

FROM A PARISH SQUARE TO JOHN F. KENNEDY PARK. EVOLUTION OF THE PUBLIC SPACE OF MIRAFLORES IN LIMA, PERU AND THE ROLE OF RYSZARD DE JAXA MAŁACHOWSKI

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the study

The study produced several key conclusions. The focus area has undergone long-term transformations, evolving from an early 20th-century parish square, to modernization by ARQUIDEA in 1990–1992, to 21st-century redevelopment and infrastructural projects. The construction of the Virgen Milagrosa Church by Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski was pivotal, initiating the evolution of public space that now includes 7 June Park and John F. Kennedy Park. The church established the district's central compositional axis, serving as the primary historical and spatial landmark and perpetuating the traditional “church at a square” pattern in Miraflores.

Material and methods

The research tested the hypothesis that Małachowski not only designed the church but also conceived the urban layout for the surrounding park. While this was not fully confirmed, the study showed that the church itself significantly influenced the spatial configuration of central Miraflores. The findings document the district's transformations over time and their implications for current revitalization policies.

Results and conclusions

Future research should investigate other public spaces in Lima associated with Małachowski, particularly those that could inspire new urban layouts. This study reinforces Małachowski's enduring role in shaping Lima's urban identity and highlights how his architectural and spatial concepts continue to shape the city's development even to this day.

Keywords: Virgen Milagrosa Church, Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski, transformation of central space in Miraflores, urban development of Lima

INTRODUCTION

Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski, 1887–1972 (López Soria, 2000; García Bryce, 2010) was one of the most prominent architects of Lima in the twentieth century. He is known mainly for his designs of such high-profile buildings as those forming the walls of the urban interior of the main square (Plaza de Armas). His contributions to the city's landscape architecture and urban layouts are notable as well. His legacy is full of works representing high aesthetic and urban values, which have profoundly shaped the identity of public spaces in Lima. In 2025, the Pro Architectura Foundation conducted a research project in Lima, titled *Ryszard Jaxa Małachowski – architekt i urbanista, który zaprojektował Limę* [Ryszard Jaxa Małachowski. Architect and Planner of Lima], which focused on the Virgen Milagrosa Church (parroquia La Virgen Milagrosa) and the adjacent Kennedy Park (Parque Kennedy).

The study area is located in the Miraflores district of Lima, Peru's capital. It covers Miraflores Central Park, specifically John F. Kennedy Park (Parque John F. Kennedy) and 7 June Park (Parque 7 de Junio), and the buildings surrounding the site, particularly the Virgen Milagrosa Church, designed by Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski (Fig. 1).

The literature review before the field research yielded the following hypothesis: not only did Ryszard

de Jaxa Małachowski design the Virgen Milagrosa Church, but he also developed the land-use concept for the park site, which has affected the composition of the central part of the Miraflores district.

The hypothesis has been verified through an investigation into the authorship of the park site adjoining the church building. It involved documenting the urban context of the church at the time when it was designed and built, and the role of public buildings in the park's vicinity. The site visit followed an archival query and was complemented by interviews conducted with experts. During the *in situ* study in May 2025, we completed a photographic survey and compositional analysis of the researched site.

In parallel, we conducted interviews with architects and researchers specialising in Lima's modernist heritage, particularly the grandchildren of Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski: architect Anna Maria Małachowska and Richard Małachowski Benavides. The interviewees included Rita Gondo, an architect affiliated with Universidad de Ciencias Aplicadas in Lima, Gaddy Leon Prado, an architect affiliated with Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, Facultad de Arquitectura, Urbanismo y Artes in Lima, Dr Gisella Marilú Cavalcanti Hoces of Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola in Lima, Professor José Luis Beingolea Del Carpio of Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería UNI, and architect José Hayakawa Casas.

