

## Article

# The Cultural Landscape of Rural Cemeteries on the Polish–Czech Borderlands: Multi-Faceted Visual Analysis as an Element of Tourism Potential Assessment

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**Abstract:** This article presents the tourism potential of the Polish–Czech borderlands (Kłodzko Land, Lower Silesia, Poland), in which historical sacred sites, namely cemeteries and churches, play a significant role. An analysis of the most important features of sacred sites was carried out to present the diversity of the architectural richness of the region. At the same time, attention was paid to additional elements, such as their visual aspects and their impact on shaping space. The research is based on the sacred sites located on the Polish–Czech borderland. As part of the work, an analysis of historical, natural, and landscape conditions was performed along with the spatial layout of 106 cemeteries. During the field research, inventories of landscape and natural values were carried out. The assessment of landscape value was carried out using an original concept to enable an indication of site’s tourism potential on the basis of visual aspects of its space. The article and the research methods contained within concern interdisciplinary research combining architecture, landscape architecture, socio-economic geography, and tourism.

**Keywords:** rural landscape; cemeteries; landscape and visual analysis



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## 1. Introduction

Elements of cultural heritage and sacred sites have been an stimulus for the development of tourism for many generations [1–11]. According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 330 million people a year undertake religious tourism [12,13]. Sanctuaries and places commemorating important events become important centers for the development of tourism. This contributes to the growth of the popularity of a place, the expansion of the service sector, as well as a seasonal or constant influx of people. Visitors to places of worship have various motives that become reasons for choosing their travel interests [14–20]. These can be religious needs, the desire to see famous places, the need to become familiar with works of architecture and others that often exist or are created next to important sacred sites. This analysis takes into consideration that well-known and important places in terms of religion or tourism are often “overcrowded” [21–27].

The intensification of tourism (regardless of the motives of visitors) in certain periods (tourist seasonality, holiday periods, celebrations of important events, etc.) may cause “discomfort”, a sense of “overloading”, and could even intensify negative feelings during sightseeing [28–30]. Therefore, it may be worth discovering and popularizing sites that can potentially be a tourist attractor, especially in the context of shaping the development of religious tourism. When creating a new “tourist product” or promoting facilities that are to become the reason for the development of pioneering travel, the diverse needs of

stakeholders should be taken into account, as well as the opportunity to propose interesting and inspiring stimuli [31–41].

The aim of the article is to present the tourist potential of the Polish–Czech borderlands (Kłodzko Land, Lower Silesia, Poland). Particular attention is paid to the sacred sites of cemeteries and churches. An analysis of the most important features of sacred sites was carried out in order to present the diversity of the architectural richness of the region. At the same time, attention was paid to additional elements such as the visual aspects of sacred sites and their impact on shaping space.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The article presents the results of research carried out under a grant on Wiejskie przykościelne cmentarze pogranicza polsko-czeskiego w krajobrazie woj. dolnośląskiego (“Rural churchyards of the Polish–Czech borderlands in the landscape of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship”). Comparative research on this area has been conducted since September 2022 and has been financed under the MEiN (Polish Ministry of Education and Science) Nauka dla Społeczeństwa (“Science for Society”). (Publication co-financed from the state budget under the program of the Polish Ministry of Education and Science under the name “Science for Society”, project no. NdS/552172/2022/2022, amount of co-financing PLN 487 978, total project value PLN 487 978). The research includes sacred sites located on the Polish–Czech borderlands, primarily including an analysis of historical, natural, and landscape conditions, as well as the spatial layout of 106 cemeteries. During the field research, inventories of landscape and natural values were carried out. As part of desk research, information related to the history and origin of sites, their transformation over time, as well as issues related to the shaping of the surrounding space were collected. Attention was also paid to important aspects connected to the historical and contemporary development of areas directly related to the analyzed sites.

