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# ISSUES OF A DIALOGUE AS A WAY TO SHAPE A HARMONIOUS LANDSCAPE AND LANDSCAPE INTEGRITY

**Agnieszka Lasota**

independent researcher, Poland  
e-mail: a.lasota@zobaczycnanowo.pl, zobaczycnanowo@gmail.com

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## Abstract

The article explores Poland as an example of a country in which generations were living under substandard circumstances and where the socio-economic transformation after 1989 did not go along with an aesthetics education. The result is the lack of cultural harmony in Polish landscapes, widely acknowledged by local experts. Politicians often do not see the problem and neither do the people living in the country as it is developed.

The author of this article shows that in order to change the path of development to a more harmonious one, there would have to be a compassionate dialogue, simultaneously with spreading awareness of the problem within all the stakeholders.

The author believes that his method called "Seeing Anew" brings some competence to all the parts of the dialogue. Understanding of the factors which created the problem can reconnect people to the environment, the landscape, and ultimately to themselves. All these factors have to be thought of when thinking to restore integrity of the landscape.

## Key words

cultural landscape, identity, hermetic language, communist bloc, contrast, educational activities.

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## 1. Introduction

The first basic skill of every person which binds them with others and allows them to function in mutual relationships is the ability to communicate. According to Marshall B. Rosenberg, an American psychologist and mediator, creator of the idea of Nonviolent Communication (NVC), we communicate at the level of needs – speech is the basis for communicating our needs to the interlocutor. This is undoubtedly how it works in young children who, as they develop, move from communicating about their basic needs to using language to express the need to share, for example, some delight.

To conduct a dialogue between two or more people, a common language is needed, and if it does not exist, an interpreter between the parties becomes necessary. Moreover, within each field of expertise jargon exists. In most professions awareness of the richness of specialist vocabulary is present. It is highly probable that this awareness is not common among spatial specialists in Poland, i.e. architects, landscape architects and urban planners, etc.

This is somewhat understandable, as the space that surrounds us is visible to the naked eye, we live in it and so by simply living in it we believe we understand it. The fact that we live in space is so

common that it gives the specialist of this field the false idea that all people know what they are talking about when talking about its elements. But there is a whole range of words that we, the landscape affecting specialists, use that are not used by most people who speak Polish on a daily basis. One may not even know or understand them and be unable to use them in the right context. And the complexity of the whole is far above understanding for most Poles. I came across a statement from a humanities student at a Polish university who claimed that the words «poor» and «modest» are synonyms. As a person with an education as an architect and urban planner, I distinguish these words and believe that NEAT = MODEST + WELL-KEPT, and POOR = MODEST + NEGLECTED.

## 2. The background of lack of understanding

There is too little public discourse about space in Poland, which is why certain words have fallen out of use. Other words arouse reluctance in some generations due to the memory of earlier times and their systemic approach of imposing solutions without a subjective approach to the users of the place and space. The fact of not being treated as a partner in creating the surrounding reality, and often being put in an impossible situation, has definitely had an impact on the current appearance and functionality of the space. Examples include the loss of real estate as a result of changes in the country's borders, as well as later communist expropriations.

Another form of serfdom was the «community action» that existed in the Polish People's Republic: unpaid work performed for the benefit of society. They took place in all provinces (voivodeships) of Poland; on a national scale, in many cases, millions of Poles, including non-party people and young people, attended this obligatory work at the party's call. Usually held on non-working days these «community actions» included work for the district, city, commune, and village: road work, gardening work (depending on the season), as well as production work in industrial plants and continuation of construction work (Nikoniuk, 2021). It is worth mentioning that in practice, these activities, shown as precisely planned and carried out, were in fact largely a waste of effort and resources. As a series of uncorrelated activities, they often intensified the chaos in the functioning of state-owned enterprises, and this aspect could affect the citizens, influencing a discouragement from various forms of social activity in the future. Later, by not getting involved themselves, they passed on to their children a *modus operandi* of not caring about the surroundings.

## 3. Socio-economic transformation and landscape degradation in Poland

In Poland there has been a strong communication divide when it comes to talking about space. This has been going on for decades: during the Polish People's Republic (under communism), almost everything was state-owned, and the State as an institution was so distant that there was simply no dialogue. The sovereignty of users of space and real estate was severely limited.

