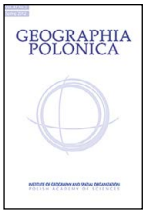

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REDEFINING THE ROLE OF LANDSCAPE PARKS IN POLAND: A Q METHOD ANALYSIS OF STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES FROM THE MAŁOPOLSKIE VOIVODSHIP

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Abstract

Protected landscapes (IUCN Category V) have expanded across Europe as tools for conserving biodiversity and cultural heritage in human-shaped environments. Their growing role in local development raises questions about management priorities and stakeholder expectations. This study investigates the perspectives of three stakeholder groups – park employees, local authorities, residents – regarding the functioning of 11 landscape parks in the Małopolskie Voivodship. Using Q methodology (105 respondents), four dominant perspectives were identified, reflecting divergent assessments of the current role of parks and expectations regarding their functions, ranging from conservation-oriented to development-oriented approaches and differing in the importance attached to environmental, economic and participatory priorities. Despite divergences, broad support for landscape parks was evident. The findings suggest a need to strengthen their role in supporting local development compatible with conservation goals and foster more participatory forms of governance.

Keywords

protected areas • landscape parks • Małopolskie Voivodship • heritage conservation • local development • stakeholders' perspectives • Q methodology

Introduction

Protected areas, classified as Category V (Protected Landscape/Seascape) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), are distinguished by the integration of nature, landscape, and cultural heritage protection with ongoing human activity. Their distinctive character stems from the long-term interaction between humans

and the environment, which has shaped landscapes of high aesthetic, ecological, and cultural value, often characterized by significant biological diversity. Safeguarding this traditional interaction is essential to preserve these areas and their conservation values (Dudley, 2013). Such protection does not entail the exclusion of human activities but rather their appropriate management to maintain biodiversity and landscapes, balancing resource use with conservation. A particular emphasis is placed on preserving traditional land-use practices (e.g., traditional farming), protecting agrobiodiversity, and fostering tourism and recreation (Phillips, 2002; Dudley, 2013). Category V areas are characteristic of Europe[1], protecting inhabited, economically used lands (primarily traditional rural landscapes), predominantly under private ownership. Effective management under these conditions requires collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including local governments, which in Europe hold extensive authority over spatial planning and land management, and residents, whose active participation is essential for the preservation and sustainable development of these areas (Hamin, 2002; Janssen, 2009; Janssen & Knippenberg, 2012). Consequently, Category V areas are expected not only to protect nature and landscape, but also to support sustainable local development, serve as exemplars for best management practices (Zimniewicz, 2002; Hammer et al., 2016; Hammer et al., 2022).

The idea of protecting natural and landscape values for aesthetic and scientific reasons emerged in Europe in the early 19th century. The establishment of large-scale protected areas began in the early 20th century, inspired by American national parks. However, Europe's approach differed due to its unique historical context (Mose and Weixlbaumer, 2016). Whereas the U.S. model focused on untouched landscapes, the European approach developed to explicitly include the protection of human-influenced cultural landscapes (Janssen & Knippenberg, 2012). This recognition stemmed from the conviction that in densely populated Europe, landscapes are products of long human settlement. Consequently, the model includes inhabited and economically used areas, primarily rural ones (Janssen & Knippenberg, 2012).

In the absence of international guidelines, European countries have developed various approaches to creating landscape protection areas, based on their different geographical, historical, social, political, and planning conditions. These areas vary in objectives, management approaches, legal frameworks, spatial extent, and are also referred to by different names (Janssen, 2009). Examples include regional nature parks (e.g., in Italy, France, Switzerland), nature parks (e.g., in Austria, Germany, Portugal, Romania, Spain), landscape parks (e.g., Poland, Slovenia), protected landscape areas (e.g., in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia) and some national parks (e.g., in the United Kingdom).

Germany and the United Kingdom have long traditions of landscape protection. The origins of nature parks in Germany are linked to the idea of Heimat (homeland), emphasizing belonging to a place defined by its landscape, nature, traditions, and history (Lekan, 2004; Janssen & Knippenberg, 2012). This concept drove the Heimatschutz (homeland protection) movement, which promoted the preservation of pre-industrial landscapes in response to urbanization and industrialization. After World War II, this vision, combined with the need to provide recreational spaces, led to the establishment of nature parks (*Naturparke*). Currently, there are 104 nature parks in Germany which together with all Category V areas comprise 28% of its land area (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2025). In the UK, the creation of national parks (currently classified as Category V) was initiated by social organizations and a political will to resist the perceived threats of urbanization,

[1] In Europe, Category V areas cover 4.3% of the land (the highest share among continents). However, many landscape protection areas (e.g. Swiss regional nature parks) lack formal categorization, indicating that the actual coverage of such areas is greater (UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, 2025).

industrialization and agricultural intensification (Ditt & Rafferty, 1996; Janssen & Knippenberg, 2012). Before World War II, proposals aimed to preserve 25% of the country's terrain, focusing on rural landscapes of aesthetic value, providing recreational opportunities for the public (Ditt & Rafferty, 1996). The implementation of the concept began in 1949 with the British Parliament's adoption of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, establishing the legal framework for national parks. Today, the UK's national park system consists of 15 areas, which, along with other Category V areas, cover 19% of the country's land (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2025). The approach to managing protected landscapes in both countries has evolved beyond the original preservation-focused models, incorporating socio-economic objectives and community participation (Stoll-Kleemann, 2001; Janssen & Knippenberg, 2012).

A distinct approach, extending beyond nature conservation to include regional policy and development objectives, was adopted in France and Switzerland. In France, regional nature parks (*Parcs naturels régionaux*), formalized by law in 1967, were established to protect cultural and natural heritage while promoting rural development. Aligned with efforts to counteract excessive centralization, the creation of these parks followed a bottom-up approach, with local authorities and communities driving their formation and management (Dwyer, 1991; Janssen & Knippenberg, 2012). These parks are considered instruments of regional policy, promoting peripheral rural areas (Hammer, 2016). Since the first regional park was established in 1968 (Salanié & Coisnon, 2016), the number of such parks in the country has increased to 58. These parks when considered with all Category V areas constitute 19% of the country's land territory (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2025). Switzerland adopted a similar model but combined bottom-up and top-down approaches. The parks, encompassing sparsely populated areas rich in both natural and cultural landscapes, integrate socio-economic development goals with nature and landscape conservation. Establishing a park requires the support of the majority of residents and the boundaries of these areas align with municipal administrative divisions. The parks operate based on the cooperation of local and regional actors, with logistical and financial support from the Swiss government (Hirschi, 2010; Siegrist et al., 2016; Gerber, 2018; Hammer et al., 2021). The high level of support for this form of parks is evidenced by the creation of 17 parks since this form of protection was included in the federal legislation in 2007.

In Poland, the origins of landscape parks were shaped by different political conditions than in Western Europe, as the idea emerged in the 1950s, within the context of top-down management characteristic of socialist countries. The concept was developed by landscape architects and planners, who proposed the Jura Landscape Park in the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland to protect this valuable area as a recreational space for the residents of the rapidly developing nearby agglomerations. The landscape park was meant to support the protection of aesthetic and cultural values, as well as the development of the area through tourism (Novàk, 1963). The national landscape protection plan developed in 1971 initiated the creation of two new forms of protection (landscape parks and protected landscape areas[2]), which began to be established in 1976 and expanded significantly in the 1980s and 1990s. Initially, the protected areas were created and managed by the regional government administration,

[2] According to the Polish Nature Conservation Act (Act... 2004), a landscape park is a protected area designated for its natural, historical and cultural values, as well as its landscape qualities, with the aim of preserving and promoting these values under conditions of sustainable development. In contrast, a protected landscape area comprises territories protected due to their distinctive landscapes with diverse ecosystems, valued for their role in tourism and recreation or as ecological corridors, and is subject to a lower protection regime and a less restrictive management framework. Both forms fall under the responsibility of regional self-government authorities; however, unlike landscape parks, protected landscape areas do not function as distinct institutional entities.

but in 2009, this responsibility was transferred to regional self-government authorities (Kistowski, 2012). Currently, they cover 30% of Poland's territory, with landscape parks (which have a higher protection regime) accounting for 8% (126 parks) (Environment 2024, 2024).