This article presents a selected part of the research. Attention was focused on the area of Kłodzko Land (Lower Silesia, Poland), due to the richness and diversity of historic sacred sites found there. At the same time, these areas are characterized by natural and landscape diversity. Due to their physiographic conditions, they are important areas stimulating the development of tourism. A skillful combination of values may provide a stimulus for the future development of a new tourism trend in these areas: religious tourism. The results of field inventories and desk surveys are presented in two tables synthesized in a manner to show the potential and advantages of the analyzed sacred sites, and the cemeteries and churches located within them. The first table contains data related to the location, the history of origin, and important elements of cultural heritage. These elements were:

- Location of sites in administrative terms;
- Location of sites against the village background;
- Religious affiliation of current and past facilities;
- The dominant architectural style of churches;
- The history of cemeteries and their origins;
- Spatial features of cemeteries: the degree of preservation of the spatial layout and the nature of the burial field;
- Historical elements of cemeteries: boundaries, gates, tombstones, epitaphs, chapels, monuments to the fallen, etc.;
- Other important elements affecting the diversity and richness of facilities.

An assessment of landscape value was also carried out using existing approaches [42–48] and an original idea enabling an indication of the potential of a place on the basis of visual aspects of its space. The aspects included:

- Architectural elements: the visual value of the church, state of preservation (technical condition), significance and technical condition of architectural elements.
- Landscape value: location against the background of a village, position of a church with the cemetery (site as a landscape dominant), attractiveness and diversity of panoramas and views from the cemetery, the natural value of the space surrounding

the sites, the state of preservation of greenery in the cemetery, the importance of archetypes in shaping the image of space.

While inventorying the architectural elements, attention was paid to the most valuable, increasing its tourist attractiveness. During the assessment of landscape and visual values, a five-point scale was used, where a score of 5 indicated the greatest impact on the positive perception of space and the shaping of the potential of the place, while a score of 1 was assigned to criteria that have a negligible impact on the image of the space. Detailed assessment criteria are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Criteria for the assessment of landscape and visual value.

Evaluation Criteria	5	4	3	2	1
Architectural elements					
Visual value of the church	exceptional	above average	standard	average	negligible
Technical state of preservation of the church	very good	good	average	satisfactory	poor
The importance of historical architectural elements	very good	good	average	small	negligible
Technical condition of architectural elements	very good	good	average	satisfactory	poor
average rating					
Landscape elements					
Location against the village background	having an exceptional impact on the ranking of the place	having an above-average impact on the importance of the place	having a standard impact emphasizing the rank of the place	having an average impact on the importance of the place	having a negative impact on the rank of the place
Position—church with cemetery as a dominant	exceptional	above average	standard	average	negligible
Panoramas, sightseeing viewpoints	exceptional	above average	standard	average	negligible
Attractiveness, diversity of views/panoramas from the cemetery	exceptional	above average	standard	average	negligible
Natural value	exceptional	above average	standard	average	negligible
The state of preservation of greenery	very good	good	average	satisfactory	poor
The importance of archetypes in shaping the view of landscape	exceptional	above average	standard	average	negligible
Average evaluation					

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. An Analysis of Geographical, Historical, Location Conditions

For detailed analysis sites (cemeteries and churches) located in Kłodzko Land (Terra Glacensis), in the counties of Kłodzko and Kamienna Góra, Lower Silesia, Poland were selected. In each of the villages there is a cemetery, and within it a church. The research area is located in the southern part of Poland and since 1945 it has belonged to the Polish state. As a border area, its history was shaped by Polish and Czech influences [49–51].

This area is attractive for tourists in terms of natural values, especially due to its physical and geographical features—there are diverse mountain ranges in terms of form and structure: Sowie, Orlickie, Bystrzyckie and Stołowe. In addition, an area of about 50,000 ha is protected due to the richness of nature and landscape. These are the Stołowe

Mountains National Park, Śnieżnicki Landscape Park, Sowie Mountains Landscape Park, several nature reserves, protected landscape areas, and NATURA 2000 sites [52–55].

An extraordinary advantage of Kłodzko Land is the existing network of hiking and cycling trails. Due to the fact that both countries—Poland and Czechia—belong to the European Union, these routes are an element of integrating communities. At the same time, undiscovered, forgotten, or unusual sacred sites may contribute to strengthening the tourist potential of the region in the future [56–58].

