

Article

Transformation of the Cultural Landscape in the Central Part of the Historical Region of Warmia in Poland

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Abstract: The study analyzed the cultural landscape of Dobre Miasto municipality, which is situated in north-eastern Poland, in the heart of the Warmia region. Cultural traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation and are presently being revived constitute the backbone of Warmia's cultural heritage. The Warmian landscape comprises several distinctive components, including traditional settlement patterns dating back to the 13th and 14th centuries, as well as cultural values (historical and architectural values, and the level of their preservation) that are being increasingly recognized and contribute to the region's tourism potential. The growing awareness that the cultural landscape must be preserved for the future generations implies that landscape protection is no longer regarded as a niche problem that is of interest only to experts in the field, and that activities should also be initiated at the local level. The study aimed to specify measures that should be undertaken to protect the components of the cultural landscape and to propose strategies that will not only contribute to the appreciation of cultural values, but will also facilitate the promotion and preservation of cultural landscape components that are gradually disappearing from the rural fabric. This complex approach to the rational management of environmental resources can set an example for other lake regions with clearly defined historical roots and well-preserved cultural values. The resulting guidelines and conclusions can be useful for developing new planning documents and updating and validating the existing legal regulations on planning, development, land use, and protection of the cultural landscape.

Keywords: cultural landscape; historical region; architectural monuments; landscape protection; Poland



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1. Introduction

A landscape is a highly complex concept that escapes easy definition [1]. Landscapes and their definitions continue to evolve, and they are the subject of scientific debate [2]. The term “landscape” first appeared in Old High German in the 8th century (Landschaft) to denote a specific area in the political and physical–geographical context [3]. The concept of landscape as a comprehensive fragment of the natural environment was introduced in the 19th century by Humboldt who defined landscape as “the character of a region” [4]. One of the most popular definitions states that landscape is the physiognomy of the surrounding environment [5]. In Poland, the definition of landscape is provided by the Nature Conservation Act of 16 April 2004 (Journal of Laws 92/2004, item 880). Article 5 of the above Act defines landscape attributes as “the environmental, esthetic, or cultural values of a region, including landforms and components of the local environment that have been shaped by nature or human activity” [6]. A composite definition of landscape was proposed by the European Landscape Convention, which stated that the landscape “is part of the land, as perceived by local people or visitors, which evolves through time as a result

of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings" [7]. Human perceptions of space are based mainly on visual information, and elements such as landform, vegetation, and anthropogenic changes in landscape configuration are responsible for the unique attributes of a given landscape [8].

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1972, established a unique international instrument that recognizes and protects both the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value. The World Heritage Convention's definition of heritage provided an innovative and powerful opportunity to protect cultural landscapes as "combined works of nature and man" [9]. In 1992, UNESCO recognized the cultural landscape as a heritage, and the World Heritage Convention became the first international legal instrument for recognizing and protecting cultural landscapes, in line with the guidelines for placing cultural landscapes on the List of World Heritage Sites, adopted by the World Heritage Committee during its 16th session. The UNESCO document describes cultural landscapes as "illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic, and cultural forces" [10,11].

In the literature, three main types of landscapes have been identified in the evolutionary approach: primary, natural, and cultural landscapes [12]. A primary landscape does not bear any traces of human activity, whereas a natural landscape has been minimally transformed by human activity—natural features dominate and human activity is harmonized with the natural environment. In turn, the cultural landscape, also referred to as the "transformed" landscape, has been shaped by humans and reflects all civilizational and cultural changes in the history of human evolution [1,13,14]. In the most general sense, the cultural landscape is a fragment of land on the surface of the Earth that is characterized by specific natural attributes and is inhabited and managed by humans [15]. According to Gyurkovich and Pieczara [16], every cultural landscape that is shaped through human activity is characterized by cultural attributes that can be visually identified. The cultural landscape can be defined as a complex geographic reality that exists in historical times and functions as a system of interwoven flows of energy, materials, and information in real, perceived, and symbolic ways [17]. In Poland, the cultural landscape is also defined in the Act of 23 July 2003 on the Protection and Conservation of Historic Monuments as "space that has been historically shaped through human activity and contains products of civilization and natural elements" [18]. Despite the seemingly simple classification of landscapes, different types of landscapes are difficult to interpret and define accurately [19]. Three main types of cultural landscapes have been identified based on the proportions and predominance of natural and anthropogenic elements, including a predominant presence of natural values, a combination of natural values and those created as a result of human activities, and a predominant presence of anthropogenic values [20]. According to Małachowicz, the cultural landscape encompasses various land-use types, from large swathes of arable land to urban and industrial complexes, where diverse human activities are undertaken to provide degraded land with an esthetic and harmonious appearance and to preserve order in harmonious areas [21]. Sztarfrowski posited that the cultural landscape consists of elements of man's cultural and economic activities, including agriculture, exploitation of natural resources, products of civilization, culture, and technology [22]. Dobrowolska defined the cultural landscape as "a synthesis of social activity in the geographic environment. The cultural landscape depicts the interdependence and relationship between nature and human communities, as well as the rate at which landscapes are being transformed in the long process of historical evolution" [23]. Various types of cultural landscapes that differ in origin, degree, and rate of transformation, and leading transformative factors co-exist in different parts of the world. Therefore, the cultural landscape can be defined as "a result of lengthy historical processes that unfold in the landscape matrix 'encoded' by nature" [24]. The cultural landscape has also been described as a stage, where mutually

interacting natural elements, culture, technology, and art are the actors [25]. Although scientific debates on landscape introduce an element of confusion [26], every definition of landscape influences human attitudes because landscapes always have and will evoke specific emotions and esthetic experiences, regardless of the offered definitions [27].

Due to the multiple definitions of the term, various interpretations of landscape have been proposed in research studies conducted in different scientific disciplines (geography, biology, landscape architecture). The above further complicates the selection of criteria for identifying landscapes that require protection and proposing effective landscape protection methods. Historical landscape evolution has attracted considerable research interest, and the results indicate that landscapes should be protected because they carry values and meanings that are important for humans [16,21,28]. Landscapes cater to diverse human needs, including recreational, esthetic, health-related, scientific, and economic needs [20,29], and they help build the human identity [8], which is why harmonious landscape evolution is one of the greatest challenges in modern nature conservation [30]. A harmonious landscape is also a measure of sustainable spatial development, which is the most important goal of every planning policy. Article 2 of the Act of 27 March 2003 on Spatial Planning and Development defines a harmonious landscape as a configuration of land cover elements that is harmonious and incorporates all functional, socio-economic, environmental, cultural, compositional, and esthetic factors and requirements in a series of ordered relations [31]. Landscapes are protected by legal regulations applicable to cultural heritage and museums [32] and nature conservation [33], but landscape protection and conservation should be also addressed by local zoning plans, which cover small areas and are not mandatory. For this reason, cultural landscapes are insufficiently protected in Poland [34]. Therefore, cultural heritage consists not only of tangible artifacts that are legally protected but also intangible assets such as collective memory and identity that represent vast human potential and can be harnessed to promote human development [35–38].

