



Original article

Mapping murals in the spaces of a post-industrial city – an example of Katowice

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ABSTRACT

This article proposes an analysis of the phenomenon of street art as found in Katowice, a post-industrial city, by mapping, documenting, organizing, and linking it to the industrial history of the city and wider region. These general studies connect the socio-economic aspects of districts degraded by the mining and steel industries with street art as a form of "soft" social revitalization. Drawing on fieldwork, cartographic and literature review, and her own educational experiences, the author presents the opportunities the Katowice murals. The author is particularly interested in the connections between post-industrial murals and the degraded and unrevitalized Szopienice-Burowiec district, the second largest district in the city in terms of street art. The article includes tables comparing data from the studied areas and maps of murals in Katowice-Śródmieście and Szopienice-Burowiec.

KEY WORDS: street art, industrial murals, post-industrial heritage, Katowice, Upper Silesia

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1. Introduction

Poland has a rich and extensive tradition of mining hard coal, ores, and mineral resources (DULIAS, 2013; PIETRZYK-SOKULSKA ET AL., 2015; STRZAŁKOWSKI, 2015). Silver, zinc, and lead mining, dating back to the Middle Ages, ended in 2020. The Triassic ore-bearing dolomites with zinc and lead ore deposits in Olkusz and Tarnowskie Góry were the most valuable for mining. Exploitation of Carboniferous hard coal takes place in the Upper Silesian Coal Basin (referred to by the Polish abbreviation "GZW") and the Lublin Coal Basin. The Lower Silesian Coal Basin, which was active until 2000, holds historical and tourist significance. Katowice, the city where the most essential institutions supervising the development of hard coal mining in the Polish People's Republic were located after 1945, occupies

the central position in the Upper Silesian Coal Basin (SZAFLARSKI, 1978).

Regardless of the mining operations, the effects of hard coal mining, as well as those of zinc and lead ores, are long-term and complex to reverse (DULIAS, 2013). Similarly, the impact of iron and non-ferrous metal smelting on the environment leaves a lasting mark in the form of difficult-to-use post-industrial spaces, desert landscapes, and heavy metals buried deep in the soil (CABAŁA ET AL., 2025). After 1989, 47 mines were closed. Twenty-three of these were closed, particularly in the northern and eastern parts of the coal basin, which includes areas where coal mining had been the longest and where coal reserves are located beneath highly urbanized areas, often within security pillars (Bytom, Chorzów, Gliwice, Zabrze, Będzin, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Sosnowiec) (TKOCZ, 2006).

Anthropogenic impact on the GZW, which has been present since the beginning of the industrial revolution, takes various forms, from mining dumps and spoil heaps to anthropogenic denudation. The primary effects of underground mining on the surface include continuous and discontinuous deformations, such as subsidence troughs, concavities, and sinkholes (DULIAS, 2013; PRZYŁUCKA & SUSZKA, 2024).

Post-industrial heritage encompasses the damage caused by mining and the architecture of disused industrial plants, which are often adapted for tourism and ecotourism purposes (MARSZOWSKI & JAROSŁAWSKA-SOBÓR, 2025). The Upper Silesian Coal Basin boasts numerous sites classified as having industrial heritage. Some, such as the Wilson Shaft in Katowice, the Luiza Mine in Zabrze, and the Silesian Museum in Katowice, located in the disused and revitalized Katowice Mine, are also geotourism sites (GAIDZIK & CHMIELEWSKA, 2020). Not all post-industrial sites can be preserved, just as not every post-industrial space can be effectively revitalized. Post-industrial towns with rich mining traditions should seek alternative ways to commemorate the industry's history, for example, through tourist trails. Murals can be an excellent alternative.

Katowice is an exciting city among Polish cities with a large number of murals. Developing since the beginning of the last decade, street art is strongly linked to Katowice's socio-economic transformation, as well as the authorities' efforts to change the city's image from the capital of Polish heavy industry to one associated with science and culture.

This article aims to analyze the role of street art in a post-industrial city, particularly murals that reference the region's industrial history. Katowice, where the autor conducted his research, was selected for the study because it has a relatively large number of documented murals, a significant portion of which reference its local history.

The article also analyzes the issue of murals in two districts of Katowice – Śródmieście, which was historically associated with hard coal mining, and in Szopienice-Burowiec, where the liquidation of the Non-Ferrous Metal Smelter, a plant with a rich history dating back to the early 19th century, began in 2008. The key research questions posed in the study concern:

- the connection between murals and the character of a post-industrial city, especially after the closure of coal mining and non-ferrous metallurgy plants (1),

- the impact of murals on the gentrification of Katowice's industrial districts, particularly the degraded Szopienice-Burowiec district (2),
- the role of murals in shaping the identity of a post-industrial district in Katowice (3).

2. Theoretical background

The theoretical foundation of this research is formed by four fields: studies on the role of murals in individual cities in Poland and around the world, studies on the tourist aspects of muralism, studies on revitalized post-industrial spaces, and studies on the transformation of post-industrial cities in the era of energy and socioeconomic transition. These four fields are incompatible in several respects, especially regarding the quantitative analysis of major global cities where urban art occurs. Lisbon, Paris, and Vienna (among European cities) and New York and San Francisco (among US cities) are mentioned primarily (CADETTI, 2020). Cities associated with the mining and metallurgical industry are not mentioned; for example, cities in the Ruhr area, such as Bochum, Oberhausen, or Recklinghausen, are not mentioned, where valuable examples of street art can be found. There is also a lack of comparisons linking industrial murals in Poland with those in the Silesian part of the Czech Republic, particularly Ostrava.

KAZIMIERSKA-JERZYK (2016) points out that everyday practices and rituals, such as walks accompanied by street art, play a significant role in contemporary reflection on cities. Murals, especially in dilapidated and empty urban spaces, can be significant because they appear wherever the process of revitalization or gentrification has not yet occurred – thus, they can anticipate, project, and herald it (KAZIMIERSKA-JERZYK, 2016). GRALIŃSKA-TOBOREK (2016), in turn, emphasizes that the change in the city's appearance, brought about by successive examples of street art, is never invasive but often serves as an introduction to larger changes. A mural should blend seamlessly into the space and form an integral part of the whole. It should also represent the artist's perspective or social group, evoke surprise, stimulate reflection, and sometimes shock. It allows us to notice previously unobservable things – social conflicts, specific neighborhood problems, and other details. Based on research conducted in the Milan suburbs, BOFFI ET AL. (2023) report that a street art project can have a positive impact on a neighborhood by enhancing its image and fostering residents'

attachment to the area. Such a project can create a representation of place that combines innovation and creativity while preserving traditional assets and spatial landmarks linked to local history and culture. These findings have significant policy implications for protecting cultural heritage in urban renewal processes, particularly in historic working-class neighborhoods, which often face challenges related to identity loss and spatial degradation (BOFFI ET AL., 2023).

