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## CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTS FOR THE ESCARP OF THE POMERANIAN DUKES' CASTLE IN SZCZECIN

### WSPÓŁCZESNE KONCEPCJE ZAGOSPODAROWANIA SKARPY ZAMKU KSIĄŻĄT POMORSKICH W SZCZECINIE

#### **Abstract**

The Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin forms one of the most characteristic elements of Szczecin's cityscape. That is why it is extremely important to expose its values properly, to stress the solid of the castle in the city panorama, according to its historical condition. Modern concepts for development of the northern castle escarp do not always meet the above expectations, both when it comes to composition and the very geotechnical safety of the escarp. The contemporary concepts for the development of northern escarp of the Castle Hill in Szczecin were presented in the paper, on the background of the complex historic, compositional and also technical conditions.

**Keywords:** revalorization of historic gardens, castle gardens, Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin

#### **Streszczenie**

Zamek Książąt Pomorskich stanowi jeden z najbardziej charakterystycznych elementów krajobrazu miasta Szczecina. Dlatego też niezwykle istotne jest odpowiednie wyeksponowanie jego walorów, podkreślenie bryły zamku w panoramie miasta zgodnie z uwarunkowaniami historycznymi. Istniejący sposób zagospodarowania północnej skarpy zamku zarówno nie spełnia powyższych wymagań kompozycyjnych, jak i nie zapewnia bezpieczeństwa geotechnicznego dla bryły budowli. W artykule przedstawiono współczesne koncepcje zagospodarowania północnej skarpy Wzgórza Zamkowego w Szczecinie na tle złożonych uwarunkowań historycznych, kompozycyjnych, a także technicznych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** rewaloryzacja zabytkowych ogrodów, ogrody zamkowe, Zamek Książąt Pomorskich w Szczecinie

## 1. Introduction

The Pomeranian Dukes' Castle, apart from the Hakenterrasse forms one of the most characteristic elements of Szczecin's panorama from the bank of Odra river. The Castle is also the most prominent landmark of the Old Town, strongly defining the identity of that place [8, p. 52], which was largely damaged by Allied bombing and introduction of foreign elements during postwar reconstruction. Still the solid of the building in the panorama from the north (main city entrance through Trasa Zamkowa [Castle Route]) is effectively obscured, at least for most of the year, by the trees growing on castle hill escarp. Even if analysis of iconographic documentation did not prove the existence of high-growing plants on the northern escarp, the problem of unveiling the castle vista is a more complex one. It is a basis for discussions of the manner in which this place should be developed for over ten years till now [4, 15].

The aim of the paper is to present, on the background of the complex historic, compositional and also technical conditions, the contemporary concepts for the development of northern escarp of the Castle Hill in Szczecin.

## 2. Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin – historic development

The Pomeranian Dukes' Castle is located in the oldest part of Szczecin, on left bank of Odra River. Archeological research proved, that a borough was first built on today's Castle Hill in last period of Lusatian culture, namely in the Hallstatt period. The perfect defensive properties of the hill that rises some 20 meters above the waters of Odra River and is embanked by ravines with streams flowing in their bottom, at a place where river crossing was also possible were decisive in starting a defensive settlement there [1, p. 25]. The excavations revealed fragments of borough embankments and permanent housing [2, p. 284–285]. When in 967 Mieszko I of Poland included the Odra estuary in his Piast state Szczecin was made of a defensive borough located on a terrace at Odra, lowest town located between the terrace and Odra River, a harbor and a small burgh. The main borough included a temple of Triglav, who was worshipped by pagan population till 12<sup>th</sup> century. In 1346 Duke Barnim III started the construction of his new seat. The "Steinhaus" – stone building some 30 meters long, 10 meters wide and 8 meters high replaced the old borough. To the west of the building there was a chapel of St. Otto, surrounded with walls. The second wall, almost 4 meters high, surrounded the whole development.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century Duke Bogusław X modernized the southern wing and two towers, and in 1538 his son, Barnim XI – while reconstructing the development after a fire – raised the "New House" by one storey and constructed the octagonal parts of towers. The highest southern wing thus had a rarely seen height of 30 meters, had 4 levels and its length was 52 meters. Duke Bogusław X's reign initiated the golden age of the castle – the duke was an ambitious ruler, educated in Cracow by Jan Długosz and married with daughter of Polish King – Anna Jagiellonka. He was the one to unite Western Pomerania. His son, apart from modernizing the southern wing, also constructed the eastern one. In the second half of

the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Duke John Frederic, the castle became an impressive renaissance residence. In the years 1571–1581 the construction was supervised by Wilhelm Zacharias – an Italian architect [11, p. 67].

