Public Space and Shop Windows

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Abstract. The paper summarises the results of research on the role of the transparency of shop windows in public space upon the example of selected streets in the centre of Krakow. Shop windows played a crucial role in the traditional public space of city centres, offering passers-by an opportunity both to look at the shop’s offer and to see the shop interior. For those inside it gives a sense of the movement in the street. The shop’s quality depends on that of the street, and vice versa. In this sense, transparency is crucial for the relationship of public space with the functions inside the buildings on the edge of the space and for generating and maintaining a vital public domain. With the development of large-scale retailing and the prevalence of advertising covering various ranges of public media, the situation of shop windows has been changing radically. The internal organisation of stores focuses on the internal arrangement of goods so that the largest possible quantities of them are available to the buyer. Shop windows seem to be unimportant and the retail space in the contemporary city tends to be centripetal in its layout. The research measures this phenomenon in the public space of the inner city of Krakow. The study includes a sequence of streets radially extending from the city centre westwards (Szewska, Karmelicka, and Królewska Streets). The streets have diverse characteristics, but within each of them, there is an active space for pedestrians and edges of volumes with various types of services. The study presents the basic characteristics of the streets and their urban blocks, the density of the structure, types of functions of ground floors, the amount of shops, as well as the degree of window transparency.

1. Introduction

Krakow is Poland’s second largest city, the capital of Małopolska region, and one of the most important centres of culture and science. This historic capital of Poland, today is a buoyantly developing city.

The Old Town, fortunately unharmed during the World War II, was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1978, and is Poland’s largest urban complex depicting a centuries long heritage of the city, the region, and the nation. The city has been developing tourism. In 2017 Krakow was visited by 12.9 million [1] people.

Krakow is also an important centre of services for business and the second largest – after Warsaw – for office space, as well as an important railway and air transport hub in Poland, with its second largest airport in terms of the number of passengers.
The spatial structure of the city formed around the historic centre with Wawel, Okół, and Cracovia\(^1\) being the oldest settlements. They constitute a vivid centre of the city to this day.

A plan from the *Study of Spatial Development Conditions and Directions for the City of Krakow (K1\(^2\))* (Figure 1.) presents the spatial structure of the city, as well as its development directions and principles. With reference to the dominant role of the historic city centre, the main commercial sequences are depicted and understood as sequences of pedestrian public spaces structuring individual districts of the city.

![Figure 1. Study of the Conditions and Directions of the Spatial Management of a Commune, Board K1 – Spatial Structure. Development Directions and Principles. [2]](image)

Karmelicka and Królewska Streets, which constitute a continuation of Szewska Street westwards from the Main Market Square, is the most important sequence linking the centre with districts located on the western part of the city. Historically it is also an important direction of the city development towards the Royal Palace in Łobzów, as well as in the subsequent period given the dominant westward extension of its structure.

Nowadays a concern for the development and maintenance of pedestrian public spaces is appreciated and constitutes a planning priority. Nevertheless, the understanding that pedestrian spaces and activities connected with them constitute a foundation for a healthy urban environment does not mean that the dominance of the car and of the traffic-related engineering spaces has been reduced. The development of urban planning based on the use of the car and “the urban planning of the presence in space and places of activity” – these are two motifs which are not always in accord. This relates not only to the protection of static spaces in the city, but also of the location and types of services. The concentration of commercial services in large centres located beyond city centres proposes a different logic of access, shopping, spending free time, etc. It also stands for a different lifestyle, tainted with consumerism, based on the dominance of the relation man-object, and not the relation man-man.

Hence, the care for the quality of pedestrian public spaces and their functional equipment is crucial.

The fundamental issue for such well-functioning spaces is the activity along their edges. This is a basic relationship – between open spaces and the volumes which define and serve them. An important metric formulated by J. Gehl in his work on Melbourne ([3]: 33-34) is the definition of the quality of ground floors of building elevations. He determined the quality of such fronts in the scale from A to E,

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\(^1\) Okół – a medieval settlement, initially surrounding the Wawel Hill; Cracovia - chartered town from 1257, with an orthogonal plot pattern and a 200 x 200 m market square.

