Emotional and Social Potential of Art in the City

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Abstract. In the city residents are more often consumers than creators. Due to evolving specialization and the division of public tasks, citizens do not have an active influence on their surroundings and public spaces. They remain passive users who are detached from the process of creation. As a result, they often have no emotional connection to public space. On the basis of literature research, case studies, questionnaires as well as in-depth interviews with the inhabitants of Tri-City Metropolis (Poland), it has been noted that art capable of evoking emotions has a particular impact on both their attitudes and engagement in the process of city revitalization. Shared participation of artists and residents in shaping space through creative acts and artistic expression may contribute to greater satisfaction with the place of residence as well as a perceived increase in the quality of life. Creative acts and processes influence the sense of dignity and personal freedom and integrity, they may serve as a catalyst to unleash the residents' authenticity, creativity and agency. The quality of art being created and its social impact depend on the model of cooperation, adopted and professed values as well as the principles being followed by the process of revitalization. This presentation discusses the what art, including street art, becomes after revitalization: a memory, an inspiration, a work of considerable material or social value or a feeling of insufficient fulfilment arrived upon due to compromise.

1. Introduction
Nowadays the art of urban construction is significantly subordinated to the principles of functionality, utilitarianism and the laws of economics. The city itself is like a market product; it is created and transformed for the purpose of selling and providing material value. The totality of commodification and commercialization of the human activity affects the processes of urban space generation and, in consequence, the shape of the space in which we live. Due to the fact that global capital shows tendency to accumulate in the hands of a small group of people, more and more decisions, that shape the city, belong to the elite of decision makers, such as developers, banks and investment funds. Cities become stereotyped and similar; they unify and lose their individual, unique character, developed according to the rule of cost-effectiveness and, at the same time, with a large share of organizations of global importance.

2. Passive attitude to creating the city
The democratic impact of local citizens on the decisions taken by the local authority is yet illusory. Statutory social participation allows everyone to express themselves and to raise objections to strategies of urban development. However, the effectiveness of individual votes is insignificant and the way of communication between the decisions making body and the residents leaves much to be
desired. The movement of urban activists and corresponding groups is in the phase of comprehensive
development. These organizations noticeably alter the relationship between the authorities and the
inhabitants, but then again, the social conviction about the ineffectiveness of the people in the process
of shaping the city is still being rendered as prevailing.

Building of urban strategies and consequently establishing planning rules requires extensive
knowledge and numerous industries’ representatives’ cooperation. Spatial planning projects are
prepared by a broad team of specialists, with the very dominance of engineering subjects. Those of the
proposals of urban strategies that implement the policy of economic efficiency of developers
commonly face criticism of the inhabitants. The argumentation of the choices made is often refers to
the specialized knowledge, and the agreement between inhabitants and decision makers is futile for the
latter tend to acknowledge the superiority of the trade solutions. Developing a mutual vision of
development is an extremely difficult task, due to it is essential to exhibit in-depth knowledge of the
needs of the local community, capability of using a widely understood language and the movement
among values familiar to the majority of space users. Government, by not making the effort to reach
an agreement and taking into account the rationale of the inhabitants, renders the attitude of the
inhabitants’ passive to the future of the city in the long run. In addition, the resignation and
helplessness of individual inhabitants deepens the feeling of detachment, which in consequence
contributes to lowering public confidence and strengthening oppositional behaviour rather than
generating cooperation. Relationships, between the authorities and the local community, articulating a
high dose of distrust, have their cultural roots, so the political and relational aspect is greatly relevant
in the process of city building. Polish society, deriving from the rural culture, is particularly sensitive
to issues of hierarchy and authority established in the culture of the grange [1]. Taking into account the
social determinants of urban shaping policy and respecting universal attitudes may help to improve
dialogue between various users of space.

The culture of democratic city-building and the formation of the middle class in Poland is not a
centuries-old tradition and is subject to significant, at times even turbulent transformations. This
particularly applies to northern Poland, where the population, after the Second World War, sailed from
beyond the eastern border of Poland to areas of foreign German culture. Such recent history still does
have an impact on the understanding and feeling of the city in which one lives. It also influences the
way one communicates, the ability to exert pressure and is not without significance for the quality of
the transformations in the city. The social voice is not definite and homogeneous and does not sound
decisive in terms of shaping the urban environment. A party that is weak may be omitted or unnoticed
in the social dialogue on shaping the city and public spaces.

