Article

The Space for Preservation and Dilapidation of Historical Houses in Modlimowo Village in the Light of Post-Dependence Studies and Historical Politics after 1945

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Abstract: The main purpose of this article is to present the results of the research on spatial degradation of Modlimowo village. Modlimowo is an example of a settlement form typical of the Western Pomerania region. Until 1945, half-timbered buildings of Modlimowo village constituted a well-preserved architectural and cultural heritage of this region. Over the past 25 years, changes in the spatial layout of Modlimowo Village irreversibly destroyed the architectural layout of the village, its cultural landscape, and affected its spatial character. The process involved the demolition of around 70% of its historical buildings. The residents, the descendants of post-war settlers, also acted in favor of the rapid degradation. This was typical in the Polish western lands, the area of so-called “Recovered Territories.” The historical memory encapsulated in the village’s spatial structure has been successfully decoded. Spatial degradation of the village of Modlimowo is an example that proves a certain regularity. The processes and mechanisms that govern the devastation taking place in Polish villages of the region of the “Recovered Territories” are subject to extensive analysis in terms of social, economic, cultural, historical, and architectural aspects. There is an ongoing discussion about the reasons for this situation. The political reality of post-war Poland and the persistent traumas of that period have had a significant impact on the actual situation of the Polish countryside. The described research may offer a contribution to the ongoing discussion regarding post-dependence, as it extends the research field typical of architecture to include aspects of the importance of collective memory as well as historical politics. The theoretical model of the conducted research was based on the grounded theory. The author chose this form due to the specific flexibility it offers. An important aspect analyzed in the research was the ability to adapt to the existing conditions. Supplementing the collected data with historical and ethnographic materials proved to be very helpful. The open interview method enabled the collection of the required, standardized data. The conducted research allows to conclude that the language of the historical architectural forms typical for the region was not understood by its new inhabitants. Therefore, newcomers felt free to thoughtlessly demolish whatever previous occupants had left. The analysis of the political context, the trauma of the post-war regime, and post-memory mechanisms can help to diagnose the reality of those times.

Keywords: post-memory; politics; spatial codes; language of architectural forms; landscape memory; historical politics

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to present the results of studies related to the spatial degradation of Modlimowo Village. It also attempts to diagnose possible causes of the changes and their possible consequences. The process of spatial degradation of Modlimowo village is a blatant example of the degradation of historic structures in the villages of Western Pomerania, though it is not an isolated case. In order to preserve the cultural heritage of the Polish Recovered Territories, it is crucial to present and disseminate the results of the research that was conducted in the village of Modlimowo. The issue of “interrupted continuity” is widely discussed in the context of the specific nature of the
“Recovered Territories,” and each voice in this matter may have an impact on stopping further degradation.

At the same time, the context of post-memory is also important for the study. Human memory, which bonds generations and ensures continuity of history, is also referred to, since it helps to identify social and national identities.

Based on common experience, the system of semantic codes, which allows for reciprocal communication within a given social group, contains both symbols and real spatial signs.

Ethnographic and sociological studies explain the adaptation of expatriates to a new reality by using their own cultural patterns applicable to material products, as well as the emotional process of autochthonization. The research was extended to cover historical politics, the importance of collective memory, as well as its impact on the development of public awareness. The research also examines the need to build and maintain one’s national identity and its impact on the creation and preservation of the cultural environment. The 1970 scientific remembrance discourse continued. It was initiated by French historians, chiefly by Pierr Nora, Paul Ricoeur, and Jacques Le Goff. Based on paradigms formulated by Marie-Claire Lavabre, the analysis of historical politics focuses on the following phenomena: “memory framework,” “places of remembrance,” and “memory work” to highlight the complex nature of adaptation to a foreign cultural heritage. The spatial and temporal framework of collective memory, developed by politics, enabled expatriates to adapt to new, unknown cultural phenomena and spaces. Collective memory and its social determinants were introduced into the discourse of humanities by Maurice Halbach. When moved to the cultural sphere, its “framework” highlights the importance of collective memory for the preservation of a social group identity, since it is a vehicle for fundamental values and behavioral patterns. When considering the importance and role of collective memory for the adaptation to a foreign cultural space, we also need to refer to Maurice Halbwachs. In his fundamental work entitled “On Collective Memory,” he pointed to family memories as a basis for intergenerational transmission (Halbwachs [1925] 1992). These memories are particularly important in communities that have been forced to leave their homelands and start living in a different place due to “historical turmoil.” Particularly in peasant families with a strong attachment to their land, the relationship between the family and its land preserves the image of the area and the village in their early individual and collective memories. Just as Halbwachs believed “the family and the land are inseparable.” Pictures of past events become objects of past impressions or thoughts and provide important guidelines for the behavior and actions of family members.

