

## **ATTRACTIVENESS OF PUBLIC SPACES IN SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES – A CONDITION FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT**

*The irrational spatial economy is observed in many small or medium-sized towns and cities. It can acquire the form of empty, undeveloped areas, degraded buildings as well as scattered building development on the outskirts of the cities*

*Such situation resulted in the changes in the social structure of the city: young people "escape" to larger agglomerations, which in turn leads to the situation when cities are inhabited mostly by older people, often with low incomes. Other features related to the structure of the population living in cities include unemployment, poverty, as well as the habits of users of urban spaces. All these features affect the image of the city and its attractiveness as places to live in. Therefore, all initiatives related to the revival of public spaces, with the creation of functional and spatial clusters are not without significance.*

*Keywords: attractiveness, competitiveness, functional and spatial clusters in public spaces.*

### **Introduction**

Urban areas have an important role in urban development strategies. They are the spaces available to everyone. Therefore their attractiveness may influence the development of the urban centres.

The quality of urbanized space, the quality of the natural environment and spatial order significantly affect the attractiveness or the competitiveness of the cities. One of the primary public goals is to ensure spatial order, and the basic tool in this area are Local Spatial Development Plans (MPZP).

There are many reasons for the low quality of the urban space in small and medium-sized towns. The degradation of public spaces which affects the quality of life is caused by the lack of attractiveness and vitality of the streets, squares<sup>1</sup> and markets<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, the attractiveness of commercial spaces which bring profits to global corporations is constantly increased.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Kobylarczyk, *Squares lace*, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 2010

<sup>2</sup> D. Kuśnierz-Krupa, *Protection issues in selected European historic towns and their contemporary development*, „E3S Web of Conferences” Vol. 45, 2018, ss.1-8;

Despite technological progress, today's cities, degraded urban environments, spaces of living and housing become anonymous, increasing the sense of loneliness<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile, the life and living of a man in a given urban space, a district should provide many experiences of an emotional, aesthetic and spiritual nature.

Houses, as well as non-domestic spaces, should have intimate character and invite to build inter-neighbourhood bonds so as to increase the vitality of space between the buildings<sup>4</sup>, within streets, squares or parks. Between the buildings, we have the opportunity to be with people in an independent, non-obliging way. The opportunity to talk and meet other people fosters closer interpersonal relationships, which seems very important for the psychological well-being of the residents.

Public spaces in many cities have become boring, monotonous and lifeless. There are also other negative aspects connected with the poor technical condition of architectural objects which require renovation, modernization or adaptation works. Loss of potential, for example, commercial or communication destructively affects the immediate and further vicinity of the facilities in question. The inability of a given district to accept new functional programs or a communication link between the place of work and the house is noticeable. When the district becomes unattractive, declined, affluent households leave it mostly by going to the suburbs of the cities, which in turn, causes urban sprawl and chaotic development. Apartments left by this group are occupied by another social group with lower income and requirements. Such processes cause transformations in the social structure of the district and the neighbourhood.

It is the quality of the spatial environment and the quality of public spaces that significantly affect the growth of social problems and the nature of the social behaviour<sup>5</sup>.

What should be done to improve the potential of a given public space, how to increase the activity of a given space, so that it does not decline or degrade? What actions should be taken to increase the attractiveness of public spaces so that they become places desirable for staying<sup>6</sup>?

The growth of population and increased prosperity are the cause of environmental burdens. City centres and downtown areas play a significant role in the

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<sup>3</sup> Cichy-Pazder, *Humanistic basis for the composition of cities*, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 1998

<sup>4</sup> J. Gehl, *Life between the buildings*, RAM, Cracow

<sup>5</sup> J. Kobylarczyk, *Quality of the housing environment in the central zone of Jaroslaw*, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 2009.

<sup>6</sup> J. Kobylarczyk, Schneider-Skalska G., Haupt P., Racoń-Leja K., Tor P., Sumlet W., Student's Scientific Circle for Sustainable development, including: Zasada K., Bogusz K., Jakubas J., Janusz K., Płonka K., Ryska K., Tekiela Ł., Waśniowska K., Winnicka S., Zemła K., 2015, *Functional and spatial diagnosis of Krakow estates: Olsza II and Ugorek*, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow.

economic growth of the city, and therefore also have an impact on the city's competitiveness. The economic development begins to be the dominant function in the daily life of the city.