The currently functioning Polish state was established after 1989 as a result of full autonomy won by its people. There were changes at the level of Poland's state structure, which was emphasized by the change in name (the Polish People's Republic changed to the Republic of Poland). Municipal and commune governments were established, and thus the times of centralized state managing the common good ended. Ownership arrangements began to change, and residents could become owners of the state apartments they inhabited.

From the very beginning, however, the Republic of Poland (the change of name emphasizes the new chapter of statehood), occupied with important matters aimed to rebuild the economy, did not anticipate that after years of oppression, the people would compensate for the lack of opportunities for development and self-determination. Despite the quick recognition of the trend by space specialists and despite the efforts they made, it was impossible to slow it down. Therefore, publications generally available in popular bookstores began to appear, such as «*Scream in Space. Why is it so ugly in Poland*» (Sarzyński, 2012), where the title reflects the visual result of the transformation that has taken place over 20 years.

The time has come when even specialists and professors comment on the situation directly, writing about a landscape hell (Kistowski, 2023). Both this author and others say that there are countries of the former Eastern Bloc where the situation is worse than in Poland, but I will focus only on my home country and the reason for the state of affairs shown here. This means that in this article I will highlight only a few reasons that make up the whole reality. For example, I am not referring to changes in law adding to the detriment of the landscape. I only mention the human aspect, because people are the ones driving changes in the law, and these laws are created for (other) people who expect these amendments. This article focuses only on dialogue, on the lack of talks at the level of partnership and mutual understanding, on what has led to this situation and

on how important it is to start a healing process for the possibility of changing the Polish landscape to a more harmonious and coherent one.

#### 4. Seeing requires the activity of the looker

To recognize that it becomes ugly in some parts of Poland or to ask yourself the question “do we live in landscape hell?” (Kistowski, 2023), one needs to have a certain perspective and sensitivity. These are not shaped equally for everyone. And just as some individuals have special artistic or linguistic abilities, it is extremely rare for a talent to develop without a teacher and self-work/practice. Even something as basic as eating with a fork and knife required practice over many thousands of approaches. Similarly, today it is difficult for me to imagine that suddenly, without «training», without education in this area, Polish society and the politicians of our country can begin to understand the importance of the topic and/or notice the opposition of beauty and disharmony. Especially, as I wrote, after the times of the Polish People’s Republic, when topics related to the development of the country, the town, the street, and even the renovation of the building in which people lived, were not discussed with them or even presented to them. Things were happening despite them.

A well-known saying goes “use it or lose it.” Hence, there is a widespread lack of (co-)responsibility for space. We feel like actors in the space, but not its creators.

What’s next? The problem is that seeing requires some activity of the viewer (Rasmussen, 1957) – the brain consciously notes only a few of the images «displayed» on the retina as on a cinema screen. On the other hand, one detail is enough for us to assume that we have seen one thing and not another: let’s say that a man walking with his head bowed realizes that blue jeans have passed him - he can tell by the seam on the outside of the leg. Where there are legs, there must be a person... Usually the observations end there; there are so many things to pay attention to on a crowded street that you can’t be bothered with other passersby. Let us assume, however, that the observations do not end there. The brain then notices more details. It was right about the jeans, but they are worn by a young woman, not a man. If you look further, more carefully, adding one image to another will give you an image of a given person. Its behavior can be compared to a portrait painter who first creates a general outline of the figure, barely suggesting it, then refines the sketch so that it shows a girl in jeans; then it adds more details until

it has the distinctive image of that particular girl. It is interesting and obvious that the more attractive the brain finds what it sees, the more likely a person will focus on it. And no matter what, it will trigger positive or negative feelings in the subconsciousness, affecting the person’s vitality and energy.

Psychologists say that our environment influences our level of life satisfaction, our relationships with others and our performance at work (Chatterjee, 2022). Experts have proven that the shape of the environment affects our relationships with others and can mitigate crime (MacDonald, 2015). Urbanists and future generations will say that the appearance of cities is a reflection of our culture (Radoine, 2016).

#### 5. Norms of social behavior and their lack

During Poland’s communist time decisions were made behind the backs of its citizens, contrary to the natural human need for self-determination. We already observe this in children, and it is no different in adults. By the time they reach adulthood, each person has undergone various “training” in how to behave, among others, starting with using polite phrases to greet, say goodbye, and say thank you. There are many examples of the upbringing of minors resulting in their adaptation to life in society, and this learning always lasts many years and usually covers a wide spectrum of areas and behaviors.

