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Factors Determining the Ways for Shaping the Landscapes of Municipal Cemeteries in Szczecin: Proposals of Changes in the Shaping of Municipal Cemeteries

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Abstract. The city of Szczecin is the capital and the largest city of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship and currently has six active cemeteries, the area of which is 204.62 ha. Cemeteries constitute a significant part of green areas in the city with a large potential for passive recreation places for residents. The aim of the research was to attempt to characterize the landscape of municipal cemeteries in Szczecin, as well as to formulate proposals for actions that would improve their current condition. On the basis of research and analyzes, the authors pointed out that the factors that influence the shaping of the landscape of Szczecin cemeteries are varied and can be generally divided into legal, spatial, historical, economic and cultural ones. It was found that the Central Cemetery, as a listed historic object, has the greatest landscape values, however, it lost much of the original landscape and cultural values due to post-war neglect and destruction. The remaining cemeteries are of secondary importance as objects of limited importance and functions of district cemeteries. Their condition is worse, and their landscapes are the least diverse. Cemeteries in Szczecin have a fairly high share of high greenery, and the low greenery is limited mainly to lawns. In order to create a climate favouring to walks and resting, the cemetery areas should be enriched with aesthetic and well thought out plant compositions from shrubs and perennials, designed by a landscape architect. It is proposed to create common "garden units" where the distance between the graves would be larger and it would be possible to create small plant arrangements. In addition, it is observed that cemeteries lack beautiful and original tombstones, which is why the return to exhibitions of cemetery art forms an important aspect. This would create the possibility of presenting modern and valuable stone art products and inspiring forms of plant arrangements at the graves. This is only part of the authors' proposals, which are quite universal and can therefore also be applied to other municipal cemeteries in Poland and abroad.

1. Introduction

Municipal cemeteries constitute about 12% of all functioning cemeteries in Poland, the total number of which is over 15.5 thousand. The distribution of municipal cemeteries in individual regions of the country is uneven, due to historical and cultural conditions. They are by far the most numerous in the provinces of western Poland, i.e. in the territories previously inhabited mostly by Protestants [1]. Most of the necropolis there used to be owned by churches or religious associations, but in the second half of the twentieth century they were municipalized and currently they are owned by the municipal authorities. Szczecin is the capital and largest city of the West Pomeranian Voivodeship and currently has six active cemeteries, of which all are municipal and there are no denominational cemeteries. As

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everyone knows, municipal cemeteries are one of the types of public green spaces, but some restrictions on accessibility and use are in force (some are based on regulations of facilities, others from cultural conditions). However, these are very specific areas of greenery, whose main function is the place of a decent burial of the deceased and therefore a funeral function. Only after fulfilling its basic role can we speak about their other functions, such as: social, cultural, recreational, ecological, natural, scientific and many others. As a kind of public green areas in the city, passive rest areas, these objects should, like parks and green areas, be equipped with the appropriate infrastructure enabling such use. In addition to functional issues, the quality of the landscape and the aesthetic value of these places are equally important. The objective of the research is to present the landscape of modern cemeteries in Szczecin along with the analysis of the reasons for their shaping. On the basis of research and analyzes, the authors formulate their own proposals as to the possibility of improving the quality of cemeteries' landscapes. The research areas are the six active municipal cemeteries in Szczecin. For the present work we adopted research methods that will enable us explaining the reasons for the present appearance of cemeteries. The characteristics of the current state and landscape features of active cemeteries in Szczecin were described on the basis of visits to the sites. Then, the analysis of the relevant literature and documentation made it possible to elaborate an outline of the history of individual cemeteries in Szczecin, which aims to determine to what extent the genesis of individual objects has an impact on the diversity or similarity of their landscapes. In addition, the analysis of the regulations of municipal cemeteries in Szczecin showed the possibilities and limitations of the users of cemeteries and how much they are able to individually influence their appearance [2]. At the end, an analysis of the legal norms applicable to the shaping of cemeteries in Poland was carried out. The conclusions, based on the results of the above analyzes as well as our own observations and observations, served to formulate recommendations by the authors as to the shaping and ways of using these objects.

