

CONTEMPORARY DIRECTIONS OF TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE SETTLEMENT AND THE LANDSCAPE OF RURAL AREAS IN THE SILESIAN LOWLAND

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Manuscript received: January 31, 2020

Revised version: May 4, 2020

ŁACH, J., SZCZEPAŃSKA B., (2020). Contemporary directions of transformations in the settlement and the landscape of rural areas in the Silesian Lowland. *Quaestiones Geographicae* 39(2), Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Poznań, pp. 55–73. 7 figs, 2 tables.

ABSTRACT: Rural areas of the Silesian Lowland, undergoing social and economic transformations today, have had a strong impact on the formation of the region's settlement landscapes. Political and economic changes after 1989 have affected the development of rural areas, in particular of 'privileged' settlements for which the proximity of towns and a trunk road are favourable factors. The result of these seemingly positive factors is the escape of young people (potential farmers) to the cities and an influx of new settlers. This affects social behaviour and activity, as well as the visual rural landscape, creating suburban zones with residential and leisure functions. The village seems to have lost its typical character but has it really? The subject of the research is, therefore, an analysis of changes in the spatial and social structure of a rural village as exemplified by Borek Strzeliński, which allows setting out its functions. The research issue is to determine the level of social activity of rural residents and their attitude towards the local cultural heritage, which influences their identity and the value of the landscape. The use of integrated methods of field work based on a free sociological survey has allowed identifying the spatial directions of village development and threats resulting from divided social activity.

KEYWORDS: Silesian Lowland, Borek Strzeliński, rural area, rural landscape, social activity, local leaders

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Introduction

In 1947, a resettlement programme called the 'Vistula action' took place and it included the Silesian Lowland. According to the directive of 1945, immigrants were to be resettled within a similar latitudinal soil-climate zone, which in practice was to lead to social, cultural, economic and technical problems. Immigrants arriving in the Recovered Territories¹ brought with them

repatriates from the USSR; however, large settlement opportunities became a solution to the population surpluses of central Poland, Małopolska and Kielce. Approximately 1,644,000 people were allocated to colonise Lower Silesia; the largest wave of settlers came from the former USSR (678,000) and the least, 85,000 people, from European countries, that is, Germany, France, Romania, Yugoslavia and Greece (Jurek 2006). To the western lands 495,000 people came from Małopolska and Kielce regions, 217,000 from central and eastern Poland (Podlasie) and 169,000 from Wielkopolska, Kujawy and Northern Kashubia. The resettlement action was managed by the State Repatriation Office, settlement reports at the starosties, the Provincial Land Office and its agendas – Poviats Land Offices and the Polish Army (Pudło 1970).

¹ The Recovered Territories, which include, among others, Lower Silesia, were subject to a resettlement process under the Potsdam Treaty (1945). The western lands were intended as settlement areas mainly for

a variety of cultures, views and behaviour patterns, as well as different mental and cultural characteristics. Here was where the mutual recognition of various regional groups, comparisons of cultural heritage and evaluations of relative development levels took place, often showing ethnic and cultural variations. There were differences in dressing, food, traditions, beliefs, folk customs and rituals, dialects and character traits (Nasz 1970). The immigrants had to get used to the German settlement and agricultural landscape they inherited – a difficult situation, especially at the beginning and during the further political and economic changes in the region that have remained until today (2019). The research period covers 74 years (1945–2019) and is a rich matrix of directions of change in both the landscape and social structure based on the social and economic changes taking place in Lower Silesia. At present, the ‘privileged’ places, because of a specific or convenient location near a large urban agglomeration, on a main communication route (a trunk road) are undergoing rapid landscape and social changes. In the conditions of the ageing of society, migration will occur in two ways: the escape of young people to urban areas and an influx of new inhabitants who treat such places as ‘dormitories’ and rest there during weekends. Observations by the authors have contributed to Eleonora Gonda-Soroczyńska’s (2009) question, ‘Is this still a village?’ To what extent does what is taking place in the cultural landscape of rural areas fit into the classic definition of a village? The research question posed by the authors is to define the rural landscape in both physiognomic and social terms and thus to attempt to define a new model of describing a village in the Silesian Lowland. The subject of the study is an analysis of the change within the spatial and social structure of the ‘privileged’ villages using the example of Borek Strzeliński as well as determining the landscape and settlement functions by analysing the social activity of the inhabitants and their experience of local cultural heritage in the context of the disappearance of rural features under the influence of urbanisation. The research presents the main episodes of the settlement-landscape transformation for the period between 1945 and 2019, with its impact on village physiognomy and social attitudes. To this end, the research tasks include geographical

and historical analyses of the village of Borek Strzeliński, showing the impact on the evolution of its spatial layout and determining the level of social activity of its inhabitants. Owing to its interdisciplinary character, the principal analyses of the rural landscape were based on genetic methods (Myga-Piątek 2012). This allowed determining the chronology of individual cultural elements existing in the landscape and reconstructing individual phases of human activity along with the landscape changes characteristic of each of them. The method used was based on the aerial remote sensing at approximately 10-year intervals (1966, 1974, 1985, 1994, 2004 and 2013) obtained from geodetic and cartographic sources in Warsaw, together with satellite images for 2018. The main research, however, was field work to record changes in the area for 2019 and to hold free sociological interviews with a village administrator, a priest, a library director and the leader of the ‘50+ Club’. In addition, a focus interview was conducted with eight women from the ‘50+ Club’. This sample selection was deliberate because the respondents should have a wider knowledge of the local cultural heritage and the social activity of the villagers. The methodology used allowed determining the spatial directions of village development and identifying threats resulting from divided social activities.