An interesting side effect of Polish history is the fact that there is no understanding among the general public of the fact that the created buildings and their surroundings should, like a number of other behaviors in society, be subject to certain rules. Here is an example. I was talking to a friend, who is a fifty-year-old renowned psychologist and therapist when she suddenly reacted sharply when she heard the information that in many regions of the world a palette of limited color is used for buildings. She was downright outraged and expressed it in a way typical of my countrymen: «How can someone impose what my house should look like?» Words said by an educated person, a coach, and a mentor for many, but so blocked from other norms of social behavior than those the psychology of relations promotes within her field. This being an example where even a person who supports others in the process of repairing relationships does not understand such basic principles as being in a community shows that many people do not understand on a conscious level that there is such a thing as landscape aesthetic standards. The fact that each building is an important element of this landscape and could be a nicely fitting element does not occur to them.

This is yet another example of the fact that Polish schools should provide education on spatial development and sensitize people to the space in which we live in form of a school subject containing elements of architecture, urban planning, geography, landscape architecture, ergonomics, economics, nature, and the environment; activities that would result in a holistic view of the relationships in the surrounding world; elements from history and geography along with showing how human life has been intertwined with economics, art, and philosophy for centuries. From a sociological perspective: does the environment and its functionality have an impact on us? What is our relationship with nature? Also a few elements of construction knowledge that are worth spreading so that renovations of our houses take place less frequently and the microclimate of the rooms is good for us, things which couldn't be passed down from generation to generation due to the Polish historical and social situation.

## 6. Sensitivity and sensitization in Poland and Europe

There are countries in Europe that were fortunately spared the history of communism whose landowners did not lose their properties and whose inhabitants can pass on knowledge to future generations. In these countries, in parallel there is still school education covering the topics which are not of interest to the Polish system of education. Just a brief mention of them in this article as a living example of the fact that the topic is important even in places where it might seem that this kind of education is not needed when compared to countries as affected by history as Poland.

In Italy, from preschool years, children are introduced to terms of the colors and ranges of hues. Something in between painting and architecture: they learn about the rich palette of historical colors as an element of the surrounding landscape. They can name the colors surrounding them and understand that color is one of the elements of building the identity of a given region or landscape. The color palette is presented as a selection of colors that harmonize and are part of the surroundings which often comprises a natural dye found in the region which gives the primary color. Lighter or darker shades of the primary color and contrasting text colors within a design will give a harmonious effect (Ministero..., 2014). They learn that almost every color composition based on the palette will blend into the landscape, only emphasizing its color coherence. For this reason alone, in countries

with such a background it is more difficult for manufacturers to sell new products from the factory like flashy colors created by mixing chemical paint additives. The available color samples of façade paints in developed countries versus countries like Poland are very different from each other. In some, the proposed colors correlate with earthy tones, in others, the colors are flashy and «fashionable» when newly introduced (and then become unfashionable due to the introduction and promotion of another novelty).

Poland is still making up for the delays of the post-war era. The Second World War ended in 1945, and we could probably not refer to this topic anymore, but one must remember that Poland was one of the countries most affected by the devastation of the war. Some cities were destroyed in up to 95%. After 1945, my ancestors, together with all the country and society, were immediately «drawn» into the Eastern Bloc of communist countries whose economies developed differently from those under the conditions of a free market economy. And so Poland did not receive the aid proposed in 1948 by the USA, called the Marshall Plan (official name: European Recovery Program) – the United States' plan to rebuild the economies of European countries after World War II, including aid in the form of raw materials, minerals, food products, loans, and capital goods. Great Britain, France, Italy, and West Germany benefited most from this aid, during which over 13 billion USD was transferred to Europe (Act of April 3, 1948, European Recovery Act).

The process of rebuilding cities and towns in Poland continued for several decades: from removing rubble and ruins to rebuilding historic centers and building new housing estates. People sometimes lived in groups of several unrelated families in one apartment, sharing the kitchen and bathroom, like the family of the writer of these words as well as herself, or in attics that were never intended to be inhabited: without heating or even layers of thermal insulation of the roof, becoming apartments where there was ice in the winter (Słomczyński, 2023). People had real existential problems and accepted the opportunity to live where they could with humility. Likewise, they had to accept the clothes or fabrics given and wore whatever they could wear, rather than focusing on chasing fashion. This can say about the delay in the development of the aesthetic drives.

