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Analysis of the transformation of the spatial structure of Silesian Park and its conservation status

Abstract

The uniqueness of the Voivodeship Park of Culture and Recreation lies in the convergence of many factors that make it an unparalleled element of Silesian history, urban planning, and culture.

The aim of the study is an in-depth analysis of the state of preservation of the compositional values of Silesian Park, a diagnosis of the condition of architectural objects/structures, artistic details, garden layouts, and the entire spatial arrangement of the park, as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of the conservation protection measures that have been applied in this area. The motivation for undertaking this work was the desire to save the park from further transformations, most of which are irreversible in nature.

The conducted research revealed a high level of integrity between the current state of the overall spatial composition of the park and its original design, while simultaneously showing a significant degree of degradation of the architectural fabric. This degradation will worsen without appropriate steps towards the conservation protection of the entire complex. This phenomenon is largely due to the insufficient and ineffective conservation protection of the site.

Key words: Silesian Park, Voivodeship Park of Culture and Recreation, Chorzów, urban park, degradation, cultural heritage protection

Introduction

After the end of World War II, Poland faced the enormous challenge of rebuilding its devastated infrastructure and economy. Upper Silesia became one of the country's key industrial centers. The dynamic development of mining, metallurgy, and heavy industry in the region triggered rapid urbanization. The number of people migrating to Upper Silesia in search of employment increased sharply, and growing areas of land were allocated for mines, steelworks, and industrial plants. In response to these challenges, during the 1950s and 1960s, the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, PZPR) undertook efforts to improve the living conditions of residents by creating urban parks – more specifically, so-called “people's parks” [parki ludowe]¹. It was within this initiative that the

Voivodeship Park of Culture and Recreation (Wojewódzki Park Kultury i Wypoczynku, WPKiW) in Chorzów was established – at the time, the largest people's park and the most extensive recreational development in Poland².

cial classes, providing them with fresh air, contact with nature, physical activity, entertainment, and elements of education. Over time, however, the function and programming of such parks evolved under the influence of totalitarian ideologies (e.g., culture and recreation parks in communist states) (Encyklopedia PWN n.d.).

² For comparison, it is worth mentioning other similar initiatives in Poland: the older People's Park named after Marshal Józef Piłsudski in Łódź (also known as the Park na Zdrowiu), established in 1924, as well as the people's parks in Lublin and Bydgoszcz, the construction of which, like that of Silesian Park, began in the 1950s. The purpose behind the creation of these sites was consistent with the idea guiding the establishment of Silesian Park: to create spaces for leisure and recreation for urban residents. The park in Łódź bears the greatest resemblance to the Upper Silesian complex: covering an area of approximately 190 ha, it features similar attractions such as a zoo, thematic gardens (botanical and Jordan-style gardens), an amusement park, the “Fala” swimming complex, playgrounds, small water bodies, monuments, and more. In contrast, the parks in Bydgoszcz and Lublin are much smaller in scale:

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¹ *People's park – a type of public park established from the 19th century onward, intended as a place of Sunday leisure for the lower so-*

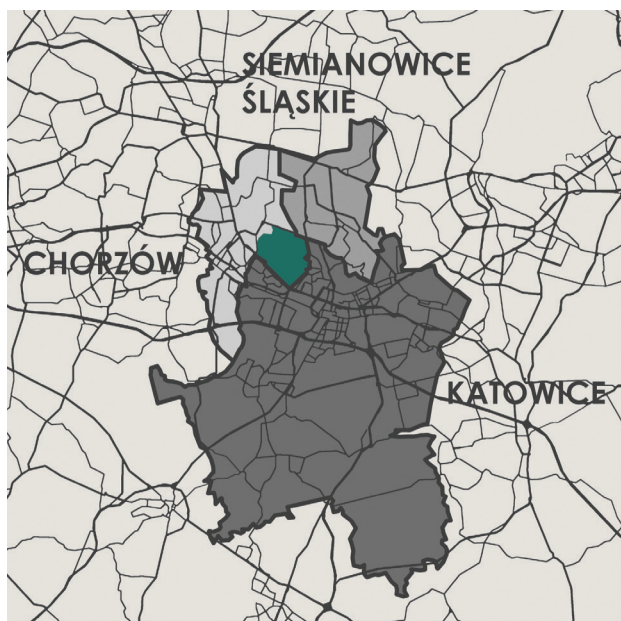


Fig. 1. Location of Silesian Park in relation to cities: Chorzów, Katowice and Siemianowice Śląskie (elaborated by P. Czubaj, based on Google Maps, 2024)

Il. 1. Lokalizacja Parku Śląskiego względem Chorzowa, Katowic i Siemianowic Śląskich (oprac. P. Czubaj, na podstawie Google Maps, 2024)

Naturally, the creation of the Voivodeship Park of Culture and Recreation (WPKiW) was not motivated solely by concern for the well-being of Silesian residents. The development of such large-scale recreational complexes played a significant role as tool of communist propaganda. These investments were presented as evidence of the success of the socialist model of national development. They also served to construct a positive image of the communist authorities, both local and central, by showcasing their alleged concern for citizens' well-being and quality of life. The creation of the WPKiW may also be interpreted as an embodiment of the ideals of equality and universal access to culture and recreation – values that aligned seamlessly with the communist narrative. It is no coincidence that at the park's main entrance stood pylons engraved with two articles of the Constitution of the Polish People's Republic.

The site designated for the park's construction posed significant challenges – not only was it vast (600 ha), but approximately three-quarters of the area consisted of post-industrial wastelands: former mining heaps, illegal mine shafts, small agricultural plots, landfills, and swamps (Buszman, Respondek 2016).

In 1951, the Park Construction Committee was established, headed by the project's originator – General Jerzy Ziętek. This marked the official beginning of the park's development, carried out largely by Silesians through voluntary civic labour.

only 31 ha (originally, now reduced to 23) and 6,5 ha, respectively, which also makes them more limited in terms of programmatic elements (Kamiński, Jaraszkievicz 2015).

Today, the park is considered an exceptionally valuable spatial and architectural complex; however, it faces increasing degradation and the threat of ongoing decline.

Subject and aim of the study

The study focuses on Silesian Park, which is currently located within the administrative boundaries of the city of Chorzów (Fig. 1), although it is often more closely associated with Katowice³. Silesian Park is undeniably the most significant urban green space in Upper Silesia and one of the most distinctive of its kind in Europe. According to the park's official website, it currently covers an area of 535 ha ("Park w liczbach", Park Śląski n.d.), making it one of the largest urban parks on the continent. To provide a scale of comparison, some of the world's most iconic urban parks can be mentioned – Hyde Park in London (159 ha) and Central Park in New York City (341 ha). Combined, their total area is still smaller than the area of Silesian Park.