In Poland, research on murals in cities is primarily conducted in four centres: Łódź, Gdańsk, Kraków, and Szczecin. The Łódź and Gdańsk studies clearly provide the most important context for Katowice. MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA & MROCZEK-ŻULICKA (2024), drawing on research into the transformation of Łódź as a postindustrial city, explore the role of murals in creating a new image for the city. The emergence of new tourist trails and the Urban Forms Foundation (Fundacja Urban Forms), established in 2008, has disrupted the balance between refreshing the city's image and transforming economic and political forces (TOBIASZ-LIS & WÓJCIK, 2013). MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA (2014) notes that Łódź's post-industrial urban space provides an ideal backdrop for street art, and its most important function is social revitalization. Murals enrich the urban fabric with creative contemporary art and improve the city's image by giving it a new, original character. They create a unique artistic urban asset. In turn, research by BALCERAK & STĘPIŃSKI (2025) in the Gdańsk Zaspa district, heavily saturated with street art, demonstrated the strong local roots of murals and the positive attitudes of respondents towards them. It also highlighted the important role murals can play in local history and space, especially those created by local actors. TRZEPACZ (2023) similarly appreciates the value of murals, using a cartographic method to confirm the most numerous occurrences of murals in Krakow's Kazimierz district, linking them, among other things, to the residence of street art creators, but also to the district's specific functions, which are attractive to young people and those representing the creative class. The analysis covers the key role of actors in the creation of murals. According to BALCERAK (2025), the mural creation process is a multifaceted phenomenon that engages diverse groups of actors – from public administration to non-profit and commercial organizations, as well as artists and residents. Each of these groups requires separate analysis and can play a key role in shaping art in public spaces.

The role of murals in cities in the Silesian Voivodeship has yet to be analyzed. As DULIAS (2024) notes, due to the closure of mines in the northern part of the region, post-industrial tourism has primarily developed there, including former mine and steelworks buildings, as well as anthropogenic forms such as mining and steelworks' spoil tips.

In studies devoted to the revitalization of post-industrial cities, the main role is played by the architecture of working-class districts or industrial plants and factories (CHMIELEWSKA, 2014). Attention is also drawn to the change in the function of the industrial city under the influence of revitalization, especially the increased tourist attractiveness of the revitalized places (KAZIMIERCZAK, 2012). As shown by KOSIACKA-BECK & CZYŻEWSKI (2025) „the art of the mural in the revitalization process can therefore be a tool to improve the appearance and functioning of degraded space. An action whose only interference with the landscape and the stagnant environment is its execution – aesthetics and semantics”.

Post-industrial tourism is characterized by trails that connect the most historically and architecturally significant mines (LAMPARSKA, 2019; PRICE, 2019; CRANE, 2021). The mines trail is also attractive due to its cross-border connection (the Coal and Steel Trail connects the Czech and Polish parts of the Upper Silesian Coal Basin). The official “VisitGZM” (“Poznaj z nami Metropolię”) website (<https://infogzm.metropoliagzm.pl/en/visitgzm/>) highlights the predominance of material post-industrial heritage. Explore the Metropolis with Us! offers six thematic paths to explore the richness of the Upper Silesian-Załębiowska Metropolis. Significantly, the “Industrial Heritage” thematic group contains no information about murals. They are also absent from the latest research on the Szopienice-Burowiec district of Katowice, which focuses on the consequences of non-ferrous metal smelting on soil pollution and the degradation of the urban fabric (KRZYSZTOFIK ET AL., 2024), as well as the designation of functions for brownfield sites, the remnants of the steel industry in this area.

Documentation of murals commissioned by, among others, the KZGM can be found on the institution's website. Only a portion of the murals owned by the KZGM are discussed here, including those on Kościuszki Street, Siewna Street, Roździeńskiego Street, and Mariacka Street. Some of the murals discussed no longer exist (e.g., on demolished buildings belonging to the University of

Silesia). Therefore, this documentation is neither current nor complete (<https://murale.katowice.eu/>).

3. Materials and methods

The research for this article was conducted using cartographic, quantitative fieldwork, and literature research methods:

- QGIS (open source software),
- analysis and use of maps from offices (including the Katowice City Hall),
- own fieldwork – including mapping of murals based on location and photographic documentation, documentation of educational workshops (survey with two short closed questions) and two interviews with representatives of Municipal Housing Management Department (KZGM) and Metallurgical and Mining Housing Cooperative (HGSM),
- selected project documentation „*Transformersi w szkołach – edukacja na rzecz zielonej transformacji i zachowania kultury górniczej w regionie*” (Eng. "Transformers in schools – education for green transformation and preservation of mining culture in the region") needed to confirm the age and gender of surveyed students (*Transformersi w szkołach...*),
- a literature review.

The results of the field inventory of the mural locations and property types were cartographically visualized using Quantum GIS (QGIS, open source software). Katowice's districts were mapped according to OpenStreetMap (OSM) content (<https://www.openstreetmap.org>).

Fieldwork was carried out along with educational activities, i.e., from February 2024 to October 2025, and took approximately 70 hours. Part of the route was covered on foot (Śródmieście, Załęże, Zawodzie, and partially through Szopienice). Other sites required driving to the selected point and preparing photographic documentation. The mapped murals were divided into two main groups: local murals (with local themes) and abstract murals (with abstract themes). Within the local-themed mural group, additional distinctions were made between murals with industrial, historical, and ecological themes. The division was based on the murals' content and cultural representation. Local murals were primarily defined as those containing content that conveyed local or regional associations. Abstract murals, on the other hand, were defined

as murals that lacked such associations and were filled with, for example, geometric patterns, slogans, and images of fictional characters. Based on the research, field notes and photographic documentation were prepared to facilitate the subsequent interpretation of selected murals. The activities were based on three mural layout plans: the Katowice City Hall website, "Katowice Murals"; "Murals in Katowice (Katowice Street Art, or a Guide to Murals in Katowice)"; and "Street Art in Szopienice" (<https://murale.katowice.eu/>).