The theoretical model of the research follows principles of grounded theory. Empirical studies carried out by the author are based on field research, observation of the social and spatial reality, and an in-depth historical analysis of Modlimowo. Moreover, the author became a member of the village community and tried to save one of the houses that were typical for the area concerned. A historical half-timber house of 1856 was one of the last witnesses of the former character of the village (Figure 1).

Relics of the past preserved in the house encouraged the author to look further into its history, previous residents, and the history of the village itself. Artifacts found during the research shed some light on the process which involved the post-war displacement of German inhabitants, the repatriation of Polish citizens, and their life in a new social and spatial reality. The research area evolved during the process. It started with the house and then expanded to include further spatial and historical areas in the village, the County of Gryfice, and the Western Pomerania Region. Researcher’s tools and skills were enriched with memory paradigms and the achievements of disciplines such as humanities and the current Polish post-dependent emanation discourse. From an institutional point of view,

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1 Researcher associated with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique who developed theories by P. Nora, H. Rouso, E. Durkheim, and M. Halbwachs. The system she has introduced the described mechanisms used by national historical politics to shape social space. (Lavabre 2012), M.-C. Lavabre, Paradigmes de la memoire, https://doi.org/10.4000/transcontinentales.756.
the study was implemented by the Center for the Polish Post-Dependence Study Center (CBDP) and the Department of Literature Anthropology and Cultural Studies at the Polish Science Faculty of the Jagiellonian University. Since 2009, findings of the research have been published in post-conference booklets and monographs issued by the Universitas Publishing House².

![Figure 1. A historical half-timber house of 1856. Created by author.](image)

The specific nature of the Polish Western Lands, which are a part of the “Recovered Territories,” and the autochthonization process are often discussed by the scientific community. Western Pomerania is a special case, since the whole territory was resettled after 1945. As a result, new inhabitants faced the arduous task of creating their new homeland and regional cultural identity in a strange cultural landscape with a history they knew nothing about. In this context, their full autochthonization was possible provided they developed a new identity. “New identity can support the sense of belonging to the national state. Since the new land was colonized, the establishing of a private homeland on the strange territory, which has just become a part of the national state, has led to strengthening rather than loosening ties with one’s ideological homeland (as previously in case of Germans in Poland or Poles in Russia). The autochthonization process in the Western Lands involved cautious [ . . . ] reference to a specific cultural heritage. Since the area was deprived of its heritage, the process involved spontaneous [ . . . ] creation of a new cultural identity of the region as a factor that integrates people” (Kwaśniewski 1987).

The adaptation to new spatial, cultural, and social conditions took place at the expense of links between material and spiritual cultures. Existing material objects that were products of a foreign culture clashed with different behavior patterns. This resulted in a long-term adaptation process. The degradation of Modlimowo’s historical system was the result of a multi-level adaptation to a foreign cultural heritage. At the same time, the cultural heritage of the area was a part of its historical memory. The process of becoming familiar with the cultural landscape, in its material and non-material output, is a distinct feature of the Polish “Recovered Territories.” Thus, its circumstances differed from those in other parts of Poland. The selective familiarization with the genetically foreign cultural output and attempts to accept it by imposing semantic calques on incongruent forms of culture.

² For more information about the Polish Post-Dependence Study Centre (CBDP), see: http://www.cbdp.polon.uw.edu.pl/. The CBDP has published 8 volumes on the subject of dependency, which were particularly useful for the studies. These include: Culture after the ordeal, people with a past. Polish post-dependency discourse—contexts and research perspectives. Vol. 1, ed. Ryszard Nycz, Universitas, Krakow 2011, ISBN: 97883-242-1317-7; (After) the partitions, (After) about the war, (After) about the PRL. Polish post-dependency discourse in the past and today. Vol. 3, ed. Hanna Gosk, Ewa Kraskowska, Universitas.
determine the diagnosis of the phenomenon. So far, scientific studies have failed to provide a comprehensive analysis of the adaptation to a foreign cultural heritage in its material dimension. This applies in particular to infrastructure and cultural landscapes. Andrzej Brencz points to the need for such studies in his publication entitled: “Rola niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego w procesie transformacji społeczno-kulturowych na pograniczu zachodnim (na przykładzie środkowego Nadodrza)” (The role of the German cultural heritage in the process of socio-cultural transformation of the western borderland (Example of Central Oder Area) (Brencz 2002). Andrzej Brencz has been involved in broad research into social identity, in particular through cultural identity discourse in the face of historical, social, and economic facts in the context of systemic transformation in Central Europe.