\(^2\)*Study of the Conditions and Directions of the Spatial Management of a Commune* is the main planning tool in Poland, synthetic in character, which, although it does not have legal status, sets out the main strategic principles, also in the form of a spatial record, relating to the development directions [2].
depending on several parameters. These are the number of doors and windows, the array of functions, the lack of blind and passive walls, the diversity of the façade relief, the quality of materials and details.

We know that shop windows used to play a crucial role in the traditional public space of city centres, offering passers-by an opportunity both to look at the shop’s offer and to see the shop’s interior, or for those being inside - giving a sense of the street movement. It is an important parameter of the dependence between the street and the shop.

In this sense, transparency is crucial for in-out relations of the open public space and functions inside the volume on the edge of the open space and for generating and maintaining a vital public domain.

The façade characteristics we can observe today demonstrate an interesting phenomenon, which most probably is a consequence of the development of large-format retailing, oriented towards interior concentrations with a disregard for the external walls of buildings, which are no longer a carrier of direct information, but rather serve as surfaces for large-format advertising or information.

Today shop windows sometimes become unnecessary and they are no longer an element of contact between the space of the street and of the interior. Neither are they places where products are displayed - they become an advertisement carrier or a blind wall.

Hence the interest in the contents of shop windows. What are they, what role do they play in the public space of our cities?

2. Methods and Materials
The presented paper summarises the results of research on the role of shop window transparency in the public space through examples of selected places in the centre of Krakow.

The study focused on ground floors of pedestrian zones along Szewska, Karmelicka, and Królewska Streets. Primarily, it needs to be emphasised that these streets have different characteristics.

The method consists of measuring the number of services located on chosen streets, and its categorization by use and degree of shop window transparency. Next, the characteristics of the streets were noted as well as the relations of types of uses and types of shop window transparency were presented.

Tables 1 and 2 present a comparison of parameters for the urban blocks that form the frontages of these streets. Interestingly enough, these parameters do not manifest a simple linear tendency (increasing or decreasing) as they get further from the city centre.

Saturation with services is definitely higher along Szewska and Karmelicka Streets than Królewska Street. It is dictated by the location of Szewska and Karmelicka Streets in the very centre of the city.

3Szewska Street – one of streets of Cracovia founded in 1257; its name derives from shoemakers, who lived there; until 1820 closed with Szewska Gate in the fortifications (today Planty Park);
Karmelicka Street – a 14th-century main street of the suburb called Piasek (later on Garbary) led to Szewska Gate next to the Carmelite church and monastery leading to Czarna Wieś and Łobzów;
Królewska Street – built in sections since 1924 until the 1940s, when the Germans in building a German district extended it as far as Podchorążyh Street.
Figure 2. Szewska, Karmelicka, Królewska Streets – a western axis with an urban block structure (by P. Łukomska)

Table 1. Main urban indicators of the streets (by P. Łukomska and N. Gorgol)

| Street                  | Average Number of Floors At The Frontage | Average Density Ratio of The Urban Blocks | Street Length M | Frontage Length M | % Of The Frontage To The Street |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Szewska                 | 3.601                                    | 2.911                                    | 261.83          | 194.34            | 74.21%                          |
| Urban Blocks S.1, S.2   | 3.785                                    | 3.143                                    | 258.98          | 190.35            | 73.50%                          |
| Urban Blocks S.A, S.B   | 3.417                                    | 2.678                                    | 264.68          | 198.32            | 74.93%                          |
| Karmelicka              | 3.482                                    | 1.662                                    | 766.60          | 724.85            | 94.55%                          |
| Urban Blocks K.1-K.5    | 3.400                                    | 2.021                                    | 765.50          | 743.00            | 97.06%                          |
| Urban Blocks K.A-K.D    | 3.563                                    | 1.303                                    | 767.70          | 706.70            | 92.05%                          |
| Królewska               | 4.777                                    | 2.228                                    | 1232.50         | 896.25            | 72.72%                          |
| Urban Blocks KR.1-KR.9  | 4.826                                    | 2.445                                    | 1270.00         | 924.50            | 72.80%                          |
| Urban Blocks KR.A-KR.G  | 4.728                                    | 2.011                                    | 1280.00         | 868.00            | 67.81%                          |
In addition, diversity is a feature of the traffic system. Szewska Street is a pedestrian zone, with limited traffic permitted for residents and deliveries (in the mornings). Therefore, the entire width of the street (over 11 m) is accessible to pedestrians. Nevertheless, there is no room for greenery here.

