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The Culture Zone in Katowice and its qualities as a public space

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Abstract

A city's public spaces ought to meet a number of requirements to serve their main purpose, that is to foster public life. They need, for instance, to answer people's needs, fulfil certain social functions, and let people use their basic rights, among them the most important right of access. In Katowice, one of the most prominent examples of the regeneration of public spaces is now the Culture Zone. The aim of this paper is to discuss the development of social functions in the area mentioned, a fine example of the post-industrial heritage of Upper Silesia. Applying some of the qualities of public space identified in the theories adopted, the paper discusses how the Culture Zone [in Polish: Strefa Kultury] fulfils the above-mentioned demands and requirements. Is it accessible? Does it meet the need for comfort? Does it function as a leisure space? By referring to analyses and opinions presented in the literature and comparing them with the results of the author's own empirical research, this article discusses the importance, opportunities, and shortcomings of the Culture Zone as a public space.

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Introduction: the origins of the author's own research

The paper presents a fraction of the findings from the research conducted as an empirical part of the author's upcoming doctoral dissertation, which is dedicated to the transformation of public spaces in the centre of Katowice. Katowice is a post-industrial city, situated in the Upper Silesia region of southern Poland. The city is a centre of the Upper-Silesian Coal Basin and Upper-Silesian Metropolitan Area, comprising 5.3 million people. The city is the heart of one of the largest conurbations in Europe, and the largest in Poland. In 2017 Katowice and 40 other towns and cities from the region united in what is today called the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia and the Dabrowa Basin [in Polish: Górnośląsko-Zagłębiowska Metropolia – GZM], a body with its own government with its seat in Katowice. It was clear that the metropolitan ambitions of Katowice would sooner or later trigger profound changes in the fabric of the city. The process of change began much earlier with the restoration of social functions to Mariacka Street, followed by creating totally new spaces in the very core of the city and new investments, such as rebuilding the main railway station and erecting a couple of shopping malls. As poorly as it may testify to the city authorities' understanding of what fostering urban life should be about, there is no doubt that the perception of Katowice has immeasurably changed. The main works in the area of main market square were eventually finished in 2015 and based on the fact, that the last research carried out in the public spaces in Katowice was conducted during the time the centre was still 'under construction' (Smagacz-Poziemska 2015), the author decided to determine how the 'new' centre is perceived by its users and what patterns of usage they established during its first two years of operation.

The study lasted from March to June 2017 and took the form of standardised interviews with a sample of 220 users of the centre of Katowice who study, work, and spend their leisure time in these spaces. The sample was selected on a targeted and convenience basis, depending on the accessibility of respondents, with half of the sample consisting of women and half of men, and with equal representation of Katowice residents and non-residents. The sample was also divided into 5 age categories, the question of education appearing as well. From May to August of the same year, non-standardised observations were also conducted in Katowice's market square, shopping malls and in the Culture Zone, and a dozen or so additional free-form interviews were conducted with the people encountered there. Later stages of the research used the method of unstructured observation, which allowed the author to broaden the context of social practice among the city centre's

public spaces – that is the Flower Square, the Culture Zone and the main shopping centre, Katowice Shopping Mall [Galeria Katowicka]. The idea was to confront the person with the space of the city in order to be sure they give an immediate and true opinion. The final strand of the research was about confronting the 'experts' – journalists, city activists, architects, urbanists and art historians, with the results from the quantitative part of the research. They were also asked to give an opinion on the city centre changes from their professional point of view.

The study was aimed at gathering an understanding of how the new centre of Katowice is perceived, how its transformations are evaluated, and what patterns of use of this space have emerged so far. The author's incorporation of the Zone spaces into the study resulted from some critical opinions about its planning shortcomings, such as excessive separation from the centre of Katowice or its mono-functionality. This attempt was also a certain necessity implied by adopting a socio-spatial perspective in planning the research. The clue is that 'the sense of individual spaces is shaped in relation to other spaces' (Smagacz-Poziemska 2015: 31) since 'nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences' (Lynch 1960: 1). The conclusion that follows is that the 'new' centre of Katowice should be perceived by reference to the 'old' centre, in its form before the transformation of the market square, and by reference to certain sub-spaces: shopping malls, which were for a long time a natural substitute for the city centre (Nawrocki 2011: 251). It was also necessary to take into account a completely new segment, namely the Culture Zone itself. Therefore, an attempt was made to check to what extent the Culture Zone is perceived as an element of city space by the users of the centre of Katowice.

Culture in the city fabric – a ready recipe for change?

Upper Silesia draws on its industrial tradition in a variety of ways. In recent years, Katowice has been doing this by means of modern and technologically advanced cultural institutions, namely the Polish Radio National Symphony Orchestra [in Polish: Narodowa Orkiestra Symfoniczna Polskiego Radia – NOSPR] and the Silesian Museum. The two complexes of buildings were created on the site of the former 'Katowice' mine and, in part, they adapt for new purposes the remnants of architecture dating back to the magnificence of the industrial era, including the iconic 'Warszawa' mine winding tower, which is part of the Culture Zone together with the 'Spodek' Sports Arena and the International Congress Centre (ICC). The whole cluster has recently been completed with the construction of one of the .KAT office towers, and the development of a housing estate is about to commence in the immediate vicinity (Fig. 1).