The aim of this study is to analyze the current condition of the compositional values of Silesian Park and to assess the alignment of the overall spatial layout with its original design, as well as to evaluate the effectiveness of existing conservation protection measures. The motivation behind this work is the desire to save the park from further transformations, most of which are irreversible. As of June 2024⁴, no documents exist to support a decision to grant the park comprehensive, area-based conservation protection. The first and fundamental step in this direction is to analyze the extent of degradation of the Silesian Park's structure, to determine the degree of loss of its authenticity and integrity in relation to the original design, and to examine the existing forms of conservation protection and their effectiveness, so that the park can survive as part of the Upper Silesian cultural, historical, and natural heritage.

Methods

The work was conducted in 2023–2024 in three main stages:

1. Analysis of existing research and a review of available sources, as well as planning and strategic documents related to Silesian Park.
2. In situ investigations, including the delimitation of the study area, photographic and cartographic inventory, along

³ When the decision to create the WPKiW was made, the land legally belonged to the city limits of Katowice. This changed in 1967, when, pursuant to the Regulation of the Council of Ministers concerning the alteration of the city boundaries of Chorzów and Katowice, the WPKiW territory was transferred in exchange for the land needed to build the "Tysiąclecie" housing estate (Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów... 1967).

⁴ Author's update (2025): Pursuant to Resolution No. XVI/187/2025 of the Chorzów City Council dated 24 April 2025, concerning the initiation of work on the establishment of a cultural park in Chorzów under the name "Silesian Park – Cultural Park", steps have been taken to place Silesian Park under conservation protection. This initiative was undertaken, among other reasons, based on consultations with the author of this article and Professor Magdalena Żmudzińska-Nowak (supervisor of the author's master thesis), as well as the presentation of her master's thesis entitled *Studium architektoniczno-konserwatorskie Parku Śląskiego* [Architectural and Conservation Study of Silesian Park], which provided the foundation for this publication.

with functional analyses and an assessment of the condition of the area and the existing complexes, architectural structures, and small-scale architecture.

3. Analysis of the collected materials and conclusions, including the stratigraphy of the park area and its evaluation, as well as an assessment of the legal protection status in the light of applicable regulations.

State of research

Most of the bibliographic entries concerning Silesian Park consist of collections of photographs of the site from various years, accompanied by brief, anecdotal descriptions of events that took place there. However, such publications do not provide any new information regarding the spatial layout, architecture, or development of the park. There are few scholarly studies addressing the park in a scientific manner. The most important among them are:

– *Wojewódzki Park Kultury i Wypoczynku w Chorzowie (Park Śląski) – Historia obiektu, kompozycja przestrzenna* [The Voivodeship Park of Culture and Recreation in Chorzów (Silesian Park) – history and spatial composition] – which present a simplified history of the site and its spatial development, as well as describe the general spatial structure of the tree stand (Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz, Łukaszewicz and Wiśniewski 2016),

– *To, co zrobiłem to nie jest nic wielkiego* [What I did is nothing significant] – discussing part of Jerzy Gottfried's architectural legacy, including structures within the park (Syska 2017),

– *Przyczyny wyburzenia wieży warzywno-ogrodniczej Othmana Ruthnera w Wojewódzkim Parku Kultury i Wypoczynku w Chorzowie – utracone dziedzictwo innowacji technicznej* [The reasons for the demolition of the vegetable and garden Tower of Othmar Ruthner in the Voivodeship Park of Culture and Recreation in Chorzów - the lost heritage of technical innovation] – describing the issues related to one of the most iconic structures built within the park (Kleszcz 2021),

– *Park wielu pokoleń* [The park of many generations] – the first presenting the history of six decades of the park's operation (Buszman, Respondek 2016),

– *Park Śląski w Chorzowie. Projekty i realizacje z lat 1950–1989* [Silesian Park in Chorzów. Projects and Realizations from 1950 to 1989] – describing the history of the park's creation, the design phases, urban planning and architecture within the park, changes in its structure, and compiling an extensive collection of archival materials related to projects in this area (Borowik 2020).

The authors of these publications address architectural projects, land development, artistic details, and history; however, they do not refer to the issues of transformations, degradation, or conservation protection of Silesian Park and its constituent elements.

The author of this article managed to access rich, previously unpublished source materials in the archives of Silesian Park, including archival maps, architectural and spatial planning designs, original descriptions, tree planting schemes, and plans for structures that were never built. A valuable source of information was also the review of



Fig. 2. Map of the park (source: Śląska Organizacja Turystyczna n.d.)

Il. 2. Mapa parku (źródło: Śląska Organizacja Turystyczna n.d.)

local daily newspapers and industry magazines, such as archival issues of the monthly journal of the Association of Polish Architects, *Architektura* (1951–1989), *Trybuna Robotnicza* (1949–1980), *Dziennik Zachodni* (1951–2014), and *Trybuna Śląska* (1951–2003). Additionally, the author collected planning and strategic documents related to the subject of the study, as well as documentation concerning objects/structures listed in the Voivodeship Register of Immovable and Movable Monuments (including decisions of the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments regarding entries to the register, object inventory cards, appeals against the decisions, and decisions concerning the removal of objects from the register)⁵.

Results

In situ research

- Delimitation of the boundaries of Silesian Park

On maps of Silesian Park available online, its area is defined as the territory enclosed by the following streets: Parkowa, Tadeusza Kościuszki, Siemianowicka (Chorzów), Bytkowska, Agnieszki, Złota and Chorzowska (Katowice) (Fig. 2).

However, there are areas that are not part of the park – they are neither managed by the park authorities nor assigned to the administrative area of the city of Chorzów (in which the entire territory of Silesian Park is located). These areas should be excluded from park maps, but due

⁵ Documents obtained from the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments in Katowice: Decisions regarding listing of objects/structures from the Silesian Park in the register of immovable monuments: K-RD.5130.6.2012.KL, K-RD.5130.7.2012.AK, K-RD.5130.35.2016.PŚ, K-RD.5140.103.2022.MB including appeals; Decisions regarding listing of objects/structures from the Silesian Park in the register of movable monuments: L.dz.PSOZ-53300/B/32/2/92, K-RD-KL/4150/19232/11/10, K-RD-KL/4150/4182/2/10 and DOZ-OaiK-6700/1528/14-[ML/178/14].

to simplifications in the preparation of mostly schematic maps, they are often artificially included within the park's boundaries. The park area does not include the following territories:

- the “Węzłowice” housing estate (near Siemianowicka Street),
- the “Kolonja Agnieszki” housing estate (near Bytkowska Street),
- housing estates along Agnieszki Street,
- residential buildings along Tadeusza Kościuszki Street.

