

## Article

# Development and Sustainability: A Case Study of the Industrial Park EURO-PARK Kobierzyce in Poland

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**Abstract:** Since 2001, a new development paradigm, not only in EU countries but also at the global level, has been the concept of balancing environmental, social and economic factors, known as *sustainable development*. Over the two decades of the new millennium, a number of initiatives and directives have been introduced that are aimed at protecting the environment against over-exploitation, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. This issue also applies to the fields of construction and architecture, which will be inspired to change by the idea of *New European Bauhaus* initiated in 2020. Thanks to the political transformation that began in 1990, Poland became part of the global capitalist system, and by joining the European Union in 2004, it declared its development policy in line with European standards. This article deals with the local development process and with industry sustainability in the example of an industrial park located in a selected, representative commune in Poland. The case study of the industrial park EURO-PARK Kobierzyce included factors determining the choice of location, provisions of planning documents, development characteristics, as well as sustainability reports published by selected companies. The aim of this study is to understand the impact of the industrial park on local development and sustainability, as well as to attempt to assess the development of the industry in the context of long-term sustainable development in the conditions of global capitalism. The analyzed case of an industrial park is intended to serve as an illustration of the research problem and a starting point for a broader discussion.

**Keywords:** development; sustainable development; Kobierzyce Commune; industrial park; EURO-PARK Kobierzyce; New European Bauhaus



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Development—A Short Draft

Research on development has been conducted for decades and covers many fields (including economics, geography and urban geography; economic history as a science dates back to the second half of the 18th century, while the beginnings of modern development theories date back to 1945–1955 [1] (p. 34)). The term itself is ambiguous; it is used in many different contexts and does not have a single definition. Mirosława Czerny wrote in 2005 that the concept of development is commonly used to define features attributed to individual societies, related to economic growth (however, development and economic growth cannot be treated the same [1] (p. 33), cf. [2] (p. 55)), modernization and well-being [1] (p. 32) (well-being is influenced by factors such as poverty, unemployment and inequality [2] (p. 55) from [3]). Development can be most simply defined as improving people's quality of life [2] (p. 53). According to the understanding of the above definitions, this concept is generally valued as positive.

In the presented approach, the concept of development focuses on *change* (improvement) and on *people* [2] (in relation to the people themselves and what serves them). In relation to real estate and architecture, development will mean building new facilities, as well as expanding or modernizing the existing ones.

After World War II, *development* became a source of assessment and a tool for dividing countries in the world. The earliest and most frequently used indicator to measure its level was the gross national product per capita (GNP) [1] (p. 35). Czerny points out that development is usually identified with an increase in economic indicators [1] (p. 33). However, from a social perspective, many other factors are taken into account to determine its level, which primarily affect the quality of people's lives (including education and health standards). In order to compare the levels of development in relation to the population of countries around the world, the UN introduced the Human Development Index (HDI), taking into account life expectancy, education and income [1] (p. 37). The World Bank (or the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) has been publishing the World Development Report annually since 1978, presenting an in-depth analysis of a selected aspect of development along with political recommendations [4]. In 2000, the UN adopted eight "Millennium Development Goals" concerning mainly human well-being (e.g., eradication of poverty; it is worth emphasizing that as No. 7 is "ensure environmental sustainability") [5].

Along with globalization (understood as a network of interconnections covering the entire world [1] (p. 21)), the economy is dominated by world-wide relations [1] (p. 22). In the system of global capitalism (understood as an economic system that was adopted by almost all countries in the world at the end of the 20th century [6] (p. 91)), large corporations have become the main economic entities on the international market [1] (p. 22). Taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the system, they develop by using the resources of developing countries—including natural resources and cheap labor. Until recently (early 21st century), a separate group of countries (what is more, with the highest level of development) included "industrialized market economies of Western Europe and North America", identified by the World Bank on the basis of multi-indicator analyses (see [1] (pp. 32,33)). Since the Industrial Revolution, industrialization has been one of the main determinants of economic success and a source of prosperity. The modern economy is focused on the development of industry and new technologies, and especially on innovation (for example, since 2010, the United Nations has been publishing the Technology and Innovation Report as part of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development to address issues "that are topical and important for developing countries" [7]).

As part of development policy, individual countries try to achieve the most favorable indicators, also thanks to an appropriate local development policy (in the conditions of globalization, the global (or globality) influences the local (or locality) and vice versa).

From an economic point of view, there are many theories of regional (or local) development. The most popular among the classic concepts is the economic base theory, according to which exogenous (export) activities constitute the economic basis of the region and stimulate other internal elements of the regional economy [8] (p. 76). It is also worth mentioning the theory of industrial clusters, developed in the early 1990s, which help to increase the competitiveness of locations [8] (pp. 81,82).

In terms of spatial policy, local development is described as "a process of positive quantitative and qualitative changes in the dimension of the local territorial unit (commune, city, village) and the local community, which takes into account its preferences, priorities and recognized value systems" [9] (p. 12).

From an economic perspective, the development of the industrial sector, both at the global and local level, will be a desirable phenomenon.

In the new millennium, global capitalism (including the expansionist activities of corporations), which was connected with excessive environmental exploitation and the emission of pollution and was also accused of causing climate change, began to be subjected to growing criticism (see, e.g., [10,11]).

The beginnings of the discourse regarding the connection of development and the environment date back to the 1960s [12]. Over the past few decades, a number of actions have been taken at the international level in order to stop the effects of development that may lead to irreversible changes in the environment. The concept of sustainable development

has become a new paradigm for conducting all economic activity [12,13] so as to provide its continuation without giving up “development” in its current common understanding.

Sustainable development has also become a paradigm of design, not only in relation to architecture itself, but also for all investment components (regarding, e.g., installations, building materials and construction)—e.g., [14,15]. Translating the principles of sustainable development into the built environment is manifested in the latest trends and postulates, which include optimization of the use of land [12], development of flat roof surfaces [16,17], liquidation of heat islands [18,19], introduction of greenery to built-up space [17,18,20], reduction in carbon footprint [21,22], design of energy-efficient buildings [23,24], circular economy (3R principle) [25,26], rainwater management [27], as well as protection of the landscape by creating visually non-invasive architecture [28], etc.

### 1.2. Sustainable Development and Built Environment

The concept of sustainable development was defined in the Brundtland Report of the World Environment and Development Commission from 1987. It was entitled “Our common future” as “a development which corresponds to current needs without any prejudice to the possibility of meeting one’s own needs by future generations” [29]. The concept is based on three connected bases, i.e., the environment, economy and society, which should remain in mutual balance [13]. The topic itself (although the date was not stated directly) was discussed earlier, i.e., in 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm [13], cf. [12] (for other definitions, see [13]). Another decade brought such significant events for the matter as the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and the UN Millennium Summit (2000), during which the Millennium Development Goals were defined [12] (p. 7). In 2001, the *European Climate Forum* was established (since 2011, the *Global Climate Forum*), devoted to the research on climate change and bringing together representatives of various fields (governments, science, business and social movements) [30]. In the same year, the European Union adopted a strategy for sustainable development, which was then verified in 2006 [29]. This strategy is supposed to serve the “long-term vision of sustainable development which combines mutually supporting economic growth, social cohesion, and environmental protection” [29]. Pursuant to Art. 3 item 3 of the Treaty on the European Union, sustainable development officially became one of the long-term goals of the European Union [29].

On 25 September 2015, the UN Member States adopted *The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* [31], in which 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030 were included. They are [32]:

1. No poverty
2. Zero hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy
8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequalities
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace, justice and strong institutions
17. Partnership for the goals

The 2030 Agenda constitutes a “universal development plan for the world”; however, each country is responsible for the implementation of the Agenda’s provisions at the na-

tional, regional and global levels in a manner adapted to its own realities, possibilities and a degree of development, respecting national policy and its own development priorities [33]. The Agenda's records apply to many civilization aspects. The goals are related to one another and the implementation of some of them can have a positive impact on the others [13] (p. 12). Many of them are connected with the sphere of the built environment, even if only indirectly. During the UIA2023CPH World Congress of Architects "SUSTAINABLE FUTURES—LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND", architects discussed architecture and the built environment as a "crucial tool" to obtain the 17 UN SDGs [34].

On 11 December 2019, the European Commission presented a set of political initiatives of the *European Green Deal*, the aim of which is to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 [35]. Within the framework of the agreement, zero level of net gas emissions is to be reached by a set date and by 2030, emissions are supposed to be limited by at least 55% compared to the level from 1990 [35]. The UN Environment Program publishes the annual *Global Status Reports for Buildings and Construction* summarizing the state of the construction sector in terms of sustainability [36]. In January 2023, the World Economic Forum published the document *Transitioning Industrial Clusters towards Net Zero*, in which it promotes the postulate for decarbonization of the industry [37].