"... public space is not the empty space into which one enters and does what it pleases, producing a
pleasurable multisensory diversity. Public space is a place of some dispute, struggle, strength. If one
side is weak, it will be displaced by other forces.” [2]

In so socialized an environment, the process of revitalization seems to be an extremely complex
process. To revitalization usually appertain areas where financial capital is lacking or where business
activity so far has become unprofitable. It is used to cover areas where the local community is
affected, particularly poverty, pathologies or social exclusion. In these areas, the activity of a local
community is frequently a huge problem. Revitalization’s processes are often denied or there is a
complete lack of interest in revitalization by the inhabitants of a given area, especially if the
revitalization process is of urban policy rather than grassroots movements.

3. Art in the revitalization

Artistic activity in revitalization processes is generally associated with politically and socially engaged
art. It often has the character of an artistic intervention. In areas of poverty and social exclusion, artists
from all over the world are engaging in projects aimed at achieving spectacular effects that could
underline crucial topics to others artists. For instance: Mundano, a Brazilian artist, decorating trash
trucks to change the image of people collecting waste. Another socially engaged artist is French, JR,
pinning to city walls photos of people living in conflicting, dangerous or badly-damaged areas. His
activities are aimed at showing the absurd of exclusion, misunderstanding and prejudice. Artists such as Haas & Hahn in Rio de Janeiro, El Seed in Cairo have done creative acts, involving excluded communities in their activities. As a result of this work, they have had a chance to meet people living in isolated worlds and to bring together and warm up the image of people living in degraded and malicious areas. In many cases, the beneficiaries of creative works also receive extensive support from people collaborating with aforementioned artists. Through the activities of artists and the popularization of their achievements in the process of assistance a number of volunteers, aid organizations and other support units become involved. At the same time, the art realized in the real world in urban space creates a gallery from the city. It becomes accessible to all, especially those who have limited access to works of art and cultural places.

By carrying out projects in marginalized places artists directly spot the inhabitants and their problems. This process is a bilateral cognitive process of a relation-forming character. Artists and locals learn about themselves, learn from each other, and contribute to meaning in their mutual work. Artists’ acquisition of information and analysis of the state of the local community determines the value of their social work. The result of the diagnosis through participation in a given culture is to understand the culture of a particular community, but also to provoke within it the formation of a relationship, to give pretexts for mutual recognition by the actors that create it and to identify their common life conditions. The collaboration between artists and residents bears traits of a scientific research method, as proposed by a team of researchers, including Marek Krajewski and Agata Skórzewska, called diagnostics in culture, as an alternative to traditional methods of studying culture and the laws governing communities [3]. This innovative method allows for in-depth exploration of the determinants of a given community and a subjective approach to people involved in revitalization. The process of revitalization carried out in a bottom-up way avoids the feeling of being subjected to externally imposed actions by high class specialists.

In Gdańsk (Poland) art played an important role in the process of revitalizing shipyards and creating in their place the Young City (Młode Miasto) in 2001 - 2008, a new residential area of Gdańsk. The artists were invited to reside in the area of the Gdańsk Shipyard, at that time undergoing transformation, in order to increase the value of the land located in the center of Gdańsk. From the anthropological development of Anna Kozik we learn that tempting motives for the appearance of artists in the yard, apart from the main assumptions of their residency, were also low rent rates, attractive atmosphere, freedom of creation and location of the studio in isolation from the city [4]. Many artists have documented the transformation of shipyards, the history of their employees. A great number introduced new users and opened mentally and physically access to places previously inaccessible to outsiders. They have brought media people closer to the city, the country and the world, unconnected to the shipyard. The transformation of the shipyards had an impact on the development of the approach to art in public space and the revitalization process. The presence of artists in the shipyard at least partially contributed to the sharing and interaction between shipyard workers and artists. There was no spectacular artistic event here, where co-creators were the native users of the area. But art related to grounds was partly the engaged art. Works related to the symbolism and history of the place and the shipyards, which went into oblivion, were created. Valuable works from this stream include Michał Szlag’s photographs depicting the process of transformation and demolition of historical objects and murals by Iwona Zając, illustrating the life and work of shipyard workers on a 250 m2 wall separating the Gdańsk Shipyard area from the rest of the city. Artistic fascination with the yard and its industrial climate continues. "Shipyard Artistic Plenary" are annually organized by the Painting Department of the Academy of Fine Arts in Gdańsk. Happenings and actions are organized by artists and urban activists to further save the symbolic heritage of the yard. Thanks to the involvement of many people cranes, vividly rooted in the landscape of Gdańsk, were rescued from dismantling. The iconic building of the European Solidarity Centre (ECS) is located on the premises of the former shipyards. From works of artists active within the shipyard two installations remain, both by Gdańsk artist Grzegorz Klaman; they were exposed in 2000 as part of the permanent exhibition "Road to Freedom", launched on the occasion of the 20th
anniversary of the signing of agreements at Gdansk Shipyard on 31 August 1980. Traces of artists have also survived on a building where they once resided, and on a building of the former Institute of Art Island (Instytut Sztuki Wyspa) in the form of small stickers as an act of disagreement over urban policy against the outcast artists. In the meantime, installation on huge stretches of the yard, including murals by Iwona Zając, was destroyed. Some of the artistic initiatives have not survived the trial of time, whether for political or financial reasons, or for the content and mismatch of the recipient. The location of Museum of Contemporary Art is planned in the area of the former shipyards.

