

# Tower as an Architectural and Urban Planning Dominant in the Cultural Landscape of Poland

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*Abstract:* The tower-type buildings have been present in human life since the beginning of conscious construction activity. As early as in the first settlement units the towers were used as perfect observation points. In the Middle Ages the towers became characteristic of Polish towns. They almost symbolise the town where they were constructed. In Poland over the centuries the towers have become more and more popularly used as architectural and urban planning dominants. The preserved towers have an interesting structure and unique architectural details. These features and also the fact that the towers constitute history of architecture, our cultural heritage and properties bequeathed to us by our ancestors make us protect the towers from damage, thus preserving the richness of Polish, and consequently, European, cultural landscape.

*Key-Words:* architectural predominant, cultural landscape, Polish towns, space structure, urban predominant

## 1 Introduction

The tower-type buildings have been present in human life since the beginning of conscious construction activity. As early as in the first settlement units the towers were used as perfect observation points. Tower-like structures in Polish territories distinguished themselves with exceptional importance since the beginnings of conscious foundations of residential hamlets, starting from Biskupin-like settlements, via medieval towns, and till the modern urban planning. In the Middle Ages the towers became characteristic of Polish towns [3]. They almost symbolise the town where they were constructed. In Poland over the centuries the towers have become more and more popularly used as architectural and urban planning dominants. Much less significance was attached to towers as architectonic or urban predominant features at the last decades. They were partially replaced by new elements necessary in modern urban development.

The preserved towers have an interesting structure and unique architectural details. Independently of the time they came into being, towers were always important composition elements of landscape. They were prevailing components not only in their spatial function, but also in artistic and historical respects. Towers creating architectural height features are at the same time classified among elements of our

cultural heritage. For the sake of their forms, historical values and their improving effect on the landscape, towers should be covered by special care both by relevant governmental services and local societies.

These features and also the fact that the towers constitute history of architecture, our cultural heritage and properties bequeathed to us by our ancestors make us protect the towers from damage, thus preserving the richness of Polish, and consequently, European, cultural landscape.

## 2 Historical outline of the tower-type buildings' development in Poland

The conscious construction activity was started when humans began constructing primitive buildings where they could feel safe. The first structures, which first of all were to provide protection against adverse weather conditions and predatory animals, featured exceptionally simplicity of form and really primitive design. In general, they made up little villages composed of just a few randomly scattered homesteads. The buildings were usually made of materials available in a given territory, and adjusted to weather conditions. In mild and warm climate the simple structures resembled today's shacks. In colder areas humans sought shelter in caves (if present) or primitive huts made of earth [15].

Some 500–400 years BC the situation was quite different. A conscious and well thought out urban conception was then used [11]. In numerous settlement units of so called Biskupin-like type, constructed mainly on islands due to safety reasons, parallel streets were delineated and the cottages were located along them in series. Additionally, “a ring road” was marked out around all houses to improve communication. An outline of settlement was generally coincident with the shape of the island being settled. To ensure better defensive properties, all settlement was fortified with soil and wood embankment provided with single entrance shaped to the gateway tower. It distinguished from other buildings with its height, so it was used as a vantage point to observe surroundings, and especially the road leading to the settlement.



**Fig. 1.** Biskupin. The view of the gateway tower, the cottages in the background (photo: R. Gubańska)

In Poland archaeologists found several settlements of this type, the best-known situated in Biskupin [3]. The city is situated ca. 30 km north of Gniezno in the province of Cuiavia and Pomerania. Originally the settlement was situated on an island which made defence easier in case of danger. However, due to the fall of water level in Biskupińskie Lake, currently the existing reconstruction lies as if on a “peninsula”. The ancient settlement could be accessed by a single route – across a bridge (Fig. 1). Then it was necessary to pass a gate tower overlooking the other huts. Because of its height, it was a perfect observation point to see the entire vicinity. Several parallel streets with rows of huts alongside were reconstructed. Huts’ interiors, despite their simplicity, were well-organised with a clear division into kitchen and living part, sleeping area

and place for animals.