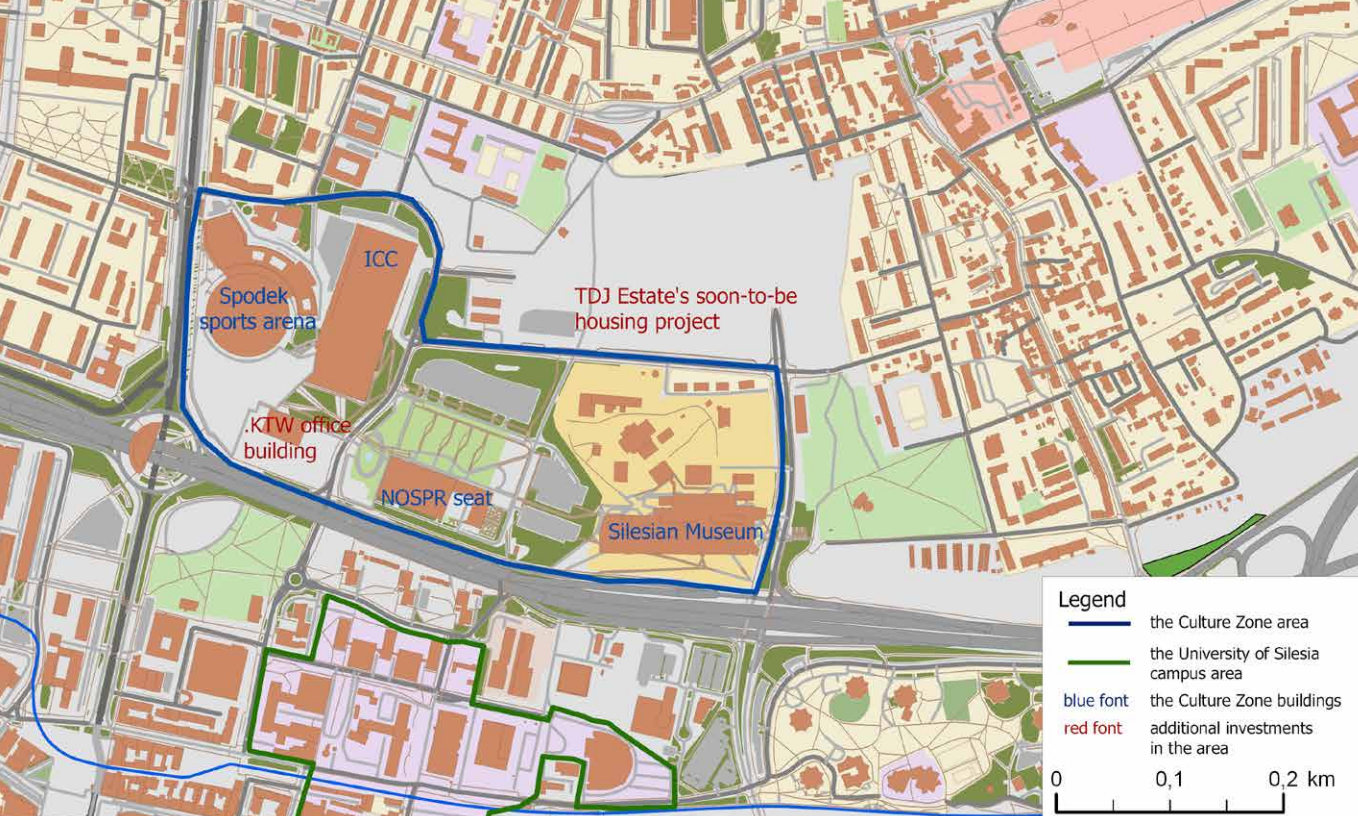


FIGURE 1
The Culture Zone area and its neighbourhood
Source: own design, cartography: Open Street Map

The Culture Zone lies in the northern part of Katowice downtown, bordering the Koszutka and Bogucice districts. The 'Katowice' coal mine closed in 1999 and from then on the future Zone was a typical example of a brownfield area, waiting to be reused and given completely new functions, among them social ones. This finally happened 15 years later with the launching of new investments between the years 2014 and 2015.

There seems to be a consensus in the literature that culture is both a means to and an end of policies designed to refresh the image of a city and promote it among other cities and regions (Kong 2000; Bianchini 1999). As K. Bizio (2010: 18) observes, 'activation through culture and art is understood as one of the instruments that can be used while carrying out regeneration work'. The links between culture and transformation of the urban structure can be traced back to the crisis of the modernist city of the 1960s and 1970s, and the switch to the postmodern paradigm. At the time, the postulate of 'breaking' with the past was replaced by efforts to save historical urban tissue (Bizio 2010).

A. Sobala-Gwosdz and K. Gwosdz (2017) put forward the Culture Zone as an example of a flagship project. As J. Temelová (2007: 171, after: Sobala-Gwosdz & Gwosdz 2017: 28) wrote, 'such schemes hold the potential to impact outside themselves and thus influence the surrounding environment'. The 'flagship' term suggests that they should serve as a kind of 'locomotive' that could trigger new social functions and qualities into areas in the vicinity of transformed sites. That most certainly was the ambition of the Culture Zone project. The Culture Zone investment could be placed in what F. Bianchini (1999) called the 'Age of City-Marketing' and L. Kong (2000) a period of 'cultural economic policy'. The main defining characteristics are (Kong 2000: 387, after: García 2004: 315):

- growing investments in the infrastructure needed for cultural production and the planning of cultural districts;
- 'flagship' arts developments and high-profile events in the inner city, referring to heritage;
- investment in public art and the revival of urban public spaces;
- the development of public-private partnerships.

The above mark a significant shift from understanding culture as a social matter to its economic potential and can be almost directly linked to the context in which the Culture Zone developed.

Around the countries of Europe, the re-formulation of local identities also proceeds thanks to the European Capital of Culture competition, not, however, without some problems arising from the fact that municipalities have difficulty in applying coherent urban policies (García

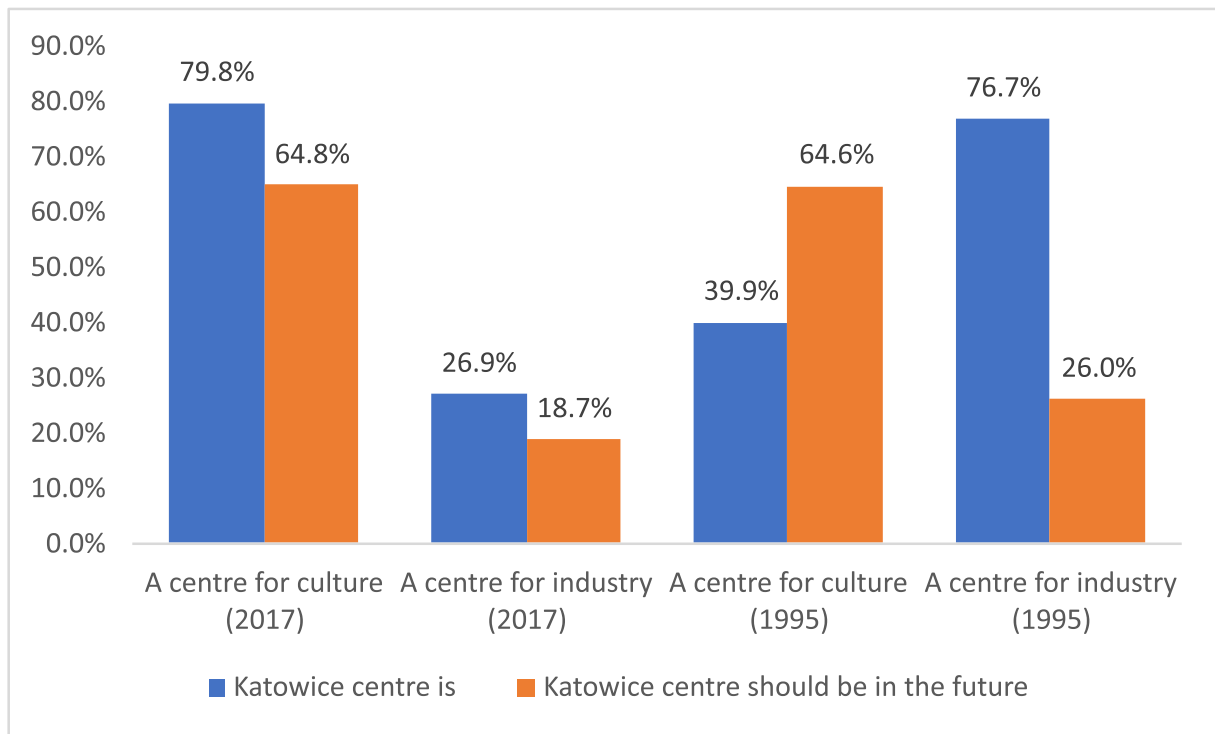


FIGURE 2
Industrial and cultural functions of Katowice centre – a comparison
Source: for 2017 – own study (N valid: a centre for culture = 218; a centre for industry = 212), Katowice centre is’ comprises three dimensions of a positive statement – rather is, is, definitely is; for 1995 – A. Bartoszek, L. A. Gruszczyński, M. S. Szczepański (1997: 56)

2004). Katowice never earned the title, however there are opinions suggesting that the very act of competing was enough to ignite profound changes – most importantly, in people’s mentality (Nawrocki 2015).