Ten sites located in Kłodzko Land were selected for detailed analyses. Nine of them are located within Kłodzko County and one within Kamienna Góra County. During field research, attention was paid to the location of sites and their role in the landscape. An inventory of the most historically significant architectural elements affecting attractiveness was also made. The information collected in the field was supplemented by desk research, during which the focus was on the analysis of data related to the history of the origin of sites (cemeteries and churches), tracing changes in the formation of the architectural style of churches, as well as identifying the special features of sites affecting the richness and diversity of sites. A detailed summary of the collected data is provided in the tables (Figure 1 and Table 2).



**Figure 1.** Location of sites selected for detailed analysis.

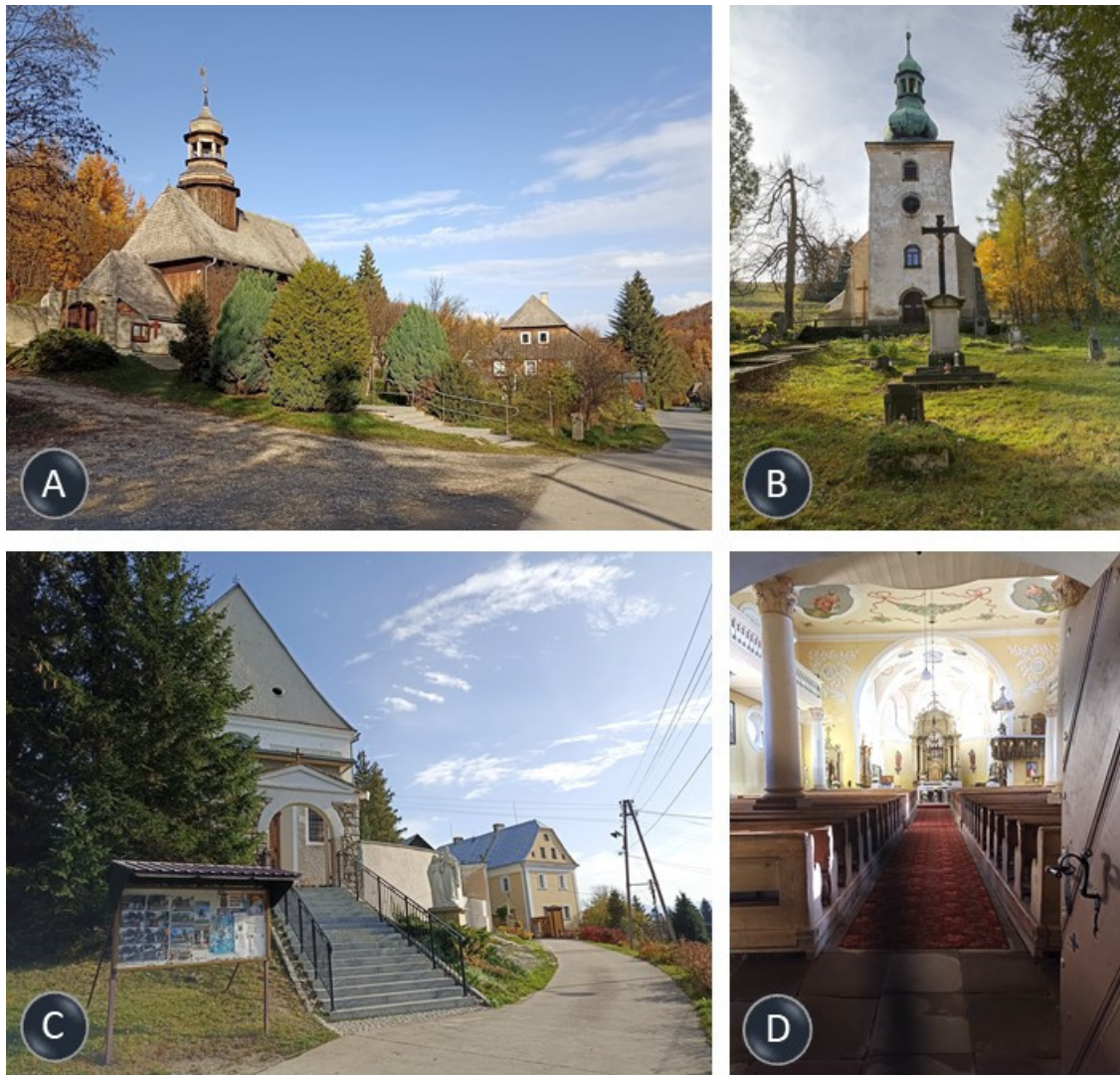
Most of the analyzed sites are located in the historical center of a village or on a hill. This is related to historical conditions. Formerly, churches were places for local residents to gather together, a center of worship and testified to the rank of the town. A location on a hill indicated an emphasis on the religious context: a combination of the earthly and the divine. In Gorzanów, a church with a cemetery is located near the sites of the former palace and park complex. In Goworów, the church and the former cemetery were connected by an avenue of trees with a new cemetery. The avenue is a peculiar element in the landscape; it can be seen as a metaphor, an avenue as a way of transition from the old to the new, or to mark the road leading to eternal life [59–63] (Table 2, Figures 2 and 3).