The best known excavation site was discovered and reconstructed in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Currently the heritage park, especially in summer, houses numerous fresh-air events such as knights’ fights, mineral sales, presentations of disappearing trades, local festivals and periodic Archaeological Fairs which are meeting point for Polish and foreign archaeologists.

The most intense development of towers over the Polish lands fell on Gothic period. Both the planning concept of ideal town and the ideology disseminated in Middle Ages have contributed to this situation.

The model scheme of medieval town was based on a chequered pattern of streets [1]. The centre was occupied by a marketplace shaped close to the square form used for formal and commercial purposes. A town hall was built in the centre with characteristic height feature of tower form [5, Fig. 2]. Eight (or twelve, depending on market square size) streets were routed from marketplace corners situated at right angles each other. Facades of marketplace frontages were used for facilities with important function for inhabitants. One parcel in close vicinity to the market square was intended for a temple featuring precisely elaborated tower or two towers.



**Fig. 2.** Malbork. The example of medieval fortifications (photo: J. Gubański)

The residence of the town owner was generally situated out-of-the-way and surrounded with additional fortifications (Fig. 2). At first medieval urban units were protected against danger with massive ramparts. In further development of medieval fortifications, the ramparts were supported with turret and towers, and during the last stage – with barbicans located just before the

main gateway towers leading into the town. Inside the fortifications, a small part of land was intended for further development of the town; however it was soon developed with residential houses. Medieval settlement structures featured with intense compact development and narrow streets.

Medieval urban plan was perfectly adopted on the territory of Poland. Irrespective of whether the towns were founded from scratch or they grew from earlier settlements as a result of favourable conditions and significant development, the predominant plan was the one of chessboard with a market square in the centre. Krakow – former capital of Poland – is a perfect example of a town which grew from a settlement outside castle walls. Its intensive development was connected not only with favourable topographic, economic, social, defensive and other conditions, but mainly with the fact of being the seat of the most powerful Polish kings for many centuries.



**Fig. 3.** Kraków. Marketplace viewed from tower of Mariacki Church (photo: R. Gubańska)

The spatial layout of Krakow is almost ideal [3]. The centre is occupied by an impressive market square (ca. 200 x 200 m) with Medieval Cloth Hall rebuilt in the Renaissance (the magnificent Polish parapet wall dates back to this period) and town hall tower currently being a characteristic element of the Krakow market square (Fig. 3). The square corners are the starting point for 11 streets which run perpendicular to one another. The only exception here is Grodzka Street going straight to Wawel (former seat of Polish kings) which used to be the most important road in town. The market square, being both representative and commercial centre, is adjoined by the most important church in town – St. Mary's Basilica – a perfect example of Gothic architecture (with a late-

Gothic altar by Veit Stoss). The housing plots are regular, like a chessboard. The market square area was inhabited by more opulent citizens, with the wealth decreasing with the growing distance to the market square, so the plots at the defence walls were much smaller. Because of the intensity and closeness of houses within the town boundaries, there was no room for green areas or town gardens. The so-called flower meadow was planted outside the administrative boundaries of Krakow (today's Błonia Park, see Fig. 1 in [4], p. 48), where the citizens could enjoy fresh air and physical exercise.

Towers of churches and town halls were also important elements of town planning arrangements in times of Renaissance and Baroque. Both theoreticians and designers worked on better models of ideal towns where people could live in greater comfort. The streets' layout was modified (gradual transfer from chessboard to star-like layouts), new squares with a solely representative or commercial function were introduced. Depending on the needs of a given epoch, and more exactly development of fire-arms, fortifications were modified and extended. In the Renaissance it was necessary to leave some areas behind the town buildings, the so-called foregrounds with places for cannons – bastions. In the Baroque, however, due to significant war-related unease and disturbances, it was necessary to build fortress towns with well-developed and multiplied star-fort system [9]. For an average city-dweller the most important aspect was the improvement of sanitary and aesthetic conditions in the town. It is impossible to overlook the significance of widening streets and introduction of green areas and street furniture into the town. Although Polish Renaissance and Baroque urban planners were acquainted with solutions adopted in European model towns, they usually preferred the familiar medieval ones. Modern solutions were used almost exclusively while constructing or adapting fortifications to meet new standards.