Integrated landscape approaches have been developed to acquire, identify, and manage land-cover attributes [39,40] as elements of visual perception that can be used in local and regional planning and development [41]. However, rapid changes in land use, in particular urbanization [29,42–44] and industrialization [45], pose a significant threat to many cultural landscapes around the world

Cosgrove [46] analyzed the relationship between experience and esthetics in the context of Germanic and Latin cultural inheritances and found that the changes associated with European modernization yielded a specific idea of landscape. A new look at cultural sites is gaining popularity, where cultural monuments are replaced by cultural landscapes that need to be appreciated and conserved. Cultural landscapes have been extensively researched because they play a multidimensional role in human life by shaping human identity, contributing to health and well-being [47–49], providing a source of inspiration in education, and promoting economic growth and sustainable development. According to Taylor and Lennon, cultural landscapes act as a bridge between culture and nature [50]. In turn, Farina argued that the cultural landscape serves as a model for integrating ecology and economics [51]. Therefore, the protection and conservation of cultural landscapes is not only a moral responsibility but also an investment in the human future and the environment. It should be noted that research on cultural landscapes requires an interdisciplinary approach combining knowledge from various scientific disciplines, including archeology, history, geography, sociology, anthropology, and psychology. As emphasized by Anelli and Tajani [52], an effective valorization of the existing cultural heritage assets is necessary. It should primarily take into account the following factors: (i) ensuring the transmission of the represented history to the present and future generations, (ii) reducing urban decay, and (iii) avoiding further natural land consumption by new buildings [53,54].

The enhancement of historical, artistic, and cultural assets is an issue of significant interest in the international and national context, within the framework of policies capable of reducing land consumption. Unfortunately, the preservation and enhancement of cultural heritage are hindered by the construction of new buildings that are incompatible with the

valuable characteristics of the surrounding urban environment [52]. Excessive exploitation of historic buildings and their immediate surroundings can also adversely affect their condition. The importance of developing effective interventions for the enhancement and reuse of disused religious heritage is increasing [55]. The issue of the reuse of religious heritage has also been the focus of numerous studies [52,56–58].

The aim of this study was to identify the measures that should be taken to protect the components of the cultural landscape and to propose strategies that will not only contribute to the appreciation of cultural values but will also facilitate the promotion and preservation of cultural landscape components that are gradually disappearing from the rural fabric. Areas with high cultural heritage value were assessed with the use of a modified method involving a point grading scale. All valuable landscape components that should be protected against destructive human activities were taken into account.

2. Materials and Methods

Warmia is one of the most attractive Polish regions. Its popularity can be attributed to pristine nature, beautiful scenery, undulating landscapes, and rich cultural heritage, including historic town centers whose unique architecture has been preserved in landmark buildings such as castles, churches, and town halls [59,60].

2.1. Description of the Study Area

The study covered the municipality of Dobre Miasto, which is situated at the heart of Warmia. Dobre Miasto is a part of Olsztyn County, and neighbors five municipalities: Lubomino, Lidzbark Warmiński, Świątki, Jeziorany, and Dywity (Figure 1).

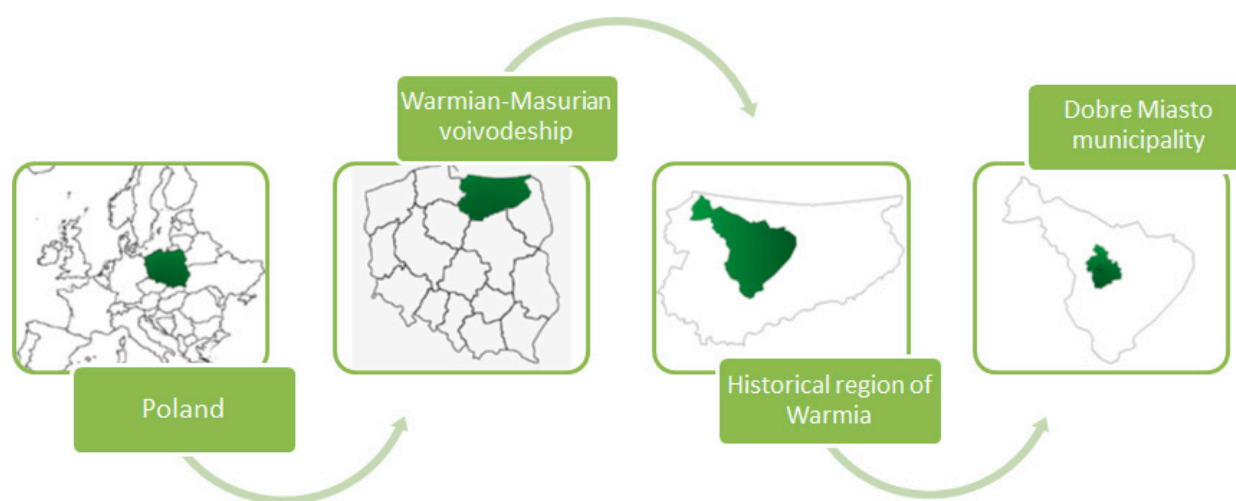


Figure 1. Location of Dobre Miasto in the historical region of Warmia and the Warmian-Masurian voivodeship (source: own elaboration).

Dobre Miasto municipality covers an area of 258.7 km² and most of its territory is covered by forests and woodland (9021 ha) and arable land (9009 ha). The municipality comprises the town of Dobre Miasto (divided into five districts) and 23 villages [61].

The town of Dobre Miasto was founded by Fredrich von Liebenzell, a voivode in the Prince-Bishopric of Warmia and a knight of the Teutonic Order. In 1325, the Teutonic chronicler Peter of Dusburg wrote: “brother Fridericus built the town of Guttstadt in the fork of the Łyna River”. The island bound by the tributaries of Łyna was an ideal site for building a fortified settlement (Figure 2). Dobre Miasto was founded in the early 14th century on the territory formerly occupied by Prussians, the indigenous inhabitants of Warmia [62].

Dobre Miasto’s cultural heritage was not affected by World War I, whereas 65% of town buildings were reduced to rubble in the aftermath of World War II. As a result, the

original layout of Medieval buildings and fortified walls was nearly completely lost [63]. As noted by Zagroba, the town was transformed during post-war reconstruction efforts and in successive decades of the 20th century; however, its historic urban layout was preserved [60]. Therefore, the remaining elements of the town's cultural landscape require further protection. The fact that religious worship sites account for 79.7% of the structures that have been listed by the Voivodeship Conservation Authority in Olsztyn (roadside shrines account for 54.2% of these structures) best testifies to the compact religious landscape of Dobrze Miasto municipality. Roadside shrines are one of the most distinctive features of Warmia's cultural heritage. Their design reflects local architectural traditions, and most roadside shrines are brick (Figure 3a) or stone structures, sometimes covered with a layer of plaster (Figure 3b). The most elaborate shrines resemble miniature castles or altars [64].

