

The contemporary importance of the Old Canal area for the centre of Bydgoszcz and its influence on the city's cultural landscape

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Abstract

European cities are centuries-old connections of social and cultural interrelations in which the history and heritage of generations have formed a specific model of collective life and culture. The nature, prestige and signs of urban life in these cities are best indicated by their public spaces and their structure and inclusion in the urban tissue. Being presentable areas as well as places of social intercourse and activity, public spaces form multipurpose areas which establish the city's cultural landscape. Simultaneously, the game for urban areas in the city and related economic interests, and market all activities promoting the city's image and interfering with the city's structure, pose a threat to the sensible development of the most valuable parts of the urban space. Globalisation processes contribute to the unification and standardisation of any forms of life, including space. The need for maintaining the continuity of urban tissue requires that its historical traces be cultivated. In this context, the contemporary role of the Old Canal area for downtown Bydgoszcz and its influence on the development of the city's cultural landscape are part of the current strategies for the culture-forming regeneration of urban space.

Keywords: public space, cultural landscape, city's green areas, the Old Canal, Bydgoszcz

1. Introduction

As noted by Anna Hołub, 'the contemporary public space means experiencing cultural exchange with the aim of a different perception of reality, and it is a presentation of new prospects and opportunities, as well as confrontation with other forms of spending free time, and looking for new challenges' (Hołub, 2005: 9).

Assuming that public spaces form the city's cultural landscape, this study is aimed at tracing the history of architectural and urban planning changes in the Old Bydgoszcz Canal area. The spatial changes which have taken place in this area over the last 200 years have had a significant influence on the canal's immediate vicinity and the city's overall image. An analysis of the transformations of the Old Canal's roles and functions for the city's image will enable us to indicate the importance of this area for the city's cultural landscape over the period of time specified above and determine new research directions. Theoretical research devoted to spatial and functional changes of the Old Canal have been conducted by the author of this paper since 2014. The methodology applied by the author starts with analysing the collected cartographic and iconographic materials and reviewing the sources, through formulating conclusions, which form the starting point for detailed research. At the current stage of analysis, the author has confined herself to assessing the condition of the existing cultural landscape in the context of its importance for the structure of public spaces in this part of Bydgoszcz whilst taking historical changes into account.

2. State of research

This article defines cultural landscape, initially as a landscape shaped by human activity (Böhm, Zachariasz, 1997: 37), and as a landscape in which anthropogenic elements predominate over environmental elements. Its characteristic feature is that the level of transformations introduced by humans is significant enough to ensure the permanent existence of the cultural landscape only by way of regular procedures maintaining it in its intended condition (Siewniak, Mitkowska, 1998: 118). The issues covered by research papers related to the Bydgoszcz Canal mainly refer to the history of its construction, technological and environmental objectives, revitalisation, and the development of tourism movement and inland navigation. Among the selected papers, attention should be paid to the articles by Zbigniew Zyglewski *Kanał Bydgoski w sieci śródlądowych dróg wodnych* and *Planty nad Starym Kanałem Bydgoskim - upadek i rewitalizacja* (Zyglewski, 2017, 2018). The issues related to the development of the Bydgoszcz Canal as an element of the Bydgoszcz Water Junction are also analysed by Dominika Muszyńska-Jeleszyńska in her paper *Tereny nadrzeczne w strukturze przestrzenno-funkcjonalnej Bydgoszczy. Problemy rozwoju i rewitalizacji* (Muszyńska-Jeleszyńska, 2014). Maria Dombrowicz and Michał Januszewski, in turn, compiled a guidebook describing the Old Canal promenades, which provides a lot of information about the natural environment of the area analysed (Dombrowicz, Januszewski, 2013). In 2006, Marek Badtke published his book *Kanał Bydgoski*, in which he presented the history of the construction of this waterway, its parameters and its function in the city's structure (Badtke, 2006). Moreover, the subject of the Bydgoszcz canal is raised in scientific papers related to hydrological and physicochemical contexts, as well as didactic and educational parameters. A number of articles have also been published in the local press which mainly pay attention to the historical importance of this area as well as devastation and revitalisation attempts which have been made.