The actual park area is enclosed by the following streets: Siemianowicka, Bytkowska, Agnieszki, Bukowa, Złota, Chorzowska, Parkowa, Wycieczkowa Avenue, and Klonowa Avenue. The northwestern boundary line of the park is not entirely clear and does not run along the street lines. Between Parkowa Street and Wycieczkowa and Klonowa Streets, the park boundary is formed by the borders of the Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park and the “Elżbieta” Family Allotment Gardens. The boundaries excluding the aforementioned housing estates from the park area also do not follow street lines precisely – they have been delineated according to plot divisions (Fig. 3).

Silesian Park includes the areas of the Silesian Zoological Garden, the Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park, and “Legendia” Silesian Amusement Park (Fig. 3: Z, E, M). These areas have been excluded from the scope of this study due to:

- their separate management structure,
- their distinct form and design,
- the nature of the activities conducted there.

- Inventory of the compositional layout of Silesian Park, description of the natural environment

The inventory was carried out in the form of a map of the area, indicating five groups of elements:

- existing architectural structures and gardens – buildings, structures, landscape features, and themed gardens in good technical condition, approved for use (or under construction, renovation, or modernization),
- existing artistic accents – sculptures, sculpture ensembles, and decorative small architecture,
- devastated buildings – in ruins or demolished – structures in poor technical condition, not approved for use, partially or completely demolished,
- planned but unrealized structures – buildings, small architectural objects/structures, landscape features, and themed areas for which projects were developed and construction was planned but ultimately not realized,
- vacant structures without defined function or name
- architectural objects/structures for which no information exists placing them within the park's timeline, unused, without a specific name or designated purpose.

The inventory map (Fig. 4) was created to compare the current state of the park with the conceptual design and archival maps.

This study does not aim to analyze the greenery, but due to the nature of the discussed space, it is not possible to leave this aspect without comment. According to the authors of the study *Wojewódzki Park Kultury i Wypoczynku w Chorzowie (Park Śląski) – historia obiektu, kompozycja przestrzenna*, two parts differing in spatial development can be distinguished in the park (Fig. 5):

- Part A (intensive) with a rich program of uses and organized vegetation,
- Part B (extensive) with dense and compact tree stands characterized by a high degree of species diversity and mixing (Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz, Łukaszewicz and Wiśniewski 2016).

The trees in the park, thanks to careful organization, represent a wide range of species. The planting of trees was mainly carried out through community involvement. Overall, approximately 3.5 million plants have been planted in the park area, including 70 different species of trees and shrubs. Initially, the area was afforested with pioneer plants that grow quickly and are resistant to pollution. Later, more refined species were added to diversify the park's appearance. Currently, the area covered by trees and shrubs is about 260 ha, making it one of the largest collections of this type in Upper Silesia. Among the exceptional places related to the park's vegetation, the Rosarium (the largest garden of its kind in Poland, covering 7 ha) and the Perennial Garden (a continuation of the former Alpinerium, now covering 1.6 ha) should be particularly mentioned.

- Landform

The topography of Silesian Park is clearly divided into two areas differing significantly in elevation: a hill in the

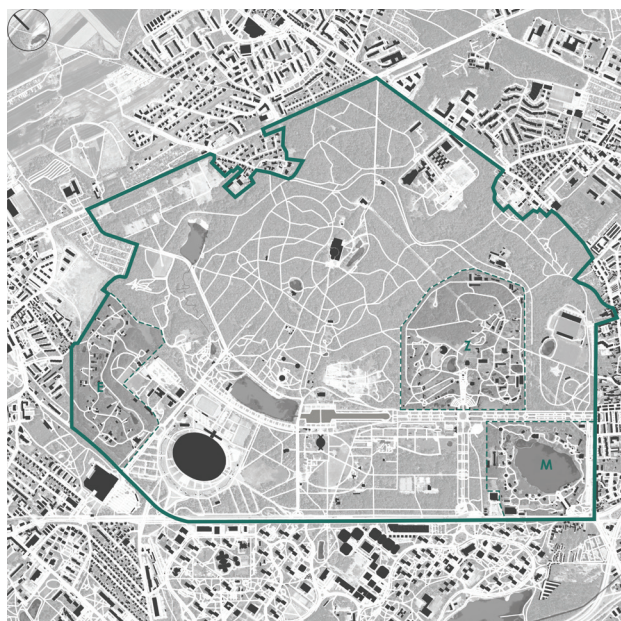


Fig. 3. Map of Silesian Park – its boundaries are marked in green, with dashed lines indicating areas excluded from the study.

Z – Silesian Zoological Garden,
M – “Legendia” Silesian Amusement Park,
E – Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park

(elaborated by P. Czubaj, 2024; base maps: OpenStreetMap, Geoportal, and the main cartographic map)

II. 3. Mapa Parku Śląskiego – na zielono oznaczono jego granice, linią przerywaną – obszary wyłączone z opracowania.
Z – Śląski Ogród Zoologiczny,
M – „Legendia” Śląskie Wesołe Miasteczko,
E – Górnośląski Park Etnograficzny

(oprac. P. Czubaj, 2024, podkład kartograficzny: Open Street Map, Geoportal oraz mapa zasadnicza)



Fig. 5. General spatial structure of the tree stand in Park Śląski – status as of 2014; parts: A – intensive, B – extensive (elaborated by P. Czubaj, based on Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz, Łukasziewicz and Wiśniewski 2016, base maps: OpenStreetMap, Geoportal, and the main cartographic map)

Il. 5. Ogólna struktura przestrzenna drzewostanu Parku Śląskiego – stan na rok 2014; części: A – intensywna, B – ekstensywna (rys. P. Czubaj, 2025, na podstawie Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz, Łukasziewicz and Wiśniewski, 2016, podkład kartograficzny: OpenStreetMap, Geoportal oraz mapa zasadnicza)

central part (which houses, among others, the Silesian Planetarium) and a much lower area surrounding the hill from the southeast, south, west, and northwest sides (Fig. 6).

- Description of the general spatial and functional organization of Silesian Park

Silesian Park can be described as a vast entertainment, recreational, and leisure complex with a highly diverse character, function, and accessibility. Its layout is centered around major infrastructural elements and attractions.