The presence of artists in the processes of revitalization of the districts of Gdańsk played a significant role not only in the area of Gdańsk Shipyard. Artistic activity is today visible in the space of Gdańsk in the districts in which revitalization was carried out in the form of urban policy, and in places where artists saw the need to perform artistic intervention. Individual artists' initiatives include the Outdoor Gallery of mural in Zaspa, initiated by the artist Rafał Roskowiński. Over the last several years, the Gdańsk Zaspa was filled with dozens of murals located on the gable walls of high-rise multi-family residential buildings (figure 1, figure 2). Enormous murals were created with the participation of many artists from all over the world. Huge field of activities and experience, collected during the work, contributed to the formation of informal Gdańsk Mural School. In the city space, the quality of this type of work is clearly noticeable. This also applies to graffiti. The tradition of mural found its continuation in the historical center of Gdansk. Townhouses on Ogarna Street were decorated with modern mural, corresponding with postwar paintings (figure 3). Criticism from the historical backgrounds notwithstanding, these murals represent an attempt at a different approach to the historic façade than the current one.

![Figure 1](image-url) Mural, title: Westerplatte, author: Krzysztof Wróblewski, location: Outdoor Gallery of mural in Zaspa, Gdańsk

Artists initiating revitalization processes in the Dolne Miasto in the first decade of the 21st century have contributed to the emergence of urban cultural institutions. Today Gdańsk has several significant institutions that are largely involved in the art of public space. These include: Łaźnia Centre for Contemporary Art (CSW Łaźnia), Urban Culture Institute (Instytut Kultury Miejskiej) and European Solidarity Centre (ECS). These institutions undertake successive educational activities as well as cyclical festivals, plenary and other artistic events. These include the care of the Dolne Miasto district, where revitalization activities of the local authority have been undertaken (CSW Łaźnia). Łaźnia runs
the Outer Main Gallery (Galeria Zewnętrzna Dolnego Miasta), which for many years has been known for installations, murals and artistic urban actions in the process of raising a district from ruins.

Urban cultural units expand their offerings by scientific, exhibition, curatorial and residential issues. They cooperate with universities, including the fine arts. An example of cooperation at the junction of art and science can be a series of meetings and workshops conducted within the Social Design Lab (Laboratorium Dizajnu Społecznego) at the European Solidarity Center [5].

![Figure 2](image_url1)
**Figure 2.** Mural, title: Bałtyk, author PGR ART, location: Outdoor Gallery of mural in Zaspa, Gdańsk

![Figure 3](image_url2)
**Figure 3.** Artistic renovated façades, Ogarna Street, Gdańsk

4. City – social work of art

Artistic vision often stops only at the stage of projecting, takes place on the pages of books and publications with written words and graphics. In the processes of creating a city, a particular artistic thought is the urban and architectural vision of the city that shapes its future framework. Contemporary cities are proof that artistic ideas and projects that follow the dreams and ideas of ideal cities have often been reflected in reality. By building dreams, creating ideas in the imagination, the foundations of reality are forged and the art of building cities is constituted. Wade Graham in "Dream Cities" gives examples of how visions, such as Citi Beautiful, have defined the shape of the home environment [6]. The visionary and artistic approach to shaping the urbanized space and creating a committed art of improving living conditions have often carved reality. They were similar to today's examples of socially engaged art. Art has always played and continues to play a significant role in the process of forging the idea of a city, even if it is not directly involved in the process. The humanistic and artistic aspects of city creation, including embodying representative places, along with economic,
engineering and legislative aspects should therefore be considered in the planning processes of cities. So that linking these different aspects could translate into an attractive space, it is necessary to understand the organizational framework of the urbanized space.