Because the physical environment and public spaces have a substantial impact on the intensity of social contacts, the role of architects and urban planners in creating these spaces, offering various functional and spatial possibilities is so important.

### 1. Spatial quality of public spaces, surroundings, and neighbourhoods.

The spatial quality of the district is an important feature as it allows the diversity of functions in a given place. Spatial order and architectural values of neighbouring buildings are not without significance for the users of public spaces. The character of the place determines whether people want to stay and live in. Therefore the prices of apartments in such places are relatively higher. The district offering more green areas with blind streets and an irregular grid are preferred by the residents<sup>7</sup>.

Service facilities are also important for the users of the urbanised areas. Their location provides accessibility to important jobs, commercial and service facilities, transport hubs, connections with the city centre and other important points in the city<sup>8</sup>. These factors have an impact on the way space usage and the value of individual residential properties.

High quality public space is characterized by easy access to shops, schools, clinics as well as public transport. It should be noted that there are various preferences of the society concerning the used area<sup>9</sup>. One group of people will be satisfied with the proximity of public and private spaces, which may improve their quality of life. Another group includes business entities for whom the neighbourhood has an influence on achieving financial results. The third group are property owners for whom attractive neighbourhoods mean higher rents. It should be remembered that users of public spaces and the neighbourhoods of a social nature evaluate its quality, comparing them to the quality occurring in other places in the city. Any changes made in other parts of the city may result in changes in the assessment of the area being analyzed.

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<sup>7</sup> K. Paprzyca, *Harmonizing the urban development of urban areas - selected issues*, Monograph 417, Cracow 2012

<sup>8</sup> J. Kobylarczyk, *Quality of the housing environment in the central zone of Jarosław*, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 2009.

J. Kobylarczyk *Quality of the housing environment in the central zone of Łańcut*, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 2010.

J. Kobylarczyk *Quality of the housing environment in the central zone of Przeworsk*, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 2011.

<sup>9</sup> J. Gyurkovich, *The significance of forms characteristic for shaping and perception of space*, Monograph 258, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 1999.

Safety is a very important factor in determining the quality of the urban environment<sup>10</sup>. It has become a "scarce commodity" in modern times. Residents of a given place, the neighbourhood must feel responsible for the state of security, cooperate with each other within the group in order to achieve common needs and interests.

Many medium-sized cities require a planning strategy aimed at social demand. It applies in particular to public spaces: streets, squares, parks, places of social activity, which over time may also become attractive for tourists<sup>11</sup>. This strategy should not be limited only to the standard of finishing and equipment. Public spaces should be enriched with all activities aimed at extracting the spirit, identity and character of the place<sup>12</sup>, its vitality and diversity of activities. It is possible due to the varied typology of open spaces, diversified functions and architecture.

## 2. Functional - spatial diversity and social differentiation

Investing in social infrastructure is an activity that has an impact on increasing the attractiveness of small and medium-sized cities. This investment mainly concerns activities related to promotion in culture, sport, entertainment and leisure.

Linking various functions in public spaces allows fulfilling many needs of the residents. These activities intensify the spaces that become more accessible to various facilities. All activities in urban centres of various sizes are focused on intensification, cohesion as well as functional and spatial diversity; they increase their attractiveness as well as the quantity and quality of services and public transport. There is an easy access to the areas used, and a large selection of services, trade. The labour market is also more efficient.

## Conclusions

The management of public spaces in cities is currently focused on making decisions and performing all actions aimed at keeping them in good condition, by introducing various functions<sup>13</sup>. Activities undertaken in public spaces related to the improvement of the quality of the natural environment will distinguish these spaces in a positive way from underinvested areas. A high standard of infrastructure and construction,

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<sup>10</sup>J. Kobylarczyk, *Space and security-selected examples, [in:] Safe space. Urban and architectural determinants of shaping urban space for increasing the safety of residents, Chair of Renovation and Urban Development, Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 2005.*