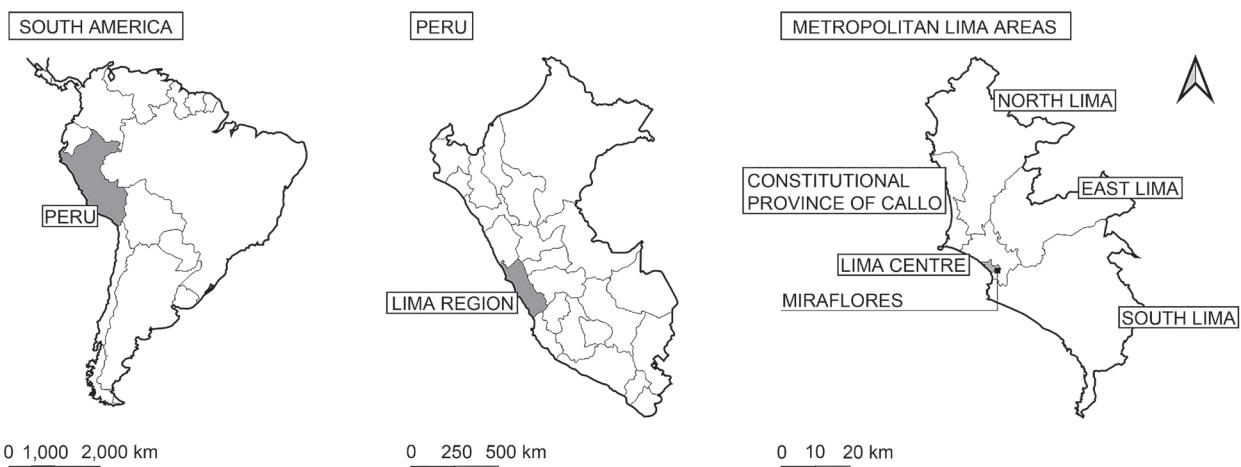


Fig. 1. Location of the study area, original work (Source: Authors' own elaboration)

RESULTS

History of Miraflores in the context of Metropolitan Lima's development

The city of Lima was established on January 18, 1535 in the place of the Curacazgo de Taulichusco settlement on the left bank of the Rímac. Its growth was driven by overlapping and coexisting local, regional, and international migrations. The process was an alternation of chaos and order (Doblado, 1990). The establishment of the Cercado district in 1568 interrupted the orthogonal urban arrangement. The development accelerated in the seventeenth century. Exquisite, typically two-storey houses were built at the time. Their colonial style was a merger between classical Renaissance academicism and Mudéjar art (Kahatt, 2014). Lima's city walls were built in the late seventeenth century as well. Over the two centuries of their existence, they were never used. Instead, they thwarted the city's growth. Earthquakes struck the place twice, in 1687 and in 1746. The latter, far more devastating disaster, demolished the city. The last years of colonialism saw the completion of many important public projects, such as a water supply system, sewerage, electric street lights, and transport (Balladoni, 2022; Doblado, 1990). The architecture of the buildings of that time shows French Baroque and Neoclassical influences. The nineteenth-century urban redevelopment aimed to give the city's growth and expansion a new direction. Public transport was introduced, and greater focus was placed on the attractiveness of public spaces. Good relations with France led the city to hire French engineers, adopt Haussmann's approach to city planning, and, consequently, demolish the city walls. The first important axes of composition emerged from that process. The enlargement of the old town accelerated the city's growth. Another important step was the establishment of primary arterial thoroughfares: Progress Avenue (today Venezuela Avenue), which connects central Lima to the port in Callao, and Laguia Avenue (today Arequipa Avenue), which links the centre with the Miraflores district. The city built railway lines from Lima to Chorrillos and to Magdalena, which were later converted into avenues, fuelling Lima's southern expansion. Lima's annexation of four resorts, Magdalena, Miraflores, Barranco, and Chorrillos, has blurred the continuity and character of the