2. Landscape of municipal cemeteries in Szczecin

In Szczecin, with an area of 300 km^2 and the population reaching almost 405 thousand [3], there are currently six active municipal cemeteries within the administrative boundaries. These are the Central Cemetery, the West Cemetery located in the left-bank part of the city and the cemeteries in Dąbie, Zdroje, Płonia and Wielgów, located in the district of Prawobrzeże. The total area of cemeteries is approximately 204.62 ha. Important information about cemeteries is presented in Table No. 1 below.

Table 1. List of more important information about active municipal cemeteries in Szczecin [4] (elaborated by A. Pilarczyk)

Municipal cemetery in Szczecin	Address	Area (ha)	Opening	Chapels, crematories	Columbarium
1. Central Cemetery	ul. Ku Słońcu	172.33	1901	an active chapel and crematorium, a destroyed modernist chapel	is
2. West Cemetery	ul. Bronowicka	17.00	2013	none	is
3. Dąbie cemetery	ul. Goleniowska	8.36	1930	destroyed chapel	none
4. Zdroje cemetery	ul. Poległych	3.39	Second half of the 19th century.	destroyed chapel	none
5. Płonia cemetery	ul. Ceramiczna	2.27	First half of the 19th century.	destroyed chapel	none
6. Wielgowo cemetery	ul. Urodzajna	1.27	1888	none	none

For all cemeteries in Szczecin, the decisive point for changes in their shaping is 1945. Due to the displacement of the German inhabitants of Szczecin and the lack of people who could deal with graves and cemeteries, they were neglected. Initially, new residents of the city were buried in free burial

fields, but over time, more than thirty-year-old graves and entire quarters were removed, removing monuments, and in their place a new division and new graves were created. Some of the cemeteries operating until the end of the war were closed; many were liquidated in the 1960-1980's. Pre-war cemeteries filled with new graves and the old ones disappeared from their landscape, like many other cemetery elements.



Figure 1. View of the municipal cemetery in Płonia, Szczecin. (A. Pilarczyk)



Figure 2. Fragment of the municipal cemetery in Wielgowo, Szczecin. (A. Pilarczyk)

Grave objects

The dominant form of tombstones in Polish cemeteries is the horizontal tomb plate with the vertical or cross plate placed on it. The post-war tombstones were mostly made of concrete or terrazzo, i.e. concrete with decorative aggregate, and their shapes were unsophisticated and devoid of decorations (Figure 1). Post-war grave monuments were far from the aesthetics of Protestant tombstones, where only steles, i.e. vertical plates or other vertical grave elements, usually made of non-polished stone, were placed. Nowadays, massive tombstones fill the burial fields tightly. There is usually no space for planting plants around graves. It is difficult to find modern tombstones with artistic values in the cemeteries (Figure 2). Most of the latest gravestones are made of granite polished to high-gloss, and the forms themselves are quite trivial, presenting what stonemason's workshops have in their offer. Necessary decorations of the grave are candles and artificial flowers, especially numerous in the autumn and winter, which does not add dignity to the graves.

Greenery in cemeteries

The observation of active cemeteries in Szczecin shows that in most cases these areas almost entirely occupied by burial grounds, and the percentage of areas of composed decorative greenery is small. The exception is the Central Cemetery where the share of greenery is still quite significant, but definitely smaller than in the past. Apart from that at the Western Cemetery, the area of greenery is still large, because the first cemetery quarters are just being filled.