Additionally, the research used the analysis of the "Local Revitalization Program for the City of Katowice for 2007–2013" and the "Local Revitalization Program for the City of Katowice for 2016–2023" (*Local Revitalization...*, 2007, 2016). The author also helped assess the street art problem in Katowice by conducting 99 teaching hours with students from 11 secondary schools in the Silesian Voivodeship, from cities such as Będzin, Dąbrowa Górnicza, Katowice, Knurów, Mysłowice, Rybnik, Ruda Śląska, Sosnowiec, Wodzisław Śląski, and Zabrze. The classes took place from February 2024 to October 2025 as part of the project "Transformers in Schools – Education for Green Transformation and Preserving Mining Culture in the Region" under the European Funds for Silesia 2021–2027 program (Just Transition Fund, Priority X European Funds for Transformation, Measure 10.25 Development of Higher Education in Line with the Needs of the Green Economy) (*Transformersi w szkołach...*). Each activity involved walking with a group of school students along the same route, leading from the historic building of the Non-Ferrous Metals Smelter at Paweł Woźniaka Street and the water tower located two hundred metres away, which used to belong to the same smelter, through points next to the Zinc Rolling Mill at 50 11 Listopada Street, the apartment block at 24 Roździeńska Street, 2 Morawa Street, Walentego Roździeńskiego Square, and Powstańców Square (at the intersection with Wiosny Ludów Street). An optional route led to a point located at 62 Wiosny Ludów Street (which was often missed due to the difficulty of accessing it by bus under a low-lying viaduct). During the classes, students visited 11 murals referencing the district's steelmaking traditions, located at all the above-mentioned points. During the educational workshops, 250 students were surveyed. They were asked two questions: whether they would like to see the murals in Szopienice again and whether they would like to see murals in other districts of Katowice.

The questions were closed-ended, and students answered them using pen and paper.

The list of Katowice murals, compiled in 2024–2025, became the basis for an analysis aimed at determining their specificity and typology, as well as assessing the occurrence of murals in post-industrial districts such as Szopienice-Burowiec, along with evaluating their post-industrial character, artistic and social significance, and potential suitability for tourist and educational purposes.

4. Results

4.1. Murals in Katowice

Figure 1 shows the distribution of local and abstract murals across the districts. A total of 57 local murals were documented, of these 55 were abstract murals. The two most important types of murals from the research point of view – industrial and ecological murals – were mapped in total in districts no. 1, 2, 15 (eco) and 1, 3, 7, 14–16 (industrial).

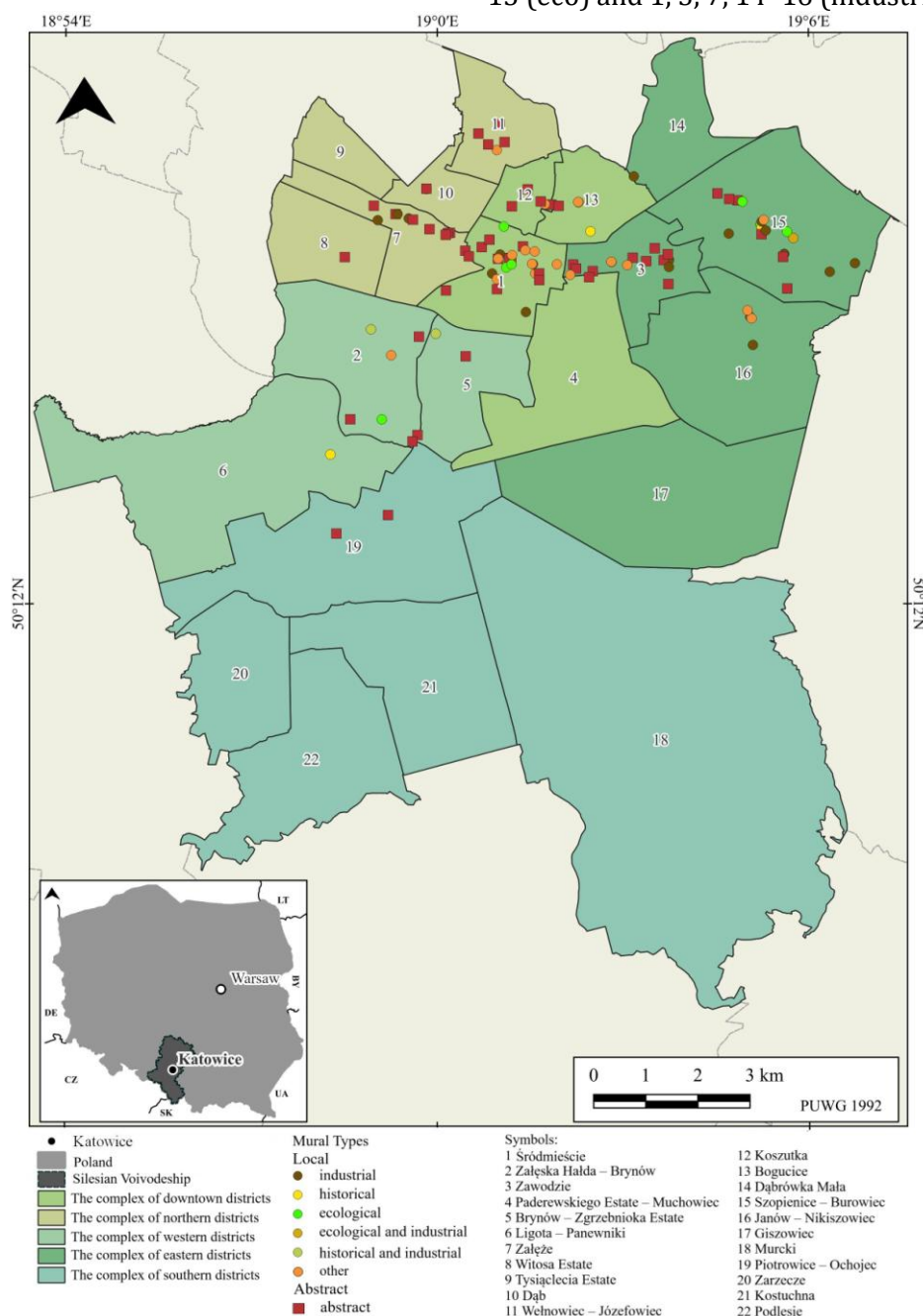


Fig. 1. Mural types in Katowice (Source: own study, <https://www.geoportal.gov.pl>; <https://www.openstreetmap.org>)

At the same time KZGM and HGSM, it was confirmed that only some of the murals were painted on city-owned buildings (Fig. 2). In the case of the former smelter-zinc complex in Szopienice-Burowiec, the murals documented were located on the site of an industrial monument that had not been revitalized since the steelworks closed. Ultimately, 33 murals belonging to KZGM and HGSM were documented, including seven in Śródmieście and six in Szopienice-Burowiec.