Karmelicka and Królewska Streets are streets open to car traffic and equipped with a tramway line. All the streets are within the paid parking zone.

Karmelicka Street is ca. 15 to 20 metres wide, with carefully designed car and pedestrian traffic zones and parking areas, and with a small amount of planting. In the section from Planty Park to Garbarska Street, there are some trees planted along the street frontage; in subsequent sections greenery is to be found only in three locations, where buildings are set back behind the frontage line.

The width of Królewska Street varies in different sections – from ca. 30 m to over 50 m. However, the part intended for car and tram traffic, is usually 12 m wide. Therefore, there is a lot of space for pedestrian traffic and greenery. Trees form a single or double line along the entire length of the street.

Szewska and Karmelicka Streets are closely enclosed by tenement houses, whereas the enclosure of Królewska Street is diverse – with buildings forming frontages or separated from the rest of the development, as well as with a composition of open areas that accompany them (courtyards and a municipal square).

3. Results and Discussions

The material for the analyses was collected in 20164. The analysis focused on the quantity and types of services and on the classification of shop windows into the following categories:

Shop windows were classified according to the following functions (Figure 4):
- View of the inside
- No view – blind shop window
- Display of goods
- Advertisement with view of the inside or display of goods
- Large-format advertisement.

The following categories of functions were adopted:
- Banks
- Restaurants, cafes, bars, catering facilities
- Grocery shops, bakeries
- Other shops
- Other services.

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4Students of the second-cycle of studies in Architecture who helped to collect the data within the scheme of voluntary classes “Urban form”: A. Biesaga, A. Dobies, K. Kabala, N. Kleszcz, M. Kurek, D. Kurzeja, N. Lidak, A. Łanocha, P. Łukomska, M. Mazur, I. Pietrzak, A. Przybycień, A. Urbanik.
Figure 3. Examples of types of shop windows (no view – blind shop window, view of the inside, display of goods, advertisement with view of the inside or display of goods, large-format advertising) (photo by A. A. Kantarek)

Table 3. Number of service outlets along individual streets along with the types of shop windows (by A.A. Kantarek)

| Streets         | Number of Service Outlets | View Of The Inside | No View – Blind Shop Window | Display of Goods | Advertisement with View of The Inside or Display of Goods | Large-Format Advertisement |
|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Szewska         | 39                        | 19                 | 0                           | 14               | 0                                                        | 6                         |
| Northern Frontage| 18 (46%)                 | 10                 | 0                           | 6                | 0                                                        | 2                         |
| Southern Frontage| 21 (54%)                 | 9                  | 0                           | 8                | 0                                                        | 4                         |
| Karmelicka      | 138 (49%)                | 20                 | 18                          | 53               | 15                                                       | 32                        |
| Northern Frontage| 68 (49%)                 | 5                  | 16                          | 26               | 6                                                        | 15                        |
| Southern Frontage| 70 (51%)                 | 15                 | 2                           | 27               | 9                                                        | 17                        |
| Królewska       | 83 (30%)                 | 14                 | 7                           | 29               | 7                                                        | 26                        |
| Northern Frontage| 25 (30%)                 | 4                  | 4                           | 5                | 2                                                        | 10                        |
| Southern Frontage| 58 (70%)                 | 10                 | 3                           | 24               | 5                                                        | 16                        |
Figure 4. Krakow Streets: Szewska, Karmelicka, Królewska (photo by A. A. Kantarek)
Table 4. Number of service outlets along individual streets along with the types of function (by A.A. Kantarek)

