

# URBAN PARK AS A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT'S LABORATORY; THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN EDUCATION AND POPULARIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL SOCIAL DEMANDS

*Jan Łukaszkiwicz, Beata Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz, Andrzej Długoński, Piotr Wiśniewski*  
*Department of Landscape Architecture, Warsaw University of Life Sciences-SGGW, Nowoursynowska*  
*159, 02-776 Warsaw, Poland*

<https://doi.org/10.11118/978-80-7509-963-1-0359>

## Abstract

For the past five years, the Warsaw University of Life Sciences—SGGW has been hosting popular science tours, offering a unique opportunity to explore Warsaw's parks through the eyes of landscape architects who are both scientists and practitioners. These tours are not just educational outings; they are immersive experiences that allow participants to see the parks in a new light. Each walk is led by a team of tour guides, the landscape architect, and the dendrologist, who deeply understand parks' design principles and maintenance issues. The dynamic interactions between guides and participants foster community and active engagement in preserving and appreciating the city's park spaces. During each walk, the unique features of the selected park's composition are highlighted, and noteworthy tree and shrub species are identified, emphasizing their unique characteristics and historical significance. Tours are thoughtfully scheduled on non-working days (Sundays) to ensure better public access and a non-profit open walk format is used. The 2024 walks, planned for May, June, and July, introduce two new routes connecting exciting locations, such as the Gardens of the Royal Castle, Vistula Boulevards, and the University of Warsaw Library, enhancing the program's dynamism. The experience gathered from past years allows us to continually improve the idea, making it more accessible and enjoyable for all (e.g. video-relations). This publication is intended to present the implementation and the social meaning of landscape walks in urban parks and gardens.

**Keywords:** dendroflora, landscape architecture, open social education, spatial composition, urban parks and gardens, trees

## Introduction

Landscape is not just a physical space but a concept observed and experienced with many senses. It plays a crucial role in the quality of social life, shaping our experiences and interactions. The European Landscape Convention recognizes this, treating landscape as an essential element of people's lives everywhere: in cities and villages, in degraded and common areas, as well as in areas of exceptional beauty - therefore, it covers the entire territory of Europe [Europe Landscape Convention. On-line]<sup>9</sup>. In October 2023, at the initiative of Poland, International Landscape Day was celebrated for the seventh time. This holiday reflects on the condition of the places we live. It raises awareness of the need to appreciate and protect the space around us [International Landscape Day of the Council of Europe. On-line]<sup>10</sup>.

Landscape is the subject of research in the scientific discipline of landscape architecture. It is a vast, interdisciplinary field combining natural sciences, agriculture, humanities, technology and art. Historically, contemporary landscape architecture was born at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries with the development of modern theories in urban planning (e.g. Howard, 1902; Le Corbusier, 1923;

---

<sup>9</sup>The Europe Landscape Convention was drawn up in Florence on October 20, 2000. The Europe Landscape Convention was drawn up in Florence on October 20, 2000. It is part of the Council of Europe's activities to protect natural and cultural heritage, as well as spatial planning and environmental management. The Convention was ratified by Poland on September 27, 2004, and entered into force on January 1, 2005. The primary objective of the Convention is to promote protection, management, and landscape planning, as well as to organize European cooperation in this area based on the exchange of experiences and specialists and the creation of good landscape practices.

<sup>10</sup>The Council of Europe established the **International Landscape Day of the Council of Europe** on the initiative of Poland, specifically the Polish General Directorate for Environmental Protection (GDOŚ). It is celebrated on October 20 to commemorate the signing of the European Landscape Convention. Landscape Day aims to build public awareness of exemplary landscape practices and inspire various entities to take action to ensure the highest quality of landscapes - urban, agricultural or natural.

Tolwiński, 1937, 1939, 1963; Lynch, 1960; Schultz, 1971) in many countries around the world - especially in the USA and Europe. The pioneer of this versatile field and the author of its very name (landscape architecture) was Frederick Law Olmsted, an outstanding park designer in the USA in the second half of the 19th century (e.g. Central Park, New York, USA).