Existential poverty and happiness from whatever one has changed after 1989, when various kinds of opportunities appeared. Some people began to have a lot of money and internal pressure to do something spectacular with it. They began to build houses that reflected their dreams, i.e. large villas

built from available materials: a mixture of the style of an Italian villa with a Polish noble manor house with a porch supported by columns made of sewer pipes. The earlier times, when it was necessary to focus on existential needs, suppressed the aesthetic needs so much that, in the face of rapidity of the development, they did not have time to evolve or in many cases, even awake.

And so, compared to today's projects, the urban implementation became popular from the late 1940s up to the 1970s (like Nowa Huta in Kraków, or in Gdańsk districts: Przymorze, Zaspą, and Żabianka). These areas have retained not only their functionality but also the modesty of architecture, whose main feature should be its constituting the background of events and not trying to overshadow them. If you follow the real estate market, it turns out that premises in this type of housing estates are very popular among those looking for apartments to buy or rent. Their attractiveness results from the fact that they were designed by outstanding urban planners educated in the interwar period, when Poland had one of the best spatial planning systems which was followed by others (Stasiuk, 2013). Today those implementations from the communist times are in opposition to the narrowness and lack of light and space in the new developments proposed in Poland by developers on whom no standards are imposed by the country.

### 7. Simplicity versus chaos

As a result of the dullness during communist times in Poland came an overinterpretation of the saying: «freedom, Thomas, in your house» (Fredro, 1880). This saying can be related to the English sayings «my home is my castle» or «anything goes». The problem is that the Polish saying comes from a well-known poem for children and is extremely popular in primary school and refers to the inside of a home. Unfortunately, Poles tend to extrapolate it to the whole building including the outside. Most often, this manifests itself in an individual's untamed display of one's taste, which stands out from the surroundings, disturbing its potential peace and harmony. And yet a Polish architect and architectural theoretician, Juliusz Żórawski, who lived in the years 1898–1967, said that «Simplicity is synonymous with calm, confidence and determination» (Żórawski, 2008). On the other hand, the majority of the people might agree that elegance is discreteness, nobility of fabrics, timelessness, subtlety of colors and patterns. That it is harmony created by moderation and balance.

In the book, *A Bathtub with a Colonnade. Reports about Polish Space* (Springer, 2013), there is an interesting summary of the number of lessons related to art included in the compulsory education in various European countries. It is a comparison of how many hours of art education, music education, theater classes, dance classes, media arts, and architecture are held in several countries. The juxtaposition shows that during the first nine years of education children in Polish schools have as many hours of lessons related to art as a student from Liechtenstein has roughly in one year. Even if compared to another country from the used-to-be communist bloc, the conclusion is rather sad: the Pole has half as many hours as a young Romanian has in a decade.

### 8. Crayon colors

In Poland, and several other countries where entire generations were brought up with four colors of crayons (yellow, green, red, blue), the word “roof” is immediately associated with a red roof, the walls of a building with a yellow crayon. For those who are raised in Poland, the sky is blue, and the grass is green. And here's an anecdote. I once met some Dutch people on the Polish coast. They were there for the first time; they came by car. They didn't know my profession and started to share their observations about Poland. They said that we had good roads in Poland, but very strange houses. When asked what they meant by these very strange houses, they said, «You know, they have yellow walls and red roofs.» It was then that the basic color set of crayons from my childhood came to my mind as well as the pictures of children from that period in my life.

It would take real, basic education in the field of colors to be able to expect less harsh colors in the landscape of Polish cities, towns, suburbs, and on single buildings in fields. To be able to conduct a dialogue about choosing the color of the roof tiles (probably the buyer asks about the red color when buying the metal roof tiles, and the seller sells it to him, neither of them mentions the red-brick color, which, although also available in the offer, is no longer in stock because no one has asked about it for a long time).

If one wanted to refer to the historical buildings, one could ask about a roof covering in a gray-brown color, because thatch roofs were somewhere closer to this color as well as others historical roof coverings made of reed, aspen, and shingles.

Without some basic knowledge of the interlocutor, it is impossible to talk about glaze paints, which blend so beautifully into the surroundings. The Polish

interlocutor, in a way that is most understandable to me, will want «good, covering paint», and the words «acrylic» and «latex» will sound modern, and he will have chosen this modernity.