The current culmination of political efforts to improve the quality of the built environment, including sustainability, is the idea that was initiated on 16 September 2020 under the slogan of *New European Bauhaus* (NEB) [38]. There are three basic values of this concept [39]:

- sustainability—"from climate goals to circularity, zero pollution, and biodiversity",
- aesthetics—"quality of experience and style beyond functionality",
- inclusion—"from valuing diversity to securing accessibility and affordability".

In addition to the above-mentioned values, "fragility" was emphasized several times as a feature of the environment in which we live and of which we must take care through joint effort [38]. The NEB idea introduces an additional deeply humanistic dimension into the ongoing discourse about the need to make a qualitative change in the sphere of construction as well as architecture itself and proposes a new paradigm that introduces the aspect of beauty and emphasizes inclusivity.

Because both the industry itself and the construction sector have a huge influence on the state of the environment by, among other things, participating in greenhouse gas emissions (the industrial sector generates 30% of emissions [37], the construction sector 39% [40]), industrial parks are a particularly important example of the built environment.

### 1.3. Aim of the Study

This article presents the results of the analysis of an industrial park as an investment located in a selected representative commune in Poland, which was made from the local development perspective on the one hand and from the perspective of sustainability on the other. The reflection undertaken in this article focuses on the issue of sustainable development in the environmental aspect as a value of the EU concept of New European Bauhaus.

The aim of this study is to understand the impact of the industrial park on local development and sustainability, as well as to attempt to assess the development of the industry in the context of long-term sustainable development in the conditions of global capitalism. Moreover, an attempt was made to identify (at least some) deficiencies and shortcomings regarding the planning and implementation of similar investments in order to indicate the possibility of their elimination in the future. These elements are discussed at the end of the paper. The analyzed case of an industrial park is intended to serve as an illustration of the research problem and a starting point for a broader discussion.

The chosen industrial park—EURO-PARK Kobierzyce—is located in the area of the Kobierzyce Commune (administrative unit) in Poland. It was created as a result of the efforts of the local government authorities as a factor to stimulate local development. Kobierzyce Commune used the economic situation created by the political transformation of the 1990s, becoming one of the richest communes in the country (for example, in 2022,

according to the data of the Local Government Service PAP, it occupied second place in the ranking of the richest communes in Poland [41]).

#### *1.4. Historical Background—Polish Economy in the Period of Transformation*

In the 1990s in Poland, during the period of political transformation and the transition from the centrally controlled economy to the free market economy, radical changes took place in all areas of economic life. Along with the start of economic transformations, the native industrial production broke down seriously, which was the result of, inter alia, the loss of existing markets [42]. Large- and medium-sized state-owned enterprises (often unprofitable and subsidized by the state) dominating in the old system required restructuring. They had to become profitable and competitive if they were to remain on the market [42]. Deep transformations also concerned the agricultural sector. The economies of Central and Eastern European countries in the socialist system were characterized by excessive agriculture, which was manifested by a high level of employment (about 20% of work resources) and participation in the production of gross domestic product [43] (p. 59). In the initial phase of the transformation in Poland there was a rapid breakdown in the profitability of agricultural production. There were changes in the ownership structure (in 1989 about 19% of agricultural areas belonged to the state) and individual farmers had to face a new free market reality [43] (pp. 60,61). In the years 1989–2003 there was a clear tendency to reduce the role of agriculture in the economic system [43] (p. 62). The process of rapid and radical economic transformations resulted in the fact that unemployment as well as a growing sphere of poverty became a big problem [44] (p. 7) (the decline in employment in the years 1990–1993 comprised nearly 1.4 million people [44] (p. 114)).

Along with the system transformation, it was expected that the country would develop according to the Western countries' model. The capitalist system offered participation in the global market of goods and services and Poland was both a new, large, as well as available market and a source of cheap labour [44].

In the face of reducing the role of the agricultural sector and progressive privatization as well as in view of the opening of the economy to foreign capital, a change in the use of agricultural land for investment purposes and the creation of local spatial development plans began to take place. The regional policy and local authorities, using the advantages of managed areas in order to attract foreign investors, performed a big role in this (pursuing spatial policy in the commune area belongs to the commune's own tasks; the local spatial development plan is an act of local law that is adopted in the form of a resolution by the commune council [45]). In this way, the role of local government units, which used territorial space as an important tool that could significantly shape the development process, was emphasised [46] (p. 154). The influx of foreign investors (observed especially from 1995 [44]) resulted in the entrance of many international companies into the Polish market. Their presence was marked, among other things, in the construction of large-scale stores and production plants on the outskirts or outside the city limits. Industrial parks, whose task was to stimulate the economy, began to be constructed then [47]. In Poland, in the early 1990s, there were four parks only; at the end of 2013, there were already sixty-seven industrial and technological parks [47] (p. 172). Some of the parks were established in post-industrial areas, which, together with the political transformation, became the property of local governments [47] (p. 174). Some parks began to be established within special economic zones, the creation and activity of which were regulated by the Act of 1994 [48]. The above actions had an impact on the change in suburban landscape and resulted in spreading urbanized areas to former agricultural areas.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

This work adopted the case study method of the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce industrial park located in Kobierzyce Commune, starting from the analysis of factors determining the choice of the location, through the analysis of the provisions of planning documents and ending with studies of published reports as well as strategies giving an insight into

the implementation of the sustainable development goals. The analysis was carried out in several stages, illustrating the multi-aspect nature of the examined issue.

The study of the context of the creation of EURO-PARK Kobierzyce, including its connections with the development of the commune, was made on the basis of the available literature—primarily on an extensive study by Przemysław Wiszewski and Rościław Żereblik: “Wielkie zmiany wiejskiego świata. Monografia historyczna gminy Kobierzyce” (“Great changes in the rural world. Historical monograph of the Kobierzyce Commune”) [49]. In Section 3.1, the commune is characterized and the historical context are presented, while in Section 3.2, the circumstances of the creation of EURO-PARK are described.

For in-depth research, a spatially separated part of the industrial park was selected.

The decision to choose the area was dictated by several conditions:

- The area is clearly spatially separated from the surroundings, which makes it easy to identify.
- The area is covered by a separate local development plan (zoning plan).
- The area houses production plants and the headquarters of the companies of the main investor of the area—LG Group, the buildings of which clearly dominate over other facilities located there. The analysis results are presented in Section 3.3.

To analyze the investment planning stage, planning provisions were studied, including the local spatial development plan [50] in force in Kobierzyce Commune at that time and legal provisions regarding the impact of the investment on the environment, such as The Act on Providing Information on the Environment and Environmental Protection, Public Participation in Environmental Protection and on Environmental Impact Assessment dated 3 October 2008 [51] and the Regulation of the Council of Ministers of 9 November 2010, on projects that may have a significant impact on the environment [52]. This information made it possible to determine what investment opportunities were offered to investors, as well as to check whether there were any specific requirements resulting from the regulations that had to be met before obtaining a building permit. The information resulting from the analyses is presented in Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2, respectively.

Then, the current state of the investment was analyzed, including architecture and land development, as well as the ownership status and information shared by the architectural studio on the website. In addition, a site visit was carried out and the materials available in the Wrocław County Spatial Information System [53] were studied. Finally, it was also checked whether the industrial development completed in the analyzed area had obtained a quality certificate in terms of sustainable development and environmental impact (such as BREEAM or LEED). The information resulting from the analyses is presented in Section 3.3.3. A significant limitation of this study was the lack of detailed information on the development, including technologies and materials used, installation systems, operation, etc., as well as information on taking into account the principles of sustainable development in the design process. It resulted from the lack of contact from the architectural studio, despite making an attempt to do so. Moreover, it was not possible to obtain information about all the designers of the analyzed investments.

To analyze the activities of enterprises in the context of their impact on the environment, the largest production plants located in the studied area, which belong to the main investor, were selected. In order to check the degree of their sustainability, available, up-to-date materials were studied—sustainability reports [54–56] and the ESG report [57] published by these companies. The results are presented in Section 3.3.4.

The reports contain information on activities (current and planned) in the field of sustainable development, including reducing the negative impact on the environment, which were the focus of the analysis. The data presented in the reports on the implementation of selected sustainable development goals give an image of the approach of enterprises to the issue of sustainability. Analysis of reports allows us to become familiarized with the company’s sustainable development policy.

A certain limitation when examining the reports was the lack of detailed data on the current impact of investments in EURO-PARK Kobierzyce on the environment—the

information was mostly presented in an aggregated manner, in relation to all locations, or with particular emphasis on leading facilities (e.g., in South Korea). However, the reports provide insight into the company's approach to the issue of sustainability and the goals planned to be achieved in all company locations, which is why it was decided to include them in the study.

The subsequent stages of the analysis described above allowed for a multi-aspect examination of the impact of investments in the selected industrial park on the environment and also provided a picture of the development of Kobierzyce Commune over the last several decades.

The choice of literature sources on which the article was based was dictated by their timeliness and relevance to the analyzed topic. For the purpose of discussing the results, the current local development strategies were studied in order to relate the advantages and problems diagnosed therein to the analyzed case.