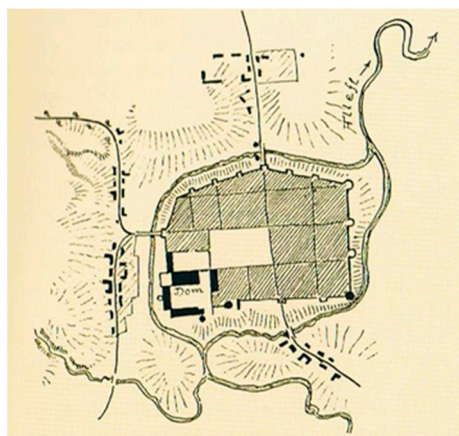


Figure 2. Medieval plan of Dobrze Miasto drawn by Michael Guise in 1827 [62].

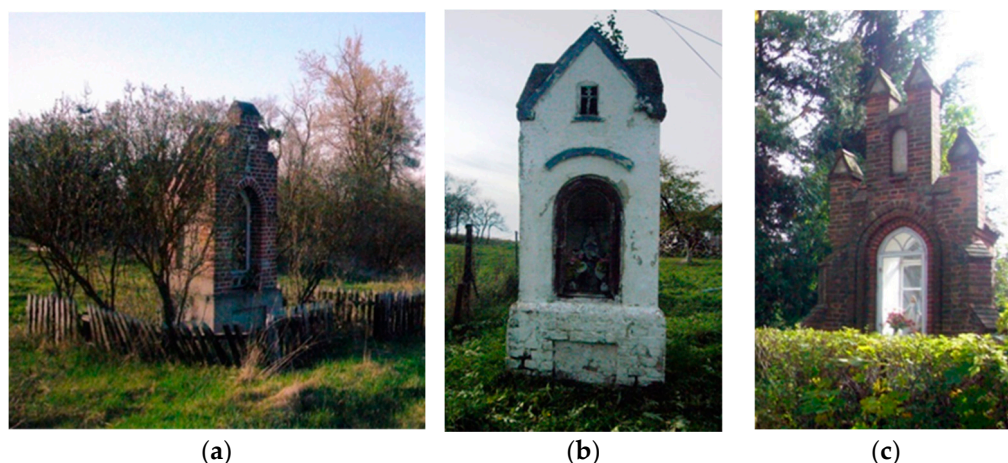


Figure 3. Roadside shrines in the Warmian-Masurian voivodeship: (a) Roadside shrine in Cerkiewnik; (b) Roadside shrine in Mawry; (c) Roadside shrine in Nowa Wieś Mała (source: own photographs).

Roadside shrines were a symbol of faith, and they were built as an expression of gratitude for good fortune and to protect the residents against “evil forces”. Some shrines had bells that were rang during community gatherings, to warn the residents about fire, or to announce the death of a villager [65]. Many Warmian roads are also lined with crosses which played an important role in the local landscape and acted as guardians of faith [66]. Dobrze Miasto also boasts other architectural monuments that emphasize the municipality's unique and multi-dimensional cultural heritage. These include the Collegiate Church in the town of Dobrze Miasto (Figure 4b), which is one of the largest and the most beautiful hall churches in Warmia with characteristic features of monastic and fortified architecture [67].

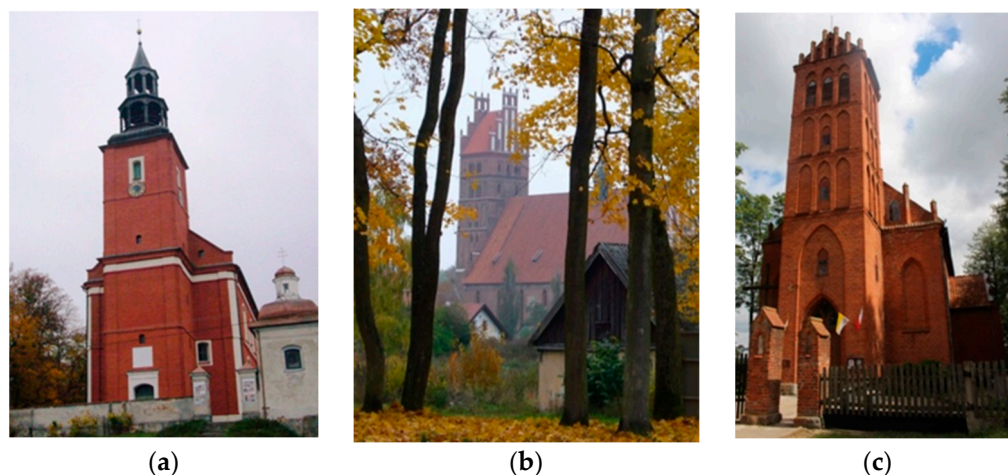


Figure 4. Historic churches in Dobre Miasto municipality: (a) Blessed Sacrament Church in Głotowo; (b) Gothic Collegiate Church in Dobre Miasto; (c) St. Catherine's Church in Cerkiewnik (source: own photographs).

Dobre Miasto municipality abounds in old churches and other historic monuments. Two of the most popular relics of religious architecture are the Blessed Sacrament Baroque church in Głotowo (Figure 4a) and the Warmian Calvary, which was built in a nearby ravine in 1878–1894. The Warmian Calvary consists of 14 neo-Gothic and neo-Roman shrines and chapels that were modeled on the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem. The construction of the Warmian Calvary was initiated and financed by Johannes Merten. The relic stones purchased by Merten during his pilgrimage to Jerusalem were placed under glass domes in each chapel [68,69]. Large churches also dominate the landscape in other Warmian villages, including Piotraszewo, Orzechowo, Międzylesie, Jesionowo, and Cerkiewnik (Figure 4c).

In addition to its vast religious landscape, Dobre Miasto also boasts other historic buildings and structures that have been listed by the Voivodeship Monument Conservation Authority in Olsztyn. These include fortified walls, Bociania fortified tower (this Gothic tower was built in the 14th century, and is the only surviving element of Dobre Miasto's fortifications) (Figure 5a), a water tower, granaries, a granary gate, a cemetery gate, historic villas, homes, tenement buildings, a church hall, an abattoir, and former stable buildings. Palaces, manors, and parks also play an important role in the municipality's cultural heritage. The historic palace and park in Smolajny, the summer residence of Warmian bishops, is one of the greatest tourist attractions in Dobre Miasto (Figure 5b).



Figure 5. Other historic buildings in Dobre Miasto municipality: (a) Bociania Fortified Tower; (b) Palace in Smolajny (source: own photographs).

The town of Dobre Miasto is a member of the Cittaslow movement. Cittaslow is an international organization that promotes the slow life concept and the harmonious

development of historic towns [70]. The Cittaslow philosophy encourages the search for sustainable development policies that offer a healthy balance between social and economic growth and the protection of local traditions and cultural heritage [71].

2.2. Research Methodology

Large datasets for the study were obtained from research monographs, field surveys, and analyses of cultural heritage values and changes in the cultural landscape based on cartographic materials. The study covered the period between 2014 and 2024 due to the availability of source materials and research studies analyzing the region's cultural landscape, natural resources, and potential for tourism development. For the needs of this study, search results were narrowed down to analyses of the cultural landscape. The study covered a long period of time to identify changes in land use and to guide activities aiming to preserve the Warmian cultural landscape in Dobre Miasto municipality. The stages of the research process are presented in Figure 6.