### **9. Talking about space in the spirit of “seeing anew what you already know”**

True communication is when both parties actively participate, both speaking and listening. This was emphasized by Marshall Rosenberg in the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) method he developed in the early 1960s, which serves as the basis for the process of supporting partnership and resolving interpersonal conflicts, both in relationships and, more broadly, in communities (Rosenberg, 2004).

It could be said that elements of this method were used in the «Seeing Anew» method, which serves to increase sensitivity to the harmony of the environment. The origin of the name of this method, which has been around for several years, is the slogan «Seeing anew what you already know». The author of this method is an architect and urban planner graduated from the Gdańsk University of Technology in the early 2000. A Pole raised in Western Europe, since her childhood she was accustomed to the visual distinctiveness of regions of this western European country and at a time when its inhabitants lacked nothing. After returning to Poland, which took place still during the times of the Polish People's Republic, she was surprised to see the direction in which the changes were going after the end of the scarcity economy. The author of the “Seeing anew what you already see” method is the author of this article.

### **10. Observation**

The created action program «Seeing Anew» is a program of education through play. Here, the collection of materials is thoughtfully prepared. Photos taken specifically for the classes: the shot, the light, the details are important. During the program, participants are shown photos from the area they know, and if the group is very local, even from the district where they live. It is important to work with images that are familiar to them.

The host does not judge these views, nor do the participants. First, they look, and their perception is stimulated in a simple way: the presented photo is printed twice, and there are several differences between the prints, prefabricated in a graphics program. Everyone gets their own set of prints, and

the adventure begins. It is often not obvious for the meeting participants which of the discovered differences represent the actual situation, and which is a clever «substituted» solution. However, it is becoming clear to them which solutions they prefer, often concluding that introducing such changes in reality would not require large budget outlays or be time-consuming, but yet would significantly affect the quality of the landscape and that these changes most often depend on the users of the space who could become its creators. It is just a matter of having an idea and implementing it. Sometimes this would require collaboration of the community together with the neighbors.

### **11. Freedom of feeling and ability to communicate**

The next plays (I intentionally avoid the word «games» because it bears the hallmarks of competition, which does not take place during the meeting nor is encouraged in any way during classes) are aimed at stimulating the freedom of feeling the feelings and also stimulating some communication skills. They aim at making people notice the subtleties of their surroundings and from where these subtleties come. Thus, the ability of expressing feelings that the surroundings evoke in us is the domain of the second element of the package «Seeing anew what you already know», in short: «Seeing Anew».

This skill, properly stimulated, among others, thanks to a set of subsequent photos and a package of phrases and specialized words introduced in the next step, appears lively and immediately seems well anchored. Here is what I wrote in 2015 when I was asked to describe my experiences for a publication about participatory planning: “What kind of amazing substantive discussions I have witnessed between complete strangers! It's nice to see that people can share their notions and are not afraid to talk to each other about emotions. Live, in front of witnesses, spontaneously and substantively” (Lasota, 2015, pp. 287) (Fig. 1).

As said before, these conversations revolve around some presented views of an area well known to the participants. The pictures sometimes show a well-kept building and street, a beautiful architectural detail, a splendid tree, nice looking garden or trash shed, and sometimes something leaving much to desire.

There is an interesting aspect of conducting workshops for groups from different ages. One can learn a lot from everyone, but above all, meeting children is eye-opening. Children have a fresh perspective, untainted by economic thinking, and they ruthlessly expose the world we live in. When



Fig. 1. People can express themselves without frustration when understanding how they feel and when they know words describing the parts of what they see.

Source: Lasota.

being shown a photo of a tenement house in a few versions (the «original windows» – «replaced windows» comparison, where in Poland windows are identified as an element of the interior and often replaced accidentally, for the convenience of the residents, and not to preserve the beauty of the building), they say, pointing to the photo of the current state - with any window joinery: «it's a mess here», «it looks as if people don't get along with one another, as if they trying to annoy each other» (Lasota, 2024).

## 12. Awareness of detail and terminology

It sometimes happens that children who have already participated in the workshops come to another one in a neighboring district. Even after a few weeks or a year, unattended, they are able to exclaim phrases as: «what a nice pattern of bricks» or: «ma'am, these doors are beautiful!... and this, this a cornice, am I right?» These are the children who felt for good that the details of buildings are like jewelry – they decorate them. Thanks to these kinds of details, the surroundings gain a subtle charm. Some children come accompanied by their parent or parents. For both adults and children, it is valuable time spent

together, during which they not only learn about the history of the place they live, but also learn new words and phrases. They come back, which is good, because it would not be possible to present the participants with all the terminology used by architecture and landscape specialists during one meeting.