2. Materials and Methods

The research uses methodology based on grounded theory developed in its classical version. The theory is based on the assumption that learning social reality is best done through participation (Glaser and Strauss 2009). In Poland, grounded theory was discussed by Krzysztof Konecki in his book titled “Studia z metodologii badań jakościowych. Teoria ugruntowana” (Studies on the methodology of qualitative research. Grounded theory) (Konecki 2000). Grounded theory, which is popular in social sciences, has been applied to other scientific disciplines as well. This approach in qualitative and case studies (especially in single case studies) and field studies is often used in architecture. Research in a particular environment starts with exploratory or survey studies. On their basis, problems are identified for detailed investigation (Niezabitowska 2014). The empirical studies are based on field studies, observation of spatial reality, and interviews with village residents. They are supported by an in-depth analysis of the village history and the development of its architecture in the wider context of the region. Due to the specific nature of issues addressed, qualitative methods would seem the most appropriate, since the identity of small-town residents can be analyzed on the basis of data collected in open interviews. Grounded theory is flexible, since it allows for adaptation to the prevailing conditions and it is possible to supplement data collected with other historical or ethnographic materials.

Open interviews were also conducted. The author became a member of the local community and this facilitated the research. The examination of the social and spatial reality was a lengthy process based on individual experience. The group of respondents included virtually all residents of the village. Over time, the group of respondents was extended to include residents of other towns in the vicinity who had previously resided in Modlimowo Village. The main questions addressed by the interview referred to the identity of the residents. The open interview method has proved to be the most appropriate because of the large diversity of respondents, both in terms of their education, as well as cognitive and verbal capabilities. The absence of standardized questions and the ability to organize and adapt the discourse to the interlocutor significantly facilitated the gathering of harmonized data (Przybyłowska 1978).

3. Results

3.1. Muddelmow Village (Modlimowo)

Modlimowo is a small village that, until recently, has been a village district. It is located on the seaside in the Western Pomerania Province, Poland. It is a part of the Karnice Commune in Gryfice County. Its historical name is Muddelmow. Muddelmow Village in the Kreis Greifenberg (County of Gryfice) was a fief of the von Damitz Family. In fact, the village dates back to the Middle Ages. Still in the 12th c., the village lay on the border of land that belonged to the bishops of Kammin. The beginning of the village is also linked to the knights’ family of Manteuffel. In its rich history, the village changed hands many times, and for a long time was subordinate to the Town of Treptow (Trzebiatów). Before the war, there were 41 farms and 28 homes. After World War II, Muddelmow Village, along with

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3 Since 2017, the village is a part of the Cerkwica Village District, Karnice Commune, County of Gryfice.
Since 2017, the village is a part of the Cerkwica Village District, Karnice Commune, County of Gryfice. Circular villages were usually small in size and consisted of homesteads located around a square or a pond (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. The oldest preserved map of the village of Modlimowo from 1834. It shows the outline of the earlier layout of the circular village. A fragment of a circular village visible on the plan on the left. Created by author.](image-url)

The spatial arrangement of the village was usually determined by the farm operation at the time. Initially, circular villages were established in times of hunting and animal farming, and later they were typical for animal breeding. The square inside a village was used to keep cattle overnight, so it was advantageous for it to include a watercourse or a natural water reservoir, such as a pond. This central area usually remained undeveloped. According to one hypothesis, circular villages were built for defense and the back walls of the houses protected the village. At night, the roads at the entrance to the village were blocked. The houses and homesteads located on the square were built several hundred years after the village was established. These were usually churches or houses of smallholders, craftsmen, and laborers. In the period of granges, living quarters for grange workers were built on the square in the center of a village.

While analyzing the spatial arrangement of Modlimowo Village (Muddelmow), two distinct areas can be distinguished. The western part of the village is an older incomplete circular village with barns grouped around the central square, whereas its eastern part consists of a curved row of houses probably developed in parallel to the grange in the early and mid-19th century. New homesteads located away from the road and grange buildings themselves date back to the beginning of the 19th century.

