follows: “In order to experience the city, we have to extract it from movement being only a hasty commute ‘from-to’; we have to liberate it from the purposefulness determined by the first and final stops. But at the same time, we must not be content with contemplative reflection on the stillness of the walls: by learning about their history, studying the slow build-up of ‘layer over layer,’ we begin to experience the city” (Ślawek 2010, 46). However, such a proposal, though intuitively familiar, does not take into account the answers to all of the above questions, reducing the spiritual, spontaneous dimension of the relationship with the urban landscape to a cognitive function based on an arduous acquisition

of knowledge—on studying the city. It also does not take into account other ways of “soft” experiencing of the urban landscape. Of course, the romantic method of cognition proposed by Lenz, who many times explicitly speaks of feeling and empathy, is also insufficient, and yet “contemplative reflection on the stillness of the walls,” as I have tried to prove, opens an interesting perspective in the study of urban landscape.

Kleine Wildnisse, die könnten eine Antwort sein auf die Anmutungen gewaltsamer Landschaftsgeometrie. Und welche Wirkungen selbst begrenzte Wildnis auf den Menschen hat, das hat offener Sinn überall registriert: wir staunen und beunruhigen uns, wir sind begeistert und erschauern, wir empfinden Sehnsucht und ein rätselhaftes Gefühl von Dauer. Wir nehmen Bild und Zeichen auf, spüren das Echo, das Wildnis in uns auslöst, es wird uns bewußt, daß wir der Landschaft zugehörig sind. Und vielleicht ist das die tröstliche Erkenntnis, die Landschaft uns vermitteln kann: die Erkenntnis, heimisch zu sein. (Lenz 1998, 60-61)

The strictly scientific approach is not enough for Lenz. And aside from that, is not the vision of becoming friendly with space more intuitive, treating it with affection, just as we would someone we just met? When does the strangeness of the landscape—the Other—disappear? Do we just need to get to know each other better? Some urban landscapes cannot be denied wildness, which is not to be found in cities designed with great precision. But how can one measure wildness, how can one tame it? Scientific language, despite improving its cognitive tools, still does not touch upon the essence of the problem. Could it be that the great lover of natural landscape, Siegfried Lenz,¹ agrees here with the great admirer of cities—of Venice and St. Petersburg, Josif Brodski (1987, 1993)—that poetry turns out to be the icing on the cake of knowledge and understanding?

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¹ Lenz devoted a significant part of his work to the Mazury. In 2011, he became an honorable citizen of Elk, Poland.

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