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**HISTORICAL PARKS AS AN ELEMENT OF SHAPING  
A GREENERY SYSTEM IN BIAŁYSTOK  
(Part 2: Contemporary state of preservation)**

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**Abstract.** The modern natural system of Białystok is based on the historical system. This system is connected with the areas surrounding the city through Las Zwierzyniecki. Landscape architectural objects are constantly updated and supplemented with new functional and aesthetic features.

**Key words:** Białystok, historical parks, greenery system.

## **1. Introduction**

Modernization activities conducted in Białystok were interrupted during the twenty-year interwar period with the outbreak of World War II. During the war, the city was repeatedly occupied by German troops and Soviets. In 1941, in the course of the Germans pacification, the Jewish neighbourhood district Chanajki was completely burned along with almost half of the city centre. In 1944, as a result of fires kindled by the bombardment of Soviet air force destroyed rest of the city. The city was looted and taken over by the Soviets from the hands of Germany in July 1944. The degree of destruction of the material substance of the city according to various sources, is estimated at 75–90 %. Remaining industrial plants and cultural facilities in the city at the time were treated as the war booty and were stolen away [1].

## **2. Aim, scope and research method**

Continuing the research presented in Part I of this study, the authors analysed the processes associated with the transformation of green areas in the area of Białystok since the end of World War II to the present times. The analysis covered areas that in the interwar period were defined as the natural system of the city and were legible in its structure to the present times. The given research was based on such available material sources as: literature, cartographic and iconographic works. The conducted works undertaken, among other things, were due to the lack of comprehensive studies dedicated to these problems.

## **3. Białystok city parks in the period after World War II**

Reconstruction of the city began in 1944, when the Office of the Voivode set up a special cell. Then, a team of designers led by a newcomer from Vilnius Władysław Paszkowski, began reconstruction works of the most valuable monuments of the city. At the same time action was taken related to the development of the project of reconstruction of the centre of Białystok. The newly created buildings (maintained in the style of socialist realism) had to replace the facilities destroyed during the war [2, 3]. The enormity of the work and its associated costs postponed the problems of urban green areas [4]. In the vicinity of the newly formed building decorated gardens were created, and the problem of public parks was not undertaken until 50s [5, 6].

### 3.1. The Palatial Park

After the completion of reconstruction of the building of Branicki palace (1946-1960) in Białystok and its handover for the needs of the Medical Academy seat, the activities related to reconstruction of the baroque gardens started [7, 8, 9, 10]. The carried out work consisted in cleaning the upper area of the garden from the forest stand and in arranging it within the fence, which was newly marked out (palace brickwork). In 50s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the arranged area was used for agricultural purposes and intended for vegetable gardens used by employees of the Medical Academy. Reconstruction work carried out in the 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was conducted as based on the development of Stanisław Bukowski since 1957 [7]. In the fence a gate from the side of Dzierżyński street (former Legionowa) and Akademicka street was introduced, allowing an easy communication by walking and connecting the area of the garden with the surrounding of old Kościółkowski boulevards. On the territory of the park boxwood plantings of embroidering parterres were restored, garden fountains and the edge of palatial pond was also regulated (in new shape). Within the space of the park several reconstructed sculptures and garden benches were placed. However, work associated with reconstruction of the bosquet, the Chinese garden and the garden pavilions were not carried out. The main Garden avenue was asphalted, and the palace courtyard was paved with concrete slabs. Courtyards, as well as the upper garden, were decorated with the rose flowerbed with a linear course, which emphasized the main axis of the palace [8].

### 3.2. Surrounding of the Palatial Park

In 1948, the building of the theatre, which was completely destroyed during the war, was given into commission [5, 12]. In the year 1949, this building was given the name of Aleksander Węgierka. At that time, the park area surrounding the theatre building was called the Old park. Its facilities are maintained in the style of the interwar period. Before the main entrance to the building, a swimming pool and a fountain were set up, which until the end of 90's were repeatedly renovated. During this period, surfaces, benches and lanterns in the park area were changed and the management of the forest stand was also carried out. On the axis of the building a linear flower bed of flowers was retained and in 1976 along the centre of its length a sculptural composition made by Albin Sokołowski was set up. The main avenue of the park was used as a driveway to the theatre parking [6].

During the post-war period, the Planty park was renamed to the Park of Friendship. In 1951 in its central part on the main axis over the central pool, a monument of Gratitude to the Red Army, of the authorship of J. Ślusarczyk, was placed. The main attraction of the park was a fountain in the central pool. The concert shell was organized in its vicinity. The main avenue of the park was preserved in its modernist style with the planting of thujas and flowery carpets. During the 70's, an additional attraction were sculptures and flowery clocks. Its surface, the same like others in the entire area of the park and the boulevards, was changed to the asphalt, and in the area around the park gradually the fittings (lamps, benches, dustbins) were replaced. In 1945, inside the park, in the rose garden a sculpture of the Washing Lady by Stanisław Horno – Popławski, ordered before the war, was placed. The other elements of the rose garden over time were devastated. On the territory of the former Kościółkowski Boulevards (which lost its name in 1944), used as walking paths, two new fountains located in the area of Dzierżyński street and the Medical Academy dormitory building were placed.