Green line—the western part of the village is shaped as an incomplete, small neighborhood. Blue line—the eastern part of the village was expanded at the beginning of the 19th century. (Figure 3).

Due to the lack of earlier historical drawings, it is now difficult to determine the actual spatial layout on the eastern side of the village. The development of the central square in Modlimowo continued with living quarters funded by grange owners in 1879.

The grange itself was once a magnificent place. Now, like the rest of the village, it is desolate. The grange and its accompanying manor house are the landmarks of the village spatial system. Together with a park and some magnificent gardens surrounding it, the manor house was certainly the most important facility in the village.

Modlimowo Grange was established in the period of peasantry enfranchisement at the beginning of the 19th century. Then, Treptow (Trzebiatów) City Council set up the so-called Landgut in Muddelmow. The construction of grange buildings and the manor house in Muddelmow at the former location of a mill was completed in 1835. The Muddelmow Landgut developed in 1820–1834. The grange was leased to consecutive tenants. The first tenant was Witholz in 1824. In 1897, in the central square, a group of dwellings for farm workers was built. Karl Friedrich Pantel was the last pre-war owner of the Muddelmow estate in 1930–1942.
In 1945, after a short period of military administration, the estate was taken over by the Polish State Rural Property Agency. At that time, a state agricultural enterprise (PGR) was established in Modlimowo as a part of the Cerkwica Farm Complex.

3.2. Spatial Arrangement of the Grange

The grange of Muddelmow developed according to the architectural rules of the era. In the 18th and 19th c., the development of the grange followed English, German, and French design schemes. However, the designs used in this specific cultural environment remained under the influence of local building traditions. In general, there was a natural flow of economic, construction, and architectural ideas between a grange and peasantry dwellings. This is also evident in Muddelmow Grange.

Grange buildings form a concise architectural complex with pronounced composition and visual axes. Their arrangement follows specific farm design principles and the nature of farming operations. Individual animal and utility buildings do not have much architectural value, but as a part of an architectural complex, they form valuable systems with harmonious and often unique characteristics.

The Modlimowo grange is now protected by law as a complex of historical buildings. However, numerous demolitions and extensions have blurred its old spatial arrangement.

3.3. Manor and Grange Courtyard in the Modlimowo Village

In terms of its architectural composition, Muddelmow Grange was shaped like an extended rectangle with a manor house opposite the entrance at the back of the farm and a garden behind the manor house. Along the access road to the grange, some typical four-unit houses for farm workers were built.

The arrangement of livestock buildings was repetitive and included stables, storages, and granaries closer to the manor house, whereas pig and sheep sheds and barns were located further away. Barns were usually located close to a rural road, often with access roads and compacted yards in the middle. So in principle, this was the layout of Muddelmow Grange built at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Later changes and rebuilding tried to maintain the convenient layout of buildings (Figure 4).
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![Figure 4. Plan for further expansion from the beginning of the 19th century to the 1970s. The map Scheme 1929. Map the buildings are similar in shape to peasant houses, they differ in size. The grange was located in the south-eastern part of the village. Farm buildings were moved away from the road around the central square. The elongated rectangle courtyard was originally surrounded by farm buildings as well. On both sides, the long L-shaped farm buildings created a semi-circle open to the manor house.](image-url)

Usually, two cobble stone roads led to a grange, as was the case in this particular instance. One main access road led to the courtyard on the longer axis, while the other led directly to the manor house through a park.

Probably still in the 1920s, the courtyard was extended and farm buildings rebuilt. Then, the northern wing of the grange buildings was demolished. Previously, the courtyard had been a rectangle of 75 m × 30 m. After remodeling, it measured 120 × 70 m. In 1945, according to maps and drawings, the courtyard was surrounded by buildings from all sides. In the north-east corner of the courtyard, the buildings grew more dense to create a small square adjacent to the stables. A farm building and a coach house were fitted between two parallel stable buildings. One of them has survived until today. The second, the coach house, probably of a wooden structure, was demolished in the 1960s; also in the 1960s, large buildings on the southern side of the courtyard were demolished. In the 1970s, they were replaced with a piggery which did not follow the original shape of the existing foundations. The spatial transformation of the grange took place in the post-war period and included the demolition of old buildings and the construction of new ones. The spatial arrangement and original shape of the grange had changed.