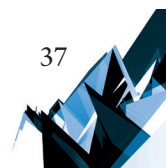
At the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century the church was demolished, together with the “Steinhaus” and the buildings in the western part of castle, and northern and western wings constructed in their place. The wings now had equal height of three levels and were topped with a continuous attic. Vast castle yard with sides measuring 50 meters was surrounded by cloister. The castle was continuously enriched with new works of art. In 1616–1619 fifth wing of the castle – the mint wing that was to hold the library and museum that could accommodate the collection gathered by Philip II, brother of the last duke – was build. After Duke Bogusław XIV died in 1637 the castle became the residence of Prussian Governor Bjelke. In 1648 Western Pomerania was divided in the result of an agreement between Sweden and Brandenburg, Szczecin was retained by Swedes. The Duchy fell and the subsequent owners of the castle did not sufficiently care for it – the reconstructions decreased the artistic value of renaissance details. During wars with Sweden the castle and the city were largely damaged in 1677. The residence was shelled by artillery, with the northern wing completely destroyed and the remaining ones largely damaged. Swedes conducted repair works according to the design of Johan Frederik Gothe. The castle hill has since become seat for military [7].

In 1713 the castle was besieged by army of the anti-Swedish coalition and the artillery shelling once again significantly damaged the walls of the building. In 1720 the city was included in Prussian borders. The residence was subjected to construction works that finished in 1736: the interiors were only slightly altered, but the elevations completely changed, the Philip II museum wing and the castle roofs rebuilt. In 1806 the castle witnessed the entry of Napoleon’s army and after his defeat in 1813 Szczecin came back in Prussian hands. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the structure was gradually rebuilt: with a court, administrative offices and archives located in its interiors.

Prussian times (1713–1945) saw the largest neglect of the castle. It housed an arsenal, numerous offices and even a brewery in that period. Its equipment was transferred to Berlin and the reconstructions of 1736 and 1872–1874 further contributed to lowering its architectonic value. The castle hill was surrounded by residential buildings making the structure almost invisible [16].

It was not until early 20<sup>th</sup> century that ideas of returning the castle to its former glory appeared. In 1925–1926 some renovation and ordering works were conducted, but the slow progress of plans was halted by the Second World War. Germans installed anti-aircraft guns on tops of the castle, making it one of the primary targets for bomb raids. Allied bombings in the last phase of war (mainly in spring of 1943 and on August, 17, 1944) totally destroyed Szczecin’s Old Town and the castle [1, p. 233–234]. What remained from the former residence of Dukes of Pomerania were damaged walls, most of the ceilings collapsed.

The reconstruction of Old Town was not started immediately after the war, due to extent of the damages. At first the less damaged districts were rebuilt [1, p. 234–236; 3]. Between 1945 and 1951 mainly stocktaking and securing works took place. Rebuilding only started



in 1958, based on designs by Professor Stanisław Latour. The wings of the structure were to house a Culture Center, a chamber orchestra hall, castle restaurant and exhibition halls. The southern wing was to house a Musical Theatre (now the Castle Opera) and Marriage Hall of the Register Office, the mint wing – Historic Monument Reconstruction Works (currently the seat of the Marshal's Office) [9].

Negative transformations of landscape directly neighboring the castle occurred right after the war, when in 1947–1949 the Odra side bypass was constructed on the bank of Odra river. A wide boulevard was erected on the ruins of the lower Old Town houses, making place for four lane carriageway and tramway rails. This completely destroyed the oldest urban system of the Old Town located at the river [1, p. 234], and also functionally and compositionally “cut off” the city from Odra river. Another investment in that area – construction of the Castle Route (Trasa Zamkowa) in 1996 contributed to total degradation of vista properties of the Castle Hill from north-western side. The castle, together with the medieval Tower of Seven Coats at its base was virtually surrounded by serpentines of the overpass – main entrance road to the city (Fig. 1). The panorama of castle and the Old Town visible from the northern side of the river and from the riverside was irreversibly distorted.

