Modernisation of Podlasie Cities' Market Squares (Poland) in Context of Their Symbolic Values in History and Now

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Abstract. Public spaces in many cities of podlaskie province (Poland) were modernized after 2004 (the moment Poland entered EU). Some squares have already been modernized while the others are still waiting to be revitalized. The changes are made in many aspects. One of the most aspects of those modernizations is the exposition of the actual and new symbolization of the space and buildings. The aim of this work is to design the forms and themes of the new buildings, which are now used to build the symbolical programme of the squares in the cities of Podlasie. In that sense they built one of the cultural characteristics of our era. The studies were made in the context of historical conditions. The historical section was presented to approach the placing the symbolical contents in the spaces of the markets in the Podlasie cities. 40 towns were taken into account. The theme of the symbolical content was systematized typical for the objects placed in the markets space in different historical eras. The forms were defined of the present symbolical contents in the following groups: architectonical buildings (the town halls, modern buildings) little architecture (the sculptures, the fountains). Those topic groups and the content were presented and introduced into the market spaces of a group of the cities. The formal groups were set up: the sculptures, the statues, the little architecture, individually designed fountains, content architectonical (furniture) and the trace the reminiscence of the historical architecture (e.g. the painting on the tiles on the square). The contents are associated with the history of those cities/towns, the person who set them up and the most important personalities in the history, the fiction characters, building the identity of the town.

1. Introduction
Modernization of the market spaces is the effect of the vast movement typical to whole Poland [1,2]. It can be analyzed in the context the ones made in the big cities (e.g. Cracow, Wroclaw, Warsaw, Szczecin, Poznan) middle ones (Bielsko Biala, Zamosc) and the towns (Wadowice, Kock) [3,4]. They are characterized by the process of shaping the symbolical layer of the space, maintaining and protecting the cultural values and introducing modern elements serving the needs of is citizens and tourists [5]. Those usually are the parts of the little architecture e.g. the new sculpture-fountain of the Warsaw mermaid in the Old Town, the glass fountain in the Old Square in Wroclaw, or the sculpture made by Wiktor Mitoraj I Swietlik the fountain to the underground museum on the Cracow market in the Old
Town. The modernizations can be done in the whole space of the squares e.g. Szczecin where the
museum was built under a specially designed square plate to allow the exposition of the main symbols
of this space such as the opera building and the monument.

Those processes are characteristic to many eastern bloc cities in Europe (Czech Republic, Slovenia,
Latvia, Leetonia, Croatia, Easter Germany) and many other European cities. The modernization
movement in the public spaces especially the markets is continuously developing. Due to the technical
wear, new citizens and tourist’s necessities, new building technologies and the political changes. In the
literature the big cities are analyzed while the towns remain in the shade. Those little spaces because of
the population, the universality and the many changes that they undergo, are worth mentioning [6,7,8].

In this essay the symbolical layer of the markets space is analyzed in the towns of Podlasie localized
in the north-eastern part of Poland. Many of them were modernized after 2004 (Poland entered EU).
The selected markets are being modernized and many of them need to be revitalized. The changes are
made in many aspects. One of those metamorphoses is the exposition of the existing and the new
symbolical layer given to the space and the buildings [9,10].

The aim of this research was to set the forms and topics of the new buildings which are actually used
to be built the symbolical programme of Polish town markets. In this sense they shape the cultural
characteristics of our era.

The research was made in the historical concept. The historical section of the approach to set the
symbolical content in the space of the town markets in Podlasie was presented. Forty towns were taken
into account, those with the town rights and some localities with the modernized markets (e.g. Wizna,
Korycin). The subject was systematized in different historical eras. The forms to the presented
symbolical contents were defined in the following groups: architectonical objects (e.g. the markets,
modern pieces) and little architecture (the sculptures, the fountains, the monuments).

Literature studies were based on the analysis of the monographs of the towns, the papers dealing with
the political and economic history and the history of the city planning especially the layers from the
different periods and building the urban patterns and especially in the history of Podlasie [10, 11, 12,
13]. The analyzed towns in general sneak the historical cannons due to the little scale or provincial
localization of the region. Therefore the important source of the information was the articles of the
revitalization and modernization of the public spaces, the markets included, in Europe, Poland and
Podlasie [3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 15]. To analyze the actual state allowed the authors research in situ in the
towns in podlaskie province and the chosen polish and European cities. Those analyses were carried out
in the context of the art history, esthetics, philosophy, urban aspects and the space identity and building
the label and the vision of the city.