**Figure 2.** Distinctive landscape elements of the analyzed sites: (A) Baroque chapel in the cemetery in Gorzanów; (B) the church in Gorzanów; (C) historic tombstones in the cemetery in Jodłowo; (D) neo-Romanesque church in Lasówka; (E) wooden Baroque church in Kamieńczyk; (F) view of historic tombstones and the viewpoint from the cemetery in Kamieńczyk.





**Figure 3.** Distinctive landscape elements of the analyzed sites: (A) view of the Baroque wooden church and residential sites in Nowa Bystrzyca; (B) view of the Baroque church and historic tombstones; (C) entrance to the church complex in Stará Lomnica; (D) Baroque interior of the church in Goworów.

Six of the analyzed churches originally belonged to the Protestant denomination, but were handed to the Roman Catholic church in the 16th century. This was related to the religious changes in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries. The oldest of the sites is the church in Rędziny, erected in the second half of the 12th century, which displays visible features of the Romanesque style. However, the church constructed in Lasówka, completed in the first half of the 20th century, bears neo-Romanesque features. Other churches built from the 16th to the 18th centuries present different faces of the Baroque form, from early to late. Their forms also show the features of earlier styles, most often Gothic (Table 2, Figures 2 and 3) [64–74].

**Table 2.** Characteristics of the analyzed sites [64–84].

Site Characteristics		Boboszów	Gorzanów	Goworów
Location		Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, Kłodzko County, Międzyzylesie Commune—rural area	Lower Silesian Voivodeship, Kłodzko County, Bystrzyca Kłodzka Commune—rural area	Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, Kłodzko County, Międzyzylesie Commune—rural area
Location against the village background		Located on a main road, in the central part of the village	Located in the center of a village on a hill near the palace	Located in the center of a village, connected by an avenue with the new cemetery
Church				
Religious affiliation	Now In the past	Roman Catholic Catholic	Roman Catholic Protestant	Roman Catholic Protestant
Dedication		St Ann	St Mary Magdalene	Ss Peter and Paul
Architectural style		Late Baroque wooden, brick	Baroque	Gothic–Baroque
Age of creation		since the 18th century	14th century, rebuilt in the 17th century	
Historical protection		Yes	Yes	Yes
Cemetery				
Age of creation		18/19th centuries	15th century	17th century
Historical protection		Yes	Yes	Yes
Preserved original spatial layout of the cemetery		Legible layout	Legible layout	Legible layout
Existing burial field		Yes	Yes	No
Contemporary use of the cemetery—contemporary burials		Yes	No	No
Historical elements of the cemetery (boundaries, gate, tombstones, epitaphs, chapel, monuments to the fallen, etc.)		Tombstones from the first half of the 20th century, graves from the second half of the 19th century	Three baroque chapels, wall, two gates, tombstones and slabs, Baroque sculpture of the crucified Christ, 19th century tombstones, tombstones from the first half of the 20th century	Wall, gate with morgue, plaque commemorating soldiers killed in World War I placed in the wall, 18th century tombstones, epitaph
Site Characteristics		Jodłów	Kamieńczyk	Lasówka
Location		Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, Kłodzko County, Międzyzylesie Commune—rural area	Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, Kłodzko County, Międzyzylesie Commune—rural area	Lower Silesian Voivodeship, Kłodzko County, Bystrzyca Kłodzka Commune—rural area
Location against the village background		Originally in the center of the village, now on the edge of the southern part	Located on a hill, above the village, exposed	In the center of the village on the main road