The grange also included 4-unit buildings located in the vicinity and in the village itself. All workers’ dwellings were accompanied by farm buildings. The houses in the village near the pond have survived until today, whereas the dwellings near the barn were demolished. The buildings for farm workers also included a gardener’s house next to the farm buildings in the south-eastern part of the park. The separate dwelling for the
gardener could indicate the greater prestige of the grange itself. These buildings, however, were demolished around 2007. The houses for workers were either built concurrently with other facilities in the grange or later in order to improve living conditions for the workers. Such an investment was a sign of prosperity. The 4-unit houses which still exist in the village were built in 1897 of red brick. They have a simple but robust architectural form without unnecessary decorations. The park and the garden do not show any premeditated geometrical arrangement of plantings. They tend to follow a free landscaping approach. The park included some splendid old trees and bushes, and an orchard behind the manor house. In front of the manor house, an oval flower bed was sculpted with rose and hawthorn shrubs. Coniferous trees were densely planted on both sides of the entrance road to the courtyard.

4. Discussion

The system of semantic codes is based on common experience and enables reciprocal communication within a given social group. The system contains both symbols and actual spatial signs. Modlimowo is an example of post-memory, historical politics, and post-dependence trauma mechanisms in action. These mechanisms have been used to decode the memory of the space. The centuries-old structure developed by previous generations dilapidates when it loses its integrity. Images of that historical space have gradually blurred in the memories of previous inhabitants and have been recorded in just a few photographs. However, the decoding of the village’s cultural space is not complete. It is continued by current residents. And since more buildings have been demolished in the past two years, the language of this space is yet to be fully understood. The effects of the demolition activities can be seen in the following lists (Figure 5).

![Figure 5. (a) Map of the village of Muddelmow (Modlimowo) state of preservation from 1939; (b) map of the village of Modlimowo 2020. Created by author.](image-url)
4.1. Dilapidated Spatial Arrangement of the Modlimowo Village in the Light of Post-Dependent Discourse

Post-Soviet, post-communist, and the post-partition dependences have shaped the collective Polish awareness and are reflected in all forms of culture. The oppression that Poles experienced due to the geopolitical situation after the Second World War still influences many areas. Ryszard Nycz described this state of affairs in the first volume of his post-dependence study. The study was published after a conference organized between 27–29 May 2010 by the CBDP and the Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Polish Studies at the Jagiellonian University. According to the study, the experience was decisive regarding, among other things, the choice of identity strategies, remembrance politics, and symbolic attributes of the imaginarium and preferred styles of living and acting. Thereby, it influenced the specific Polish mentality, habitus, and entire culture (Nycz 2011).

4.1.1. The Degradation of the Grange Architecture in the Village of Modlimowo as a Result of Political and Economic Decisions

The post-war agricultural reform was based on the Decree of the Polish National Liberation Committee of 6 September 1944 and the Decree of 8 March 1946 on abandoned post-German estates. The latter provided grounds for the State Treasury to seize abandoned property without compensation, a process which was completed by 1946. This revolutionary piece of legislation provided for the nationalization of property. The aim of the reform was political. The reform restructured the agrarian system in Poland, divided large and medium-sized private agricultural estates, accelerated the resettlement of Western and Northern territories, and secretly eliminated the landed gentry, one of Polish society’s social groups.

In western and northern territories, the reform focused on land properties owned by German Reich citizens and Polish citizens of German nationality. The decree underlying the reform also covered property owned by people convicted for high treason, desertion, avoidance of military service, and assistance to occupants to the detriment of the state or the local population. The decree covered land owned or jointly owned by natural or legal persons, provided the total size exceeded 100 ha (property of major landowners and kulaks). According to the law, all such assets could be seized in full by the State Treasury without any compensation.

As a result, the reform destroyed large land estates, the architectural space of historical manor houses, and the culture associated with them. Later, many valuable architectural monuments were destroyed, and priceless works of art scattered throughout the country. For historical reasons, the vast majority of manor house estates were located outside urban agglomerations. The decree transferred them to state-owned enterprises answerable to the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Reform, initially the Real Estate Companies later converted into the State Agricultural Enterprises (PGRs). Political and administrative decisions brought irreversible changes to historical buildings. Their management was vested in the above-mentioned institutions and their functional program and original structure transformed. Adaptation to residential and administrative purposes accelerated the destruction. A common practice was to convert palaces and manor houses into educational or cultural institutions. This, however, could not guarantee their protection against dilapidation.