When discussing the riverside areas, the following publications should be mentioned: *Rewitalizacja frontów wodnych jako element procesu odnowy miast* by Piotr Lorens (Lorens, 2004), *Restrukturyzacja miejskich obszarów nadwodnych, Aspekty urbanistyczne, zarządzające i społeczno-kulturowe* by Alexander Tölle (Tölle, 2010), *Spółeczne i krajobrazowe walory wody w środowisku miejskim* by

Anna Januchta-Szostak (Januchta-Szostak, 2012), and also *Miasta przyjazne rzekom* by the same author (Januchta-Szostak, 2005). In 2014, Alina Pancewicz published her book entitled *Rzeka w krajobrazie miast* (Pancewicz, 2014). In the following years, Krystyna Solarek, Elżbieta Dagny Ryńska and Małgorzata Mirecka presented their publication entitled *Urbanistyka i architektura w zintegrowanym gospodarowaniu wodami* (Solarek, Ryńska, Mirecka, 2016), and in 2019, Sabina Kuc analysed German projects and published *Woda rzeczywistość i iluzje. Niemieckie wystawy ogrodnicze w latach 2007-2017* (Kuc, 2019).

3. Spatial development of the canal in the urban structure of Bydgoszcz

Bydgoszcz is situated in central Poland, in the meander of two rivers: the Brda river and the Vistula, in the Toruń-Eberswalde ice-marginal valley. The city's geographical and topographic conditions, as well as its location on the two rivers, significantly contributed to the development of its spatial layout in the past.

When looking at the history of architectural and urban planning changes in Bydgoszcz, water and green areas have always been important elements of the city's landscape and strong identifiers of its space. The main elements of this system have been natural environmental forms, including the existing forest complexes situated in the north-western and south-eastern parts of the city, the areas of the Northern and Southern Escarpments, as well as the trees stands in the Brda river and the Vistula valleys. The favourable geographical conditions and the agricultural and economic activity of the region's inhabitants have provided opportunities for passage by land and water. Their history dates back to the 16th century.

The first plans for marking out a new waterway between the Vistula, the Noteć river and the Oder were established under the supervision of Franciszek Florian Czaki in 1766-1768 under the rule of King Stanisław August Poniatowski. As a consequence of the partition of Poland, Bydgoszcz became a part of the Kingdom of Prussia, and the plans to link the Vistula and the Oder were taken over by Prussian officials. In 1773, construction works began in the Noteć river valley between Bydgoszcz and Nakło (Fig. 1). Within the city of Bydgoszcz, the canal was marked out as a straight-line watercourse going from the west along the contemporary streets Nakielska, Marszałka Focha (the southern bank), Grunwaldzka and Garbary (the northern bank), and the mouth to the Brda river was situated on Artura Grottgera Street in the city centre by the City Lock. It was in 1774 that the first barges successfully sailed along the canal. The total length of the canal was 26.77 km, and the differences in water levels were made navigable by means of nine locks (Biskup, 1991: 373).

The watercourse was an important inland waterway which was used to transport agricultural produce, wood, leather and other bulk goods from the east. The Bydgoszcz Canal changed the face of the city and significantly contributed to its economic and spatial development. Bydgoszcz became a trade centre of supra-regional importance. The architectural and urban planning development of Bydgoszcz was related to the main communication routes: water, road and rail running north-south and east-west. On the western side of the canal route, new villages and districts developed, including Szwederowo, Okole, Wilczak and Lisi Ogon. In the city, new administration, service, storage and industrial premises were constructed as were residential buildings (Biskup, 1991: 414). In the city centre, buildings and structures dating back to the times when Bydgoszcz received its urban charter predominated on the southern riverbank, with its clear chessboard street grid being preserved, the market square, the historic ruins of the castle dating back to the times of Casimir the Great and the city's main landmark, the 15th-century St. Martin and St. Nicholas Cathedral. Right on the riverbank there were industrial plants, craft workshops and quay serving barges transporting goods. The buildings and structures on the northern bank of the canal