### 3.3. The area of former preserve (Park Zwierzyniec + forest)

The system of roads for communication through the area of the former zoo in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ("Strategic szosse"), and in the interwar period (11 Listopada street), divided it into four different-sized parts [13]. The subsequent repairs involving widening of these roads and strengthening of this division, led to the different usage of these parts.

The northern part of the zoo divided into Świerczewski street (formerly 11 Listopada street), since the interwar period was already functioning as a division into space for relaxing and recreational area and a group of sports facilities. In the 60's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Accent Zoo (mini zoo with an area of approximately 3 hectares) was opened in the park, which primarily was used as a space for temporary storage of animals. The amphitheatre stage was organized in the park. Festivities and folk parties were organized there. An athletics stadium, tennis courts functioned in the area located between 11 Listopada and Wołodyjowski streets. In the 70's, a sports hall belonging to the Medical Academy was built there. The biggest attraction in this part of the park was a tower used for parachute jumping in the 60's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [6]. The southern part of the zoo in

this period was functioning as a forest area, restored after devastation from the period of World War II, when the Nazis cut down 50 hectares of forest within the framework of re-development of the Krywlany airport, adjacent to this forest. In the northern part of the forest, in the 70's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the headquarters of the Polish radio was built. Since 1947, the State House of Small Children operates in the place of the former summer resort Rozkosz. The southern edge of the forest because of farmland, allotment gardens and the area of the airport was connected with the suburban Solnicki Forest.

#### **4. The green areas in the centre of Białystok after 1989**

The political or economic changes that took place in Poland after 1989, are reflected in the spatial activities, including those related to the functioning of green areas [4]. It was part of the so called decommissioning space. It required the removal of monuments – symbols of the communist period and the reconstruction or new construction associated with the flow of independence times. The next stage of transformation of green areas in the city is associated with the renovation and modernization. These were made possible by the funds obtained for this purpose from the European funds.

##### **4.1. Branicki Garden in Białystok**

In 1997, the work started in order to perform revalorization of Branicki Gardens in Białystok. The author of the development of the new concept was Dr. Dorota Sikora. Based on her work, reconstruction of four out of eight lodging gardens was completed. Plantings of plants and filling of embroidering parterres were completely changed. Work on the reconstruction of fountains placed in the pre-courtyard also started. The next phase of the revalorization was started in 2009. It was connected with the implementation of a completely new design concept. The author of the development was Dr. Dorota Sikora and arch. Tomasz Rogala [14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19]. The essential part of work was carried out in the years 2009–2011. The upper garden was entirely rebuilt, embroidery parterres were once again reconstructed, the Pavilion under Eagle was rebuilt (2011), and the whole area was successively fitted with reconstructed sculptures. In the area of the upper garden and the pre-courtyard, the pavement was entirely replaced. The ongoing work is supposed to be continued and will include regulation of ponds, implementation of the Chinese garden and the successive reconstruction of a bosquet [20].

##### **4.2. Old Park named after Prince Józef Poniatowski**

Revitalization work in the area of the Old park started in the year 2003. It consisted of organizing the area and replacing the pavement. Among others, a fountain and a central flower bed with a statue were eliminated. An essential part of the work was carried out since 2007. It was carried out based on the project of architect Danuta Fiedziukiewicz, under which the surface was reconstructed and a new fountain was designed. The newly shaped area was excluded from the road communication. The created square was named after Marshal Józef Piłsudski. In 2014, in the central part of the square, a renovated composition by Albin Sokołowski was placed. The edges of the square were equipped with new benches and the flora was enriched with lilacs.

##### **4.3. Planty Park and rose garden**

In 1990, the monument of Gratitude to the Red Army, which was located in the central part of the park, was dismantled and moved to the cemetery of Soviet soldiers which was located at Ciołkowski street in Białystok. At the same time, the park was restored its historic name the Planty park. In the mid of 90's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a children's playground was organized in the area of the park. At the same time, an underground public restroom was rebuilt for a café. The area is subjected to constant maintenance. However, a comprehensive modernization was not carried out. Currently, its asphalt surfaces and the flora in the area of the rose garden is in the worst condition. The main attraction of this object still remains the fountain, for which the repairs were carried out between 2000 and 2016 [6, 21].

##### **4.4. Kościalkowski Boulevards**

The area surrounding the Branicki and Planty Park gardens – Kościalkowski Boulevards were restored with their historic name in 1990. In 1991, in the northern part of the boulevards, between the cathedral and the

Branicki palace, a monument of Rev. Jerzy Popieluszko of the authorship of Jadwiga Szczykowska-Zaleska was set up. Whereas in 2005, at a new location a replica of the sculpture of “Pies Kawelin” was set up. The author of the original from 1938 was Piotr Sawicki, and the modern replica was made by Małgorzata Niedzielko [6]. In 2011, in the immediate vicinity of the boulevards – the site covered with abandoned pool fountains, was put into operation into a new multi-functional playground. During the subsequent years, the inoperative fountain situated along Legionowa street (former Dzierżyński) was also covered [21]. The area of boulevards, as well as the area around the Planty park was subjected to successive maintenance and its furnishings are constantly modernised.