Category V protected areas have widely expanded across Europe in response to increasing threats to traditional landscapes from rapid land-use changes (Fjellstad et al., 2009). Their popularity is driven not only by the strong European emphasis on protecting landscapes, but also by the growing acknowledgment that landscape protection yields tangible social and economic benefits, such as increased agricultural and tourism revenues (Hirschi, 2010). This multifunctional approach aligns conservation with regional development, positioning these areas as key tools for sustainable land management (Janssen & Knippenberg, 2012; Hammer, 2016; Ritzel et al., 2023). This approach reflects a broader shift towards a new paradigm in protected area management that emphasizes the integration of conservation with socio-economic development and active community involvement (Phillips, 2003; Borrini-Feyerabend et al., 2013; Lange & Jungmeier, 2014; Shafer, 2015; Mose & Weixlbaumer, 2016).

Despite the integrative approach, the management of Category V protected areas often generates tensions and conflicts among stakeholders due to diverging perspectives on conservation priorities, land use, and economic development. Balancing the interests of conservationists, policymakers, local communities, private landowners, and investors proves challenging, as each group holds different views on what should be preserved and how the area should evolve (Grindsted et al., 2024). These conflicts frequently stem from competing visions of land use (Röhring & Gailing, 2005; Nastran, 2015; Feyeh, 2016), contrasting approaches to natural resource management (Vuleti et al., 2009; Kiš, 2010; Nastran, 2015) or divergent tourism development strategies (Nastran, 2015; Bahamonde-Rodríguez, Šadeikaitė & García-Delgado, 2023; Grindsted et al., 2024). Disagreements may arise from differing perceptions of the benefits the protected landscapes should provide, including their nature, timeframe and intended beneficiaries (Nastran, 2015), often compounded by knowledge gaps concerning the advantages and disadvantages of the protected areas.

In Poland, managing landscape parks faces additional challenges arising from the socio-political and economic contexts. Tensions are partly a consequence of the political transformation, which brought a change in the division of competencies between public authorities at various levels. The ambiguity of competencies and the lack of an established tradition of cooperation and participatory management of natural resources lead to conflicts in the management of protected areas (Zimniewicz, 2002, 2005). These conflicts are further reinforced by systemic shortcomings in spatial planning and insufficient integration of environmental considerations into decision-making processes (Kistowski, 2005, 2007). In addition, economic freedom, often prioritizing individual interests, combined with low trust in authorities, further complicated the management of such areas. In southern Poland, these challenges are exacerbated by strong land fragmentation, scattered development, changes in rural functions (especially the shift away from agriculture), and strong developer interests that intensify urbanization pressures (Bożek, 2019; Ćwik & Hrehorowicz-Gaber, 2021; Janus & Taszakowski, 2018; Pyryt & Pukowiec-Kurda, 2024; Rosner & Wesołowska, 2020; Semczuk, 2013). The real estate market's development, lacking effective spatial planning regulations, contributes to uncontrolled urban sprawl, semiurbanization and intensification of tourist urbanization, especially in areas of natural and scenic attraction (Chmielewski et al., 2018; Ćwik & Hrehorowicz-Gaber, 2021; Górka, 2018; Kowalewski et al., 2018; Lityński & Hołuj, 2020; Wdowiarz-Bilska et al., 2024). Under these conditions, managing landscape parks requires not only considering diverse interests, but also the developing cooperative

mechanisms to reconcile landscape protection with the local communities' needs and economic development.

These challenges underscore the need to integrate stakeholder perspectives into effective landscape park management strategies. Accordingly, this article aims to explore the diverse societal perceptions on the role of landscape parks in the Małopolskie Voivodship in heritage conservation and local development. To achieve the main objective, the following specific goals have been established:

1. Identify the main groups of opinions (perspectives) among the stakeholders of landscape parks in the Małopolskie Voivodship;
2. Identify the key features of these perspectives, i.e. the values, beliefs and attitudes that shape the perception of the role of landscape parks in the region;
3. Examine the relationship between perspectives and respondent group membership;
4. Identify the areas of consensus and divergence in perceptions of the impact of landscape parks on space, society and the economy.

Methodology and research area

Q methodology

The Q methodology is used to search for distinct social perspectives (points of view, opinions) among groups of respondents and to analyze the differences between them (Kloosterer et al., 2008). It was introduced in the field of psychology by W. Stephenson (Stephenson, 1953), and then developed and described in detail by, among others: Brown, 1980; McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012. Its essence is the ordering of a set of statements (Q-set) by participants, who assign a certain number of points to each of them, so that the ratings follow a normal distribution. The method is semi-qualitative. Its qualitative character results from the analysis of subjective opinions in small samples. On the other hand, the quantitative aspect relies on the use of statistical methods, such as principal component analysis (PCA) or exploratory factor analysis (EFA) used to identify groups of respondents with similar attitudes. Contrary to classic statistical analyses, it is the respondents (and not the variables) that are subject to grouping. Analysis in the Q method is based on the creation of a correlation matrix of respondents and then reducing the number of dimensions to extract factors (perspectives). Their number is determined, among other things, based on eigenvalues, the percentage of explained variance, and the scree plot. After determining the number of factors, rotation is performed (e.g., using the varimax method) to assign respondents to appropriate groups. Finally, these results are used to interpret the perspectives and compare the attitudes of the respondents.

It should be emphasised that Q methodology does not aim to achieve statistical representativeness of the studied population, but rather to capture the diversity of viewpoints within a given discourse. Q studies are designed to sample from a universe of perspectives rather than a population of individuals, consequently, the results cannot be generalised to the entire population (Anderson et al., 1997). However, because the size of the respondent group (P-set) is determined by the ability to identify distinct perspectives rather than by the need for population coverage, relatively small samples are considered sufficient, provided that they include respondents representing a broad range of experiences and viewpoints. The selection of participants is therefore purposeful and focused on diversity rather than proportional representation of particular territorial units or social groups.

Data collection procedure

The research procedure consisted of four main stages: (1) Q-set development, (2) selection of respondents (P-set), (3) data collection through Q-sorts and open-ended interviews, and (4) statistical analysis and interpretation (Fig. 1). In the first stage, based on previous research (including: Badanie świadomości..., 2019; Zawilińska, 2020), a review of the literature and online sources, key ideas and viewpoints (the concourse) were identified,

resulting in an initial pool of over one hundred statements. Subsequently, a reduction process was conducted, during which the statements were reviewed, merged and structured to ensure balanced coverage of the three analytical dimensions: impact on space, society (local community), and the local economy, with each dimension represented by statements referring to both current situation and expectations for landscape parks. All statements were designed to be universally applicable to each landscape park within the study area. The preliminary set was validated through consultation with two landscape park directors and subsequently pilot-tested to ensure clarity and comprehensibility. This resulted in the final Q-set of 36 statements.

The selection of respondents (stage 2) was purposeful and included three groups:

1. Park employees – the entire management team and all available specialists responsible for nature/landscape conservation, historical and cultural values and education, employed by the Landscape Parks Complex of the Małopolskie Voivodship;
2. Local government – mayors, their deputies and other employees (responsible for local development, planning, environmental protection and tourism) from the municipalities where the landscape parks are located;
3. Residents – people living within or near landscape parks boundaries (if their professional or personal activities were connected to the park area, such as forest managers, educators, landowners within the park boundaries, and local tour guides). Residents were selected by identifying local leaders (e.g., village representatives, priests, and members of local development associations), cultural center staff, tourism operators and others influential in local development. Additional participants were recruited using snowball sampling. Efforts were made to ensure broad

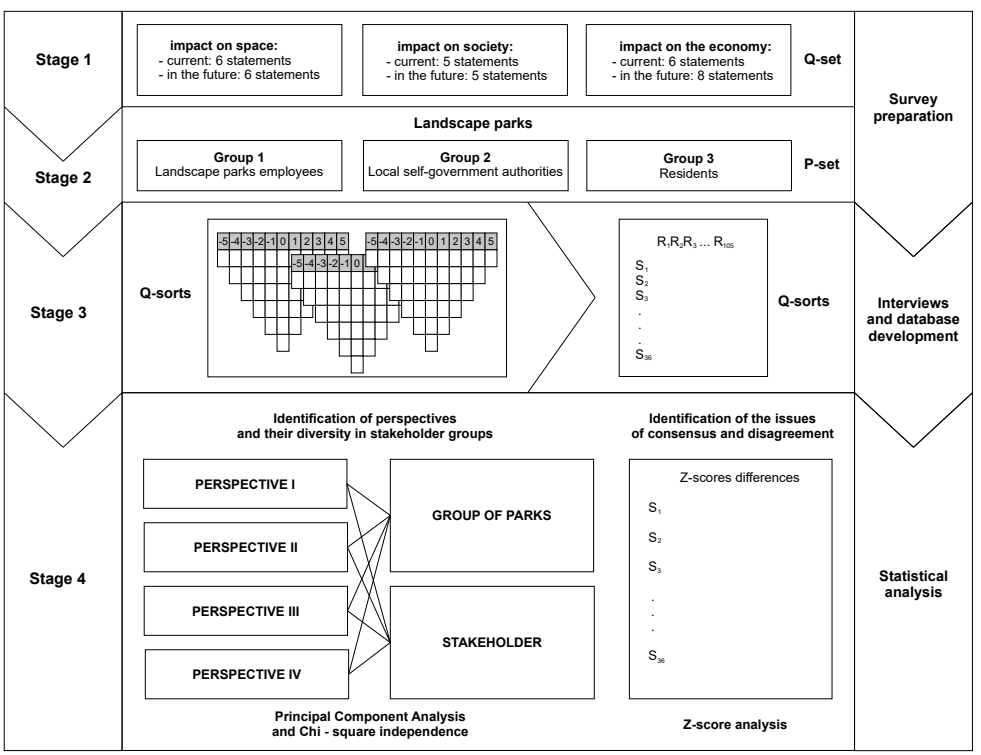

Figure 1. Research procedure

diversity of respondents in terms of residence, age, and occupation.