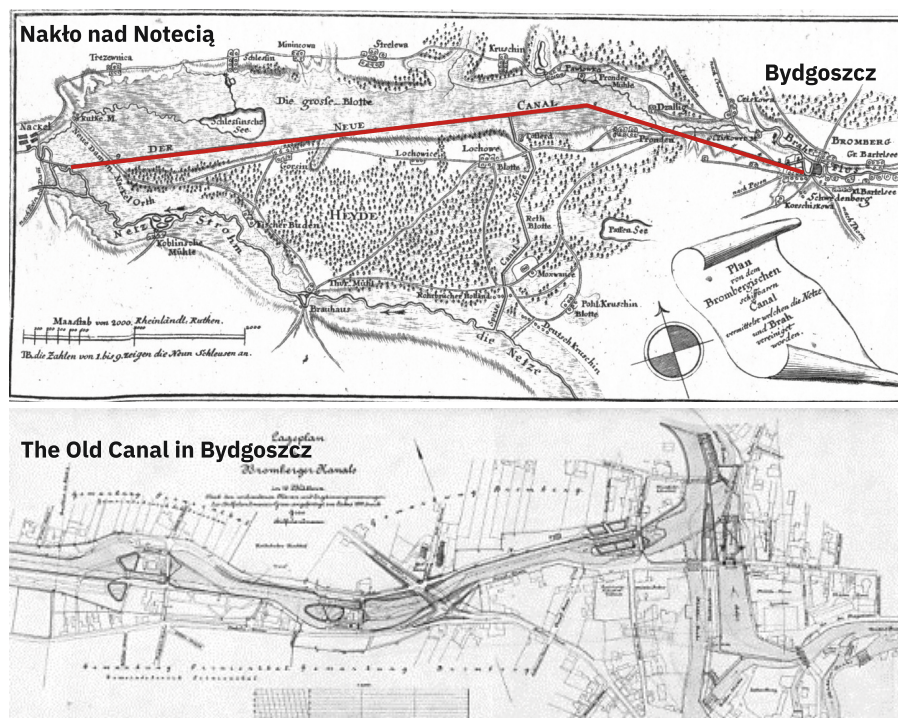


Fig. 1. 1 – Plan of the Bydgoszcz Canal connecting the cities of Nakło nad Notecią and Bydgoszcz from 1774, 2 – Plan of the route of the canal in Bydgoszcz in 1899 (source: own study based on materials of the State Archives in Provincial and Municipal Library in Bydgoszcz, sign CII791)

and the Brda river were directly influenced by the city's development caused by economic changes resulting from the establishment of the new waterway. Along the present-day central streets, such as the Gdańska, Dworcowa and Marszałka Focha streets, which are related to the river by their urban composition, new government buildings of the Prussian administration, and public utility facilities, including a theatre, post office, schools and Evangelical and Catholic churches were built, and new presentable squares were marked out and surrounded with elegant eclectic tenement houses (Grześkow, 2012: 328–329). The layout of housing and factory blocks along Grunwaldzka and Nakielska streets, and secondary streets, which were marked out perpendicularly, including Wrocławska, Kanałowa, Św. Trójcy, Ks. A. Kordeckiego, Marcinkowskiego and Lubeckiego, formed clear street enclosure leading to the canal and its infrastructure. The architectural landmarks which highlighted the importance of the hydrotechnical facility in the city centre were, in particular, the Evangelical church built in 1910-1912 on the southern bank according to the design of architect Roger Sławski and the Prussian School of Craft and Art Industry dating back to 1911 as well as the royal mills on the Mill Island dating back to the 18th century, St. Martin and St. Nicholas Cathedral situated on the Brda river, and the neo-renaissance building of the Directorate of Prussian Railways made of brick on the elevated northern bank.

The Bydgoszcz Canal area and the city's public green spaces formed a coherent system. Promenades, parks and municipal squares were created. In 1802, a lot of trees began to be planted along the sandy banks of the new watercourse. Plant species were selected that would reinforce the wharves and limit them being washed out, and meet the habitat conditions prevailing in the area. The linden and poplar paths were complemented with s black alders, horse chestnuts, elms, beeches, hornbeams, willows and numerous shrubs. All this was compositionally united with the wooded walking paths. Particularly beautiful lines of trees were created from 1804 to 1808, between lock no. 4 and lock no. 5 on Wrocławska Street. In the years 1833 to 1835, the area of green promenades was enlarged with subsequent sites, where several hundred trees were planted from Artura Grottgera Street to Bronikowskiego Street. Plant nurseries situated in the vicinity of the canal formed decorative flower beds every season. The area of the riverside promenades in the 19th and early 20th centuries was 74 ha, and

it became a presentable space, and a place of recreation for the inhabitants of Bydgoszcz. In the Planty park in Bydgoszcz, restaurants and cafes with outdoor seating, playgrounds for children and adults, playrooms, tennis courts and sports fields were opened. Within the public spaces of the promenades, special green enclosures were assigned for the weekly organisation of concerts, dance meetings and a variety of shows intended for different age groups and subjects of interest. The riverside tree and shrub stands in the western and central parts of the canal have been preserved unimpaired by human activity (Kuczma, 1995: 79–83).