Issues of changes taking place in rural landscapes

The development of rural areas after World War II is a product of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation of large urban centres because they absorbed the rural labour force and influenced the social and cultural structure of rural heritage (Johnston et al. 2000). This process was defined by Pevetz (1994) and Wilkin (2008) as ‘external induction’, which strongly influenced the multi-occupational development of the village. At present, in the 21st century, through land consolidation, intensification of capital and specialisation (Clock 2008; Bryła 2009), as well as the dynamically developing mobility of rural residents, new multifunctional rural areas are developing. This, according to Wojciechowska (2018), was due to the so-called

triple roots of agricultural activity based on a defined territorial space, the local natural environment and socio-cultural elements. It is elements of the natural environment that influence the development of many human phenomena recorded over time (Dylik 1946; Janiszewski 1959). The richness of the many-sided lives of residents, conditioned by space and human phenomena, has influenced the image of Silesian Lowland settlements. Already in the early post-war years, Dylik (1946) drew attention to the shaping of contemporary rural landscapes through urban development (physiognomy) and stressed that villages of more than 1,000 inhabitants have tendencies to become urban. Contact between the village and the city through the development of the communication network resulted in establishing close ties and the creation of worker and peasant-worker groups (Bydałkowska 1970). Bydałkowska stated that the impact of the proximity of urban centres increased the number of peasant-workers, that is, where a farmer's occupation has been 'professionalised' as a result of being displaced from agricultural activity by more capable and entrepreneurial organisations with higher aspirations (Boberski 1970). Nasz (1970) indicated that at the turn of the 1970s, the process of village urbanisation in Borek Strzeliński was extremely rapid because of contact with the city and the road leading to it. The process was manifested in taking up an urban lifestyle, causing above all an increase in aspirations as to an improvement in living standards and motivating the inhabitants to reach higher levels of social advancement. In the eyes of the rural population, the city grew and is growing into a symbol of an easy, comfortable and attractive life, and this mainly attracts the young people who shun hard work on farmland. The factors of industrialisation, urbanisation and the development of education influenced the formation of a new socio-occupational structure and family model (because a man worked in the city, many of his agricultural duties were taken over by a woman). The migration of young people to cities led to the disappearance of extended families. Nasz also noted that the vicinity of the village to the city and easy access to it had an impact on agricultural production. Rural areas experiencing the impact of urbanisation are losing the traditional rural landscape (Jones 2003; Cała

2007; Łach 2012a), but it should be remembered that, in addition to agricultural activity, the village landscape is shaped by the so-called historical landscape (Rottle 2008) because it reveals the historical heritage and directs its development. Churches are an example of an element that 'stores' the material and spiritual heritage, influences the image of the village and often plays a dominant role in its spatial arrangement, which, according to Kaczyńska (2016), can be considered a physical sign of landscape identity. The current rural landscape is undergoing profound change as a result of the disappearance of homogeneous spatial structures, breaking cultural continuity and disrupting ecological stability (Jones 2003; Fairclough 2010). Latocha (2009) in a study of rural landscapes in the Sudeten region drew attention to changes in the function of the village from typically economic and agricultural to recreational, which affected its appearance. At the same time, by emphasising the importance of protecting landscape value in order to preserve the diversity of the rural landscape, it can reduce negative trends through the development of chaotic and regionally mismatched housing.

Geographical and historical features of Borek Strzeliński

Borek Strzeliński is located in the commune of Borów, and within the Strzelin powiat (district) and Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, 28 km south of Wrocław and 11 km north of Strzelin. The village is located on trunk road no. 395 from Wrocław, via Strzelin to the Polish-Czech border. The neighbouring towns are Świniobród from the south, Jaksin from the south-east, Kojęcin and Kończyce from the east Radoszkowice from the north-east, Michałowice from the north, Boreczek from the west and Jelenin from the south-west (Fig. 1). In physical and geographical terms, Borek Strzeliński is located in the southern part of the Wrocław Plain, a macro-region of the Silesian Lowland (Kondracki 2009). The village does not have a watercourse but lies between two rivers: the Żarnówka to the north-east and the Mała Ślęza to the south-west. The landscape of Borek Strzeliński is flat with a post-glacial genesis deriving from the middle Polish glaciation, cultivated for agriculture (rapeseed, maize, potatoes



Fig. 1. Location of Borek Strzebiński against the background of the region and Poland.

Source: J. Lach.

and sugar beet) on soils from first to third grades. However, in terms of historical and landscape regionalisation, Borek Strzebiński is located in the Wrocław region (Plit 2016). At present, Borek Strzebiński is a village of 1,656 inhabitants.² The village has a parish church and cemetery, a primary school, a library, a cooperative bank, four stores (two groceries, one general and one with parts for agricultural machinery), two hairdressers, a tailor, a florist, a beauty salon and a furniture factory, *International Deco Logistics Sp. z oo.*

The history of Borek Strzebiński starts in 1155 when it is mentioned for the first time in bulls of Pope Hadrian's as the property of the Knights Templar. At that time, the place was called 'Borek', which meant 'forest' in the Slavic languages. An important event in the history of the village was the construction of the church in 1232. In 1234 or 1237, Prince Henry the Bearded gave Borek and all its possessions to the Bishop from Lubusz in Neumark. The village together with four others came (under the Silesian administration) under

the Brandenburg March, becoming a kind of Brandenburg enclave in Silesia. From the 16th century (from 1553), the Borek estate became the property of the von Kanitz family (Waschek 1951a; Dzedo 1977). This period is important in Borek's history, because its first owner Frederick von Kanitz imposed a change of religion from Catholic to Protestant, which had a significant impact on the social and cultural behaviour of the village until the end of World War II. The creation of a refuge church for Protestants after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and its extension had an impact on the landscape of the village (Sambor 1996; Kaczór 1996). An important period in Borek's landscape transformation was the 19th century when a new owner, Heinrich von Schonemark, built a neo-Renaissance palace in 1858 with an English-style park and a lake. At the beginning of the 20th century, within the territory of Borek Strzebiński in addition to the sacred, manor and settlement landscapes, there was a dominant agricultural landscape consisting of four farms with areas from 22 to 45 ha and a further ten from 6 to 10 ha. Above all, sugar beet and

² Data from the Borów Commune Office as at 31.12.2016.

wheat were grown. Cereal for bread for villagers was ground in a mill, whereas the sugar beet was processed at the sugar factory in Brzeg. In 1924, 11 new residential buildings, with gardens and sheds for animals, were erected in the north of the village on Wrocławska St and craftsmen as well as officials and workers of the post office and railway lived there; 20–30 ares of land belonged to each plot. Behind this estate, there were allotments with summer houses for employees of the estate as well as for craftsmen. At the current Strzelińska St, there was a five-class school – a building from 1822 (at present, a health clinic) – attended by children from Borek and the neighbouring villages of Jaksin, Jelenin, Świnobród and Kojećin (Theuser bd).

