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Landscape understanding and values in extended public consultations on spatial planning in rural communes in Poland

Abstract

A large part of spatial planning projects in Polish rural communes deals with landscape issues such as protection and planning. Besides legal regulations extended public consultations (EPCs) on spatial planning processes provide an opportunity to comprehensively address and negotiate landscape arguments. This research aims to identify the understanding and values of the concept of landscape by local communities in the examined EPC cases. This paper explores landscape issues through a systematic analysis (multiple-case study) of six cases of EPCs carried out in Poland between 2019 and 2022. The landscape was negotiated in terms of its various functions to provide values for aesthetics, culture, history, identity, recreation, and economy. In some cases, the landscape was used as an argument to promote a hidden agenda. In the rural communes, aesthetic functions of landscapes were frequently addressed, while natural, ecological, and climatic functions of the landscape were barely mentioned, suggesting that the understanding of landscape remains at a representative, cultural, and visual level, which differs from urban discourses that often focus on climatic and ecological functions of landscape. EPCs are a sound instrument to further integrate landscape as a common asset into spatial planning processes.

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1 Introduction

Sustainable development of rural communities can only be successful if landscape and nature are seen as common assets (Antrop and Van Eetvelde, 2017, p. v, viii, 97, 400). Since the Rio Summit in 1992 and the New Leipzig Charter in 2021 (The New Leipzig Charter: Synthesis and Focus, 2021), human benefits arising from landscape functions have been widely acknowledged. Landscape elements are seen as a key factor in ecological development projects in urban and rural communities (Antrop, 2004; Clos, 2017). However, in Europe, including Poland, there are still obstacles to landscape protection, management, and planning in rural communities. Difficulties with a coherent understanding of landscape are a key constraint to local development (Price, 2017, pp.68-69). The domain of landscape values and its understanding is important for landscape and spatial planning (Calderon & Butler, 2020; Ramos et al., 2019) but, at the same time, due to its multifaced nature, it can be an obstacle (Biedenweg et al., 2019; Moosavi et al., 2023). In Poland, landscape issues and concepts are anchored in the laws on spatial planning, nature conservation, and monument protection, but their implementation is fragmentary and does not actively involve local communities. One of the emerging opportunities to enhance landscape issues in spatial planning is the use of **extended public consultations** (EPCs) on spatial planning documents. This implies additional community involvement that does not result from a statutory procedure. Rural communes may organize EPCs under financial grants from the government and such cases are considered in this article. In recent years in Poland, this has become an increasingly common method of expanding opportunities for community involvement in spatial decision-making processes. This seems to be an opportunity for landscape issues to be visible in the public debate considering that inclusive spatial policies are still under threat and at the same time they are increasingly important for contemporary societies.

1.1. Multiplicity of landscape understandings

The understanding and evaluation of landscapes are subject to constant change depending on prior knowledge, sociocultural shapers, temporal recep-

tion, cognitive perception, and theoretical classification in different disciplines (Antrop & Van Eetvelde, 2017; Strecker, 2018). Even the meaning of landscape has no fixed form and keeps shifting to reflect historically and culturally specific understandings of space and nature, which evolve and change due to differing ideologies and interpretations (Ahn, 2019; Price, 2017, pp.45-59). Therefore, many historical, contemporary, and scientific definitions of landscape coexist, as is also represented in the case studies (Żarska et al., 2014, pp. 7-12). For instance, landscape in England is often understood as scenery, while in the United States it rather denotes a territory, and the German term *Landschaft* often refers to a polity and a region (Antrop and Van Eetvelde, 2017, p. 39; Jones and Stenseke, 2011, p.8; Olwig, 2007). A holistic definition of landscape is included in the European Landscape Convention (ELC) (European Landscape Convention and Reference Documents, 2000; Strecker, 2018), which has been ratified by most European countries, becoming a binding legal instrument (Buława et al., 2022). These and other numerous definitional efforts testify to the multidimensionality of landscape understandings, diffuse conceptualization and shifting meanings of the term landscape. This is not just a dilemma for linguists and theorists, but also affects the public debate and participatory processes related to landscape in spatial planning.

1.2. Landscape in the legal spatial planning system in Poland

The landscape as an element of spatial planning in Poland is regulated through the Act of 27 March 2003 on **Spatial Planning and Land Development**. The Act was amended in 2023 and in its new wording entered into force on 24 September 2023 (Dz.U. z 2023, poz. 977 (in force since 24.09.2023)). It is worth noting that the studies in question (concerning cases completed in the years 2019-2022) were carried out in the legal status prior to amendments (Dz.U. z 2022, poz. 503 (in force until 23.09.2023)). The definitions listed below are the same in the Act before and after the 2023 amendment. The position of the landscape did not change significantly with the law amendment. However, the new law replaced some planning documents (as explained below) and

strengthened the role of public involvement. The Act introduces a **definition of landscape**, which is defined as a space perceived by people, containing natural elements or products of civilization, formed as a result of natural factors or human activity. The definition closely reflects the definition in the ELC. Landscape issues are also addressed in the **Act of 23 July 2003 on the Protection and Care of Historical Monuments** (Dz.U. 2022 poz. 840, 2022). It introduces the idea of **cultural landscape** (Polish: *krajobraz kulturowy*), which is also closely related to the ELC definition of landscape, but it concerns historical areas.

Returning to The Act of 27 March 2003 on Spatial Planning and Land Development, it also introduces the concept of **priority landscape** (Polish: *krajobraz priorytetowy*), a type of landscape perceived as particularly valuable to society (legally considered at the voivodeship level). At the local level, before the 2023 amendment, the Act provided a **study of the conditions and directions of spatial management of the commune, SCDSM** (Polish: *studium uwarunkowań i kierunków zagospodarowania przestrzennego gminy, SUIKZPG*), and a **local spatial management plan, LSMP** (Polish: *miejscowy plan zagospodarowania przestrzennego, MPZP*). These documents (and related procedures) were the subject of extended public consultations (EPCs) considered in this article. It is worth noting that since 24 September 2023 (the amendment) SCDSM has been replaced by a general plan (Polish: *plan ogólny*), while LSMP has not changed fundamentally since the amendment.

Until 23 September 2023, the SCDSM defined the spatial planning policy at the communal level. It covers the entire area of the commune. Pursuant to the Act, the landscape is considered in relation to the protection of environmental, natural, and cultural values. More specifically, the SCDSM refers to **cultural landscapes** and **priority landscapes**. The landscape issues take the form of binding guidelines for further LSMPs in relation to other forms of nature and environmental protection. In any case, landscape issues appear in the SCDSM mostly because of other protection forms and do not deal with landscape issues in a comprehensive and multifaceted way. Thus, the SCDSM instrument creates a valid basis for communities to implement landscape issues

in their local development, but only in a limited way.

In contrast, the LSMP is not mandatory for the commune. It directly determines the potential use of the land. It must be consistent with the findings of the SCDSM and may be considered as its refinement. Once enacted, the plan is binding as a local law. In the LSMP, landscape issues such as protection and planning are treated as orders, prohibitions, authorizations, and restrictions on the use of land. This is due to the legal construction of the Act and results in a narrow treatment of the landscape.

Compared to the legal acts mentioned above, the **Act of 16 April 2004 on Nature Conservation** (Dz.U. 2023 poz. 1336, 2023) offers the most substantial legal framework to consider landscape concerns in an integrated manner. The Act introduces specific **landscape values** (Polish: *walory krajobrazowe*), which relate to **natural, cultural, historical, and visual aesthetic qualities** of an area and include the topography of the land and components of natural and cultural elements shaped by natural forces or human activities. In this Act, landscape values are mostly defined by compositional and visual aspects. Focusing on landscape protection, it distinguishes the following aspects of a valuable landscape:

- **scenic axis** (Polish: *oś widokowa*), an imaginary straight line directing the eye to the characteristic elements of land and area use;
- **exposure foreground** (Polish: *przedpole ekspozycji*), vast horizontal planes allowing panoramic views, in particular water bodies, slopes, or flat valley bottoms;
- **vantage point** (Polish: *punkt widokowy*), a topographically elevated place or point in the terrain from which the visual layout of the viewing area is wide and distant for the observer; and
- **landscape protection** (Polish: *ochrona krajobrazowa*), conservation of the characteristics of the landscape.

