

## Innovation and creativity in a design of high quality public space. Case study of Poznan, Poland

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### Abstract

*The paper deals with the questions of a public space creation through the implementation of art and design. The idea of promotion the cultural features within a public space helps to increase the city space attractiveness. The author presents the case study of a downtown area of a city of Poznan in Poland, Wielkopolska region. As a result of an observation that there is a lack of a public space of culture and art in Poznan city centre, there is presented a proposal of an innovative and attractive functions implementation. There is also presented the research method of public space activation through art and design. The art is understood not only as temporary events but as the pieces of a small architecture and built areas of a cultural function as well. There was created an idea of a MAD city for people - which means searching for meaning, action and design in a city centre space. This idea is to be used as a tool to identify the existing and potential space for art in a city centre and to define whether it is a space of sacrum or of profanum. The tool helps to define what is the best use and purpose of a space in a context of an art implementation. It is also to create a functional system of socially and spatially attractive public spaces within a city centre.*

**Keywords:** city centre, public space, art and urban design, creativity

### Introduction

The creation of a high quality and attractive public spaces is extremely important especially within a downtown area. The downtown as a key-element of inner-city areas, which is distinguished by the richness of various qualities - functional, historical and cultural, requires a particular attention to the protection of the urban landscape and equipment. The significance of providing and protecting a desirable physiognomy and aesthetics of a downtown public space is crucial both for its spatial and social attractiveness. The urban art and design can be used to underline the existing values forming the climate of an anthropogenic urban environment. Art in a city public space can be treated as a tool to activate, revive and give new quality to existing spatial situation. It could be understood differently: as performances and happenings or as a public space furniture of various scales and meaning. So art and design in a public space means also material and immaterial dimension. In the paper the material elements are of special importance because their presence in a public space of a city can guarantee desirable visual and aesthetic effects. The implementation of art pieces in a public space can bring new life and quality to existing spatial environment. That is a reason why creativity and innovation are so desirable and crucial in this matter.

Art, design, creativity and innovation can be helpful in terms of increasing a level of a downtown attractiveness and competitiveness. The downtown public spaces owing to their historical and cultural surrounding create very good opportunities for an implementation of art, design, creative and innovative functions or forms. The interesting and inspiring public space equipment can ease and provoke social integration and contacts. The social attractiveness of public spaces within a downtown is significant for they are a pride of a city and they testify to a cultural level of a local community. "Landscape is a harbinger of information - it is the image of creativity or dehumanization of life", so it is of great importance to "shape the conscious, rational and aesthetic human environment" especially in a city centre [Bogdanowski, Łuczyńska-Bruzda, Novak, 1979, p.7-9].

## Public space attractiveness

The definition of "attractiveness" is of particular importance in the context of public spaces within a downtown area. These spaces are "attractive" because they "attract" people owing to the cultural, social, emotional, compositional and aesthetic values. The right level of a public space attractiveness is provided by an appropriate spatial composition of separate elements and by the value of individual objects of various architectural scale. The proper distribution of spatial equipment - art and urban design - in the existing urban structure may positively influence a spatial and social attractiveness: in varying degrees, depending on the scale and character of the public space.

The meaning of the public space lies in its social attractiveness, which expresses a high level of urban composition as well as spatial, emotional and cultural order. For this reason, it is important to create the proper image [Lynch 1969] of a public space, whose attractiveness is directly related to the potential of cultural and heritage preserved. The attractiveness also refers to the city humanistic values that form the possibility of a realization of people's needs in terms of: safety, comfort, pleasure, prestige, social contacts etc.

The public space appearance, especially in a downtown area, is not only an issue of aesthetics as it significantly affects social behavior. The urban space generates various types of emotions - pleasure / displeasure, attraction / repulsion [Simonds 1961]. The proper public space creation means not only giving it a specific form and function but also giving its users a reason to identify, integrate and inspire.

According to Lynch [Lynch 1969] and Norberg-Schulz [Norberg-Schulz 1984, 2000] quality of a place determines its specificity and identity. Lynch emphasized the influence of the environment on the human senses and psyche. The city space attractiveness is, in his opinion, determined by respect of human health requirements and by providing possibility to maintain a mental balance. Norberg-Schulz described a place as a phenomenon for eligibility for the character of the place. The character indicates the specificity of the place, which means not only the visual quality but the entire palette of sensory experiences that a person acquires while perceiving the city space. In this context, the presence of art and urban design within a public space can play not only aesthetic but more complex role. The desirable and proper equipment of a public space means functions and forms that are inspiring, activating, reviving and interesting at the same time.

## Idea of research

The presented study of the downtown area in Poznan is devoted to issues concerning art implementation in the city space and creation of high quality public spaces. The research focuses on the assessment of the attractiveness of given public spaces due to the three parameters. There were examined: the semantic layer, activity / viability of the space and its aesthetic qualities. The subject of the study is to assess the quality of a space for the possibility of the location of objects or interior elements of different urban scale and meaning. There was tested a quality of a public space in terms of the compositional aspects and networking core areas in terms of aesthetics, visual and symbolic values of potential or existing pieces of art and urban design. The research is focused on finding the best location for brand-new, activating and inspiring spatial forms and cultural meaning within an existing public space system.