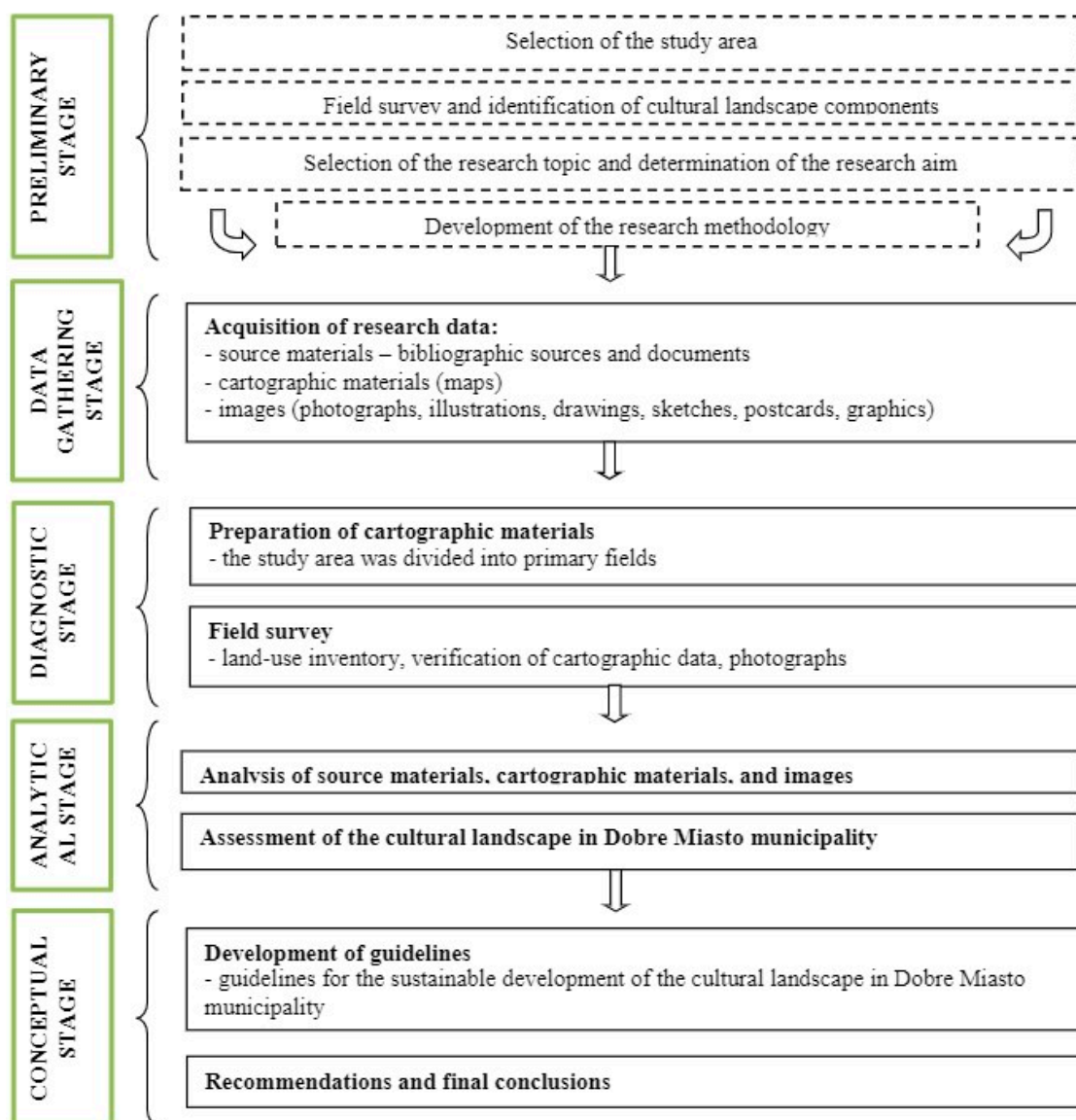


Figure 6. Stages of the research process (source: own elaboration).

The preservation of cultural values was assessed with the use of a point grading scale (Table 1). The study area was divided into primary fields. A primary field represents a unit of area in the examined territory where the analyzed variables are calculated. In

this study, the primary fields were squares with a side length of 1 km. The map of Dobre Miasto was divided into primary fields based on the coordinates provided by the Atlas of Vascular Plant Distribution in Poland (ATPOL) [72]. The atlas maps the geographic distribution of vascular plants, but it divides the territory of Poland into squares with a side length of 10 km. Data resolution can be improved by decreasing the size of grid squares. Equally sized grid squares are highly useful in spatial analyses because they facilitate data comparisons [73]. In ATPOL, the municipality of Dobre Miasto was divided into eight 10×10 km squares with the following symbols: EB 11, EB 12, EB 21, EB 22, EB 23, EB 31, EB 32, and EB 33. To divide the municipality into primary fields, the centrally located square EB 22 was selected, and its coordinates were superimposed on a map with a scale of 1:25,000. The municipality was divided into 307 squares, but 103 squares had an area smaller than 1 km^2 because they were located along the municipality's boundaries (Figure 7).

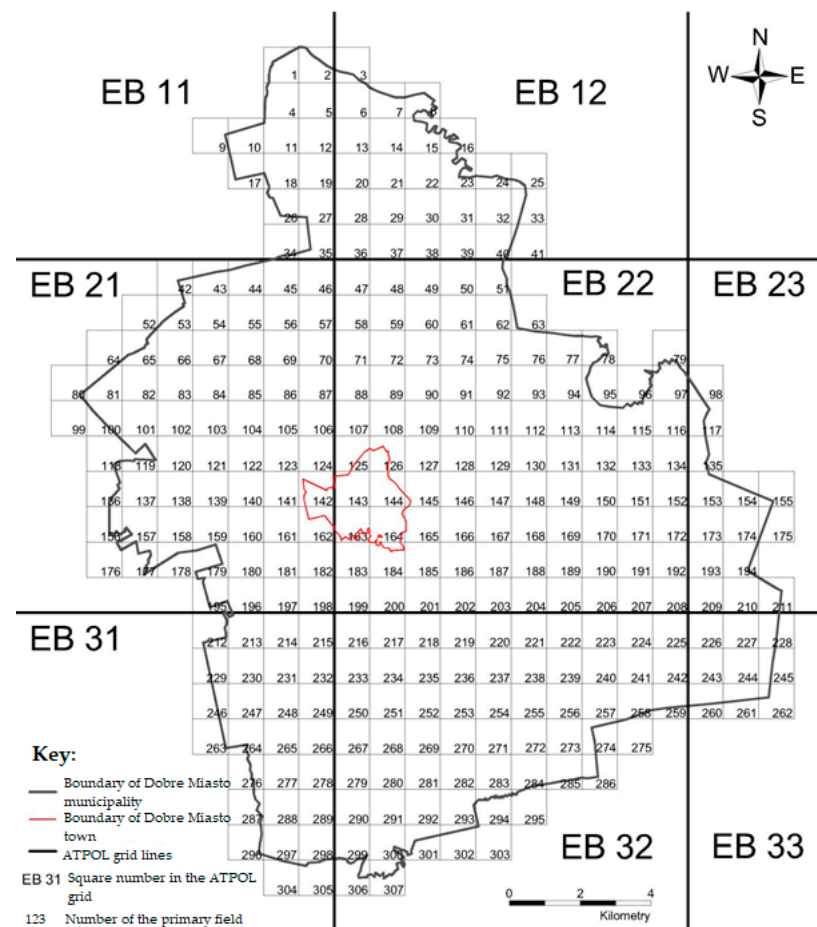


Figure 7. Map of Dobre Miasto municipality divided into primary fields based on ATPOL (source: own elaboration based on the ATPOL topographic map and raster map with a grid of squares; [74]).