city's structure. The new urban axes and structures south of the centre produced a monumental city and a garden city, a step towards a more profound process of metropolitanisation of Lima (Doblado, 1990). The place gained large villa-style residential districts inspired by the American style. This, in turn, caused a pivot in the urban fabric typology and scale. New additions to the urban system included Santa Beatriz, Lince Jesús María, Country Club, and Orrantia. As transport improved, the resorts of Barranco, Miraflores, and Chorrillos followed suit. Their style was a mix of Neocolonial, Neo-Inca, and Neo-Peruvian architecture. More universal trends included *Art Deco* and its sub-genre. With a rapid population growth in the twentieth century, Lima became a metropolis (Fig. 2). Working-class districts and public facilities were needed. The housing troubles brought about by the overpopulated centre have led to the first unofficial settlements, the so-called *barriadas*. The residential problems of the time evolved into a permanent housing crisis, which has plagued Lima ever since (Oviedo Rodríguez, 2023; Matos Mar, 2012; Espinoza and Fort, 2020). Even though the 1990s saw improved economic and social stability in Peru, the seven-million city faced serious transport problems. Today, the administration aims to revitalise the central areas and restore the heritage districts for business and tourism. Similar processes affected the first residential districts and resorts: Miraflores, Barranco, and San Isidro.

The Miraflores district was officially established on January 2, 1857. In the late eighteenth century, Miraflores was a dull village with clay-and-straw buildings. Initially, in most part, these districts consisted of summer houses. The latter were then replaced by year-round buildings. Land with an unspecified official use attracted both formal and informal residential development. Miraflores grew rapidly in the first half of the twentieth century, both in size and in population. The growth was driven by the Via Espresa motorway and the Circuito de Playas de la Costa Verde road transport project. In the late twentieth century, it was converted into residential developments, which remain inhabited today (Aquirre Aquirre, 2016). In addition to housing, the authorities earmarked many sites for administration buildings, embassies, consulates, and headquarters of international organisations. At the same time, the district's urban fabric grew denser, whereas rec-

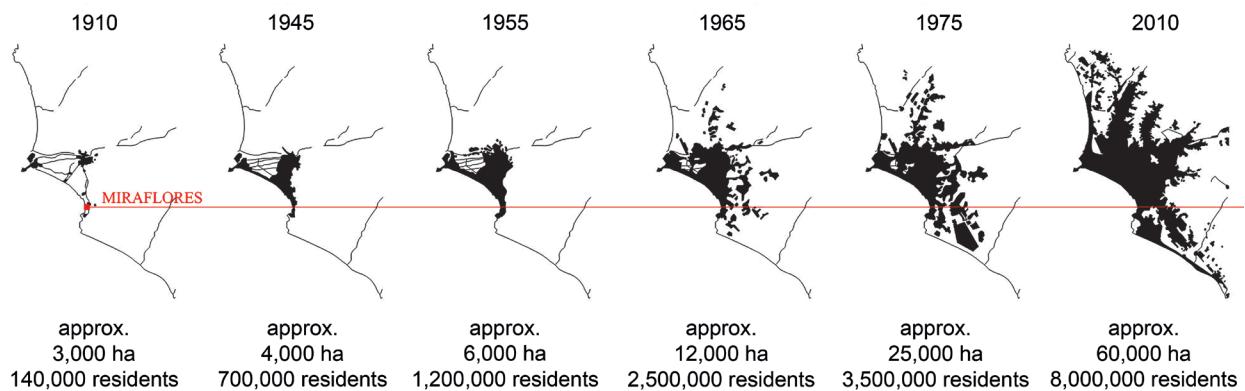


Fig. 2. Expansion of Lima (Source: original work based on Kahatt, 2014)

reational and leisure areas gained new importance, including parks: Kennedy, del Amor, and Alfredo Salazar as components improving the district's quality and important attractions for residents and tourists (Belladoni, 2022; Namuche Vega, 2022; Hosler, 2019; Ludeña, 2002).

Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski. The contribution of the Polish architect and urban planner to Lima's development

Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski was born on May 14, 1887 in Prochorowa, near Odesa, as an heir to the Małachowski family, house of Gryf, a branch settled in the Kherson Governorate in the nineteenth century. His father was a Pole and his mother, a Slovak. He graduated from the School of Fine Arts (École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Art) in Paris, and arrived in Peru in 1911 for a two-year placement. Three years later, he married a Peruvian, María Benavides Diez Canseco. They had five children: Augusto, Ricardo, Malvina, Felipe, and María Teresa. Małachowski spent the rest of his life, sixty-two years, in Peru. When leaving Europe at the age of twenty-four, he was considered an outstanding engineer and a qualified expert in architecture and the arts. His professional life revolved around Peru, including the renewal of Lima (Kotarski, 2020; Omilanowska, 2020; polskaswiatu.pl). He was also active in Ecuador and Uruguay. Over his sixty years of design and planning, Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski has substantially remodelled the urban landscape of Lima. Starting as a state engineer, Małachowski eventually became the Chief State En-

gineer. He won numerous design competitions for state buildings, including the redevelopment of the Government Palace of Peru, the National Theatre, the Municipal Palace of Lima, the Legislative Palace, and the National Museum of Peruvian Culture. The public buildings Małachowski designed for Lima were the first of their kind. Their architectural style has introduced a modern touch to the city. Some of the most prominent examples include Edificio Cía de teléfono de Lima, the first luxurious shopping mall, several bank buildings, and the National Club. These numerous edifices expressed Małachowski's unique, eclectic style, inspired by Baroque, Rococo, and Neoclassicism, with traces of French influences. He managed to shape them into both graceful and subtle forms. Considered the father of the Peruvian style, Małachowski drew on pre-Inca and Inca architecture (Joffré, 2014). He designed many important state buildings, but those in the historical city centre carry particular weight. Ten of his designs are considered Peruvian cultural heritage today: façades of the Archbishop's Palace, the Government Palace of Peru, also known as the House of Pizarro, the Legislative Palace, the Municipal Palace of Lima (interiors), the National Club, the Banco Italiano building, the Rímac Building, and San Martín Square. Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski also designed numerous buildings for companies and businesses, including banks and insurance firms. Furthermore, he designed churches: Virgen Milagrosa and the Carmelite parish church in Lima (facade), as well as residential buildings, the first apartments for rent, urban and seaside luxury homes, villas, and housing estates. His

other works include commercial venues, sports facilities, and even the first indoor car parks in Lima. He did not shirk from traffic and circulation infrastructure, particularly city squares and other paved areas, ranging from small, rectangular ones to vast ellipsoid or oval courts surrounded by prestigious buildings, like Dos de Mayo Square (predesign), Paseo de la República Avenue, and San Martín Square mentioned above. The buildings and public spaces designed by Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski transformed the city, endowing it with a modern, metropolitan beauty (Mercado Herrera & Ybañez Pareja, 2000; Kotarski, 2014). He was part of the Pan-American Generation, which played a substantial role in professional and educational organisation, and helped consolidate building designers as a professional group through Pan-American Congresses, schools of architecture, and trade journals, as reported by Ramos de Dios and Peretti Poggio (2012). Małachowski established the Faculty of Architecture

at the School of Civil Construction and Mining Engineers (Escuela Especial de Ingenieros de Construcciones Civiles y de Minas del Perú), today's National University of Engineering (Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería). He led the school for thirty-three years. Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski died on September 6, 1972 in Lima (polksaswiatu.pl).

HISTORY OF PARQUE CENTRAL DE MIRAFLORES (KENNEDY PARK)

The initial site layout was designed around 1900 as a parish square of the Matriz de Miraflores Church (GPSmyCity, n.d.). Małachowski designed a new temple in its place, the Virgen Milagrosa parish church between 1930 and 1939 (Kotarski, 2014), exactly as reported by Mercado Herrera and Ybañez Pareja (2000) in 1936. The church transformed the place into the heart of the district.