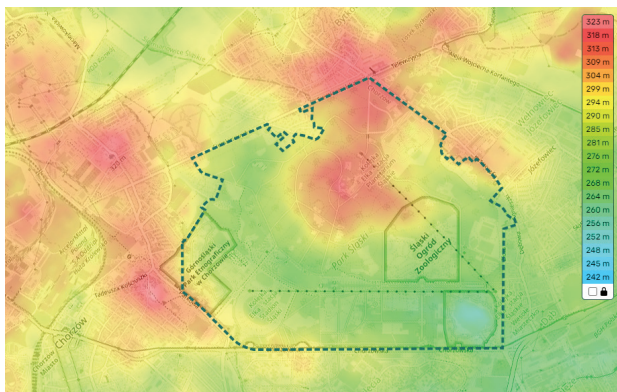


Fig. 6. Hypsometric map of Silesian Park (elaborated by P. Czubaj, based on: Topographic maps)

Il. 6. Mapa hipsometryczna Parku Śląskiego (oprac. P. Czubaj na podstawie Topographic maps)

Functions carried out in this area include:

- entertainment – Silesian Stadium, “Legendia” Silesian Amusement Park, GKS sports field,
- educational – Silesian Planetarium, Silesian Zoological Garden, Children’s traffic training center, Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park, Silesian Sculpture Gallery,
- recreational and leisure – forested walking areas, the Rosarium, General Jerzy Ziętek Promenade (Promenada im. gen. Jerzego Ziętka), all park avenues, “Fala” swimming complex, Regatta Canal (under renovation), playgrounds,
- sports – municipal sports field, training field, “Budowlany” tennis courts, shooting range, skatepark near the Children’s traffic training center, bike path and roller-blade track along General Jerzy Ziętek Promenade,
- service – all gastronomic points in the park,
- social – scouting center.

Analysis of collected materials

- Stratigraphic analysis of the layout – analysis of transformations

In order to determine the sequence in which the layers of development were created and to assess the state of preservation of the spatial composition of the area from the moment the concept was devised to its present state, three maps were compared: the conceptual map from 1952, the map of the existing state in 1972, and the contemporary map in two versions – a cartographic study and a recent satellite image.

The compositional assumptions were based on the topographic conditions of the area and on the programmatic requirements imposed on the designers by the Voivodeship National Council and the Park Construction Committee. The architectural and landscape composition was developed to maximise the emphasis on the site’s scenic qualities. The main axes were closed by the towers and chimneys of the industrial plants and mines existing at that time (Borowik 2020).

The compositional directions were based on two main assumptions:

1. The central part of the park was designed on the slopes of the hill dominating the area as the park’s woodland section. At its summit, the Silesian Planetarium was located, towering over both the park and its wider surroundings. Paths in this area were laid out organically, in soft curves.
2. The programmatic elements were integrated into the terrain surrounding the base of the hill. Paths and layouts in this part of the park were designed in a regular, and in some places geometric, manner. The compositional backbone was a promenade running parallel to today’s Chorzowska Street, intended to connect most of the park’s attractions (Niemiec, Szpuner 1959).

Following the stratigraphic analysis (Fig. 7), two groups of elements in the park’s fabric can be distinguished:

- elements preserved in the park’s layout from the conceptual design to the present day,
- elements preserved in the park’s layout from the 1972 state to today.

The first group of elements consists of structures, layouts, and areas that were planned or already existed at the

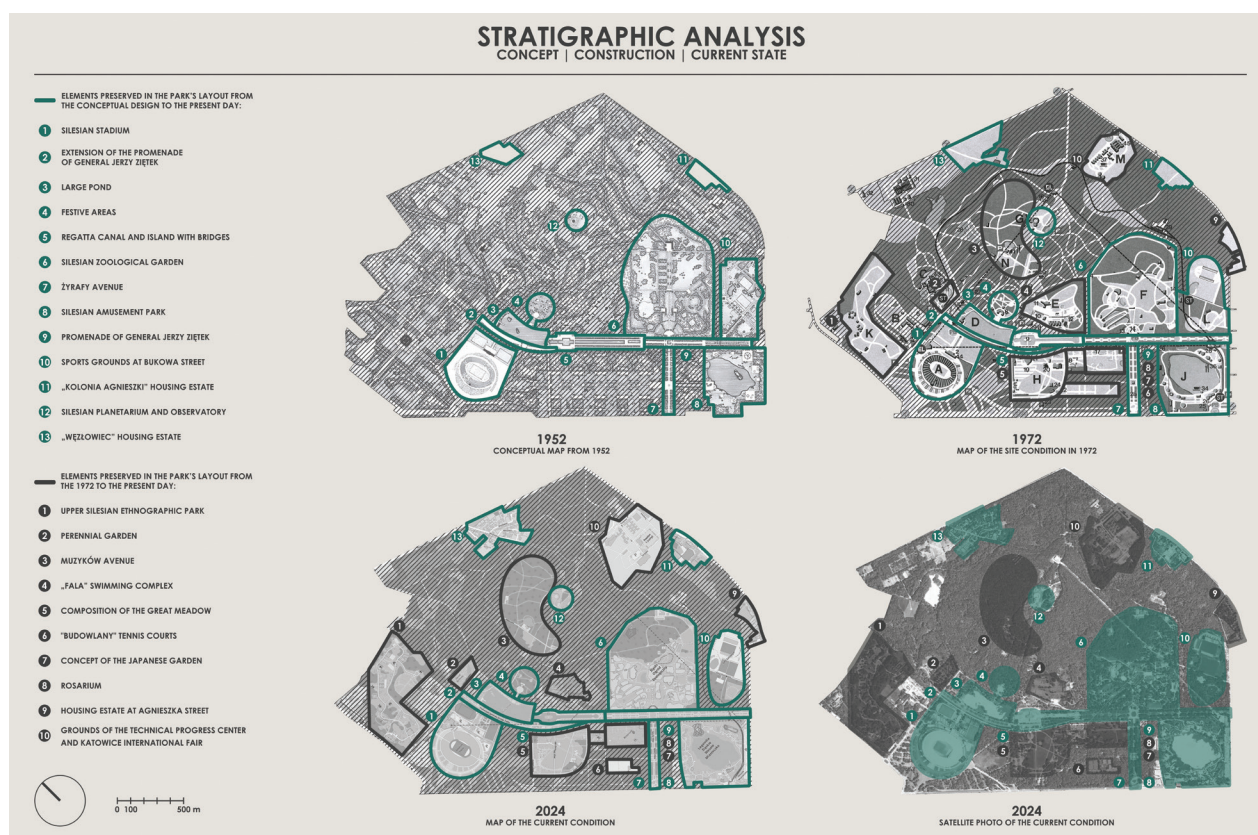


Fig. 7. Stratigraphic analysis (elaborated by P. Czubaj, 2024; base maps: Open Street Map, Geoportal, and main cartographic map)