The analysis of murals in Katowice was limited mainly to two districts: Śródmieście and Szopienice-Burowiec. The twenty-two districts, where murals

were documented and studied, were included in the "Local Revitalization Program for the City of Katowice for 2007–2013" (*Local Revitalization...*, 2007; STAŚ & PAWLIKOWSKA-MUSIEWICZ, 2012) and the "Local Revitalization Program for the City of Katowice for 2016–2023" (*Local Revitalization...*, 2016). Both programs analyzed the possibilities of restoring the city centre's core district function, preserving the historical and cultural heritage of the oldest post-industrial districts, revitalizing them, and creating conditions for developing new forms of economic, social, educational, cultural, tourist, and recreational activity.

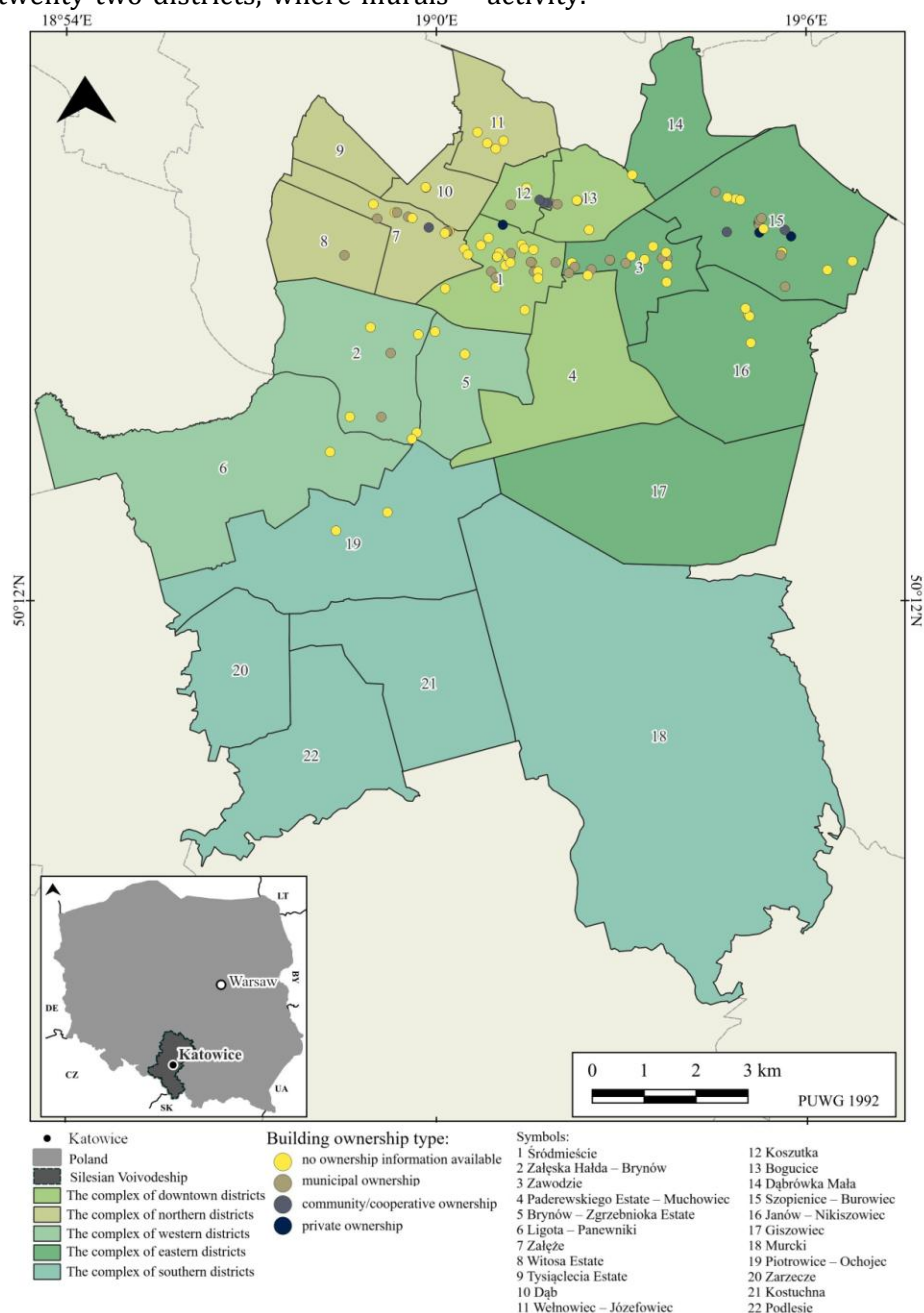


Fig. 2. Ownership of murals in Katowice (Source: own study, <https://www.geoportal.gov.pl>; <https://www.openstreetmap.org>)

Of the twenty-two districts included in the study, five are post-industrial districts. Dąb is linked to the Kleofas mine, Załęże to the Baildon steelworks, Bogucice and Koszutka to the Katowice mine, and Śródmieście to former railway land, a meat processing plant, and "ARMAK" S.A., an industrial fittings factory (STAŚ & PAWLIKOWSKA-MUSIEWICZ, 2012). The areas where the city has completed reclamation are the former Katowice and Kleofas mines. The Silesia City Centre shopping and entertainment centre and the Culture Zone have been built on the former Wujek mine site, where ongoing mining operations have not been fully reclaimed. Field research based on field notes revealed the existence of 112 large-format murals in Katowice, with diverse themes, layouts, and similar formats (covering the walls of tenement houses, apartment blocks, and residential buildings) (Table 1). Most (26) were located in Śródmieście and Szopienice-Burowiec (20). Subsequently, murals were documented in the districts of Zawodzie (14), Załęże (13), and Koszutka (6) (Table 1). These include the city centre districts

(Śródmieście, Koszutka), the eastern district (Szopienice-Burowiec, Zawodzie), and the northern district (Załęże) (Table 1). The changing dynamics of the creation and removal of spatial artistic works were also determined, including by documenting the creation of two new works between March and September 2025: Mona Tusz in Śródmieście at 11 3 Maja Street and Basia Flores (on the occasion of the 160th anniversary of the founding of Katowice).

According to the list, the most statistically significant number of murals were created in the city centre districts (43), which has 15.4 km². Śródmieście, the most mural-rich district, covers an area of 3.8 km², while Szopienice-Burowiec covers 8.5 km². Compared to districts such as Giszowiec (12 km²) or Ligota-Panewniki (12.6 km²), Śródmieście and Szopienice-Burowiec do not occupy large areas, so as can be seen, this is not the decisive factor in artists' choice of space. Katowice's largest district, Murcki (41.5 km²), has no murals, as 86% of the district is covered by forest.