For Borek, 1945 was the year of the greatest social and economic changes related to Poland's independence. The consequence of the Potsdam agreements (1945) was the largest resettlement programme in Europe, and already at the beginning of June that year, Borek was settled by people from central Poland and the eastern borderland towns of Korościatyn, Kowalówka, Komarno, Monasterzyska and Chłopy. Arriving migrants brought with them different cultures, views and patterns of behaviour shaped in areas of their previous residence. They differed in psychological features, but there was often a mutual meeting of different regional groups, realising each other's existence, comparing cultural achievements and assessing their relative development levels, which included pointing out differences reflecting ethnic and cultural origins (Nasz 1970). Resettlement activities, as seen in the example of Borek Strzeliński, created a heterogeneous settlement, even more diversified after the establishment of the State Farm in the 1950s, whose activity attracted new workers from all over Poland. An important element influencing the settlement structure of the village is a trunk road that enabled contact with the urban areas of Wrocław, Brzeg, Oława or Strzelin, affecting social and cultural development and the desire to improve professional qualifications to achieve social advancement. This process had an impact on the creation of workers and peasant-workers with a broader view of the world and an influx of intelligentsia, which perhaps was, and certainly is now important in perceiving the existence of the rich cultural heritage of Borek Strzeliński.

Analysis of the landscape functions of Borek Strzeliński within the period of 1966–2019

The period up to 1966: Twenty years of assimilation with the inherited German estates and agricultural culture was a very difficult period of acceptance of the 'new village landscape'. In the immediate post-war period in Borek, and also in other Silesian settlements, a uniform social attitude was found in the inhabitants for whom the common denominator was being anti-German. It was manifested in the spontaneous (primitive) destruction of the German material heritage accompanied by church authorities and elites (Vetter 1992; Mazur 2003; Zybura 2005, 2006). Visual symbols of the German presence were removed because they allegedly created an open wound in the consciousness of the resettled population, and this was surprisingly encouraged by the then elite. Therefore, graveyards around churches, monuments, inscriptions or epitaphs from the urban and landscape space of the village were removed (Zybura 2006). This process mainly consisted in blurring landscape details; however, it did not affect the physiognomic landscape of the agricultural village. From 1945 to 1966, as a result of adaptation and economic activity in the space of Borek Strzeliński, several types of landscape could be distinguished:

- **Agricultural landscape** was predominant and characterised by large and small fields. The large fields were located to the north-west and west of the village. At that time, they belonged to the State Farm and were used for the cultivation of cereals and root crops (mainly sugar beet) and for cattle grazing (pastoral landscape – Fig. 2 – 66/KRP). However, to the north-east, east and south of the village, the agricultural landscape was more of a mosaic (Fig. 2) because this area was covered by small fields that belonged to private owners. These were owners of 2–3 ha on which they cultivated cereals and root crops (they also had meadows and grazing land, but they were located along the watercourses of the Mała Ślęza and Żarnówka – outside the study boundaries). The agricultural landscape was varied by dirt roads, which had no tree-lined boundaries for technical reasons;

- **Orchard landscape** - represented by several plots of fruit trees, mainly apple with an area of 5-20 ares. The plots were located on the southern side of the village (Fig. 2 - 66/KSA);
- **Allotment landscape** - larger than home gardens, allotments were in the 1960s in the centre of the village near the palace buildings under the management of the State Farm at that time and which were transferred to its employees (Fig. 2 - 66/CODE);
- **Buffer strips landscape** - this type of landscape is from the northern part of the study area (Fig. 2 - 66/KRŚ) and is the only natural type with an area of about 1 ha. The forest stand is made up of deciduous trees, mainly willows, poplars with elder and hawthorn bushes;
- **Settlement landscape** - compact occupying the central part of the village surrounded by agricultural fields visible in the aerial photograph from 1966 (Fig. 2). It is represented by brick buildings of two types, residential and farm buildings, in an area extending up to 20 ares. The first type is a farm, usually in the shape of a more or less elongated rectangle with a residential building in the foreground, behind which there were places for smaller buildings (chicken coop, rabbit cages or coy-