Il. 7. Analiza stratygraficzna (oprac. P. Czubaj, 2024, podkład kartograficzny: Open Street Map, Geoportal oraz mapa zasadnicza)

conceptual design stage. They have retained their location, function, and boundaries, but not necessarily their form. Elements that have been partially or completely transformed and require additional commentary not included in the graphic section are:

- Silesian Stadium – despite complete transformation, it has retained the shape planned in the concept,
- extension of the Promenade named after General Jerzy Ziętek – a bike path and roller-skating route have been established parallel to the promenade,
- Regatta Canal and the island with bridges – currently undergoing modernization,
- “Legendia” Silesian Amusement Park – similar to the Silesian Zoological Garden, it has been transformed internally; the main gate has changed its form, but the size and purpose of the area have not changed,
- sports areas near Bukowa Street – completely transformed and partially privatized, but their function remains unchanged.

The second group consists of structures, layouts, and areas that were not planned at the conceptual stage but were created during later programmatic changes and existed in the park in 1972. They have retained their location, function, and boundaries, but not necessarily their form. Elements that have been partially or completely transformed and require additional commentary not included in the graphic section are:

- Upper Silesian Ethnographic Park – internally transformed and slightly enlarged,

– “Fala” swimming complex – the bathing facility was demolished, and construction of a new facility with the same function and building boundaries is ongoing,

– Large Meadow composition – a large portion of exhibition facilities on its area was demolished, yet its strong layout based on an arc is still visible,

– “Budowlany” tennis courts – the facility was significantly expanded,

– Japanese Garden concept – the original garden has faded, but a new layout based on the same concept was created in its place, designed completely differently,

– OPT and MTK areas⁶ – mostly unused; some buildings remain, and the area is separated from the rest of the park.

This division into two groups of elements is caused by the abandonment of some projects planned at the conceptual stage even before their construction, and their replacement with new functions and projects that appeared later.

• Spatial composition analysis

The spatial composition of the park (Fig. 8) is divided into two distinct parts. Their division corresponds exactly to the division of greenery in the park (described earlier

⁶ Technical Progress Center (Ośrodek Postępu Technicznego, OPT) a scientific and educational institution organizing exhibitions on various topics within a complex of pavilions. Katowice International Fair (Międzynarodowe Targi Katowickie, MTK) – a defunct enterprise established in 1992 on whose premises a construction disaster occurred on January 28, 2006.

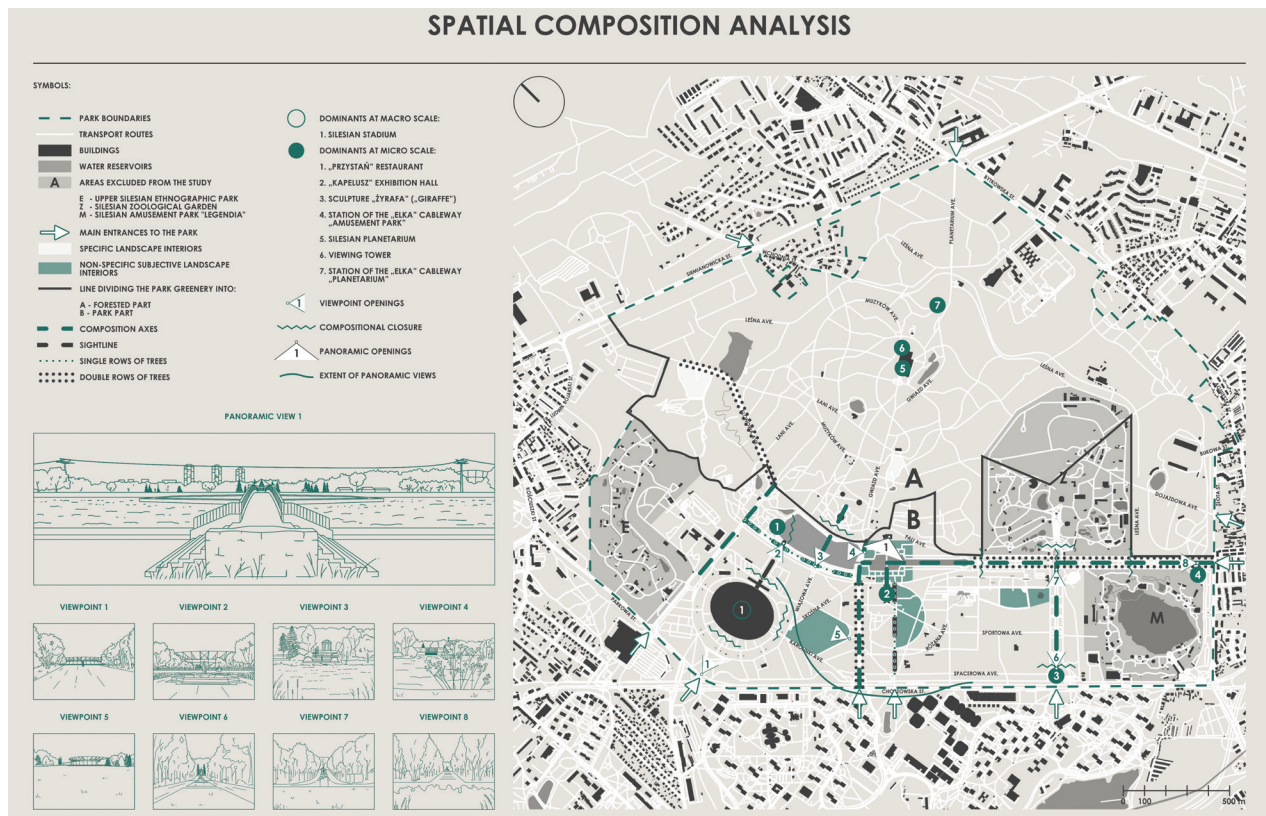


Fig. 8. Spatial composition analysis of Silesian Park
(elaborated by P. Czubaj, 2024, base maps: Open Street Map, Geoportal, and main cartographic map)

II. 8. Analiza kompozycji przestrzennej Parku Śląskiego
(oprac. P. Czubaj, 2024, podkład kartograficzny: Open Street Map, Geoportal oraz mapa zasadnicza)

in the section “Inventory of the Spatial Composition of Silesian Park, Description of the Natural Environment”).