Today in Polish legislation, for art in the process of creating a city has been guaranteed place indirectly. The pre-war regulations on the shaping of urban space directly referred to the aesthetics and the need to build public spaces and buildings in accordance with its principles. They also guaranteed the location of works of art in public space. Now aesthetics of a space is only an element of order, which is the key attribute of space. Spatial order is understood as shaping a space that creates a harmonious unity and considers in the ordered relations all functional and socio-economic, environmental, cultural, compositional and aesthetic requirements and conditions. Its construction is desirable; however, urban planning is limited to selected activities defined in Polish legislation.

Constitutional rights of the city dweller - freedom and property - may be limited only to the extent specified by statutes. Thus, the shape of the city, at the level of planning regulation, can only be defined by a limited set of urban tools such as the building alignment, the building area ratio and the building dimensions. More regulations are allowed for areas covered by protection forms, such as conservational or natural. The rules for the location of small architecture in public space mainly refer to art matters. Polish regulations do not define art as a separate category of construction [7]. Due to the variety of contemporary works of art, it can be placed between objects of small architecture, advertising and construction. For each of the above categories of spatial objects separate urban regulations are necessary and other requirements apply if they are implemented. Practically in the current legal conditions it is not possible to unambiguously categorize many artistic installations. Examples of difficult works to categorize can be sculptures by Janet Echelman that can be described as engineering, canopy, or huge handicrafts located on supports. Similarly, Magda Sayeg's small artifacts, left in the urban space, are subject to a similar classification problem. In the local spatial development plans of municipal regulations concerning the location of works of art in the city space occur incidentally or not at all. Arrangements for small architectural objects in public space are often limited to urban furniture and lighting regulations. Currently, in Poland, resolutions are being made to protect the landscape, regulating the principle of localization of advertising in public spaces and small architectural objects, which, through the change of regulations, have been removed from planning papers. The above resolutions are a response to spatial chaos and the need to rearrange public spaces, and therefore proposals for detailed development rules, including the forms and types of small architectural objects, acceptable materials and colors, appear. According to the authors' assurances, the unification of the essential features of the design of the urban space will improve the visual harmony of the whole city and will benefit the reception of space. The implementation of resolutions classifying contemporary works, including street art, as objects of a small architecture or a certain form of advertising, will create conditions exclusively for the unification of artifacts located in the public space of the city. Such an approach contradicts the idea of art, which is unique and individual work, often overlapping with all categorization. Such an approach may even render them unable to be located in public space.

In Polish conditions, where advertising has diminished most of the visual stimuli, the above-mentioned resolutions also have the task of sorting out the problem of advertising in the public space. Nowadays art can be interwoven with it, at times it can be confused with it. It is also important to distinguish in Polish law the concept of art presented in the public space from advertising. The bulk amount of advertising media in Poland, and the pressure to reduce them on the part of legislators, can be a challenge for artists looking for places to present works. Following in the footsteps of murals, which are located on useless walls, contemporary art can be found on advertising media and solving the impending problem of unused objects.

Contemporary art in public space has developed significantly in recent years, and as a development phenomenon it is worth further insight, especially in regards to the relations that arise between space, architecture and art in the space of the city, and translating the results of research into the language of the functioning and design of the modern city. The issue of art in urban space is important because of
the bonds and social relationships that can be generated by the creative process and the interaction with art as well as the symbolic and iconic value of artifacts for cities.

As stated in a study conducted by the National Centre for Culture on the state, role and importance of culture in Poland, more than 50 percent of Poles are culturally indifferent [8]. In the face of these data, the degree of defining art and even omitting it in Polish law does not seem to be a coincidence. The art is in the minds of many Poles restricted to a narrow social group. If incidentally it occurs outside the museum and exhibition spaces, it does not affect the perception of the community as a whole. The revitalization areas in which the most artistic initiatives are currently taking place represent only a small percentage of the city. So far, issues of art location in the open space of Gdansk have not received much attention from both the city authorities and the residents. The city of Gdansk is not fully prepared for contemporary art in public spaces. There are many places where there are no artifacts and artworks, and no dedicated art space. In particular, it concerns objects created in recent years. Undeveloped areas are located in front of the ERGO Arena and around the Energa Stadium, that are frightfully empty, boring and impersonal. Few places honoring today's emerging art are historical areas in which a sculpture, referring to a traditional, such as a fountain with lions, or previously mentioned murals in the tenant houses of Ogarna Street, is inscribed without much controversy. Apart from them, individual works of contemporary art appear in selected parks and multi-family houses built by developers. In general, however, places where contemporary art is located are the walls of buildings, the pillars of communication nodes, and often unused and unnecessary place. With all due respect to art, but gives an image of its position in the hierarchy of values recognized by the community.