The Discussion part (Section 4) discusses the results of the case study, indicating recommendations for the future.

### **3. A Case Study of the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce Industrial Park in Kobierzyce Commune**

#### *3.1. Description and Post-War History of the Development of Kobierzyce Commune*

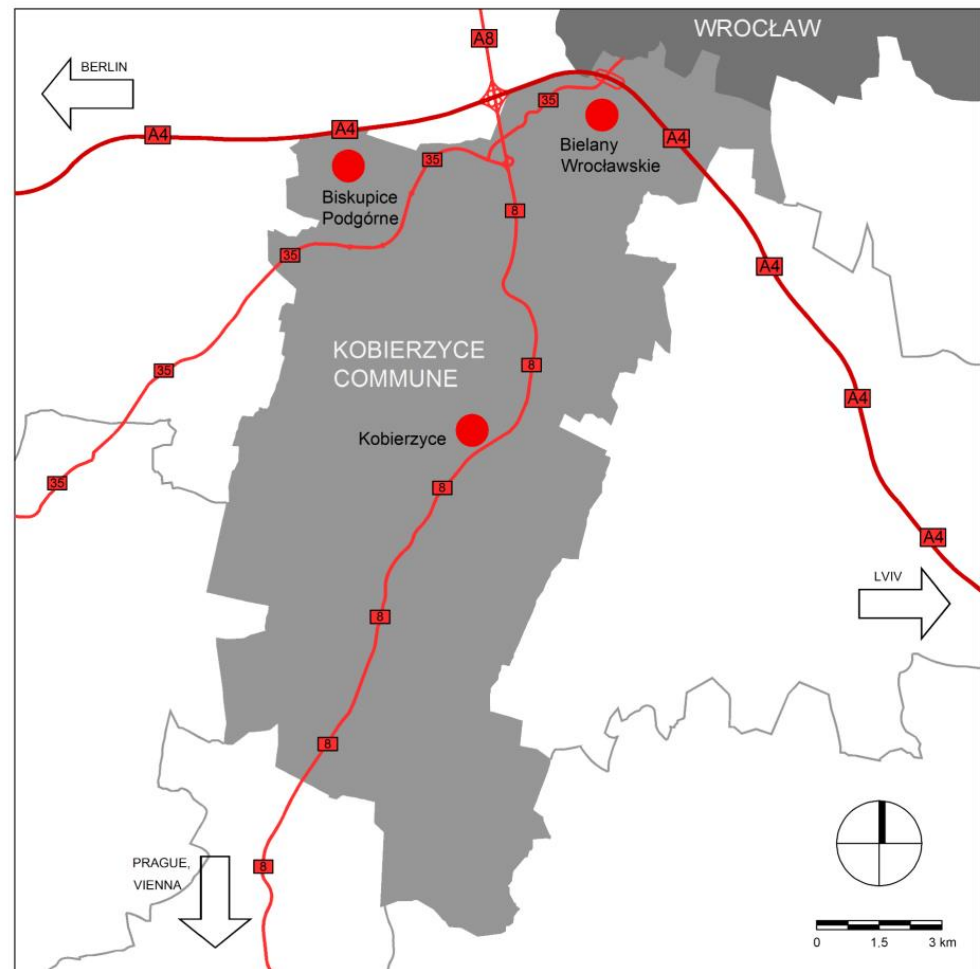
Kobierzyce Commune is an administrative unit that is divided into 32 districts with a total area of 149.3 square meters. It is situated in southwestern Poland (relatively close to the borders with Germany and the Czech Republic) in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship and inhabited by around 22,000 people (as of 31 December 2020) [58]. It is located south of Wrocław (one of the largest cities in Poland and the capital city of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship) and belongs to the Wrocław Metropolitan Area and the Wrocław Functional Area. Together with eight other administrative units, it is part of Wrocław County. At present, there are 33 towns and villages in the commune. Before World War II, this area belonged to the German Reich and was inhabited by the German population. After the war, along with the change in state borders and the settlement of these areas by Poles (displaced people from the Eastern Borderlands and Central Poland), a new administrative order was introduced.

The A4 motorway runs through the northern areas of Kobierzyce Commune—an important east–west communication route and one of the main car routes running through Poland, which connects Western and Eastern Europe (Germany–Ukraine). Near the village of Bielany Wrocławskie, there is an exit from the highway and exits from national roads DK5, DK8 and DK35 to Wrocław. A European route leading south to the border with the Czech Republic and further, to Austria, runs through the area of the commune (Figure 1).

Kobierzyce Commune, being a rural administrative unit, is primarily agricultural in nature and land classes definitely exceed the average in the country (79.1% of the soils are soils of valuation class II and III [58]). Historically, these areas supplied food to the inhabitants of Wrocław [49]. Immediately after World War II, the present areas of the commune were dominated by private farms. After the change in borders, this area was settled by Polish people who took over the existing properties. The socialist system prevailing in Poland after the war was not conducive to the development of private farms. In the 1950s, by virtue of the agricultural reform, regardless of the functioning private farms, State Agricultural Farms were created in the country (these farms received support from the state budget; they often did not bring profits and usually aroused the reluctance of farmers) and the percentage of private and state lands fluctuated over the next decades (in 1972, 75% of the total agricultural land was owned by individual farmers [49] (p. 180), whereas in the 1980s it was only 46% [49] (p. 181)).

In 1966, there were three State Agricultural Farms in the commune [49] (p. 177). In 1972, a State Agricultural Farm operated among others in Biskupice Podgórne in the northern part of Kobierzyce Commune [49] (p. 179). In the 1970s, thanks to political changes that were conducive to the development of a private initiative, private enterprises

began to be created (but at that time they were rather of a craft character). The economic development of the commune took place during that decade. In 1978, 16 state service facilities and 68 craft factories operated in the commune [49] (p. 180). However, the commune was primarily agricultural, whereas the state then emphasized the development of specialist farms [49].



**Figure 1.** Kobierzyce Commune in southwestern Poland and the main communication routes: A4 motorway and national roads—DK8 and DK35; prepared by author, based on [53].

Summing up the picture of economic transformations in the commune in the years 1945–1989, it can be stated, according to the authors of the study on the commune, that “it is extremely complicated. (...) the then economy, centrally controlled without taking into account any local conditions, often underwent reorganizations due to the changing political views of the authorities, but not economic needs, did not develop in a way that could be described as natural, market or (...) linear. These are rather jumps and breakdowns, taking place differently in different fields, closely related to political decisions of the authorities and social transformations in the country” [49] (p. 185).

The year 1989 brought a change in the political system in Poland. The Polish state opened to the influx of external capital, offering foreign entrepreneurs favourable investment conditions. At the beginning of the next decade, a decision to liquidate the State Agricultural Farms was made (in Kobierzyce Commune, several hundred people worked there and they were often the only breadwinners in the family [49] (p. 206)). Entering the era of globalization in the following decades was supposed to strongly mark the landscape of the commune—both in terms of space and economy.

The national authorities hoped for the privatization of the areas of former state farms by selling land to farmers and former employees of these enterprises; however, this was not possible to a large extent [49] (p. 206). The opening of Poland to foreign markets in the 1990s resulted in an uncertain situation in the native agricultural sector. Due to the liquidation of state farms, there was an increase in unemployment (plants producing and servicing obsolete equipment that was used in State Agricultural Farms were closed and, also, the Commune Peasant Self-Help Cooperative, which previously served the entire commune in the field of trade and services, was liquidated [49]). Moreover, at the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century, the infrastructure (including, among other things, roads, gas, water supply, sewage and energy installations as well as drainage devices) in the area of Kobierzyce Commune required modernization and development [49] (pp. 207, 227).

Faced with the above difficulties, the commune authorities decided to diversify production and created conditions for the development of large commercial, industrial and logistics investments (while also focusing on the development of individual agriculture). First, the authorities tried to use the favourable location of the land in the north of the commune at the exit of highway A4 and national roads DK5, DK8 and DK35 to Wrocław near the village of Bielany Wrocławskie, i.e., the area of the so-called Bielany Junction. In 1992, the decommunization procedure was completed and the consent to change the use of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes was obtained—approximately 80 hectares in the Junction area [59] (p. 23). The real estate prices and favourable investment conditions in this region began to attract foreign investors [49] (p. 216) (among other things, very good plot infrastructure; for example, in 1999 the main power point was completed in Bielany Wrocławskie, thanks to which not only did the northern area of the commune obtain “a more sustainable” power supply, but also, in the entire Commune, new energy-consuming investments could be created [49] (p. 231)). The first large plot of land (7.23 hectares) in the Bielany Junction area was bought by MAKRO CASH&CARRY in December 1992, allocating it for the construction of a hall with the function of a multi-industry wholesaler, which initiated a construction boom in this area [49] (p. 217)—in 1993, the construction of the Cadbury Chocolate Factory began nearby; a year later, IKEA invested in the area; and in 1995, the Cargill concern decided to build a glucose syrup factory in this area. These were the first large foreign investors in the municipality [49] (pp. 215–217).