The forested part of the park does not have a distinct compositional layout. The communication routes are laid out organically, with gentle curves. It lacks strongly perceptible elements of spatial composition, such as axes or view openings. However, it is worth noting that these were originally created in this part but were lost due to the lack of maintenance of the tall greenery, which caused its excessive overgrowth. This area contains few buildings but is rich in artistic details intended to create a specific accent contrasting with the greenery.

The park part features clearly defined elements of spatial composition. It is more built-up and architecturally and spatially diverse – most of Silesian Park attractions are located here, and the spatial structure and its urban elements are clearly legible. Important elements for the spatial composition of this part are the view openings and panoramic openings – these have been developed in the graphic section.

Analysis of the current legal protection of Silesian Park

Legal protection includes both direct conservation protection and provisions in planning documents related to protection. Among the former, the following can be distinguished:

- The municipal register of monuments

The Office of the Conservator of Monuments of the Chorzów City Hall included a significant number of architectural structures, plastic details, and landscaping elements of Silesian Park on the municipal register of monuments. However, the list contains many elements that have been demolished, transformed, and some of which cannot be found either in the park’s fabric or in archival materials from this area, which may suggest that the register has not been updated for many years. Currently, the register includes 33 objects/structures, including already demolished ones (e.g., the historic part of the Japanese Garden), transformed ones (e.g., the “Łania” restaurant), and some that no longer exist either in the park fabric or archival materials (e.g., the “Na kwadracie” temple).

- The voivodeship register of immovable monuments

The structures listed in the Register of Immovable Monuments maintained by the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments in Katowice are:

- The Exhibition Hall “Kapelusz” [Hat],
- The Silesian Planetarium,
- Pavilion C-G (Exhibition Pavilion of the Technical Progress Center).

The building of the former “Parkowa” restaurant is currently (June 2024) not included in the register. The facility has undergone several processes of inclusion and subsequent removal from the list at the owner’s request. At the moment, proceedings are ongoing regarding its re-entry on the list.

The entire area of Silesian Park has never been entered into the voivodeship register of monuments.

– The voivodeship register of movable monuments

Most of the sculptural details (sculptures, their ensembles, and other elements such as gates or temples) located within Silesian Park have been entered into the Register of Movable Monuments maintained by the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments in Katowice. Currently, the register includes 54 structures.

In the voivodeship's strategic documents (Uchwała Sejmiku Województwa Śląskiego 2012; 2016; 2020; 2022), the importance of Silesian Park for the region is repeatedly emphasized; however, none of these documents contain specific legal regulations, protection systems, or support mechanisms for the park. The only documents that describe the park area in more detail and impose legally binding rules are: The Local Spatial Development Plan of the City of Chorzów dated January 28, 2021, which defines general principles for shaping the space related to the park. It divides the park into areas of nature protection greenery, park-function greenery, public services, cultural value protection, restrictions on larger construction due to the occurrence of voids resulting from shallow, permanent hard coal mining, flood hazard zones, and sports and recreation services (Obwieszczenie Rady Miasta Chorzów 2021) and the Local Spatial Development Plan for the area within the Voivodeship Park of Culture and Recreation named after Gen. Jerzy Ziętek S.A., near the Gen. Jerzy Ziętek Promenade, Main Avenue, and Avenue of Stars dated June 24, 2021. This plan sets general principles for shaping a small section of the park around the Regatta Canal (Uchwała Rady Miasta Chorzów 2021).

Summary

Assessment of the overall preservation status of the spatial composition of Silesian Park

The spatial composition principles formulated by Władysław Niemirski during the creation of the WPKiW concept have largely been preserved. Despite the park's continued development and the addition of elements not originally planned in the program guidelines, the main structural foundations of the design remain clear. The park's layout is still based on the division of the area into a forested part on the hill in the central part of the layout, and programmatic elements, attractions, and a more sparsely wooded area surrounding the forested part. The core compositional element connecting most program elements remains the General Jerzy Ziętek Promenade.

However, several elements have faded over time and are less perceptible in the park's fabric. The most significant change is the loss of dominance of the hill, and thus the Silesian Planetarium, over the rest of the park. This is caused by insufficient maintenance of the vegetation in the forested area, resulting in its uncontrolled growth. It now obscures the entire hill along with the Planetarium, diminishing the prominence of this key feature over the park. Additionally, this leads to the loss of clarity in the landscape interiors and compositional axes in this part (Fortuna-An-toszkiewicz, Łukaszewicz and Wiśniewski 2016).

Another important change compared to Niemirski's concept is the loss of direct connection between the main WPKiW entrance and the "Tysiąclecie" housing estate, caused by the development of Chorzowska Street and the tram line. The main entrance function has been effectively taken over by the entrance near the "Giraffe" sculpture. This is most likely due to the location of the tram stop and underground passage leading to the housing estate at this entrance.

Architectural and urban evaluation of Silesian Park

The architectural evaluation was conducted in two stages. The first part involved an individual examination of all inventoried architectural structures, gardens, and sculptural details (existing, demolished, or in ruins) in terms of three categories:

- state of preservation,
- conservation protection status,
- degree of transformation.

Next, a visualization was created, serving as a summary and compilation of the conducted study. As a result, a map showing the extent of transformations of all inventoried structures was produced (Fig. 9).

Problematic elements within the spatial layout of Silesian Park were identified as part of the evaluation process. These were divided into non-cohesive elements on micro and macro scales, as well as areas requiring individual intervention. Non-cohesive elements on the micro scale consist of structures that conflict aesthetically or spatially with the historic spatial composition or the historic layout of building complexes (Welc-Jędrzejewska 2017). These structures most often differ in appearance from the park's historic fabric. Their additional infrastructure (such as garden terraces or waste storage areas for restaurants) spreads in a way that causes spatial chaos or disrupts the visual exposure of more important structures. Some facilities appear grotesque in form – for example, the "Hawaii" restaurant or the "Dron" sculpture.

Non-cohesive elements on the macro scale are similar structures but having an impact on the entire Silesian Park area. This category includes the housing estates "Węzłowiec", "Kolonja Agnieszki", and the area along Agnieszki Street, which lack clear boundaries separating them from the park. This results in transitional zones treated as no-man's-land, where unauthorized constructions, informal allotment gardens, and illegal waste dumping sites arise.