Table 2. Cont.

Site Characteristics		Boboszczów	Gorzanów	Goworów	
Church					
Religious affiliation	Now In the past	Roman Catholic Protestant	Roman Catholic Roman Catholic	Roman Catholic Roman Catholic	
Dedication		St John the Baptist	St Michael the Archangel	St Anthony	
Architectural style		Baroque	Baroque	Neo-Romanesque	
Age of creation		17th century	18th century	1st half of 20th century (1912)	
Historic protection		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Cemetery					
Age of creation		16th century	16th century	1911–1912	
Historical protection		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Preserved original spatial layout of the cemetery		Irregular layout	Regular layout	Clear layout, crosses and tombstones were placed next to the wall of the chapel	
Existing burial field		Yes	Yes	Yes, lapidarium	
Contemporary use of the cemetery—contemporary burials		Yes	Yes	No	
Historical elements of the cemetery (boundary, gate, tombstones, epitaphs, chapel, monuments of the fallen, etc.)		Wall, pre-burial chapel, tombstones from 1901–1931, 19th century pillar gate with openwork doors, tombstone in the form of a “Crucifixion” chapel	18th century gate, tombstones from the first half of the 20th century, sculpture of the crucifixion of Christ	A cross commemorating the victims of wars—former residents of Kaiserswalde (since 1945, Lasówki), a monument commemorating the fallen in World War I, the grave of the priest Gustav Pangratz 1881–1945, tombstones from the first half of the 20th century	
Site Characteristics		Nowa Bystrzyca	Pasterka	Rędziny	Stara Łomnica
Location		Lower Silesian Voivodeship, Kłodzko County, Bystrzyca Kłodzka Commune—rural area	Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, Kłodzko County, Radków Commune—rural area	Dolnośląskie Voivodeship, Kamienna Góra County, Kamienna Góra Commune	Lower Silesian Voivodeship, Kłodzko County, Bystrzyca Kłodzka Commune—rural area
Location against the village background		On a slope, above the village	On a slope, on the main road	On a hill, on the south-western edge of the village	In the central part of the village



Table 2. Cont.

Site Characteristics		Boboszków	Gorzanów	Goworów	
Church					
Religious affiliation	Now In the past	Roman Catholic Protestant	Roman Catholic Protestant	Roman Catholic Protestant	Roman Catholic Protestant
Dedication		St Mary the Virgin	St John the Baptist	Nativity of the Virgin Mary	St Margaret
Architectural style		Wooden Baroque	Baroque	Romanesque	Gothic, early Baroque
Age of building		18th century	18th century	2nd half of 12th century	14th century, rebuilt at the end of the 16th century
Historic preservation		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cemetery					
Age of creation		17th century	17th century	16th century	15th century
Historical preservation		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Preserved original layout of the cemetery		Legible layout	Legible layout	Legible layout	Illegible layout
Existing burial field		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Contemporary use of the cemetery—contemporary burials		Yes	No	Yes	No
Historical elements of the cemetery (boundary, gate, tombstones, epitaphs, chapel, monuments of the fallen, etc.)		Wall and chapel from the 18th century, gate from the second half of the 19th century, tombstones from the second half of the 19th century, tombstones from the first half of the 20th century	Funeral chapel	Epitaph on the wall from the 19th century, stone wall from the 18th century, gate from the 19th century, tombstones from the second half of the 19th century, tombstones from the first half of the 20th century, epitaphs from the 19th century	Wall, gate, chapel with pieta, crosses in the cemetery field, slabs in the church wall, tombstones from the first and second halves of the 19th century

