

LANDMARK

A natural or man-made spatial form, which is a strongly distinctive or characteristic element of the landscape, subordinating to itself the entirety of the so-called landscape composition.

The landscape can be marked by a sacral building, a building of political and social importance, a natural object or even a small architecture: any element which, due to its location, designates the centre of the composition (e.g. a centrally located hut of the head of a Dogon village in Africa, a church in a medieval village, a town square, an imperial palace, a temple or a sacred statue, but also a hill, a tree or a rock). Almost in every historical epoch we can identify characteristic landmarks: sacral buildings in antiquity (Mesopotamia, Babylonia, China), an agora or forum in ancient Greece or Rome, a cathedral in the Middle Ages, a town hall and market square in the Renaissance. In the industrial period industrial buildings (e.g. chimneys), engineering projects (e.g. Eiffel Tower), skyscrapers (e.g. in Shanghai, Dubai) became dominants.

A landmark can be intentionally showcased, e.g. by means of the so-called viewing foreground (undeveloped space, square in front of the building) or natural terrain (e.g. a bend of the Oder River in Wrocław builds the landscape of Ostrów Tumski, in Shanghai the Huangpu River displays Pudong). A landmark can be indicated by means of lines leading to it (e.g. mapping out streets so that they lead directly to the market square or church). Equally important is the background against which it occurs (e.g. a forest wall or an empty space with a visible horizon). A dominant can be framed in the landscape, which can include for example tall trees surrounding the most attractive part of the landscape.

A landmark does not always have a positive aesthetic value. In architecture there is a negative dominant phenomenon which contributes to impoverishment and degradation of the landscape (e.g. chimneys of industrial plants). The term "landmark" appeared in the Polish legislation in the presidential bill of the Landscape Act in 2013. A landmark was defined in it as an object with a leading visual impact on the landscape.

[M. G.]

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