Overall, although the ELC calls for integrating landscape issues into spatial planning and spatial policies, it is still noticeable that while the SCDSM and LSMP incorporate landscape issues, they do not seek a comprehensive understanding of landscape. Despite the policies contained in the above-mentioned Acts, landscape issues often receive little attention in formal planning processes as well as in the legal

system in Poland and are not recognized as a key factor for sustainable spatial planning in rural communities (Pluta, 2017; Żarska et al., 2014, pp. 30-34).

1.3. Public participation and Extended Public Consultations (EPC) in Poland

Public participation in spatial planning has been increasingly disseminated in the literature since the introduction of the Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969), leading to guides such as The Public Participation Handbook (Creighton, 2005), operational manuals for Polish rural communes such as Everything Is Clear (Polish: *“Wszystko jasne”*) (Chustecka, 2019), or A Moderator’s Toolbox (Polish: *“Poradnik moderatorki”*) (Bregin et al., 2019). However, many researchers point out that public participation is not sufficiently developed in practice (Butler, 2014; Butler & Berglund, 2014; Santé et al., 2020). Bryl-Roman argues that at the foreground of contemporary landscape problems is the lack of education (Bryl-Roman, 2019). Calderon and Butler, on the other hand, claim that an insufficiently grounded theory of the relationship between landscape, democracy, and participation and a direct focus on practice are responsible for the poor operationalization of participatory ideals (Calderon & Butler, 2020). In Poland, public participation processes are often related to revitalization/restoration projects in accordance with municipal revitalization programs and participatory budgets (Kulig et al., 2018; Solecka & Dworniczak, 2016). Additionally, participatory processes in Poland predominantly take place in urban areas, omitting rural communes even though public involvement in the latter areas is just as important.

In Poland, as part of the mandatory planning procedure related to communal spatial documents such as the SCDSM and the LSMP, civic society has certain influence over planning procedures through public participation. During the process of enacting these planning documents, the rural commune is obliged to publish draft planning documents in paper form and online to allow comments on these drafts and to organize at least one public debate on these drafts.

Since the legal procedure for landscape issues is rather weak, landscape concerns may be raised in planning processes not only through administration and mandatory public involvement but also through

EPCs funded by the Polish government and operated by various agencies (e.g. those listed in section 2.1). Therefore, some rural communes pursue broader participation processes. On behalf of the communal government, the implementing organization invites rural communes interested in conducting an EPC process related to the planning documents currently under development in such communes.

At the beginning of the process these rural communes subsequently develop a consultation plan in cooperation with the implementing organization. This plan consists of an analysis and diagnosis of the rural commune, including the current planning situation and anticipated planning problems. Moreover, it details the expectations of the local community and foresees consultation techniques along with a schedule (Bregin et al., 2019; Chustecka, 2019). At the end of the process, a final report is produced with recommendations worked out during the process. It also verifies the achievement of the objectives set out in the consultation plan, concludes on the developed solutions, and the social consensus reached regarding the planning document in question. It should also note captured changes around issues in question, state of knowledge, narratives, and attitudes of the local community towards the issues and challenges identified in the consultation plan. Both the consultation plan and report are to be developed and edited together by representatives of the involved municipality and implementing organization, as the knowledge and competence transfer was also a goal of the programs.

EPCs serve as a platform to reach social consensus and give recommendations on the SCDSM or LSMP at the municipal level in coordination with the official statutory procedure on spatial documents. EPC processes shift the common understanding of the society, engaged citizens, and communes to important spatial planning issues, including landscape concerns. Public participation (such as the EPC) reflects the demands seen in the ELC (par. 5c) and the Guidelines for the implementation of the ELC (par. G) call for public involvement in general landscape issues. The analyzed EPCs focus on specific cases rather than developing general principles, but they reflect ideas expressed in the convention.

1.4. Study goal and research question

The research is based on the **hypothesis** that although EPCs serve as a platform to convey a comprehensive landscape understanding in rural communes, which is a key factor for sustainable and ecological spatial planning, only some values are perceived by local communities and the landscape is understood in narrow visual aesthetic terms. Thus, the research examines the Polish realities of spatial planning procedures in rural areas, focusing on the nuanced meanings and values associated with landscapes in participation processes. These issues are commonly represented in the literature individually, while the joint perspective is rarely explored (Antrop and Van Eetvelde, 2017). Perception, values, and understanding of landscape tend to be overlooked during public participation in rural communes in Poland, while the focus is on physical attributes and spatial facts. As Calderon and Butler argue, a better understanding of landscape and recognition of its values would make the differences and conflicts present in the landscape more visible and transparent (Calderon & Butler, 2020). The **research goal**, therefore, was to investigate how landscape is understood, and which landscape values are important to Polish rural communities during spatial planning procedures. For this purpose, the following **research questions** were investigated:

- How was the landscape understood by the local community?
- Which landscape values were relevant to participants in the examined EPC cases?

2 Materials and methods

2.1 Criteria for including EPC examples in the study

To draw cross-case conclusions, the cases were selected according to the following criteria:

- An EPC was related directly or indirectly to landscape issues.
- An EPC was launched in a rural commune.
- An EPC was carried out between 2019 and 2022 in Poland.
- An EPC was part of one of the following programs established and funded by the Polish Government

under the Operational Program Knowledge Education Development (Polish: *Program Operacyjny Wiedza Edukacja Rozwój*) co-financed by the European Union under the European Social Fund:

- **Our Space: Public Consultations on Planning Documents in Rural Areas and Small Towns** (Polish: *Nasza przestrzeń. Konsultacje społeczne dokumentów planistycznych na wsi i w małych miastach*), which was implemented and supervised by the Rural Development Foundation in Warsaw (Polish: *Fundacja Wspomagania Wsi w Warszawie*, hereafter FWW), and
- **School of Conscious Urban Planning 2.0** (Polish: *Szkoła świadomego planowania przestrzennego 2.0*), which was implemented and supervised by the Association for Supporting Economic Initiatives Delta Partner in Cieszyn (Polish: *Stowarzyszenie Wspierania Inicjatyw Gospodarczych Delta Partner w Cieszynie*, hereafter DELTA).

2.2. Selected cases – an overview of the study areas and considered EPCs

Six cases of extended public consultations (EPC) on spatial planning processes in Poland were selected and investigated in chronological order. The locations of analyzed cases of rural communes are shown in Figure 1. The cases of Rudnik and Łomazy dealt with the SCDSM, while Grudusk, Dąbrowa, Brenna, and Hażlach concerned the LSMP. Four cases were implemented by FWW, and two cases were implemented by DELTA. All cases were part of the professional activities of one of authors of this article within the EPCs. He was involved on behalf of the implementing institution as a co-creator of the consultation plan or on behalf of the rural commune launching the EPC as a facilitator or expert. This ensured first-hand, personal, and local expertise and enabled to employ the range of observation method in the research. Below is an overview of the investigated cases (spatial attributes and the EPC process). Further contextual case descriptions are presented in Appendix 1 (spatial and landscape attributes) and Appendix 2 (the EPC processes). The analyzed data come from observation during the consultation's techniques, and document studies encompassing the consultation plan and final reports of the respective cases.