Table 1. Types of Katowice districts and the number of murals (Source: own study based on: <https://murale.katowice.eu/>; <https://antekwpodrozy.pl/96-katowicki-street-art>; <https://mdk.katowice.pl/street-art-w-szopienicach>; <https://www.geoportal.gov.pl>; <https://www.openstreetmap.org>)

A set of districts	Name of the district	Surface [km ²]	Number of murals
DOWNTOWN	Śródmieście (no. 1)	3.8	31
	Osiedle Paderewskiego – Muchowiec (no. 4)	7.4	1
	Koszutka (no. 12)	1.4	6
	Bogucice (no. 13)	2.8	5
	SUMMARY	15.4	43
NORTHERN	Załęże (no. 7)	3.4	13
	Osiedle Witosza (no. 8)	3.4	1
	Osiedle Tysiąclecia (no. 9)	1.9	0
	Dąb (no. 10)	1.9	2
	Wełnowiec – Józefowiec (no. 11)	3.1	6
	SUMMARY	13.7	22
WESTERN	Załęska Hałda – Brynów (no. 2)	6.5	5
	Brynów – Osiedle Zgrzebnika (no. 5)	4.1	2
	Ligota – Panewniki (no. 6)	12.6	1
	SUMMARY	23.2	8
EASTERN	Zawodzie (no. 3)	4.0	14
	Dąbrówka Mała (no. 14)	3.7	1
	Szopienice - Burowiec (no. 15)	8.5	19
	Janów – Nikiszowiec (no. 16)	8.6	4
	Giszowiec (no. 17)	12.0	0
	SUMMARY	36.8	38
SOUTHERN	Murcki (no. 18)	41.5	0
	Piotrowice – Ochojec (no. 19)	12.1	1
	Zarzecze (no. 20)	5.1	0
	Kostuchna (no. 21)	8.6	0
	Podlesie (no. 22)	8.3	0
	SUMMARY	75.6	1
SUMMARY - KATOWICE		164.7	112

4.2. Murals in the city centre

The concentration of murals in Śródmieście stems from its symbolic and representative function and the fact that the most significant number of events related to the city's holidays, anniversaries, and other important events are planned here. It's worth noting that until recently, the city centre's appearance was dominated by the mining industry. Currently, the district has been completely revitalized, and mining plays a symbolic role. Its two greatest symbols, remnants of the Katowice mine, are the Silesian Museum and the Silesia City Centre shopping mall. Abstract murals (11) highlight the district's changing function. At the same time, many local murals (15) related to Katowice's history, including its industrial history, have been documented in the city centre (Fig. 1).

This is evidenced by examples such as the COP 24 mural on the City Hall building on Młyńska Street, painted by Mona Tusz in 2018 (no longer in existence), the artist's other murals (including those at 13 Warszawska Street – the so-called stickers – and on 3 Maja Street), related to Katowice's coal mining industry, and the murals on Tylna Mariacka Street (e.g., the mural by Zbigniew Wodecki by the Czary-Mury collective, Marek Grela, and Marta Piróg). Most of them are informative and educational in nature and are visible from various points and distances (for example, Wodecki's likeness is visible from the main railway line, especially for passengers arriving from Kraków, Łódź, and Warsaw).

Moreover, the location of murals in places such as Młyńska, Tylna, Mariacka, and Warszawska Streets indicates a tendency to concentrate significant socio-cultural activities in these particular areas of the city centre, linked on the one hand to the seat of municipal authorities, and on the other to the fashionable and developing retail and service infrastructure, creating opportunities for smaller outdoor events. There are no murals where events take place that attract the largest audiences (e.g., Christmas markets and amusement parks), that is, the Katowice Market Square.

We can assume that Śródmieście is not dominated by murals related to the history of the mining industry, although there are numerous references to this history. A more important role is played by murals reflecting the district's representative role, subordinated to the city's dynamic politics. It is also worth emphasizing that some of the industrial murals are located under viaducts or in gates,

which means that the local history they present is not so visible (e.g. Mona Tusz's murals in the courtyard at ul. 3 Maja 11 or Mona Tusz's stickers depicting elements of the mine at ul. Warszawska 13). Another significant advantage of districts like Śródmieście is the ownership of the buildings displaying murals. Most (16) are managed by the Municipal Housing Management Plant in Katowice (GZM) (Fig. 2).

In districts with a significant number of murals, such as Śródmieście, a overwhelming number of buildings belonging to the Municipal Office have murals painted on them. In Śródmieście, there are five such buildings in total. However, there are significantly more murals documented on buildings of unknown ownership (17).

4.3. Murals in Szopienice-Burowiec

In the Szopienice-Burowiec district, 18 murals were documented, 12 of which are of local character and six are abstract (geometric figures and other abstract patterns) (Fig. 3). All the murals in Szopienice that are thematically and interpretively related to the closed Non-Ferrous Metals Smelter are discussed below.

Presented documentation of murals in the Szopienice-Burowiec district demonstrates their connection to the buildings of the Non-Ferrous Metals Smelter in Szopienice-Burowiec. Among all 18 murals in Szopienice-Burowiec, this is a model representation. Most are related to the mining and zinc-smelter industry and the district's history (Fig. 3). Research confirmed two architectural connections between the murals and the industry (on Ks. Majora Karola Woźniaka and Roździeńska Streets) and three conceptual connections, demonstrating a connection to the theme of metallurgy in Szopienice-Burowiec at the level of interpretation of the murals or their content (Fig. 3). These connections were also noted by students participating in the workshops, confirming the visible industrial themes of the murals and the possibility of combining them with the knowledge acquired during the workshops. As previously stated, the students who participated in the survey confirmed the importance of viewing murals in combination with historical commentary and thus enhancing the touristic value of the places visited. To the first question, 193 students responded affirmatively. 176 students also responded affirmatively to the second question. Based on project documentation deposited at the University of Silesia in Katowice (Faculty of Natural Sciences in Sosnowiec),

the age and gender of the respondents were determined. The participants who completed the survey were aged 15–18. Half were female, and half were male (in line with EU project requirements).

Most of the murals in the district are located close to each other, forming a trail over 4 km long, which can be completed on foot in an hour and a half. Its key feature is that it includes various types of buildings, starting from the former steelworks pithead, located in a brownfield area, through a shopping and service centre (Halina Lerman Square), Walenty Róźnieński Square, and finally the Bagno Estate (22 Róźnieńskiego Street), located right next to the Zinc Rolling Mill. As mentioned earlier, this type of development – often discontinuous or free-standing, like the pithead building – provides favourable conditions for creating large-scale art work. It also allows them to convey their message as closely as possible to the buildings' former function (the murals on the water tower and pithead building raise doubts here, as both buildings were entered into the register of historic monuments on July 30, 1978, registration number: A/1227/78).