Areas requiring individual intervention are neglected spaces, often remnants of demolished historic structures. These areas are very unsightly, unlit, and sometimes even dangerous. The most urgent problems to be addressed by the park authorities appear along the boundary line between the park and "Legendia" Silesian Amusement Park. These zones resemble technical support area, which negatively affect the park's main axis – Promenada im. gen. Jerzego Ziętki.

Conservation protection status of Silesian Park

A significant problem affecting Silesian Park is the functioning system of the municipal register of monuments and the

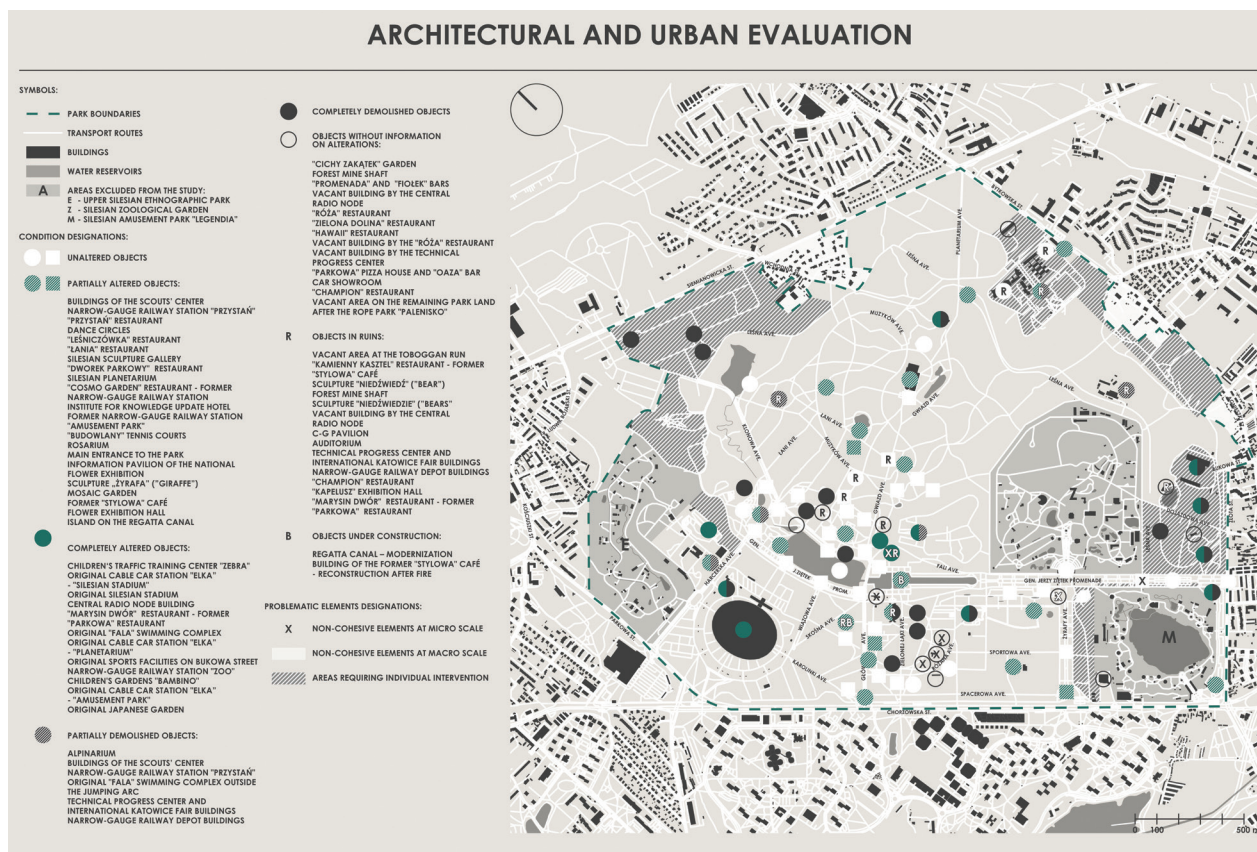


Fig. 9. Architectural and urban evaluation

(elaborated by P. Czubaj, 2024;

base maps: Open Street Map, Geoportal, and main cartographic map)

II. 9. Waloryzacja architektoniczno-urbanistyczna

(oprac. P. Czubaj, 2024, podkład kartograficzny: Open Street Map, Geoportal oraz mapa zasadnicza)

voivodeship-level register of monuments. Their imperfection lies in the lack of a legal obligation to maintain the park in good technical and aesthetic condition, combined with the possibility of deregistration when the condition deteriorates. This creates "facilitations" for owners who are mainly interested in the potential of the land on which the monument is located, rather than the monument itself. With a sufficiently long period of neglect, the given structure falls into ruin, which ultimately becomes grounds for its removal from the register and allows for its demolition.

Symptoms of this phenomenon are clearly visible in Silesian Park. Two buildings listed in the register are currently not allowed for use and no conservation or repair works are being carried out on them – the "Kapelusz" Exhibition Hall and the C-G Exhibition Pavilion (Fig. 10). The latter building is in such poor technical condition that expert evaluation showed it is impossible to restore the building to its pre-damage state. As a result, the building may be removed from the register and ultimately demolished.

It is also worth mentioning the facilities whose protection has been carried out in the most proper manner, even serving as examples for the rest of the park's buildings and the entire area.

In 2022, the complete renovation and expansion of the Silesian Planetarium building, including the addition of

a new wing, was completed. The building retained its full authenticity; the renovation respected every detail of the historic structure, and the expansion was carried out in such a way that it does not interfere with the original form of the building's volume.

The vast majority of sculptures within the park have been repaired and restored, regaining their original appearance without any alteration to their forms. Several of them have been relocated to new sites to highlight their aesthetic value (as their previous locations became less frequented by visitors, leading to the sculptures being neglected) and to protect them from factors that had previously caused their degradation.

These examples confirm that park structures can be treated with appropriate respect and preservation of their heritage, even if changes are needed due to the necessity of expanding the program of the facility or changing its function.

An important issue is also the municipal register of monuments maintained by the Office of the Conservator of Monuments at the Chorzów City Hall – it raises questions about the purpose of creating such a list if it is not kept up to date.