The importance of both church and town-hall towers as architectural and town planning dominants did not change – they were still widely used. They were clearly perceived in their horizontal projection and also, or first and foremost, in their elevation. They differ from those of medieval times in more extended form and decorativeness. In general, they were admired for the wealth of architectonic details. Also now they fill passers-by and tourists with awe.

Only in 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the industrial era, new buildings appeared to replace traditional towers as architectural dominants – those were

water towers and factory chimneys constructed after Poland underwent significant industrialisation. Using new construction materials, such as steel, cast iron and reinforced concrete brought new structural solutions, braver in their form and unique. The constructors paid greater importance to function, while architecture played second fiddle. Despite such approach to construction issues, the tower-like buildings of industrial character were designed in an extremely careful and precise manner.

In the modern world constructing even the most sophisticated towers is no longer problematic. Structural possibilities, exceptional construction materials and computer programmes supporting calculations, as well as a modern approach of the designer allow for creating more and more complicated, almost fabulous structures like the skyscrapers being designed by architect David Fisher. Some time ago such idea would have to remain a dream, while at present it is only necessary to find a wealthy developer.

### 3 Typical Polish town

Poland is mainly composed of lowlands – that is open, flat areas. For this reason the panorama of the simplest settlement structure is uncomplicated, not interesting. The buildings appearing on the horizon, intertwined with trees and shrubs, do not reveal any special character of the place. Certain enriching element, making the landscape more diversified, may be the tower of local village church if it was built there. The ideal solution was the existence of the group of palace and farm buildings in a given place, since the finials of palace spires were additional vertical element in the settlement. Both the church tower and palace spire were architectural dominants overlooking the other village buildings. They introduced certain dynamism and diversity into the perception of a given panorama.

In the case of urban structures it was entirely different since there were at least two towers: church and town hall. It was Middle Ages when characteristic structure of Polish towns was developed and consolidated [3]; now it is clearly received, generally in case of small settlement structures.



**Fig. 4.** Toruń. Example of typical town's panorama with illuminated fortification (photo: J. Gubański)

While observing a fragment panorama of Toruń (Fig. 4), we see the line of residential buildings which here and there is replaced with greenery. In the foreground, there are picturesquely illuminated medieval fortifications with towers and gateway towers. The view would be of monotonous reception without towers overlooking the city [5]. As can be seen from this example, in most towns the tower buildings were multiplied. There is a single town-hall tower, but there may be over a dozen church towers (depending on the size of the town). There appear also gate towers, look-out towers and in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century – factory chimneys and municipal water towers.

In successive decades, urbanites have been and they still are aware of the importance of such vertical predominant features as surely are both those historical ones and those currently constructed or planned towers.

Special great importance was attached to structures placed at the closures of streets. They offered interesting solutions, frequently even taking the passers-by by surprise. A stroller walking down a road with almost uniform buildings will be charmed or amazed by the sudden appearance of a building with tower element being a unique view closing.

Regrettably, tower-like buildings being architectural or urban planning dominants are no longer such characteristic for the panorama of modern towns as they were in past times. This is due to such factors, to name a few, as enlargement of urban structures, expansion of functionalities, development of communication systems, mainly for wheel vehicles [16]. The former function of towers as the predominating elements is more and more commonly taken over by sky-scrapers. In their close vicinity, the historical ancient towers lose their value and “are lost” among them. Hence, no effort shall be spared to highlight at least those

historical and ancient towers in modern urban space.

#### **4 Division of towers with respect to their time of construction**

Towers can be classified to their construction material, time of origin and functionalities. Obviously, such classification is of conventional nature. The classification based on the type of construction material seems obvious. Depending on the type of material used the towers can be divided into: wooden, stone, brick, mixed (half-timbered, stone/wooden, brick/wooden, stone/brick) ones. The material used for construction influenced the choice of structure and shape of facade. Wood, stone and brick are formed differently – each of them provides other possibilities, mainly with respect to ornamenting.