Over subsequent years, the area of the Bydgoszcz Canal promenades was linked to the banks of the Brda river, thus creating a green corridor towards the Vistula (Mokra, 1996: 143–148). The routes of the canal in the western part of the city, of the Brda river in the city centre and of the Vistula in the east formed a linear system of greenery, and it was complemented by the areas of the Bydgoszcz Forest, annularly surrounding Bydgoszcz from the north and south, and numerous, although small in terms of area, public parks, squares and gardens. Among the greenery compositions contributing to the cultural landscape of the canal was a square within the present-day Poznań Square, situated on its southern bank (Kuczma, 1995: 70). In the area of the Canal's mouth to the Brda river, in the central part of Bydgoszcz, the Planty park surrounded the Mill Island and formed a presentable walking path.

The drastic architectural and urban planning changes that were introduced after the end of World War II in Bydgoszcz also referred to the role of the Old Canal in the city's structure (Badtke, 2006: 5–10). In connection with the gradual decline in the importance of inland navigation and the development of road and rail transport in the city, a decision was made to cover the canal up. In the 1960s, during the extension of the Grunwaldzka transport intersection in the central part of the city, the closing of the canal's section between lock no. 2 and lock no. 3 began, and the water was directed towards an underground collector (Fig. 2). By 1971, the historic locks and the Władysław IV bridge made of stone, which used to connect Św. Trójcy and Grunwaldzka streets, were dismantled, and the arrangement of the Planty park was interrupted by way of cutting out over 100 historic trees (Kutta, 2004: 23–28). Because of the progressive degradation of the natural environment in the canal's vicinity, development of industrial plants, unregulated sewage management and too little water discharge, Bydgoszcz turned its back on the wharves for the next decades. The significant deterioration of natural conditions in this area resulted in the devastation of the existing and well-ordered urban arrangement, which, in this part of the city, was based on the former role and importance of the Old Canal. The individual features of the cultural landscape and identity of the place began to blur.

4. Revitalisation of the Park on the Old Canal

Following years of neglect, the City Council together with the City Planning Office began to work on revitalisation programmes regarding the Bydgoszcz Water Junction after 1989. The following was developed: the Programme for Restoring the Brda River to the City of Bydgoszcz – Revitalisation of the Old Town, Bydgoszcz Venice and the Mill Island (City Planning Office 2000), the Bydgoszcz Water Junction Revitalisation and Development Programme (City Planning Office 2006), Renovation of Cultural Heritage Sites within the Mill Island in Bydgoszcz (Bydgoszcz City Hall 2008), the Local Revitalisation Programme for the City of Bydgoszcz (City Planning Office, City Development and Strategy Department 2009, 2013), REURIS: Revitalisation of Urban River Spaces (Bydgoszcz City Hall 2008-2012), Development of the City of Bydgoszcz Landscape (City Planning Office 2015), and the Commune Revitalisation Programme for the City of Bydgoszcz 2023+ (Bydgoszcz City Hall 2018).

The documents highlighted that the spatial development of these areas should refer to the existing natural conditions. Utmost importance was ascribed to the

route of the watercourses, which gave an original nature to the city's architectural and urban planning facilities, and determined the composition of the city's space. With regard to the areas adjoining the Old Canal area, planning and investment activities were undertaken, taking into account the following principles:

- ▶ the development of the riverside area so as to improve its landscape and recreational values;
- ▶ the restoration of functional relations with the areas adjoining the canal;
- ▶ the incorporation of new buildings and structures (e.g. residential and service objects) so as to ensure a view opening towards the canal;
- ▶ functional links with other downtown areas with the restoration of public green areas along the banks of the canal and parallel streets.