To find out, if the castle hill was built over or if there were composed garden with trees and bushes in the past – there was the analysis of preserved iconographic documentation conducted by the author of the present paper.



Fig. 1. The Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin seen from the riverbank, May 2017  
(photo by M. Rzeszotarska-Palka)



### 3. Castle gardens

Castle gardens were characteristic in particular in Middle Ages, when they were started in connection with the castle's solid, as enclosed garden interiors, frequently in shape of rosary or a small utility garden. In Renaissance in turn, the gardens were composed in quarter form and frequently were stretching outside the area enclosed by fortifications. Polish examples of renaissance castle gardens include: decorative garden enclosed by walls and the Italian garden started by Queen Bona on terraces of Wawel, a quartered garden along the fortress curtains in Zamość, vegetable and flower quarters at Łodygowice castle and gardens that were located outside fortress walls in Łowicz and Wiśnicz [13, p. 291–292].

Unfortunately both literature and archive documentation lack any information about the development form for both courtyards and castle hill scarp in Szczecin in the times of its greatest glory in Renaissance and also in later period. Some more information is brought by iconographic sources [5]. Map from the 1581 work by Georg Braun and Frans Hogenberg entitled *Civitates orbis terrarum* shows a narrow northern scarp of the castle devoid of any plants and ending with a high defensive wall and a moat at its base, filled with low-growing plants. The 1641 *Stetinum* engraving by Matthaeus Meridian also shows no plants nor terraced shaping of the northern escarp of the castle hill (Fig. 2). The chaotically located residential and commercial buildings, and low trees and plants are visible in the 1826 *Schloß Stettin von der Mitternachtsseite* painting by August Ludwig Most. Similarly, the next painting – *The Vista of Szczecin from Łasztownia Shipyard* of 1847 shows the panorama of Old Town with perfectly visible solid of the castle that is not covered by any greenery.



Fig. 2. Matthaeus Merian, 1641, *Stetinum*, Frankfurt a.M., copperplate, T. Niewodniczański collection, Syg. Ikn. 150N, open access, <https://fbc.pionier.net.pl/details/nnhm3ng> (access 15.05.2017)

To summarize the above – the analysis of preserved iconographic sources reveals, that in 19<sup>th</sup> century the castle hill was built over at its base with townhouses. The escarp also shows some trees and bushes, but they do not obstruct the castle's solid and are not a dominant element, just supplementing the existing buildings. We also found no traces of purposefully composed garden terraces on castle escarp.

#### **4. Development concepts for the escarp of the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin**

The Pomeranian Dukes' Castle has permanent place in spatial structure of the city and the awareness of its inhabitants, both former and present – forming a recognizable element in Szczecin's landscape. Still its solid remains covered by chaotic plantations on its northern escarp. Trees growing in that place are mostly self-sown, and introduced after the war. Even with some being 50 or 60 years old, they do not form a devised composition that would stress the castle's solid, nor are they made of valuable species. Dendrological inventory of the northern escarp of the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin, which was carried out in 2012 revealed: norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) – 53 pieces, false acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) – 28 p., ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) – 27 p., wych elm (*Ulmus gabra*) – 13 p., sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) – 8 p., black elder (*Sambucus nigra*) – 5 p., holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) – 3 p. [12]. Furthermore – they effectively obstruct the castle panorama from north during the vegetation period – from the side of Castle Route (Trasa Zamkowa), Solidarności Square or Korsarzy Street the sole visible element is the Bell Tower (Fig. 3). Only in winter, when the trees have no leaves we can admire the silhouette of the northern wing, although slightly obscured by mosaic of boughs and branches.

The idea of cutting down the trees growing on the northern escarp appeared already in 2006 and won positive opinion of the Regional Historic Monument Conservation Office (WUOZ). According to Ewa Kulesza of WUOZ the castle should be unveiled, and the moat running at the base, overgrown at that time, turned into a walking path. This idea was also supported by professor Stanisław Latour, who rebuilt the castle from war damages: “The greenery in the northern escarp is totally random, abandoned, obscures the castle and it requires intervention. Even when there is no permit to cut it down completely it should be decisively thinned out and ordered. So that the escarp does not bring us shame” [15].