#### **4.5. Park of Constitution of May 3**

During the 90s, the northern part of the Zwierzyniecki Park was reinstated to its historic park name, named after the Constitution of May 3. Since that time in the area of the park, a number of modernization and maintenance works associated with the maintenance of roads and vegetation was carried out. In the southern part of the park, a new children's playground was organized. Reconstruction of the area of the Accent Zoo was also carried out. The essential part of the work took place in 2014 [21].

Since 2006, the initiative “Forum Białystok Jutra” started activities related to the revitalization of the area of the monument of Constitution of May 3. Supplementary missing trees were planted, and on May 3, 2007 a pyramidal monument was unveiled. This realization was inscribed as a part of the activities for reproducing monuments destroyed during the war and commemorating people and events erased in the history of People's Poland.

In 1997, in the central part of the park, a copy of a monument dedicated to soldiers of the 42nd Infantry Regiment, who died in the battles for independence in 1920 was set up. The authors of the original were the brothers, Jakub and Kazimierz Juszczykowi. A replica was made by the Białostock's sculptor Krzysztof Jakubowski.

In 2000, the main axis of the park, close to the Philharmonie, a memorial stone in honour of the Polish prisoners of war massacred by the Soviets was unveiled. This monument was rebuilt in 2005. At that time, it supplemented the sculptural composition and the name was changed to the Monument of the Katyn massacre. Currently another reconstruction of the monument is planned. The work relies on the introduction of a several meters high cross to the existing composition. On the social initiative, it is also planned to organize in the given area a steadfast and underappreciated Avenue. On the section between monuments: the Katyn massacre and soldiers of 42nd infantry regiment, boulders will be set to commemorate the “heroes who acted in favour of a free Poland, fought and died for their country, repressed, and today still not widely known as compatriots” [22]. The monument will be realised with public funds in the years 2017–20. In 2014, the monument “Cześć Poległym” located at the military cemetery since 1934 was renovated. The monument was kept in art-deco style and restored to its original character.

All the activities related to renovation and construction of monuments in the area of the Park of Constitution of May 3 will completely change the nature of its area. This area takes on the characteristics of features of the memorial.

#### **4.6. Las Zwierzyniecki (rezerwat – reserve)**

In 1996, according to the order of the Minister of Environment, Natural Resources and Forestry, part of common forest was transformed into the nature reserve under the name “Zwierzyniecki forest”. It was set up on account of scientific and teaching values of tree stand about character of the humid broadleaved forest. Now, it is combined with the Park of the Constitution May 3 with a walking footbridge conducted above the modernised Zwierzyniecka street. In the spatial arrangement, elements of the composition carried out in the years 30's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by J. Rybołowicz are legible [18].

In 2011, a decisive competition for the design of the campus of the University of Białystok took place. For this purpose, the city has allocated, belonging to it, the southern part of the Zwierzyniecki Forest, used as an area of garden allotments. The author of the winning concept prof. Marek Budzynski started the implementation of the facilities entering into the environment and interaction with nature. On the basis of this concept, in 2014, a building with four divisions was realised. The new investment is located outside the main traffic routes in the city, separating the urban areas from the forest area. It met with many controversies. As a result of discussions, it was decided to undertake the design work aimed at

streamlining the communication of the new campus while maintaining the cultural and natural places. A concept of “Ogrodu Czterech Uniwersytetów”, the system linking the compositional and natural Białystok universities was developed. The project involves the spatial relationship of each university to the system of green areas. For this purpose, it used the preserved relics from the days of John Clement Branicki including the arrangement of the Branicki Garden, the Planty Park and Kościalkowski boulevards, the Park of Constitution of May 3 and the Zwierzyniecki forest. The work related to the studies and design efforts for its implementation is currently under way.

## 5. Conclusions

The current existing system of green areas of the city of Białystok took shape for over two hundred years, based on the knowledge and experience of successive generations of its creators. Today, it consists of city parks and housing estates, land allotments and cemeteries, as well as urban wastelands and the area of the Biala river valley. Its primary core is a green wedge connecting outside urban areas to the forest areas of the city of Białystok. Its elements are discussed in this publication related to parks and forests.

## Gratitude

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**ІСТОРИЧНІ ПАРКИ ЯК ЕЛЕМЕНТ ФОРМУВАННЯ СИСТЕМИ  
ОЗЕЛЕНЕННЯ У БІЛОСТОЦІ  
(Частина 2: Сучасний стан)**

*Анотація.* Сучасна система озеленення Білостоку історично сформована. Поєднується через Звєжинецький ліс з природним середовищем за містом. Ландшафтні об'єкти постійно модернізуються та доповнюються новими елементами функціонального та естетичного характеру.

*Ключові слова:* Білосток, історичні парки, система озеленення.