Issue of Protecting Historic Urban Layouts of Small Towns in South-Eastern Poland – On Selected Examples

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Abstract. The article addresses the issue of protecting historic urban layouts of small towns in south-eastern Poland. The problem will be presented on the example of such towns as Dukla, Kołaczyce, Brzostek, Sieniawa and Skawina. Those towns were established during the medieval period, and their spatial layouts represent the urban models used at the time, which were based on full regularity. Among those most frequently applied within the discussed area were: 9-square model, turbine or pseudo-oval model also known as Silesian. Both during the last 50 years and nowadays, in the course of the intensified multi-faceted town development, those layouts and historic buildings surrounding them have been in grave danger of degradation, or even annihilation. It is worth emphasising, that only some of those layouts are under statutory legal protection thanks to an entry in the voivodeship register of immovable monuments. The others are not protected in any way, unless they have been included in Local Spatial Development Plans. As a result, their historic spatial layouts have been uncontrolably transformed or even obliterated. Such tendencies have a definitely negative impact on the cultural landscape, the identity of the place, but also on the spatial order of the centres of those towns. Therefore, more emphasis should be put on the issue of protecting those layouts and buildings surrounding them. Maybe cultural parks, which would help in ordering and revalorising those spaces, should be created in the centres of small historic towns on a larger scale. One should also demand ordering the traffic layouts in those towns, since frequently main supralocal roads run through historic town centres thus negatively influencing their cultural landscape, as well as their reception as a homogeneous urban interior. Another important question is educating the society about the protection of cultural heritage values, in this case historic urban layouts, which also entail such non-material aspects as traditions and the origins of a given town's field.

1. Introduction

This article addresses the issue of protecting and revalorising historic urban layouts of small towns in south-eastern Poland. Towns of historic Lesser Poland, and nowadays the Lesser Poland and Podkarpackie Voivodeships are, besides large cities such as Krakow, Tarnow, Rzeszow or Krosno, mainly small towns the population of which does not exceed 20 000 inhabitants. The majority of those towns were founded during the medieval period and their urban layouts date back to those times. They serve as town centres nowadays. However, they are at risk of uncontrolled transformations dictated mainly by the development of urban infrastructure.

The basic reason for such a state of things is the fact that many of those towns do not have Local Spatial Development Plans for their centres, and also that only few historic urban layouts of small towns are under protection of the legal act.
It is worth noticing here that according to the Polish law, namely the Monument Protection Act from the year 2003 with later amendments, there are four forms of protecting immovable monuments: inscribing it the monument register; recognising it as a monument of history; establishing a cultural park; establishing its protection in the local spatial development plan (or if a given town does not have the plan: in the appropriate decision relating to establishing land development conditions).

The purpose of this article is to present the above outlined problem more comprehensively. It will be shown on the example of four towns from the area of the present Podkarpackie Voivodeship (Dukla, Kołaczyce, Brzostek) and Lesser Poland (Skawina). The article is also to prove that urban layouts of small towns deserve to be offered a greater degree of conservation protection than they are afforded nowadays.

2. Planning principles in small towns during the high Middle Ages in the lands of historic Lesser Poland

As mentioned in the introduction, many small towns of historic Lesser Poland, and nowadays of the Lesser Poland and Podkarpackie Voivodeships, are towns founded in the high Middle Ages. Therefore, they present urban planning models from that period. It ought to be mentioned that they were founded in already settled areas (on sites of already existing villages) or “in cruda radice (“in cruda radice” – “on raw root” – founding a town or village on the site of no previous settlement). Those towns display a regularity which, however, might have been slightly disturbed if the town layout adapted previous states of development. Nevertheless, while providing their general characteristics it should be stated that they are orthogonal layouts with market squares. Basically they can be divided into two groups: simple layouts and complex ones. The town which are the subject of these considerations are simple layouts, which means urban centres with a relatively simple functional – spatial construction [1]. Their planning was a result of the development of economic, political and social relations, and was shaped by the influence of urban design tendencies predominant in Europe, including Poland, at the time (detailed typological classification of Polish medieval towns was prepared by a team of scientists (M. Książek, M. Wójcikiewicz, K. Kuśnierz) from the Chair of History of Architecture, Urban Studies and Art, at the Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology) [2].