Cemeteries were most often set out at the same time as the church and most of them have retained their original, legible spatial arrangement. In Jodłowo, as the site was expanded, the original spatial layout was lost, and it is impossible to read the form of the original complex. In Lasówka, on the other hand, due to the small number of preserved historical graves, the layout is legible, but contemporary burials are beginning to shape a new image of space (Table 2, Figures 2 and 3) [75–84].

### 3.2. An Analysis of Architectural Conditions

In the research—presence of architectural features such as: cemetery chapels, boundaries, gates, tombstones, crosses, epitaphs, plaques commemorating important events or the dead, as well as sculptures were taken into account. Their state of preservation is diverse, related to the age of the sites, as well as the financial aspects of conservation work. The site in Gorzanów is distinguished by the extraordinary Baroque richness of accompanying features. The church and the cemetery are surrounded by a wall in which three chapels are blended. In addition to the plaques on the wall of the church, a sculpture of the crucified Christ can be found. In Goworów, the most valuable element, due to connections with the local community, is the plaque commemorating soldiers killed in World War I. Rędziny is distinguished by the richness of epitaphs located in the wall surrounding the cemetery. In Lasówka, in contrast, a lapidarium was created (Table 2, Figures 2 and 3) [64–84].

When analyzing each of the sites, attention was paid to their diversity, as well as the uniqueness of the preserved historical architectural elements. In Boboszków, there is a hall church with chapel niches and galleries. Inside, there is rich polychrome in an historicist style with both artistic and scientific value. The building itself is genetically related to Czech architecture. In Goworów, the church is one of the most valuable examples of early Baroque sacred architecture from Bohemia, Moravia, and the Kłodzko region, containing early Baroque stucco of outstanding artistic value. Together with the cemetery, it is surrounded by a high wall with two gates. The building in Kamieńczyk is one of four wooden churches in Kłodzko county, it has a unique 18th century decorative polychrome in the church interior. Inside Lasówka, original, pre-war details from the early 20th century are found, including the main and two side altars with paintings of its patrons, the Mother of God and St. Joseph, as well as a sandstone baptismal font. It should be emphasized that this is an extremely attractive place in terms of tourism, rich in diverse landforms, characteristic mountain ranges, rivers, streams, and cultural values, located very close to Polish-Czech border, where several very popular hiking and cycling trails run. The church in Rędziny is an example of a well-preserved building from the 12th century with wooden walls in a very good state of repair. In Stara Łomnica, the historical spatial layout of several sites has been preserved: a church surrounded by walls with the remains of a cemetery, presbytery, and farm sites (Table 2, Figures 2 and 3) [64–84].

#### 4. Discussion

The analysis of the landscape potential of the place was made on the basis of the authors' assessment of landscape and visual values. During field research, each site was evaluated according to separate criteria. The perception of the landscape is multi-faceted. The main element influencing the assessment of the landscape is the visual image of space. When staying in an attractive landscape, we pay special attention and assess the openness and multi-facetedness of views, viewpoints, and viewing axes, with wide and varied panoramas. Architectural elements and structures also have an undeniable influence. Their dominance in the landscape or the rhythm introduced through repetition potentially organizes and calms the space while giving it an individual character. At the same time, the landscape is evaluated and felt through other senses, as well as instilled patterns and traditions. Therefore, among the evaluation criteria, the category "the importance of archetypes in shaping the image-perception of the landscape" was distinguished (Table 3).

Taking into account the assessment of the importance of architectural elements, the highest score was obtained by Stara Łomnica (5.00), followed by Boboszków (4.75) and Gorzanów (4.75). Churches located in these villages are characterized not only by attractive architecture, but are also maintained in a good state of repair. This directly affects assessment. The churches in Jodłowo and Pasterka had the lowest average criteria. Their assessment underestimates the technical condition of churches and other architectural elements; however, this is not as important for their special visual value (Table 3).