Interviews (stage 3) were conducted in 2024 using the EQ Web Sort tool (Banasick, 2019), primarily through face-to-face meetings, which enhanced the depth of the qualitative data and provided a broader context for the responses. The interview consisted of three stages: an initial categorization of statements ("agree," "disagree," "no opinion"), their arrangement on a response grid ranging from -5 (strong disagreement) to 5 (strong agreement), with a fixed number of statements assigned to each rank (Fig. 2) and an in-depth interview focusing on the extreme ratings.

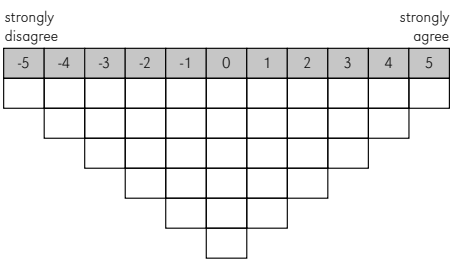

Figure 2. Q-sort forced distribution grid

Statistical analysis

To extract perspectives (factors), the analysis methodology developed for Q method, and an R package (qmethod) designed for this analysis were used (Zabala, 2014). The Principal Component Analysis (PCA), varimax rotation, and manual flagging were applied. PCA was selected as a commonly used extraction technique in Q methodology, allowing for the identification of shared viewpoints and maximizing the explained variance, while providing a transparent and reproducible solution compared to alternative approaches. Varimax rotation was then applied to obtain a clearer factor structure by enhancing the distinction between factors and facilitating a more unambiguous assignment of respondents to individual perspectives. The number of perspectives was determined based on: (1) the total amount of variability explained, (2) the scree plot analysis, and (3) the substantive interpretation of the factors. Respondents were assigned to perspectives based on their highest factor loading; in cases where this assignment was not clear, manual flagging was used to assign respondents to the perspective that best reflected their Q-sort. After identifying the perspectives, Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) was conducted using the FactoMineR – R package, followed by the creation of a classification tree model (Chi-square automatic interaction detection – CHAID) in Statistica 13.3. The MCA examined the co-occurrence of qualitative variable categories, visually mapping relationships between perspectives and respondent traits in a two-dimensional space (Benzécri, 1973; Greenacre, 1984). The classification tree model (Kass, 1980) enabled the identification of variables that differentiate the assignment of respondents to specific perspectives, such as affiliation with a specific respondent group and connections to particular landscape park groups. These analyses were treated as exploratory and descriptive, serving to identify patterns of co-occurrence between perspectives and respondent characteristics, without implying causal relationships or population-level generalizations.

Research area

The study encompassed all 11 landscape parks within the Małopolskie Voivodship (Fig. 3) covering 180,042.78 ha (11.9% of the Voivodship's territory)(Local Data Bank, 2023). Since 2009, management has been centralized under the Landscape Parks Complex of the Małopolskie Voivodship, comprising three branches: the Jura, Carpathian Foothills, and Poprad Landscape Park, formerly independent units. The Kraków branch (Jura) oversees six parks, mostly on the Kraków-Częstochowa Upland, the Tarnów branch (Carpathian Foothills) manages three parks in the Carpathian Foothills, and the Wola Krogulecka branch (formerly limited to Poprad Landscape Park) now administers both parks in the Beskids. The parks span 47 municipalities (25 rural, 20 urban-rural and two cities, including

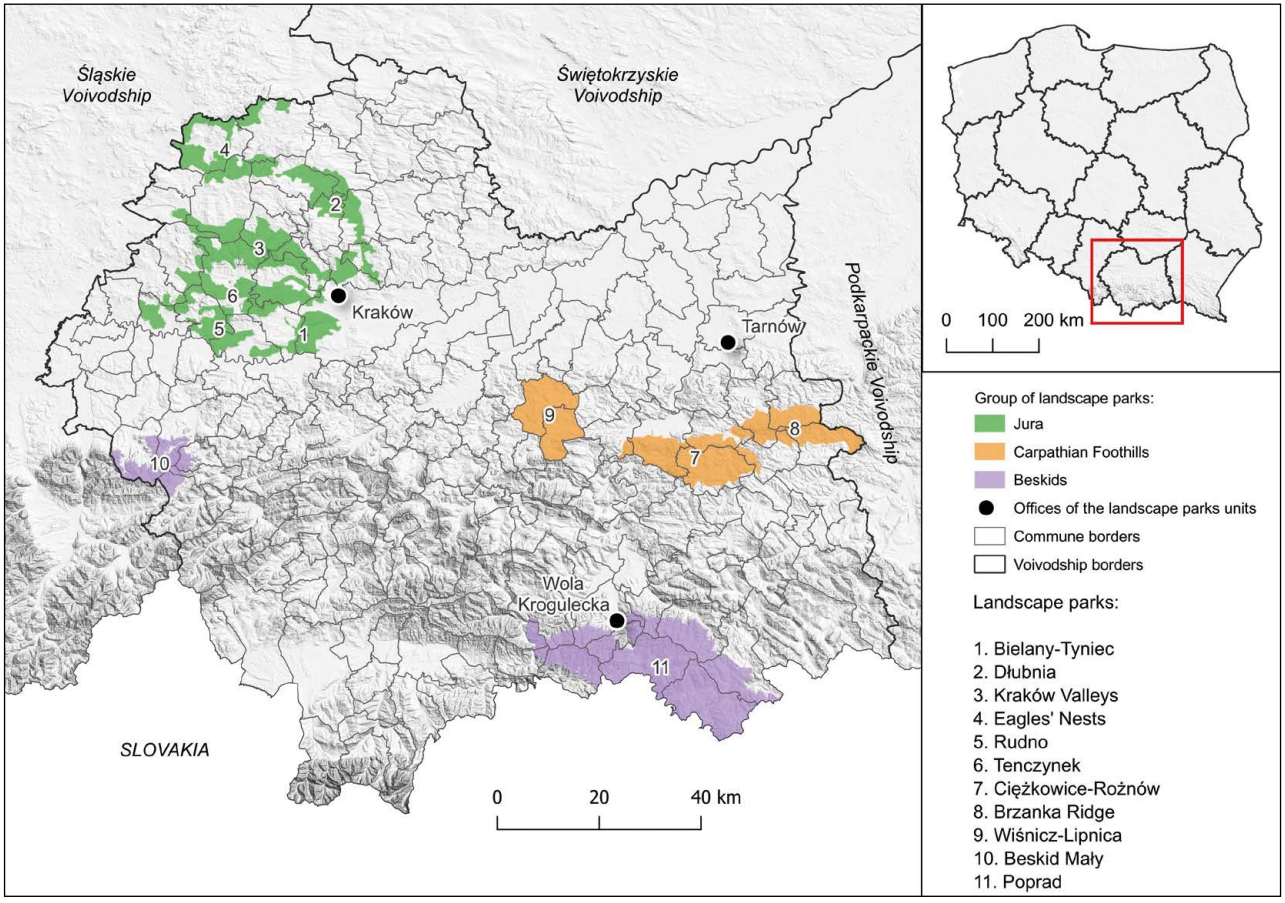

Figure 3. Landscape parks in the Małopolskie Voivodship (study area)

Kraków) with a total population exceeding 1.5 million (53% residing in Kraków). Approximately 189,000 individuals are estimated to live within park boundaries, yielding a population density of 105 inhabitants·km^{-2} (Carioli et al., 2023). The landscape parks of the Małopolskie Voivodship are characterized by the highest share of private land ownership in Poland. This is evidenced by the fact that land under the management of the State Forests or the National Support Centre for Agriculture (responsible for the Agricultural Property Stock of the State Treasury) accounts for only 32% of their area (Forest Data Bank, 2026; National Support Centre for Agriculture, 2026), representing the lowest such proportion among all voivodships.