Revitalisation plans were developed for the watercourses in Bydgoszcz and the Old Canal in the following years as part of international programmes. In 2006, a programme entitled Utilisation of Inland Waterways for Regional Development – In Water (Program rewitalizacji i rozwoju Bydgoskiego Węzła Wodnego, 2006) was developed, and in 2009–2012, the programme Revitalisation of Urban River Spaces (REURIS) was prepared (*Kształtowanie krajobrazu...*). As part of the In Water programme, the revitalisation of the Old Canal area included the restoration of the pre-war Planty park on both sides of the watercourse. With regard to the greenery composition, it was planned to plant low vegetation, shrubs and short greenery walls, which were to serve as the backdrop for the exhibition of works of art in public space. The water section between lock no. 4 and lock no. 5 was to become an outdoor salon. The design, which referred to the history of the place, enabled the establishment of small catering outlets, children's playgrounds, active leisure sites, water sports and bike rental shops. The In Water documents proposed buying the building on Wrocławska Street and assigning it for cultural and administrative purposes related to the Old Canal, i.e. a museum and the seat of the park's management and associations.

In 2009, the City Planning Office presented another concept for the public green areas, specifically, the "Reuris" Central Park on the Old Canal. The revitalisation conditions were analysed with regard to the entire area of the park on the Old Canal, as well as the areas surrounding it, especially on its western

Fig. 2. Contemporary development of the Old Canal space (in the vicinity of the Prussian School of Handicraft and Artistic Industry) in comparison with the archival condition (photo source 1, 2, 4: <https://audiovis.nac.gov.pl/search>, access: 09.09.2019, photo 3, 5: by the author)

side (Gminny Program Rewitalizacji Miasta Bydgoszczy 2023+, 2018). In 2009–2011, a section of the park from the Grunwaldzkie roundabout to Wrocławska Street was reconstructed, following the specifications of the prepared design. The undertaken actions were aimed at improving the quality of the selected water-related urban public space and restoring its importance. The Planty park was included in the area development plan, in which playgrounds for particular age groups, active and passive leisure areas and areas intended for the provision of catering services were marked out. The whole park was divided into four different zones of use: the first zone – the “Park’s Gateway”, which was the section of the canal between the Grunwaldzkie roundabout and Wrocławska Street (lock No. 4); the second zone – the “green salon”, which covered the area between lock no. 4 and lock no. 5; the third zone – the “English landscape garden”, which covered the area between lock no. 5 (Czarna Droga) and the railway viaduct; and the fourth zone, which was a recreational and sports zone, which was situated furthest west and which surrounded the Gwiazda sports complex by the canal fork by lock no. 6 (Gminny Program Rewitalizacji Miasta Bydgoszczy 2023+, 2018).

The compositional and functional alteration covered the first section of the Planty park, from the junction of Grunwaldzka and Nakiełska streets, the “Park’s Gateway”, which underwent the most substantial changes at the time of covering the canal up at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. The works covered an area of 2.4 ha (nearly 4% of the area covered by the Reuris programme). This area was revitalised in 2011 in accordance with the design by the architectural studio IN&OUT Architekci Krajobrazu Dorota Nitecka-Frączyk. Along the raw concrete banks, new walking paths were marked out, which were covered with mineral pavement and separated from the water by a narrow strip of new low plants. The Canal were cut across with new roads and footbridges situated at different heights so as to ensure access to interesting vantage points and link this area to the surrounding residential and service buildings. Moreover, gentle cascade descents were introduced to enable the users of this area to contemplate the greenery and enjoy peaceful leisure. In the canal’s bed, glass panes of different height were installed, which cut across the course of the water. Fountains and new lighting were installed, and bike routes were marked out to link this area to other parts of the park.

Further revitalisation of 30 ha of the Park on the Old Bydgoszcz Canal is going to cover areas to the west of the city centre. The planned actions, which are conducted annually, focus on restoring the right role and function of this area in the city’s cultural landscape. New public spaces with greenery are marked out, which enrich the urban planning composition of subsequent districts linked to the canal. Furthermore, works are performed annually to look after the existing wood stands, renovate the paths and lawns, repair and construct landscape structures and plant new shrubs.