The research did not confirm the predominance of buildings belonging to the Municipal Housing Management Plant in Katowice (KZGM) (6 out of 19; Fig. 4). Based on a conversation with a representative of the management board of the Metallurgical and Mining Housing Cooperative, it was established that only two locations are owned by the cooperative: at 43 Bednorza Street and 22 Róźnieńskiego Street.

The Non-Ferrous Metal Smelter's pithead building, sometimes called "Uthemann", is covered with murals on its north and east sides. According to the murale.katowice.eu, the murals on the east side were created over two days in 2022. The creation process was open to observers, who could meet with friends and admire the creation of works in a unique atmosphere – the initiative aimed to bring art closer to the residents of Katowice. As we see on Fig. 5 the murals on the two walls are distinctly different. Those on the north side evoke the outdoor entertainment events likely intended to occur there. Like a pictorial narrative, those on the east side illustrate the smelter's history, referencing anecdotes and fairy tale motifs.

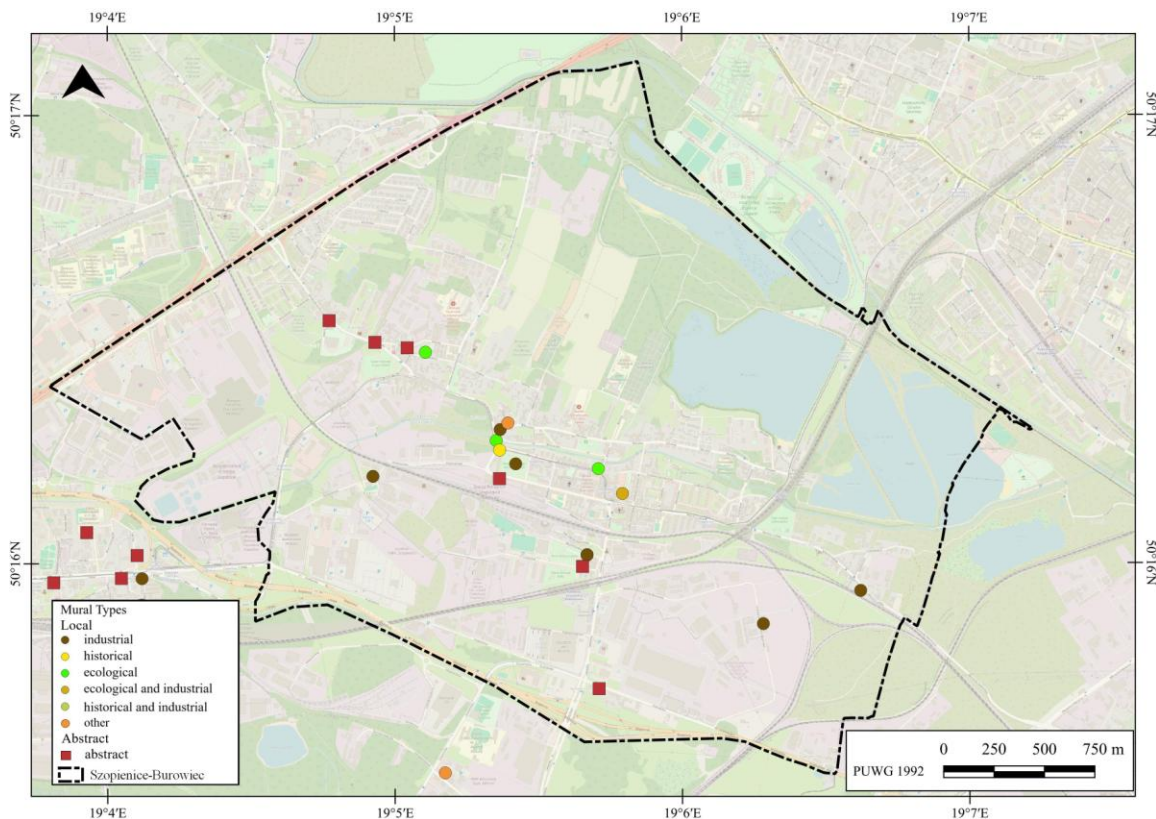


Fig. 3. Mural types in Szopienice-Burowiec district (Source: own study, <https://www.geoportal.gov.pl>; <https://www.openstreetmap.org>)