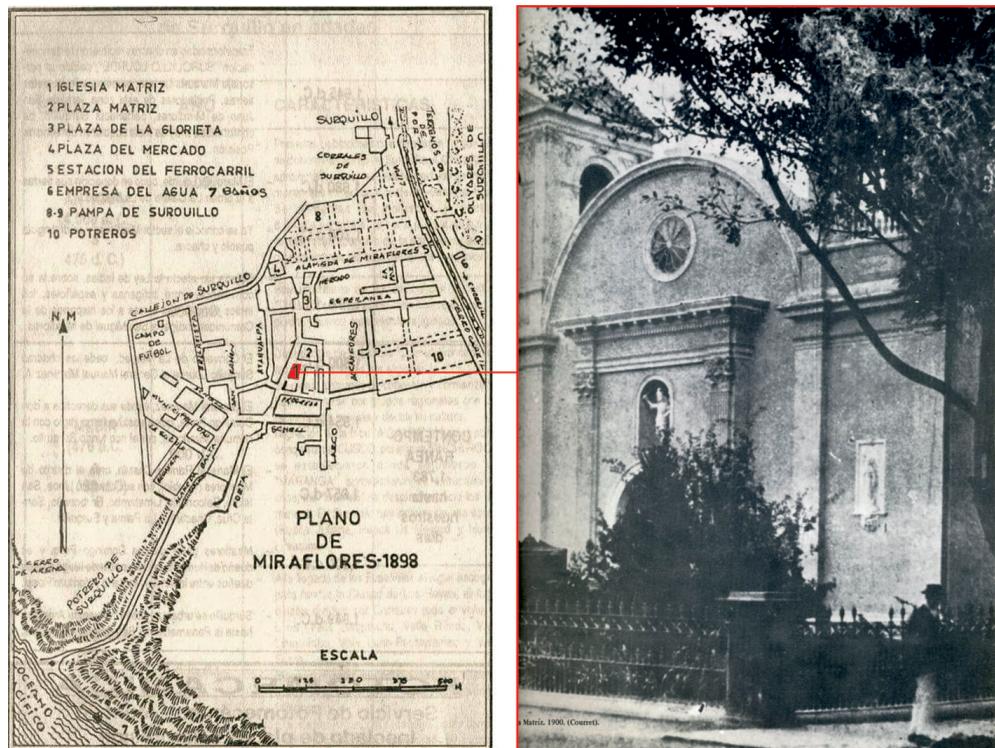


Fig. 3. Left: a 1898 plan of Miraflores with the location of Iglesia Matriz de Miraflores church (Source: <https://pl.pinterest.com/pin/239535273926836400/>, accessed: 10.10.2025). Right: the Iglesia Matriz de Miraflores church (Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c8/Municipalidad_de_Miraflores_-_Iglesia_Matriz_de_Miraflores_%287395435022%29.jpg, accessed: 10.10.2025), original work

The park was split in two in the 1960s. The primary, triangular part near the Miraflores roundabout was named 7 June Park (Parque 7 de Junio), while the smaller site resembling a rectangle was initially called 28 July Park (Parque 28 de Julio). The latter is now known as John F. Kennedy Park (Fig. 4). The name commemorates the good relationship between President Prado and President Kennedy and their meeting in the US in 1962 (Mujica Pinilla, 2013). The 22,000 m² parks replaced demolished central city blocks. It was redeveloped in 1990, when Alberto Andrade was the city mayor. The concept by ARQUIDEA (Javier Artadi, Juan Carlos Doblado, José Orrego) included two entrance zones: small squares delineated by porticos, with accesses at the junction of Larco and Diagonal/Benavides, and at the intersection of Diagonal/Benavides and Shell. The layouts were enriched with internal pathways with circular features: the Chabuca Granda amphitheatre in 7 June Park, and the Kennedy Square in John F. Kennedy Park. These alterations were intended to address deteriorating public security and render a positive social and economic impact (Hosler, 2019; Ludeña, 2002; Adrián Matos, 2015). Simultaneously, the buildings around the park were redeveloped, resulting in three department stores (Ludeña, 2002). A bust of John F. Kennedy was unveiled in the park in 2003. Larco Avenue was recon-

structed in 2014, and a four-storey underground car park was added in 2015–2016. The final rearrangement covered Virgen Milagrosa Street, which was made into a pedestrian street to establish a visual connection between the two parks and merge them into one (López Bandezú and Chong Herrera, 2020). After the comprehensive renewal in 2019, the park has gained new importance as a public space for the Lima community. Two processes can be identified in the urban fabric adjacent to the park and in its surroundings. The regeneration and commercialisation have improved real estate value and aligned with the renewal of this evolving part of the city. This has led to reversed gentrification. The park serves as a venue for occasional events, public gatherings, celebrations, marches, and spontaneous meetings (Hosler, 2019).