Among the simple layouts five types can be distinguished, three models of which could be found within the analysed area. The so called 9-block model and its mutations are ten most frequently encountered. According to that model the town is enclosed within 9 blocks (most often squares). The central block is occupied by the market square, while the diagonal block is frequently occupied by the parish church. In this model the proportions of the market square could be 1:1, 1:1.5, 1:2, or similar. The second type among simple layouts is the so called turbine layout, also known as windmill. The structure is based on the pattern in which one street leading in a different direction of the world, usually towards the town gate, runs from each of the four different corners of the market square. The market in this type of layouts is either a square or a rectangle, and the market square buildings continue along main streets leading out of the market square. The third type is a pseudo-oval model, also known as Silesian. In this model, the market square along its opposite frontages is crossed by two parallel streets (running out from four corners of the market square) merging into one road in front of the town gates. Such a solution was determined by economical and practical reasons, to minimise the number of town gates in its defensive perimeter. The town gate was the most expensive element of such a perimeter while being its weakest link, at the same time [3].
3. Characteristics of urban layouts of selected towns and their origins
The towns which were selected as representative for the addressed issue, as has been mentioned, are located in south-eastern Poland, in Podkarpackie and Lesser Poland Voivodeships. They are towns which were founded in the 14th century according to the above described urban-planning models.

Dukla is located in the Podkarpackie Voivodeship, around 20 km to the south of Krosno, on the Jasiołka River. Currently its population numbers app. 3000 inhabitants. The town was founded around the year 1357, next to a former village of the same name, where the Dukielka joins the Jasiołka [4]. Significant trade routes of local and above-local importance (to Bardiov) ran through Dukla [5]. It is also worth mentioning that in the past the town used to belong to many well-known Polish families, such as: the Kobyleński, the Jordan, the Męciński, the Ossoliński, the Mniszech, the Potocki and the Stadnicki families [6].

Describing the urban layout of the town, one has to state that it is regular. Considering the above presented typology of medieval urban layouts occurring in Poland, Dukla can be characterised as a
simple, orthogonal layout and a mutation of the 9-block model. In the town centre a rectangular market square with proportions 1:1.5 was measured out, from which three above-local routes run out: one leading westward – to Krakow, one towards the north – to Jasło and one towards the south – to Hungary, across the Dukielska Pass [7].

Nowadays, the foundation, regular urban layout is still easily discernible in the structure of the town. Despite the fact that it constitutes an unquestionable value of the cultural heritage of the town, it has not been entered into the voivodeship monument register (Monuments register is one of the forms of protecting historic objects in Poland defined in the Monument Protection Act. The monuments register for monuments located in the area of a voivodeship is run by the voivodeship monument conservator. An immovable monument is inscribed in the register on the basis of a decision issued by the voivodeship monument conservator ex officio or when applied to by the monument owner or the perpetual lessee of the land where the immovable monument stands). However, it is under protection thanks to the records in the local spatial development plan (Local spatial development plan is a local regulation passed in the form of an act by the municipal council, determining the purpose, land development and building conditions, as well as distribution of public investments. It consists of the text and the graphic part). The historic urban layout was included in the zone under conservation protection which, according to the wording of the plan, encompasses areas inscribed in the monument register and the surroundings of objects entered in the monument register. Within the described zone e.g. the existing historic buildings, small architectural features, road network and greenery complexes are under protection. Transformations of existing buildings cannot cause lowering the cultural value of the historic objects and spaces [8].

In the case of Dukla, it can be claimed that the urban layout is under conservation protection and control. However, the question is whether this protection is sufficient. What is obviously lacking here is the authorities’ idea about what the town centre, which is one of the greatest cultural values of the said town, should look like in the 21st century. It certainly ought to be restored with maintained appropriate colour scheme and finishing materials in architectonic objects. Significant elements of historic spaces are also architectural features which complement the aesthetic expression of space. When they are not properly matched they can mar it, instead of emphasising stylistic features of historic objects and spaces.

![Figure 4. Fragment of the cadastral plan of Dukla from 1851, presenting the chartered town. Map [in:] AP Przemyśl, AG Dukla set, sign. map 1851, section V](image)

Kołaczyce is located app. 10 km from the city of Jasło, on the Wisłoka River, with the population of about 2000 inhabitants.

The origins of the town are connected with the medieval period when it was founded on the site of a former village belonging to the Benedictine monastery in Tyniec. We do not know the exact date when
the foundation charter was issued for Kołaczyce, but it is assumed to have occurred before the year 1339, since then the foundation deed of the parish church was issued [9].

As a result of founding the town according to the Magdeburg rights, a new urban layout was created in Kołaczyce. It is regular, and with reference to the theory of urban design it should be called defined, orthogonal and 9-square. It was measured out on a model (± 45.0 m). The core of the layout was the market square measuring 90 x 67.5 m. Its interior was enclosed on 4 sides with single building blocks 45 m deep, divided into settlement plots. The entire urban layout was surrounded by an outline of timber-and-earthwork defensive ramparts which did not survive till our times [10].