The characteristic feature of Szczecin cemeteries is their quite numerous high greenery in the form of avenue plantings as well as trees growing among burial fields. However, not all trees were planted, as some trees grew during the period of neglect of the necropolis. Many trees, also valuable species, having survived their years, irretrievably disappeared from the cemeteries. While trees give intimacy to burial fields and beautify space, many grave-keepers report complaints to the administrator about their harmfulness. It is about the need to clean leaves and other plant "impurities", as well as damage that breaking branches and growing roots cause. In addition, greenery in the form of trees and high hedges is assessed by some of the users as a threat, because it reduces visibility. The Central Cemetery has particular compositional qualities, including its plantings. There is a large number of valuable tree species and magnificent avenues (Figure 3). In 2010, a botanical path was marked out here that led to

the most interesting specimens of trees and shrubs in the old part of the necropolis. The new cemetery also has an extensive and varied arrangement of plantings, although the compositional effect is not yet fully visible, because the vegetation is still young (Figure 4).



Figure 3. Plantains alley in the Szczecin Central Cemetery, Szczecin. (A. Pilarczyk)



Figure 4. Urn burial quarter in the Szczecin Western Cemetery (A. Pilarczyk)

Analyzing the planned low plantings, i.e. rebates from bushes, the most are now in the new cemetery, which is to diversify this still quite empty space and encourage burials in this place. Historically there were many beautiful plant arrangements also at the Central Cemetery, in various parts of it. Unfortunately, due to post-war neglect, they are practically invisible today. However, one can find here a great diversity of modern plantings from shrubs and perennials, especially in the newer parts of the Central Cemetery. However, these are not planned plantings, but are carried out individually by grave-keepers. This is particularly evident in the grave units established in the area of the former military training ground in the 1990s (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Private plantings around graves in the Szczecin Central Cemetery (A. Pilarczyk)



Figure 6. Cemetery chapel and a basin fountain in the Szczecin Central Cemetery (A. Pilarczyk)

It is an area very richly planted with shrubs, small trees and perennials. However, while the individual plant arrangements at the graves most often have aesthetic value, the whole unfortunately shows a chaotic grouping of different plantings. In addition, it often happens that inadequately selected plants, expanding their size, block communication paths, and their growing roots raise tombstones.

Since the cemeteries' regulations prohibit arbitrary planting, it is obvious that incorrectly selected plants have been planted here without the approval of the administrator. This type of ornamental planting near the graves can be found at all active cemeteries in Szczecin.

Decorative elements and small architecture

Decorative elements in cemeteries include basin fountains, which can only be found in the Central Cemetery and have a pre-war origin (Figure 6). Unfortunately, not all of them have been renovated and function today. In addition to these basins, the water elements also include wells and pumps. In addition to the few historical ones that have decorative qualities, the others are plain and simple devices with no aesthetic significance. Benches and lighting are only present at the Central Cemetery and Western Cemetery, while at other smaller cemeteries, small architecture elements, such as benches or low fences around the graves, are set individually by grave-keepers, but their forms lack cohesion (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Private benches in the Zdroje municipal cemetery, Szczecin (A. Pilarczyk)



Figure 8. Monument devoted to "Lost Seafarers" Szczecin Central Cemetery (A. Pilarczyk)

Memorial monuments

In the Central Cemetery there are over twenty monuments, crosses, boulders and commemorative plaques most often set after 1989 (Figure 8). The squares in the oldest eastern part of the necropolis proved the most attractive place for exhibiting this type of objects, which on the one hand increased the cultural and social significance of the cemetery, but also contributed to the subsequent change of the old spatial layout of the necropolis. In addition, a relatively large number of German tombstones have survived compared to other pre-war cemeteries. In 1996, there were 149, but it is known that since then many more have been found [5]. Today, they are of historical value and often after the conservation they are set in the lapidarium, or in the former Urn Grove, where today several dozen pre-war tombstones stand, including those found at other cemeteries in Szczecin. Within the Central Cemetery, a historical route was designated, that is a described route showing the most interesting historical objects. On the remaining historical cemeteries, both contemporary memorial monuments and pre-war tombstones are single objects.