Currently, art-related activities and investing in the headquarters of cultural institutions are among the key axes for developing modern cities. They are based on the use of existing resources – historic architecture and urban layouts – and the creation of new bodies – museums, concert halls or modern art installations in the public space (Nyka & Szczepański 2010: 7). Around Europe it is common for former industrial functions to be superseded with cultural ones. Katowice is here no exception, but one of most prominent examples. Over twenty years ago, Katowice sociologists asked the city’s residents about its current and desired functions. The industrial function has been pointed out rather frequently, leaving culture well in the background, however the researchers noted a strong wish that one day culture would be one of the city’s primary functions.

When the author was conducting his own research in spring 2017, the views turned out to be almost completely reversed (Fig. 2). Now serving as a cultural centre is one of main functions of Katowice centre, right behind the trade and communicational node. It seems obvious that the new function fosters and triggers hallmark cultural investments.

As M. Dymnicka (2013: 146) states, in recent years the space for culture has ‘gone beyond its contexts’, resulting in the creation of interesting architectural projects which create opportunities to remind residents about rejected city areas. On the other hand, they pose a challenge in terms of how to properly assign new functions and meanings to a place with all its specificities. K. Bizio (2010: 48–49) distinguishes three types of cultural sites within the city fabric:

- landmark buildings, which are a continuation of the *white cube* concept. Today, this model ‘places architecture in the context of popular culture, where it is treated as a media product’;
- the ‘cultural centre’ model, which evolved at the time of the predominance of the modernist paradigm – here art mainly played an educational role and was a means for ensuring equal opportunities;
- alternative space, in which art functions in a redefined public space and which results from the transformation of an industrial city into a post-industrial one and from the evolution of art itself, which seeks for itself new, alternative channels of presentation.

In Katowice, the first and third models are both represented by the buildings of the Culture Zone, as well as by the Centre of Scientific Information and Academic Library [Centrum Informacji Naukowej i Biblioteka Akademicka – CINI BA]. The third model, namely alternative space, is also used by public art, as is seen in one of the shopping malls in Katowice, which makes its space available for the needs of theatre performances. The second one, however interesting, is not the issue to be discussed here.

At present, the Katowice authorities plan regeneration activities on the basis of the *Local Regeneration Programme of the City of Katowice for the years 2016–2022*, which was updated in 2017 (Rada Miasta Katowice 2017). In a sense, the creation of the Zone also fits in the wider policy of ‘regeneration through culture’. However, specialists point out that regeneration tends to be confused with reclamation, adaptation, or conservation, and the way it is carried out is often far from ideas of perfection. As P. Langer (2014: 59–63) notes, the term ‘regeneration’ is often used in reference to the adaptation of old infrastructure contrary to the spirit of the respective place or in a way that is not completely proper. For example, the author would like to draw attention here to the risk of falsification of identity in the course of the reconstruction of former mine buildings and structures. How then should the concept of regeneration be understood? According to A. Majer (2014: 59), regeneration is a ‘series of urban and planning activities coordinated by the local state administration or local government, aimed at social, architectural, planning and economically beneficial transformation of a city district or other designated city area affected by a crisis as a result of economic or social factors’. However, it should be clearly emphasised that regeneration, understood as ‘revival’, covers various layers – ‘construction activities are the key component of regeneration, but they cannot substitute for it (...)’ (Majer 2014: 59). M. Pirveli (2011: 94) even claims that regeneration in the full sense of the word cannot happen without the process being socialised. This dimension is stressed in the definition of regeneration included in the Polish Regeneration Act, according to which regeneration is a ‘process whereby degraded areas are reclaimed in a comprehensive manner through integrated and territorially concentrated actions benefiting the local community, space and the economy (...)’ (*Ustawa z dnia 9 października 2015 o rewitalizacji: art. 2 sec. 1*). The second chapter of the Act explicitly refers to public participation in the regeneration process by mentioning the participation of stakeholders in public consultations and in the work of regeneration committees. In the light of the above considerations, regeneration should essentially

be defined as the multifaceted transformation of an entire area, which – as should be emphasised – may lead to a change in its importance and function. While reviewing literature related to regeneration, J. Parysek also draws attention to the link between regeneration and associated phenomena, such as reclamation and gentrification. The author argues that although they should not be treated interchangeably or synonymously, in practice, these phenomena are inseparable from each other in the context of urban life (Parysek 2016: 6–7). The social dimension is also emphasised in the same context, and the cited author stresses that ‘society-wide effects (benefiting the city and its residents) can only be achieved by a kind of regeneration that approaches a degraded area holistically, meaning in such a manner as to comprise one comprehensive project’ (Parysek 2016: 7). Thus, according to the ‘principles’ proposed there, even though the socialisation of regeneration processes is a necessary condition, such types of activity should not be treated as the only tool for reversing unfavourable trends or solving social problems. It should be one of the effects, and not the aim in itself (Parysek 2016: 8). Therefore, the goals of regeneration can be divided as follows (Lorens 2009: 8):

- urban-planning and architectural goals, which, in addition to renovation, upgrading and restoration, involve conscious shaping of the cultural landscape of a given area;
- technical goals, which work towards improving the quality of technical and road infrastructure;
- social goals, which focus on eliminating negative and dangerous phenomena, and on preventing social pathology and exclusion;
- economic goals, which are linked to reviving a given area economically, developing tourism, and promoting new initiatives there;
- environmental goals, which are associated with improving the environment in a given area and reducing or eliminating harmful emissions.

Therefore, it can be said – bearing in mind the ‘principle of totality’ and the postulates proposed by J. Parysek – that placing excessive emphasis on any aspect of regeneration may be treated as an abuse, given that regeneration is one of the territorial instruments applied to implement the objectives of the priority axes of the EU Regional Operational Programmes in the current EU programming period (2014–2020). However, while the location of cultural buildings in post-industrial areas is associated with various benefits for the city and its users, such a way of transforming space is not an ‘easy part to play’ (Nyka & Szczepański 2010: 8), and the potential of a space is not enough to ensure that regeneration will be a success.

How it turns out for those who fail to see the broader perspective and embed actions in social context could be observed in the experience of cities such as Barcelona or Glasgow where ‘a lack of adequate integration between economic and cultural policies’ (García 2004: 322) allows for a top-down approach, having no regards for the existing fabric of society and making unrelated, and unbalanced actions in no way tied to any coherent cultural policy.