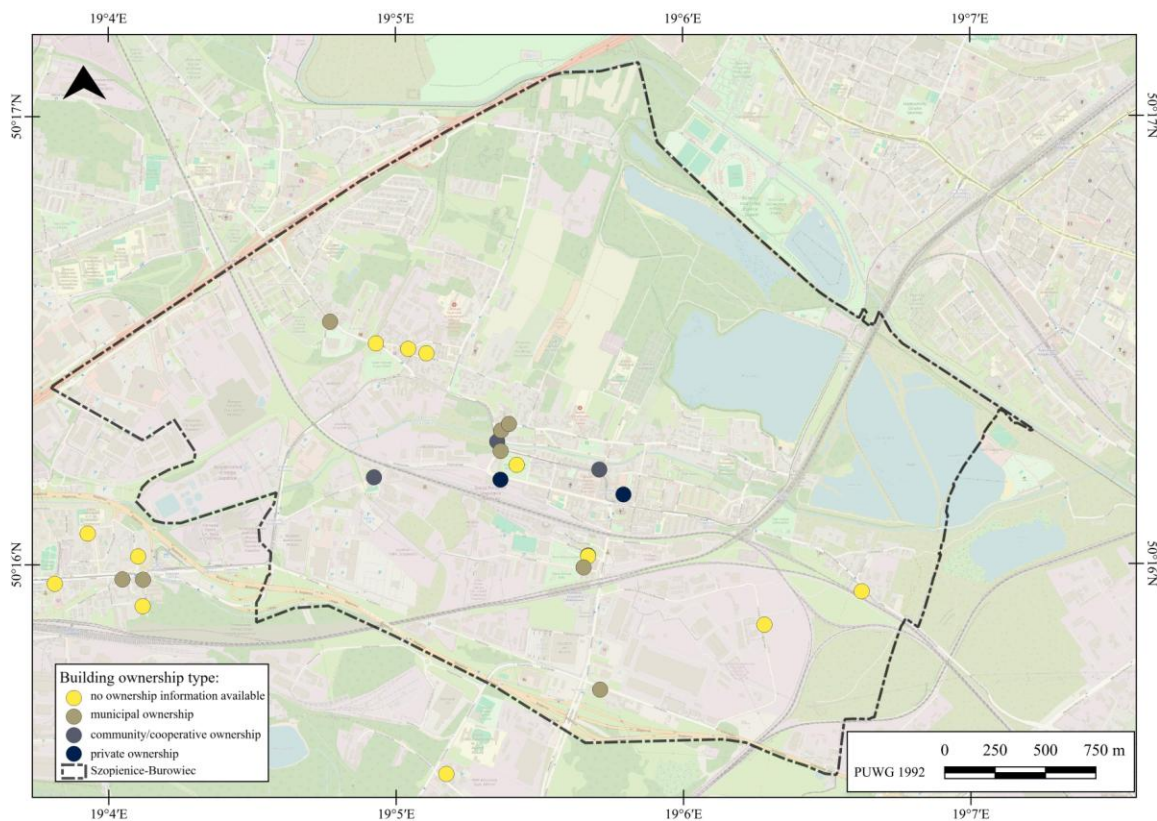


Fig. 4. Ownership of murals in Szopienice-Burowiec district (Source: own study, <https://www.geoportal.gov.pl>; <https://www.openstreetmap.org>)



Fig. 5. DAJSE (abbreviation of the name of an artistic group of painters) murals placed on the management building (hall) of the Non-Ferrous Metal Smelter, Ks. Majora Karola Woźniaka Street. (Source: author)

The mural on 1 Wiosny Ludów Street was created as part of the Street Art Festival 2014 to commemorate the Szopienice-born painter Halina Lerman, who died in 2013. The guiding idea for the work, by Marta Abramowicz and Van, was guerrilla gardening (REYNOLDS, 2009). The authors primarily referred to the opportunities offered by the large, unrevitalized

Szopienice former steelworks area and to the grassroots capabilities of the residents, particularly women, who currently hold the future of Szopienice-Burowiec in their hands (Fig. 6). The mural has a 3D character – in the background of the colorful flower garden are the black outlines of the pithead building, symbolizing the entire Non-Ferrous Metal Smelter. The black and grey of the steelworks contrast with the intense colours of the garden, symbolizing renewal and life.

The mural on Walenty Roździeńskiego Square was created in 2015 under "Earthworks – Carboneum". The work was created by members of the "Earthworks" collective. The mural depicts elemental carbon bonds, but its meaning goes beyond what is visible (Fig. 7). It can be interpreted in relation to its location. In this place operated only one mine in Szopienice, the Szczęście Luizy mine, closed in 1939 (GRZEGOREK ET AL., 2017). The Square itself, through its name, refers to the activity of the first forges, i.e., prototypes of steelworks, in Katowice (the park features a pedestal commemorating the author of the first Polish treatise on metallurgy, entitled *Officina ferraria* from 1612, Walenty Roździeński (JONCZY & STAWOWIAK, 2019). Thanks to the mural placed along the entire length of the

building located next to the walking path connecting Bednorza and Obrońców Westerplatte streets, passers-by have the opportunity to walk past the



Fig. 6. A mural inspired by the work of Halina Lerman, 1 Wiosny Ludów Street (Source: author)

The renown Katowice street artist Jan Raspazjan created the mural on the eastern wall of Morawa Street 2. The mural is located approximately 30 metres from the River Rawa, which flows through the historic Roździeń district of Katowice, where the aforementioned Luziy Szczęście mine, the Wilhelmina and Bernhadi zinc smelters, the Lieres roastery, and the Recke sulfuric acid factory (SZARANIEC, 1980) operated before the war. The mural is symbolic and consists of a collection of geometric black and red objects – human and animal heads, symbolizing miners and steelworkers, images of the planet Saturn, a regular feature of this artist's murals, associated with the paintings of amateur miners from the neighbouring Nikiszowiec-Janów district (the so-called Janowska Group) (Fig. 8). Due to the proximity of the canalized river, the mural also depicts the industrially degraded River Rawa. This is reminiscent of the construction of the heads, which form the shape of a river canal.

The penultimate work on the industrial mural trail in Szopienice-Burowiec discussed here is located at Roździeńskiego Street 22, in the Bagno housing estate, next to the Zinc Rolling Mill, a privatized part of the defunct Non-Ferrous Metal Smelter. The mural was created in 2019 with support from the National Heritage Institute and the Zinc Rolling Mill. Its creator, Mona Tusz, alongside Raspazjan, is a leading representative of Silesian street art. Like Raspazjan, she draws on Silesian demonology and folk imagery. The mural,

mural and observe the developing network of connections between individual black spots.



Fig. 7. "Earthworks" mural, Walenty Roździeńskiego Square (Source: author)

titled "Flora and Florian", is located on the side wall of a building belonging to the Mining and Metallurgy Housing Cooperative, which also owns other residential buildings in the district (Fig. 9). The historic Bagno district, where the mural is located, was once inhabited by miners and steelworkers. Therefore, the figures painted by the artist are linked to the steel industry (Florian, patron saint of steelworkers) and its future (Flora, goddess of plants). The mural visibly alludes to the production of zinc sheets at the Rolling Mill by placing a production line symbol and crushed mirror particles on the block wall, representing water and life. The mural also features ruderal plant species, such as *Silene vulgaris*, whose presence in the former steelworks area of Szopienice, particularly around the former management building on Woźniaka Street, has been confirmed by botanists from the University of Silesia (Nadgórska-SOCHA & CIEPAŁ, 2009; NADGÓRSKA-SOCHA ET AL., 2011).

The mural is optionally the last to be visited. It is located a few hundred meters from the pithead building of the Non-Ferrous Metals Smelter, in the so-called Second Szopienice district, next to a former sulphur plant that was harmful to the environment and people. It is located on both sides of the building. On one side, it depicts the pithead tower that burned in 2011, a symbol of the smelter's irreversible closure (Fig. 10); on the other, it depicts the face of a black man, perhaps a steelworker or miner, and the River Rawa running through it, painted based on

19th-century lithographs by Ernst Wilhelm Knippel. The mural was created as a tribute to the working-class district and demonstrates a strong connection to its social problems following the smelter's



Fig. 8. Raspazjan's mural, Morawa Street 2 (Source: author)



Fig. 10. Axel Void mural, 62 Wiosny Ludów Street (east side) (Source: author)

closure. In 2017, Artur Pławski received first prize for his series of photographs, "Szopienice," showing Axel Void's close contact with the house residents at Wiosny Ludów 62 while working on the mural.