Composition layout

The Central Cemetery [6] and especially its oldest, eastern part possess the most outstanding compositional layout. Unfortunately, the historical composition of the cemetery was partially altered. The places where the tombstones were once placed loosely, surrounded by greenery, now have cemetery quarters filled with densely set gravestones. Also, the introduction of memorial monuments changed the former spatial layout of the necropolis. The new West Cemetery also has a varied spatial layout with both more geometrical and free parts. However, because its construction is unfinished, it is difficult to predict what its ultimate shape and nature of landscape will be. The remaining cemeteries

are characterized by a simple and regular arrangement of avenues and burial fields, and only some of the roads kept their tree plantings. The maintenance status of the cemeteries in Zdroje, Płonia and Wielgów is average. They do not have a unique or attractive landscape.

3. Legal regulations in Poland regarding establishing and shaping cemeteries

In Poland there is a legal division of cemeteries into denominational and municipal (secular) cemeteries. The present article only deals with the subject of municipal cemeteries. Due to the limited volume of this text, only the most important legal issues related to shaping of cemeteries will be discussed. The most important legal norms currently in force in Poland, which directly address issues related to cemeteries are the three documents discussed below.

The act of 1959 [7] indicates that cemeteries are designated and enlarged in the areas specified in local zoning plans. The grave cannot be liquidated earlier than 20 years after its foundation and if anyone extends the right to use the grave by paying the fee for the next 20 years, which can be repeated many times.

The issues regarding the selection of the proper area for the construction of the cemetery are regulated by the Ordinance of 1959 [8], which indicates that before establishing the cemetery one should analyze the features and conditions of the area taken into account as the place where burials are located. The following are analyzed: the type of land, the water system of the area, terrain, existing plant complexes. The minimum distance of the cemetery from housing development and other facilities on which the cemetery may have a negative impact is 150 m.

Ordinance of 2008 [9] indicates that cemeteries should be designed and maintained as a park-based area. It is required that the cemetery is surrounded by a permanent fence with a minimum height of 1.5 m. Moreover, in the above regulation, various types of graves and their dimensions and required technical conditions were characterized. It was pointed out that the cemetery, apart from the burial area, should also include the areas intended for: isolating and decorative greenery, roads, walking and pedestrian routes, parking spaces, waste collection areas, toilets, water drawing points (wells), morgue, funeral home, possibly also a chapel and administrative and economic facilities. Passages between the graves should have a width of no less than 50 cm, and the cemetery manager decides about their development.

4. Discussions

It is mostly the burial fields, which occupy the largest area, that decide on the character of cemeteries. As can be seen from the above descriptions, although the active cemeteries in Szczecin differ greatly in their size and composition, their landscape in the most burial fields is relatively homogeneous. Large burial surfaces devoid of plants create a monotonous and depressing impression; in addition, the chaos of the average aesthetic quality of tombstones, closely packed together, creates a landscape of disorder. Therefore, it can be concluded that the current state of cemeteries does not encourage spending more time in cemeteries, apart from the circumstances related to funerals or occasional visits to graves of relatives. From the analyzes and observations of the authors, it appears that the conditions that determined the state of the landscape of cemeteries in Szczecin are complex, the authors divided them into following factors: legal, spatial, historical, economic and cultural. We will discuss them in greater detail below.

The very intensive use of the cemetery area to create burial sites results from several reasons. The spatial factor should be considered the basic one, which very often concerns the observed problem of the lack of new places for burials, for which there is a constant demand. In order to ensure places for the longest possible time, graves and burial fields are closely packed next to each other. In addition, legal conditions allowing extending the existence of graves for subsequent periods of 20 years lead to the need to create new places, because there is no possibility of their re-use. Legal records indicate the minimum distances between graves, although in practice these distances are often even smaller. Spatial factors also include the impossibility to enlarge the area of the cemetery by adjacent areas. The reason for this is most often the existing condition of development and the need to maintain