The components of the cultural landscape were evaluated in the town of Dobre Miasto, 23 villages in Dobre Miasto municipality, the neighboring sites, and sites distributed throughout the entire municipality. The analysis was narrowed down to these locations because valuable structures and objects were identified only in these sites. The cultural landscape was assessed with the use of the criteria proposed by Źarska [75] and Malinowska [76], with some modifications. The elements of the cultural landscape were defined as objects of material culture that testify to the region's history and unique character, including historic monuments of outstanding architectural value, palaces, manors, parks, rural buildings and structures, and valuable archeological artifacts. Entire rural settlements and their significance in the surrounding landscape were also evaluated. The cultural heritage

value of historic objects and structures and their attractiveness as tourist destinations were assessed on a point grading scale.

The cultural landscape was evaluated with the use of four criteria, which are described in Table 1. Primary fields containing the described objects were assigned a given number of points. In primary fields containing several heritage objects, the points awarded to each monument were summed up. The last criterion (general landscape composition) was evaluated subjectively. The following factors decreased the attractiveness of the cultural landscape in the primary fields: road and rail networks with accompanying infrastructure, transit routes, water supply lines and facilities, public utility buildings, mining sites and illegal waste dumps, industrial facilities, developed areas, power grids, and telecommunications masts (Table 1).

Table 1. Cultural heritage criteria for classifying primary fields based on the number of awarded points.

Criteria	Point Grading Scale		
	Elements of the Cultural Heritage	Points	
I	Objects generally classified as cultural monuments *	Historic palaces, historic parks	5
		Historic urban layout	5
		Churches, chapels, Stations of the Cross, towers	5
		Cemeteries, roadside shrines, and crosses	3
		Historic farmhouses	3
		Archeological sites	3 **
		Historic residential and commercial buildings	1
		Buildings with valuable architecture	1
II	Objects of unique significance for the region's cultural heritage	Objects that are unique on the national scale	5
		Objects that are unique on the regional scale	3
		Objects with typical and repetitive features	1
III	Significance for the cultural landscape (historic and architectural value, level of preservation)	High	5
		Moderate	3
		Low	1
IV	General landscape composition	Harmonious	5
		Partly disrupted	−3
		Disrupted	−5

* Points are summed up in primary fields containing several cultural heritage objects. ** Archeological site listed in the register of monuments. (Source: own elaboration based on Żarska and Malinowska [75,76]).

The results of the analysis were used to identify five types of landscapes with different cultural heritage values (Table 2).

Table 2. Criteria and a point grading scale for assessing cultural heritage value.

Groups of Criteria	Description	Total Number of Points
A	Areas with outstanding cultural heritage value	>35
B	Areas with very high cultural heritage value	26–35
C	Areas with high cultural heritage value	16–25
D	Areas with average cultural heritage value	6–15
E	Areas with low cultural heritage value	<6

The points awarded for the components of the cultural landscape were summed up in primary fields. Areas with high cultural heritage value were designated with the use of colors (white—no cultural heritage value; dark maroon—very high cultural heritage value).

3. Results

3.1. Warmian Cultural Landscape

Warmia is an ethnographic, historical, and geographic region whose evolution was influenced by historical, natural, demographic, and cultural factors that left lasting imprints on the region's social and cultural heritage [77]. This picturesque region is characterized by undulating glacial landforms. Nested between Elbląg Heights and Olsztyn Lakeland, Warmia is intersected by the valleys of two rivers, Drwęca Warmińska and Łyna [78]. The region was named after the Prussian tribe of Warmians (Warmi) that colonized the area of Braniewo and Frombork. The efforts to map the region's administrative boundaries lasted more than a century (1243–1375). Warmia's heritage was shaped by four distinctive cultural identities: Prussia, Prince-Bishopric of Warmia, East Prussia, and contemporary Warmia [79]. Throughout history, Warmia remained under the exclusive influence of the Catholic Church, which significantly contributed to the sacralization of the region's cultural landscape [64]. Warmia abounds in 16th-century Gothic churches, Baroque pilgrimage churches, and 19th-century religious art imbued with complex symbols [80]. Numerous roadside shrines, built mostly in the 19th and 20th centuries, are a distinctive feature of the Warmian landscape and a part of the common cultural heritage shared by all Warmian residents, similar to the numerous churches [81]. Due to their unique architecture, roadside shrines are regarded as works of art, and many of them have been placed on the list of historic monuments. Sanctuaries and monasteries are also valuable objects of Warmian cultural heritage. Most of them were built in river valleys and deserted areas to elicit esthetic and, above all, religious experiences [69]. In the past, the rhythm of life in Warmian communities was based on the calendar of religious observances that was synchronized with nature.

Warmian rural settlements were characterized by dense development, and timber was the predominant construction material until the 19th century (Figure 8). Then, wooden houses were replaced by single-story buildings, sometimes with usable space in the attic, which were made of red brick; some of them had stone foundations [69].

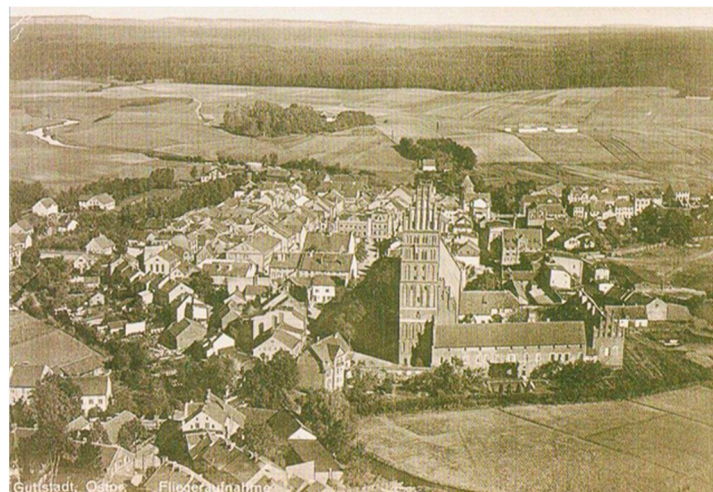


Figure 8. Historic panorama of Dobre Miasto [62].