2. Symbolic values of the market squares in history

The area of podlaskie province is localized on the space with certain historical conditions. They
influenced the shape of the space of the town markets. During the history this area belonged to different
countries and lands, with different cultural conditions therefore we can appreciate the clear tradition of
multicultural identity of the public spaces in the towns. The oldest towns in podlaskie province have the
middle age origin (XIV century). Since those times the market squares functioned together with the
town halls as a symbols of the administration and king’s property of the town (e.g. Zambrow, Knyszyn).
Those were wooden buildings that haven’t survived till nowadays. Therefore the real analysis started
from baroque era (XVIII) and has passed through characteristic periods: 1795-1918 period of partitions
in Poland, when the country didn’t exist on the political map of Europe and the analyzed area was under
Russian influence, 1918-1939 twenty years of iterwar period, 1945-1989 and the Popular Poland and
after 1989 political change in Poland.

2.1 Baroque Period

In this period in the second part of XVIII century, especially the ideas of the space content of the private
cities were associated with the aristocratic residences. The residential cities were the symbolic and
esthetic frame of those aristocratic lands. They were associated with the compositions (Bialystok,
Choroszcz, Siemiatycze) [11, 15]. The market squares, behind the utilitarian function, also possessed the symbolic ones. They were the parts of the developed plan of the formal and ceremonial identity of that city. In Białystok (figure 1a) and Bielsk Podlaski (figure 1b) belonging to Branicki family and in Siemiatycze (figure 1c) of Ania Sapiehow Jablonowskiej family, the town halls with the high towers were composed into the urban space of the market squares [17]. They have a symbolic function and were the dominant part of the city landscape. In reality those town halls had a commercial function where the owner of the city obtained their benefits. The administrative function was limited to some spaces. The town halls built the esthetic of the city and underlined the status of their owner.

![Figure 1. Town halls from XVIII century: a) Białystok [19], b) Bielsk Podlaski [19], c) Siemiatycze [17]](image)

In the market spaces also were located some sculptures with their symbolical meanings. In Białystok in the part designed for commerce a statue of Temida was placed which represented the honesty of the transactions. In the most representative part of Białystok market a sculpture of Saint Florian was supposed to protect the city from the fire.

The most interesting idea used in the baroque symbolism is the market square in Tykocin. It was rebuilt by a hetman Jan Klemens Branicki. The main square with the representative character was composed on the axis. In the center there is a sculpture of a hetman Stefan Czarnecki (the first of the secular sculptures in Poland) (figure 2 a,b). In front of it a church inspired by palladian architecture was built, with the gate with the four evangelist busts and the fencing with ten poles representing the rest of the twelve apostles (figure 2 a,c). The square in Tykocin underlined the values of the owners: the great origin of the national hero Czarnecki, his piety, his charity, the patron of arts, culture and education. The church apart from its regular function was supposed to also be a Family pantheon of Branicki Family[14].

![Figure 2. Tykocin market square: a) view of market square, b) sculpture of Czarnecki, c) contemporary view of market square [all photos 19]](image)

Before the partitions from Antonio Tyzenhaus´s idea, ordered by the last Polish king Stanislaw August Poniatowski, based on the idea of Italian architect de Sacco, Krynki was built. The idea was to activate the locality and the region connected with the aesthetic character underlining the status of the king´s initiative. In the context of the classical six angled market was supposed to be built a town hall. It was supposed to be the most dominant part of the square.
2.2. The partition period (1795-1918)
During this period there weren’t too many changes made in the space of the mentioned markets. Those provincial towns were not the places of interest of the invaders. The changes were the result of military conditions (e.g. building the military track in the market in Zambrow), [10]. This was a part of the road to secure the mobility of Russian troops among Warsaw, Grodno and Petersburg) and administrative ones (Building the market in Lomza and the park in Augustow which were the provincial cities). They showed the power of the tsar. Some of the activities were made as the part of the plan of unification town space to the projects promoted by Russia. Those kinds of urban plans were made for Bialystok. Their effects suffered the spaces out of the market square.

2.3. The period of interwar (1918-1939)
After recovering the freedom by Poland in 1918, this fact became the reason for symbolical confirmation of this status in the public spaces in the cities. In many cases on the squares were placed the sculptures based on the patriotic and historical topics associated with the anniversaries of recovering the freedom (Grajewo) or the monument dedicated to the victims of the January uprising in 1863 in Zambrowo. The next group were the monuments devoted to the victims of the Polish-Russian war in 1920 or polish regiments (Wysokie Mazowieckie, Stawiski, Jedwabne, Choroszcz, Czyzew, Dabrowa Bialostocka). In many polish cities we can find many monuments of marshal Pilsudski.

2.4. The period of the Second World War (1939-1945)
This period is a time of the destruction. It is very difficult to talk about creation. But it is worth to mention one spectacular event. It is based on the Bialystok market. During the period from 17/09/1939 to June 1941 Bialystok was still under soviet occupation. Due to the political and symbolic reasons the town hall was demolished (the one built in the second part of XVIII century by Jan Klemens Branicki). In the spot Stalin’s monument was supposed to be built [13]. This idea wasn’t put into practice because of the war between Germany and Russia.