| Street    | Number of Service Outlets | Banks | Restaurants, Cafes, Bars, Catering Facilities | Grocery Shops, Bakeries | Other Shops | Other Service Outlets |
|-----------|--------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Szewska   | 39                       | 3     | 20                                            | 1                        | 14          | 1                     |
| Northern Frontage | 18 (46%)               | 2     | 11                                            | 0                        | 5           | 0                     |
| Southern Frontage | 21 (54%)               | 1     | 9                                             | 1                        | 9           | 1                     |
| Karmelicka | 138                     | 13    | 22                                            | 14                       | 67          | 22                    |
| Northern Frontage | 68 (49%)               | 6     | 10                                            | 6                        | 33          | 13                    |
| Southern Frontage | 70 (51%)               | 7     | 12                                            | 8                        | 34          | 9                     |
| Królewska  | 83                       | 8     | 9                                             | 18                       | 30          | 18                    |
| Northern Frontage | 25 (30%)               | 1     | 5                                             | 2                        | 9           | 8                     |
| Southern Frontage | 58 (70%)               | 7     | 4                                             | 16                       | 21          | 10                    |

Table 5. Szewska Street, juxtaposition of types of functions and types of window shops (by A.A. Kantarek)

| Shop Windows | Number of Service Outlets | Banks | Restaurants, Cafes, Bars, Catering Facilities | Grocery Shops, Bakeries | Other Shops | Other Service Outlets |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Ul. Szewska  | 39 (100%)                 | 3     | 20 (51%)                                      | 1 (3%)                   | 14 (35%)    | 1 (3%)                |
| Number Of Service Outlets | 39 (100%)         | 3     | 20 (51%)                                      | 1 (3%)                   | 14 (35%)    | 1 (3%)                |
| View Of The Inside | 19 (49%)              | 0     | 17 (43%)                                      | 0 (2%)                   | 0 (0%)      | 1 (5%)                |
| No View – Blind Window Shop | 0 (0%)              | 0     | 0 (0%)                                        | 0 (0%)                   | 0 (0%)      | 0 (0%)                |
| Display Of Goods | 14 (36%)              | 0     | 3 (7%)                                        | 0 (0%)                   | 0 (0%)      | 11 (10%)              |
| Advertisement With View Of The Inside Or Display Of Goods | 0 (0%)       | 0     | 0 (0%)                                        | 0 (0%)                   | 0 (0%)      | 0 (0%)                |
| Large-Format Advertisement | 6 (15%)            | 3     | 0 (0%)                                        | 1 (5%)                   | 2 (10%)     | 0 (0%)                |

Table 6. Karmelicka Street, juxtaposition of types of functions and types of window shops (by A.A. Kantarek)

| Shop Windows | Number of Service Outlets | Banks | Restaurants, Cafes, Bars, Catering Facilities | Grocery Shops, Bakeries | Other Shops | Other Service Outlets |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Ul. Karmelicka | 138 (100%)            | 13    | 22 (16%)                                      | 14 (10%)                 | 67 (49%)    | 22 (16%)              |
| Number Of Service Outlets | 138 (100%)          | 13    | 22 (16%)                                      | 14 (10%)                 | 67 (49%)    | 22 (16%)              |
| View Of The Inside | 20 (15%)            | 1     | 8 (40%)                                       | 5 (25%)                  | 4 (20%)     | 2 (10%)               |
| No View – Blind Window Shop | 18 (13%)           | 0     | 3 (20%)                                       | 2 (10%)                  | 6 (30%)     | 7 (35%)               |
| Display Of Goods | 53 (38%)             | 0     | 3 (21%)                                       | 3 (15%)                  | 40 (26%)    | 7 (43%)               |
| Advertisement With View Of The Inside Or Display Of Goods | 15 (11%)        | 3     | 1 (7%)                                        | 2 (13%)                  | 9 (57%)     | 0 (0%)                |
| Large-Format Advertisement | 32 (23%)           | 9     | 7 (43%)                                       | 2 (13%)                  | 8 (50%)     | 6 (35%)               |
Table 7. Królewska Street, juxtaposition of types of functions and types of window shops (by A.A. Kantarek)