The emergence of Polish landscape architecture in the interwar period of the 20th century is related explicitly to the rebirth of the Polish State after a long period of 123 years of partition (Poland regained independence in November 1918) and the great need to have specialists professionally dealing with the native landscape - urbanized and open - often neglected and even devastated by the predatory economy of the invaders. Polish landscape architecture, initially called park science, grew out of the centuries-old tradition of planning gardens and parks cultivated in Poland - places intended for relaxation and contemplation of natural beauty. WULS-SGGW in Warsaw has become a precursor of teaching at the higher level and educating students of this profession. It should be mentioned that the Landscape Architecture course at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences (currently at the Institute of Environmental Engineering of the Warsaw University of Life Sciences) is the oldest centre for educating landscape architects at the higher level in Poland and the third in Europe - it has been operating continuously for over 90 years! [Łukaszkiwicz et al. 2019a, 2019b].

The Warsaw School of Landscape Architecture profile was shaped by several generations of outstanding artists who contributed to the development of landscape architecture in our country. These undisputed personalities left behind several excellent projects (parks, gardens, etc.) representing the highest standards. These facilities still function today, effectively enriching the landscape and urban natural systems. In turn, their numerous theoretical studies constitute the foundation for further investigations within the discipline of landscape architecture [Łukaszkiwicz et al. 2019a, 2019b].

**Parks and gardens** are an essential part of city landscapes- their natural values significantly impact the quality of the urban environment [Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz 2019, Łukaszkiwicz 2019]. Without a doubt, the order, beauty and harmony of park spaces positively impact the development of social attitudes [Madden 2021, Murray 2021]. Bearing the above in mind, landscape architects - scientists and practitioners from the Department of Landscape Architecture at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences - for five years (2019) have been popularizing knowledge about Warsaw's parks and gardens through tours - open walks for all interested. So far, they have been carried out as part of, for example, the Warsaw Science Festival, the European Landscape Day or a thematic series organized by the Polish Dendrological Society. The aim of outdoor meetings in selected locations in Warsaw is to popularize science - dissemination of knowledge, promotion of social attitudes, raising sensitivity, etc. in shaping parks and city gardens as "laboratories of landscape architects". In 2024, a series of walks disseminating knowledge about shaping the space of parks and urban gardens will be implemented as part of a project financed by the Polish Ministry of Education and Science entitled "Popularization of Science".

### Goals and Methods

The project conducted in 2024 entitled "Shaping parks and urban greenery in the historical context and current social needs" (no. POPUL/SP/0272/2023/01) is a continuation and synthesis of the previous activities of landscape architects from WULS-SGGW, included under the working title "Urban park as a landscape architect's laboratory. The project received the patronage of the Polish Dendrological Society (PTD) and the Association of Polish Architects (SARP). The main idea of the project is the social popularization of the art of parks and gardens carried out in the form of a series of walks in May, June and July 2024 in selected facilities in Warsaw and Mazovia and their presentation through the prism of the achievements of the so-called Warsaw School of Landscape Architecture SGGW.

Walks conducted at convenient times (e.g. Sundays) will allow guides to interact directly with the participants. Each time, thematic threads regarding garden art, dendrology and contemporary environmental challenges will be discussed. The meetings will be conducted so that their topics are tailored to the needs and perceptions of the participants. The goals we want to achieve through the walks with lectures formula are:

1. education, promotion of knowledge about the history of buildings and the city, landscape composition and good-quality space;
2. developing sensitivity to the beauty of nature;
3. popularizing what a park is in urban space, indicating good patterns and how to shape greenery in the city; what urban greenery looks like when it is properly composed, carefully

selected, properly arranged, adequately cared for and protected against the impact of unfavourable urban conditions;

4. promoting the achievements of graduates and employees (designers and scientists) related to the Landscape Architecture of SGGW, with emphasis on their achievements (shaping and protecting urban greenery, designing parks, revalorization of historic buildings, etc.);
5. influencing the natural and social sensitivity of the participants of the walks so that, over time, they will skillfully evaluate the actions of local governments in the field of a better visual city landscape, which should provide people with balanced living conditions in the mental and health sphere.