Fig. 9. Mona Tusz's "Flora and Florian" mural, Różdzieńskiego Street 22 (Source: author)

5. Discussion

Research on Katowice's murals reveals that their connection to the city's and region's industrial past is strong, yet not isolated. The documented murals are partially connected to the city's mining and zinc-smelter history. In the two post-industrial districts examined, a total of 17 murals referring to the local, industrial history of the city were documented: 15 in Śródmieście and 12 in Szopienice-Burowiec. The local nature of the murals is partly industrial and partly ecological, commemorating the city's past and recognizing the impact of industry on the environment. The murals simultaneously serve as a reminder of Katowice's closed industry and educate residents about the post-industrial character of their districts.

Murals also contribute to the gentrification of Katowice's post-industrial districts. Murals have, among other things, enabled the transformation of Śródmieście's industrial function into a representative one (like Wodecki's or Korfanty's murals). Murals

also help enhance the city's touristic offerings, although Katowice still has much to do in this regard. It's worth emphasizing that Katowice street art, as evidenced by information provided on the KZGM website, is the result of the interest shown in the city by artists from Poland and around the world. The 112 murals documented in Katowice are certainly evidence of the interest street artists have in the city and its possibilities. Street art has been repeatedly highlighted as a tourist attraction in post-industrial cities (HIBSZER, 2021) – particularly in cities such as Łódź, which is characterized not only by its large size but also by numerous technical monuments (JAŹDŻEWSKA, 2017; MOKRAS-GRABOWSKA, 2024). Many researchers have also pointed to the possibility of treating murals as heritage and "testimonies that spread the values of civilization" (MEZZADRI, 2021). In the case of industrial murals, particularly those located on the water tower and pithead building, which are listed as historical monuments, the concept of heritage encompasses more than just the care and attachment of the local community or tourists to beloved icons. KAMIŃSKA-BEREZOWSKA & HORÁKOVÁ (2025) demonstrates, the need for new industrial routes in both tourism and education. Most university students from Katowice and Ostrava, surveyed by sociologists, confirmed that industrial heritage provides a prime opportunity for a lecture on local history. Furthermore, interviews conducted during classes by the author revealed strong interest among young people in industrial history and the social problems of post-industrial districts, in conjunction with discussions of individual murals. The author's survey among young people confirmed the attractiveness of tourism mediated by the presentation of murals. Young people who regularly participated in workshops about the murals in Szopienice, in addition to completing the survey, demonstrated interest in the district by visiting the tourist path around the steelworks where the murals were located. This research requires broadening and deepening, especially to include the residents of the buildings where the murals are located.

Although Katowice does not have a separately documented mural policy, it does have detailed revitalization plans that encompass the two districts analyzed in this article – Śródmieście and Szopienice-Burowiec. The latter, in particular, still faces numerous social and economic problems that require action from the city authorities. As demonstrated by surveys among young people participating in the "Transformesi" project, there is considerable interest

in the history of run-down districts such as Szopienice-Burowiec. This is influenced by the attractiveness of new tourist trails, such as the mural trail around the Non-Ferrous Metals Smelter.

Katowice's initiatives were also linked to the city's preparations for the European Capital of Culture title in 2029. Because the preparation program included discussions with residents and grassroots efforts to shape the city's appearance, street art proved a much more effective way to refresh and transform the image of urban spaces than the time-consuming and difficult revitalization of individual districts or industrial monuments. The plans, outlined in the study "Katowice. City of Gardens. Candidate for European Capital of Culture 2016," included measures that would "softly" counteract reckless mining and its consequences, mining damage, and environmental and urban pollution. The publication also emphasized concern for the city centre, calling for revitalizing neglected areas and creating a public space that would encourage residents and tourists to spend time in the city centre (PIEKARSKI & ZACZKOWSKI, 2016).

As TRZEPACZ (2023) rightly notes, mural or graffiti tourism is not only the activity of visitors and educators, but also the artists themselves. In the case of Katowice, where mural festivals were the driving force behind the phenomenon, research into the distribution of their nationalities in relation to the districts where they worked on their art could also be interesting. Data related to the ownership of residential buildings featuring murals is also worth supplementing and verifying, particularly those belonging to cooperatives once owned by industrial plants.

The involvement of individual actors in the mural creation process requires detailed analysis. Thanks to the documentation provided to the author by the KZGM and SGHM, it was possible to determine that a significant portion of the murals were created on the walls of buildings with established ownership, which belonged to the KZGM. An analysis of press materials provided by the KZGM revealed that the KZGM most often commissioned murals not created as part of festivals. Detailed research is required to understand the local community's attitudes toward murals and their perception of their impact on the district's tourist appeal.

Separate studies should be conducted for individual cities in Upper Silesia, such as Bytom or Chorzów, which are similar in development and industry to Katowice. Several industrial murals have been created

in Chorzów around the closed Kościuszko Steelworks in recent years. Further murals, contracted in July 2025 as part of the city's participatory budget, will form the trail called "In the Footsteps of Two Steelworks: A Steelworks Walking Trail". It would also be important to confirm which portion of the available murals has particular educational and artistic value. The scale of the difficulties in interpreting the works created during the Katowice street art festival demonstrates that these are often separate collections.

6. Conclusion

The research attempted to answer three key questions: the relationship between murals and the character of a post-industrial city, especially after the closure of hard coal mining and non-ferrous metallurgy plants (1); the impact of murals on the gentrification of Katowice's industrial districts, with particular emphasis on the degraded Szopienice-Burowiec district (2); and the role of murals in shaping the identity of post-industrial districts in Katowice (3). Field research identified 112 murals, including both local and abstract styles. It was also confirmed that some of them refer to the history of the mining and zinc-smelter industries. At the same time, others also highlight the ecological dimension of post-industrial cities, which is important from the perspective of an ecology and energy transition. Thanks to detailed interpretative analyses of selected murals in Szopienice-Burowiec, their connection with the closed Non-Ferrous Metals Plant was confirmed on many different levels – from the thematic to the dimension related to imagining/designing the future of the post-industrial district (especially by artists). Student surveys confirmed the interest of visitors to Katowice in murals as an element enhancing the attractiveness of degraded urban spaces. However, they also indicated that murals should be accompanied by professional commentary to facilitate understanding of the interpretive context of street art – especially that related to industry.

In the future, it would be worthwhile to expand research on the actors involved in the mural creation process, particularly the local community living in buildings displaying street art. It would also be worthwhile to deepen interpretive research on selected murals, especially those combining industrial history with the art and artistic traditions of Katowice (e.g., those represented by Kazimierz Kutz and Erwin Sówka, painted on murals in the

Szopienice and Zawodzie districts). It would also be worthwhile to analyze the mural work of individual artists, such as Mona Tusz, whose fame transcends Katowice, but it was here, in Upper Silesia, that they began.

Founding

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