Surroundings of the Virgen Milagrosa Church at the time of its design

In the 1930s, when the church was designed and built, the Miraflores district was sparsely built up. Low-rise buildings and large open public spaces prevailed in the area. The square in front of it was a place of religious meetings, processions, and celebrations. The Neocolonial building became a clear-cut urban landmark (Fraser, 2004), towards which the nearby space and views would gravitate (GPSmyCity, n.d.).

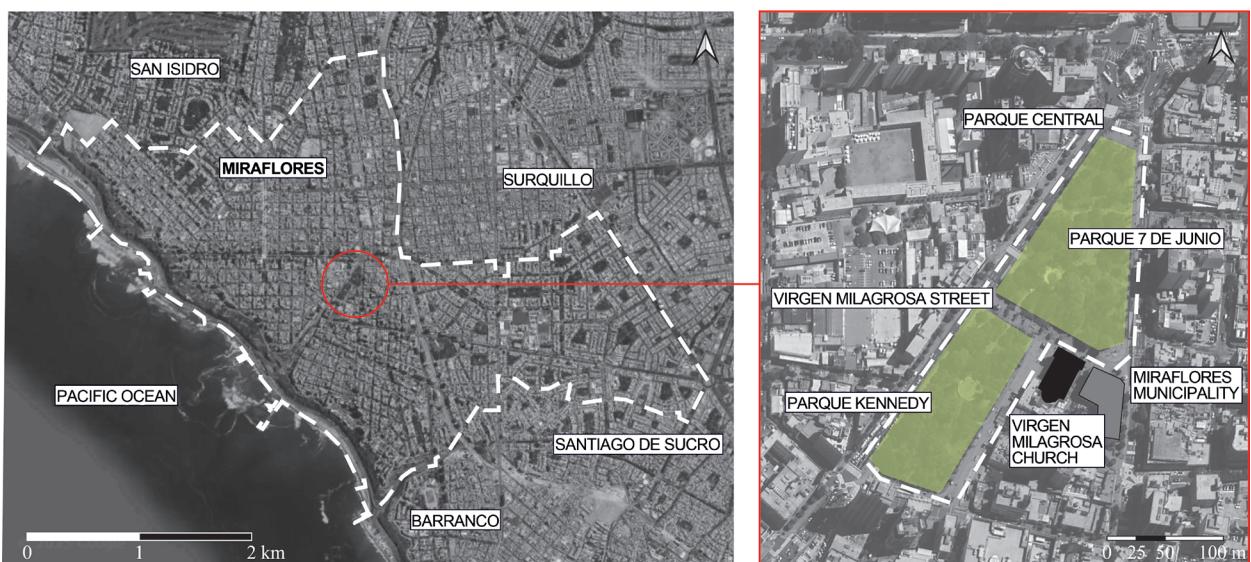


Fig. 4. Miraflores Central Park on a map and its layout based on google.pl/maps (as of October 2025)

Site visit and archival research

In 2025, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage of the Republic of Poland announced a competition for NGOs in which the ProArchitectura Foundation secured a grant for the project *Ryszard Jaxa Małachowski. Architect and Planner of Lima*. Having completed the necessary preparations and having identified potential sources of information, the foundation delegated one person to carry out a site visit to Kennedy Park to make arrangements for the planned *in situ* study in Lima.

Directly adjacent to the park is the Virgen Milagrosa Church and its immediate urban context. The church was designed by Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski.