appropriate protection zones around the cemetery. Economic factor also concerns the inability to enlarge the cemetery with a new area, however for financial reasons. The cost of developing the new area and financing the relevant infrastructure is high, and the cost of maintaining the enlarged space is also substantial. Establishment of new cemeteries is a practice that is quite rare in Poland, and - if possible - avoided by city authorities or municipalities. For example, in Szczecin the Central Cemetery was opened in 1901, and it was enlarged many times, and only when this possibility was exhausted, in 2013 a new municipal cemetery for Szczecin - the West Cemetery was opened. Also the appearance of the graves is partly due to economic factors, when selecting the gravestone the customers of stonemason's workshops adopt an acceptable price as their foremost concern. Therefore, clichéd patterns and modest forms are much more common in cemeteries than tombstones individually designed to order, especially from sculptors and architects. Cultural factors include the issue of choosing the type of burial by an eligible person. In Polish culture, the tradition of earth burials is definitely dominating, and these take up much more space than urn burials. If it is possible to choose the form of a burial, in Poland the burial in the coffin is still more often selected than cremation. In Szczecin, urn burials after the war were possible only after the crematorium was re-opened in 2005. What may encourage the choice of the urn burial outside, of course, personal convictions are its lower cost, although considering the amount for cremation itself, this is still a marginal difference [10]. So the saving lies in the lower price of the urn than the coffin. For younger generations, the urn burial may be associated as rather modern, since cremation of corpses in Western countries is an old and common practice, especially in Protestant countries, although not only, for example, cremation with over 80% of burials is also widespread in the Czech Republic [11]. It should also be added that the Catholic Church, 87.6% of Poles [12] declare the affiliation with, currently does not prohibit the cremation of the faithful, although it encourages traditional burials. In Poland, numerous crematoriums have been growing fast in recent years (in mid-2012 there were only 16 active crematoriums [13] and in 2017 there were already 53 [14]). It can therefore be assumed that the number of urn burials in Poland will increase, which will inevitably translate into the landscape of cemeteries, as columbarium and urn burials will be added, with a different spatial arrangement than in the case of earth graves. Within the cultural factors it is also necessary to take into account the visible social need, or perhaps the tradition, to embellish the graves of those close to the dead by planting them with plants and decorating them with potted plants, cut flowers and artificial flowers. Such actions are an expression of the need to commemorate the deceased and also to provide social confirmation about their memory and attachment. Unfortunately, as already written, there is usually no place for planting burial sites with plants, and planting unsuitable plants causes many problems when they grow. Nevertheless, the need to plant plants at the graves of the dead is a phenomenon worth exploiting and necessary to include in the planning of cemeteries.

In terms of historical factors, a very important specificity of the cemeteries in Szczecin, as well as in the whole area of territories annexed to Poland after 1945, is that there is a lack of centuries-long continuity of burial traditions, as is the case in other regions of Poland. Foreign graves and entire cemeteries in the immigrant population did not find any attention and concern, hence almost complete liquidation of tombstones and monuments of former residents, regardless of their artistic and cultural values. Occasionally, tombstones older than seventy years old can be found in cemeteries in Szczecin, not to mention those that have artistic values. Wishing that, as before the war, the cemetery would be a place where art meets the beauty of nature, it would be worth creating suitable conditions for it. For example, pre-war Szczecin hosted exhibitions of sepulchral art, presenting aesthetic examples of tombstones. This tradition is still alive in Germany, as exhibitions of the Bundesgartenschau BUGA and Internationale Gartenbauausstellung IGA show so-called reference cemeteries with various modern forms of tombstones and with accompanying aesthetic plant arrangements.

5. Conclusions

In the previous parts of the article we characterized the landscape of cemeteries in Szczecin. The Discussion chapter indicated the causes and conditions that have already influenced or continue to

affect the appearance of these spaces. In this part of the work, the authors propose changes that could be taken into account by the City Authorities and the administrator of cemeteries, which may translate into an improvement in the quality of space, including their appearance. Above all, cemeteries should be an attractive area for visitors, a place of rest and walks. It is not possible to achieve this without well-maintained greenery and appropriate small architecture. Changes in the spatial layout would refer to the designation of decorative green areas and belts properly maintained by the administrator. There should be rebates and flowerbeds that are best designed by a landscape architect, in the representative locations. In addition, there should be an effort to improve the quality of cemetery space thanks to individually planted greenery, however, to make it possible to design it distances between the individual graves should be larger. Thanks to this the plants planted will have sufficient space for development and it will be possible to create interesting plant arrangements. Therefore, we could create special garden quarters, which would by ruled by separate regulations. Thanks to the care of greenery by private individuals the cemetery can become a kind of botanical garden and a beautiful place for visitors in a short time.