One on the basis of type is classified to their time of origin. This systematic refers to the periods existing in architecture development. So, we are saying about Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, historicizing (originated in 19<sup>th</sup> century) or the modern ones. We should remember that towers from much earlier times or from so called transitory periods have also survived.

Over the territory of Poland, the oldest towers include those of Romanesque origin. The towers were usually situated in the immediate vicinity of or as a component of rotundas, the most numerous sacral buildings in Poland at that time. Most preserved buildings are made of stone, with brick used almost exclusively for door and window casings, or ornaments. They are characterised with simple form and absence of architectural detail.

Those shaped to Gothic patterns are definitely much numerous. It is common knowledge that the Middle Ages witnessed development of tower construction, having various functions: starting from defence, via housing, representative and ending with symbolically spiritual. They are parts of buildings which dominated not only with their overall dimensions but also their functions: churches which represented clerical authorities, and town halls – the mark of secular power. The consciously shaped silhouette of the town at that time instigated certain rivalry between the clergy and laymen. Whichever had greater support and respect tried to build a taller tower [15].

Medieval towers distinguished themselves with simple form: basic solids (mainly rectangular prisms) were put one on the other. The preserved

vertical structures which can still be admired are mainly built of brick. They already display some ornaments, but those are still relatively modest when compared with the successive epochs and contemporary examples from Western Europe. Architectonic details include regularly spaced windows, lizenes, arcade cornices and specific wall coping formed as merlots. As a rule, the structure was covered with hip roof (so called pavilion roof).

Renaissance towers were completely different. As everybody knows, Renaissance preferred horizontal arrangements; hence the structures of that time did not climb up so much as in previous period. Generally, polygonal buildings were coped with domes. They featured repeated onion domes placed one onto another which were separated each other by so called lanterns – openwork structures which created arcade spans. Despite the single model of constructing tower finials, almost all of them are unique. They differed not only with respect to size, materials used, form but also the architectural details. Thanks to openwork, characteristic onion-shaped cupolas and classical ornamental forms they had diverse solutions.

Both during Renaissance and later Baroque, a common method was to place domes, either with splendid Renaissance forms or Baroque domes abounding in shapes, onto earlier, most often survived medieval tower. The final effect varied: new elements either matched the existing buildings perfectly or introduced certain disharmony or even dissonance in the aesthetic perception with its otherness.

It is commonly known that Baroque has operated in architecture with forms taken from previous era, i.e. Renaissance. Basic architectonic compositions and solutions remained, however they subject to important transformations. Sometimes, even the clarity of construction has been lost. Similar situation refers to the tower constructions. Then became again the predominant features in urban and landscape systems. They were intentionally situated in visually clear positions, either on natural rises or especially formed for this purpose, or else on closures of visual axes.

Baroque towers were definitely higher than those of Renaissance; however they were also covered with domes. Baroque finials of towers distinguished with diversity of shapes and details unusual in earlier times. Even if they created a multi-level structure, each part was planned separately. Likewise the solutions applied in buildings, lines shaped on circle circumferences

were prevailing. Due to such actions, Baroque towers featured some kind of form dynamics.

In successive decades the patterns taken from previous periods were commonly used. They were merely transformed and adapted to the needs of specific period. Similar situation referred also to tower structures. It happened that following the order of a developer or taste of architect, the copies of buildings existing in other parts of Europe were constructed in Poland.

One of the most magnificent examples of such attempts to bring western models into Poland is the basilica constructed on Saint Mountain in Gostyń. The land owner at that time – Zofia Konarzewska travelling across Europe became amazed with the church of Santa Maria della Salute in Venice. Having returned to Poland she ordered a local architect to construct a Venice-like temple. Another perfect copy is the church of St. Apostles Peter and Paul in Krakow (Fig. 5), resembling the church of Il Gesu in Rome.



