

LOCAL LANDSCAPE STUDIES

(Formerly: country-writing, landscaping, earth-writing) – in a broad sense, a set of information or the entirety of the knowledge about a country or region (geography, history, ethnography).

Local landscape studies include: 1. a civic movement aiming, through various forms of tourism, at getting to know the country or region, gathering all the information about it and popularising it, working for the preservation and multiplication of local (indigenous) natural and cultural differences, protection and care of monuments, increasing awareness of the value of indigenous nature and culture; 2. an area of knowledge with a specific object of cognition (country, regional culture, sum of the values created, landscape) and methodology (drawing on various scientific disciplines, including geography, folklore studies, botany, zoology, agrarian sciences, economics, history, art history, archaeology, law and tourism services). Local landscape studies are aimed at gathering knowledge about the country or its part (region), as well as its popularisation through e.g. organising tourist visits of cognitive and didactic nature.

The beginnings of local landscape studies in Poland date back to the times of the National Education Commission (1773), which introduced elements of Polish history, natural history and the Polish language into the teaching process. In the same period Hugo Kołłątaj and Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz pointed to the need to start gathering museum collections of national culture, learning the history and nature of the country. In the era of Romanticism, knowledge about the country was utilised in the processes of denationalisation and was an element of the struggle for Poland's freedom. In the second half of the nineteenth century tourist traffic began to develop and the towns and villages that were attractive in terms of sightseeing and landscape (e.g. Zakopane, eagerly visited by Polish poets and painters) began to gain in importance. At the beginning of the 20th century a descriptive trend in local landscape studies begins, documenting scientific research on landscape, folklore and regional nature.

The notion of local landscape studies is connected with the term “local history sites”, distinguished due to their historical, religious, scientific, artistic, cultural, technical or economic qualities (e.g. natural monuments, art monuments, commemorative plaques). It also includes the notion of local history qualities, referring to the whole of the natural and cultural elements of a given area (country), representing a specific local history value (for example, landscape, viewing point, flora and fauna, local customs, festivals promoting local culture), which impacts the tourist attractiveness of the area. Local landscape sites that form a compact whole are called complexes (e.g. monastery complex: church, monastery and cemetery or palace complex with its natural surroundings, park, garden, etc.). The term landscape, broadly understood as a space, area or territory with its characteristic natural complexes and monuments of material, social and spiritual culture, remains a key element of local landscape studies. Local history remains a knowledge area that highlights the links between nature and regional cultures in an ethnic sense (ethnic groups or minorities) or in a social sense (culture of particular social groups, such as farmers, miners, etc.).

[M. G.]

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