The research is also related to questions of the downtown revitalization not only in spatial but social aspect as well. The main issue is the relationship between the regeneration of public space and increasing a socially understood attractiveness. The study mainly concerns public spaces of a downtown, which are the most important elements of the urban structure, affecting at a large scale the assessment of the whole city and a functional and spatial heart of the city. The study can be understood as an attempt to find the direction of change in the equipment of Poznan public spaces in order to increase their social attractiveness.

There was conducted an extensive examination of an existing situation concerning creation and activation of inner-city public space through the introduction of cultural or creative functions - either temporary or permanent, mobile or immobile, variable in their form and located in built or unbuilt space tissue. It was so as to propose a typology of Poznan public spaces due to the spatial equipment and meaning. As a result there has been designated a network system of public spaces - nodal and linear ones. The components of the system understood as streets, squares and greenery were assessed in terms of compositional, functional and symbolic aspects. This preliminary study was aiming at a suggestion of public space feasibility of activation by introducing innovative, creative, cultural functions playing activating role of a degraded downtown. The implementation can be performed both in the urban scale, architectural detail or the scale of the equipment of public space in the form of small architecture.

## Research method - MAD

While searching a best public space features there was invented while conducting a research an idea of MAD City for People<sup>1</sup>. This is the idea of a carefree, friendly, joyous urban space, attracting, retaining and addictive in its design and offer. MAD is a synonymous of a space with a unique character and identity, which is livable, with actions and activities taken by its users, dressed in an attractive spatial form and equipped with high quality furniture. This is a creative, innovative, qualitative and inspiring public space.

Within an examination of existing spatial situation of public space in a downtown area in Poznan, the answers to the following questions were searched: how does the ideal public space look like?, how to create it?, what characteristics of the space are needed to meets these criteria? and what elements do not provide / spoil the appropriate quality and attractiveness?,

Thus within Poznan downtown there were searched the best places for art and creative features and cultural functions to be localized in an undeveloped, degraded, not livable, not attractive area in the form of architectural objects of various scale and meaning.

The detailed research was conducted so as to identify the existing spatial situation of a downtown area, to evaluate the potential to develop cultural functions and to introduce an innovation and creativity, as well as an art and design. There were taken the following steps of a research - identification of: 1. the existing system of public spaces in the city center, 2. functional dominants and functional or spatial nodal areas, 3. existing cultural, commercial and public services offer, 4. routes with different functional profile associated with the existing range of spatial offer, 5. existing urban interiors in terms of the presence of elements associated with the art or urban design.

The conclusion of the research was the identification of MAD elements in the existing system of public spaces. That was a basis for recommendations - which meant MAD in the existing public space system as a tool of spatial and social activation. As a result there were indicated the potetial spaces for a location of objects and pieces of urban design and art at different scales related to cultural function or profile of a given space.



Pic. 1

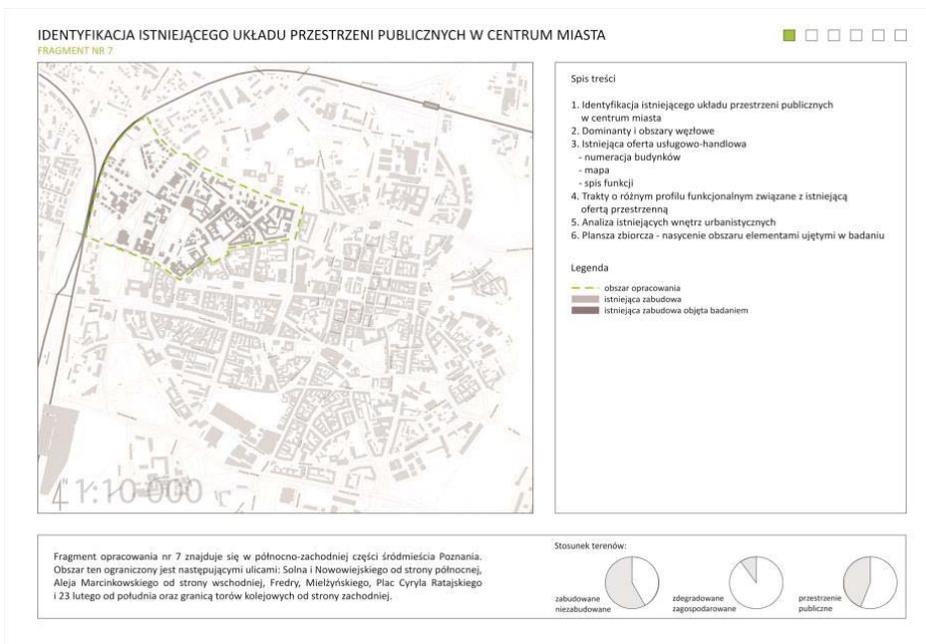
<sup>1</sup> MAD city for people is an idea invented and promoted by dr Dominika Pazder, dr Bartosz Kazmierczak during Poznan Design Days 2014. The authors of the concept are also involved in a research entitled "Art in a city space - object as a tool of the creation and social activation of a downtown public space. Case study of Poznan", which is held in Poznan University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, 2013-2015, number 02-017/13 DS.PB, leader of a scientific group - dr hab. Tomasz Matusewicz, members - dr Dominika Pazder, dr Bartosz Kazmierczak.