Several types of rural settlements evolved over the years. Linear settlement, where most buildings were erected along a single main street or a lake or river, was predominant. In circular villages, which are rarely encountered today, buildings were arranged around a central square that served as a public space or a grazing area [82]. Over the years, these types of settlements evolved into irregular villages with several streets, where buildings were erected in a planned or chaotic manner.

In the 19th century, the agrarian reforms introduced by the Prussian government led to the fragmentation or consolidation of land, which induced profound changes in the

Warmian landscape. The reforms enabled many peasants to build homesteads on consolidated parcels, which led to the emergence of isolated colonies and, in some cases, the gradual disappearance of dense rural settlements. The resettlement programs introduced after 1945 also contributed to the loss of Warmian cultural identity because indigenous communities were replaced by settlers who did not feel emotionally attached to the land. The new settlers arrived from the Vilnius, Lviv, Grodno, Warsaw, Łuck, Przemyśl, and Białystok regions [79]. In the last decade, the rapid development of agricultural estates and housing also induced considerable changes in the Warmian landscape [83]. Most of Warmia's inhabitants are descendants of settlers who arrived in the region after World War II, and they do not have a sense of regional identity and are not emotionally attached to their place of residence [84]. For this reason, local communities do not feel compelled to prevent the gradual degradation of the Warmian landscape and undertake the necessary conservation measures. Effective revitalization programs have been implemented in the region to reinstate historic structures such as wayside shrines or nature reserves [69]. However, comprehensive restoration projects involving landscape protection experts are needed to preserve the region's cultural heritage for future generations. The most valuable landscapes will be irrevocably lost in the coming decades unless such measures are initiated [85].

3.2. Planning Regulations in the Urban–Rural Municipality of Dobre Miasto

Spatial planning is the totality of activities that are undertaken to promote the harmonious spatial development of the country, voivodeships (regions), and municipalities in view of the existing mutual relationships and interests, as well as international connections. Spatial planning is a preliminary stage of land management that induces specific changes in land use. In Poland, spatial planning plays a key role in shaping and protecting the country's natural, cultural, and socio-economic environment. It is a process that encompasses a series of activities aimed at organizing and developing space in a way that is sustainable and provides adequate living conditions for the present and future generations.

The local zoning plan constitutes an act of local law that divides land into zones and prescribes specific land-use types and regulations for new development in each zone. Very few local zoning plans have been developed in the municipality of Dobre Miasto. According to Statistics Poland data, only 1% of the municipality's territory was covered by local zoning plans in 2014, and this value increased insignificantly to reach 1.9% in March 2024. The most recent plan covering a part of Dobre Miasto town (Olsztyńska, Cmentarna, and Jeziorańska streets and the city's administrative boundaries) was enforced in 2021 [86]. The spatial coverage of local zoning plans is presented in Figure 9.

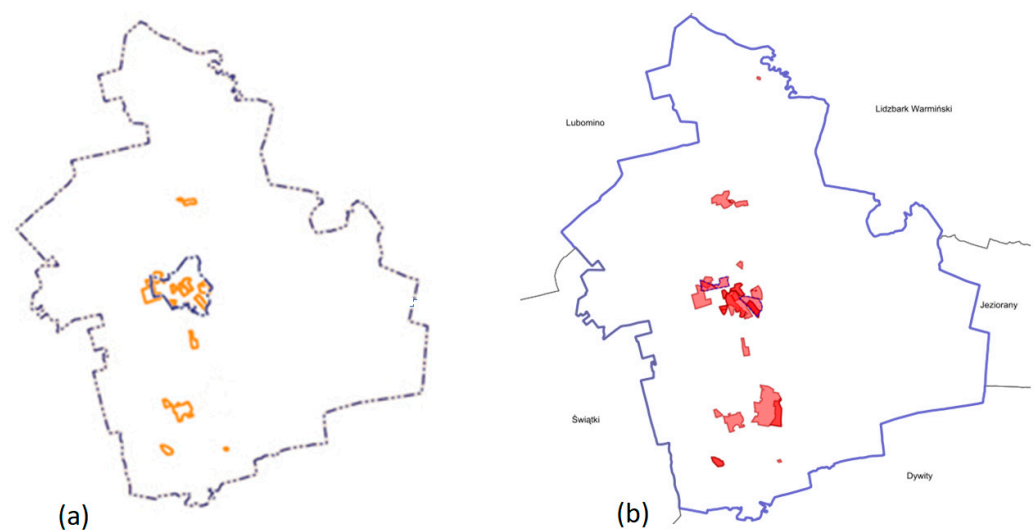


Figure 9. Local zoning plans covering the town and the rural–urban municipality of Dobre Miasto in 2014 (a) and 2024 (b) [87].

Spatial planning is based on decisions on new development in a given zone, which are issued in the absence of local zoning plans, according to the current regulations [31]. However, this solution does not take into account the preservation of cultural landscapes, since the decisions on land development are issued mainly on the basis of neighborhood analyses. As a result, new, modern buildings are erected, which leads to the loss of cultural heritage value.

3.3. Assessment of Cultural Heritage Value

Only 180 primary fields containing villages, settlements, colonies, dispersed rural development, and the town of Dobre Miasto were included in the assessment of cultural heritage value. Five types of areas with different cultural heritage values were identified based on the awarded points (Table 2). Their distribution in Dobre Miasto municipality is presented in Figure 10.