The studied parks are distributed across three distinct geographical regions, each with unique geographical, cultural, and economic characteristics. Kraków-Częstochowa Upland (commonly known as the Kraków-Częstochowa Jura) is characterized by karst valleys, limestone crags, caves, and a rich cultural heritage, including medieval castles. Its proximity to Kraków and the Upper Silesian conurbation fosters high tourist activity (primarily day-trips) and a diversified employment structure, with a significant portion of the population working outside agriculture. This park group exhibits the highest population density and the most dynamic population growth among all park groups. Mountainous areas in Małopolska's landscape parks cover parts of the Beskid Mały and Beskid Sądecki ranges in the Western Carpathians, with elevations reaching 1,000 m and 1,300 m, respectively. These regions are distinguished by extensive forest coverage and sparse population density, with settlements concentrated along river valleys (e.g., Poprad Valley). Their natural and cultural assets, combined with developed tourist infrastructure, make them popular destinations, particularly in the Beskid Sądecki, where health resorts have emerged due to mineral springs. The Carpathian Foothills feature lower elevations and gentler terrain compared to the Beskids, leading to a higher share of agricultural land at the expense of forests. While cultural landmarks (small historic towns, religious sites and manor house complexes) and notable geological features enhance their attractiveness, their peripheral location limits tourism development compared to other park groups.

Results

Characteristics of respondents

The study involved a total of 105 respondents, including park employees (n = 20), local authorities (n = 37), and residents (n = 48). Respondents indicated the geographical scope of their responses, referring either to landscape parks corresponding to their place of residence or work, grouped into the Jura, Beskids, or Carpathian Foothills regions, or to all parks in the study area (the distribution of respondents is presented in Tab. 1). Within each region, diversity across stakeholder groups was ensured in terms of roles and areas of responsibility (including park staff, local government officials, and residents with varied connections to the park, such as forestry, land ownership, education, tourism-related activities and services, as well as involvement in local NGOs and community organizations).

Table 1. Respondents by stakeholder group and geographical scope

	Park employees	Local authorities	Residents
Jura	6	20	19
Beskids	6	7	15
Carpathian Foothills	5	8	13
All parks	3	2	1

Dominant perspectives

The survey of landscape park employees, local authorities and residents revealed four main perspectives (P1–P4) regarding the impact of landscape parks in the Małopolskie Voivodship on space, society, and economy (the key statistics on these perspectives are shown in Tab. 2). When combined, the identified

Table 2. Q analysis results

Perspective (P)	Number of defining variables [respondents]	Eigenvalues	Explained variance in %	Cumulative explained variance in %	Composite reliability	Standard errors of factor
1	34	19.0	18.1	18.1	0.99	0.09
2	40	17.2	16.4	34.5	0.99	0.09
3	18	8.6	8.2	42.7	0.98	0.14
4	13	6.5	6.2	48.9	0.98	0.16

perspectives explain 48.9% of the total variance, with a high composite reliability of each perspective (> 0.98). The standard error values that indicate the accuracy of the calculations, are at an acceptable level. P1 and P2 have the largest share in explaining the variance and are represented by the largest number of respondents (P1: 34 people, P2: 40 people), which indicates their dominant significance. P3 and P4 include a smaller number of respondents (18 and 13 people respectively) and are characterized by a lower contribution to the explanation of variance. Nevertheless, they make a significant contribution to the diversity of opinions.

Each of the perspectives emphasizes different priorities and challenges related to the functioning of landscape parks and shows different approaches to the management of these areas. The detailed numerical values, including *z*-scores and statement rankings for each perspective, are presented in Table 3.

Perspective 1: Heritage conservation and education. Representatives of this perspective view landscape parks primarily through the lens of nature, landscape and cultural heritage conservation, additionally emphasizing their educational role. The interviewees emphasized the parks' importance in preserving biological, landscape, and cultural diversity (statements 1 and 5), and in educating residents and tourists about the local heritage (s7). In in-depth interviews, they listed specific activities: protection of ecological corridors, preservation of xerothermic grasslands and landscape values, nature monitoring, and educational initiatives. This group highly values these activities's impact on shaping space and increasing the region's tourist attractiveness (s2 and s6). In the interest of park protection, the participants advocate for more restrictive regulations regarding spatial development (including construction) (s23), protection of traditional architectural forms (s22), and increased involvement of park authorities in local planning (s19). The respondents rate the need to expand the parks' spatial planning competencies the highest (s20/rank1), indicating this limited scope prevents effective counteraction of negative phenomena. They believe parks do not limit socio-economic development, nor bring local community losses (s13 and s14), but rather direct and partially support development (as illustrated by examples). The participants in this group oppose both top-down, expert park management (s25), and handing them over to local governments (s34/rank36).

Perspective 2: Sustainable local development. Participants who hold this perspective recognize the multifaceted impact of landscape parks on local development. They appreciate the parks' role in nature/landscape conservation, spatial development and enhancing tourism attractiveness (s1, s2, s3, s5, s6, s19). Simultaneously, they indicate the financial burdens and limitations associated with the operation of parks (s13), strongly emphasizing the need for state subsidies for municipalities with conservation areas (s31/rank1). This group considers current park administration competences sufficient to ensure the protection of natural and landscape values (s18), strongly opposing an increase in these powers and any tightening of restrictions on spatial development and

Table 3. Assessment of the impact of landscape parks on space, society and the economy: z-scores and rankings of statements in four perspectives

Issue	Statement	Perspective 1		Perspective 2		Perspective 3		Perspective 4	
		z-score	rank	z-score	rank	z-score	rank	z-score	rank
Impact on space – currently	1. Landscape parks in the Małopolskie Voivodship play an important role in protecting the region's biological, landscape, and cultural diversity	1.62	2	0.94	5	1.22	5	-0.26	22
	2. The functioning of a landscape park increases the tourist attractiveness of the area	0.98	6	1.27	3	1.97	1	-0.86	30
	3. A landscape park prevents the development of investments that have a negative impact on nature and the landscape	0.02	19	0.71	12	0.11	19	-0.37	24
	4. Residents are proud to live in an area of high natural and landscape value	-0.02	20	0.22	19	0.32	15	-1.16	33
	5. Without landscape parks, the nature and landscape of these areas would be much less well preserved	0.99	5	0.73	11	0.45	11	-0.57	26
	6. In practice, landscape parks do not influence the shaping of space	-1.51	33	-1.83	35	-0.86	31	0.96	6
Impact on society – currently	7. Thanks to the educational activities of landscape parks, residents and tourists have the opportunity to better understand and appreciate the local natural and cultural heritage	1.57	3	0.27	18	0.53	10	0.24	16
	8. Thanks to the functioning of the landscape park, residents are more involved in the protection of nature and cultural heritage	0.50	13	-0.15	23	0.45	12	-0.13	20
	9. Landscape parks improve the quality of life of residents	0.41	15	-0.84	27	1.57	2	-0.92	31
	10. It does not matter to residents whether they live in a landscape park or not	-0.99	31	-0.94	29	-0.50	25	0.08	18
	11. Only a few people feel the restrictions associated with the functioning of landscape parks; most residents and entrepreneurs do not feel any restrictions	-0.11	21	-0.71	25	-0.17	21	0.48	14
Impact on the economy – currently	12. Landscape parks stimulate the local economy	-0.33	25	-1.36	32	0.20	17	-1.10	32
	13. Landscape parks limit the socio-economic development of the areas within their boundaries	-1.75	34	0.51	16	-0.72	28	0.34	15
	14. Landscape parks cause economic losses to both municipalities and residents	-2.20	35	-0.40	24	-2.04	35	-0.76	29
	15. Landscape parks stimulate the creation of new jobs	-0.66	29	-1.70	33	0.41	14	-0.66	27
	16. By creating an attractive living environment, landscape parks attract new residents and entrepreneurs	-0.14	22	-0.86	28	-0.15	20	-1.83	34
	17. Landscape Park Complex of the Małopolskie Voivodship, as an institution, is an important partner in fostering local development	0.55	12	0.19	20	-0.64	27	-0.34	23