Figure 1. Locations of the six analyzed cases in Poland. Source: Own study, based on Google Maps.

Grudusk

The planning and participation process focused on the village of Żarnowo, but in fact the issue touched on a problem that is urgent throughout the entire commune of Grudusk. The EPC focused on the area of the proposed Natural and Scenic Complex “Żarnowskie Ponds” (Polish: *Zespół Przyrodniczo-Krajozawodowy „Stawy Żarnowskie”*) (shown in Figure 2). It concerned the everyday landscape on a scale of panoramas, interiors, openings, and views.



Figure 2. Żarnowskie Ponds in Żarnowo. Photo: Author, 2024.

The main impetus for the discussion came from the plans to build industrial livestock farms across the commune, with particular focus on the village of Żar-

nowo. The inhabitants opposed the construction of industrial livestock farms, which were proposed by investors coming from outside the rural commune. At the same time, they did not want to block opportunities for their own farmers to grow their business.

Brenna

The focal point of the process was the center of the village of Brenna (in the Brenna commune) and the entire valley enclosed by the surrounding mountains (shown in Figure 3). The landscape issue was discussed on a scale of small architectural-landscape interiors (between buildings, squares, and streets), mid-size landscape interior sequences around the Brennica River, and the large landscape interior of the Brenna commune, including the surrounding mountains.



Figure 3. View of the Brennica River. Photo: Author, 2023.

The objectives included redesigning the center of Brenna along the river to improve its functionality, address car traffic and parking issues, redevelop the tourist offerings, protect the landscape of the Brennica valley and increase its attractiveness, and eliminate nuisance features.

Dąbrowa

The spatial focal point of the process in the Dąbrowa commune was the shore of Siecienica Lake (shown in Figure 4) in the village of Parlinek. The process concerned a very small plan (LSMP) covering no more than a few lakeside plots of land, including a lake-focused landscape interior visually separated by surrounding hills.



Figure 4. The Siecienica Lake in the village of Parlinek. Photo: Author, 2024.

The landscape concerns related to the development of this small lakeside area with a sequence of recreational spaces and features such as an unguarded beach. The beach and the lake were characterized by functional limitations, and the rural commune focused on developing the recreational and tourism potential at this location.

Rudnik

The discussion on landscape issues in the Rudnik commune was limited to one location: the palace and park complex (several hectares in size) in the village of Sławików, owned by the rural commune (shown in Figure 5). The park adopted a formal design language of the 18th and 19th centuries, characterized by internal and external compositional relationships, axes, garden interiors, openings, and



Figure 5. The former palace and park complex in the village of Sławików. Photo: Author, 2022.

spatially integrated views with the village (Żarska et al., 2014, pp. 69-73).

The EPC revolved around a problem that occurred throughout the commune: rich cultural and material heritage without funds for its activation/revitalization. Thus, the goal was to redevelop the former palace and park complex in the village of Sławików. The process focused on establishing a new function and developing the complex towards tourism and recreation, taking advantage of the surrounding landscape, cultural heritage, and visual attributes.

Hażlach

The EPC in the Hażlach commune focused on the historical centers of two villages: Kończyce Wielkie (shown in Figure 6) and Zamarski (shown in Figure 7). The discussed landscape issues concerned social functions of public spaces for daily use. Elements of the landscape such as axes, spatial dominance, rhythm, visual relationship between elements, openings, and closure of the view all mattered.



Figure 6. Historical church in Kończyce Wielkie. Photo: Author, 2021.



Figure 7. Centre of the village of Zamarski. Photo: Author, 2021.

The process focused on the spatial development of the centers of the two villages. In each of them, it was important to identify key directions and forms of development that reflected the needs of the local community and to create places and spaces that encouraged everyday activity and recreation. An additional effect of the process was the development of a vinery as well as enotourism across the commune.

Łomazy

The spatial scope of the process in the commune of Łomazy comprised the entire commune including the village of Łomazy (shown in Figure 8) as well as landscape elements such as streams, canals, culverts, and retention facilities. Together, they form sequences of scenery that make up the landscape of the commune.



Figure 8. Centre of the village of Łomazy. Photo: Author, 2021..

The process focused on water management as well as flood and drought prevention from an agricultural perspective. This was prompted by dissatisfaction with the local water management and demands for its reorganization. In addition, it was associated with agricultural development and the plan to build industrial livestock farms by a group of investors, which was opposed by the residents.

2.3. Methods

The research was carried out using a **multiple-case study** (Yin, 2017), (Groat L. and Wang D., 2013, pp. 415-424) with qualitative methods (pp. 215-261).

The research comprised two following techniques:

- documentary analysis: the consultation plan and consultation reports;
- participant and passive observation (2019-2022) during the realization of consultation techniques: meetings, workshops, information desks, research walks, surveys, and opinion polls.

When analyzing the documents, we looked for content directly and indirectly related to the landscape:

- a. directly - when it was expressed with the word “landscape” or any synonymous expressions; then we tried to determine what values and understanding of the landscape are behind them,
- b. indirectly – when the content under the question may potentially influence the landscape, or when content under the question may express values and understanding of the landscape.

Moreover, we compared the position of the landscape (including its values and understanding) in investigated cases in consultation’s plan and the report after the process to see how these issues evolve during the process. The goal and the content of the consultation’s plans and reports are characterized in section 1.3.

The second technique, which enables us to gain original information from the local community (participants) with their context in the discussions, forced ideas, emotions, expressions, and engagement were observations. They were realized as participant observation in cases where the coauthor of this article was personally and actively engaged in the realization of consultation techniques as a moderator or expert (Brenna, Rudnik, and Hażlach). In the cases of Grudusk, Dąbrowa, and Łomazy, where the coauthor was engaged in the preparation, monitoring, and evaluation of the process, the observation was realized as a passive observation during the technique’s realization and by other experts. In these cases, the process and conclusions were discussed with them to extract the essence of values related to landscape and its meaning in a particular activity with the local community (participants). Groups of participants are listed in the Appendix 2. During the observation they were involved in consultation techniques according to the previously approved consultation plan (list of techniques is in Appendix 2). We observed and focused on the following issues:

- what do participants focus on when expressing their problems, needs, and expectations related to their neighborhood and surroundings?
- how do they imagine their neighborhood in the future and how is it related to landscape issues?
- how do they react to problems, conflicts, and divergent expectations related to their neighborhood and surroundings?
- do they pay attention to the landscape in general?
- how can they describe landscape and landscape-related issues and what terms do they use?
- with which topics do they associate the landscape if it appears in the discussion, during the workshop, and what issues are important then?

This technique was important for our research as, in opposition to the first technique, it enabled the access first-hand information possible to read from situations, dialogs, spontaneous reactions, what is not possible to acquire from aggregated information in documents. The summary of investigated EPC processes, key data, participants and the list of involved techniques are tabled in Appendix 2.

We used these two techniques as they complement each other and serve as a peer review / verification for each other. It was necessary because we have assumed at the beginning, that landscape values and understanding may not be expressed directly, as it was not the essential goal of EPC. Furthermore, directly asking participants about the landscape values that are important to them and how they understand landscape would not be clear to a layperson. In this light we needed to interpretate the content of documents, obtained data, and information in their context from ongoing techniques of consultations.

It is to note, that some techniques (as noted in Appendix 2) were realized online due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which was a factor that made it difficult to carry out the study.

2.4. Research criteria

To systematize our research data collected from documentary analyses and consultations technique analyses, which was descriptive, in the next step we tried to merge these findings with definitions from Acts mentioned in section 1.2 or if not fit into them we noted such fact and described it. In result the

following criteria were employed to systematize and compare landscape-related arguments and understandings within the case studies:

- compositional values such as scenic axes, exposure foregrounds, and vantage points;
- visual aesthetic values, understanding of landscape qualities related to the definition of priority landscape;
- cultural values, understanding of landscape qualities related to the definition of cultural landscape;
- historical values;
- natural values;
- other landscape-related values recorded during the consultation process (EPC) and/or related to sustainable development and climate changes.