The above process also applied to Modlimowo. In 1945, after a short period of military administration, the estate was taken over by the State Rural Property Agency and one of the Cerkwica farms was then established. The process continued in subsequent years within the framework of the PGR structure. In 1969, the PGR Cerkwica together with the PGR Modlimowo became the State Breeding Center.

More importantly, all current residents remember Modlimowo as a beautiful, well-maintained, and vibrant village. Its management by the PGR is remembered by inhabitants

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[^4]: PGR—State-owned Agricultural Enterprise—a form of socialist land ownership in Poland in 1949–1993; a farm owned by the state.
as an excellent time of village development and prosperity. Political and social changes of the late 1980s in Central Europe and the subsequent economic and socio-cultural transformation changed the ownership of PGRs. Following the transition to a market economy, based on the Law of 19 October 1991 on the Management of the State Treasury Agricultural Property, PGRs were liquidated and their assets taken over by the State Treasury Agricultural Property Agency (now the National Agriculture Support Center). The process continued until 1995. Privatization brought major changes to the use of agricultural properties. Practically all employees of former PGRs lost their jobs. Obviously, not all of them were able to find their place in the new economic situation. They often remained on the margins of society.

The remains of the former grange buildings in Modlimowo are now in a very poor state. The manor house was transferred to former PGR employees. For social reasons, the current residents of the manor house have not been able to provide proper maintenance, which has resulted in the worsening of its condition.

The Modlimowo grange is protected by law as a complex of historical buildings. However, numerous demolitions and extensions have blurred its original spatial arrangement.

4.1.2. Post-Memory Processes

Marianne Hirsch, an American historian of literature and art specializing in memory and visual research, stressed the pivotal role of the time and physical distance encountered by the “generation after” who survived the war. It is a relationship that they bear due to “traumatic memories” which defines family trauma narration (Ubertowska 2013). In my opinion, post-memory differs from memory by the generation distance and from history by a deep personal bond. Post-memory is a strong and very specific form of memory, since its relationship to an object or a source is based not on what people actually remember, but more on their imagination and creativity. […] Post-memory describes the experience of those who grew up in an environment dominated by narrations which originated before they were born. Their own stories are overshadowed by stories of the previous generation, stories which are shaped by past traumas which can hardly be understood or processed (Hirsch 2011).

The legible architectural structure of the village, which developed over centuries, has been completely destroyed over the past 25 years. The process of spatial decoding coincided with a major transformation in Poland of the 1980s and 1990s. Previous changes in urban development usually occurred due to years of negligence, poverty, political decisions, and poor management of the property by the public administration. Unfortunately, the deterioration progressed even further when children of the first generation of displaced people took over the property.

Village inhabitants, who grew up under the influence of PGRs and who could not remember the war and its trauma, thoughtlessly and methodically continued the demolition. This resulted in the destruction of about 70% of village buildings and about 50% of the greenery, including the garden and the entire manor park.

The collective memory of the inhabitants only preserved deep war-time traumas. Near the end and shortly after the war, the displacement of the indigenous population from Muddelmow progressed very fast. We know that Russian troops entered the village on 6 March 1945. On 13 April 1945, some of the population, women in particular, were forced to leave the village. Almost at the same time, the village welcomed people deported from the area of Grudziądz, Poland. The German population of the village was forced to work on dismantling the tracks from Trzebiatów to Kamień and at the military airport until the end of the war. The evacuation of the German population began on 7 July 1945. It was preceded by a census of the local German population and people previously evacuated to Muddelmow from the area of Grudziądz. According to witnesses, those people were evacuated in very poor conditions. They were transported without food supplies and they were given no time to collect their belongings. Some died from exhaustion. Evacuation and
resettlement were accompanied by an outbreak of an infectious disease. Some Germans stayed in Muddelmow awaiting evacuation until 1946.

At the same time, the Polish population settled in the village. The census and the deportation were the responsibility of Józef Rączka, a village leader appointed by the Polish administration. The indigenous German population was confronted with newcomers from beyond the Bug River. Between July 1945 and the summer of 1946, German and Polish families lived together in the village. The reconstruction of those events is scarcely possible. The Polish memories of violence and oppression are blurred. Moreover, it is difficult to assess how deep the events were impressed upon human memory. Additionally, certain historical facts are recorded by Albert Ulrich in his “Chronik des Kreises Greifenberg in Hinterpommern,” as well as in a number of other documents. Inhabitants of the village tell numerous stories about those times. There are tales about German inhabitants drowned in the pond by Russians and accounts of violence and oppression against some Germans kept in house no. 23 until 1946. They all stimulate our imagination and contribute to a different perception of the pond and the house as places of torment.