<sup>11</sup>K. Kuśnierz, D. Kuśnierz-Krupa, Tourist function as an activating factor in small historic towns in the former Krakow region in the second decade of the 21st century – selected problems, „Wiadomości Konserwatorskie - Journal of Heritage Conservation” nr 42/2015, Wyd. ZG SKZ, ss. 61-70;

<sup>12</sup>M. Gyurkovich, Hybrid spaces of culture in a contemporary European city, Monograph 438, *Cracow University of Technology, Cracow 2013*

<sup>13</sup>K. Paprzyca, *Koncepcja rozwoju miasta Oświęcim poprzez ofertę wzrostu walorów kulturowych, użytkowych, Technical Transactions - Czasopismo Techniczne*, Vol. 115, Iss. 3, 2018, ss. 41-52

ecological technologies, diversified functions adapted to the preferences of users of a given space, and the closeness of natural elements will influence positively the atmosphere of the place and the well-being of its users<sup>14</sup>. Actions of any kind aimed at improving the quality of public spaces indirectly may:

- improve the quality of life and living in the city,
- reduce the city's spillages,
- protect agricultural areas,
- increase city's intensification, effective use of existing areas. Owing to functional and spatial diversity, it is possible to create alternative travel models that allow to use bikes, public transport or walking. These activities bring the environmental, social and economic benefits for the city.

It should be remembered that local authorities, urban planners, and architects play a key role in protecting the urbanized environment, public spaces and thus in improving the quality of life and housing. These activities are important especially when the population of large cities is growing while the number of people in the small and medium-sized cities is declining. Making public spaces more attractive supports the economic development of the cities, which is especially important at a time when we are increasingly experiencing the problem of economic crisis.

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<sup>14</sup> G. Schneider-Skalska, *Kształtowanie zdrowego środowiska mieszkaniowego. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Monografia 307, Politechnika Krakowska, Kraków 2004.

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## **ПРИВАБЛИВІСТЬ ГРОМАДСЬКИХ ПРОСТОРІВ В МАЛИХ І СЕРЕДНІХ МІСТАХ ЯК УМОВА ЇХ РОЗВИТКУ**

Сьогодні в великій кількості малих міст і містечок спостерігається нераціональне економічне використання просторів. В результаті – порожні, невикористані території, т.зв. пустиші з неексплуатованими будівлями чи розкидана неорганізована забудова на околицях міст.

Наслідком такої ситуації стають зміни соціального складу населення – “втеча” молоді до більших агломерацій, що призводить до ситуації, коли в місті мешкають переважно старші люди, з низькими статками. Інше негативне явище пов’язано з структурою населення, яке мешкає в міст, а саме: безробіття і низький рівень життя. Проблеми, про які йде мова, впливають на образ міста. Звідси не без значення всілякі ініціативи, пов’язані з оживанням громадських просторів, з утворенням кластерів з привабливим функціонально-просторовими рішеннями.

Ключові слова: привабливість, конкурентність, функціонально-просторові кластери в громадських просторах.

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## **Atrakcyjność przestrzeni publicznych w miastach małych i średniej wielkości – warunkiem ich rozwoju**

### **Streszczenie**

Nieracjonalna gospodarka przestrzenna obserwowana jest w wielu miastach i miasteczkach. Jej efektem są puste, niezagospodarowane tereny – tzw. pustostany z nieużytkowanymi obiektami oraz rozproszoną zabudową na obrzeżach miast.

Konsekwencją takiej sytuacji są zmiany struktury społecznej mieszkańców - „ucieczka” młodych ludzi do większych aglomeracji, co doprowadza do sytuacji, w której miasta zamieszkują przeważnie ludzie starsi, o niskich dochodach. Inne negatywne zjawiska związane ze strukturą ludności zamieszkującą miasta to: bezrobocie i skrajne ubóstwo. Problemy, o których mowa mają wpływ na obraz miasta. Stąd nie bez znaczenia są wszelkie inicjatywy związane z ożywianiem przestrzeni publicznych, z tworzeniem klastrów o atrakcyjnych rozwiązaniach funkcjonalno-przestrzennych.

Słowa kluczowe: atrakcyjność, konkurencyjność, klastry funkcjonalno-przestrzenne w przestrzeniach publicznych.