3 Results

3.1. Grudusk

In the case of Grudusk, which dealt with the construction of industrial livestock farms, landscape did neither relate to a priority landscape nor a cultural landscape. Hence, the discourse within the EPC did not place significant emphasis on **historical, cultural, and visual aesthetic values**, for instance scenic axes, exposure foregrounds, vantage points, or touristic landscape assets. Most of the arguments regarding landscape focused on issues of landscape protection related to its natural values. For the participants, however, the decisive factor was not the intrinsic value of nature and landscape itself, but rather the strategic use of nature conservation arguments to counteract unwanted spatial development driven by foreign investors. For this reason, the experts advocated the adoption of a local spatial development plan rather than being guided by nature conservation and protection policies and approaches. However, this argument failed to persuade either the local community or the authorities. Instead, the participants focused on economic, marketing, and nature protection aspects of the landscape but used them as tools to block unwanted investments.

3.2. Brenna

Unlike the previous case, the landscape in Brenna was designated as both a priority landscape and a cultural landscape. However, the discussion during the EPC on the redesign of the center of Brenna along the Brennica River went beyond scenic axes, exposure foregrounds, and vantage points, also addressing landscape protection arguments. Notably, the participants discussed landscape in accordance with the legal definition, demonstrating a fairly comprehensive understanding of landscape encompassing **cultural, historical, and visual aesthetic values**. The landscape of Brenna, especially the Brennica River, was seen as a major asset of the commune in terms of tourism and recreation rather than in terms of the natural values. The participants stressed the functional, aesthetic, transportation, and traffic-related aspects of the landscape, arguing for better landscape protection and management, as well as the preservation and enhancement of aesthetic and functional values of green spaces, especially around the funfair and market stalls in the village center.

3.3. Dąbrowa

The EPC in Dąbrowa, which focused on the development of Siecienica Lake, discussed primarily recreational aspects of the landscape and compositional aspects such as scenic axes, exposure foregrounds, and vantage points. The landscape was not considered a priority landscape nor a cultural landscape, but it played a crucial role in shaping the identity of the community. While the discussion focused on the **visual aesthetic and recreational values** of the landscape, **natural, cultural, and historical values** as well as landscape protection were hardly addressed. The participants expressed a strong emotional connection to the place, as some older residents remembered using the unguarded beaches when they were young. The residents argued in the EPC that the lake would be a unique place in the commune, where they could relax and enjoy leisure activities on the waterfront, stressing the recreational, social, and identity-forming aspects of the landscape.

3.4. Rudnik

In Rudnik, the landscape was considered a cultural landscape. In the discussion on the development of

the palace and park complex under financial constraints, landscape aspects were seen as an economic asset. In particular, scenic axes, exposure foregrounds, and vantage points were seen as important factors in the development of the area, while ecological arguments and landscape protection issues were only mentioned in passing. In other words, **the cultural, historical, and visual aesthetic values** of the landscape all mattered but **natural values** did not. In the process, landscape aspects were understood and argued as symbols of beauty and exclusivity. Landscape values per se were crucial for the participants in terms of the mental image, local identity, and future development and delimitation issues with the palace and park complex.

3.5. Hażlach

As in the case of Rudnik, the landscape of Kończyce Wielkie and Zamarski villages in the Hażlach commune was not designated a priority landscape but a cultural landscape. In both villages, which aimed to enhance their historic village centers, the scenic axes, exposure foregrounds, and vantage points were seen as important, whereas landscape protection aspects were rarely discussed by the participants. This indicates a prioritization of **cultural, historical, identity, and visual aesthetic values** over **natural values**. The discussion revolved around the demand to improve the public spaces of the villages to achieve social and recreational goals through landscape solutions. Calls were made for the introduction of greenery to enhance the aesthetic value of common public spaces and facilities.

3.6. Łomazy

The EPC mainly focused on improving water management in relation to agricultural needs and unwanted agricultural development (industrial livestock farms). Landscape-related discussions focused mainly on issues of landscape transformation subordinated to agriculture protection even though **ecological aspects** were pushed from the beginning of the process as the starting point. Despite the distinctive landscape scenery based on an agrarian water management system, the landscape of Łomazy was not designated as a priority landscape nor a cultural landscape. During the consultations process, **cul-**

Table 1. Landscape values that were openly addressed during EPCs.

Case No.	Commune	Focus area under consultation	Landscape values								
			compositional values	visual aesthetic values	cultural values	historical values	identity values	social and recreational values	economic values	natural values (nature protection)	ecological and climatic values
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
1	Grudusk	Village of Żarnowo	low	low	low	low	low	low	high	mid	low
2	Brenna	Center of the village of Brenna and its valley	high	high	high	high	mid	high	high	low	low
3	Dąbrowa	The lakeshore of Siecienica Lake in the village of Parlin	high	high	low	low	high	high	low	low	low
4	Rudnik	The palace and park complex in the village of Sławików	high	high	high	high	high	mid	high	low	low
5	Hazlach	The village centers of Kończyce Wielkie and Zamarski	high	high	high	high	high	high	low	low	low
6	Łomazy	The entire commune of Łomazy	low	low	low	low	low	low	mid	mid	mid
TOTAL			4x high 2x low	4x high 2x low	3x high 3x low	3x high 3x low	3x high 1x mid 2x low	3x high 1x mid 2x low	3x high 1x mid 2x low	- 2x mid 4x low	- 1x mid 5x low

tural, historical, and visual aesthetic values such as scenic axes, exposure foregrounds, and vantage points were of little importance. At first, the participants did not attach much importance to on a comprehensive understanding of landscape. Instead, they demonstrated a utilitarian understanding of landscape, emphasizing its functional and technical aspects for agricultural use. Unlike politicians, the participating farmers attributed the flooding of their fields to technical failures rather than to climate change. This also determined controversies and differences in perception regarding the use of traditional methods versus modern solutions that consider climate change and water management requirements in agricultural areas. The realization that landscape plays a key role in climate change mitigation and ecological improvement as well as shapes the mental image and identity of the community started to emerge during the EPC process.

3.7. Summary of the results

The cases demonstrate a wide range of landscape values and understandings. In alignment with the research question, Table 1 offers a condensed and comparative overview of the results, applying a graded scale of the presence of individual values from high to medium to low. The table shows landscape values consistent with the legal acts listed in section

1.2 (blue rows) and those not covered by these legal acts (white rows).

The examination of the six cases reveals many different landscape values and related understandings, indicating a clear prioritization of specific values. In other words, certain values appear frequently in all cases, while others receive minimal attention. It turned out that in the analyzed cases, compositional, aesthetic, and visual values were addressed most frequently (4 x high, 2 x low). Identity, social, recreational, and economic values met with moderate interest (3 x high, 1 x mid, 2 x low). Slightly less but comparable interest was shown in cultural and historical values (3 x high, 3 x low). Finally, natural, ecological, and climatic values of the landscape were least present in the discussions in the studied cases (2 x mid, 4 x low; 1 x mid, 5 x low respectively). It should be noted that the scales used are conventional and it is difficult to make precise comparisons between the examined cases in their individual contexts, but the overall picture shows the characteristic tendencies discussed below. Moreover, four aspects (values) of the landscape that are not openly expressed in the analyzed legal acts were recorded during the EPC processes, namely identity, social and recreational, economic, and ecological and climatic values.