The urban layout of Kołaczyce from the town foundation period has basically been preserved till today, due to which it has a high cultural value. However, it has not been inscribed into the monument register, nor is it protected by the local spatial development plan since such a plan has not been yet drawn for Kołaczyce. Nowadays all investment activity associated with constructing or altering architectonic objects and elements of the town infrastructure are realised on the basis of decisions about land development conditions which in reality do not always include appropriate regulations concerning conservation protection of objects and spaces. Because of such a situation that crucial element of the cultural landscape of the town is threatened by too far-reaching transformations and the lack of vision in relation to protecting and restoring the historic town centre. Currently, the main problem in this space is transit traffic which runs through the town centre i.e. the market square, which unquestionably contributes to further degradation of that historic space.

Figure 5 a, b. Views of a fragment of the market square in Dukla nowadays. Photo [in:] Author’s Archive

Figure 6. Fragment of the cadastral plan of Kołaczyce from 1850, presenting the chartered town. Map [in:] AP Rzeszów, set 1313 “Land cadastre”, sign. 2848
Slightly further towards the north, approximately 15 km from Kołaczyce, there lies Brzostek which currently has about 3000 inhabitants.

This town, like Kołaczyce, was founded by the Benedictines from Tyniec in the 14th century, or more precisely in the year 1367. It was established on the site of an earlier village which had already been mentioned in the monastery documents from the year 1105 [11].

The town was founded on a headland enclosed on three sides: from the north and east (along the Słony brook), and from the west by the slope of the ice-marginal valley of the Wisłoka River. Defensive ramparts with three gates were erected on the escarpment culmination. Roads leading to Brzostek, those from the north, the east and the south, merged into one in the centre of the chartered town (the market square).

The chartered town occupied almost the whole area within the defensive perimeter. It was measured out on the module (± 45.0 m), due to which an urban layout was created that bore features of the pseudo-oval model as well as elements of the 9-square model with elongated proportions towards the north-south. To serve the town’s needs the pre-foundation church (connected to the pre-foundation village) was adopted, which fitted well into the new urban layout.

The town centre, namely the middle block, was occupied by the market square in the shape of an elongated rectangle measuring 67.5 m x 135 m, in which the town hall was located. The market square interior was surrounded with single blocks 45 m deep. The market square could be accessed by means of the three, previously described, main streets, linking it directly with the town gates [12].

That medieval urban layout has largely been preserved till the present times. Significantly, a relatively long time ago that is in the year 1978 it was inscribed in the voivodeship monument register (A-150 from 11.03.1978) [13], which allows for more intensive conservation control in its area. It is worth emphasising that the commune also boasts having drawn a Commune Monument Protection Programme for the years 2016-2019, which really needs to be stressed since, despite the statutory obligation to draw such a document (every 4 years) at the level of the commune, district and voivodeship, it is not fulfilled by all the local authorities. Unfortunately, until today the town has not yet drawn the local spatial development plan for the historic centre, in which regulations concerning the protection of the urban layout would be detailed and complete. To make matters worse, the cultural landscape in the centre of Brzostek is badly neglected. The absence of revalorised and uniform market square surface, combined with the presence of the parking lot and motor traffic, make this historic urban interior unrecognisable as a whole.

**Figure 7.** View of the fragment of the market square in Kołaczyce nowadays. Photo [in:] Author’s Archive
The fourth town which was analysed is Skawina, which is located in the Lesser Poland Voivodeship in the distance of app. 15 km towards the south-west of Krakow. Nowadays the town is inhabited by about 20 000 people.

Skawina, like the other above described towns, was established in the 14th century, in the year 1364. The town was measured out on the area of three villages belonging to the Benedictine abbey in Tyniec. The trade route running from Bochnia and Wieliczka towards Oświęcim and further on to Silesia, as well as the customs house connected with it, should be indicated as the main town-forming factors which had a huge impact on the creation of Skawina [14].

The town was established according to the Magdeburg rights as a royal town, and was measured out on the (± 45.0 m). It is an excellent example of a defined, orthogonal 9-square model, in the centre of which a rectangular market square measuring 112.5 x 90 m was laid out surrounded by a single row of building blocks 45 m deep. In one such block, situated diagonally from the market square on the north-east side, the parish church was erected which has survived until today. The urban layout of Skawina was surrounded with a defensive perimeter which was reinforced by a defensive castle complex [15].