Another way to improve the quality of cemetery space may be by educating the community and promoting good traditions and practices. Because not everyone knows about plants, although may still want to grow them, we could create appropriate publications as well as websites on how to decorate graves with plants. In addition, it's worth coming back to organizing cemetery exhibitions, where original and good examples of tombstones could be presented, including sculptural works, as well as the aesthetic possibilities of decorating graves with plants other than artificial flowers. Extended cemetery regulations could regulate what appearance not only the tombstones may have, but also benches, fences or other elements of small architecture that are set individually by grave-keepers. The assessment of the objects proposed for the setting by private persons should be carried out by a person specially prepared for this function.

Municipal cemeteries are, by definition, devoid of religious symbolism because both the religious and atheist deceased may be buried there. Currently, the ritual on the graves of the faithful is held directly at the grave of the deceased. Despite this, cemeteries should have a certain universal symbolism associated with death, transience and eternity, because it is a place culturally marked by such aspects. Plant symbolism is the least intrusive in this respect, so it is recommended that cemeteries, including municipal ones, use plants with symbolic meaning, which will enrich the cultural sphere of cemeteries. In addition in the new Szczecin necropolis there is a possibility of creation of religious quarters, which could have symbols appropriate for a given denomination or religion, as well as grave monuments with traditional forms that are characteristic for a given cultural circle.

In Szczecin we find the most possibilities for a good shaping in case of the new Western Cemetery, as it is only gradually created today. It is worth not to repeat the problems that are visible in other cemeteries today. The burial fields should not be too large, so that they do not give the impression of being overwhelmed by the number of graves and do not create a depressing impression. Avenue plantings should appear between the quarters, but at such a distance that falling branches would not threaten the tombstones. One should rather give up the trees between the graves. It would be necessary to create various types of quarters, where the cemetery regulations would indicate how to manage the grave and the space next to it. In the respective quarters certain unification of tombstones should apply. Regulations should indicate the dimensions of tombstones, material from which they can be made, information on finishing and decorating. This will reduce the chaos among the emerging tombstones and will positively affect the visual reception of space. Conclusions should also be drawn from the changes in the compositional layout caused by setting of memorial monuments at the Central Cemetery. Therefore, today it is necessary to plan locations in the Western Cemetery where in the future these objects could be properly exposed. To this end, we should cooperate with a landscape architect, who will be able to predict both visual and functional effects of such decisions. As part of the development of further parts of the cemetery, plans for building a chapel or erecting memorial monuments, it is worth taking advantage of the opportunities offered by prestigious international

competitions. It seems that the winning projects selected in this way would best reflect the prevailing tendencies in shaping such developments and objects. The design solution should be very carefully thought out and unique in its form because the newly founded cemetery will function and influence through its aesthetics for decades to come. It should therefore become a special object, recognizable for the city, just like the historic Central Cemetery.

In addition, it is worth expanding Polish legal provisions with issues related to the harmony of space and the aesthetics of cemeteries. It is worth establishing a minimum percentage share of decorated green areas in relation to the total cemetery area. It should be demanded that the greenery should not be limited to lawns only, and that the avenues are reasonably planted with trees. Currently, there is a lack of supervision over cemeteries, especially in terms of their appearance, so such top-down supervision should be exercised. Since cemeteries are public green areas landscape architects should participate in the design of cemeteries and their new parts, and the infrastructure of the cemetery should allow passive rest to visitors.

The fulfilment of these proposals would certainly translate into an improvement in the quality of municipal cemeteries. These areas would become more visually appealing and would receive an atmosphere that is suitable for them, which would encourage visiting them not only to see relatives' graves, but also to spend time in a nice and interesting space.

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