Problems related to documents at the provincial, municipal, or city levels mainly result from the superficial nature of the provisions contained therein. Most of these doc-

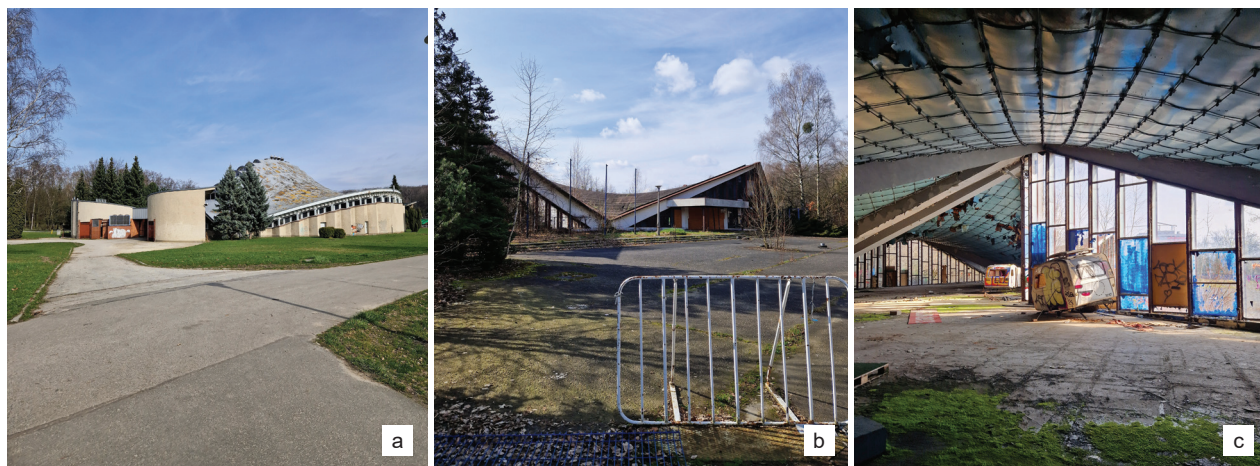


Fig. 10. Current condition: a) "Kapelusz" Exhibition Hall, b) exterior of the C-G Exhibition Pavilion, c) interior of the C-G Exhibition Pavilion (photo by P. Czubaj, 2024)

Il. 10. Obecny stan: a) Hali Wystawowej "Kapelusz", b) Pawilonu Wystawowego C-G na zewnątrz, c) Pawilonu Wystawowego C-G wewnątrz (fot. P. Czubaj, 2024)

uments either do not address the topic of Silesian Park or treat it very generally. These documents tend to focus more on describing nature and monument protection in the form of a set of principles concerning the entire area they cover. They do not specify particular areas or structures nor impose concrete legal requirements.

Although the main beneficiaries of the park's existence are residents of three cities whose borders meet at the park's area, only Chorzów is responsible for its maintenance because the park lies within its boundaries. The lack of any support from the neighbouring cities that border and use the park is striking – especially in the case of Katowice, which lists Silesian Park among its attractions in its official documents.

The only documents that describe the park area in more detail and impose legally binding rules are: the Local Spatial Development Plan of the City of Chorzów dated January 28, 2021 (Obwieszczenie Rady Miasta Chorzów 2021) and the Local Spatial Development Plan for the area located within the Wojewódzki Park Kultury i Wypoczynku im. Gen. Jerzego Ziętka S.A., around the General Jerzy Ziętek Promenade, Main Avenue, and Alei Gwiazd, dated June 24, 2021 (Uchwała Rady Miasta Chorzów 2021). However, the first document does not put sufficient emphasis on the conservation protection of the spatial layout and historically and culturally important structures within the park, and the second concerns only a very small fragment of its fabric.

The documents lack the imposition of a systemic protection that would limit chaotic and non-cohesive development and prohibit the expansion of private spaces that do not belong to the park but which, through uncontrolled growth, gradually reduce its area step by step.

The urgent problem of lacking a protection system is highlighted by recent events in the Silesian Park – in the area of the former Technical Progress Center (OPT), sold to a private investor, about 1,200 trees were cut down despite protests from residents and park supporters (Świerczek 2024).

Conclusions

The conducted research shows a high level of consistency between the current overall spatial composition of Silesian Park and its original design assumptions. However, a high degree of degradation can be observed in the architectural structure of the park's components, which ultimately affects the perception of the entire spatial layout. Without taking steps to halt further decay of the architectural fabric, this problem will deepen.

Stratigraphic analysis reveals that changes occur more frequently in the form and use of the buildings rather than in their function. Progressive degradation, disintegration of the composition, and destruction of architectural structures lead to the loss of the historical, cultural, and aesthetic values of the entire complex, as well as to further changes in the structure – such as the sale of additional park lands and the emergence of new developments, which are not necessarily needed or appropriate for this space.

The state of conservation protection has long been insufficient and ineffective. However, following the Chorzów City Council's Resolution No. XVI/187/2025 initiating the establishment of Silesian Park as a cultural park (Uchwała Rady Miasta Chorzów 2025), steps are now being taken to place it under area-wide conservation protection, offering a real chance for a positive outcome and the faithful preservation of the park's original conceptual design, which reflects the best practices in green space management. The research conducted may be used in further conservation analyses and the preparation of effective guidelines for protecting this valuable area.

Silesian Park is a testament to history and constitutes a unique element of Silesian cultural heritage. It is of utmost importance to maintain it in the best possible condition, both as a symbol of the times for future generations and as a green island in an increasingly urbanized region. This park is not only about attractions, buildings, avenues, or trees – it is, above all, about the memories of countless people, a sense of belonging, and social bonds.

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Streszczenie

Analiza przekształceń struktury przestrzennej Parku Śląskiego oraz stanu ochrony konserwatorskiej

Wojewódzki Park Kultury i Wypoczynku to niepowtarzalny element śląskiej historii, urbanistyki oraz kultury. Celem opracowania jest analiza stanu zachowania wartości kompozycyjnych Parku Śląskiego oraz diagnoza zgodności całości układu przestrzennego parku z pierwotnymi założeniami, a także ocena skuteczności dotychczasowych form ochrony konserwatorskiej, która pojawia się na tym obszarze. Motywacją do podjęcia niniejszej pracy była chęć ratowania parku przed dalszymi przekształceniami, z których większość ma charakter nieodwracalny.

Przeprowadzone badania wykazały wysoki poziom integralności obecnego stanu ogólnej kompozycji przestrzennej parku z jego oryginalnymi założeniami przy jednocześnie daleko posuniętym stopniu degradacji tkanki architektonicznej, co może się pogłębiać przy braku podjęcia odpowiednich kroków w kierunku ochrony konserwatorskiej całego założenia. Zjawisko to jest w większości spowodowane niewystarczającą i nieskuteczną ochroną konserwatorską obiektu.

Słowa kluczowe: Park Śląski, Wojewódzki Park Kultury i Wypoczynku, Chorzów, park miejski, degradacja, ochrona dziedzictwa kulturowego