The existing cultural and commercial offer within a public space of a Poznan downtown. Students' work prepared during a Research Studio at the Faculty of Architecture, Poznan University of Technology, under the direction of the Author of the paper, summer semester 2014. Students: Magdalena Strużycka and Filip Pudło.



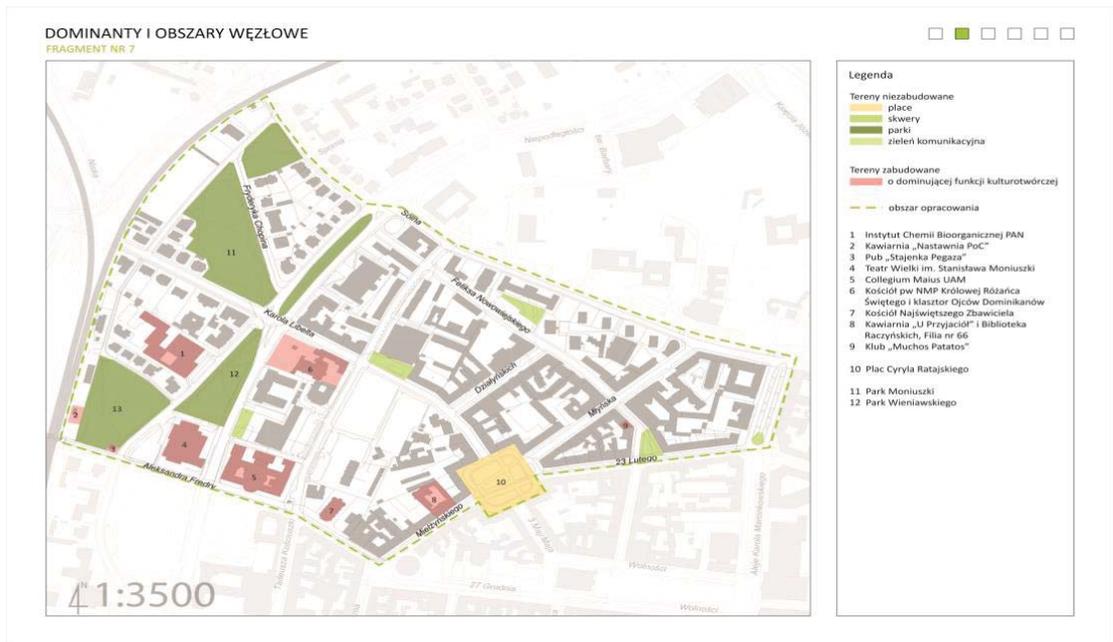
Pic. 2

The analysis of the urban interiors within a public space of a Poznan downtown. Students' work prepared during a Research Studio at the Faculty of Architecture, Poznan University of Technology, under the direction of the Author of the paper, summer semester 2014. Students: Magdalena Strużycka and Filip Pudło.



Pic. 3

The identification of the public space system within Poznan downtown. Students' work prepared during a Research Studio at the Faculty of Architecture, Poznan University of Technology, under the direction of the Author of the paper, summer semester 2014. Students: Magdalena Strużycka and Filip Pudło.



Pic. 4

The identification of the functional dominants and functional or spatial nodal areas within the public space system within Poznan downtown. Students' work prepared during a Research Studio at the Faculty of Architecture, Poznan University of Technology, under the direction of the Author of the paper, summer semester 2014. Students: Magdalena Strużycka and Filip Pudło.

## Conclusion

The research results can be found helpful within a process of Poznan downtown revitalization. The examination and verification of the characteristics of existing public spaces in terms of their meaning, role and attractiveness can be used by Poznan Municipality as an additional tool to determine the best desirable equipment of a given public space in the city centre.

The analysis concerned the evaluation of semantic values of public spaces in terms of a possible future implementation of different kinds of urban equipment. It was done so as to confront and verify the theoretical assumptions of the model network of public spaces with existing spatial situation and to analyze their presence equipment. It was also important to link the parameters of urban public spaces with the relationship between a man and a space in terms of experiencing art in the city. More specifically, it was done so as to indicate a predisposition to certain equipment, activity or role of a specific public space, including the creation of design and innovative forms appropriate for this space.

The study was to assess the quality of a downtown public space in terms of finding the best location for pieces of art and urban design of various spatial role and meaning. The result is a formulation of recommendations regarding the existing features and characteristics of public spaces and their potential to develop and implement creative, innovative, artistic and cultural functions and urban space equipment.

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