4 Discussion

4.1. Landscape as scenic and aesthetic value

The landscape in the examined cases was discussed mainly in terms of its visual and compositional qualities. In particular, the debates focused on the aesthetics of open spaces and landscapes (the cases of Hażlach and Brenna), scenic qualities (the cases of Brenna, Dąbrowa, and Rudnik), and visual and compositional relationships such as scenic axes, exposure foreground, and vantage point (the cases of Brenna, Rudnik, and Hażlach). This perception is strongly related to the definitions and approaches represented in the Act of 16 April 2004 on Nature Conservation (Dz.U. 2023 poz. 1336, 2023). The focus on the scenery and aesthetic values of the landscape is not surprising and reflects an approach that prioritizes the appearance of the surroundings. Bogdanowski states that the landscape is the physiognomy of the environment, being a synthesis of natural elements and human activities (Bogdanowski, 1994). In fact, this landscape understanding derives from a specific mode of perception and a scenic landscape legacy. Our research shows that to this day the concept of landscape is often reduced to its scenic dimensions. The close association of landscape with “beautiful scenery” has its roots in landscape painting of the post-medieval period, where the depiction of rural scenic views became popular (Strecker, 2018; Tuan, 1979). Owing to the legacy of Dutch landscape painters, landscapes function “as a strong imageable and poetic reality” (Giro, 2017, pp. 136).

The understanding of the scenic landscape not only affects the conception of landscape and contemporary landscape design but also influences lawmaking as “early national laws focused on the ‘beauty’ and ‘character’ of landscapes and sites, leading into landscape protection laws” (Strecker, 2018). This is reflected in the Act of 16 April 2004 on Nature Conservation, which is based on compositional and visual attributes (Dz.U. 2023 poz. 1336, 2023). Certain ways of seeing and compositional principles such as scenic axis, vantage point, and exposure foreground shape the understanding of how the landscape is looked at and assessed.

4.2. Landscape identity, cultural heritage, and historical value

The emphasis on cultural and historical values of the landscape not only reflects traditional viewing conventions but is also important for place attachment. In the case of Rudnik, for example, creating an identity through historical landscape values was important because it promoted a new mental image and helped reposition the place through its landscape. However, looking at cultural landscapes, Jackson criticizes the historicizing and idealizing vision and directed attention to the everyday reality of landscapes (Jackson, 1957). Following his thoughts, Bucher observes that “the eye is directed at the past, and thus only sees destroyed, formerly ‘beautiful landscapes’ instead of the alive and hence positively charged, ‘day-to-day contemporary landscape’” (Bucher, 2016, p. 41).

Only Brenna (out of all six cases) is characterized by mountain landscapes that can be considered of exceptional value. The other analyzed cases concern mostly “day-to-day contemporary landscapes” (as noted in Appendices 1 and 2). In fact, except for Rudnik, the studied cases are affected by rural sprawl, which can be considered a type of degradation. Other forms of landscape degradation (or possible degradation) include industrial livestock farms in the communes of Grudusk and Łomazy. The rising rural sprawl and new industrial livestock farms are changing the local identity as well as cultural and natural values.

In the case of Dąbrowa, the participants expressed an emotional connection to the lakeshore area, as some older residents remembered using it in their youth. Thus, the discussed (re)development was seen as a continuity of their heritage. In the village centers of Kończyce Wielkie and Zamarski, cultural heritage was important, but rather as an attractive context for activities.

4.3. Landscape as recreation space for inhabitants and social values

Landscapes and public open spaces were discussed in Brenna, Hażlach, and Dąbrowa, also in terms of their recreational value for those seeking physical and mental well-being (Bil et al., 2021). In the vil-

lages of Kończyce Wielkie and Zamarski (the case of Hażlach), recreational facilities and greenery in public spaces were the focus of the discussions as the social aspect was important to the participants. In Dąbrowa, the recreational aspect of the landscape was discussed.

In fact, aesthetic and recreational values are massive drivers for landscape policies, going beyond the analyzed cases (Fagerholm et al., 2019; Garcia-Martin et al., 2017; Gobster et al., 2007). This is based on a human-centered approach to the landscape concept, which prioritizes the role of landscapes for human health and well-being. The landscape is perceived (by people), forms the natural and cultural heritage (for people), is used to produce food (for people), and lastly is used to make money (by people). The recreational function of the landscape is often measured in terms of experiences people have with its natural and cultural assets, and in terms of their social engagements and leisure activities in landscape spaces (Hansen, 2021; Hoyle et al., 2018; Southon et al., 2018). However, it should be noted that prior experience, the degree of satisfaction, and expectations regarding leisure activities and recreational spaces are closely related to individual backgrounds, namely personal values, needs, beliefs, and interests as well as behavioral patterns and cultural literacy (Ahn, 2019; Garcia-Martin et al., 2017; Kaur et al., 2004; Povilanskas et al., 2016). According to Hansen, recreational landscapes not only nourish the social dimension but can also create numerous encounters between people and nature (Hansen, 2021, p. 135). Cullinan points out that caring and concern for nature (and thus the landscape) requires closeness to nature and an emotional bond with it (Cullinan, 2011).

These human-nature encounters for recreational purposes also shaped the discussion about the revival of winemaking traditions and enotourism in the case of Hażlach (the village of Kończyce Wielkie). This concept can be seen ambiguously as an idea to reclaim the cultural heritage or as an idea of economic development revealing a conflict between conservation and transformation of the landscape (vineyards and enotourism). In the end, the recreational potential of landscapes helped in the discussion of the existing values and themes (such as

the rural sprawl, quality of public spaces, and nature protection).

Neither in Grudusk nor in Łomazy was the recreational aspect considered as a priority. The case of Dąbrowa concerned a recreational space intended for local communities and not seen as a tourist destination. The same was true in Hażlach, but in the sense of the consulted centers of two villages. In Brenna and Rudnik, the recreational values for the local communities were combined with tourism objectives. Going back to Hażlach, the idea of enotourism that was finally developed should also be considered as a mainly tourist offer for visitors.

4.4. *Landscape as economic value*

Even if not directly expressed during the process by its participants, the economic values of the landscape (Price, 2017) were important drivers during all six cases. In Grudusk, the residents primarily opposed industrial livestock farm development – in other words, investment projects. Landscape values served as an instrument to block these investments. Thus, local farmers looked out for opportunities to earn money and grow own business instead of allowing outside investors. The discussion concerned highly productive vernacular landscape. Even though enotourism (and the related winemaking) was associated with scenic and heritage values and recreational aspects in the case of Hażlach, it can be also considered a highly productive part of vernacular landscape. In Hażlach, enotourism as a branch of the leisure industry was the starting point for discussing landscape assets and including them in development strategies in the commune. The case of Łomazy shows that another important issue was cultivation of crops that were threatened by droughts and floods. Brenna and Rudnik presented an economic perspective, where the landscape was treated as a money-making asset. In Dąbrowa, the adopted plan and its provisions (concerning recreational functions) were necessary for the commune to acquire the ownership of the land as it was then owned by another institution. The economically driven redevelopment of the lakeshore was the hidden agenda of the EPC. Most of the cases show that the mental image of the commune and of its individual villages (its improvement as well as deterioration) plays

an important role in economic growth because this marketing factor determines the development of the commune.