The dissemination of information about the project is based on digital accessibility. Each time, informing participants and disseminating knowledge about the project will be carried out via the website "[www.parkoznawstwo.sggw.edu.pl](http://www.parkoznawstwo.sggw.edu.pl)" established for this purpose. The website will be compatible and functional. It will have a defined language, consistent navigation, identification, more straightforward text perception and appropriately adapted content presentation. An FB account will be supplementary in informing public opinion about the project with the same name and announcements on local media portals.

The walks will be open to anyone interested - without registration. Previous experience shows that to enable the participation of as many participants as possible, the days of excursions should be Sundays in May, June and July at noon, and the optimal duration of each walk should be approximately 2 hours. The formula of the walks is so flexible that it can be easily adapted to the needs of different people (including disabled people, seniors, and children). Therefore, meeting points will be designated near public transport stops. Moreover, for better recognition and communication, lecturers and all colleagues will be appropriately marked (e.g. badges, reflective shirts, etc.), and a portable sound system will be provided during walks. The walks will run along selected routes to best present the specificity of selected landscape architecture objects.

## Results and Conclusions

Our experience indicates an apparent social demand for education on shaping the space of urban parks and gardens and the resulting popularity of such a formula for transmitting knowledge about landscape architecture. Previous events held in 2019 - 2023 were attended by over 60 people each time, up to a maximum of approximately 120, which indicates significant interest in the topic regardless of the weather conditions [figures 1. - 4.].

By default, each trip is led by two experts: **a landscape architect and a dendrologist**. The landscape architect presents, among others, observed greenery arrangements, principles of composing spatial forms, sequences of interiors and viewing openings. Its task is to present interesting facts about specific parks - typically "workshop" - and historical ones, e.g. stylistic trends in particular eras. Field meetings facilitate the presentation of the essential elements of the park program, and the principles of spatial composition are discussed using visible examples. Issues covered include shaping scenery and views, park interiors and plant arrangements, and achieving specific moods, which helps create the local identity of the place.

Without a doubt, the main component of the park's composition is vegetation, especially lush trees. Beautiful trees largely determine the attractiveness of city parks and gardens, which enable effective recreation for city residents. Since each garden work achieves its full artistic and functional effects only after many years (specificity of vegetation development), special attention will be devoted to this issue in order to show the specificity of the park as opposed to works of architecture - as a delicate and dynamic system changing in time. Therefore, the task of the dendrologist expert is to present dendroflora (trees, shrubs, vines), morphological features of woody plants, their decorative values, habitat preferences, life cycle and possibilities of use in various urban conditions (e.g. parks, streets and others). Selected examples of ancient trees - witnesses of history growing in a given place for many years - will also be highlighted.

During the walks, landscape architects and dendrologists share their professional knowledge and experience in shaping landscape architecture objects in cities, explaining the essence of a city park and its traditional and contemporary functions. Indeed, the initiative of landscape and dendrological walks in parks and gardens in Warsaw helps to increase social sensitivity to landscape, beauty, and harmony of space and vegetation, which are the primary materials of landscape architecture objects. In this way, the activities carried out by landscape architects from SGGW-WULS fit into the idea of popularizing the Landscape Convention and the European Landscape Day.



Fig. 1: The participants of the landscape-dendrological walk passed through a big open interior in Pole Mokotowskie Park, Warsaw, Poland. Sunday, September 05<sup>th</sup>, 2021. [photo. J. Łukasziewicz].



Fig. 2: Numerous participants in the landscape-dendrological walk in Skaryszewski Park, Warsaw, Poland. Sunday, September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021. A vast white poplar (*Populus alba* L.) visible in the front [photo. J. Łukasziewicz].