**Fig. 5.** Kraków. The Apostles Peter and Paul Church (photo: R. Gubańska)

New constructional potentials arose not earlier than in industrial era due to application of cast iron and then steel as constructional materials. 19<sup>th</sup> century was the time of modern technical solutions, frequently very innovative and daring both in the general form and architectural detail. The buildings are large and tall, often with glazed facades. Both the new material and the first attempts at prefabrication allowed for constructing buildings on the scale unknown before, which in turn aroused amazement, or even respect among people gathered inside. Simultaneously, another tendency in industrial architecture developed which largely used the achievements of earlier architecture, mainly the Renaissance (buildings

with representative and housing function) and Gothic (manufacturing halls and factory buildings). New materials, as well as structural and technical solutions were also seen in tower-like buildings. The towns gained towers with a new function, namely municipal, water and railway towers. In both cases the form was influenced by function [6].



**Fig. 6.** Żarnowiec. The modern tower as observation point (photo: R. Gubańska)

At present, construction of tower-like building creates no major problem as more and more modern building technologies are available as well as large variety of building materials (among other, those with higher and higher strength) and also highly advanced specialty constructional calculation algorithms [13]. Each facility under design is treated individually, hence we can say about their uniqueness (Fig. 6). Their exceptional character can be attributed also to carefully-chosen materials and well-designed structure reflecting the buildings of the past.

## 5 Division of towers with respect to function

Proper functional programme is of crucial importance for each building. The function influences not only the form, cubic capacity but or architectural details, but also the surroundings of the building, and that is the reason for its importance, although totally different classification of towers may be used when their functional program is considered.

One of the oldest were defensive towers usually located in ramparts of castles, fortified churches or town fortifications (among them the

gateway tower was dominating with its overall dimensions and height). The earliest gate tower having defence function known in Poland was discussed in detail in section 2 (see Fig. 1). The most intense development of defence tower structures took place in the Middle Ages. With enriching the city walls with bastions and towers we can talk about their diversity concerning both construction materials used, form and architectural detail. Usually they were made of brick or stone, much more rarely using mixed techniques, combining wood with e.g. brick.

Wood was used mainly for “toilet” towers, since they were not close to the castle and in the event of danger could be set on fire, thus blocking the access to the castle for the enemy (Fig. 7).



**Fig. 7.** Kwidzyna. The “toilet” tower (photo: R. Gubańska)

In Middle Ages, there were popular constructed towers with residential functions. At first, they were components of castles (Fig. 8), while then they were also building as self-reliant structures.



**Fig. 8.** The Bolków Castle. On the left – residential tower (photo: J. Gubański)

The function of those towers was not, however, limited only to the most basic existential needs of inhabitants. They were tall enough to be perfect observation posts used both in wartime, to see the approaching enemy in time, and in peace, to

admire views and panoramas. The vertical forms of towers have always made the aesthetic perception of landscapes more interesting and diversified.



**Fig. 9.** Kraków. Towers of the Mariacki Church (photo: R. Gubańska)

Church towers are considered as the most important and numerous; among their functions was also to draw attention to the temple and to emphasize their importance within the closest vicinity. Their structures, forms and architecture were largely diversified, depending on the epoch of their construction, developer's wealth and builder's skills (Fig. 9). Although each historical era had its own structural and architectural standards, the diversity and uniqueness of church towers still amazes and surprises modern people. They are frequently pilgrims' and tourists' destination.



**Fig. 10.** Toruń. The tower of town hall (photo: R. Gubańska)

Towers existing close to town halls or being their integral parts are classified as those of stately functions. Like the town halls themselves, they bore testimony to the importance and wealth of towns they represent with their appearance. Their form and architectural details were also diversified (Fig. 10), just as in the case of church towers. They reflected the fashion and town wealth. Frequently the new historical era brought about changes in their architectural costume, compliant with the latest trends. Analogically to the defence and housing towers, they were also used for watching the vicinity and the city itself.

Another type of towers to distinguish are so called stairs tower which, as their name suggest, contain staircases in their interior. Their structure and form were perfectly matched to the character of the entire building, though they slightly protruded above the roof ridge. They were frequently given shape of towers with individual roof covering (e.g. cupolas). Frequently, they created interesting characteristics in series of selected facades or engaging elements shaping the body of buildings.