Issue	Statement	Perspective 1		Perspective 2		Perspective 3		Perspective 4	
		z-score	rank	z-score	rank	z-score	rank	z-score	rank
Impact on space – in the future	18. Landscape parks guarantee that the landscape and nature within their boundaries remain well preserved	0.10	18	1.43	2	-0.37	23	-2.25	36
	19. Landscape park authorities should be more involved in the preparation of local development plans in municipalities	0.93	8	-0.75	26	-0.75	29	1.06	4
	20. Landscape park authorities should be given broader powers to influence land use	1.63	1	-1.74	34	-0.78	30	-0.23	21
	21. Landscape parks should be more involved in promoting sustainable forms of management	0.17	17	0.11	21	0.56	9	0.68	12
	22. Landscape parks should promote the preservation of traditional architectural forms characteristic of the area	0.96	7	-0.01	22	-0.59	26	1.01	5
	23. Restrictions on land use (including construction) should be more restrictive in landscape parks	1.05	4	-1.85	36	-2.17	36	0.89	8
Impact on society – in the future	24. Municipal authorities and residents should be more involved in the activities undertaken by landscape parks	-0.26	24	0.64	13	0.95	8	2.01	1
	25. Good decisions regarding the functioning of landscape parks can only be made in a top-down manner, by experts	-1.29	32	-1.04	30	-1.55	34	-2.01	35
	26. The support of local authorities and residents is essential for the proper functioning of landscape parks	0.61	11	0.78	8	-0.23	22	0.76	10
	27. Landscape parks should serve as a platform for cooperation between various stakeholders for sustainable local development	0.65	9	0.94	6	0.17	18	1.15	3
	28. Landscape parks should cooperate more with local communities to shape the local cultural identity	0.20	16	0.55	15	0.43	13	0.82	9

Issue	Statement	Perspective 1		Perspective 2		Perspective 3		Perspective 4	
		z-score	rank	z-score	rank	z-score	rank	z-score	rank
Impact on the economy in the future	29. Landscape parks should initiate projects that promote sustainable development in the region	0.64	10	0.76	10	0.97	7	0.11	17
	30. Landscape parks should support local development and promote local products (e.g. agricultural, culinary, handicrafts)	0.42	14	0.79	7	1.45	3	0.91	7
	31. Municipalities with landscape parks should receive subsidies from the state	-0.51	27	1.69	1	0.28	16	0.01	19
	32. Landscape parks should cooperate more extensively with businesses and stimulate the development of the local labor market	-0.71	30	0.37	17	1.44	4	0.60	13
	33. Landscape parks should be more involved in the development of tourist infrastructure and commercial forms of tourism	-0.52	28	1.02	4	1.06	6	0.72	11
	34. Landscape parks should be managed by local (municipal) authorities	-2.33	36	-1.17	31	-1.22	32	-0.73	28
	35. Planning documents developed for landscape parks should focus more on social and economic issues and take into account local development needs	-0.49	26	0.78	9	-0.47	24	1.72	2
	36. Landscape parks should focus their activities exclusively on the protection of natural, historical, cultural and landscape values and on education	-0.19	23	0.64	14	-1.31	33	-0.37	25

Z-score: weighted average of the scores given to the statement by flagged respondents.

Rank: position in the ranking of statements in each perspective (Z-score values sorted in descending order).

Green cells: the five highest-rated statements in each perspective (rank 1-5).

Red cells: the five lowest-rated statements in each perspective (rank 32-36).

construction (s20, s23). These individuals are also reluctant to increase park authorities' involvement in local government planning (s19). They support park management by independent institutions but do not emphasize this as strongly as the representatives of the first perspective (s34). Furthermore, they strongly focus on socio-economic issues. The respondents believe parks currently do not stimulate job creation and activate the local economy, nor do they increase residents' quality of life or attract new residents or entrepreneurs (s9, s12, s15, s16). Therefore, they advocate for the cooperation between park-associated communities for sustainable local development (s27), greater consideration of local social/economic needs in the parks' activities, and increased involvement in development projects (s29, s30, s33, s35).

Perspective 3: Economic development and commercialization. This perspective views landscape parks pragmatically as catalysts of local development. Its representatives acknowledge the parks' role in conserving nature, landscape, and cultural heritage and their positive impact on residents' quality of life (s1, s9). Crucially, they believe parks significantly boost regional tourism attractiveness (s2/rank1) and do not impede development (s14). They advocate for parks to transcend traditional functions (s36) to actively stimulate local development. This includes promoting local products, collaborating with entrepreneurs, job creation, developing tourist infrastructure, commercializing tourism and initiating sustainable development projects (s29, s30, s32, s33). Seeking commercialization, this group strongly opposes stricter spatial planning restrictions, especially regarding building construction (s23/rank36). They also oppose both the top-down management model of landscape parks by experts (s25) and transferring of management to local governments (s34).

Perspective 4: Public participation and integration of activities. This perspective centers on landscape park management, citing its ineffectiveness in conservation and minimal influence on spatial planning or local development (s4, s6, s12, s16, s18/rank36). The respondents strongly reject both exclusive top-down expert management of landscape parks (s25) and management transfer to local governments (s34). Instead, they champion a participatory model, emphasizing the need for cooperation among various park-related groups and greater involvement of local authorities and residents, deeming their support crucial for the functioning of the parks (s24/rank1, s26, s27). This group recognizes the necessity of integrating municipal planning with park activities and tightening land use restrictions, including construction (s23). They suggest park authorities should be more involved in municipal planning documents, and, conversely, planning documents developed for landscape parks should address social and economic issues and incorporate local development needs (s19, s35). People in this group see untapped park potential, with high expectations for their role in nature/landscape protection and broader local development, encompassing shaping local cultural identity, sustaining architectural traditions, and promoting sustainable management (s21, s22, s28). Regarding economic issues, they believe that landscape parks should support territorial development, promote local products and cooperate with entrepreneurs to stimulate the local labor market (s30, s33).

Analysis of the relationship between perspectives and respondent characteristics

The distribution of respondents across perspectives reveals clear perceptual patterns linked to specific groups of respondents (Tab. 4). MCA (Figs. 4 and 5) and the CHAID decision tree model (Fig. 6) allowed for the identification of key differentiating factors. P1 was strongly associated with landscape park employees (52.9% of people presenting this perspective) and respondents who did not indicate a specific park but stated that their opinions refer to all parks in the province (also mainly park employees). P2 was dominated

Table 4. Perspectives by stakeholder group and park group

Perspective	Number of respondents (percentage share)	Group of stakeholders	Group of parks
1	34 (32.38%)	park employees: 18 (52.9%) local authorities: 2 (5.88%) residents: 14 (41.18%)	all parks: 5 (14.71%) Jura: 15 (44.12%) Beskids: 9 (26.47%) Carpathian Foothills: 5 (14.71%)
2	40 (38.10%)	park employees: 1 (2.50%) local authorities: 27 (67.50%) residents: 12 (30.00%)	all parks: 1 (2.50%) Jura: 20 (50.00%) Beskids: 8 (20.00%) Carpathian Foothills: 11 (27.50%)
3	18 (17.14%)	park employees: 1 (5.56%) local authorities: 5 (27.78%) residents: 12 (66.67%)	all parks: 0 (0.00%) Jura: 6 (33.33%) Beskids: 8 (44.45%) Carpathian Foothills: 4 (22.22%)
4	13 (12.38%)	park employees: 0 (0.00%) local authorities: 3 (23.08%) residents: 10 (76.92%)	all parks: 0 (0.00%) Jura: 4 (30.77%) Beskids: 3 (23.08%) Carpathian Foothills: 6 (46.15%)