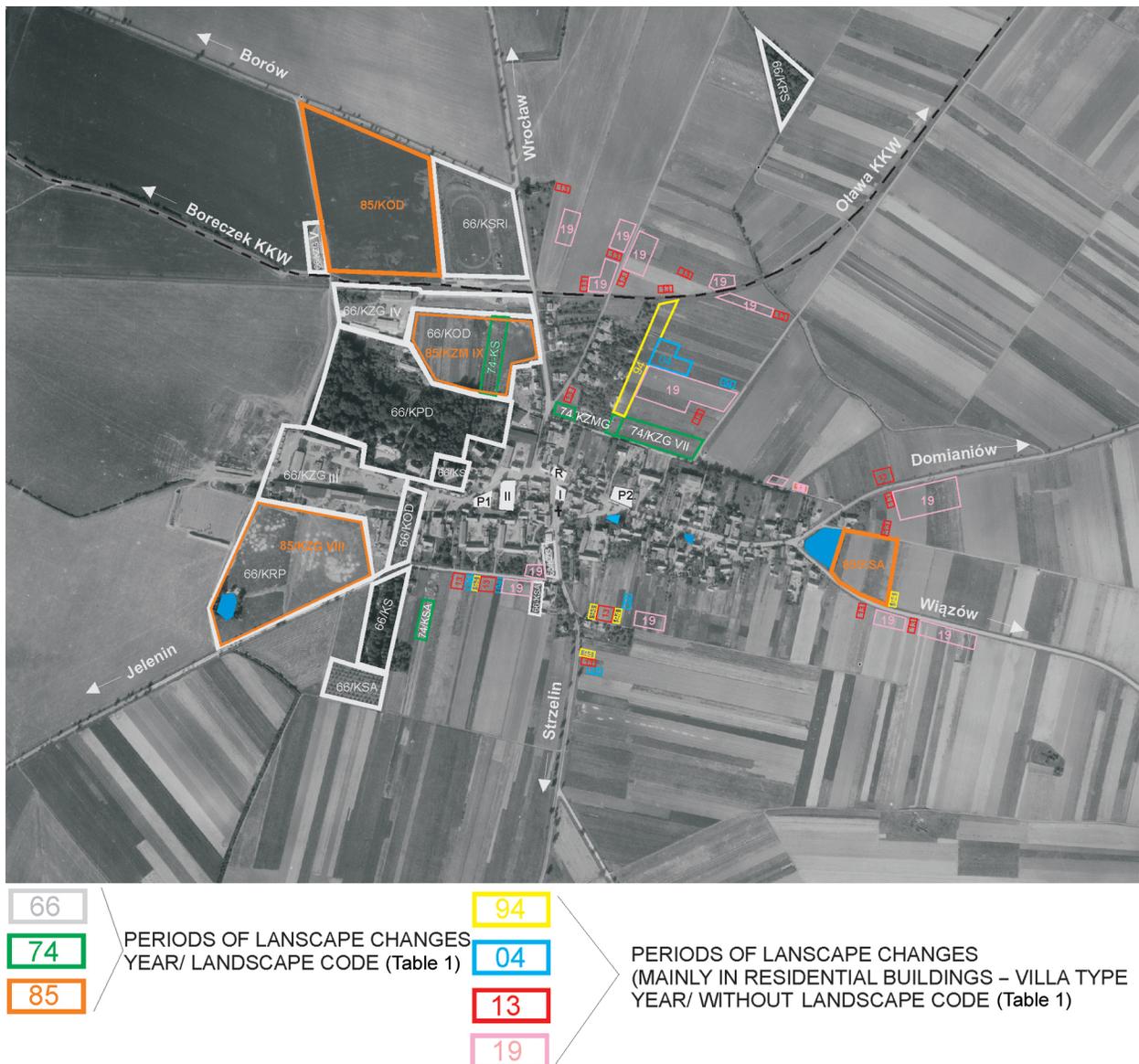


Fig. 2. Structure and function of landscape transformation of Borek Strzeliński in the period 1966-2019. Source: J. Lach.



Fig. 3. The spatial and functional layout of a Franconian homestead in Borek Strzeliński in Św. Floriana St.
Source: J. Lach.

these service facilities influenced the settlement landscape enriching it with signs and window displays. A kindergarten and a cinema played an important role in the village space (Fig. 2 - I) and so did the primary school (Fig. 2 - II). The compact buildings of Borek Strzeliński were diversified by four fire prevention reservoirs - with the largest covering 30 ares in the eastern part of the village between the roads to Domaniów and Wiązów. It is also worth noting that in the settlement space, thanks to animals in the village landscape, their sounds and smells were heard. At present, only a few inhabitants have poultry and rabbits; there are no pigs or cattle - the last cow disappeared from Borek's space in 2017;

- **Manor landscape** - related to the families of von Kanitz, von Tenczin, von Rentz, von Bemsdorf and von Schonemarkt. This landscape is represented by a neoclassical palace with outbuildings, as well as a park and lake in a 19th-century style (Fig. 2 - 66/KD). Within this period, the manor area passed into the management of the State Farm, affecting its structure and reducing its aesthetic value, but the residential and economic functions did not undergo major changes;
- **Sacred landscape** - in Borek Strzeliński consists of a church with a walled graveyard

along with the current parish cemetery located in the southern part of the village. The church with its eight centuries of history is located in the centre of the village (Fig. 2 - 66/KS) and stands out from the surroundings with its spatial form, baroque architectural details, its church tower as a visible religious symbol. The magnificent tower with a dominating onion-shaped helm is the 'hallmark' of the village (Fig. 4).

The parish graveyard is surrounded from two sides by a stone wall overshadowed by a lime tree, with one main passage. An important object in the rural landscape of Borek Strzeliński is a stone monument with a cross in the centre of the village from around 1920. Before 1945, the monument commemorated those killed in World War I (Kołaczkiwicz 2008) but the contemporary monument is dedicated to the 770th anniversary of the existence of the church in Borek Strzeliński in 2007 and to Pope John Paul II in 2000 for preparing the world for the Great Jubilee celebrating 2,000 years of Christianity and 1,000 years of the Archdiocese of Wrocław.

- **Landscape of farm buildings** - owing to the agricultural nature and activity of the State Farm in the territory of Borek Strzeliński, cowsheds and pigsties were built in the palace

(Fig. 2 - III). The so-called 'sugar beet' square (Fig. 2 - IV, V) by the former narrow-gauge railway station at that time belonged to the commune cooperative for which grain, pigs, cattle and also scrap metal were bought. From an interview, it seems that only the foundations remained (Fig. 2 - V), and it was not used; perhaps these were the former buildings of the transshipment siding for the narrow-gauge railway under the German owners of Borek. Amongst other economic buildings, the coal depot on the road to Strzelin is important (Fig. 2 - 66/KZG VI).