In the assessment criteria assigned to the category of landscape elements, a much greater numerical differentiation can be seen. This is mainly due to the terrain, the position of the analyzed sites, natural value, and the state of maintenance of greenery. The influence of archetypes in shaping the image of the area was also taken into account—location on a hill, the occurrence of streams, or the existence of elements affecting the connections of the community with the place. The highest average in the assessment of landscape elements was obtained by the sites in Kamieńczyk (4.43), Jodłowo (4.14), and Lasówka (4.14). The space surrounding them has natural value, and their location and the state of greenery (in and around cemeteries) affects attractiveness, as well as the variety of views and panoramas. The lowest average scores were in Pasterka (2.29) and Gorzanów (2.71). This is due to the poor position of the sites, the lack of viewpoints, and the low importance of archetypes in shaping the image of the place (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Assessment of landscape and visual value.

Evaluation Criterion	Boboszków	Gorzanów	Goworów	Jodłów	Kamieńczyk	Lasówka	Nowa Bystrzyca	Pasterka	Stara Łomnica
<b>Architectural elements</b>									
Visual value of the Church	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	5
Preservation of technical state of the Church	5	4	4	3	4	5	4	3	5
Importance of historical/architectural elements	4	5	3	2	4	3	4	4	5
Technical condition of architectural elements	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	2	5
<b>Average</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>4.75</b>	<b>3.50</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>5.00</b>
<b>Landscape elements</b>									
Location against the village background	4	4	2	3	5	4	4	3	4
Position of the church with cemetery as a dominant	3	4	1	4	5	3	3	2	4
Panoramas, viewpoints	3	2	3	5	5	5	3	1	4
Attractiveness, variety of views, panoramas from the cemetery	3	1	2	5	4	5	2	1	3
Natural preservation	3	2	5	5	5	5	4	5	3
State of preservation/maintenance of greenery	3	4	4	3	3	4	2	2	5
The importance of archetypes in shaping the image/feeling of the landscape	2	2	3	4	4	3	4	2	4
<b>Average</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>2.71</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>4.14</b>	<b>4.43</b>	<b>4.14</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>2.29</b>	<b>3.86</b>

## 5. Conclusions

Landscape perception has a multi-faceted character. The main element influencing its assessment is the visual image of the space, with the help of which the openness and multi-facetedness of views, viewpoints, and viewing axes, as well as diverse panoramas, are assessed. The landscapes of rural church cemeteries on the Polish–Czech borderlands are unique. They have a diverse physiognomy and landscape affecting the overall landscape and cultural heritage. Preserving church cemeteries in the village landscape and emphasizing their importance in tourism is an important element for recreating the history and stories of the former inhabitants. In the analyzed area, many sites of great architectural importance have accumulated. These are places valuable for historical, religious, cultural, and social reasons, which must be saved from oblivion. Their importance for tourism is still unrecognized. Future research should focus on a holistic assessment of the landscape



value of rural areas and model solutions for local and regional tourism, including religious cultural heritage.

Cemeteries are an important element of the landscape, where the symbolism associated with the sacred is identified in relation to a set of signs, elements, and symbols. Cemetery zones are diverse; their layout depends on many factors, including religious traditions, local community, geographical location, building conditions, or spatial development plans. In the villages of the Polish–Czech borderland, there are many small church cemeteries, which have become an important element of the cultural landscape of the Polish countryside. An important aspect is the exceptional value of landscape features that are characteristic of these cemeteries, which must be identified, grouped, and evaluated, and then qualified for protection or additional care. Such research will also have an impact on the promotion of culture in this area, and strengthening the awareness of residents about the cultural values of Polish–Czech borderland. This is related to the use of these places in education and tourism and results from the strengthening of tourism also into the development of tourist services in this area, which can have a positive impact on the economy of municipalities.

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