5. Conclusions

Nowadays, the canal area is among six of the most valuable and the oldest parks in the city. Because of its recreational values, it is ranked fifth among forty-five municipal parks. In terms of infrastructure offered, it is ranked twenty-seventh (Kozłowska-Adamska, Zieliński, 2012: 98). The revitalisation plans presented included turning the park on the canal into a presentable area with its historical values being preserved. The park was to undergo comprehensive revitalisation and receive new functions by way of opening a rope course, a Biblical garden and an observation tower. In 2005, hydrotechnical elements of the canal were entered into the list of protected historical monuments (Fig. 3). The principles of preserving the cultural landscape related to the Old Bydgoszcz Canal were laid out in the prepared urban planning programmes. According to these programmes,

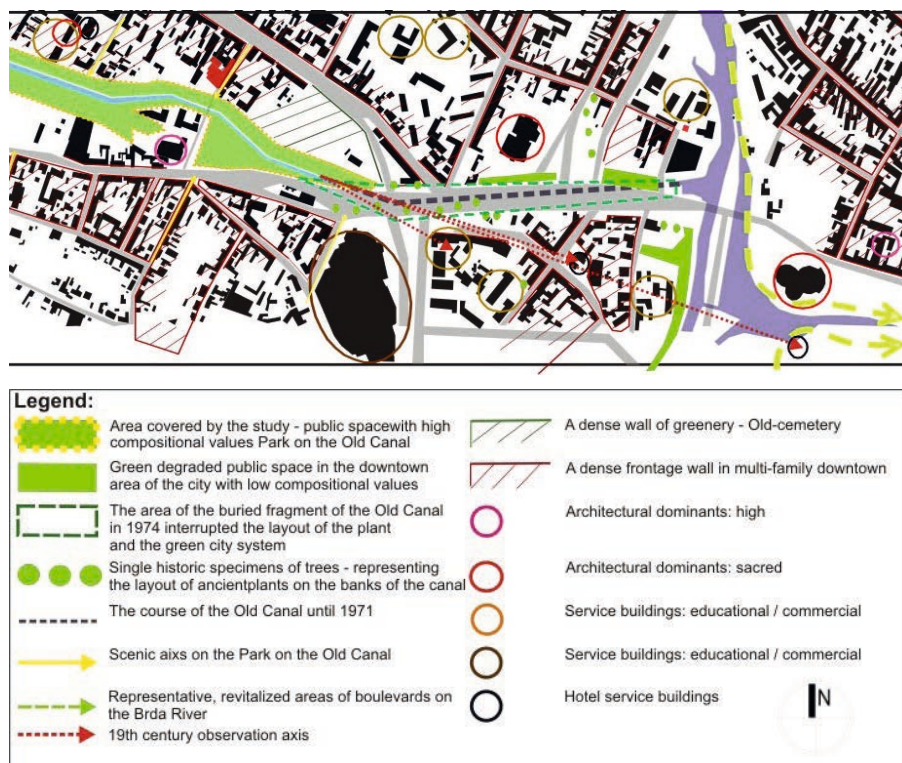


Fig. 3. The role of green public spaces of the Old Canal in central Bydgoszcz and its impact on the city's cultural landscape (source: author's own study)

this area has unique features resulting from its history and development. The urban design, as part of which new guidelines were prepared regarding public green spaces, has contributed to these areas regaining their utmost functional and aesthetic importance for the city's structure, which is significant for the living quality of the inhabitants of Bydgoszcz, although different in comparison with the historical role. Rebuilding of the downtown transport system in the 1970s and the elimination of the connection between the Old Canal and the Brda river irreversibly interrupted the clear compositional layout of the city. This resulted in the degradation of central districts, in particular those linked to the canal – these areas were deprived of their original role and function. Moreover, the historic buildings and structures accompanying the canal-related business activity were closed down – houses for service workers, the locks, restaurants, cafes, landscape structures, in other words, everything that formed the atmosphere and nature of this part of the city. The natural environment was also degraded because of the construction of a number of industrial plants on the banks and the elimination of a 650-metre-long section of the city's greenery, which was situated in the region of the highest concentration of buildings. The development of the transport infrastructure and the location of new housing and service facilities make it impossible to restore the previous connection between the greenery system and the banks of the Brda river.