The Culture Zone as a public space

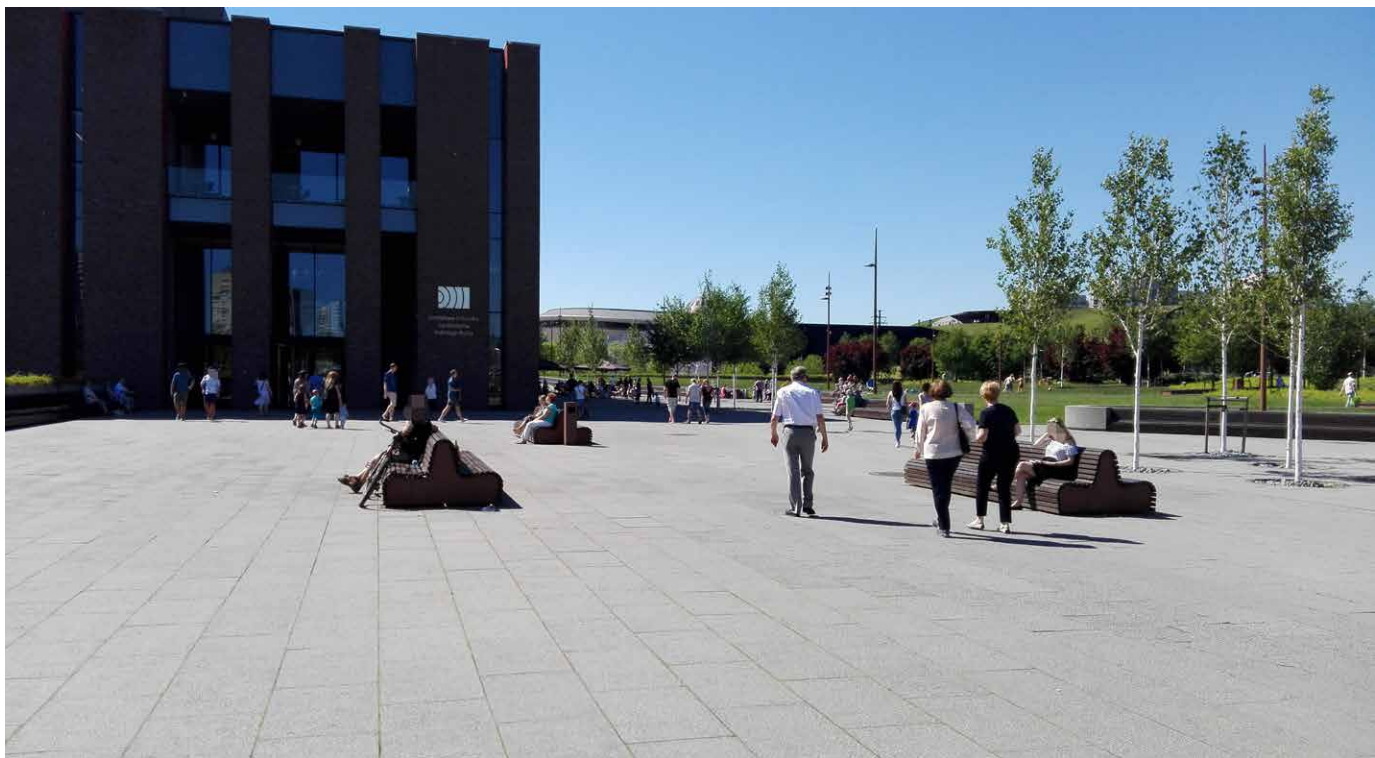
The way the entire area of the Culture Zone is organised reflects the underlying intention to establish a correlation between its intended use and the qualities and functions of its public spaces. Public space refers to the physical dimension of space and usually takes the form of urban areas.

As such, public space can be characterised by physical, visual and symbolic accessibility, by being organised and controlled, and is also perceived as a ‘public good’ – it serves public interests, is inclusive and open, even if some parts of it are under private control (Bierwaczon & Nawrocki 2012: 34–35). If put in this way, it plays the role of a place where people meet and express their attitudes conceived in the public sphere – a space for integration and identification (Wallis 1977: 214–216), but also one of leisure, identified by L. H. Lofland (1998: 233) as ‘respite and refreshments’. A good public space also satisfies various needs, for instance the need for relaxation, exploration of new city areas, or simply for passive engagement in the hubbub of city streets (Carr et al. 2009: 86–136). An important quality of public spaces in the city centre that A. Wallis mentions is that they allow its users’ prestige to be demonstrated – in other words, there are places worth visiting and it’s good to show yourself in those places. It’s a satisfaction drawn from social recognition (Wallis 1977: 212–214) when the fact that the person knows some prestigious places is apparent to other city users.

According to L. Nyka and J. Szczepański (2010: 9), ‘an important role in the regeneration of urban areas is played by the capacious intermediate spaces created at the interface between cultural buildings and the street. (...) Many of them seem to be leading passers-by into the building interiors by offering a gradual transformation of streets or squares into concert halls and galleries (...). They are also effective generators of movement, a factor that is greatly needed in districts undergoing regeneration’.

Assisted by visual artefacts, the Silesian Museum therefore ‘extends its iconosphere’ (Dymnicka 2013: 178) by making its areas available 24 hours a day. The functional landmark of the Museum is the winding tower ‘Warszawa’, from which visitors can admire a panorama of Katowice. Other notable design features located next to remaining mine structures are the semi-transparent cuboids forming the main buildings of the Museum. The roof of the International Congress Centre is a viewing deck, while the entrances of the NOSPR building are located both at its front and its rear (Fig. 3).

FIGURE 3
The Polish Radio National Symphony Orchestra [NOSPR] building’s rear entrance, 2017
Source: photo by Pawel Pistelok



The main architect of the Orchestra building, T. Konior (2016) declares that ‘in fact, the building has no front or rear, which results from purposeful action’. This makes the complexes of the Zone an ‘extension of the city space’ (Dymnicka 2013: 194). The abovementioned Library of the Silesian University, which is another major architectural project completed in recent years, has a similar quality.

As a whole, the spaces of the Zone are used by the inhabitants of the Bogucice district and the nearby housing estate as an area for an afternoon walk, sometimes rounded off with a cup of coffee in the Museum bistro. This conclusion is based on observations and free-form interviews conducted with users of the centre of Katowice for the needs of the author’s upcoming doctoral dissertation. This is yet another dimension, or rather an effect, of combining cultural functions with those inherent in public spaces – the development of such services as cafes, bookshops and stores. M. Dymnicka (2013: 183) notes that ‘locating leisure and meeting spaces in museums (...) helps the latter shake off their old, nineteenth-century “sacredness”, as well as extends the public space for residents, artists and architects, making it hectic and dynamic’. This completes the image of the Zone as a project which does not function ‘by producing goods, but instead, by producing goods and simultaneously saturating them with meanings, (...) symbols’ (Gruszka 2010: 53).

Is the public space good enough?

However, one cannot ignore comments made by specialists about the urbanistic qualities of the Zone. This is relevant because the location of the Zone relative to the centre of Katowice and the internal layout of the area are additional factors which have a significant effect on its qualities and functions as a public space. In 2015, the *Moje Miasto* Association nominated the space for the Concrete Sett [Betonowa Kostka] anti-award in a vote for the worst urban planning solutions. A member of the Association, M. Kubieniec, argued that the Zone was designed in a manner that contradicts modern international planning standards because the effects favour car traffic instead of helping the city to limit it, and furthermore, the whole area is devoid of connection to the urban fabric (*Betonowa Kostka – Nominacje 2015*). Taking into consideration the public space characteristics, a major one is here affected, that is physical accessibility. A. Sikora (2015: 44) spoke bitterly about the situation: ‘A district with cultural buildings has been created, with convenient access, and surrounded by car parks, like a huge shopping centre. (...) Such an organisation of this part of the city does not help the city to develop, since it fails to revive the area (because there is nothing there) – there is no one to radiate the culture to. It is a place you only come to occasionally, to attend an

event (concert or exhibition), and then you go to your car and drive back home. It is a luxurious enclave, a cultural reserve in which culture – though protected, cherished, and of top quality – is locked behind a glass pane.’