At the end of the 20th century, the Bielany Centrum was established (at present, Aleja Bielany) under the management of IKEA, which included investments of three large retail chains (IKEA, OBI, TESCO) and, a bit later, the Bielany Centrum II (Aleja Bielany II) was established, where one of the first supermarkets in Poland was opened by Saturn Company [49] (p. 217). In 2004, the Prologis Company bought the land in the neighbourhood for the construction of a logistics centre [49] (p. 217).

On 1 May 2004, Poland became a member of the European Union. In the same year, a new project of the study of conditions and directions of spatial development of Kobierzyce Commune was created (on its basis, local landscape planning is prepared, which is an act of local law adopted in the form of a resolution of the Commune Council). In this project, the commune was treated as an industrial and service region with 2.4 thousand hectares of the commune areas provided for investments [49] (p. 246). Due to the fact that there were no free investment areas of the Bielany Junction anymore, the commune authorities designated new investment zones, including the one in Biskupice Podgórne [49] (p. 219), in the territory of the former State Agricultural Farm [60]. At that time, there was an opinion that “this is the largest plot of land in Poland which was prepared for an industrial investor so well” [49] (p. 219). In this area, one of the Special Economic Zones was supposed to be located. Negotiations between foreign investors and the Polish side took place at the government level. The size of the investment and employment depended on the possibility of tax benefits that a foreign investor could count on [49] (p. 220). In 2005, a contract for the construction of a factory for the assembly of liquid crystal displays, mainly for the production of televisions by the South Korean company LG Philips LCD, was signed [49] (p. 220).

### 3.2. Creation of the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce Industrial Park

In order to be able to implement the investment agreements that were concluded between the Council of Ministers, LG Philips LCD (at present, LG Display LCD) and other contractors, the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce industrial park was created within the framework of the Subzone Wrocław-Kobierzyce TSSE EURO-PARK WISŁOSAN in 2005 [61]. EURO-PARK Kobierzyce covers the areas of Bielany Wrocławskie and Biskupice Podgórne with a total area of approximately 410 hectares, of which 240 hectares constitute lands intended for investments (30 hectares in Bielany Wrocławskie and 210 hectares in Biskupice Podgórne) [61]. Since then, several companies of LG Group have been operating in the zone in Biskupice Podgórne. In 2016, the first lithium-ion battery factory in Europe was founded for LG Chem Energy electric cars (at present, LG Energy Solution), which is the largest factory of this type in the world [61], making Poland the greatest exporter of this product in Europe.

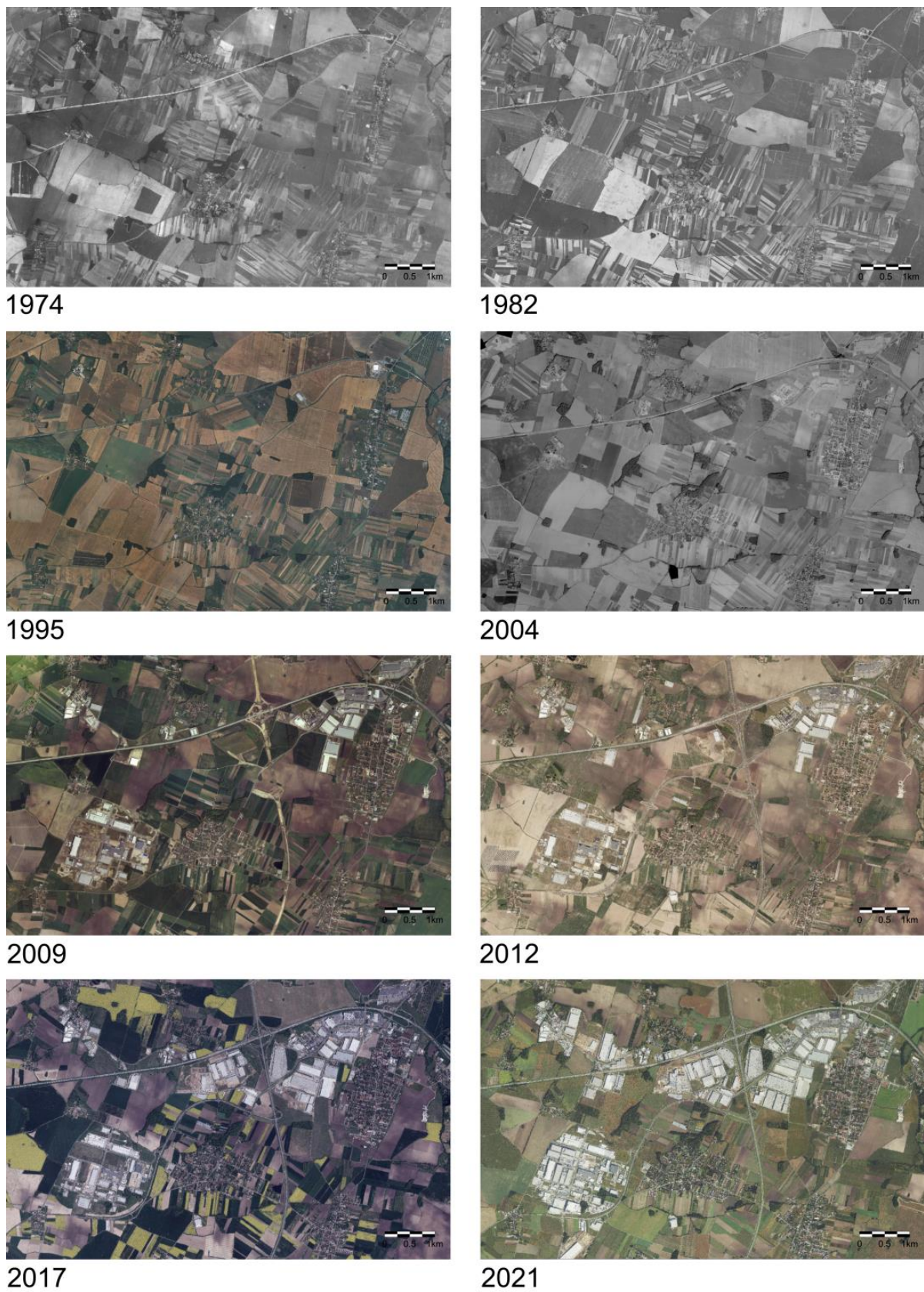
The Industrial Development Agency S.A., which manages the industrial park, says that “the purpose of EURO-PARK Kobierzyce is stimulation of the economic development of the region, the development of industrial efficiency, full and sustainable use of well-developed investment areas and creating space for new investments, preparing investment areas for the needs of innovative and modern investments” [61]. At present, there are 37 operating enterprises in EURO-PARK Kobierzyce [62].

New investments stimulated the development of local infrastructure, thanks to, among other things, investment obligations on the part of local and voivodeship authorities, an example of which is the construction of an energy line for the investment area in Biskupice Podgórne, which made it possible to meet the total demand for energy with a capacity of 160 MW (as estimated, this is a value corresponding to half of the demand of the city of Wrocław for electricity) [49] (p. 221). The influx of foreign investors and economic diversity in the commune also had a beneficial impact on the development of other branches of the local economy and the connections of investors with the commune refer to many spheres [49]. In 2015, over 10,000 workers were employed in companies operating within the special economic zone (although many of them are not inhabitants of Kobierzyce Commune, the presence of large enterprises has a stimulating effect on the local service sector) [49] (p. 224).