| Window Shops | Number of Service Outlets | Banks   | Restaurants, Cafés, Bars, Catering Facilities | Grocery Shops, Bakeries | Other Shops | Other Service Outlets |
|--------------|--------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Ul. Królewska | 83 100%                  | 8 10%   | 9 11%                                        | 18 22%                   | 30 35%      | 18 22%                |
| Number Of Service Outlets | 83 100%                  | 8 10%   | 9 11%                                        | 18 22%                   | 30 35%      | 18 22%                |
| View Of The Inside | 14 17%                  | 0       | 6 2                                            | 2 2                       | 1 2         | 2 2                   |
| No View – Blind Window Shop | 7 8.5%                  | 0       | 2 2                                            | 2 2                       | 1 2         | 2 2                   |
| Display Of Goods | 29 35%                  | 0       | 0 6                                            | 21 21                     | 2 2         | 2 2                   |
| Advertisement With View Of The Inside Or Display Of Goods | 7 8.5%                  | 1       | 0 4                                            | 2 2                       | 2 2         | 2 2                   |
| Large-Format Advertisement | 26 31%                  | 7       | 1 4                                            | 4 4                       | 4 4         | 4 4                   |

Table 8. Compilation of types of functions and types of shop windows (by A.A. Kantarek)

| Shop Windows Compilation | Number of Service Outlets | Banks   | Restaurants, Cafés, Bars, Catering Facilities | Grocery Shops, Bakeries | Other Shops | Other Service Outlets |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Number Of Service Outlets | 260 100%                 | 24 9%   | 51 19%                                        | 33 13%                   | 111 43%     | 41 16%                |
| View Of The Inside | 53 20%                  | 1       | 31 7                                            | 7 7                       | 7 7         | 7 7                   |
| No View – Blind Window Shop | 25 10%                  | 0       | 5 4                                            | 7 7                       | 7 7         | 7 7                   |
| Display Of Goods | 96 37%                  | 0       | 6 9                                            | 72 9                      | 9 9         | 9 9                   |
| Advertisement With View Of The Inside Or Display Of Goods | 22 8%                   | 4       | 1 6                                            | 11 0                      | 0 0         | 0 0                   |
| Large-Format Advertisement | 64 25%                  | 19      | 8 7                                            | 14 14                     | 16 16       | 16 16                 |

Characteristically, in each of the streets most service outlets (but only to a small extent) are located along the southern frontage, hidden in the shadow (Fig 5).

Szewska Street (Table 5.) is dominated by catering functions (51%), and here also, there is the highest number of shop windows allowing contact between the interiors and the street (90% of the type of shop windows and 44% of the number of shop windows). The second most numerous form of shop windows are displays of goods, predominantly for other shops. Large-format advertisements can be seen only in 6 cases, but it is worth emphasising that all the banks located on the street have such windows (3). There are no blind, neglected shop windows in this street, neither are there shop windows with small advertisements combined with the view of the inside.

In Karmelicka Street (Table 6.) non-grocery shops (other shops) are the most common function. It is related to a specific type of shop window – the display of goods, which appears in 40 cases (60% of these shops). Displays of goods constitute the most popular type of shop window in this street – it covers 38% of service outlets. Here we also see more large-format advertisements (32 service outlets, 23% of service outlets). They cover all types of function. Blind shop windows have a relatively large share – these are shop windows which are not used at all, and the function of the interiors is hidden. This is the case in as many as 18 premises (13%) representing each function except for banks. In Karmelicka Street there are also functions connected with education (a foreign language school, a junior high school, a branch of the Pedagogical University, falling into the category of other service outlets) which also belong to this group.

In Królewska Street (Table 7.) the largest group of service outlets are non-grocery shops (other shops) – 35% (30). The most common type of shop windows is for the display of goods (35%, 29 shop
Characteristically the share of large-format advertisements is 31% (26 shop windows, the second most numerous type). They are the most common in other service outlets. 17% of premises offer a view of the inside, and they are the most numerous in the category of catering (6).

4. Conclusions
The following data should be stressed in the general compilation:

- The most numerous functional group is other shops (43%),
- Most of them have a shop window with display of goods (65%),
- The least numerous group is banks (9%), although they have the biggest number of windows with large-format advertisements (30%),
- The most popular type of shop windows is for the display of goods (37%), and large-format advertising ranks second (25%),
- The share of shop windows which offer a view of the inside is only 20%, while 10% of shop windows are blind.

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