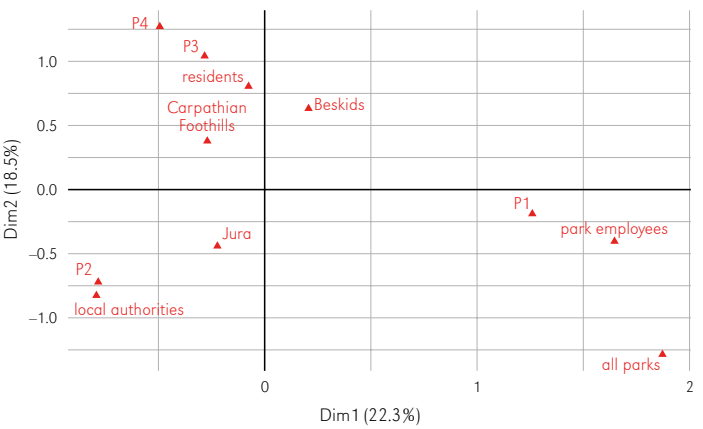

Figure 4. Variable categories factor map

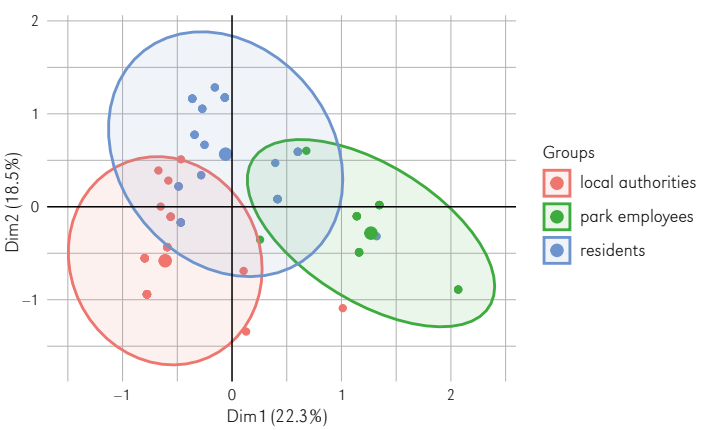

Figure 5. Individuals factor map

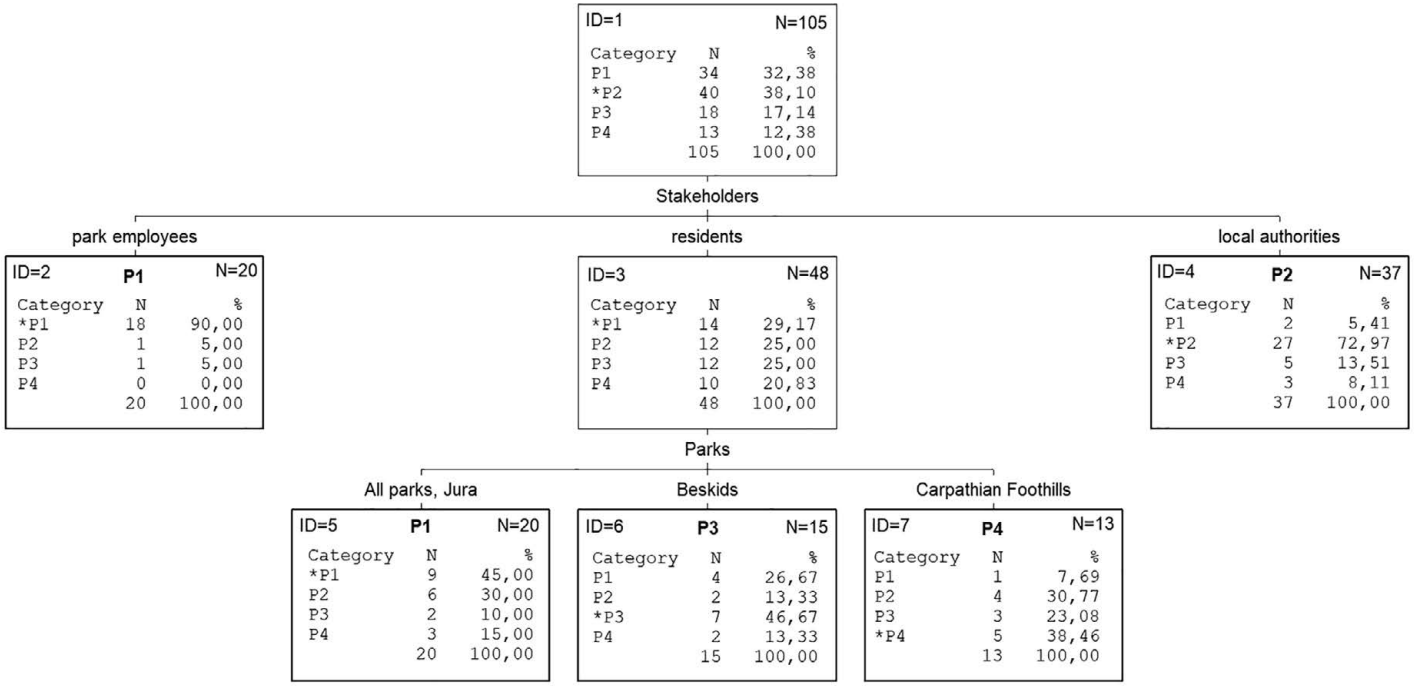

Figure 6. CHAID decision tree model

by local government representatives (67.5%), while P3 and P4 were mainly represented by residents (Tab. 4, Figs. 4 and 5). Park employees constituted the most homogeneous group – 90% of them identified with P1. Local government representatives were also relatively consistent, with 73% assigned to P2. Residents, on the other hand, showed the greatest diversity of views, segmenting by park location: P1 dominated among residents of parks in the Jura group, P3 in parks in the Beskids group, and P4 in parks in the Carpathian Foothills group (Fig. 6). The views of P1 representatives showed the greatest deviation from other perspectives, while the positions of P3 and P4 were the most similar (Fig. 4).

Areas of consensus and differences in perceptions of landscape parks

All perspectives agree on the value of nature, landscape, and cultural heritage conservation and the role of parks in boosting tourist attractiveness. While P1, P2, and P3 acknowledge park effectiveness and achievements (s1, s2, s5, s6), P4 critically assesses the current system's efficacy (s18/rank36), urging intensified activities (s19, s22) (Tab. 3). P4's assessment of park impact strongly diverges from P1 and P2, notably showing an extreme difference with P2 regarding the parks' role as guarantors of nature protection (s18, Tabs. 3 and 5). Despite these differences, all perspectives recognize the legitimacy of the parks' existence. The consensus also includes support for participatory management of landscape parks and fostering cooperation between the parks and various communities. All perspectives strongly reject the top-down expert management model (s25), instead advocating for park management by institutions independent of local authorities (s34) and emphasizing the parks' function as platforms for cooperation towards sustainable local development (s27, especially P4: rank 3) and shaping cultural identity (s28).

The greatest differences of opinion concern the scope of park management's competence, land use restrictions, and the park's role in local development. P1 strongly supports

Table 5. Contrasts and commonalities between perspectives

Statement1	Consensus vs. disagreement	Z score difference P1-P2	Z score difference P1-P3	Z score difference P1-P4	Z score difference P2-P3	Z score difference P2-P4	Z score difference P3-P4
1	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P4	0.68 (6*)	0.41 (*)	1.88 (6*)	-0.27	1.20 (6*)	1.48 (6*)
2	distinguishes all	-0.29 (*)	-0.99 (6*)	1.84 (6*)	-0.70 (***)	2.13 (6*)	2.83 (6*)
3	distinguishes P2 distinguishes P4	-0.69 (6*)	-0.09	0.38 (*)	0.60 (***)	1.08 (6*)	0.48 (*)
4	distinguishes P4	-0.24	-0.34 (*)	1.14 (6*)	-0.10	1.38 (6*)	1.48 (6*)
5	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P4	0.25 (*)	0.54 (**)	1.56 (6*)	0.28	1.31 (6*)	1.02 (***)
6	distinguishes all	0.33 (*)	-0.65 (***)	-2.47 (6*)	-0.98 (6*)	-2.79 (6*)	-1.82 (6*)
7	distinguishes P1 only	1.3 (6*)	1.05 (6*)	1.34 (6*)	-0.26	0.03	0.29
8	–	0.65 (6*)	0.05	0.62 (***)	-0.60 (***)	-0.03	0.57 (**)
9	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P3	1.25 (6*)	-1.16 (6*)	1.34 (6*)	-2.41 (6*)	0.09	2.50 (6*)
10	distinguishes P3 distinguishes P4	-0.05	-0.49 (**)	-1.08 (6*)	-0.44 (**)	-1.02 (6*)	-0.59 (**)
11	distinguishes P2 distinguishes P4	0.60 (***)	0.06	-0.59 (***)	-0.54 (**)	-1.19 (6*)	-0.65 (**)