In the shaping of public space through the use of art often participate non-governmental organizations and organized groups of urban activists. Interesting initiatives in the Tri-City metropolis (Gdańsk, Sopot, Gdynia) include actions aimed at improving urban aesthetics, for example through the exchange of city signs and typography workshops. In the Polish landscape, through advertising and signage business owners try to drown out competition and stand out more than others. Therefore, the landscape is filled with flashy, multi-coloured and strongly contrasted ads. Attempts by local activists, such as the Traffic Design organization, are partially taking over. In these actions the myth is broken, that the more the better, and it is instead translated into conviction for calm and elegant typography and modern urban design. Organizations also contribute to the aesthetical and community management of non-residential spaces by introducing urban furniture and inspiring meeting spaces (figure 4).

![Figure 4. Community management of spaces in Gdańsk. Authors: Inicjatywa Miasto, City Meble and partners](image-url)
5. Conclusions
Art in public space by artists and non-professional residents can serve as a utility or respond to personal needs. As a response to the personal needs of the inhabitants of Gdansk appears in the form of graffiti, for example in the act of protest about the liquidation of a cemetery intended for housing (figure 5). Expresses the most often dissatisfaction or disagreement with current events. Creativity of the inhabitants is found in the form of galleries on fences, presenting private works or collections of pictures of the old quarter. Public space for public art objects by private individuals is not yet common in Gdansk. There are timid attempts to occupy space and make it their own through individual acts of creation. The reason for limited activity is somewhat complicated procedures and the unclear, mentioned beforehand status of artefacts in Polish law. The resulting uncertainty of forbidden acts causes only a few to stand on the act of courage or inquisitiveness needed to obtain information on the necessary permissions. The small artistic initiative of the citizens is also influenced by the widespread belief in the lack of talent and the lack of artistic means of expression. In reference to the Brene Brown study, which deals with the shame and importance of this emotion in social life, it can be stated that the feeling of being insufficiently good has enormous implications for the quality of life and social development [9]. Shame limits susceptibility, which is a measure of courage and openness of the unit to others. It also contributes to building relationships among people. At the same time sensitivity is the basis for creativity, innovation and change. These, in turn, are the desired social effects in revitalization processes. Poles largely attribute the culture to the task of education and helping in the understanding of the world. 47% of Poles believe that culture is a mean of communication with other people [10]. Nevertheless, only a small proportion of the population of Gdansk undertakes artistic activities in urban space. NCK research also shows that Poles are sensitive to the art that moves and touches. They are sensitive to beauty. It is necessary to popularize new forms of art accessible to all inhabitants of the city by placing them in public spaces. The art and its form sought by the local community are not sufficiently articulated. Currently, research is being conducted on the reception of art in public space. On the basis of past performance, it can be expected that pioneering activities in the public sphere face social resistance to contemporary works that deal with sensitive subjects or are politically incorrect. The beginnings of art involvement in the transformation of cities are usually difficult, both for the artist and for the audience. However, only through the work compromises and agreements and the way the dialogue between the creator and the recipient is worked out. Independent art does not use simple means of expression and therefore cannot be a mass art. Because of the presentation of art in public, works created in some way automatically should count on the recipient.

![Figure 5](image-url)

*Figure 5. Mural - the act of protest about the liquidation of a historical cemetery intended for housing.*

*Unknown artist*
Artists will search means to express themselves closer to the audience or translate and explain them to the community or seek for shocking solutions. Determining the form of the contemporary art language of a given community must be the result of the courage of artists and creative people who carry out their work in public space.

Currently Gdańsk is facing a new challenge. It is at this point that strategic documents on revitalization of areas threatened with exclusion or serious problems and pathologies are emerging. Educational and artistic activities have been selected to enhance local community activism. Indications in the municipal action strategies are likely to be co-financed by EU funds. Gdańsk is both faced with a great chance of restoring vitality to a large part of the City, as well as to the enormous challenge of undiminishing art as a tool in the revitalization strategy, and treating art as a means of gaining in-depth knowledge of the culture of the revitalization community and permission to express yourself. Such an approach has the potential to be a contributor to social innovation and not just a controlled process, oriented on the top-down... yoyo effect.

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