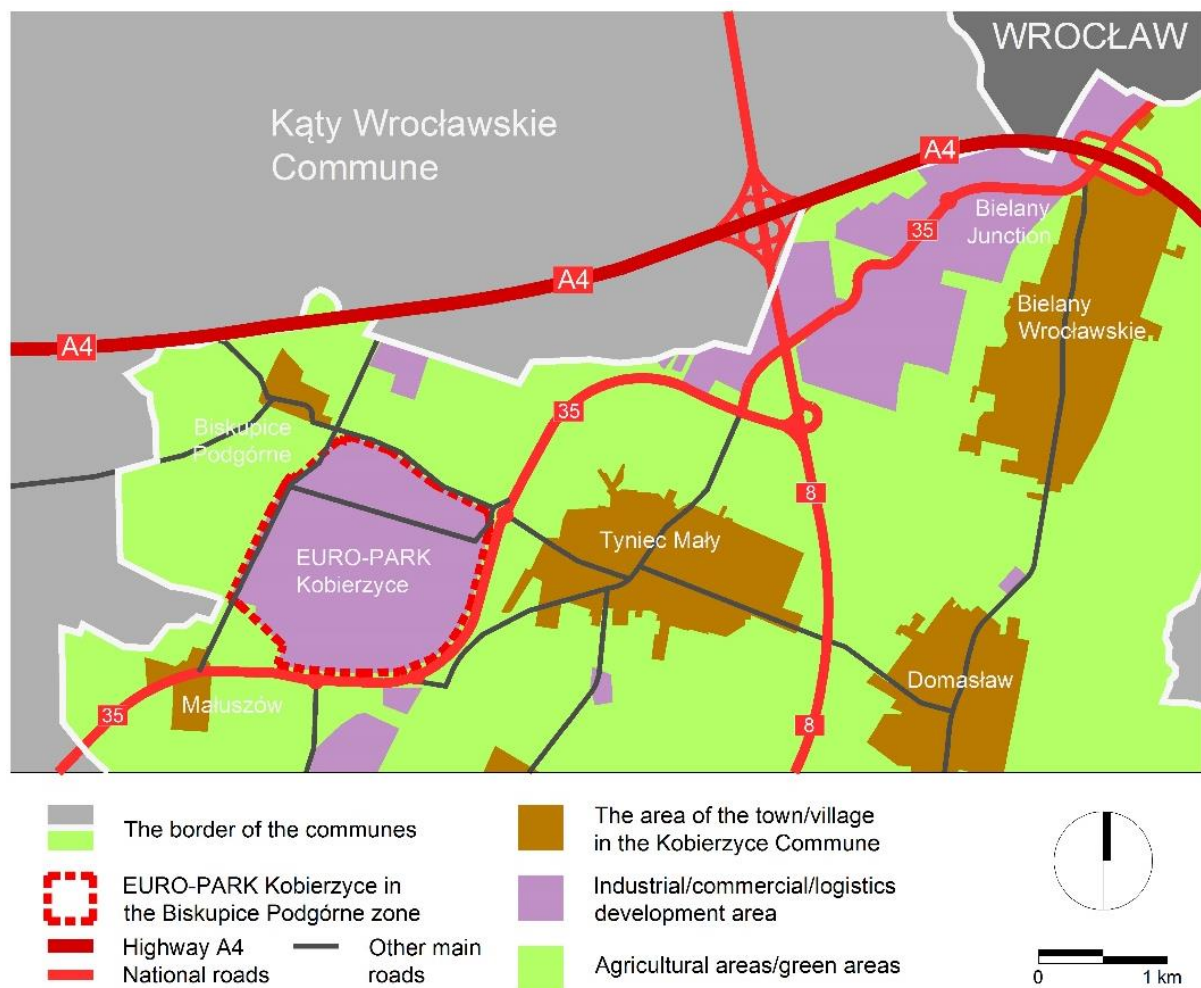
As a result of the decision concerning the transformation of agricultural areas into investment areas, using local advantages and thanks to the consistently conducted policy, Kobierzyce Commune “became a recognizable brand for foreign entrepreneurs” [49] (p. 248). As the local authorities state, “The Kobierzyce Commune stands out from other rural administrative units in Poland because it skillfully uses its attributes to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants. Undertakings which are important for the development of the commune, both today and in the long run constitute the priority” [63].

Intensive urbanization of the northern area of the commune, mainly in the area of the Bielany Junction and within the framework of the industrial park, changed the local landscape—the place of arable fields was taken by industrial facilities and large-scale trade and logistics bases. In the aerial photos from the years 1974–2021 in the northern part of the commune around the villages of Bielany Wrocławskie, Biskupice Podgórne and Tyniec Mały, we can see areas that were occupied almost exclusively by arable fields, which were gradually inferior to intensive developments (Figure 2).

The analysis of the case study focuses on the investments that were implemented in the area of EURO-PARK Kobierzyce in the zone of Biskupice Podgórne. It is an area with visible boundaries, limited by national road No. 35 in the east and south and spatially separated from the surrounding farmland in the north and west (Figure 3).



**Figure 2.** Changes in the area of the northern part of Kobierzycze Commune over the years—visible progressive urbanization since 1995; source: [53].



**Figure 3.** EURO-PARK Kobierzyce in the Biskupice Podgórne zone; prepared by author, based on [53].

### 3.3. EURO-PARK Kobierzyce in the Zone of Biskupice Podgórne

#### 3.3.1. Planning Strategy—Local Spatial Development Plan

In 2006, the Kobierzyce Commune Council passed a local spatial development plan (hereinafter referred to as the plan) for the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce area within Biskupice Podgórne, which constituted the basis for developing projects in this area. Drawing up the plan is the responsibility of the commune and it is a decisive moment when decisions are made on the investor's interests.

One of the first records indicates that “within the limits of the area covered by the plan there are no areas requiring the principles of protection rules and shaping the spatial order” [50] (p. 3). Moreover, “within the boundaries of the area covered by the plan there are no areas requiring specific conditions for land development and restrictions in their use, including a prohibition of development” [50] (p. 5).

The plan specifies that “production, component, and service activities which implement the findings of this plan, may not cause nuisance in neighboring areas and the excessive burden on the environment outside the plot of land to which the investor has a legal title” [50] (pp. 3,4).

The area of the industrial park is situated in the territory of the Major Groundwater Reservoir (GZWP no. 319 “Sub-Reservoir Prochowice—Środa Śląska”) [50] (p. 4). According to the definition of the Polish Geological Institute—National Research Institute, “main groundwater reservoirs are geological structures rich in water, which constitute or may constitute in the future strategic groundwater resources to be used to supply the

population and basic industries requiring high-quality water. In accordance with the contractual separation criteria—due to the high quality of water, abundance and potential productivity—GZWP's constitute the most valuable parts of hydrostructural units and aquifer systems. They require special protection in terms of the chemical and quantitative status of groundwater and control of resource management (. . .)" [64]. The plan indicates the lack of administrative decisions related to the location of the Reservoir, which, however, would be binding on the investor under separate regulations. It is prohibited to build individual water intakes on the investor's premises with a depth exceeding 30 m and water consumption exceeding 10 m<sup>3</sup>/day [50] (p. 6).

The area was covered by the Archaeological Conservation Protection Zone and archaeological sites were established ("a settlement of the Lusatian culture from the Bronze Age and the Hallstatt period" and "prehistory traces of settlement") [50] (p. 4). Before obtaining a building permit, it was therefore necessary to "obtain permission of the Lower Silesian Provincial Conservator of Monuments to carry out earthworks in the historic area of the conservation works procedure, which consist in conducting rescue archaeological research by the excavation method or permanent archaeological supervision by an authorized archaeologist at the expense of the investor" [50] (p. 4).

The provisions allow investors to construct buildings of significant volumes. The maximum development area for the main development area and for services was set at 90% of the plot of land (the minimum biologically active area was set at 10%) and the maximum development height was set at 55 m [50] (p. 5).

Moreover, the plan regulated the issues that were connected with infrastructure, including installations (in the case of heat supply, it was ordered "to use boiler rooms operating with technology combustion with low emissions into the atmosphere" [50] (p. 7)) and mandated separate collection of waste [50].

#### Conclusions:

- By drawing up a plan that "invites" foreign companies to invest in the area of the commune, the plan's authors created very favourable conditions from the investment point of view.
- The plan's provisions allow for high design flexibility; they make it possible to implement buildings of significant volumes without regulating aesthetic and quality issues.
- A very small share of biologically active area is allowed.
- The plan lacks detailed provisions regarding the operation of the development and environmental protection issues, apart from the basic guidelines resulting from separate regulations.

#### 3.3.2. A Decision on Environmental Conditions

Since 2008, in relation to investments as enterprises that can *always* or *potentially* have a significant impact on the environment, before obtaining a building permit, Polish provisions impose the requirement to obtain a decision on environmental conditions [51]. A decision on environmental conditions determines the conditions for the implementation of a given enterprise, such as the use of the area in relation to the stage of implementation of the investment, as well as the further use and the requirements in the scope of environmental protection necessary to be taken into account during its implementation and operation. According to the Ordinance [52], "industrial or warehouse development along with accompanying infrastructure and a built-up area of not less than (. . .) 1 hectare (. . .)—whereby the built-up area is understood as the area of land occupied by construction facilities and the remaining area to be transformed as a result of the enterprise" is subject to the need to obtain a decision [52] (p. 15111) (the provisions of the 2019 Ordinance extended this requirement by adding "buildings with photovoltaic systems" [65]). In the case of development in Kobierzyce Commune, the relevant documents (including environmental impact forecast) are reviewed by the Regional Director for Environmental Protection in Wrocław (and, depending on the investment, among other things, by the State Poviast Sanitary Inspector in Wrocław and the State Water Farm—Polish Waters—Director of the Regional Water

Management Board in Wrocław). The environmental decision, which is preceded by the environmental impact assessment, is issued by the head of Kobierzyce Commune.

The Act of 2008 [51] is supposed to guarantee social participation in the proceedings regarding the issuing of decisions on building conditions for investment, in relation to which there is suspicion that they may have a negative impact on the environment (including human health as well). Pursuant to the regulations, information on planned investments that can significantly affect the environment is announced on the notice board in the Commune Office and on the commune's website in the Public Information Bulletin [66] (in practice, this is not an effective method of informing society because it requires recipients with substantive preparation to some extent who know the rules and are aware of their potential agency).