## 13. Initiating cooperation

One of the activities is focused on building a human settlement out of wooden blocks on a scale of approximately 1:500. It was intended to shape the participants' spatial imagination and be an exercise in map reading for the people who will potentially one day be faced with buying a «hole» from a developer (buying an apartment at the building design stage happens quite a lot in Poland). However, I discovered another aspect of this exercise when, after the first surveys, I read that some people liked this construction because it taught them cooperation. These are the words for both kids and adults. The fact is that participants are building a city that cannot be created otherwise than with the cooperation of all those gathered, as they do it by building subsequent block houses (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Being involved together with others in building a neighborhood from wooden blocks requires cooperation. Source: Lasota.

#### 14. Conscious citizen

These are not all the elements of the package. Suffice it to say, with subsequent developments, the “Seeing Anew” package guides both adults and children to share responsibility for the aesthetics of their surroundings. This takes place in parallel with building a sense of local identity. This happens thanks to the incidentally told history of the place where we meet: the specificity of its architecture, the development of the region, presenting historical curiosities. The “Seeing Anew” is a method that may become important as an element of foundation for revitalization processes in the proper sense of the word. Only by starting to build in the society conscious competences on the edge of urban planning and landscape protection, can we substantively discuss the need to protect the natural or cultural landscape of regions.

#### 15. Summary

As a person who has lived in various places around the world since birth, not only in Poland, I have had the opportunity to observe various environments and the changes they underwent. This led me to

two main conclusions: 1. The beauty of the space in which we live depends on a sense of local identity. It allows us to protect the achievements of previous generations and create a legacy for the next generation. 2. The appearance of the environment reflects and influences interpersonal relationships.

The effect of the classes conducted according to the «Seeing Anew» program is to stimulate responsibility for the aesthetics of one’s own neighborhood (Fig. 3). I know of various examples of real action to improve the quality of space that took place after the «Seeing Anew» classes. I once received an email from a participant who after attending the workshop repainted their aquamarine house in the Kashubian countryside a different color (white, maybe not the best, but much better) and was «planning further embellishments”. It is worth adding that during the workshops, in which this person participated, color awareness was stimulated, without any specific example of any houses with facades painted harsh green color. It is very important not to stigmatize any solutions as we can accidentally make a participant feel judged. The aim is to inspire towards the best hue and material solutions for the area. The same can be said when talking about the selection of natural greenery. Therefore, repainting the house by this person is a result of the workshop participant’s own reflection.



Fig. 3. A group of local leaders discovering the value of details for the creation of a coherent whole.  
Source: Lasota.

Another example might be the inhabitants of the Biskupia Górka district of Gdańsk, who felt so inspired that they gathered together later to take care of one of the most exposed places in this district (a slope in front of a tenement house). They reported their need to the city hall and, as the district they were living in is covered by the revitalization program, they spontaneously received some financial and organizational assistance from the city. So, they dug and weeded the land, and made new plantings, by themselves. They also took care of the conservation of some forged elements of historic metal railings by cleaning them of paint and repainting them (Sulikowski, 2013). I am also aware that after various «Seeing Anew» meetings, different participants decided to buy balcony flowers and display them on the external window sills, thus beautifying the appearance of the building.

Another thing happened at the end of a summer camp with children in another historic district of Gdańsk. At the end of the last, fifth day of the camp, a tree was planted in an empty, treeless square. We did it together as an accomplishment of the workshops which started with nature looped back to the theme. Even though it was planted in the

heat of mid-August, and none of the participating children lived close enough to this place to take care of the tree, it survived. It happened thanks to the local residents, in front of whose windows the tree appeared one day probably in a quite unexpected way in the middle of the day and which they eagerly watered and even planted around with nasturtiums. This birch has been growing there for 11 years now, enriching this inconspicuous square (Fig. 4).

The awareness of beauty and the need for harmony can be developed at any age. Therefore, I will also mention that there was a «Seeing Anew» program of training for officials responsible for spatial planning in municipalities, gathering clerks from 20 distant rural and urban communes. «Seeing anew what you already know» – motivational training incentives in the field of environmental protection and spatial planning, including protected landscape protection. Some 1100 slides, mostly with pictures, were prepared in order to improve their professional competences and qualifications. The training had some of the nature of a workshop. The aim was to shape aesthetic sensitivity among office workers and awaken the sense of being co-responsible for the image of the village/commune/city and



Fig. 4. Planting a tree on a forgotten square as a final point for a 5 day summer camp for children from the district.