The system of semantic codes is based on common experience and enables reciprocal communication within a given social group. The system contains both symbols and actual spatial signs. Modlimowo is an example of post-memory, historical politics, and post-dependence trauma mechanisms in action. These mechanisms have been used to decode the memory of the space. The images of that historical space in the memories of previous inhabitants and recorded in a few photographs have gradually blurred.

Traditional half-timber buildings in the village only remain in photographs kept in the Regional Archive of the Provincial Conservation Authority in Szczecin. However, the decoding of the village’s cultural space is not complete. It is continued by its current residents. And since more buildings have been demolished in the past two years, the language of this space is still yet to be fully understood.

While examining the spatial reality, one could form an impression that the village lacks its own spatial identity. The level of spatial degradation in Modlimowo is so palpable and the living conditions so difficult that the author presumed that the inhabitants would not identify themselves with the village at all. Indeed, according to the discussions, the inhabitants still regard the area of Modlimowo as a strange space and they do not identify with it. Awareness of the need to take care of the village’s cultural environment is low. Although the residents consider historic half-timber houses as typical for the region, it is still an unwanted and troublesome legacy. On the one hand, wooden houses are picturesque and attract tourists, but on the other, Modlimowo inhabitants associate them with poverty and backwardness.

5. Conclusions

The described degradation processes of the historical layout of the Modlimowo village are the result of multi-level processes of adaptation to foreign cultural heritage. The results of the research are summarized in the table below (Table 1).

| The contexts of the process of spatial degradation of the Modlimowo village in the time period 1945–2019 | The reasons for the spatial degradation of the Modlimowo village in the time period 1945–2019 | The picture of the spatial degradation of the Modlimowo village in the time period 1945–2019 |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The context of historical politics | | |
The context of the political transformation in Central Europe after 1945.

|   |   |
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| 1. Breaking down the cultural continuity in the Polish Recovered Territories. | The Modlimowo village underwent multi-level spatial degradation. The process of indigenisation that began after the war and consisted in building a new identity in a culturally alien area brought irreversible changes to the spatial arrangement of the village. The breakup of the relationship between material and spiritual culture, fostered over generations in the Recovered Territories, was reflected in the changes that occurred in the village. |
| 2. The process of selective adaptation of the foreign cultural heritage by the new inhabitants of the village. | Many valuable architectural monuments were pulled down, and many priceless works of art were destroyed or stolen. Houses and the entire spatial layout of farms and their facilities in the village were misused or used not in accordance with their intended purpose, which led to their destruction. |
| 3. Attempts by the new inhabitants of the village to impose their patterns of meaning to unrelated, different forms of culture found in the Recovered Territories. | Whole spatial systems were degraded. The historical layout of the architectural forms of the village was repeatedly reconstructed and underwent many irreversible changes. Numerous historic buildings in the village were demolished, and those that were kept were assigned new functions, inconsistent with their original purpose. |
| 4. The elimination of the landed gentry class from social life in Poland. | As a result, not only land estates, but also the culturally shaped architectural spaces of historical palaces were irreversibly destroyed. The estate in Modlimowo ceased to fulfil its historical role. The village, which had previously been working for the estate, thus upholding its status, was forced into a new historical context. |
| 5. The process of the nationalisation of the village spatial structures, built over centuries. | Historic buildings that were taken over and managed by state institutions were often subject to irreversible transformations, both in terms of their functional aspects, as well as their original structure and layout. The Modlimowo estate was transformed into a State Agricultural Enterprise and completely reconstructed. Nationalised farms underwent far-reaching transformations and their division, based on ownership, was changed. As a result, the spatial structure of Modlimowo was deprived of cohesion. |
| Table 1. Cont.                                                                 |
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| The context of the political and social changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Central Europe. |
| The political transformation in Poland did not occur in tandem with economic changes, for which society was not adequately prepared and was mostly left to its own devices. Some of the inhabitants left the Modlimowo village and moved to cities, leaving their homes. The economic problems of the inhabitants of Modlimowo were reflected in the spatial order of the village, or rather, total lack thereof. |
| The degradation of individual houses and entire spatial systems was continuing. The abandoned houses could not find new owners for a long time, and consequently fell into a state of dilapidation. |
| The context of the dissolution process of the State Agricultural Enterprises (PGR), which was completed in 1995. |
| The employees of the State Agricultural Enterprises lost their jobs almost overnight and were left with no future prospects. The poor economic condition of the families who previously worked in such institutions was aggravated by the severely limited opportunities to retrain and take up new employment. The so-called “PGR children” were socially and economically excluded, left without any effective aid from the state. |
| The palace building was parcelled out among former PGR employees, who were unable to carry out ongoing repairs and take proper care of the technical condition of the buildings. The economic and social motivations of the new tenants accelerated the process of degradation of the technical infrastructure of the estate and palace buildings. The owners of independent farms were facing a difficult economic situation, which forced them to postpone building repairs. As a result, all buildings in the village fell into a state of dilapidation. |
| The context of the privatisation of the State Agricultural Enterprises (PGR), which began in the early 1990s. |
| Changes in the agricultural policy and Poland’s accession to the European Union were reflected in the way farm buildings were used in the village. Mass breeding of livestock was introduced and became widespread. A large-scale pig farm was established in the village. The introduction of this type of agricultural production, characterised by a high level of nuisance, had an impact on the image of the village of Modlimowo. |
| The apartments created in the divided palatial space were sold to the previous tenants. The new tenants did not hurry with renovations either, as a result of which the appalling condition of the building continued to aggravate. The pig farm, located on the premises of the historic estate, in the very centre of the village, not only spoiled the cultural landscape, but also completely destroyed the image of the Modlimowo village. People were leaving, and the depopulation of the village continued. It was only after the closure of the poorly managed and controversial animal farm in 2017 that the inhabitants could finally breathe a sigh of relief. The decision also attracted new residents and visitors, looking for a place for summer and weekend relaxation. |
2. The context of the post-memory phenomenon