The above mentioned castle, as well as the walls, which bore the testimony to the eventful history of the town and its high rank in medieval Lesser Poland have not survived till today. However, the medieval urban layout of Skawina has been preserved almost intact with vestigially preserved land-record division

Figure 8. Fragment of the cadastral plan of Brzostek from 1850, presenting the chartered town. Map [in:] AP Rzeszów, set 1313 “Land cadastre”, sign. 2050

Figure 9. View of the fragment of the market square in Brzostek nowadays. Photo [in:] Author’s Archive.
of market square building blocks. Nowadays it constitutes one of the essential elements of the town’s cultural landscape.

The urban layout of Skawiny was not inscribed into the monument register although, in the author’s opinion, it should be offered this form of protection. It has, however, been put on the municipal list of monuments (Municipal monument list is a set of address cards of immovable monuments from the municipality area collected by the vogt (town mayor or president). The municipal monument list contains: immovable monuments inscribed in the register; other immovable monuments found in the voivodeship lists and immovable monuments indicated by the vogt (town mayor or president) after consultation with the voivodeship monument conservator) and is protected thanks to the regulations of the local spatial development plan. The plan determines the principles for protecting the cultural heritage, monuments and achievements of contemporary culture with regard to protecting objects inscribed in the monument register and list of monuments. In the plan, the urban layout of Skawina is in the zone under strict conservation protection in which investment activity is acceptable only in accordance with detailed conservation guidelines and under the supervision of a proper conservation protection unit.

In conclusion it ought to be emphasised that the local spatial development plan for Skawina was passed a few years ago; previously the space was practically devoid of any conservation control, which resulted in e.g. the realisation of the market square transformation whose architectonic expression does not allude to the historic composition of that space, but rather falsifies it instead. A huge problem in the town centre is the multitude of random commercial hoardings and shop-signs that spoil the cultural landscape, and thus lessen its value as a monument.

![Figure 10. Fragment of the cadastral plan of Skawina from 1845. Map [in:] AN O. Krakow, sign. 29/280/0/9.1/3457](image)

![Figure 11. View of a fragment of the market square in Skawina nowadays, Photo [in:] Author’s Archive](image)
When analysing the existing state of historic urban layouts in selected towns, one must admit that, on the whole, those layouts are still fairly well preserved. In all four instances the town centre in the form of a medieval market square is clearly distinguishable, and so are the strips of buildings blocks around it. Relics of historic buildings round the market square located on the historically formed settlement plots have also been preserved in those towns. Interestingly, the urban layout of only one among the described towns (Brzostek) has been inscribed into the monument register. But, like Kołaczyce, it does not have the local spatial lend development plan, which undoubtedly has a negative impact on the protection quality of the space. The remaining two towns, namely Dukla and Skawina, have passed the local spatial development plans which establish zones of conservation protection in the historic town centres with regulations concerning concrete principles for protecting and utilising those spaces.

Figure 12. Aerial photo of the historic urban layout of Dukla. Photo [in:] Geoportal, mapy.geoportal.gov.pl, access: 09.03.2018

Figure 13. Aerial photo of the historic urban layout of Kołaczyce. Photo: W. Gorgolewski, 2016

Figure 14. Aerial photo of the historic urban layout of Brzostek. W. Gorgolewski, 2016

Figure 15. Aerial photo of the historic urban layout of Skawina. Photo: W. Gorgolewski, 2017

4. Conclusions
In conclusion one must indicate the absolute need for protecting the historic urban layouts in small towns in Poland. While such protection of the layouts in major cities is ensured (at least partially) by means of inscribing chartered layouts in monument registers, establishing cultural park, entries in the list of monuments of history, or protection in the Local Spatial Development Plan, the smaller and less well-known towns do not have such protection for their urban layouts. Only few have their LSDPs. Unfortunately, such a state of affairs also results from the lack of awareness both among the town
authorities and inhabitants concerning the cultural value of historic urban layouts. People uneducated in the field of architecture, monument conservation and spatial planning, do not realise that an urban layout can also be a part of cultural heritage, as it is connected to the history of a given community and its identity.

Therefore, there is a growing demand for conducting an intensive educational action among inhabitants of historic urban centres, particularly the small ones. The residents should also become involved in the process of protecting the cultural heritage of the town by participating in local exhibitions and lectures.

The other demand concerns introducing conservation control, since its lack might soon lead to erasing historic urban layouts which, in the case of small towns, have remained one of the last cultural values. Conservation services should attempt to place urban layouts under statutory protection, since in this way they have a chance to survive during a period of intensive development of broadly understood infrastructure. It is enough to analyse the degradation of cultural heritage which took place during the last 30 / 40 years when, because of political transformations in Poland, urban centres including the small ones began to develop rapidly. Unless the degradation is stopped, the historic urban layouts will be systematically erased e.g. as a result of unprofessionally conducted renovations of market squares or nearby buildings, changes in historic parcelling of land etc.

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