*Conclusion:*

With regard to the investments in EURO-PARK Kobierzyce of the area indicated, for which the implementation of the above provisions was applied for permission, it was necessary to assess their impact on the environment with the participation of local government and the public.

### 3.3.3. Description of the Investment

The industrial park in Biskupice Podgórne, with an area of approximately 210 hectares [61], covers the areas of individual companies (mostly invested already), access roads (along the perimeter, excluding the southwestern corner) and the network of internal roads. The analyzed area houses several companies of the LG Group, of which the largest area, about 100 hectares, is occupied by the LG Energy Solution buildings, which produces batteries for electric cars (it is the largest investor in Kobierzyce Commune (as of 2021) [67]). The remaining area has buildings that belong to LG Electronics (households appliances factory), LG CHEM (electronics production), LG Innotek (manufacturer of car parts) and other companies and cooperating plants. Facilities of LG CHEM Wrocław Energy Phase I (2017), LG CHEM Wrocław Energy Phase II (2017–2018) and LG CHEM Wrocław Energy Factory (2016–2018) were designed by Yoon Group [66] (the company is also the author of the Starion Company building in the described area [66]). There are no data on the authorship of the other buildings in EURO-PARK Kobierzyce.

The areas around the facilities include, among other things, storage squares, infrastructure facilities, parking lots for passenger cars, grass greenery and plantings. The implemented industrial facilities have the forms of rectangular bodies with flat roofs and mostly white facades (mainly facade panels) with a height of one to three storeys. The total area of flat (or slightly sloping) roofs of the main industrial buildings only is about 65 hectares (estimated own measurement on the basis of [53]) (Figure 4). The analysis of materials and site inspection did not show any development of their surface (e.g., solar installation).

The buildings have not obtained certificates in sustainability that are granted according to the multi-criteria (BREEAM, LEED et al.) in their categories (see [68]).

*Conclusions:*

- The analyzed development has a monotonous architectural expression.
- There is a large area of undeveloped flat roofs and a large amount of paved area (parking lots).
- The development does not meet at least one of the required criteria to obtain sustainability certificates.



**Figure 4.** Investments in the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce area in the Biskupice Podgórne zone; prepared by author, based on [53].

### 3.3.4. Sustainability and Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals

The analysis regarding the implementation of sustainable development goals in the zone of Biskupice Podgórne focused on the strategies of LG enterprise as the main investor in EURO-PARK Kobierzyce (other companies cooperating with the LG Company, operating in the area of EURO-PARK Kobierzyce, also took actions in the field of sustainable development. For example, production in the UPM Raflatac factory in Biskupice Podgórne has been powered by 100% renewable energy since 2016 [69]; another example is the Taiwanese Company Universal Scientific Industrial issuing reports on its activities in relation to the environment and social issues since 2009 [70]). The analysis focuses on those activities that are aimed at reducing negative effects of the production activity on the environment.

### 3.4. LG Electronics Sustainability Report

In the report published on the LG general website regarding the implementation of the objectives of sustainable development by the enterprise—2022–2023 LG Electronics Sustainability Report—there was a current review (data from 2022 and the first half of 2023) of information on the ESG management strategy (an acronym from the words environmental, social and governance that means three factors (environmental protection, social responsibility and corporate order), on the basis of which non-financial assessments of the enterprise are made). The management of ESG has become an image issue for companies due to the pressure of international public opinion. LG has been managing ESG since 2021 [71]). A few years earlier, as part of their obligations, the company set the

ESG strategic task Better Life Plan 2030 and is going to achieve neutrality in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2030 [54]. The LG Company has joined the global initiative RE100 (Renewable Energy 100), in the framework of which companies aim to become 100% renewable in order to satisfy their own energy needs in the areas of workplaces in firms all over the world. LG is planning to achieve this goal by 2050 by using solar and wind energy; it also declares a transition to a closed circulation economy by means of waste recycling [54].

In the Strategy for ESG Management under the slogan Better Life for All, the goals were divided into two categories on the basis of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals: “For the Planet”, which is focused on the purposes connected with environmental protection—Carbon Neutrality (UN SDG No. 13), Circularity (UN SDG No. 15), Clean Technology (UN SDG No. 7)—and “For People”, which is focused on social purposes—Decent Workplace (UN SDG Numbers 12, 16), Diversity and Inclusion (UN SDG Numbers 5, 10) and Design for All (UN SDG Numbers 3, 11) [54].

The Report covering the years 2022–2023 also presents information on the company’s activities for local communities around the world (including, inter alia, South Korea, India and Ethiopia; no data on the actions taken in Poland) as an expression of the implementation of UN SDG Numbers 1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 11 and 17 [54].

### 3.5. LG CHEM Sustainability Report

The latest LG CHEM Sustainability Report from 2022 presents data collected from LG Chem firms from all over the world. The company’s sustainability strategy includes the goals set by the company and was divided into “5 Sustainable Priorities”: (1) Climate action, (2) Renewable energy transition, (3) Circular economy, (4) Environmental protection, (5) Responsible supply chain [55] (p. 22). As part of the adopted categories, the aspirations focus, among other things, on (1) Global zero emission by 2050 (“2050 Net-Zero”), (2) “Transition is 100% renewable energy for overseas facilities by 2030 and domestic facilities by 2050”, (3) “Expanding the recycling of waste plastics and waste batteries”, and (4) “Promoting Zero Waste to Landfill across operations” [55] (p. 22). In 2022, the company managed to achieve carbon-neutral growth goal 20 years before the scheduled date [55] (p. 23).

The Report also presents the ESG strategy of the enterprise. The Environmental ESG Key Indicators were, inter alia, presented: greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption—the company strives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to switch to the use of 100% renewable energy [55] (p. 34).

Moreover, the information on what was achieved in each of four areas, i.e., Environmental, Social, Governance, and Growth, was presented [55] (pp. 40–43). In relation to environment protection activities, it was stated that in the global terms, the transition to renewable energy in 2022 was 11.6%, of which seven foreign facilities obtained 100% conversion (locations were not given) [55] (pp. 40, 46).

The company focuses on the implementation of five of the seventeen UN SDGs; these are Numbers 8, 9, 12, 13 and 17 [55] (p. 48).

The report also includes information on actions taken for local communities (no current data regarding location in Poland) [55].

### 3.6. LG Innotek Sustainability Report

According to the LG Innotek Sustainability Report 2022–2023, which was published in 2023 and contained data from 2022 and the first half of 2023, the main directions in the ESG strategy in relation to environmental protection are as follows: Carbon neutrality, Resource circulation and Green technology /Products [56] (p. 012) (as reported in the introduction of the Report [56] (p. 02); some of the quantitative data presented apply to facilities in Korea only).

The company joined the RE100 and Science-Based Targets initiative (SBTi) program. The company declares a 100% transition to electrical renewable energy by 2030 (the Report gives an energy transition rate of 22%) as well as the achievement of carbon neutrality by 2040 (the Report gives a carbon neutrality rate of 20%) [56] (pp. 016,017,50).

In the scope of green management, the goals include, among other things, a reduction in the total annual emission of pollutants by 90% (from 2018) up to around 2030, switching to substitutes for substances of very high concern up to around 2030, as well as making a plan for actions for biological diversity (as of 2023) [56] (p. 044). The obligations made are part of the UN SDGs Numbers 11 and 12 [56] (p. 044). In the scope of pollutant management, the company makes, among other things, regular measurements of the level of emissions of air pollutants and also analyzes the sewage discharged in order to reduce water pollution (3R activities implementation aimed at reducing water consumption and reusing sewage began) [56] (p. 048). The average concentration of air pollution emissions in 2022 was at a level of less than 3% compared to the permissible limit [56] (p. 048). The 100% zero-emission vehicle transition goal for company cars has also been undertaken by 2030 [56] (p. 050). Moreover, as part of the actions taken, roof photovoltaic installations are being introduced in subsequent foreign facilities of the company [56] (p. 052). Additionally, monthly greenhouse gas emissions reports from facilities from all over the world are made [56] (p. 056). The intensity of greenhouse gas emissions in 2022 was 2.31tCO<sub>2</sub>eq/KRW 100 million [56] (pp. 016,056), noting a decrease of 6% in comparison to the previous year (year by year). The goals undertaken in the carbon neutrality area are part of UN SDGs Numbers 7, 11, 13 and 15 [56] (p. 050).

The goals undertaken in the area of resource circulation are part of UN SDGs Numbers 8, 12 and 14. They are obtaining a Zero Waste to Landfill certificate for workplaces in the state and abroad by around 2025, reaching 95% waste recycling by around 2030, installing facilities to reuse the cleaning water discharged from the process by around 2025 and achieving the re-use of water resources by around 2030 at a level of 50% [56] (p. 058).