It is easy to notice that A. Sikora’s remarks express a view corresponding to the vision of a city proposed in the 1960s by J. Jacobs, who defined four conditions indispensable for a newly designed district to generate ‘exuberant diversity’ (Jacobs 1961: 150–151):

1. the district must serve many functions to ensure the presence of people at all times of the day;
2. the blocks must be short, with frequent opportunities to turn corners;
3. the district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition;
4. there must be a sufficiently dense concentration of people.

When the above measure is applied to the new ‘district’ of Katowice, it turns out that the Zone is an example of a practice in which ‘a land-use master plan for a big city is largely a matter of proposed placement, often in relation to transportation, of many series of decontaminated sortings’ (Jacobs 1961: 25). Furthermore, according to J. Jacobs (1961: 168–169), ‘projects such as cultural and civic centres, besides being woefully unbalanced themselves as a rule, are tragic in their effects on cities. They isolate uses – and too often intensive night uses too – from the parts of cities that must have them or sicken’. As P. Czakon (2015) observes, the Zone as a district in the sense proposed by Jacobs does not actually ensure a steady flow of city users. Another problem has also been noticed – the Zone has no effect on Bogucice, the district which has direct ties to the former mine: ‘the success of the Culture Zone in Katowice is partial as it has failed to achieve one of its main goals: the regeneration of Bogucice. (...) It was the residents of the district, and of the old miners’ houses in Katowicka Street, that were supposed to have the best access to the Zone, which was also to become a great and beautiful green heart of the district. The intentions were good, but they were to little avail’ (Przybytek 2015).

Although the NOSPR building and the Silesian Museum do perform certain public functions, this does not mean that the whole area of the Zone fulfils the condition of more in-depth reconstruction of community ties. This is, after all, the key condition of any regeneration process, since no regeneration is possible if the process is not socialised (Pirveli 2011: 94). In the light of the above opinions and articles, it can be concluded that even if the Zone is an example of regeneration by assumption, it does not in itself regenerate. As has been said, there is however ‘a star on the horizon’ – precisely, a new housing estate investment in the vicinity of the Zone on which construction is set to begin and the just recently finished .KTW office building (Fig. 4).



FIGURE 4.
The Culture Zone
with the first .KTW
office building
completing the area,
2018
Source: photo by
Pawel Pistelok

There is now a chance that these new investments will complete the area and introduce new functions and services allowing diverse categories of users new means of spending time. The .KTW building may be at the same time a chance and a threat – a chance, due to the possibilities it creates, and a threat, if any services carried out there are oriented to those who will be working here. In that case, a business bistro or other specific kind of service addressed to young professionals could only strengthen the exclusive image of the area, as the NGO mentioned above and specialists point out.

An attempt at opening

However, it must be emphasised that a few years ago there were already efforts made to extend the radius of the Zone's influence, for example, by establishing the 'Creative Shift' [Szycha Kreatywna] initiative, which addresses regeneration from the social perspective: 'The regeneration process to which Katowice's Culture Zone has been subjected has not only had an effect on the urban structure, but also – and perhaps predominantly – on the local community. How should one manage this process responsibly, transparently and with mutual respect for all stakeholders? We will look for the answers (...) during the "Creative Shift" Forum, jointly with its participants. All those who care about the public space are invited to participate in the discussions' (*Szycha Kreatywna*).

As can be seen, the Silesian Museum clearly refers to the Culture Zone as a regenerated space. Nevertheless, during the event consisting of lectures and workshops, sociologists, architects, members of NGOs and other specialists talked about, among other things, how various investments affect the life of local communities, how to plan the future functionality of reclaimed spaces, how to take into account the specificities of the relationship between a building and its surroundings, and what is the importance of public participation in the transformation planning process.

Mention should also be made of other attempts to overcome the excluding character of the Culture Zone – in a sense, the 'yoga on the grass' project or the summer and drive-in cinemas in the car park in front of the NOSPR building bring residents closer to the Culture Zone and illustrate its potential as a leisure space. In December 2016, the Museum organised workshops for parents with children, and lectures related to Miner's Day (also known as 'Barbórka' or 'St. Barbara's Day'), and at his soirée, J. Krzyk (2016) presented his book dedicated to the history of the 'Katowice' (formerly the 'Ferdynand') mine on the site where the Museum currently operates. The last of the events was particularly appreciated since it brought people associated with Upper Silesia together, including residents of the Bogucice district, many of

whom are former employees and persons associated in some way with the ‘Katowice’ mine. The community of Bogucice is particularly sensitive to what is happening today on the site where they used to work. One of the highlights was the screening of a film documenting the last operational day of the mine.

When reflecting on the condition of the Culture Zone as a space restored to the public, one can observe analogies with similar types of project undertaken in Europe. Certainly, one such process was the transformation of the Ruhr area, which also involved the regeneration of post-mining areas, except that there it took 40 years. Nevertheless, the experiences of both regions display certain similarities. The problem most frequently raised in Katowice is insufficient involvement of the inhabitants of Bogucice, the district closest to the Zone, whereas the Ruhr faced the problem ‘of a low sense of identification among the local community, which translated into their minimum involvement in activities benefitting their own place of residence’ (Skowron 2011: 76). On the other hand, the Silesian Museum, as if in response to participatory deficits, established the ‘Creative Shift’. Meanwhile, as early as the 1990s, the Faculty of Spatial Planning of TU Dortmund University created a similar initiative, referred to as the ‘bank of ideas’, which established a range of strategic objectives for further development and envisaged such actions as transformation of post-mining buildings into museums and culture centres, based on the potential of scientific and academic institutions and the transport infrastructure (Skowron 2011: 75). As E. Skowron (2011: 76) also notices, an opportunity for the region to regain its sense of identity came when Essen was named the European Capital of Culture. As has already been noted, this was also the case with Katowice, which ‘by losing by a narrow margin to Wrocław, actually (...) won much more than the title of the European Capital of Culture’. The ECC 2016 campaign initiated the ‘Great Change’, which not only released incredible amounts of energy in residents, artists, volunteers and all those who got involved in the activities – of whom there were many – but also triggered a process of profound mental change among the city’s residents (Majzel 2015: 64–65).

The Culture Zone in empirical research

Regarding the main part of the study, namely the questionnaire interviews, the respondents were initially asked if they had visited the Culture Zone (Fig. 5).’

As it turns out, 67.7% of the respondents visit the Culture Zone in order to attend cultural events and another 17.3% use the space exclusively for recreational purposes, which translates into a total of 85% of users visiting the space. Another survey question was derived from the statements on alleged separation of the area from the downtown area. Respondents were asked what means of transport they use most frequently when visiting the Culture Zone and the city centre. The answers received show that the predominant choice for both sites is to get there using public transport (Fig. 6).