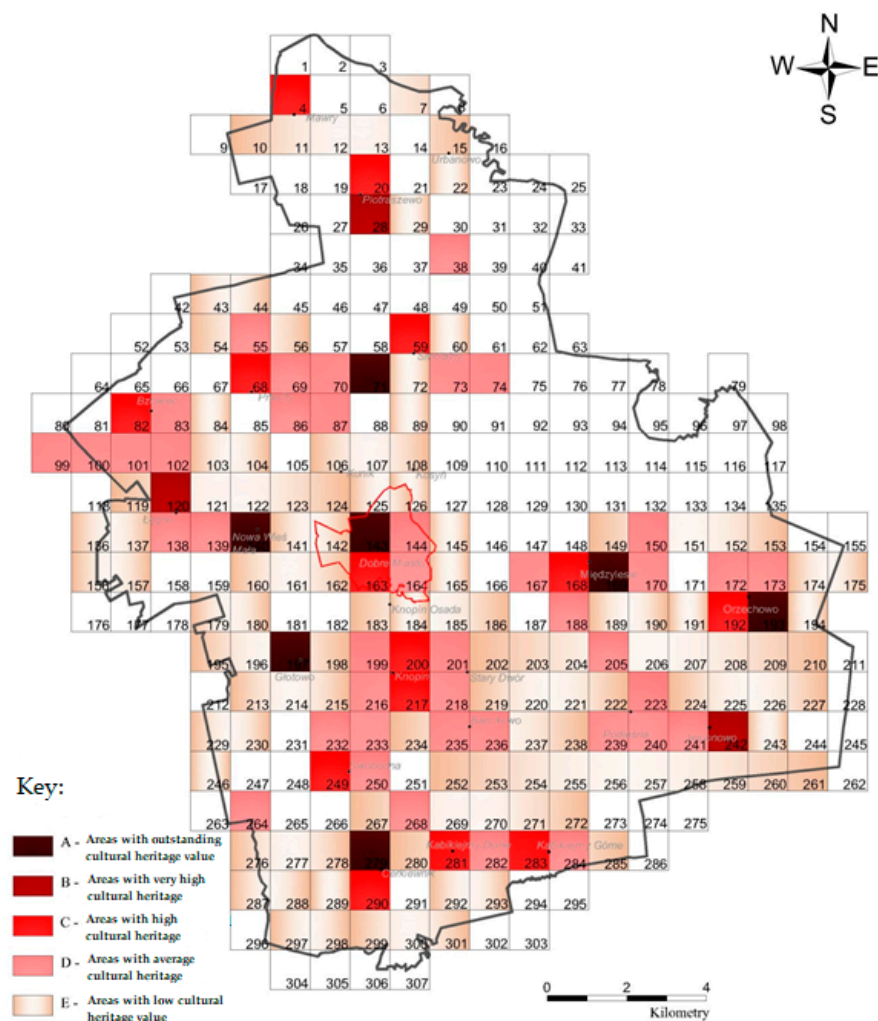


Figure 10. Distribution of areas with different cultural heritage values in Dobre Miasto municipality (source: own elaboration).

Seven areas with outstanding cultural heritage value, three areas with very high cultural heritage value, 14 areas with high cultural heritage value, 42 areas with average cultural heritage value, and 114 areas with low cultural heritage value were identified in Dobre Miasto. These results imply that 41.4% of the municipality's territory (127 primary fields) is deprived of cultural heritage value.

Areas with outstanding cultural heritage value covered only 2.3% of primary fields, including the palace and park in Smolajny (field No. 71—37 points), the village of Nowa

Wieś Mała (field No. 140—39 points), a fragment of dense urban development (field No. 143, the highest number of points—102), a fragment of rural development in the village of Międzyzlesie (field No. 169—57 points), the village of Głotowo (field No. 197—86 points), and selected fragments of the villages of Jesionowo (field No. 242—35 points) and Cerkiewnik (field No. 279—42 points). The primary fields classified as group A areas feature a high number of unique historic monuments listed in the register of historic monuments and/or the inventory of historic monuments, which make a valuable contribution to the region's (primary fields 71, 140, 242, 279) or the country's cultural heritage (primary fields 143, 169, 197).

An analysis of the map presenting the results of the cultural landscape analysis indicates that areas with outstanding (group A), very high (group B), and high (group C) cultural heritage value were dispersed on the territory of Dobre Miasto municipality. In turn, areas with average (group D) and low (group E) cultural heritage value tended to form larger clusters because they contained dispersed rural settlements and fragments of the neighboring villages and the town. These areas were devoid of or featured a very small number of unique historic monuments that make a valuable contribution to the region's cultural heritage. Group D areas (with average cultural heritage value; 42 primary fields) and group E areas (with low cultural heritage value; 114 primary fields) accounted for 13.7% and 37.1% of the territory of Dobre Miasto municipality, respectively.

The largest number of primary fields (114) were classified as group E areas with low cultural heritage value, including areas that received a negative score in the general landscape assessment. These areas were characterized by partly disrupted or disrupted landscapes. Very few group E areas featured cultural heritage sites that were listed in the register of historic monuments and the inventory of historic monuments (village of Kosyń, field No. 108), were listed only in the register of historic monuments (dispersed development in Prasłity, field No. 103), or were listed only in the inventory of historic monuments (a fragment of Mawry village, field No. 11; field in Smolajny, field No. 72; Prasłity, field No. 85; Kunik, field No. 106, Urbanowo-field and farmhouse, field No. 29).

The attractiveness of Dobre Miasto's cultural landscape was compromised by the presence of the following structures: road and railway networks with the accompanying infrastructure, industrial sites, power grids, remnants of the former State Agricultural Farms, and deserted and dilapidated residential and commercial buildings. The municipality's failure to adopt local zoning plans poses a considerable threat to valuable cultural heritage sites. The absence of land-use regulations leads to chaotic development and new developments that are not harmonized with the surroundings and traditional architecture. The study revealed that the relationship between cultural heritage objects, in particular, roadside shrines and their surroundings, has been obliterated, especially in the town, where changes in land use proceed more rapidly. In many instances, the area surrounding cultural monuments is inadequately managed, and various elements of technical infrastructure, such as safety barriers, utility poles, fire hydrants, trash cans, traffic signs, street lamps, and bus stations, are positioned in the immediate vicinity of such objects. Many new buildings in the town and in villages represent diverse architectural styles and clash with the surrounding environment. Unauthorized attempts to renovate historic roadside shrines also pose a problem in rural areas (Mawry, Międzyzlesie, and Piotraszewo). These efforts show local initiative, but they often fail to follow conservation guidelines, which contributes to the degradation of valuable heritage objects. Robbery and acts of vandalism also pose a significant threat to sites of religious worship. Old statues are often stolen or replaced with cheap plaster or ceramic figures that are bought by the parishioners. The immediate surroundings of historic and religious monuments are often poorly managed. In many cases, fences and paved surfaces are dilapidated and require repair. Heritage sites can be also damaged during renovation projects through the use of inappropriate materials. The archeological sites that are situated along the eastern and southern shores of Lake Limajno and managed by the Voivodeship Monument Conservation Authority were divided into building plots and sold. Many homeowners built fences around their

properties and completely blocked public access to the lake. A listed historic Prussian settlement (Kapelusz) was also sold to a private owner who erected a stone and concrete fence around the estate.

4. Discussion

Cultural landscapes, situated at the interface between nature and culture, tangible and intangible heritage, and biological and cultural diversity, represent an intricate web of relationships, the essence of culture and human identity [10]. The cultural landscape is also a popular category, and every tenth entry on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites, established within the framework of the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention [88], is a cultural landscape, which testifies to its role and significance in human life [1,89].

Chaotic spatial development in Poland undoubtedly resulted from poor planning after World War II, and it is particularly visible in rural settlements, where architectural solutions were introduced in a disordered fashion without much regard for regional traditions [90]. In the past, rural landscapes were regarded as types of terrain that were least affected by human activity. The rural landscape is influenced by the shape of the settlement (spatial layout of buildings and utilities), the layout of farm fields, architecture (style of construction), road networks, natural features, and the overall landscape composition.

