Shaping of Public Space in Downtown Area on the Example of the City of Częstochowa

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Abstract. The author deals with the evolution of public spaces in the city of Częstochowa over the years. The choice of a medium-sized city such as Częstochowa results from a broader analysis of cities that are important in Polish history and belong to the culture-creating places of the nation. In such places one should expect, above all, urban and architectural solutions that emerge from the uniqueness of the place and its role - a pilgrimage city, an academic and tourist centre. On the basis of collected archival, cartographic and photographic materials, the author presents changes in selected urban spaces from the early 20th century to modern times. Selected examples of urban spaces are located in the key places of the compositional axis of the urban layout of the city and play a vital role in the minds of inhabitants. The first example showing urban changes in downtown areas is the urban park zone near the Jasna Góra monastery. This area stayed at the beginning of the composition canvas for the urban layout of the city of Częstochowa (1826). The location of the area and historical background creates a huge potential of the place attracting city residents as well as tourists and pilgrims. Secondly, The central part of the historical urban axis of the city is Biegański Square. The urban development program developed by the city authorities assumed the elimination of vehicular traffic and the creation of a cohesive public space in the city centre (2011). Thirdly, urban spaces of the city and the Old Market Square are discussed. This is the area closing the historical axis of the Częstochowa urban foundation. This problematic area requires revitalization activities in response to contemporary functional requirements and newly defined social needs. The discussed changes within the urban space illustrate the process of transforming these areas into special places - important for the urban development of the city.

1. Introduction

The inner city areas are subject to constant transformation. They include both conservative actions that maintain cultural resources in good condition as well as project activities that stimulate the development of inner-city areas in relation to modern times. Shaping public spaces in the areas of the very city centre cannot do without a general analysis of urban structure and extraction of the characteristics of the given urban organism. Thus, the city becomes also the subject of historical considerations in aspects that are helpful in the understanding of transformation activities.

In the article, the author indicates contemporary thematic areas related to shaping the city space. Observing actions on the downtown areas of the city of Częstochowa, it is hard not to notice that their renewal consists mainly of interventions in urban spaces such as streets, squares, parks. Selected examples of urban spaces transformations are located in the key places of the compositional axis of the
city and are a testimony of the proper relations of the historical cultural environment and contemporary social needs.

2. Historical background of urban environment development

The turn towards the past is aimed at knowing how the city developed and transformed over time, and how individual elements of the urban structure participated in the morphological evolution of the city's tissue. Citation of historical facts is an attempt to depict transformation activities that stimulate the development of the urban environment at a given time.

Citation of historical facts is an attempt to depict transformation activities that stimulate the development of the urban environment at a given time. The selected stages of downtown development include the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries as well as modern times.

Phase one - 19th century. The combination of two urban organisms - the Old Częstochowa and the New Częstochowa became the canvas of the city's urban layout. A communication axis in the form of an Avenue is created. Saint Mary’s Avenues connect the area of the medieval Old Town and the Saint Sigismundus Church with the Bright Hill Monastery. A service and commercial zone developed along the new axial foundation. This influenced the intensive development of downtown areas [1].

The second phase - the second half of the 20th century. The emergence of multi-storey department stores results in the focus of the commercial function in a small area. Contemporary objects complement the existing buildings. They are a response to the needs of residents and the evolving city function.

Phase three - the beginning of the 21st century. The retail and service space along the main thoroughfare of the city is dispersed. The centre of social, commercial and cultural relations is transferred to a multifunctional retail and service centre, located on post-industrial areas.

Phase four - an attempt to revive the historical urban areas constituting the compositional canvas of the urban planning assumption.

The structure of the urban substance which shaped over the years requires taking appropriate measures. They involve contemporary solutions permeating each other's cultural spaces and respecting guidelines for the conservation and revalorisation of the urban layout [2]. The examples presented below confirm the need for continuous creation and stimulation of the urban and architectural processes of the city. These are mostly centralizing activities whose task is to activate the urban environment. The undertaken solutions create user-friendly zones. Their program offer is to meet the expectations of the ever-growing and increasingly demanding urban population.

3. Revitalization of city parks

The area of urban parks in front of the Bright Hill Monastery (the so-called 'Bright Hill Parks') became an example of a key implementation that was a catalyst for urban changes in the inner city areas. It consists of: Stanisław Staszic Park and the 3rd May Park [1].

In these areas, in 1909, the largest Exhibition of Industry and Agriculture took place in Poland (before the First World War). Over 660 exhibitors from Poland and abroad took part in it. Among the exhibition pavilions designed by the most eminent Polish architects, four objects have been preserved until today and have currently educational and exhibition functions. These are:

- The Pavilion of Akcyjna "Zawiercie" Society - currently Multimedia Center of Education "Zodiak", intended to popularize science among children and adolescents (Figure 1).
• Ethnographic Pavilion (also known as the Museum of Folk Industry) - currently an object belonging to the Częstochowa Museum, of an ethnographic character (Figure 2).

• Włościańska Farm - an object also belonging to the Częstochowa Museum. The building has retained its function from the period of the Great Exhibition - it presents architectural trends of houses from the beginning of the 20th century (Figure 3).

• Hygienic Museum - is another object belonging to the Częstochowa Museum. Currently known as the Pavilion of Temporary Exhibitions - it serves temporary exhibitions [3] (figure 4).

The city authorities were aware of the importance of the Bright Hill Parks in the spatial structure of the city. The priority has been to restore the cultural, leisure and educational function in these areas.