In the areas that are not included in this analysis, LG Innotek Company also publishes information on the implementation of UN SDGs, e.g., in the scope of innovation, Numbers 9 and 17, as well as Social Contribution, UN SDGs Numbers 1, 2, 4, 10, 11 and 17 [56] (p. 084) (in total, in many areas of its activity, the company participates in the implementation of all UN SDGs (see collective statement: [56] (p. 141)). The study provides information about the company's operation for the local community in Poland, which consist in, inter alia, activities for children with disabilities and students with special needs [56] (p. 088).

### 3.7. LG Energy Solution ESG Report

The latest report of LG Energy Solution Company—LG Energy Solution ESG Report—includes data from 2022 (and some from the first half of 2023) and concerns the ESG strategy, which was presented in the form of the slogan “We CHARGE toward a better future” [57] (p. 24). In 2021, the company joined the RE100 initiative, undertaking to use 100% renewable electricity by 2030 (the company's global rate in 2022 was at a level of 56%) [57] (p. 30). As stated, the production plant located in Poland already uses 100% renewable sources (the transformation of all plants is supposed to take place by 2025) [57] (p. 30). The company also joined the EV100 initiative—a conversion of 100% of official vehicles to electric vehicles [57] (p. 30). The company declared the goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2040 [57] (p. 31). In the future, the company is planning, among other things, the installation of energy storage systems near its business sites in Korea and abroad as well as an increase in the use of recycling materials [57] (p. 31). In general, LG Energy Solution Company takes actions in areas covering UN SDG implementations Numbers 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17 [57] (p. 102).

The analyzed reports focused on the effects of the LG Company's activity regarding the process of production (e.g., energy consumption needed for production, waste recycling) and their material composition and operation, so that they gradually have an increasingly lower negative impact on the environment (use of recycled materials, balanced supply chain, etc.); attention was also paid to the impact of employee activity on the environment (guidelines for company cars). However, there was no information on the principles of landscape planning for new investments (e.g., in the matter of parking lots and green areas) and the requirements for architectural facilities (the issue of, among other things, building

materials and performance), thanks to which the material traces of the company's presence in a given area could also meet the guidelines of sustainable development (the issue of "sustainable workplace" raised in reports concerns social issues such as gender equality, work culture, etc.).

Most of the data in all of the reports are presented by location: Korea and overseas.

### 3.8. Conclusions

- The activities of LG Group companies are consistent with the idea of sustainability: the company not only cares about its own economic growth, but is also active in activities aimed at minimizing the negative impact on the environment and activities for the benefit of the community (inside and outside the company).
- The sustainability reports lack detailed information on the activities of enterprises located in EURO-PARK Kobierzyce. There was no sustainability report from LG Energy Solution.
- The way the data are presented in reports makes it impossible to quickly compare them.
- The data in reports are often presented from the perspective of the goal and what has been achieved, rather than from the perspective of the problem.
- The activities of these companies are consistent with the implementation of the goals set out in the set of political initiatives of the European Green Deal, the most important of which is to reduce the level of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to the level in 1990 and to achieve zero net emissions by 2050 [54–57].
- Companies implement the UN SDGs in various ways. The reports do not provide detailed information on the functioning of individual facilities.
- Although some information regarding the companies' activities would require supplementation or details to be made public, efforts are being made to ensure that the environmental impact related to their activities is gradually minimized in all locations.
- There is a lack of information on the requirements for architectural structures and land development.
- The reports publish certain activities of enterprises for local communities that influence local development.
- By presenting extensive reports on sustainability—currently a priority issue—the company builds its own positive image.

## 4. Discussion

Studies of the literature and source materials regarding the economic changes that took place in Kobierzyce Commune, as well as a case study of an industrial park located in the commune, allowed us to see the relationship between local development and the development of the industrial area, as well as the complexity of the issue of industrial sustainability.

The issues arising from the analyses are discussed in the final part of this paper, where recommendations regarding the sustainable development of industrialization are also proposed.

### 4.1. Local Development

The creation of the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce industrial park was possible as a result of the political transformation in Poland—the transition from a centrally controlled economy to a free market economy. In this situation, both the foreign investor and the Polish authorities (national and local government) took advantage of the possibilities of global capitalism to open a branch of a Korean company in Poland. The commune took advantage of the benefits of the location and allocated the area of the former State Agricultural Farm for the new investment, the use of which for agricultural purposes was not economically viable at that time. Taking into account the large land resources (including soil) of the commune, it can be concluded that from an economic point of view it was the right decision. The diversification of the economy had a positive impact on local development, in accordance with the assumptions of the economic base theory and the cluster theory [8]. The park contributed, among others, to the development of large-scale exports and also created

many new jobs. Therefore, the goal of the local government authorities has been achieved. The commune has developed, undergoing multi-directional modernization, stimulated and financed to a large extent thanks to foreign investments.

Currently, the commune pursues a development policy based on the sustainability paradigm [59].

*The development strategy of Kobierzyce Commune until 2030* was prepared with the participation of experts and the local community, in accordance with the Act on the principles of development policy [72]. Developed and implemented under the Act on Municipal Self-Government (Journal of Laws of 2023, items 40, 572, 1463, 1688) [73], it defines development priorities and sets directions of actions enabling solutions to diagnosed problems and strengthening the identified potentials of the commune [59]. Pursuant to this Act, the commune's development strategy is consistent with the assumptions of higher-level strategies [73] (p. 16), which are the Wrocław County Development Strategy 2030 and Lower Silesian Voivodeship Development Strategy 2030, as well as the Integrated Territorial Investment Strategy of the Wrocław Functional Area, National Strategy for Regional Development 2030, Strategy for Responsible Development by 2020 (with a perspective up to 2030), Long-term National Development Strategy: Poland 2030 and, finally, Sustainable Europe 2030 [74] (p. 53). Moreover, together with four other local government units, Kobierzyce Commune is associated with *the Local Action Group for the Sustainable Development of the Communes of Kąty Wrocławskie, Kobierzyce, Siechnice, Żórawina, Domaniów—Lider A4* (LGD), established in July 2008 [75]. The main goal of the LGD is, among other things, "acting for the sustainable development of rural areas, taking into account the appropriate protection and promotion of the natural environment, landscape and historical and cultural resources as well as equal opportunities, activation of the rural population, promotion of rural areas and communes located in the LGD's area of operation" [75]. The activities are implemented mainly within the framework of the Local Development Strategy, developed for a period of several years; the current strategy covers the years 2023–2027 [76]. Therefore, local development policy in Poland has become part of the European sustainable development policy. The latest results of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals on a national scale are presented in the report "Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Poland 2023" [77], which provides information collected from 12 out of 16 voivodeships [77]; the Lower Silesian Voivodeship did not participate in the review [77] (p. 38).

Regional development strategies specify, among others, the development potential of the region, estimated on the basis of SWOT analyses, which categorize processes and phenomena as strengths and weaknesses. The published analysis results enable, among others, a general assessment of opportunities and threats arising from industrial activity in the region. They show that a high concentration of foreign investments and, among others, the pro-export orientation of enterprises was included among the strengths of the region [78] (pp. 37–41). Among the identified threats to the Wrocław subregion, the following development barriers were indicated: a high level of air pollution and "an increase in the share of urbanized and built-up areas in communes neighboring Wrocław, at the expense of agricultural space" [78] (p. 36). Analyses for the voivodeship also indicated "progressive degradation of the acoustic climate, especially along major communication routes" [78] (p. 6). It is worth mentioning that an additional effect of the activities of South Korean companies in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship is the launch of a direct Wrocław–Seoul air connection on 3 November 2023 (there are over 580 Korean companies located in the Lower Silesian Voivodeship (48% of all Korean companies operating in Poland; as of 3 November 2023)) [79].

Kobierzyce Commune is also developing in terms of social well-being. This includes, among others, a low level of unemployment and modernizations carried out. In the "Good Commune for Life" ranking, taking into account the Quality of Life Index, published in October 2023, it reached first place in the voivodeship and sixth place in the country [80].

#### 4.2. Local Spatial Planning

The location of EURO-PARK in Kobierzyce Commune was made possible by the decision of the local government to change the land use from agricultural to industrial. An insight into the local development plan for the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce area (Section 3.3.1) allows one to notice a certain inequality in the relationship of global investor to local context (this situation may also occur in relation to private domestic investors). The conditions provided for in the plan, guaranteeing a minimum of restrictions, are intended to attract investors. They create a favorable situation for the entrepreneur, disregarding the local context (rural landscape) and other local values (e.g., soil quality).

A phenomenon like this can be seen as a general threat when the vision of development from an economic perspective dominates over other conditions. In the past, there were many situations in which regions that wanted modernization and economic growth tried to attract foreign capital, e.g., at the expense of their natural resources. Therefore, care should be taken to ensure that the choice of investment area (especially in relation to industry) is dictated by economic, social and environmental factors that are in balance. Free land is a resource that should be used in an optimized manner (see, e.g., [12]), taking into account the long-term perspective. The question of whether new industrial plants should be built in non-urbanized areas at all remains to be considered.