The contemporary importance of the Old Bydgoszcz Canal area for central Bydgoszcz and its influence on the city's cultural landscape are still an open issue (Figs. 3 & 4). As a result of a number of case studies and the implementation of selected projects over recent years, the importance of this area for the city's image is being gradually restored. Revitalisation of the city centre part of the promenades and the park has had a positive influence on the restoration of this area's importance and role for the development of the cultural landscape of Bydgoszcz. The new functions, which are adjusted to the existing spatial alterations, are increasingly better satisfying the contemporary expectations of the inhabitants. The linear recreational and leisure park established within the Old Canal area penetrates the tissue of the city centre. It is an attractive area of high compositional and natural values, which is unique because of its hydrotechnical elements, which have been preserved and renovated, and its



Fig. 4. Revitalized part of the Old Canal Park, accompanied by cultural objects - Lock No. 4 Theatre and a new housing development (photos by author)

connection to a network of waterways from the Vistula and the Noteć river to the Oder. Moreover, the canal's revitalisation has contributed to the elimination of the consequences of long-term neglect in this region of the city and the restoration of the image of Bydgoszcz, which is perceived by the inhabitants as a city by water. In this area, cultural, sport and leisure, and service projects are undertaken, which are mainly initiated by local associations. Such initiatives favour the reconstruction of social and local traditions associated with this area by the citizens of Bydgoszcz. New walking trails and cycle lanes have been marked out, and old ones are reconstructed, new housing areas are established in historical surroundings, and neglected areas are coming back to life. In the canal area, there is a thematic museum running its activity, and the Lock No. 4 Theatre, which has been falling into decay for decades and has been being renovated, and which, hopefully, will again be present on the cultural map of Bydgoszcz. According to the city's inhabitants, who have been surveyed in this regard, the canal area is an important place, which is appreciated because of its values and preserved heritage, and which plays leisure-related functions in a historical setting and in green surroundings (Kozłowska-Adamska, Zieliński, 2012: 106–107) (Fig. 4).

6. Summary

As stated by Danuta Kochanowska, the increase in importance of the shape of urban space is currently based on the needs of contemporary users, who are looking for new sensations, emotions and experiences. Therefore, "the issue of cultural functions of urban space, and, above all, important public spaces and their development, comes to the fore" (Kochanowska, 2005: 31). According to Zbigniew Zuziak (Zuziak 1998: 13–15), "public spaces with original and rich forms, which are able to attract the attention of the inhabitants of cities, together with their new programmes regarding the use of free time, are becoming an important part of the "urban product". In comparison with the general phenomena and interrelations in the process of shaping the cultural spaces of cities which are being observed, further revitalisation of the Old Bydgoszcz Canal in accordance with the formulated programmes gives us hope that the historical importance of these areas for the city's landscape will be restored. Turning the Planty park

in Bydgoszcz into multifunctional areas again, with a significant aesthetic quality substantial presentable role, is an important element for Bydgoszcz regaining its individual cultural landscape and attractive riverside areas.

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Współczesne znaczenie przestrzeni Starego Kanału w śródmiejskiej części Bydgoszczy i jego wpływ na krajobraz kulturowy miasta

Streszczenie

Miasta europejskie to wielowiekowy splot społeczno-kulturowych zależności, gdzie historia i dziedzictwo pokoleń stworzyły określony model życia zbiorowego i kultury. O ich charakterze, prestiżu i przejawach życia miejskiego świadczą najpełniej przestrzenie publiczne, ich struktura i wpisanie w tkankę urbanistyczną miasta. Przestrzenie publiczne jako miejsca reprezentacji, forum współżycia i aktywności mieszkańców, tworzą wielofunkcyjną przestrzeń, budującą krajobraz kulturowy miasta. Jednocześnie gra o tereny w mieście i związane z tym interesy ekonomiczne, urynkowanie wszelkich działań promujących obraz miasta ingerujących w jego strukturę, zagraża świadomemu kształtowaniu najcenniejszych fragmentów miejskiej przestrzeni. Procesy globalizacji przyczyniają się do unifikacji i uniformizacji wszelkich form życia, w tym również przestrzeni. Potrzeba zachowania ciągłości tkanki miejskiej wymaga kultywowania jej historycznych śladów. Na tym tle współczesna rola przestrzeni Starego Kanału w śródmiejskiej części Bydgoszczy i jego wpływ na kształtowanie krajobrazu kulturowego miasta, wpisuje się w aktualne strategie kulturowej odnowy przestrzeni miejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: przestrzeń publiczna, krajobraz kulturowy, zieleń w mieście, Stary Kanał, Bydgoszcz