- **Sports and recreation landscape** - a sports field is located in the northern part of the village by the road to Wrocław (Fig. 2 - 66/KSR);
- **Landscape of avenues** - found along asphalt roads towards Wrocław, Borów and Strzelin. The avenues were made up mainly by poplars. Other asphalt roads (to Wązów, Dominiów, Jelenin) and dirt roads were not lined with trees during this period. However, the

route of the narrow-gauge railway from Oława to Borecz was still visible (Fig. 2 - CIC).

The inhabitants of that time focused mainly on agricultural work on their own land but also worked at the State Farm, so agricultural and economic functions dominated in the landscape.

The period between 1966 and 1974 was a period of stabilisation of economic activities mainly agricultural and cultural; however, as the residents emphasise, the impact of the proximity of the urban centres of Strzelin, Wązów and Wrocław was already noticeable. In the settlement structure, apart from the type of farmer (peasant), that of peasant-worker was increasingly developing. There was little significant change in the physiognomic landscape:

- **Orchard landscape**, which was enriched by two areas, one in the south of the villages close to the existing one and one in the area of allotments,
- **Landscape of farm buildings** - in the rural space, there are buildings of an agricultural equipment base and the collection of milk



Fig. 4. The tower of the parish church in Borek Strzeliński dominates in the panorama of the village from the south.

Source: J. Lach.

through the cooperative (Fig. 2 – 74/KZG VII) at present, Akacjowa Street. At this time, the inhabitants focused mainly on work on private plots and the State Farm, so agricultural and economic functions dominated in the landscape.

The period between 1974 and 1985 is a period of further social changes, including the migration of young people to cities to receive education, as well as professional and social advancement. The number of peasant-workers is increasing, which leads to the abandonment of farm work. Significant changes in the village landscape caused by economic and social activities took place in the following:

- **Agricultural landscape** – owing to the transition to closed rearing of beef and dairy cattle, the pastoral landscape (in the western part of the village) disappears under the development of five large barns,
- **Orchard landscape** – disappears in the area of the allotment gardens because of the construction of housing for State Farm employees in 1978. However, a cherry orchard is being planted in the eastern part of the village behind the fire prevention reservoir,
- **Allotment landscape** – disappears in the central part of the village at the expense of housing for State Farm employees. A new area of allotments is being established 200 m north near the sports pitch,
- **Landscape of farm buildings** – is enriched with five barns in the western part of the village on the site of the former pasture (Fig. 2 – 85/KZG IX)
- **Landscape of avenues** – only the narrow-gauge railway route from Oława to Boreczka is visible in the landscape (Fig. 2 – KKW); its western section has been taken up and disappeared. The eastern part begins to become overgrown with such bushes as wild rose, hawthorn, blackthorn, rowan and elderberry. It becomes an informal walking place for residents and gives access to the surrounding fields.

Again, at this time, the inhabitants focused mainly on work on private plots and the State Farm, so agricultural and economic functions dominated in the landscape.

The period between 1985 and 1994 – a period of political and economic change whose

consequences were revealed in the landscape of Borek Strzeliński, mainly in terms of settlement – in the southern part, several single-family houses were built including an orchard and fruit bushes. The agricultural and economic functions again dominated in the landscape.

The period between 1994 and 2004 – the time of liquidation of the State Farm, the consequence of which was the change of land ownership and a change in the activity of residents who were forced to look for jobs in nearby urban centres (Strzelin, Wiązów, Oława and Wrocław). During this time, significant changes occurred in the following:

- **Agricultural landscape** – without physiognomic changes to large fields (but changes in ownership status – Dzieduchiewicz becomes the owner of the former State Farm), changes have occurred in the mosaic of small fields. There was consolidation of land because of the introduction of monoculture (often associated with the transfer of leased land because of older owners giving up agricultural activities),
- **Orchard landscape** – in the late 1990s, the removal of orchards in the southern part of the village took place at the expense of arable land,
- **Settlement landscape** of Borek Strzeliński, since 2000, has been enriched in the southern and northern parts by the building of a number of single-family houses. However, it is worth noting that this type of new development is characterised by a lack of farm building and fruit and vegetable growing areas, and plots, with an area of up to 10 ares, have the character of villas with their greenery (Łach 2012a). Housing and services are also undergoing change, the slaughterhouse and butcher's shop are closed and the bakery (P1) is in the process of closure; thus, the multi-sensory landscape in the centre will disappear, there will be no smells of baking bread, or sounds of the smithy,
- **Sacred landscape**, though stabilised with the arrival of a new priest, Wiesław Szczęch, it has undergone certain changes: removing the old trees around the church and the trees in the area of the parish graveyard. Since 2000, as a result of the renovations within the sacred zone, the church and its surroundings have gained significant visual value. On the

initiative of Wiesław Szczęch, three times a day (6:00, 15:00 and 21:00) chimes sound from the church tower, thus the sacred landscape has been enriched by a sound landscape, becoming a new marker of the village of Borek Strzeliński (Łach 2012b),

- **Landscape of farm buildings** is undergoing visible change – the buildings of the dairy were demolished because of its closure, the five barns were transferred to private hands, changing their function from rearing livestock to manufacturing. The new owner uses them to produce furniture, adapting the environment to factory operations, changing the landscape by renovating buildings to the aesthetic value of factories. In this period, the agricultural and economic functions still dominated the landscape, with a number of farmers already owning several dozen hectares. The rest of the former farmers have given up agricultural activity to work in services in nearby cities. Young inhabitants disappear from the rural landscape including those who choose economic emigration outside Poland. Housing and economic buildings no longer fulfil their functions; older owners do not use farm buildings (leading them to be demolished); however, they still grow fruit and vegetables for their own needs. During this period, new single-family housing without outbuildings is

being erected on the outskirts of the village, functioning for their owners who work outside the village as a dormitory or a place of recreation (Fig. 5).