The provisions of the plan for the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce area did not regulate many issues, including those regarding spatial order and the quality of architecture. What is also noteworthy is the very low index of biologically active surface. Although the plan regulated certain issues related to the use of facilities due to the potential emission of pollutants, its provisions could be more detailed.

Planning documents are a powerful tool in the hands of local government authorities. Preparing them while taking into account the principles of sustainability would have a beneficial impact on the environment and the quality of people's lives (see [81]).

It is recommended that in the future, especially in relation to industrial investments, spatial development plans include guidelines resulting from the New European Bauhaus principles, including establishing a framework for the quality of architecture and environmental protection. They should, among others, specify the method of obtaining electricity, the method of rainwater management and the share of recycled building materials and indicate the possibility of developing the surface of flat roofs. This may involve the need to develop and introduce new urban indicators and other parameters regulating the future functioning of the designed facilities.

However, pursuant to the Act, anyone can submit comments on the plan and oppose its provisions (plans are made available for public viewing) [45]. Where planning decisions may raise objections, the voice of the local community should be treated as a partner in the discussion on the shape of the space. Therefore, sustainable planning, consistent with the values of the New European Bauhaus, means not only appropriate planning provisions, but also sensitivity to social needs and values.

#### 4.3. An Impact on the Environment

Since 2010, Polish regulations [51,52] guarantee the need to assess the environmental impact of industrial buildings with a built-up area of not less than 1 ha and also ensure public participation in the environmental impact assessment. The analyzed facilities (significantly exceeding the indicated area) for which information was obtained were built since 2016, so they were most likely covered by the above requirements. Their implementation means that they have passed the assessment. However, there are several environmental impact issues worth addressing beyond this assessment.

Firstly, the EURO-PARK area was designated over a very large area covering agriculturally useful (probably high-quality) soil. Currently, the increase in urbanization in the commune at the expense of agricultural areas is already indicated as a development barrier (see Section 4.1). Taking into account the needs of subsequent generations and the fact that soil resources are shrinking, in the future, soil resources are recommended to

be managed in accordance with the principles of sustainable development [82], avoiding similar decisions. Additionally, the development of free space involves the elimination of habitats and feeding grounds of wild animals, which have already been drastically reduced in the last few decades.

Moreover, an issue that should be taken into account in the future when assessing the environmental impact of an investment is the long-term impact of the development—carbon footprint, biodegradability or recycling of materials, potential formation of heat islands, etc., and even the potential multifunctionality of buildings. It is worth remembering that in the event of a change in the economic situation and, consequently, the closure of a production plant, there is always a built-up space (becoming, in extreme cases, a symbol of decline in the form of vacant buildings and ruins). In times when free space remains an increasingly valuable resource, architecture that may remain “waste” cannot be treated as a sign of sustainable development.

From the point of view of sustainability, the procedure itself for assessing the impact of an industrial investment on the environment is very important and requires an honest and reliable approach. Every effort must be made to ensure effective public control in this respect by strengthening the role of public participation in the decision-making process. It is also worth increasing society’s interest in participating in decision-making processes by expanding the scope of educational and information activities, strengthening the agency of the local community supported by substantive knowledge.

The latest events show that the inhabitants of the commune do not want further development of service and industrial areas in its area—on February 21 of this year, a petition on this matter signed by over 200 people was submitted to the Commune Council [83,84]. They justify their opinion by limiting their right to recreation (they feel forced “to live between production and warehouse halls”), increasing pollution, degradation of the natural environment and increasing limitation of wild animal habitats [84].

#### *4.4. Land Development and Architecture*

The lack of detailed data on buildings located in the analyzed area does not allow us to draw final conclusions regarding architecture.

The highest standards of development were probably not maintained in the park area, which can be concluded from the fact that the buildings did not obtain certificates in sustainability (including BREEAM and LEED).

Based on observations, several unfavorable features were diagnosed in relation to architecture and land development. There is a huge unused area of flat roofs and a large share of paved surfaces in parking lots for passenger cars, which may adversely affect, among others, the microclimate of the analyzed area. Moreover, the monotony of buildings in such a large area has a negative impact on the local landscape.

It is worth pointing out that companies implementing the principles of sustainable development in relation to their production activities should also take responsibility for their own investments and take care of the overall high quality of the built environment, which also means attention to aesthetic values, in accordance with the NEB idea, which values beauty as well as sustainability. Due to its size, industrial architecture is particularly visually invasive. Low-quality development degrades the value of space. In the face of growing urbanization and the saturation of the landscape with architectural products, it is worth adopting the concept of dematerialization [26] for architecture as an aesthetic category in the sense of a visual effect (“architecture of absence” [28]) or as a quantitative category in the sense of “reduction of material and energy consumption” [26] (p. 32) (which is close to the concept of a circular economy).

#### *4.5. Industry Sustainability*

LG Group companies with headquarters located in the analyzed area in Kobierzyce publish sustainability reports on their websites. The most objectionable thing may be the lack of such a report on the activities of LG Energy Solution—the largest manufacturer

of batteries for electric cars in Europe. However, the general message of all LG Group companies is consistent—efforts are being made to eliminate or minimize the harmful impact on the environment, ultimately in all of the company's enterprises around the world. At the national level, the Industrial Development Agency S.A., which manages EURO-PARK Kobierzyce, has developed the Clean Industry Strategy for 2023–2025 with a perspective until 2030, which is based on the statement “clean industry is a new development paradigm” [85]. Common policy—national and corporate—aimed at improving the quality of industry's impact on the environment can strengthen industry sustainability in local conditions.

It is worth assessing the way data are presented in reports. They are presented largely from a global perspective, and it would be more valuable if they took into account the activities of individual institutions so that they are transparent and verifiable by all interested parties. The global approach to the problem (the issue of waste recycling, water reuse, etc.) makes it impossible to make an assessment at the local level.

Moreover, presenting data from the perspective of a goal or a reduction in negative effects obscures the essence of the problem—the scale of pollutant emissions, waste production or consumption of natural resources. It seems that one of the biggest challenges currently facing sustainable development of industrialization is how to neutralize the harmful side effects of business activities, so that the increase in production is not associated with an increase in negative impact on the environment. Perhaps the problem lies in the nature of modern capitalism, which until recently emphasized “development” in the sense of economic growth only. Meanwhile, according to the ethics of sustainability, corporations should stop increasing production if it would be associated with an increase in harm to the environment.

Information on participation in the implementation of various sustainable development goals shows that companies do not only focus on minimizing the negative effects of their activities, but also conduct a number of initiatives that affect the well-being of local communities in many places around the world.

It would be beneficial for local development if activities of this type were largely carried out in the vicinity of the company's location, including in cooperation with local government or institutions—in the case of EURO-PARK, in Kobierzyce Commune and in the entire region. According to the information provided in the latest reports, some activities are taking place for the benefit of the Kobierzyce community (see Section 3.3.4). According to information available in the local media (data from December 2022), the company's activities in the region are not limited only to the commune—for example, LG Energy Solution provided a subsidy to the Wrocław University of Science and Technology, which will enable the construction of the Electromobility Laboratory [86]. As reported, the cooperation of the Wrocław university and the Korean company “is an opportunity for the development of the entire electromobility sector in Poland” [86]. The benefit seems to be mutual—in this way, a cadre of experts—future employees of the company—can be created locally.

Even if the publication of reports on the company's sustainability or non-industry initiatives themselves are perceived in image-related terms, it seems that they can be assessed positively. If a company cares about the positive reception of the society in which there are potential consumers, this may prove the increased importance of the voice of regular people in the discussion of sustainability and the indirect control they exercise over the company's operations through consumer decision-making. It is important that society have access to independent data showing the effects of the activities of industrial enterprises. Perhaps the solution would be periodic reports prepared by an independent group of experts, for example, on a local basis.

## 5. Final Conclusions

The case study of the EURO-PARK Kobierzyce industrial park in Poland showed how complex the issue of industrial development in the spirit of sustainability is.

Sustainability is a matter of balance. In the system of global capitalism, it is necessary to constantly ensure that the economic factor does not overshadow the other two factors—social well-being and the natural environment. Therefore, the challenge to industrialization is an ethical challenge and falls within the word *moderation*. For corporations, it will also be a matter of consent to incur additional costs related to, among others, care for the high quality of the built environment or giving up further profits if the cleanliness of the environment is threatened.

Among the problems discussed in relation to the development and sustainability of global industry and its relationship with local industries, an important issue emerges about the role of society in exercising control over industrial activities in the region and over local spatial politics. Some experts point out that we do not know what the goals and needs of future generations will be. Perhaps in the future, free space and undeveloped landscape will have the greatest value, and it is possible that decisions made in this matter will primarily involve local communities. In line with this reflection, the following directions for further research are proposed:

- Effectiveness of public participation in making planning and environmental decisions in the region.
- Relationship: global enterprise–local community.
- Non-institutional tools of social control of industrial corporations.

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