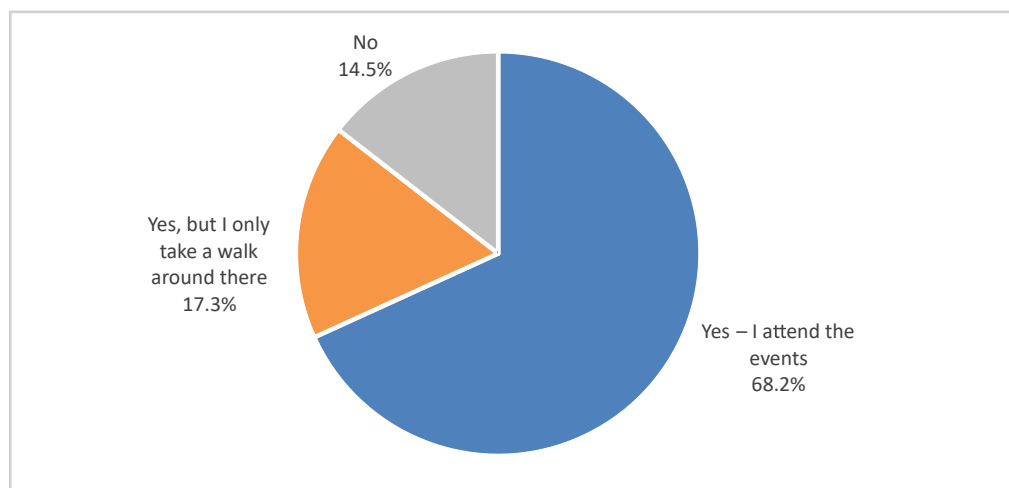
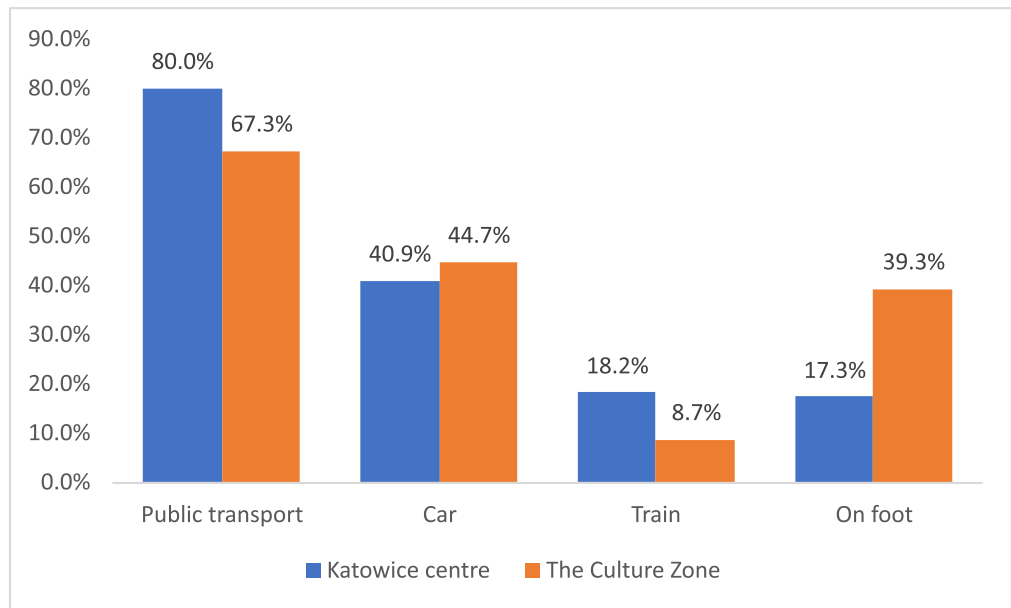


FIGURE 5
The question of whether the Culture Zone is visited for whatever reason
Source: own study
Note: N (valid) = 220

FIGURE 6
Visiting the Culture Zone and the city centre – means of transport
Source: own study
Note: N (valid) = 220 (Katowice centre); 150 (The Culture Zone). The values do not add up to 100%, since with multiple choice questions, more than one answer could be chosen; the first four answers are presented; 'Public transport' comprises 'bus' and 'tram' categories



Indeed, the percentage of those who drive to the Culture Zone by car is slightly higher than among those who visit the city centre itself, however it is too few to determine if the notion that the area is suitable only for cars and not accessible for pedestrians is justified, especially taking into account the percentage of respondents who choose to get there on foot (39.3%).

Another question, proved that 76.7% of the respondents visiting the Culture Zone also use the centre of Katowice in connection with going to the Zone: that shows the assertion that the new area is a place you go to and then go back straight home is not justified. When, in turn, the respondents were asked about the relationship between the centre of Katowice and the Culture Zone in the context of leisure activities, the following set of answers was obtained (Fig. 7).

Of course, the Culture Zone is kind of a 'secondary' space in comparison with the centre itself – due to its relative monofunctionality and situation on the map of Katowice – however one most certainly cannot claim that it serves only elites and special events. Thus, it proves to have a great value and a high potential for it to become a place you go to for a walk – in this respect it is nearly as popular as the centre of Katowice (46.9% of the users choose this area). This is also corroborated by observations and free-form interviews with users of the area, which were conducted in April and June 2017. People use the extensive areas between the Silesian Museum

FIGURE 7
Katowice centre and the Culture Zone as areas suitable for selected kinds of activities
Source: own study
Note: N (valid): Meeting... = 214; A walk = 211; Visiting... = 210; 'Killing time' = 206; the values do not add up to 100%, as the survey also asked about the shopping centres in Katowice, which are, however, not the subject of this paper