Still the 2010 geotechnical expertise proved that possible earthwork that would change the shape and ecosystem of the escarp could be detrimental [14]. The escarp is made exclusively from non-homogenous made ground, still its condition is currently stable. This is also fostered by the root system of the trees growing there, that plays the role of anchors, and the fact that trees take their water from the ground secures low soil humidity. The permeable soils of the escarp are the gravitational flow path for ground waters towards Odra river, thus the removal of trees would intensify this process and could trigger landslides. Caution was advised in changing the development of that area. It was deemed necessary only to remove the less valuable, unhealthy trees and to absolutely leave the trunks in the soil, with their stabilizing



Fig. 3. The Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin covered with trees – view from the side of Castle Route (Trasa Zamkowa), May 2017 (photo by M. Rzeszotarska-Palka)

function replaced over time with newly planted plants. The experts also ascertained that it is not recommended to introduce such changes in the shape of the escarp that would increase its steepness or load [14, p. 7–8].

Discussions on idea of “unveiling” the castle did not stop and in 2011 the Zakład Usług Komunalnych in Szczecin announced a contest for design of development of the northern escarp. There were four submissions, but the Contest Committee decided that none of them fulfilled expectations – according to Ewa Stanecka, the regional conservator of historic monuments the designers failed to recall the historic character of location, modern plant structures were proposed, and not all of them were adjusted to steep escarp. And most of all none of these works did anything to expose the values of the castle and stressed its silhouette.

The castle management adopted a decision to order the development of castle hill development. The concept was developed in 2016 by the Szczecin-based *Compono* architecture company. According to them the trees were to vanish from the northern escarp, replaced by lower plants and footpaths on four different levels, composed in resemblance to the renaissance quartered gardens. After cutting tall trees the design envisages the removal of clay and rubble deposits from the scarp and their replacement with reinforced concrete structure to secure their stability. It is worth stressing that the planned pseudo-renaissance terraces never existed in that place and have no historic justification.

The castle management stated that the design of terraces would be completed within two next years, but in the light of recent events thee plans are now questionable. As this paper



was drawn (in May 2017) in northern wing of the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin fragments of ceilings from the second floor down to the cellar collapsed. The reason for ceiling collapse was structural support of the ground floor falling below cellar level. Currently the object is closed for visitors and the area of building disaster is secured and investigated. Experts list unstable ground underneath the cellar as potential cause, and whole escarp cross-section contains such [6].

The issue of development of greenery areas around an object as important as the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin also became subject of many concept works developed during the *Revalorization of historic gardens* classes at the faculty of landscape architecture of ZUT in Szczecin. Various concepts with common aim of exposing the castle silhouette were developed under supervision of the author of the present paper. Some of them envisaged complete cutting out of the existing trees, assuming the absolute necessity for stabilization of the escarp with a system of reinforced concrete poles and foundation slabs, with differently composed terraces on top of them – from a style that resembles the renaissance quartered gardens (Fig. 5) to the more modern proposals of walking alleys going gently down the escarp. In other works the students proposed less radical solutions, assuming leaving the existing trees in the lower zone of escarp (following the recommendations of the geotechnical survey), only exposing the castle silhouette (Fig. 4).

