

AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE

A type of cultural landscape, created as a result of human agricultural activity; associated with agriculture as a sphere of production and the countryside as a domain of what is pastoral.

The agricultural landscape is the earliest type of landscape shaped by humans since the adoption of a settled lifestyle. Along with the Neolithic revolution, including gradual development of agriculture, invention of agricultural tools, management of cleared areas, humans, improving methods of land cultivation and animal husbandry, gradually transformed the landscape, creating a typical rural landscape of fields and rural settlements.

For Europe and the Anglo-American culture a characteristic way of organising rural space is the central location of the village, around which there are cultivated fields, further on pastures, meadows, orchards, plantations, forests (Muir). Among the types of villages characteristic for Poland there are villages organised along one long street, rundlings, forest villages. Buildings characteristic for agricultural landscape include low houses (originally single-storey), farm buildings, windmills, inns.

The agricultural landscape in Poland covers about 60% of the country's territory. The Central Poland Lowlands (Mazowiecka, Wielkopolska, Śląska) are dominated by cereal crops, forest landscapes in the lake districts, meadows and pastures in the foothills. From the landscape point of view, a noteworthy aspect of the agricultural environment in Poland is the so-called chessboard of fields, which is the result of significant land fragmentation. Individual fields may differ in the type of sowing, resulting in colour and/or texture differences arising from the variety of crops grown.

Aesthetic and literary interest in the agricultural landscape can be seen in the ancient culture (the idylls of Theocritus, the Eclogues also called the Bucolics by Vergil), prone to the idealisation of the rural life and nature. Depictions from the Middle Ages show more often the "materiality" of the earth and related tasks (calendars illustrating field works, Matins of the Limbourg Brothers), as well as works from the Renaissance period (e.g. Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Harvesters*). The presence of the agricultural landscape in European culture developed in the 18th century, and deepened in the 19th century (Romanticism) in the period of an increased interest in folklore and folk culture and the development of landscape painting. In the 18th century, an aesthetic category of the picturesque was born, thanks to which the pastoral landscape gained in importance.

The agricultural landscape may also be considered in ethical and moral terms. The Renaissance maintained the antique image of the village as an idyllic and bucolic space. In the 19th century, this image was strengthened by the belief in the existence of a natural order of things in rural life and rural culture (in opposition to the "corrupt" life in the city). From the 19th century, values such as physical vigour, community, friendship, common work, simplicity and kindness were associated with the countryside. Village people, who in the 18th century were accused of incompetence and lack of education, began to be treated as a repository of folk wisdom in the 19th century. A characteristic feature of living in the countryside became authenticity, distinguishing those who "live in the landscape" from tourists who only "watch it". (the perspective of the inhabitant in opposition to the perspective of the tourist). In the 20th century, the agricultural landscapes began to be associated with the national landscapes.

The agricultural landscape can be looked at in terms of formal beauty (lines and colours) and expressive beauty linking memory and experience (Carlson). In recent years, this type of landscape has become more aesthetically pleasing, with the countryside increasingly used for entertainment rather than for land cultivation. Attention is drawn to its picturesque character, which serves agro-tourism (sheep are grazed in the pastures for tourists and picturesque views); rural areas are transformed into theme parks (Lowenthal), and the smell of animals and manure is replaced by the smell of plants (Porteous).

[M.G.]

Literature:

Carlson, Allen. *Nature and Landscape. An Introduction to Environmental Aesthetics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009 (especially chapter 6: "Productivity and the Aesthetic Value of Agricultural Landscapes").

Lowenthal, David. "European Landscape Transformations; the Rural Residues". *Landscape Research*, Vol.32, no.5, 2007, pp. 637-659.

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