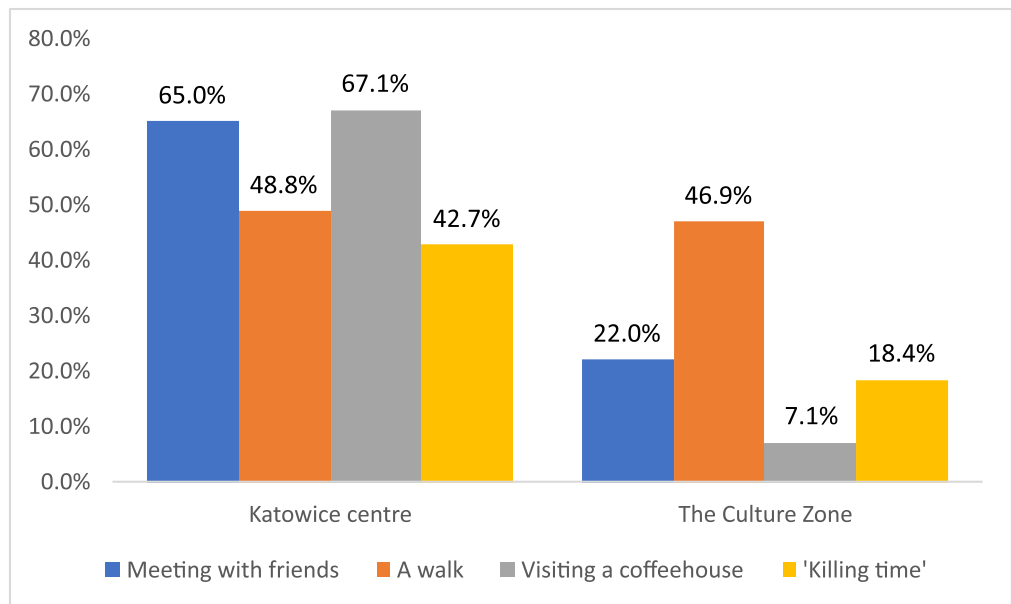
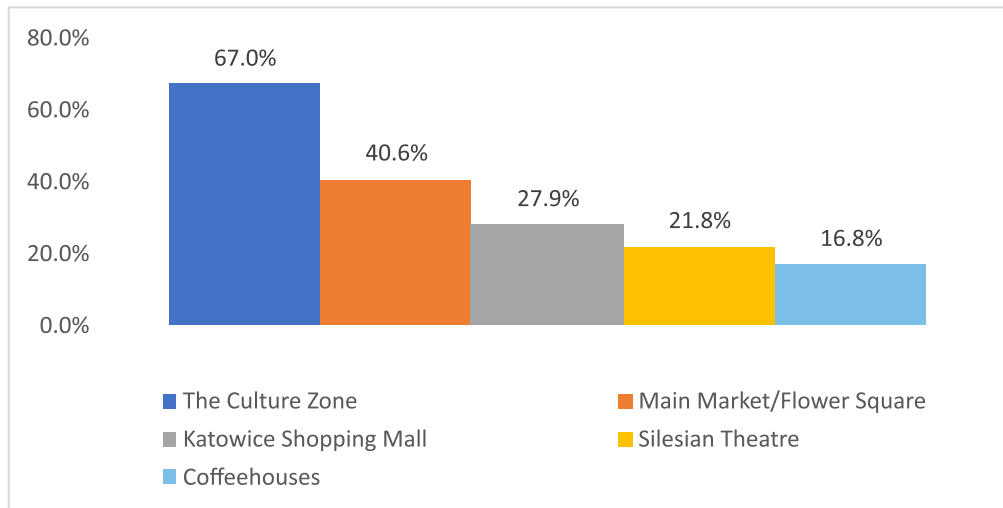


FIGURE 8
Places in the centre of Katowice worth visiting
Source: own study
Note: N (valid) = 197; the values do not add up to 100% – the respondents could name more than one answer; the first five answers are presented



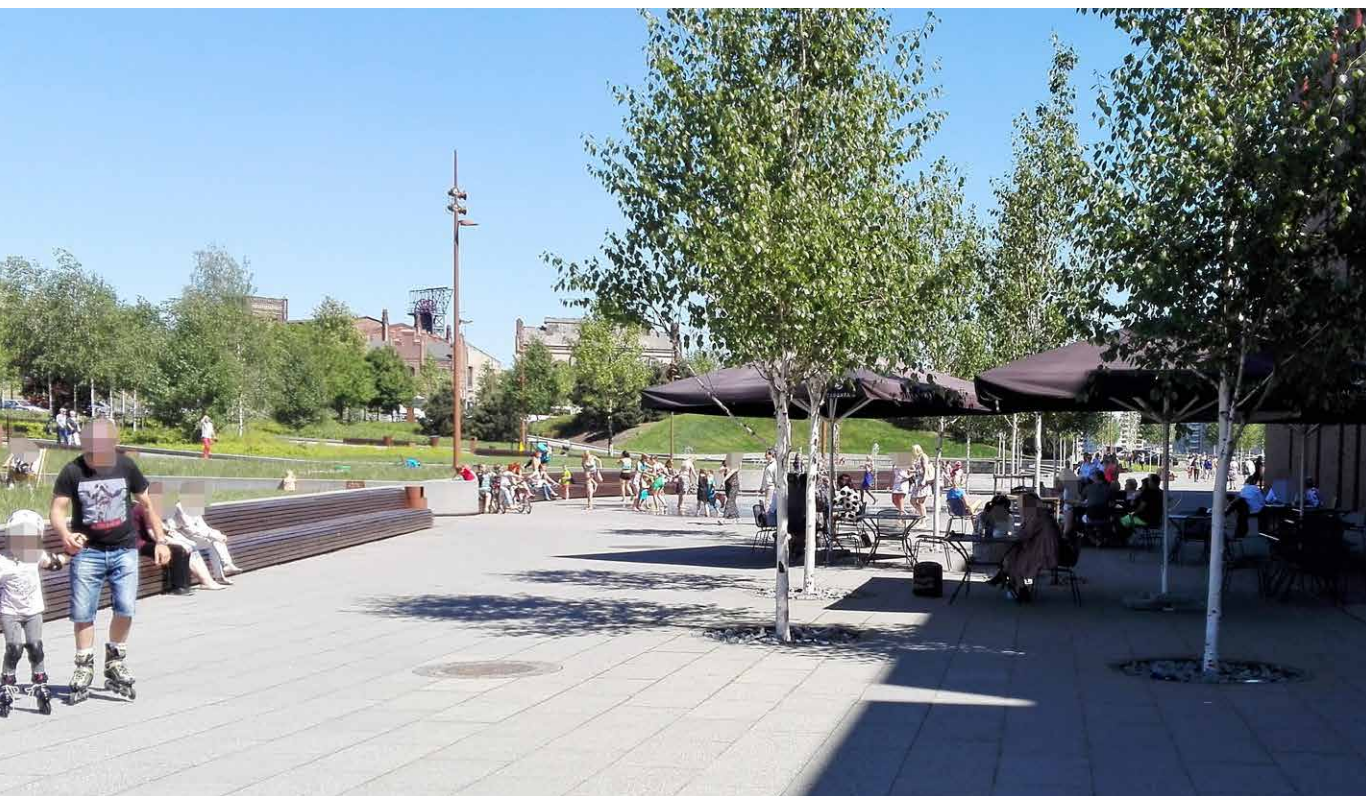
and the NOSPR building for leisure activities with their children and grandchildren, as well as a place for bicycle trips, relaxation on the grass, or picnics (Fig. 9).

There is also one quality of public spaces that might sound trivial but is of great significance for what happens between buildings, for fostering social life. A. Wallis (1977: 212–214) calls it ‘a space for accomplishing prestige’ and puts it among the social functions of the city centre. Indeed, every city has some places that are worth visiting, that create some sense of importance. According to A. Wallis, being and dwelling in such places brings a sense of social recognition. Consequently, the respondents were asked whether there are any places in Katowice that ‘you need to visit’ and 89.5% of them agreed that indeed such places exist in Katowice. When asked to name such places, the respondents listed in on the first place (Fig. 8).

Apparently, the most frequently named place where one can accomplish ‘prestige’ derived from being recognised is the Culture Zone. The site was also given as the place that Katowice residents should show to someone who visits the city for the first time – 67.0% of the respondents declare specific institutions in the Culture Zone or the area as a whole.