The period between 2004 and 2013 – is a period of the dynamic expansion of single-family residential villas without any economic function, becoming a place for rest after work and a ‘bedroom’ for their owners (Fig. 2 – KZM/13). The areas of dynamic expansion are the small fields in the northern, north-eastern, eastern and south-eastern part of Borek Strzeliński (abandoning of agriculture by owners – sale of property). In the residential part of the former State Farm, a new building is being erected, with a commune cultural centre with a performance hall and a library. From this period, it can be stated that alongside the agricultural economic function through the creation of the suburban housing zone, residential and recreational functions have emerged.

The period between 2013 and 2019 – construction of new houses in the area indicated above by residents from other places; at the same time, the old settlement fabric is being renovated (many owners renew the facades of their parents’ or grandparents’ houses). In 2016, the former railway route disappeared from the village landscape, replaced by a half asphalt road. The bushes were destroyed, and it was stripped of trees. The



Fig. 5. A new model of the settlement space of Borek Strzeliński in its northern area – a villa type characteristic of a suburban area.

Source: J. Lach.

orchard landscape in the eastern part has disappeared at the expense of arable fields. In 2019, the old poplars along the Borek-Wrocław and Borek-Borów roads were cut down, which meant the end of the avenue landscape. As a result of passing into private hands, the palace together with its park, the former farm and manor buildings, after extensive renovation work, has become the distinguishing feature of the village. Along with the restored church, they form an aesthetic, physiognomic and historical-architectural landscape.

Selected aspects of the social activity of rural residents and attitudes to cultural heritage and the landscape

The changes taking place in the rural landscape of Borek Strzeliński are components of the German and Polish cultural, economic and religious heritage, whose expression is the material space, dynamically shaped since 1945 by the heterogeneous nature of the inhabitants. Thanks to various culturally informed skills of

the inhabitants, social activity has upheld rural traditions and rituals, supported by the church and the commune authorities of Borów. An eloquent example of the activity of the inhabitants of Borek Strzeliński is the Ślężanki Folk Group. The first dance and music group remembered by the respondents operated at the State Farm, but, unfortunately, it was not possible to get information directly on this group's activity. On the basis of interviews, extensive information was obtained about the Ślężanki Folk Group from Borek Strzeliński (Fig. 6).

The group was founded in 1984, and at the beginning, it had 24 members, at present there are 11. On the basis of family traditions, Ślężanki present folk songs from various regions of Poland and occupy the new hall in the building of the public library in Borek Strzeliński. The women after numerous consultations and conversations decided to perform in Kraków costume and their performances were accompanied by a band named Batiary.

The interviews emphasised the culture-forming role of this organisation. People were proud



Fig. 6. The Ślężanki Folk Group during a performance at the Culture Centre in Borek Strzeliński in 2017.
Source: S. Zawer/Communal public library in Borów.

that, thanks to their involvement in the group's activity, *our culture and customs* are being propagated not only in Poland but also abroad. Thanks to the action of one woman, it was possible 'to raise funds for folk costumes. Some say that we don't need costumes or trips, but they don't understand that we are the ones who keep the traditions'. The respondents proudly talked about their trips and performances and about the positive cooperation between the group and the library and commune authorities.

On Sunday mornings, from 7 am to 10 am, Małgorzata Majeran-Kokot on Radio Wrocław hosts a Polish folk music broadcast.³ This show is especially popular amongst folk bands from around the province. Twice a year, competitions are organised between the bands for which the prize is to record a disc. So far, Ślężanki have participated in the competition twice. These events involve the entire local community, and it is noted that the team currently has no shortage of

members to continue, but in most folk groups, the average age of women is more than 50; younger people are a definite minority. Some respondents are aware that the roles performed by the group are assessed differently. 'Younger people receive the band in a sometimes critical and immature way. For them, the band is so-called 'wiocha [corny]', but their age has their right of rebellion. The group that appreciate our activities most are the elderly, but not only... As delegates from abroad come, the women from the group present our traditions, prepare, e.g. artistic setting' (p. 4). Respondents point to the benefits that participation gives them, are proud that most of their commitment is appreciated by their husbands, children and the local community. It should be added that in addition to the Ślężanki group, also using the hospitable thresholds of the commune cultural centre in Borek Strzeliński, the Veni Lumen choir has been active since November 2010 (Fig. 7).

The integrating role of the library, which appeared in all interviews, is expressed not only by enabling performances and rehearsals of music bands but also by organising a series of cyclical events that aim to intensify social relations in the countryside. Some say that the library is the best thing that happened in Borek. The positive role

³ The aim of the programme is to show the activity of rural residents, to promote not only folk groups but all events related to maintaining cultural heritage in Lower Silesia. One of the most important events is the annual Lower Silesian Tradition Festival organised at the Wrocław Opera. <http://www.ludowe.radiowroclaw.pl/infopages/view/2/O-Liscie> (accessed: 24 August 2019).



Fig. 7. The Veni Lumen choir at the commune cultural centre in Borek Strzeliński.
Source: S. Zawer/Communal public library in Borów.

of the library against the background of the village is particularly emphasised. 'If it wasn't here in the village, nothing would happen here, there would be no events. There were no meetings of inhabitants before, there was no one to organize them'.

The 50+ Club is another important initiative operating in the library in Borek. Activities undertaken are addressed to 'active people with great potential and skills, participating in a diverse library offer, meeting their ambitions and passions. The library is a meeting place for them. They are able to share their interests and passions, help in organising events for other groups, are interested in new information and communication technologies'. It was the women of the 50+ Club who focused on their attitude towards cultural heritage. A vast amount of research material has been collected, and the study will present data on culinary traditions and changes in the funeral rite of passage.