4.5. Underestimated values: natural, ecological, and climatic

While a wide range of landscape understandings and values were present during the EPCs, it is also important to highlight which topics were less discussed. The case studies indicate that far too little attention was paid to the interplay of natural and settlement spaces regarding current and future challenges such as the ecological crisis including loss of natural resources and declining value of nature, climate change, and biodiversity crisis. This was noted only in the case of Łomazy, where initially there was a visible ecological approach to water management issues such as retention facilities and flooding in the context of crop cultivation. However, during the process the participants presented a more traditional mindset focused on regulating rivers and canals. Apart from Łomazy, the ecological and climatic importance of the landscape and the need to protect natural assets were not widely recognized compared to the aesthetic, cultural, historical, recreational, and economic understandings of the landscape. In Grudusk, landscape protection was at the heart of the Natural and Scenic Complex “Żarnowskie Ponds,” but it was used only as an argument to prevent undesirable investments, rather than to revive natural values. In Dąbrowa and Rudnik, ecological concerns and climate and nature protection issues did not appear at all. In Hażlach (in the village of Kończyce Wielkie), the participants proposed regulating the flow of the local Piotrówka River, while the ecological effects of such redevelopment were not analyzed in detail, similarly to Łomazy, where the participants proposed regulating culverts. In both cases, landscape elements were seen as a threat to people rather than as an important common good.

In times of climate and biodiversity crises as well challenges posed by the rural-urban relationship, rural areas have great potential to become important drivers in finding solutions to these challenges through landscape and nature-related approaches. As our case studies have shown, development of rural settlement continues to be discussed in isola-

tion from the nature and landscape development, climate change, and biodiversity strategies. For instance, nature-based solutions and green infrastructure are still not part of rural settlement development strategies. Nature is still not treated as an integral element of human settlements in all forms. Thus, these topics need to be more strongly addressed, appreciated, reinforced, and actively implemented in planning instruments. Further increasing public engagement in environmental and landscape issues (for example, by using landscape-oriented EPC techniques) would promote the perception of the landscape as a common good in spatial and design decisions, resulting in a better representation of landscape values in spatial planning and spatial law (Tribot et al., 2018). Moreover, it can introduce the ecological and climatic role of the landscape into the public debate in rural communes as it happens nowadays in urban discourse. Further, creating a coherent and holistic understanding of landscape issues is a key factor in local development (Martín & Yepes, 2023). Thus, in Europe, it even seems reasonable to consider extending EPCs to alternative and experimental tools and opening up the participatory process to grassroots initiatives, and even to non-human stakeholders, for example based on the concept of “environmental personhood” (Buława et al., 2022; Schoukens, 2018, 2019; Stone C.D., 1972).

5 Conclusion

The article helps to identify a range of different landscape understandings and values in extended public consultations (EPC) processes in Polish rural communes and fosters a deeper understanding of different landscape arguments, including their purpose. Discussions about the landscape in the investigated cases were mostly limited to its scenic, cultural, recreational, and economic aspects while depreciating the importance of ecological and climatic values. However, in some cases, landscape arguments were used to achieve hidden agendas. Nevertheless, even a discussion of aesthetic and economic values can function as a “door opener” to a more complex understanding of landscapes, including their ecological and climatic functions. Discussing the landscape

allows for a deeper personal involvement of the participants to stimulate their sense of beauty, aesthetics, and harmony. It builds social awareness and sensitivity to landscape issues as a common concern and creates a platform for dialog and achieving public consensus on common goods and values.

The research findings improve knowledge of the differences and similarities between experts and laypeople in the perception and understanding of landscape (Antrop and Van Eetvelde, 2017, p. 135). The quality of the discourse on urban design and landscape in rural communes is closely related to informed participants. Therefore, education and professional moderation of EPC participants play a huge role in enhancing the discussion on landscape issues in spatial planning processes. Transferring, translating, and mediating landscape knowledge between planners and the public is crucial for spatial planning projects. In this light, a landscape-oriented EPC has a great power to introduce new important climatic and ecological issues into social and political discourse in rural communities as well as into rural planning processes and laws.

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Supplementary material - Appendix 1

Table 1. Spatial data and attributes of the entire communes and areas consulted in the investigated cases. Source: Official website of the rural commune, official community documents, consultation plan, and EPC reports.

Case No.	Rural commune	Approx. area (sq. km) of the commune	Approx. population of the commune (inhabitants)	Settlement characteristics in the commune	Landscape characteristics in the commune	Type and location of the focus area consulted in the commune	Approx. area consulted (sq. km)	Approx. population consulted (inhabitants)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
1	Grudusk (Masovian Voivodeship)	97	3,700	37 villages - remote agricultural rural commune - poly-centric settlement structure - in some parts rural sprawl and satellite housing - mostly agricultural homestead development and residential properties, family farms (industrial livestock farm, chicken farms), single-family houses - industrial livestock farms	- agricultural and vernacular landscape - primarily agricultural land use (crop land, pasture, farming) - low forest cover - topographic features: terrain is mainly flat - special landscape features: few scenic landscape elements, occasionally small ponds	Village of Żarnowo (1 of 37 in the commune)	6.7	93
2	Brenna (Silesian Voivodeship)	96	11,200	3 villages - agricultural and tourist rural commune (winter sports and hiking) - linear settlement structure (less settlement due to mountainous terrain) - rapidly progressing rural sprawl and satellite housing - mostly residential properties, single-family houses, tourism establishments	- mix of fragmented agricultural landscape and nature reserve - varied land use (forests, crop land, nature reserve, water bodies) - high forest cover - topographic features: valley of the Brennica River, Beskid Mountains, the highest mountain in Brenna: Three Mounds (Polish: <i>Trzy Kopce</i>) with an altitude of 1,082 meters above sea level - special landscape features: scenic valley; the Brennica River and its tributaries (e.g. Leśnica, Hołcyna); Silesian Beskids Landscape Park (Polish: <i>Park Krajobrazowy Beskidu Śląskiego</i>)	Center of the Brenna village and the valley alongside the Brennica River	2	11,200
3	Dąbrowa (Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship)	110	4,600	14 villages - very remote agricultural rural commune - poly-centric settlement structure - in some parts rural sprawl and satellite housing - mostly agricultural-homestead development and single-family houses - not popular for residential development (due to the remote location)	- agricultural and vernacular landscape - varied land use (crop land, pasture, farming, forest, water bodies) - medium forest cover - topographic features: terrain is flat with some hills in the north and east - special landscape features: scenic lake shore area of Siecienica Lake hidden between farmland and woodland - the lake was formerly used for recreational purposes, but there is currently no infrastructure in place even though the water quality allows bathing	Small area of the lakeshore of Siecienica Lake in the village of Parlin	< 1	400

Table 1. Spatial data and attributes of the entire communes and areas consulted in the investigated cases. Source: Official website of the rural commune, official community documents, consultation plan, and EPC reports. (*Continued*)

4	Rudnik (Silesian Voivodeship)	74	5,200	• 14 villages • remote agricultural rural commune • poly-centric settlement structure • villages are characterized by a compact structure; no rural sprawl or dispersed settlements • mostly agricultural-homestead development and single-family houses, but also numerous historical ruined palace and park complexes • very few services such as shops or food services	• mix of agricultural and cultural landscape • primarily agricultural land use (crop land, pasture, farming, ornamental horticultural areas) • low forest cover • topographic features: terrain is slightly hilly • special landscape features: scenic park and palace complex across the commune	The entire commune area with special attention to the palace and park complex in the village of Sławików	6 (village of Sławików)	400
5	Hażlach (Silesian Voivodeship)	49	10,800	• 6 villages • agricultural rural commune on the border of the Republic of Poland and the Czech Republic, close to several towns • mixed settlement structure • Hażlach dominates as the seat of the rural commune • advanced rural sprawl • villages are characterized by dispersed structure, only the village of Zamarski has a distinct center • historical churches on the Wooden Architecture Trail (Polish: <i>Szlak Architektury Drewnianej</i>).	• fragmented small-scale agricultural and vernacular landscape • varied land use (crop land, farming, forest, water bodies) • medium forest cover • topographic features: terrain is slightly hilly • special landscape features: pond area	Centers of two villages: Kończyce Wielkie and Zamarski	14.4 and 8.6	1,800 and 1,400
6	Łomazy (Lubelskie Voivodeship)	200	5,000	• 19 villages • remote agricultural rural commune • poly-centric settlement structure • Łomazy dominates as the seat of the rural commune • progressing rural sprawl and satellite housing • mostly agricultural-homestead development and family farms, multifunctional development (mainly in Łomazy) • less popular for residential development (due to the remote location) • industrial livestock farms	• agricultural and vernacular landscape • primarily agricultural and forest land use (crop land, pasture, farming) • medium forest cover • topographic features: terrain is primarily flat with few hills • special landscape features: a linear landscape structure of drainage ditches and dikes	The entire Łomazy commune area with special attention to the water issues	200	5,000

Supplementary material - Appendix 2

Table 2. The participants and techniques in the investigated EPCs with a process description. Source: Official website of the rural commune, official commune documents, consultation plans, and EPC reports.