2.5. The period of Polska Ludlow (1945-1989)
Many towns in podlasie province were destroyed in the Second World War. The markets also suffered this destruction. They had to be rebuilt and completed. Because of the change in the political system in Poland there were different actions taken to shape the space of the market squares. We can divide them in two categories associated with the management of the market spaces. The first stage of the reconstruction (in the 50s of XX century) concerned building in the clasps. In Zambrow putting into practice 5 Year Plan two parts of the square market were built, filling it in with the building type ZOR (laborers district) promoting socialistic architecture. In the other towns in the region this type of buildings was used to construct new centers far from the market squares (Wysokie Mazowieckie, Grajewo). Those actions devaluated the meaning of the squares in the public space [10, 16].

The next step was creating green spaces in the spaces of the markets. Some of them were made as a social act but unfortunately not based on any project. Those were spontaneous actions. Those green spaces created in the 50s, 60s or 70s of XX filled the space with plants. High trees influenced the limit of exposition of the market spaces understood as a symbol of the towns tradition originated in the past (Zambrow, Choroszcz, Grajewo, Kolno, Wysokie Mazowieckie, Zablow, Jedwabne, Stawiski, Bialystok, Wizna). Overgrown trees not taken care during many years made those places dangerous (pathological places). The access to those places was limited and the citizens didn’t like to spend their time there [16].

In the 60s and 70s in XX century another kind of actions took place. The commercial buildings with the modern design were placed. Those contrasted with the traditional tenement houses or the detached houses, so characteristic to the period before the war. Those modern buildings with unified form bulldozed local values of traditional architecture next to the market squares in reference to the form and
scale (Ciechanowiec, Zambrow, Czyżew). The symbol of the modernity and the functionality influenced the loss of the individual and regional characteristics of the place.

On the markets of selected cities monuments have been erected, meaningly related to the history of Poland since World War II (Łapy - around 1965 a full monument of Marcel Novotka, Wizna was built - in 1967 an obelisk was erected in honor of the defenders of the Wizna section in September 1939).

The actions directed after the Second World War in relation to the space of historical markets led in many cases to the fact that the city's inhabitants have ceased to identify these places as the main public space of the centers. Traditional destiny and symbolism has been preserved on a limited scale. Therefore many market squares stopped being recognized as a symbol of the urban space. They are only recognized as squares.

3. Contemporary symbolic values of the market squares (after 1989)

In 1989 because of the free elections Polish political and economic system changed. In 2004 Poland joined UE. Those events influenced the way of treating the public space, especially the market squares and allowed to build their own modern code responsible for the new conditions.

Starting from the 80s XX century there are some social movements trying to give the market squares back the sculptures from the period between the wars (1918-1939). In Zambrow the monument memorizing the heroes from the January upraise from 1863 was reconstructed, in Wysokie Mazowieckie relics were dug up and the monument in then memory of the soldiers and the marshal Piłsudski was reconstructed. The sculptures and monuments associated with the traditional Polish independence were built and placed on the new market squares of many towns in the province (Choroszcz, Czyżew, Białystok, Goniądz, Grajewo, Kolno, Łapy, Michałowo, Stawiski, Suraż, Korycin, Michałowo, Sokółka).

In the period after 1989 the history of the place was taken into account. Therefore the actions tending to localize the sculptures of the owners and founder of those towns (Augustow, Knyszyn, Kleszcze, Siemiatycze, Szczuczyn) and the personalities important in the history of each town: Suwałki the monument of the writer Maria Konopnicka (figure 3a), Lomza - the bench with the actress Hanna Bielska (figure 3b), Suchowola – the monument of the priest Jerzy Popiełuszko (figure 3c). Those symbols (both the monuments and the statues) referring to the past had their didactical value for the locals but also were the touristic attractions.

Building the new picture of the towns, their originality among so many places was based on creating the new symbolic codes that included both the monuments and the sculptures in the space of the market squares. Among them we find e.g. the dwarfs from the fairytale and the bench reading the verses of Maria Konopnicka placed next to the statue of the writer on the market square in Suwałki, or the sculpture of the girl-strawberry in Korycin a town famous for the strawberry production, or the stone in Suchowola symbolizing the geographical centre of Europe and the Pope Arch placed in the same town after the pope Jan Pawel II visit in 1995 in Bialystok. In Bielsk Podlaski the architects planned to place a bench with Charlatan the famous person from the film recorded in that town while in Lomza the citizens wanted to place the sculpture of the local philosopher Wincenty Lutosławski.
In other towns in order to remember the tradition of the place the information signs were placed on the tiles of the market squares. In Augustow the city coat of arms was placed, in Białystok a line was drawn of the non-existing building of the city scales and the course of the choroski tract, in Lomza the town hall borders were painted. In Siemiatycze it is worth mentioning the market square turned into an urban square in form of the roundabout. On the other hand, the contour of the non-existing city hall was represented by a hedge which is a rectangle inside the old market square. The shape is so readable and clear that attracts the attention. It makes you want to know the coded history.