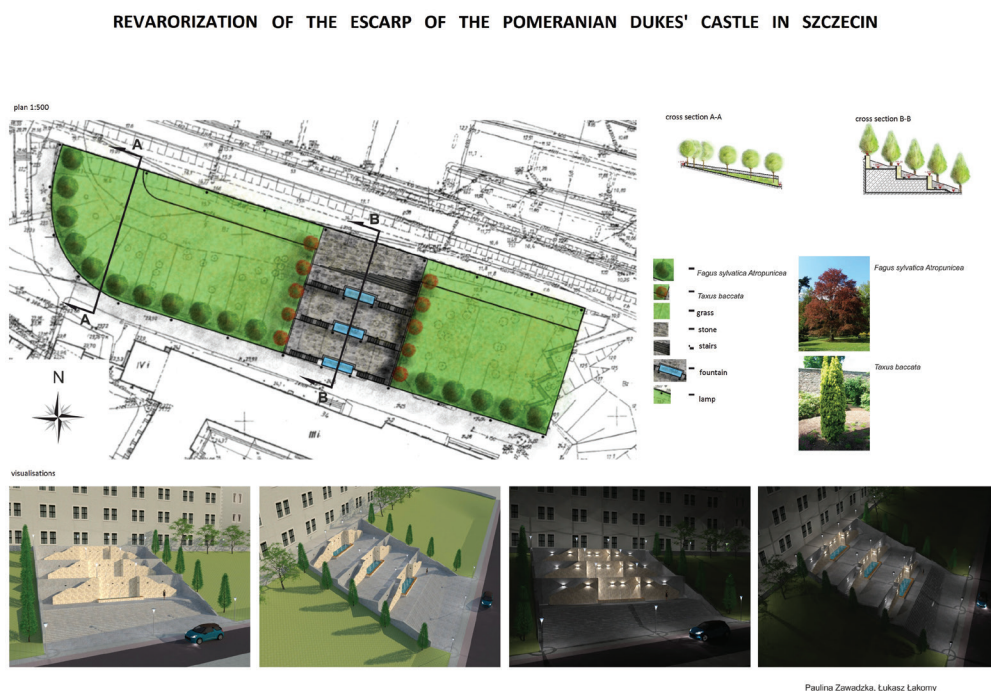


Fig. 4. Revalorization of the escarp of the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin, authors: Ł. Łakomy, P. Zawadzka under the supervision of M. Rzeszotarska-Pałka, ZUT in Szczecin 2014



## REVALORIZATION OF THE ESCARP OF THE POMERANIAN DUKES' CASTLE IN SZCZECIN

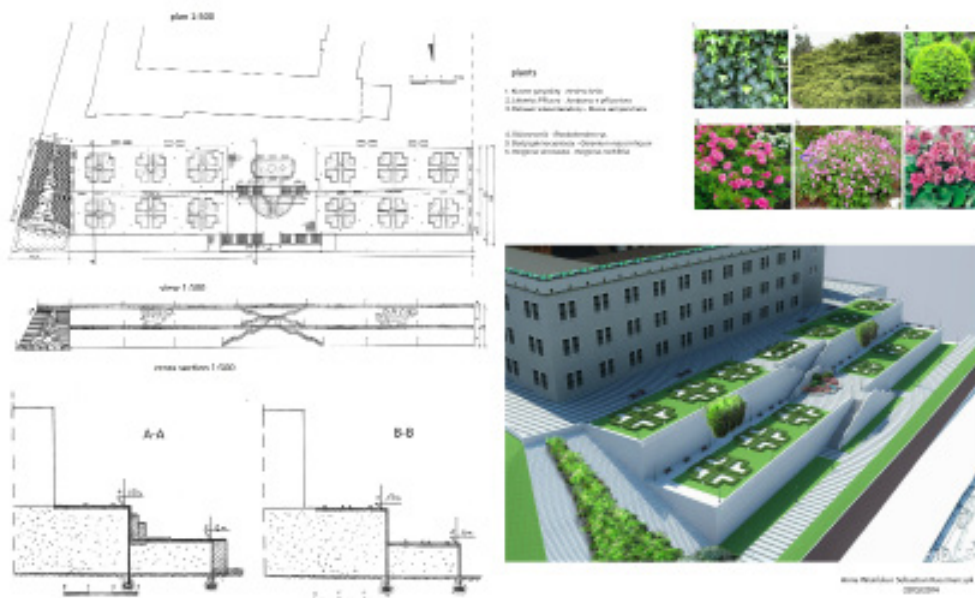


Fig. 5. Revalorization of the escarp of the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin, authors: A. Wisińska, S. Kaczmarczyk under the supervision of M. Rzeszotarska-Palka, ZUT in Szczecin 2014

## 5. Summary

Lack of expressiveness and legibility of space, but also loss of characteristic elements that decide about the identity of cityscape is a problem of modern cities [10, p. 143]. Without any doubt the Pomeranian Dukes' Castle in Szczecin is a unique element in the cityscape that defines its character and is recognizable by both inhabitants and people from outside Szczecin. That is why it is extremely important to expose its values properly, to stress the solid of the castle in the city panorama, according to its historical condition. Modern concepts for development of the northern castle escarp do not always meet the above expectations, both when it comes to composition and the very geotechnical safety of the escarp. It seems that finding an optimal solution of this problem still requires deeper studies and common analysis of specialist from different fields: landscape architects, engineers, geologists, historians and monument conservators. The concept works (with common aim of exposing the castle silhouette) developed under supervision of the author of the present paper at the Department of Landscape Design of ZUT in Szczecin could be also used in further studies.

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