Case No.	Rural commune	The EPC period	The official title of the EPC process (includes the related planning document)	Participants (local communities, users)	Additional participants	Type, number, and location of the consultation techniques. Tools / materials
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Grudusk	2019-2022	In-depth public consultation on the LSMP for the village of Żarnowo (Polish: <i>Pogłębiane konsultacje społeczne projektu MPZP wsi Żarnowo</i>)	- residents of the village of Żarnowo - volunteer firefighters, Farmers' Wives Association (Polish: <i>Koło Gospodyń Wiejskich</i>) - other NGOs focused on specific topics	potential investors (industrial livestock farms, recreation, and renewable energy sector)	an open consultation meeting on industrial livestock farms with an expert at the community center in Żarnowo a design workshop at the community center in Żarnowo an online tool for the whole community to collect feedback on the developed solutions The landscape issue that was identified by the consultation plan as needing to be addressed was the risk that an industrial livestock farm development would disrupt the previous life of the village. The consultation plan stated that this was a major community-wide problem that could prevent sustainable development based on high quality of space, environment, and produced food in favor of a "factory" producing low-quality food with ethically questionable technologies. During the meetings, the participants discussed the range of risks concerning industrial livestock farm development. Some residents saw this issue in terms of the suffering of animals, others focused on damage caused to the road system by lorries, huge demand for water, increase in wastewater emissions, and the produced stench. It was suggested that rural communes branded as "chicken farms," with the farms visible on the horizon and distinctive smell in the air, should exclude tourism and agritourism from their development strategy. This affects the landscape issues. At the request of the residents, the local authorities attempted to block the planned construction of industrial livestock farms by establishing the Natural and Scenic Complex "Żarnowskie Ponds" covering an area of 44.26 ha. It should be noted that this isn't an instrument dedicated to planning solutions but is a tool for nature and landscape protection provided by the Act of 16 April 2004 on Nature Conservation. The community decided to make this move to play for time. It is a relatively quick procedure to get started, whereas the adoption of a local plan is more time consuming. The problem hasn't been definitively resolved on the scale of the entire commune as it is still under pressure from unfavorable investments. While the advance of chicken coops has been stopped (at least for a while) in Żarnowo, the small rural commune of Grudusk is at a disadvantage in the clash with investors.
2	Brenna	2019	In-depth public consultation on the LSMP for two structural units: Brenna Spalona and Brenna Centrum (Polish: <i>Pogłębiane konsultacje społeczne dotyczące projektu MPZP dla jednostek strukturalnych: Brenna Spalona i Brenna Centrum</i>)	- residents of the entire commune - users of the Brennica Valley as a recreation area - volunteer firefighters, Farmers' Wives Association	- investors interested in the Active Recreation Center "Kotarz Arena" - local entrepreneurs	stage 1: four exploratory walks alongside the Brennica River in the Brenna center with printed A3 size maps, which included site analysis and note-taking stage 2: IDI at the Brenna Commune Hall stage 3: a consultation workshop at the Brenna Commune Hall - handmade work on on-a scale model of the area (sketching, referring to source data, modelling) stage 4: a consultation meeting at the Brenna Commune Hall stage 5: dedicated online geotagging and commenting on significant sites Landscape issues to be solved were recorded in the consultation plan and developed during the process. The first problem concerned the Brennica River and its valley, which suffered from uncoordinated development, tourism pressure, and insufficient infrastructure in relation to the development risks. Other issues that were raised included spaces between technical buildings and the river, new public and semi-public spaces on the riverside, the unsightliness of a temporary funfair in the center, and traffic conflicts between drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. There were calls to create a central square of an appropriate scale and offering a range of functions. Guidelines were developed for shaping the space of the Brennica Valley. In the Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDIs), the respondents highlighted the scenic / landscape qualities and relatively quiet character of the village as the main assets of the Brenna commune. Another discussion concerned the question whether the landscape was for local communities or for tourists as users/clients (one-day tourists / at least one-night visitors). The participants stressed that traffic congestion and lack of effective parking management (or a park-and-ride system) at weekends was a problem. They were concerned about the dangers of traffic congestion. The construction of new required roads (or the rebuilding of existing ones) would also change the character and aesthetics of the linear center of the village over a long stretch. It was proposed to relieve congestion in the center by building parking lots in front of the center. A solution for the reconstruction of the river crossing in the village center was developed as a recommendation to the relevant provisions of the consulted local plan. It assumes more convenient boulevards and expansion of public spaces.

Table 2. The participants and techniques in the investigated EPCs with a process description. Source: Official website of the rural commune, official commune documents, consultation plans, and EPC reports. (*Continued*)