State-ment1	Consensus vs. disagreement	Z score difference P1-P2	Z score difference P1-P3	Z score difference P1-P4	Z score difference P2-P3	Z score difference P2-P4	Z score difference P3-P4
12	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P3	1.02 (6*)	-0.53 (**)	0.77 (***)	-1.55 (6*)	-0.26	1.30 (6*)
13	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P3	-2.26 (6*)	-1.02 (6*)	-2.09 (6*)	1.23 (6*)	0.17	-1.06 (6*)
14	distinguishes P2 distinguishes P4	-1.80 (6*)	-0.16	-1.44 (6*)	1.64 (6*)	0.36 (*)	-1.28 (6*)
15	distinguishes P2 distinguishes P3	1.03 (6*)	-1.07 (6*)	-0.01	-2.11 (6*)	-1.04 (6*)	1.07 (6*)
16	distinguishes P2 distinguishes P4	0.72 (6*)	0.00	1.69 (6*)	-0.71 (***)	0.97 (6*)	1.69 (6*)
17	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P2	0.36 (**)	1.19 (6*)	0.89 (6*)	0.83 (6*)	0.53 (**)	-0.30
18	distinguishes all	-1.33 (6*)	0.47 (**)	2.34 (6*)	1.8 (6*)	3.68 (6*)	1.88 (6*)
19	–	1.68 (6*)	1.69 (6*)	-0.12	0.01	-1.81 (6*)	-1.81 (6*)
20	distinguishes all	3.37 (6*)	2.41 (6*)	1.87 (6*)	-0.96 (6*)	-1.51 (6*)	-0.55 (**)
21	–	0.06	-0.39 (*)	-0.52 (**)	-0.44 (**)	-0.57 (**)	-0.13
22	distinguishes P2 distinguishes P3	0.97 (6*)	1.56 (6*)	-0.05	0.59 (***)	-1.02 (6*)	-1.61 (6*)
23	–	2.90 (6*)	3.22 (6*)	0.16	0.32	-2.74 (6*)	-3.06 (6*)
24	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P4	-0.90 (6*)	-1.21 (6*)	-2.27 (6*)	-0.31	-1.37 (6*)	-1.06 (6*)
25	distinguishes P2 distinguishes P4	-0.25 (*)	0.27	0.72 (***)	0.52 (**)	0.97 (6*)	0.46 (*)
26	distinguishes P3 only	-0.17	0.85 (6*)	-0.14	1.02 (6*)	0.03	-0.99 (***)
27	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P3	-0.29 (*)	0.48 (**)	-0.50 (**)	0.77 (***)	-0.21	-0.98 (***)
28	–	-0.36 (**)	-0.23	-0.63 (***)	0.12	-0.27	-0.39
29	distinguishes P4	-0.12	-0.33 (*)	0.53 (**)	-0.21	0.65 (***)	0.86 (***)
30	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P3	-0.37 (**)	-1.03 (6*)	-0.49 (**)	-0.66 (***)	-0.13	0.54 (*)
31	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P2	-2.19 (6*)	-0.79 (***)	-0.52 (**)	1.40 (6*)	1.68 (6*)	0.27
32	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P3	-1.08 (6*)	-2.15 (6*)	-1.30 (6*)	-1.07 (6*)	-0.23	0.84 (***)
33	distinguishes P1 only	-1.54 (6*)	-1.58 (6*)	-1.24 (6*)	-0.05	0.30	0.34
34	distinguishes P1 distinguishes P4	-1.16 (6*)	-1.12 (6*)	-1.60 (6*)	0.05	-0.44 (*)	-0.49 (*)
35	distinguishes P2 distinguishes P4	-1.27 (6*)	-0.03	-2.21 (6*)	1.25 (6*)	-0.94 (6*)	-2.18 (6*)
36	distinguishes P2 distinguishes P3	-0.83 (6*)	1.12 (6*)	0.18	1.95 (6*)	1.01 (6*)	-0.94 (***)

1 – statement numbers as in Table 2.

P – perspective.

— – No perspective significantly different from the others indicated.

significance

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

6* $p < 0.000001$

extending management competence, considering it a priority (s20, P1: rank 1), a stance opposed by other perspectives, especially P2 (s20, P2: rank 34). Regarding land use, P1 and P4 favor tightening restrictions, including building development (s23, P1: rank 4), while P2 and P3 strongly oppose this, considering this opposition to be crucial (s23, P2 and P3: rank 36). P2, P3, and P4 urge greater socialization of the functioning of parks through the active involvement of local authorities and residents, with P4 being the strongest proponent (s24/rank 1). P1 remains skeptical about this position. Regarding social issues, only P3 strongly underscores the positive impact of parks on residents' quality of life (s9, P3: rank2), P1 assesses this issue rather positively, while P2 and P4 disagree. In the economic context, however, P1 strongly rejects the claims that parks limit socio-economic development and cause losses for local communities (s13, s14, P1: rank34 and rank35), though it perceives no significant benefits. P3 is the only perspective noting a modest positive economic impact of parks, while P2 and P4 strongly deny benefits, considering parks to be a factor limiting local development. P2, acknowledging development constraints, prioritizes granting state subsidies to municipalities with landscape parks on their territory (s31, P2: rank1), while P1 is opposed to this. Concerning the future economic role, P3 strongly supports parks' activities promoting commerce (s30, s32, s33), P2 and P3 also seek greater parks' involvement in this area, while P1 clearly differs, accepting only some issues to a limited extent (Tabs. 3 and 5).

Discussion

The four main social perspectives identified by landscape park stakeholders reflect diverse attitudes towards the functions of these areas and management priorities. Despite these differences, the need for parks was widely accepted, confirming high public support for this form of nature conservation in the Małopolskie Voivodship (*Badanie świadomości*..., 2019). Most of the detailed comments from respondents focused on nature and landscape conservation issues, a theme emphasized across all environments represented. However, stakeholders diverged on the need for stricter landscape protection and development restriction in landscape parks. Supporters of stricter rules stressed the necessity of protecting unique natural and cultural values – the basis of tourist appeal and local identity – and counteracting negative changes. In the opinion of one resident, landscape parks "are one of the few institutions that save municipalities from the destruction of the landscape and valuable natural assets that attract tourists". Opponents, conversely, feared increased burden on residents and reduced investment opportunities, negatively impacting municipal finances, limiting the labor market, and exacerbating social problems. One respondent noted, "residents of villages and small towns already associate nature conservation exclusively with problems". Among the most contentious issues was the development of buildings, particularly residential and tourism-related structures, with concerns extending beyond the mere construction of new facilities to include architectural considerations. Some respondents advocated for the promotion of traditional architectural patterns as an important element of cultural heritage and local identity, while others feared that preserving these models could impose constraints on construction activities.

The divergent views on regulations stem from the dynamic transformations occurring in the Małopolskie Voivodship. This region, one of the most valuable in Poland in terms of nature, landscape and culture, is undergoing profound functional changes in rural areas. One of the major challenges is the abandonment of agriculture due to the low profitability (resulting from environmental constraints and the high fragmentation of land), the possibility of finding more lucrative sources of income in the economically well-developed region of Poland, as well as high land prices (especially in suburban and tourist areas), which encourage their sale (Bański, 2014; Semczuk, 2013). This leads to ecological

succession and an expansion of residential, commercial and tourist infrastructure. Consequently, natural habitats become fragmented and degraded, transition zones between natural and urbanized areas (traditionally agricultural lands) shrink, traditional landscapes are lost, and rural settlement patterns and architecture characteristic of the region are disappearing (Brańka & Zawilińska, 2020; Ćwik & Hrehorowicz-Gaber, 2021; Kaim et al., 2023; Jakiel et al., 2024). These processes also have negative social and economic consequences (Lityński & Hołuj, 2020; Śleszyński et al., 2020). The high population density in the province (226 people·km^{-2}), dispersed settlement patterns, and a dysfunctional spatial planning system further exacerbate chaotic urbanization, making spatial management increasingly difficult.

This issue fits into the broader context of biodiversity and landscape protection in economically used areas, including agricultural and urbanized regions. Functional changes in rural areas and urbanization processes are widely recognized as major threats to biodiversity, traditional landscapes, and the cultural heritage of rural areas, indicating the need to focus more attention on inhabited and economically used landscapes. Furthermore, there is a need to introduce flexible conservation strategies adapted to local conditions that integrate human activities with the preservation of natural and landscape values (Miller & Hobbs, 2002; Plieninger et al., 2006).

International research shows that effective protected areas management in developed areas requires an integrated approach combining nature conservation with local development. In some European countries, regional parks (nature parks) are directly linked to local socio-economic development policies, and local communities play a key role in their management (Feyeh, 2016; Gerber, 2018; Hammer, 2016; Hammer et al., 2021; Pütz et al., 2017). In Poland, however, the objectives set by the legislator: the preservation and promotion of natural, historical, cultural and landscape values in the context of sustainable development (Act..., 2004, Article 16), place the management of landscape parks in the role of guardians and educators. The parks lack real tools to support local development, and the integrated approach is further hindered by organizational constraints and detailed legal regulations. At the same time, their capacity to effectively limit development pressures is insufficient and rather indirect, remaining largely dependent on cooperation with planning authorities and municipalities. This also points to the importance of strengthening landscape governance instruments (within the existing institutional framework) that support the integration of protection objectives with spatial planning and local development processes.