The quality of rural landscapes is influenced by spatial factors such as the rural panorama, dominant features, landscape segmentation, distribution of roads, homestead parcels and vegetation, a village's location in the landscape, the vista surrounding villages and the neighboring areas, and the characteristic layout of farm fields [91]. However, recent decades have witnessed considerable changes in the functional and spatial attributes of rural areas, which gives serious cause for concern [92]. In Poland, many rural areas were not adequately protected against the adverse consequences of rapid economic growth, which has led to the degradation or even devastation of landscape elements [93]. We are living in an era of revolutionary landscape change, where landscapes are being consumed on a massive scale, and for this reason alone, urgent measures are needed to promote sustainable development patterns [24,94]. It should be noted that landscapes have limited resilience to degrading factors, and their attributes are more easily degraded than improved, which is why the existing landscape resources are bound to be depleted at some point [95]. The changes in anthropogenic and natural environments proceed rapidly, and only some landscape elements can be preserved [96]. Fast-paced changes and the resulting degradation of the cultural landscape were initiated during the period of political transformations in Poland, when environmental protection was guided by old instruments that were unable to effectively control the new dynamics of social and economic growth [97]. Landscapes undoubtedly reflect our present lifestyle, economic processes, and culture, and they represent the evolution of human civilization [27]. Land development plays an important role in this process, and its consequences are particularly visible in the surrounding scenery. In 1976, Bogdanowski noted that urban development leads to the loss of valuable architecture in villages which, in themselves, symbolize the progress of human civilization and an improvement in living standards and public services [98,99]. These changes are usually driven by growing levels of social affluence and the desire to live in single-family homes surrounded by attractive scenery, which encourages developers to build apartment blocks or tourist sites in such locations. The prices of recreational real estate are significantly affected by the visual quality of the surrounding landscape [100]. Unfortunately, housing development and the resulting increase in the number of car users could not be stopped, which has led to the construction of dense road networks and the irrevocable loss of roadside trees and greenery [85].

Environmental degradation decreases the quality of life and causes psychological strain and physical discomfort. There is a growing recognition that rapid economic growth and poor spatial planning have induced adverse changes in rural landscapes [60].

Despite the fact that more stringent landscape protection regulations have been introduced over the years, the cultural heritage value of historic monuments declined due to

changes in the surrounding space. New regulations were introduced to protect monuments together with their immediate surroundings. These laws were expanded to protect entire groups of monuments and, in recent years, the cultural landscape [101]. Despite these measures, Polish landscapes are being continuously eroded, which leads to a massive loss of cultural heritage resources. The European Landscape Convention is the only act of international law that is dedicated entirely to landscape protection and management. Poland ratified this document in 2004 and undertook to protect valuable landscapes that are a part of the European cultural heritage. The Act of 24 April 2015 amending selected legal acts to strengthen landscape protection instruments is an important legislative milestone in the process of controlling adverse landscape changes. This act will contribute to the implementation of the provisions of the European Landscape Convention, which have not yet been translated into best management practices in Poland [102].

The religious landscape of Dobre Miasto municipality bears witness to more than seven centuries of Catholic traditions of the Prince-Bishopric of Warmia. Numerous churches and roadside shrines are a distinctive feature of the historical region of Warmia [80]. However, the present condition of the region's cultural landscape leaves much to be desired. Some monuments are in dire condition due to the lack of proper maintenance and funding. Commercial development and large structures that dominate the local landscape have induced negative changes in the immediate surroundings of historic and cultural monuments [64]. Few attempts are being made to blend new architecture into the cultural landscape or tall vegetation, which poses a threat to the aesthetic value of the landscape. Large State-owned agricultural holdings and apartment blocks have also contributed to the loss of esthetic values and regional identity [99,103]. Despite the awareness that landscapes should be protected, conservation measures are often regarded as an obstacle to economic growth, and some developers take advantage of the fact that many municipalities have not yet developed local zoning plans covering their entire territory. The significance of landscape conservation must be clearly communicated to the public to change the prevailing attitudes towards landscape protection as an economic obstacle [101]. These problems should be addressed by protecting, revitalizing, and adapting landscapes to modern needs. Educational campaigns aiming to increase public awareness about adverse landscape changes should be prioritized. Zoning plans covering larger areas are also urgently needed to introduce cohesive spatial planning solutions and protect rural landscapes. Distinctive rural features should be identified and used as a source of inspiration in new development [104]. Legal regulations are needed to ban discordant development in the vicinity of historic monuments and to maintain their original character because the value of cultural heritage sites is diminished when these objects are overshadowed by new development or vegetation. Realistic, clear, and precise laws must be developed in Poland to prevent the loss of cultural heritage values because current activities will influence the long-term welfare of future generations [105]. Therefore, the definition of cultural (material) heritage in research studies should be expanded to account for new developments that will constitute a point of reference for future generations [16]. Planning solutions that contribute to the rational management of protected areas or areas that require protection plays an immensely important role in landscape conservation [106]. According to Marcinkowski, vista points and scenic overlooks are gradually disappearing in Poland despite landscape protection regulations [107]. National and local laws are clearly ineffective in this respect. Public consultations should be held in the process of developing local zoning plans [108]. Educational campaigns should be organized for all age groups, and local communities should participate in landscape protection because collective responsibility motivates people to take good care of shared resources [109]. Mass media campaigns promoting the cultural landscape could also play an important role in spreading the awareness that regional traditions and history are factors that drive tourism and contribute to the development of local communities.

In the face of rapid social and economic change, the resilience and adaptive capacity of cultural landscapes play a key role in sustainable development [44,110]. Valuable resources

can be also digitized to preserve the elements of the cultural heritage and increase public awareness about their importance. Digitization helps protect valuable archival materials, and digitized documents can be easily accessed online by members of the public [34].

5. Conclusions

The proposed method, especially the list of cultural landscape elements that should be protected, is the main achievement of this study. In the era of the development of GIS technology and free and universal access to spatial data, the proposed method can be applied to any area. The main challenge is to know what data to include and what evaluation criteria to use. This article provides such a proposal, which has been tested in a selected research area (characterized by high cultural heritage value).

The rural–urban municipality of Dobre Miasto features valuable cultural heritage sites that are undergoing rapid transformation. The analysis of the cultural landscape in the studied municipality revealed seven areas with outstanding cultural heritage value (2.3%), including the palace and park in Smolajny, the villages of Nowa Wieś Mała, Cerkiewnik, and Głotowo, selected fragments of the villages of Międzylesie and Jesionowo, and the north-western part of dense urban development. Areas with outstanding, very high, and high cultural heritage value (24 primary fields) are characterized by a large number of cultural monuments and considerable potential for tourism development. The analysis also revealed that poor planning policies contribute to landscape degradation. Fragmented programming and ineffective landscape protection measures lead to the loss of harmonious landscapes. To counteract the decline in landscape esthetics, protective measures should be developed by interdisciplinary teams of professionals who have considerable experience in landscape management. Legal regulations concerning landscape protection and spatial planning should be amended to incorporate the provisions of the European Landscape Convention. The results of this study pave the way for future research, and they can be used in planning processes to preserve the cultural and natural value of historic landscapes, promote sustainable development of lake regions, and increase their appeal to the local residents. The present findings can be useful for spatial planning (at both local and regional levels) to establish provisions for a given space and to use it rationally.

The municipality of Dobre Miasto needs a rational spatial policy. The local authorities should make every effort to preserve the unique cultural landscape. Issues of landscape conservation and protection should be reflected in local zoning plans, which are currently optional and cover only a small area of the country. As a result, the landscape heritage in Poland is very poorly protected, especially in the municipality of Dobre Miasto where local zoning plans cover less than 2% of the territory.

Various policies, regulations, and measures have been undertaken to preserve the historical values of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites. However, many monuments and sites have unique natural or cultural values, but their protection is only possible through national or local laws.

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