Source: Lasota.

its landscape surroundings. It was a motivational training in the field of environmental protection and spatial planning, including protected landscape protection. The 6-hour training (8 hours including all breaks) covered, among other things, the mentioned topics: the diversity of world cultures as local wealth, regional construction (cultural landscape and local identity), landscape elements and their impact on the overall perception, proportions and color selection as determinants of harmony, the impact of the environment on the quality of life, durability, quality and aesthetics of the materials used, threats to meadow ecosystems, trees and their role in the landscape, and foreign examples of striving for environmental coherence. Everything prepared with the intention to create a sense of individual and collective responsibility for the quality of surroundings, the beauty of the landscape and the cleanliness (and biodiversity) of the environment. The awareness of all the long-term consequences of changes in the landscape results in more thoughtful provisions in the local development plan. Pictures showing a juxtaposition of two photos in the theme of before / after proves the effect of thoughtful

provisions: a chaotic place looks much better for example when the colors of the buildings' roofs and walls are tuned down and when there are more plants especially when these plants are not thuja. The program was being prepared with a focus on the idea of showing people in the municipalities how big of an impact detailed descriptions have on the spatial plan: even the fences – their material, their height, the degree of their translucency, so as to keep a cohesion of the neighborhood.

Some places can look much better in 30 years. It is a matter of creating certain rules, explaining them, and watching the progress become real within each renovation. The intention is to promote the principles of sustainable development of space, motivate participants to approach the topic of consultations honestly, and show what benefits can be achieved with this approach showing the risks associated with a lack thereof.

Other adult-focused meetings were addressed to one poviat's (Polish prefecture's) leaders, the Kashubian region of Poland. The group included the mayor of a village, a few people working in culture, some retired people, but also a designing

architect, and an architect issuing building permits in the poviát head office. When asked why they decided to come, the architects expressed their lack of knowledge and understanding of the regional architecture although they were from the region themselves and graduated from the main technical university in the area.

Among the surveys from both the above-mentioned groups (training for civil servants and workshops for so-called regional leaders), despite the meeting lasting as long as 6 hours, there were statements in the surveys that showed a real hunger for knowledge. No one complained that the program was too long, quite the contrary. The groups are always small, up to 15 persons. No matter the form, kids or adults, I keep the group small to be able to listen to all the expressions said out loud and to see through their eyes to understand the actual, not expressed, feelings, if there are any. It is important to understand and discuss the topic so one particular thought of a participant does not ruin in their mind the whole idea of harmony and coherence of the landscape. And also so they don't pass this doubt onto the other participants in the coffee break or later. Usually, their doubts come down to the topic of money: and for sure, natural materials are more expensive than those in wide use for the last few decades. One can consider more expensive material when understanding the durability and other aspects like thermal and acoustic values. Additionally, this increased durability can spare the owner future renovation costs and inconvenience in one's older age. When the doubt derives from the fact that to realize the integrity of the house or landscape, one would need to talk to the neighbors or the community, I present pictures of successful

achievements from Poland, explaining how it happened and mention M. Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication method (2003). I often also present some background of the Polish history and how it influences the way we talk, and we do a few exercises rewriting pictured signs and notifications in a gentler way. It is fun, and it is also funny as a few fragments from comedy films from the Polish People's Republic are shown. Funny moments, but in which there is a specific language. Adults and sometimes even teenagers know these fragments, as the comedies were introduced to them by their parents. Now they have another perspective on what they watch: they recognize the communication from those movies more as a world of monologues in which a few generations grew up. It is important to understand the history of your own country to be able to make a change.

There were more than 75 people at all the mentioned adults "Seeing Anew" workshops and trainings, not to count those in Gdańsk's district of Biskupia Górka after which people reunited to work on the site. Many of these people wrote in the surveys that the meeting could have lasted longer. Nobody wrote that there were too many topics, too many pictures. And there were more than 1100 slides, most of them pictures. It is like imprinting what is worth remembering on the retina.

To sum up, one of the aspects of the educational activities conducted in the spirit of «Seeing anew» is the workshop participant's full understanding of its limitations, history, blockages. All this so that everyone can realize that cities can be either beautiful cities of ugly houses or ugly cities of beautiful houses.

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