The inhabitants of the villages have quite an **open attitude towards** regional traditions inherited from their ancestors. As research has shown, traditional dishes are usually traditional only in name, it was not possible to determine a recipe (e.g. for white or Ukrainian borscht) during the interviews. For the respondents, traditional recipes are those whose preparation they have learned at home from mothers, grandmothers and even mothers-in-law. It is very difficult to obtain a single recipe, and in addition, the respondents improve them so that they are attractive and have a chance of winning in competitions. Invaluable sources of information and inspiration, once completely inaccessible, are women's press and the Internet; culinary blogs, for example, are increasingly accessed. The free approach to culinary tradition has been well recognised (Biejał, Wójcikowska 2015: 106–107). Dishes from the Eastern Borderlands are no longer held only in communicative memory but have become an element of cultural memory shared by some of the inhabitants of not only Borek Strzeliński but also Lower Silesia.

In surveys from 2013, on a national scale, every seventh respondent declared having a straight line relative (parent, grandparent or great-grandfather) born in the former Eastern Borderlands (Kresy) (from 4.4 to 4.5 million people). Every fourth respondent was a resident of Dolnośląskie

Voivodeship (CBOS 50/2012: 3). According to the approach proposed by Jan and Adelaide Assmann, passing experience from generation to generation goes three generations back; this time horizon sets the limit for the functioning of **communicative memory** (Assmann 2008). If one agrees with the argument that memory in families is cultivated up to the third generation at the most, then it should be said that the memory of the Eastern Borderlands, their cultural diversity and traditions manifested in everyday life such as culinary activities is currently largely supported by institutional action supporting the myth of the Eastern Borderlands in the 21st century. The culinary theme has become an excellent contribution to the development of the thread about relations between villagers. Borek Strzeliński is an excellent example of a village where attempts are being made to integrate new and old residents. The information obtained is ambiguous. On the one hand, new residents are involved in the religious life of the parish (they willingly take the sacraments); on the other hand, there is information 'about apathy, passivity and being enclosed in the four walls of their own home. If you need to bake a cake for some celebration, it's for the 'native' women do'. There are many reasons; most often there is an argument that after many hours spent at work outside Borek (very often in Wrocław), there is no more strength or willingness to get involved in the life of the community.

Problems in relations between the indigenous and new inhabitants of the village were raised in a report prepared by the 'Stocznia' Research and Social Innovation Foundation as well as in research on the Wrocław commuter area (Kajdanek 2011). On the basis of the current state, it is impossible to clearly answer the question to what extent attempts to integrate new and old residents have brought the desired effects. Most analyses conclude that there is a visible boundary between indigenous and new inhabitants of the village expressed in behaviour and mentality.

Local leaders directly say that one of the roles of an institution, that is, school, library or church, is, 'apart from cultural, spiritual and educational functions, taking care of local identity. Keeping the memory alive of where we come from. The descendants of those who came from many territories to live here. The oldest inhabitants remember the war. Now new residents are appearing.

And the point is to care for this identity. This is the task to pass on to future generations, through tradition and rituals but also through exhibitions and performances'. The answer to the question about the identity of residents whether new ones feel more a part of Wrocław (e.g. because of their lifestyle) is beyond the scope of this study.

Presenting further plans for the activities of the 50+ Club and the Ślążanki group, the need to continue those activities that are currently taking place and that enjoy popularity and recognition amongst the local community was emphasised. The operating strategies of these organisations are adaptive and largely depend on the characteristics of their leaders. As far as possible, the women are willing acquire new skills, for example, they took part in a computer course organised by the library.

Changes in the funeral ritual

'Transition' rituals (Stomma 1981: 60), including a funeral, have always had numerous functions in the life of rural communities (Ostrowska 2005: 235), although it can be said that these have significantly reduced. The death of a loved one becomes a kind of test for the family: how they behave and which habits will be preserved. The involvement of the rest of the local community in the funeral ritual is usually limited to attendance at the service.

The number and variety of rituals that were presented depended on the place of origin of the subjects. The oldest respondents explained extensively why such behaviour and no other were undertaken that are no longer practiced (covering windows, mirrors and knocking the coffin three times on the threshold of the house). The course of funerals in earlier times depended on the age of the deceased (child, young person) sex, type of death, position in the family and local community. The priest also emphasised the importance of changes that took place in the liturgy after the Second Vatican Council. Up to the 1980s, 'three-stage' funerals took place in a Lower Silesian village at deceased's house, the church and the cemetery (Szczepańska 2018). At present, a funeral is a mass in the church and a service at the cemetery. It is not an event for the whole community or a significant part of it, but

mainly for the family. Activities that were previously assigned to family members and neighbours, such as preparing the deceased for burial and organising refreshments, have disappeared. The family has been relieved of the obligation to organise the funeral, because these tasks were taken over by funeral companies. More and more rural residents have non-agricultural sources of income and are unable or unwilling to attend the funerals of their neighbours. The rituals associated with death and the funerals of village inhabitants have, at the same time, been reduced. On the basis of the literature and personal research, there is clearly more interest shown in the appearance and care for graves than in the pre-war times (Kolbuszewski 1996; Szczepańska 2017). Despite the above changes that have taken place in the funeral ritual from 1945 to the present day, they are still one of the strongest elements of socialisation, building the social identity of their participants.

Conclusions

The rural landscape of the Silesian Lowland with a 'privileged' location shows features of structural and functional heterogeneity, which is the result of historical and social activities, that is, the assimilation with the German landscape and cultural heritage, agricultural policy carried out by the communist authorities, economic and social changes after 1989 and, thanks to the EU subsidies, projects supporting the protection of cultural heritage. These diverse factors have allowed us to capture changes in the landscape and settlement context that have taken place for 74 years in the Lower Silesian village located on a fertile plain and on a trunk road leading to surrounding urban centres that have a significant impact on its material and non-material landscapes. Studies on the nature and function of the landscape based on remote sensing and field work have allowed the separation of various types and subtypes of rural landscape in Borek Strzeliński. From the analysis of the 'small-scale' landscape, as many as seven main types can be distinguished (Table 2) with various functions.