What is most important in this case, the activities cited and the mutual experience of dwelling in the area that is ‘worth visiting’ make it a democratic and egalitarian space and override its exclusive profile created by the presence of hallmark cultural institutions. Bogucice is a traditional working-class district and its residents’ profile most definitely doesn’t match that of

FIGURE 9
Public space in the Culture Zone, 2017
Source: photo by Paweł Pistelok





the typical hipster user of zones such as the Culture Zone¹. Nevertheless, diverse categories of users ‘peacefully’ coexist in these vibrant spaces (Fig. 9). It is enough to mention that another district whose residents the author very frequently encountered when conducting his research is Koszutka, which M. Klekotko (2015) associates with alternative patterns of culture.

Still, by contrast, a much smaller proportion of people choose the area specifically to meet friends (22.0%) or have a cup of coffee (7.1%), as can be seen in Figure 7. It appears that this can be explained by the deficit of service outlets there, which although currently available, are limited to two restaurants and a bistro. The nature of these places and their location, however, determines the high price levels there, which strongly discourages people from choosing them for appointments with friends.

It should also be noted that a large proportion of the people encountered in the Zone live in Bogucice and Koszutka, that is, the districts adjacent to the Culture Zone. This in some part indicates that the area is too separated for residents from more distant districts. This is most probably due the fact that you need to walk a significant distance from the centre itself and cross a multilane road [Drogowa Trasa Średnicowa – DTS] when walking from the University of Silesia campus (Fig. 10).

By contrast, one can meet relatively more people from the western or southern districts of the city in the Katowice market square area than in the Culture Zone. Thus, while in the light of the author’s research cited above the multilane road does not stop the city centre visitors from going to the Culture Zone, this kind of separation seems, in a way, to affect from which Katowice districts people come to visit the site. A part of the explanation could also be that the southern districts tend to have a more local and rural profile, as they are boroughs relatively newly incorporated as districts of Katowice. People there tend to be more tied to their local spaces and do not feel the need to visit particular leisure areas. This is also reflected at the level of language. The author’s experience of living there shows that when taking a bus to the centre of Katowice, the residents of the southern districts tend to say that they ‘have some business to take care of in Katowice’, as if it was another town, not the centre of ‘their’ city.

As can also be observed, even a temporary change in the weather is often sufficient for people to refrain from visiting the area of the Culture Zone, which confirms the view about its lack of ‘weatherproofness’, expressed by G. Piątek (Kwietowicz, Piątek & Trybuś 2015). Observations made by the author of this paper also reveal that even with torrential rain and low temperatures, events organised in Katowice Market Square are capable of attracting consumers and users and the space fosters the public sphere in all circumstances. Meanwhile, the

FIGURE 10
The Culture Zone (left) and its separation by the multilane road [DTS], 2018. The University of Silesia campus would be on the right side of the picture, but is not visible in the picture
Source: photo by Paweł Pistelok

1. The Author would like to thank one of the reviewers for this important remark

Culture Zone does not seem to offer a sufficient number of service outlets to attract visitors or spots where they could hide from the rain or high/low temperature, with the weather being, incidentally, a reason why hardly anybody will appear there in colder months. If one was to name this spatial inconvenience, it should be said that the need for comfort, as it has been named in the literature (Carr et. al. 2009), is in this case impaired. However, one should keep in mind that the aforementioned observation was made before finishing the construction of .KTW office building. How the surroundings of the building and services introduced will function, is yet to be determined.

In analysing the changes which have taken place in cities competing for the title of the European Capital of Culture, the authors of the 'ECC Effect' Report also note an apparent contradiction, namely that, against all odds, the space does 'work': one of the respondents – a journalist from the local 'branch' of a well-known newspaper – admits that in a way the space has succeeded in becoming another city area suitable for leisure activities (Orzechowska-Wačławska 2017: 190). Consequently, a kind of paradox can be observed – on the one hand, the Zone is an example of thinking in modernist zoning terms, and on the other, following the long-lasting deficit of good space in Katowice, it has come to be recognised as an attractive and interesting place. This is confirmed by the results of surveys and observations the author conducted in the Zone in spring 2017. What is more, when confronted with the critical diagnoses of urban planners, inhabitants of the surrounding districts and visitors to the area do not agree with them or are even irritated by 'talk of the usual experts'.

Taking the above into consideration, it is safe to propose that the Culture Zone can be defined – referring to the 'extension' function of urban space (Dymnicka 2013: 178) – as 'spatial extension'. According to M. S. Szczepański, extensions are areas which 'in the minds of residents exist as [the area's] integral parts and functional extensions. Different categories of people identify with such spaces to different degrees. The level of identification depends on the realisation of existential needs in such extensions' (Szczepański 1991: 153). What can be said for sure – at least in the light of the research results presented – the Culture Zone is a kind of secondary space, taken in relation to the city centre itself. Most of the people surveyed are aware of its existence and chose the area as a place to take a walk together with other activities performed in the city centre. As has been stated, a variety of social categories use this space and there doesn't seem to be any conflicts regarding the patterns of spending time there.

Conclusions

In the light of the above analyses, it can be concluded that there is much that is unequivocal in people's assessment of the Culture Zone, which is a kind of paradox – the Zone concentrates in itself a number of shortcomings, and yet it functions as a 'fully fledged' public space. If this case was to be analysed in terms of the goals of regeneration formulated in the literature, it should be considered that the new district combines the architectural and economic goals of regeneration (as defined by Lorens 2009: 8) to the greatest extent. Often the nature of a regenerated space creates the risk that some aspects will be neglected or can produce shortcomings. Such shortcomings indeed occur, however they seem to be successfully coped with, despite the judgmental commentary made by the specialists.

Looking at this case through the selection of the qualities of public space which derive from the research conducted, it should be said that the Culture Zone does mostly function as a leisure space capable of bringing people together. In this case, one could say it fulfils the need of relaxation (Carr et. al. 2009: 98–104) and works for people as a space of respites and refreshment (Lofland 1998: 233). The exclusive profile of the site does not deter those people who don't come there for the particular reason of attending an event from visiting it. On the contrary – the elitist character of the Culture Zone also works in a way that fulfils a certain quality of public space – that is, it allows one to be recognised as a patron of prestigious areas of the city (Wallis 1977: 213–214). One would find that the site is equally popular among those who enter the site to attend cultural events and other public space users – residents from Bogucice and Koszutka districts. One is a traditional, working-class district, the other is said to be undergoing a gentrification process (Klekotko 2015).

If the author was to name the most important shortcoming of the Culture Zone, it would be its apparent separation from the city centre itself. The effect is that one actually does not encounter there anyone who would come from the southern parts and districts of Katowice. The predominant number of patrons who were questioned reside or live in Koszutka or Bogucice districts. This may to some extent prove that visiting the Culture Zone is quite an effort for the people of southern Katowice. Also, the visible lack of so-called 'weatherproofness' sometimes affects the patterns of spending time in the 'one', forcing the visitors to retreat. Thus, it appears that a quality of comfort should be introduced.

Perhaps a new chapter of the Culture Zone story is yet to be written – given the announcement that a housing estate, planned in the area of Nadgórników Street, north of the Silesian Museum, is to be added to the Zone

(Kwietowicz et al. 2015), and thanks to the construction of two .KTW office buildings, one of which has already been completed. Thanks to these investment projects, new services are likely to appear there, bringing in a continuous flow of people, which will also mean overcoming the monofunctionality of the Zone, and hopefully, achieving the ideal of ‘exuberant diversity’ referred to by J. Jacobs.

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