Analysis of spatial relationships and roles of public buildings

Today's Kennedy Park is a park-square complex (Llona, 2011; Gutiérrez and Haramoto, 1998) where green and pedestrian areas intertwine. Note that public space does not mean only horizontal space. Buildings whose façades form the square frontage, serving as architectural and landscape walls of the urban interior or public space, play a crucial role in this context. The Virgen Milagrosa Church is located south of Virgen Milagrosa Street, which splits the park system in half. The building is the main compositional and navigational landmark for the area. The eastern frontage of Virgen Milagrosa Street is terminated by the Municipal Palace of Miraflores. Together with the Chabuca Granda amphitheatre, the features ensure all-day vitality in the space. Other important landmark buildings in the immediate vicinity of the park are Edificio Diagonal, designed by Enrique Seaone and built between 1952 and 1954, and El Pacífico by Fernando Osma, constructed between 1957 and 1958.

The composition and view analysis of the study site (Fig. 5.1) identified a cultural landmark: the Virgen Milagrosa Church (Fig. 5.2), and a secondary cultural landmark: the Municipal Palace of Miraflores (Fig. 5.3). Six cultural markers were also identified: three access squares delineated by porticoes (Fig. 5.7), the Chabuca Granda amphitheatre (Fig. 5.8), a circular square in 7 June Park (Fig. 5.9), and a circular square in John F. Kennedy Park (Fig. 5.10). Two composition axes were found. The church's façade defines the first, and the other is along Virgen Mila-

grosa pedestrian street, with a node at their intersection. The photographs (Figs 5.3–5.6) show that the church is a formally important spatial component of both parks. Still, the current arrangement of pedestrian circulation paths does not emphasise the link between the church building and the park area. The primary element is the pedestrian street dividing the park site in two.

CONCLUSIONS

The study yielded the following conclusions:

- The study area has emerged as a result of long-term transformations: from a parish square, to modernisation by ARQUIDEA in 1990–1992 (Ward, 2004), to redevelopment and infrastructural projects in the twenty-first century.
- The design and erection of the Virgen Milagrosa Church by Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski initiated the process of evolution of the public space, which is now the complex of parks: 7 June Park and John F. Kennedy Park.

The construction put the place in the heart of the district and defined its composition. The church is the primary compositional and historical landmark in the park and the central section of the district, perpetuating the traditional pattern of “a church at a square” (De Szyszlo, 1997) in the context of Miraflores. Ultimately, the hypothesis that not only did Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski design the Virgen Milagrosa Church, but that he also created the urban layout concept for the park site around it (one that has affected today's spatial arrangement and composition of the central part of the Miraflores district), has not been confirmed. Nevertheless, the study has revealed the significant impact of Małachowski's church design on the spatial layout of Miraflores' central area. The study documents transformations in Miraflores and their contemporary impact on the district's revitalisation policy.

Further research on Małachowski's works should cover other public spaces in Lima, including those similar to the present focal point, where his achievements could stimulate new urban layouts. The present study can help amplify the argument concerning his role in shaping Lima's urban layout and disseminate it.