3	Dąbrowa	2020	In-depth public consultation on the LSMP for land parcel No. 112/5 in the village of Parlin (Polish: <i>Pogłębione konsultacje społeczne dotyczące projektu MPZP dla terenu działki nr 112/5 w miejscowości Parlin</i>)	- residents of the entire commune - residents of the villages of Parlin and Parlinek - farmers (lessees) - unorganized anglers - volunteer firefighters, Farmers' Wives Association - other NGOs focused on specific topics	- landowners - fish farm	a landscape report for the village of Parlin activities with young people at the primary school in Parlin an exhibition of children's artwork at the Dąbrowa Commune Hall exploratory walks along the lakeside and, on this basis, preparation of a landscape concept for the lakeshore area by an expert a consultation workshop at the Dąbrowa Commune Hall based on the previously developed landscape concept for lakeshore area an online tool for the whole community to collect feedback on the developed solutions
The landscape issue was the subject of consultations. The first step before starting the process was the preparation of a detailed landscape report for the village of Parlin to analyze and assess the landscape of the village in terms of its physiognomy (visual aesthetic and compositional values). At the stage of consultation techniques, the landscape was the main issue, and several detailed architectural and landscape solutions were developed. The residents were interested in working out the functional guidelines for the recreation area, whose scenic qualities were known and obvious to them. During an exploratory walk, several topics were raised, including the importance of a diagnosis, the identity of the place, the functions of the different groups, and the need to preserve the local and intimate character of the area. The landscape report was presented to the participants. The work focused on identifying functions, users and their needs, and initial solutions. Three design solutions were proposed and discussed, varying in terms of development intensity. They were developed by experts based on the guidelines. The residents favored a moderate investment intervention, arguing that it was a space for them and not for visiting tourists.						
4	Rudnik	2021-2022	In-depth public consultation on a change to the SCDSM of Rudnik (Polish: <i>Pogłębione konsultacje społeczne dotyczące zmiany SUIKZPG dla Rudnika</i>)	- residents of the entire commune - residents of the individual villages (incl. Rudnik and Sławików) - users of the park in Sławików park - farmers (small family farms) - volunteer firefighters, Farmers' Wives Association - other NGOs focused on specific topics	The entire commune: - potential investors in the agri-food industry - large-scale farmers - local small and medium-sized entrepreneurs and employees The village of Sławików: - storekeepers - service providers - small craftspeople	internal project workshops with experts at the Rudnik Commune Hall with presentations, diagnosis, and discussion an open meeting and consultation workshop at the Rudnik Commune Hall, including previously prepared professional conservation studies and discussion a consultation and diagnostic workshop at the Sławików Commune Hall, guidelines for the landscape concept of the park in Sławików consultation and design workshops at the Sławików Community Hall based on the previously prepared landscape concept of the park developed by an expert based on the formulated proposals, discussion, and further recommendations an online tool for the whole community to collect feedback on the developed solutions
A number of landscape issues to be solved were recorded in the consultation plan. They included the historical layout and character of the villages, palace and park complexes, and development of properties along main roads in the village of Rudnik. Subsequently, the EPC process focused on the cultural heritage – the palace and park complexes (or their ruins) scattered throughout the commune. The original palace and park complexes are now mostly deserted, and their spatial compositions are unreadable. On the other hand, for the local communities, they were a symbol of their former glory and an element of local identity. In the consultation process, consideration was given to the palace and park complex in Sławików, which is currently in ruins. The participants were asked about the direction in which the complex should be taken to make it available to the residents but also to exploit its commercial potential. The design solution itself was also part of an extended public consultation. It was developed based on previously formulated proposals and guidelines by the participants of the meetings. An outdoor wedding photography center was proposed and developed as a design vision for the park (B. Buława et al., 2022b). A draft version was then presented at a subsequent consultation meeting. After the submitted amendments were made and final approval was obtained from the participants and the rural commune, the final version was developed for the next stage – an agreement with the conservation officer.						
5	Hażlach	2020	In-depth public consultation on the LSMP for the Hażlach Commune (Polish: <i>Pogłębione konsultacje społeczne dotyczące projektu MPZP dla gminy Hażlach</i>)	- residents of the entire commune - residents of Kończyce Wielkie and Zamarski - commune councilors - village councils - parishes - societies of lovers of particular regions - NGOs: volunteer firefighters, Farmers' Wives Association - sports clubs	- The Commune Office - educational institutions - small craftspeople - local winemakers	technique 1: an open online meeting with presentations and discussion dedicated to the entire commune (due to COVID-19 restrictions) technique 2: online consultation workshops dedicated to the local communities of Kończyce Wielkie and Zamarski – live analysis and digital drawing with participants on the materials, maps, and photos prepared by the facilitator – an architect (due to COVID-19 restrictions) technique 3: online consultation for the whole community – comments and evaluation of the previously developed solutions

Table 2. The participants and techniques in the investigated EPCs with a process description. Source: Official website of the rural commune, official commune documents, consultation plans, and EPC reports. (*Continued*)

5	Hażlach	2020	Landscape issues weren't prominent in the consultation plan, which focused on functional and social issues, whereas they appeared in workshops as a small-scale landscape issue in creating a better common public space. The landscape visions developed for the centers of Kończyce Wielkie and Zamarski were based on spatial redefinition using elements of spatial and landscape composition. This was to authenticate the structure, create appropriate zones, and incorporate new postulated functions. At the workshop in Kończyce Wielkie, new recreational zones were proposed, visually referring to the surrounding landscape and dominant architectural features. A proposal was made to develop empty spaces in the sprawling center of the village to consolidate it and a range of functions was worked out. It was pointed out that the Piotówka River, which surrounds the center, frequently overflows its banks and the adjacent areas are prone to flooding, which causes material damage. The participants saw this as a need to regulate the flow of the river. At the same time, in the village of Zamarski, new greenery and landscaping elements were introduced during a workshop to transform the car-dominated character of the village center into one that was more pedestrian- and user-friendly. The participants defined the desired character of the center as a space for the residents, characterized by high aesthetic and functional qualities and traffic organization ensuring greater safety. It was pointed out that it was necessary to challenge the conventional perception of the center by the residents, who associated it with an intersection, storage area, technical facilities, and backend of the fire station. The participants proposed creating an open space in the center as a pedestrian public square with leisure facilities and greenery. Rows of new high greenery were proposed to redefine the compositional axes and emphasize dominant spatial features and the shape of landscape interiors. The workshop in Kończyce Wielkie also provided impetus for further important discussion. The participants identified winemaking and enotourism as a direction of development that should be sanctioned in the local plan. After the EPC formally finished, the idea of enotourism development in Cieszyn Silesia was brought to life. In November 2021, the association of winemakers "Cieszyn Wine Route" (Polish: Cieszyński Szlak Wina) was established. Consequently, a sequence of activities was implemented in the Hażlach commune as actions of the local government, grassroots initiatives, and landscape studies conducted by the Academy of Silesia in Katowice. Their aim was to develop innovative solutions for landscape at the commune level (B. Buława et al., 2022).			
6	Łomazy	2021	In-depth public consultation on a change to the SCDSM of the Łomazy Commune (Polish: <i>Pogłębione konsultacje społeczne dotyczące projektu SUIKZPG dla Łomaz</i>)	• residents of the entire commune • users of public spaces of the village of Łomazy • residents of areas close to potential water facilities • farmers • Zielawa River Valley Society (Polish: <i>Stowarzyszenie „Dolina Zielawy”</i>) • sports clubs	• landowners • owners of land selected for the construction of reservoirs • Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection • State Water Management Authority Polish Waters (Polish: <i>Państwowe Gospodarstwo Wodne Wody Polskie</i>) • canoeists and anglers	a report (prepared by experts) on water and soil conditions in the Łomazy Commune a screening of a film about water issues at the Łomazy Community Center a series of educational activities in schools throughout the rural commune joint creation of a rain garden at a public facility in the village of Łomazy consultation points in selected villages joint planting of trees and water-absorbing vegetation in selected public spaces first open consultation meeting at the Łomazy Commune Hall online consultation for the whole community with comments and evaluation of the previously developed solutions second open consultation meeting at the Łomazy Commune Hall
The landscape issues had already appeared in the consultation plan. The goal was to prepare the rural commune for new cyclical periods of drought and flooding resulting from climate change in the context of crop cultivation. The emphasis was placed on education and making the residents aware of contemporary environmental issues. With the start of the process, a report entitled "Analysis of water retention possibilities in the commune of Łomazy" was also prepared, which formed the basis for subsequent EPC techniques. The report stated that due to the flat terrain and high groundwater levels, the previously considered construction of retention reservoirs would be difficult and ineffective. This resulted in a water-landscape strategy proposed during the EPC of systematic implementation of water management and retention solutions throughout the entire commune, such as small-scale retention, reuse of rainwater, and rain plazas. Although old drainage ditches and dikes have been the subject of much debate as to the quality of their functioning, together they affect small-scale perception of the landscape. On the one hand, the local authorities had recognized the problem and were trying to respond to climate change by educating and making the residents aware of contemporary environmental issues. Modern methods of dealing with water as a resource as well as a threat were used, and the landscape was understood as an element of climate change mitigation and as part of ecological issues. On the other hand, most of the residents participating in the meetings were convinced that the reconstruction and maintenance of ditches and regulation of watercourses, as had been done in the past, would be the best idea. However, watercourse regulation goes against the current state of knowledge and trends in water management. It became apparent that further education and awareness-raising of local communities were essential to reach a consensus on the proposed solutions and then create spatial plan proposals that would be consciously accepted. A number of recommendations were developed, such as retention requirements for the local plan and recommendations for the implementation of model retention solutions. Another recommendation in the report concerning water retention possibilities was that, given the regular flooding of crops, consideration should be given to replacing them with crops that can tolerate this, rather than reverting to drainage ideas from the 1970s. Also, the relationship between water issues and industrial farms was discussed. Farms use large amounts of water, which indirectly affects the water supply and consequently the landscape.						