Fig. 3: The group of ca. 120 participants gathered on the pond's bank during the landscape-dendrological walk in Ujazdowski Park, Warsaw, Poland. Sunday, October 03<sup>th</sup>, 2021. [photo. P. Wiśniewski].





Fig. 4: During walks many participants - amateurs of dendrology - keep notes, make sketches or collect leaves to learn new interesting facts about trees. In front a leaf of Warsaw linden (*Tilia tomentosa* 'Varsiaviensis'). The landscape-dendrological walk in Warsaw's Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły Park. Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021 [photo. E. Žak].

## References

- Europe Landscape Convention. On-line: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape> [access: 12/04/2024]
- Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz, B. (2019). Vegetation in spatial composition: heritage values and preservation. SGGW Publishing House, Warsaw 2019. ISBN 9788375838572
- International Landscape Day of the Council of Europe. On-line: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/international-landscape-day#:~:text=The%20International%20Landscape%20Day%20of,Europe%20Landscape%20Convention%20for%20signature> [access: 12/04/2024]
- Madden, K., How to Turn a Place Around: A Placemaking Handbook. Publisher: Project for Public Spaces, Inc 2021 ISBN 978-0692137703
- Murray R. (ed). (2021). Why Cities Need Large Parks: Large Parks in Large Cities. 2021. Routledge ISBN 978-1032072937
- Project MEIN [Ministry of Education and Science] "Shaping parks and urban greenery in the historical context and current social needs" (No. POPUL/SP/0272/2023/01). On-line: [www.parkoznawstwo.sggw.edu.pl](http://www.parkoznawstwo.sggw.edu.pl)
- Łukaszewicz, J., Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz, B., & Roślon-Szeryńska, E. (2019a). Ursynów school of landscape architecture - masters and their work Part 1. Acta Scientiarum Polonorum. Series: Architectura, 18(1), 133-146 DOI:10.22630/ASPA.2019.18.1.15
- Łukaszewicz, J., Fortuna-Antoszkiewicz, B., Roślon-Szeryńska, E., & Bartman, Z. (2019b). Ursynów school of landscape architecture – masters and their work Part 2. Acta Scientiarum Polonorum. Series: Architectura, 18(2), 125–138 DOI: 10.22630/ASPA.2019.18.2.29
- Łukaszewicz, J. (2019). Tree plantings in the city landscape: selected aspects of shaping structure and function. SGGW Publishing House, Warsaw 2019. ISBN 978-83-7583-858-9

## Souhrn

Projekt "Utváření parků a městské zeleně v historickém kontextu a současných společenských potřebách" (č. POPUL/SP/0272/2023/01) realizovaný lektory SGGW je zaměřen na setkání obyvatel Varšavy s uměním parků a zahrad. Průvodci světem vytvořené krajiny jsou krajinářští architekti a dendrologové. Jedná se o sérii přednášek vedených v terénu, tj. ve speciálně vybraných parcích a zahradách ve Varšavě a na Mazovsku, které ilustrují vývoj stylu utváření parkového prostoru. Každou procházku povedou společně krajinářský architekt a dendrolog, kteří se dělí o znalosti a respekt k přírodě.

Ideou projektu je společenská popularizace umění parků a zahrad prováděná formou série procházek po vybraných objektech krajinářské architektury ve Varšavě a Mazovsku a jejich prezentace prizmatem úspěchů tzv. varšavské školy krajinářské architektury SGGW. Procházky ve vhodnou dobu (např. v neděli) umožní vedoucím přímou interakci s jejich účastníky. Během terénních vycházek budeme vždy diskutovat o zajímavých tématech týkajících se krajinářské architektury, dendrologie a

současných environmentálních výzev. Setkání budou vedena tak, aby jejich témata byla společensky zajímavá a přizpůsobená potřebám a vnímání účastníků.

**Contact:**

Jan Łukaszkiwicz

E-mail: [jan\\_lukaszkiwicz@sggw.edu.pl](mailto:jan_lukaszkiwicz@sggw.edu.pl)

Open Access. This article is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, CC-BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