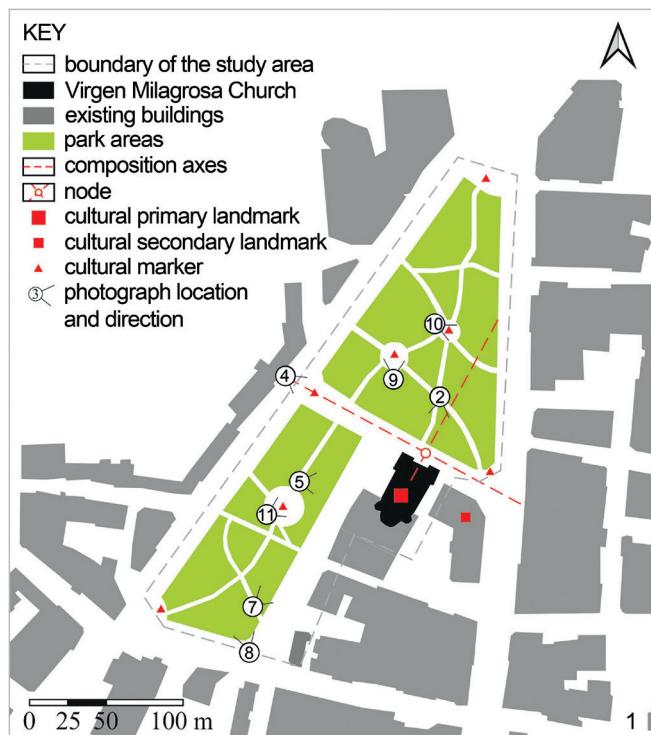




Fig. 5. Composition analysis (1) and photograph records: view of the Virgen Milagrosa Church (2), view of Municipal Palace of Miraflores (3), view of Virgen Milagrosa Street and the church from a junction of Oscar R. Benavides Avenue and Virgen Milagrosa Street (pedestrian), the green wall in the foreground is a cultural marker (4), view of the church from John F. Kennedy Park (5, 6). Cultural markers: park entrance delineated by a portico (7), Chabuca Granda amphitheatre (8), square in 7 June Park (9), square in John F. Kennedy Park (10) (Source: Authors' own elaboration)

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OD PLACU PARAFIALNEGO DO PARKU JOHNA F. KENNEDY'EGO. EWOLUCJA PRZESTRZENI PUBLICZNEJ DZIELNICY MIRAFLORES W LIMIE (PERU) I ROLA RYSZARDA DE JAXA MAŁACHOWSKIEGO

ABSTRACT

Cel badań

Badany obszar przechodził liczne transformacje na przestrzeni czasu, ewoluując od placu parafialnego z początku XX wieku, poprzez modernizację zaprojektowaną przez ARQUIDEA w latach 1990–1992, aż po przebudowę i projekty infrastrukturalne XXI wieku. Budowa kościoła Virgen Milagrosa, zaprojektowanego przez Ryszarda de Jaxa Małachowskiego, była w tym procesie wydarzeniem przełomowym, zapoczątko-

wując ewolucję przestrzeni publicznej (obecnie obejmującej park 7 Czerwca i park Johna F. Kennedy'ego). Kościół Virgen Milagrosa ustanowił centralną oś kompozycyjną dzielnicy, pełniąc funkcję dominanty przestrzennej i charakterystycznego obiektu historycznego (*landmark*), a jednocześnie utrwalając tradycyjny schemat „kościoła na placu” w dzielnicy Miraflores.

Materiały i metody

Postawiono tezę, że Małachowski nie tylko zaprojektował wspomniany kościół, ale że również stworzył układ urbanistyczny otaczającego go parku. Badania służyły weryfikacji tej hipotezy. Chociaż nie została ona w pełni potwierdzona, to badania wykazały, że sam kościół znacząco wpływał na układ przestrzenny centrum Miraflores. Wyniki badań dokumentują transformacje dzielnicy na przestrzeni lat i ich implikacje dla obecnej polityki rewitalizacji.

Wyniki i wnioski

Przyszłe badania powinny skupić się na innych przestrzeniach publicznych w Limie związanach z Małachowskim, a w szczególności na tych, które mogłyby zainspirować nowe układy urbanistyczne. Wnioski z prezentowanych badań dowodzą, jak ważną rolę Małachowski odegrał w kształtowaniu tożsamości miejskiej Limy, oraz podkreślają, że jego koncepcje architektoniczne i przestrzenne wywarły trwały wpływ; co więcej, do dziś oddziałują na rozwój miasta.

Słowa kluczowe: kościół Virgen Milagrosa, Ryszard de Jaxa Małachowski, przekształcenia przestrzeni w centrum dzielnicy Miraflores, urbanistyka Limy



Ministry of Culture and National Heritage
Republic of Poland

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**COFINANCIADO POR EL MINISTRO DE CULTURA
Y PATRIMONIO NACIONAL
DEL FONDO DE PROMOCIÓN DE LA CULTURA**

*Ryszard Jaxa-Małachowski polski architekt i urbanista,
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*Ryszard Jaxa-Małachowski, arquitecto y urbanista polaco
que diseñó Lima*

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