Landscape parks in Poland function as organizational units of regional self-government (voivodship-level) authorities, and their boundaries rarely coincide with those of municipalities. The only mandatory planning documents (park protection plans) are not integrated with municipal development strategies, do not directly address local development support, and are issued for 20-year periods, making it difficult to adapt measures to changing conditions. Landscape park directorates usually manage multiple protected areas, their headquarters are often located in cities outside the parks[3], impeding contact with park communities and marginalizing local stakeholders. Although park councils include representatives of local communities, this body covers all parks in a given complex and has only an advisory function, with no real decision-making powers (Kistowski, 2012; *Badanie świadomości...,* 2019; Zawilińska, 2020; Zimniewicz, 2005). Despite these limitations, landscape parks in Poland are broadening cooperation with local communities (mainly

[3] The Landscape Parks Complex of the Małopolskie Voivodship is responsible for managing not only the landscape parks, but also 10 protected landscape areas, which together cover 49.6% of the province's area. In addition, its tasks include issuing permits for tree felling in the three main cities of the province and issuing opinions on applications for felling in the protected areas under its management.

local governments and educational institutions) and indirectly supporting local development through education, promotion and popularization of natural and cultural values.

Against this background, respondents' key concerns were landscape parks' management, their role in socio-economic development and relations with residents. The study revealed divergent views on the competences of parks. Some respondents, mainly park employees, were in favor of expanding their powers, but this was met with strong opposition from the representatives of municipalities and some residents who feared losing control over local development. Respondents emphasized that landscape parks do little to support the local development or are even perceived as a limiting factor, and are not considered to influence the inflow of new residents or entrepreneurs. Although most municipalities in the surveyed parks recorded population growth (2000–2020: 72% of municipalities), this was not a result of the parks' operation. The development of settlements, especially in the suburbs of Krakow, was mainly caused by economic factors (real estate prices) rather than the attractiveness of living in landscape parks (Brańka and Zawilińska, 2020). Regardless of the perspective presented, there was support for a greater involvement of parks in local development activities, emphasizing the need to support traditional agriculture and promote local products ("parks should support local craftsmen, artists, organic farms, and all economic activities that fit within the framework of sustainable development"). The implementation of such measures is recommended for protected areas classified as protected landscapes according to the IUCN classification (Phillips, 2002), but many of them do not implement these guidelines or do so only to a limited extent, which is criticized by local communities (Fjellstad et al., 2009). This indicates that expectations towards landscape parks extend beyond their strictly conservation-oriented functions and are closely linked to the socio-economic context in which they operate.

In the case of the Małopolskie Voivodship, the results of this study are consistent with this pattern. They reflect a broader tension between the conservation mandate of landscape parks and local expectations regarding their role in supporting economic development. While such expectations are understandable, they extend beyond the core statutory functions of these institutions and are structurally constrained by their limited competences and institutional position. At the same time, in areas dominated by private land ownership, the effectiveness of landscape protection is closely linked to the level of social acceptance. Long-term conservation outcomes are difficult to achieve without aligning protection objectives with locally perceived benefits. In this sense, the role of landscape parks is not to stimulate spatial development, but to support forms of local development that are compatible with conservation goals and reinforce their social legitimacy (Janssen 2009, Pütz et al., 2017).

Despite being aware of the limited role of landscape parks in stimulating the local economy, respondents strongly opposed transferring their management to local authorities. Concerns mainly related to the subordination of conservation objectives to short-term economic interests, but also to a narrow management perspective focused on the interests of individual municipalities. At the same time, the development of cooperation between different groups was proposed as a key element of effective park management. These findings do not indicate a contradiction, but rather point to a preference for a hybrid participatory governance model that moves beyond both a purely top-down expert-driven approach and the transfer of management to local authorities, combining institutional independence of park management bodies with participatory mechanisms involving local stakeholders. These views reflect the Central European approach to protected area management, which is dominated by a belief in the important role of public institutions, linked to limited trust in local authorities and difficulties in introducing active forms

of social participation. At the same time, there is a recognized need for cooperation and involvement of residents (Kluvánková-Oravská et al., 2009; Meessen et al., 2015; Niedziałkowski et al., 2012; Nolte, 2016; Tickle & Clarke, 2000). These conditions mean that the direct transfer of management models used in other parts of Europe may prove ineffective in the Polish context. The results therefore suggest the importance of developing governance arrangements that combine the key role of public nature conservation institutions with more effective tools for participation and local-level integration of activities. An example of such an initiative is the implementation of a co-management model for protected areas in Portugal (Moreira & Martins, 2023).

The findings of this study should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The analysis is based on a single-region case study (Małopolskie Voivodship), which limits the transferability of findings to other contexts. Part of the resident group was recruited through snowball sampling, which may introduce selection bias. Consistent with the assumptions of Q methodology, the analysis aims to identify distinct perspectives rather than their prevalence in the wider population and therefore does not support population-level generalizations. The construction of the Q-set involves an element of researcher judgement, which may have influenced the range of perspectives captured. Finally, the perspectives identified may also reflect the institutional positions of respondents (e.g., park staff, local government representatives, and some residents), which may shape their viewpoints.

Conclusions

The study revealed the complexity of attitudes towards landscape parks in the Małopolskie Voivodship and their role in heritage conservation and local development. The identification of four main stakeholder perspectives revealed significant differences in expectations regarding the functions of parks, depending on the group of respondents. Park employees showed the greatest consistency of opinion, emphasizing the priority of heritage protection and environmental education and pointing to the limited competences of park management. Representatives of municipal authorities and residents emphasized the need to take socio-economic aspects into account but presented different perspectives. Municipal authorities emphasized balancing the conservation of nature with socio-economic development needs and the autonomy of local governments in shaping the landscape. Residents, whose opinions were the most diverse, partly shared the perspectives of park employees (P1) and municipal authorities (P2), but largely prioritized local development issues, oscillating between a vision of commercialization (P3) and a participatory model of cooperation and community involvement (P4). In terms of methodology, the Q-method proved to be of great practical value, enabling the description of the perspectives presented by stakeholders, the analysis of the relationships between them, and a deeper understanding of opinions thanks to the possibility of commenting on extremely rated statements.

The study indicates broad acceptance of the existence of landscape parks but also revealed controversies surrounding their functioning. The key challenges relate to issues of spatial management, conflicts of interest, and the limited powers of park management. On the one hand, there are expectations that parks should play a stronger role in protecting the landscape and nature, while on the other hand, their functioning is sometimes perceived as a factor limiting the economic development of municipalities. In the context of dynamic spatial, social, and economic changes in the studied region, including the functional transformation of rural areas and urbanization processes, the findings point to the need for a more context-sensitive approach to landscape park management that takes into account the realities of inhabited and economically used areas. The key challenge remains to find a balance

between nature conservation and the needs of local communities, considering both the requirements for landscape and biodiversity conservation and the conditions for economic development. This requires the integration of spatial policies and the coordination of actions by various stakeholders.

The minor importance of landscape parks in stimulating local development and the marginal role of the institutions managing these areas as partners in shaping this development, in the context of the low effectiveness of parks in counteracting negative spatial phenomena and high expectations regarding their social and economic functions, as emphasized by some respondents, suggest a need to reconsider the role of landscape parks and their competences within the national nature conservation system. A comparison of the functioning of landscape parks in Poland with solutions applied in other Western European countries suggests that, in the studied context, the current model may limit their role in local development. The findings point to the importance of better integrating the activities of parks with municipal development policies, involving them in social and economic development activities, and building stronger ties with the community. This may require legislative adjustments, the development of cooperation mechanisms between various stakeholders, and more effective participation tools that could increase residents' involvement and their sense of shared responsibility for the functioning of parks. At the same time, particular emphasis should be placed on strengthening landscape protection functions through the more effective use and implementation of existing policy instruments, particularly in the context of increasing development pressure on landscapes. Key instruments include the European Landscape Convention and the Polish Act amending certain laws to strengthen landscape protection tools (Act..., 2015), commonly referred to as the "Landscape Act", which provide a framework for integrating landscape protection with spatial planning and local governance.

Data availability

The dataset supporting the findings of this study is available in the RODBUK repository at https://doi.org/10.58116/UEK/4FCZAW.

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