On this basis, two main types of landscape can be determined in terms of function and change: agricultural and residential-economic. In the latter type, a twofold division is visible in the village

space: the western part of Borek is characterised by economic, religious, educational, and sport and recreational functions, whereas the eastern part is residential. The divider of these two zones is trunk road no. 395. On the other hand, a study of 'large-scale' landscape within the residential and agricultural area, revealed as many as 14 landscape subtypes (Table 1). In the agricultural space, large fields and the small fields that influence the mosaic character of the rural area were identified. Owing to the cultivation of rapeseed, maize, potatoes, cereals and sugar beet, the agricultural landscape is not currently monotonous; however, changes are noticeable, which is related to the transfer of leased fields by small farmers to 'large' farmers with several dozen hectares and more, who in the future will produce a monotonous landscape because of the development of intensive monocultural agriculture. From the analysis of agricultural landscapes, it is the orchard landscape concentrated in the southern part of the village that has showed the greatest change in rural space during the 74 years. Owing to the unprofitability of production, it no longer exists in Borek Strzeliński. Among the natural and cultural types of landscapes in the village, the landscape of allotments is an interesting one, a legacy of the State Farm that allocated plots of up to 10 ares of land to its employees. At present, they are still in use but, as field studies have shown, they are being abandoned by older gardeners unable to work because of their health. There is no interest in working on plots of land among young rural residents.

From an analysis of large-scale settlement space, two types of buildings can be found: compact, historical with interesting Franconian housing of the residential-economic type; and the zone of modern dispersed single-family housing of the type of suburban villas without any economic function on the outskirts of the village, mainly concentrated in the northern, north-eastern and eastern parts. The latter type is conditioned by sociological factors and the impact of large urban areas, in this case Wrocław, Oława and Strzelin. Service facilities, such as butcher, shoemaker, blacksmith, bakery and dairy, have disappeared from the settlement landscape, and hair and beauty salons have opened instead.

In the transformation of the structure and function of the rural area of Borek Strzeliński,

three major episodes affecting landscape types can be distinguished (Table 2):

- **First episode, 1966-1994** - characterised by a mosaic structure of the agricultural landscape with both plant and animal productions as well as a settlement landscape with inherited German historical fabric and a residential-economic-service function. For this period, both the religious and manor landscape were treated badly by the then system, not caring for the so-called value of the historical landscape and allowing its slow deterioration;
- **Second episode, 1994-2013** - this was the time of dynamic change mainly in the structure of the settlement landscape with the disappearance of the residential-economic function in the historic part of Borek (disappearance of vegetable and flower gardens [Łach 2012a] and disappearance of animal rearing), and since 2004, the creation of a settlement landscape with a dispersed building type and without a vegetable garden, fruit bushes or an orchard, and the development of a villa landscape and suburban housing with residential and leisure functions;
- **Third episode, 2013-2019** - there are no major changes in the agricultural landscape during this period, although a rapid decline in agricultural area is observed in favour of single-family housing mainly in zones to the north, north-east, east and south. In the historical space, as a result of the renovation of the church, palace and residential and commercial buildings, the aesthetic value of the landscape has increased. The abandonment of pig and cattle rearing has resulted in the disappearance of the sound and smellscape, characteristic of the village.

The contemporary functions of the rural landscape, with the example of Borek Strzeliński as a model, are undergoing transformation towards agricultural, economic and recreational functions from having agricultural and farm functions with residential-economic development. The factor affecting the change is the proximity of a large urban agglomeration and the creation of commercial and economic zones along trunk road no. 395 on the outskirts of Wrocław, Oława and Strzelin. These use a significant proportion of Borek's inhabitants, thus producing the dominance of a worker-type resident. From the analyses of landscape physiognomy, the authors noticed that the

influx of new settlers posed a threat to a typical rural landscape. They occupy peripheral areas where new types of housing development incompatible with the existing urban space are introduced, ignoring spatial development plans. This is comprehensible from the point of view of social behaviour based on urban education. Acceptance of the creation of suburban villas is not consistent with the historical fabric and has introduced a division of inhabitants into those 'from the village' and those from the 'fields'. Differences in behaviour influence joint social activity and the lack of willingness to assimilate can disturb identity and attitude towards the local cultural heritage. Social activity undertaken by the inhabitants of Borek Strzeliński based on the research is the result of a compromise between financial opportunities and meeting the needs of specific people, their families and the local community. Owing to limited budget possibilities, the study focuses on selected initiatives operating in Borek. It is important to emphasise the great importance of local leaders: the mayor Maria Czarnecka, the priest Wiesław Szczęch, the library director Elżbieta Sucharska and the librarian/culture organiser Sabina Zawer. Thanks to their commitment to their work, Borek is a village where willing people will find a variety of opportunities to meet their diverse needs and the traditions and rituals for preserving the historical and religious landscape on a material and spiritual level are maintained. Their most important areas of activity concern the integration of the local community (younger-older, new-old residents) in its widest sense, followed by maintaining traditions (folk, rural). 'It is important for us that our tradition is constantly transmitted and developed and local identity is built'. One of the characteristic features of Borek's inhabitants is the vivid emphasis on the diversity in the origin of the village's inhabitants. As in other regions of the country, referring to tradition in the culinary sense is understood as referring to the recipes of mothers and grandmothers. At the same time, tradition is adapted and processed to the needs of the individual. The pattern associated with experiencing the funeral ritual in the countryside is changing. However, despite the impact of contemporary trends on social behaviour adopted from urban zones, thanks to the leaders and parts of the society of Borek Strzeliński, with the support of environmental

elements such as flat land and a fertile soil, the rural agricultural and economic landscape will remain unchanged until urban sprawl approaches too close to the village and perhaps the main road will be responsible for the disappearance of a rural area with its rich traditions.

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