## 6 Importance of towers as a predominant in the cultural landscape

Vertical buildings have always played important role in shaping landscape, both the natural and urban one. They differ with respect to scale and localisation. Even the primitive people felt some sort of respect for a single, old and branchy tree or lone mountain overlooking the area. Such places were usually chosen for places of worship. In architecture and urban planning the dominant form was given to buildings of exceptionally important function. It can be said that the Polish urban planning has always recognised the importance of temple – representing the clergy, and town hall – representing lay authorities [14].

Most predominates are considered distinctive features, or even symbols of a given place. The perfect example is Eiffel Tower in Paris. There is no need to indicate the city since everyone immediately connects the tower with Paris and the entire France. In such a way this structure has come to symbolise both Paris and France. In Poland such symbols are Wawel in Krakow or the Royal Castle in Warszawa. Poles treat them not only as symbols of a given city, but also important historical symbols. The said buildings are beyond doubt architectural and urban planning predominates of places where they are situated. However, the historical conditions and events imprinted the importance and exceptional character of those places in minds of many generations of Poles.

Poland is a typical lowland country. Lowlands are prevailing type of landscape in Poland, while mountains cover minor territory on the south. What can be seen most frequently are: picturesque cornfields and meadowlands cut with river channels and their tributaries, areas of forests and woods. Some variety is introduced by building development emerging here and there which has, as ever, arranged the human being living space.

Strips of residential buildings with surrounding greenery appearing occasionally in the horizon line diversify the environment to some degree. The landscape gains dynamics when height elements appear. They are mainly the towers of churches and town halls which have been shaped over historical development of architecture and town planning. In Middle Ages, towers were given symbolical value, they manifested significance and wealth of power (laity and clergy). The towers started to be used consciously to shape urban systems and panoramas so characteristic for Polish cultural landscape [12].

In the photograph below we can see typical view of urbanized location (Fig. 11). The foreground includes arable fields with shimmering



**Fig. 11.** Jutrosin. Town panorama with characteristic predominating elements (photo: J. Gubański)



river mirror. At some distance, a strip of residential and farm buildings coinciding with horizon line and with predominating towers: on the left – the local parish church, next one of town hall, on the right – the Evangelical church and next small cemetery temple. The blue of the sky closes the panorama outlined and creates at the same its background. This is an excellent example of the function of tower as the predominant element both in architectonic and urban systems. It is thanks to those visible and dominant vertical elements the panorama of the town discussed does not seem monotonous and flat, but rather dynamic. The sizes, forms, mutual localisation of towers created characteristic silhouettes of places they stood. Frequently, it is possible to recognise the city just looking at the outline of buildings.

Towers as architectonic predominant features were commonly used in urban compositions. They predominated not only over adjacent buildings but frequently created scenic closures of streets. To achieve the intended impression, they were incorporated at the end of one frontage of the street. Final effect was always appropriate, aesthetic reception of the space – interesting as can be said. Going down the street closed with an interesting building of exceptional height (frequently only of the tower), or surprising, rare form we feel nicely surprise and tend to view the area in a favourable way. We tend to like such places.



**Fig. 12.** Malbork. The view from the castle tower (photo: R. Gubańska)

Towers were used not only for architectonic composition purposes. Due to their height, they were also excellent observation points to look around the surroundings to alert in case of any hazard are detected. They offered view of not

only the nearest vicinity, but also further grounds (Fig. 12). Depending on the localisation, the visibility could even reach several tens of kilometres. Now, they provide viewing possibilities allowing to admire nearby views and landscape. In the modern world most historical towers have been adapted to tourist, commercial needs. Some of them have even had lifts fitted to enhance accessibility.

## 7 Legal solutions to protect the towers

On the grounds of aforementioned discussion, the towers deserve protection due to their huge impact affecting directly the composition and aesthetics of cultural landscape. This means not only the passive protection provided by relevant regulations, but first and foremost the real one depending predominantly on architects, landscape architects, urbanists and clerks in specific administration bodies. According to Loures and Crawford: *...Connecting the place to the society should be considered essential in a landscape reclamation project. (...) Public integration, public participation in the decision making process benefits both project quality and society. For this reason it is essential to develop a framework that specifies how public participation should be introduced in the different planning phases* [7, p. 120].