| The context of the post-memory phenomenon | Disruptions in the development of the social awareness of the repatriates, as well as the lack of the need to build and maintain a national identity in the newly settled areas, resulted in a negative attitude towards those spaces. The feeling of alienation and misunderstanding of the existing material relics of a foreign culture contributed to their serious neglect during the process of adaptation to a new place. Memories and longing for the abandoned home, which was completely different and did not resemble the current place of residence, were passed onto successive generations of inhabitants of Modlimowo. The new inhabitants did not feel a need for the creation and preservation of the cultural environment which they inherited. The places, objects, and spaces of the Modlimowo village did not appeal to the new inhabitants. The village, with its unknown and never well-understood history, could not relate to its new inhabitants the processes in which it was formed with all its prosperity. The houses seemed too big to the new settlers, the objects and equipment too fancy and superfluous. In fact, the new inhabitants never even learnt the actual purpose of many devices. It was difficult to transfer one’s old habits to new spaces. In addition, the turbulent geopolitical situation in this area made it impossible to live a peaceful life there. All relics of a foreign culture were subconsciously destroyed. That process started right after re-settlement was started, and has been ongoing ever since. |
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| The context of spatial and temporal frames of collective memory. | The relationship between family and land is especially important for peasant families. The new, post-war inhabitants of the Modlimowo village were unable to establish such relationships with the new land. The memory of their homeland, which they had to leave, prevented them from becoming attached to the new, strange land. Successive generations cultivated this aversion. In Modlimowo, a few families decided to take over and run an independent farm, but the vast majority took up employment on state-managed farms, which were part of the State Agricultural Enterprises. The latter felt released from the obligation to take care of the property. As a result, the need to care for the cultural heritage or create one’s own identity never arose. |
| The context of the relationship between family and land. | The socialist realism of the post-war era took a toll on several generations of Poles. The radical indoctrination, a general feeling of fear and helplessness, as well as the difficult living conditions in the post-war Polish countryside must have had a destructive impact on the mentality of subsequent generations. Under such circumstances, higher values, such as law and order or the aesthetic qualities of the inhabited place, no longer mattered. The lack of care for one’s immediate surroundings led to their destruction. For decades, houses, objects, and spaces were merely used, without any attempts to improve their condition. The current picture of the village of Modlimowo is a result of the post-war decades of neglect, omissions, and bad decisions. |
| The context of mentality. | |
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