The modern element which in the other eras was rare, but now is very common is putting the fountains in the market squares. The oldest one was in Białystok and was founded by the water supplies company in the period between the wars (1918-1939).

In Zambrow the fountain with the lions was built in the 60s of XX century when on the market was placed a square. In the other towns the fountains did not exist. In the last two decades they were built in many localities. Nowadays apart from the prestige function they shape the spacial composition of the square markets (Augustow - figure 4a, Suchowola – figure 4b) strengthen its function as a square (Zambrow, Wysokie Mazowieckie) the relaxation place in the green space in the town. It is becoming more common that they are the part active recreation due to the proximity of the kids playground (Suwalki – figure 4c) The fountains have lights in winter which is also another aesthetic attraction of those places [2, 16].

![Figure 4. Fountains on marketsquares: a) Augustow [19], b) Suchowola [20], c) Suwalki [21]](image)

Nowadays the architectonic furniture and the active recreation machines are places which so far have never been integrated in this space. Generally those are the playgrounds (Suwalki, Suchowola, Korycin, Kolno). Those are the sign of the times due to citizens paying more attention to the active and healthier lifestyles. At the same time they expect those spaces to fulfill those expectations. Vaster interpretation of those spaces can be green bus stops in the public spaces built in Siemiatycze.

The example of the modern times can be also found in the architecture. Unfortunately is less represented because the space around the market squares was completed with the buildings in the previous decades. But it is worth mentioning the rebuilt of the town hall in Lomza according to the design made by the architect Jerzy Ullman. Postmodern example, characteristic for its time is a tourist office in Augustow. Those building with the defined forms are good identification of the times they were built.

The symbolical meanings actually included in the space of podlasie market squares have a reference to the history and the tradition of those towns. They are being developed with the new elements based on the tradition of those places and the famous real and fiction people. This subject is also treated from the patriotic and historical codes view and also by improving the prestige of the place promoting the recreation and activity. The symbolics is coded placing the forms in the shape and space of the market squares (the statues, the benches, the fountains, the architectonic furniture, other little architecture objects, the light) and also placed on the picture on the tiles and also composed into green spaces.

4. Results and discussion
The symbolical theme which nowadays is located in Podlasie space of the square markets reflects the movement in many cities in Poland and this tendency can be studied in Europe.
Those changes are forced by the bad technical conditions of those spaces. Those modernizations are based on the symbolic programme corresponding to modern conditions resulting with the analogical formal solutions [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8].

The symbolical contents is realized individually taking into consideration every center. For that reason, we can meet examples which in Podlasie have not been used. The very interesting example is done in the last decade the Old Town in Bielsko Biala (a part of individual symbolic formal programme). The revitalized inner urban space was filled with the historic content of the place: the rests of the town hall’s walls showed in the crystal cabinets, the reconstruction of the well showing the lower tiled pavement from the different era, the little bridge over the stream which crossed the market before, finally, the modern watch-calendar. Those elements composed on the axis are completed with the model of the same market but from the period of its construction. In the same space new original elements appeared such as the column of Saint Juan Nepomucen [2].

In the chosen towns or cities, we can distinguish individual approach towards the fountains e.g. in the Old Town in Warsaw the sculpture of the symbol of the capital, the mermaid, was placed in the center of the fountain. In Wroclaw in the Old Town we can see the fountain which is a glass sculpture, across the market square in Katowice flows the artificial river Rawa and also the sunbeds are placed during summer. The cities and towns are working really hard on the individuality and identity which provide the icon buildings with their symbolism and tradition of the place [18]. At the same time, they are the differentiators on the background of other places. In that way make them more competitive.

5. Conclusions
The content and the symbolic forms have undergone the changes along the years due to the political and economic changes. Each era has worked on the different code which was the identity on the background of the others.

The research allowed to establish theme groups and formal characteristics for the symbolic content placed in the space of the market squares in Podlaskie province.

Those symbolic content located in the spaces of the markets are associated with the history of the place, the people who set them up, patriotic elements, fiction and real heroes and other elements that build the city view. We can divide them into the following groups: single architectural buildings, many sculptures and monuments and little architecture buildings such as the fountains, architectonical furniture. Also placing the elements on the pavement tiles are common too.

The newest tendency is to place the elements that build a modern image [18] of the city in the market squares. They have values such as didactical, informative and commerce one (e.g. tourism development, building the label of the city, making it more competitive). Sometimes they mix the historical facts with the fiction. All the actions are taken in order to strengthen the prestige of the place and propose the free time offer.

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