Each form of protection should be preceded by thorough review of landscape transformations for specific location so as not to lose the significance of existing predominant feature which often represents high historical and artistic values. First it should be checked whether the existing plans really correspond to the actual state. In many cases they must be updated. Having updated maps it is possible to start analysing, covering issues connected with functional and spatial layout, transportation, condition of buildings and the area, environmental and landscape issues, conservation zone and many other. Such reviews ordered by respective bodies of conservation services could be included in historical restoration studies and serve as one of various recommendations for town and country development plans – the basic documents binding in spatial planning.

Special attention shall be paid to current survived neighbourhood of towers, i.e. whether the towers are appropriately highlighted, whether nothing obstructs their view, or whether new structures appeared competitive in height terms. Thus, at first the area of conservation protection need to be specified with distances allowed for

nearby new buildings to be constructed. This would consist of protective zone of a specific width, without any new buildings – it would be prohibited to build anything in the zone. Then, a landscape protection zone should be established wherein the cubage and height of new facilities need to be controlled, so as they make no competition to the protected tower. In the specified area covered with conservation protection, it would be necessary to determine the height, cubic capacity and even the façade colours. Such instructions would make the applicable regulations more understandable and precise, at the same time facilitating work of public administration authorities. In successive stage, so called view strips and the best exposition routes [14] need to be envisaged. Their main purpose was to leave a free undeveloped space to strengthen both the vertical perception and impression-aesthetic sensation. At this stage the role of a landscape architect cannot be neglected. As early as in the phase of concept design the architect should take into consideration local needs, but also the educational footpaths, bicycle paths, recreation and tourism facilities, highlighting all landscape values (interesting places, unique cultural panoramas, vantage points and axes, and many others). Should the above rules be observed, the basic functions of existing towers as fundamental architectonic and urban predominating feature, so characteristic for Polish landscape, could be preserved.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> WSEAS International Conference on Landscape Architecture in Algarve (Portugal) José Luis Miralles I Garcia said: *...Territorial and urban planning is a matter concerning administration. This is because both regulate land uses, and so, put limits o private property, limits that can only be established by administration, in order to defend general interest of the whole society.*

*The European Landscape Convention talks about landscape protection, planning, and management. It is a new way of understanding territory that incorporates both landscape value and perception as seen by part of citizenship. Form this point of view those landscapes sensed as of a great value by citizenship should be considered of a general interest.*

*All this implies new methodologies to analyze territory value considering landscape, and to introduce landscape public valuation in planning processes before the decision – taking moment; that is to say, when all options are possible [10, p. 18].*

## 8 Conclusion

The landscape is one of the fundamental elements of our environment. Geographical conditionings, landforms, existing vegetation forms and even seasons are of crucial importance for the reception of a particular landscape. Natural and cultural landscapes are equally important for people of our days. In everyday life the landscape we see is modified to a larger or smaller degree – unfortunately, the degree of modification is increasing. The natural environment, not influenced by humans, is rather rare, and that is why it is so important to protect it.

Whether it refers to a single tree standing alone among picturesque fields, or rich Baroque domes topping towers of local church, the predominant height feature determines our aesthetic impressions from landscape reception. They have always been an advantageous element of both the natural and cultural landscape; they add it diversity, individual features, identify with it.

According to Alan Chenoweth: *...Landscape Character and Identity – Landscape Settings and elements may be distinctive or typical attributes of character types, and contribute strongly or weakly to regional landscape identity...* [2, p. 46].

Over centuries, these have been the towers which have established as vertical elements directly affecting landscape panoramas. Towers have survived to our times, some of them even from Middle Ages. We should remember that they are silent witnesses of past time, material goods inherited from our predecessors. Due to the respect for our past generations and events we should protect the cultural heritage left for us. If we allow it to deteriorate or be lost, it would be as if we have forgotten our historical background, the efforts of our ancestors, and even lost our identity. These monuments are impossible to regain and for this reason they must be preserved and protected.

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