Figure 1. Multimedia Center of Education "Zodiak" (left).
Figure 2. Ethnographic Pavilion also known as the Museum of Folk Industry (right). Area of the Bright Hill Parks

Figure 3. Włościańska Farm (on the left)
Figure 4. Pavilion of Temporary Exhibitions (on the right). Area of the Bright Hill Parks
With the help of funds from the European Regional Development Fund, as part of the Integrated Regional Operational Program, aesthetic and functional values were restored both to the objects located in the parks and the surrounding greenery. [4] Currently, the area of the Stanisław Staszic Park and 3rd May Park 3 are a cohesive organism which also enrich: a concert arbor (Figure 5), a water reservoir with a fountain (Figure 6), playgrounds for children, tennis courts with a club café. The whole area is connected by paved alleys, among species-selected trees and shrubs. The monastery complex at Bright Hill together with the Bright Hill parks assumptions is a huge potential for attracting both city dwellers and tourists and pilgrims. Adaptation of park areas is a kind of approach to urban development and changes, taking into account the history and tradition of the place [5]. Individual buildings, places and recreation areas retain their uniqueness and character, and at the same time they strengthen the power of magical influence on the historical environment. The renewal of park areas with all infrastructure has begun the process of revitalization of central urban areas creating a new quality of urban space in Częstochowa.

Figure 5. Park arbor (on the left)  
Figure 6. Water reservoir with a fountain (on the right). Area of the Bright Parks

4. A new cultural space of Biegański Square

Another example of urban activities concerns the development of Biegański Square. The space of the square occupies a key, central part of the historical axis of the city – Saint Mary’s Avenues. In the immediate vicinity of the square (southern wall) there is a late-class town hall (built in the years 1828-1836 which was the seat of the city authorities until the 1960s) and the building of the guardianship. Currently, the buildings serve the function of the Częstochowa Museum. The opposite northern wall of the square is bordered by a park and a Roman Catholic church dedicated to Saint James the Apostle [6]. The square's space divided in half by the communication route (St. Mary’s Avenues) limited the possibilities of cultural events in the city center with the participation of Częstochowa residents.

Due to the dynamics of the development of the urban layout of the city, the issue of inner-city areas is the current topic of the architectural contests undertaken. They are organized by the local Częstochowa Branch of the Association of Polish Architects in cooperation with the Management of the City of Częstochowa.

The contests, carried out in 2008, covered issues related to the development of the following squares: Biegański Square and Daszyński Square together with the section of St. Mary’s Avenues, connecting them. The winning contest entry (Częstochowa Architectural Design Studio "Forma") presenting the design solution of the space of the squares and the alleys connecting them, has also become the subject of implementation activities. The development plan for Biegański Square,
completed in the first stage: integrates the sections of St. Mary’s Avenues and creates a legibly shaped and well-functioning public space. It is a form of continuation of the earlier foundation of the city square, which is a response to the contemporary conditions of the local community. The suggested solution of the square is an integral part of the sequence of the Avenues enriching and preserving their historical urban layout. Such behavior is in line with the standards of shaping the centers of European cities. [7]

A slight correction of the communication route passing through the square created an opportunity to enlarge the slab of the square and give it a new meaning - the urban market - a meeting place important for the residents, celebrations. The possibility of organizing cultural events underlines the importance of an organized cultural space as an important element shaping the environment and character of the city.

This space is not only for the organization of large cultural projects, but also allows the urban community the conditions to implement its own initiatives. Public accessibility and attractiveness of the new space of the square facilitates and encourages residents to interact with manifestations of local activities in the area of culture, art, social activities, etc. (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Biegański Square. A visible, enlarged new square slab

5. Shaping the urban zone within the Old Town
Numerous contests for the downtown zone organized by the local Częstochowa Branch of the Association of Polish Architects in cooperation with the authorities of the City of Częstochowa draw attention to the problem areas important for the city. The contest organized in 2015 for the architectural concept of the development of the Old Market Square is another attempt to organize the city's oldest open public space. The building structure of this area, shaped since the 14th century, includes spatial relations, view axes, objects and elements of the spatial layout. An attempt to reconcile the urban and architectural dimension that takes into account the historical aspect of this space requires holistic actions. [8]
The solutions applied in the contest works referring to the historic area of the Old Market cover mainly the development of the market square. Design decisions in terms of function, form, technical and utility parameters that also take into account the remains of old buildings are a form of incomplete revitalization. Renewal of the facade, replacement of the surface of the square and streets, small architecture or improvement of urban transport arrange the structure of this part of the city. However, they do not constitute a comprehensive analysis and classification of urban and architectural activities.

Is the form of continuation of the earlier assumption of the historical layout a response to the contemporary needs of the local community? There are no references to the frontages surrounding the Old Market Square (especially the most neglected western) and the lack of communication solutions connecting the Old Town zone with St. Mary’s Avenues leave the sensitive area without a solution (Figure 8).

An attempt to revitalize this space does not bring the expected results. The lack of comprehensive functional and spatial, cultural and city-forming solutions makes it difficult to organize this fragment of the city. [9]

![Figure 8. Old Market Square](image)

6. Conclusions

The issues of urban development cover spatial phenomena concerning inner-city areas. Keeping them in good condition requires constant action which requires creation of socially acceptable spaces that stimulate the development of central city areas.

Częstochowa is an example of a city looking for the right relations between the present and the future. This requires delicate and precise decisions related to the introduction of centralizing functions within the historical centre. Thanks to this, it has a chance to adapt to modern functional requirements and changing social needs. These multidirectional searches are aimed at increasing the value of the urbanized environment and are a reflection of the relationship between the cultural, commercial and service functions.

The development program for the city centre should be developed by the city authorities taking into account the spatial concept of the entire historic urban layout. The interpenetrating historical areas have the chance to create a cohesive urban space with a rich functional program and to encourage residents to spend their free time in them.
Examples of contest works prove that the activities undertaken by the city of Częstochowa lead towards the best solutions enriching the city's space.

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