Possibilities for Creating Public Spaces in a Small Town: Case Study

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Abstract: Public spaces exist in each space which has been built. In the case of small European towns, they are usually strictly defined: and include market square, side squares and streets, which are often clearly connected with each other with regard to functions and composition. There are also municipal units, which have been created as a result of the development and expansion of residential developments located near important industrial plants (e.g. within the Central Industrial Region). These units were built in accordance with the modernist principle of a functional town in its original form and did not have traditionally defined public spaces. The article presents the history and possibilities of creating such spaces in a small industrial town based on an example of Nowa Dęba.

1. Introduction

Development of European towns, from the earliest times to modern assumptions, was associated with the growth of urban fabric as well as construction and reconstruction of spatial structure both in the area of architecture and public spaces. In most cases towns developed spontaneously, around a central square - market square where trade took place, where the seat of municipal authorities was located, as well as cloth hall, scales, wells and other elements essential for the comfort of life in a given settlement unit [1;2]. Along with the territorial development of a town, new spaces were created focusing on social activity. They included both linear - representative “vivid” streets, as well as area – auxiliary squares, small markets or squares [3;4;5;6].

A separate phenomenon is towns founded in the 20th century in cruda radice in accordance with modernist doctrine. These towns were created on the basis of complete plans, often made by well-known architects (the most important investments are “big” cities: Chandigarh (Le Corbusier), Brasilia (Lucio Costa, Oskar Niemeyer), Magnitogorsk (Ernst May, Mart Stam). In accordance with the idea of “modernity”, the main emphasis was placed on the quality of residence – the designed buildings and premises were to be characterized by availability, good lighting and ventilation. According to the Athens Charter from 1933, a city was to be functional, designed for living, work and leisure [7]. In an urban organism understood in such a way, residential buildings were high and freely distributed over large green areas and representative squares were surrounded by public facilities. In multi-family residential buildings, it was more difficult to locate intimate meeting places than in historical urban quarters,
especially in the popular comb and line layouts, as well as among tower blocks, and therefore they were not created simultaneously with growing housing estates or cities.

A particularly interesting case is small towns developed from company housing estates for industrial plants associated with the broadly understood arms industry. These towns are usually located aside, in dense forest complexes and the core of the urban complex (residential and service) is built mainly from multi-family residential buildings and single detached shopping facilities. Sometimes there are services on the ground floors of these buildings. An example of such units are cities developed on the basis of implemented as a result of the "four-year plan" (for the years 1936-1940) [8], among others Nowa Dęba (Podkarpackie Province).

2. Outline of the history of Nowa Dęba
As part of the construction of the Central Industrial Region in the area of central Poland of that time, a number of investments related to the heavy industry and armaments sector were proposed and partly implemented in the so-called safety triangle. Some of the planned investments were located in existing towns or developed centres but without municipal rights, and some, especially those related to special production, were located in non-urbanized areas.

In dense forests of the Sandomierz Forest, near the village of Dęba and Majdan, the Ammunition Factory No. 3 (in Dęba) was built (Figure.1) – Construction works were interrupted by the outbreak of war and the investment has not been completed. Because the factory was located far from housing estates with a high degree of urbanization, several multi-family residential buildings (separate for workers, engineering and clerical staff), a director's villa, three villas for the deputy director and specialists, and a foreman's colony were built for the personnel working in the Plant (a complex of semi-detached single-family houses). In addition, the housing estate included a school and a hospital (a hospital is currently located in the former school building). During the II World War, the factory was taken over by the Nazis who used the factory, residential buildings and the nearby military training ground for military exercises (military training ground was located near Dęba village in 1927. Ammunition Factory no. 3, constructed later, used it to carry out the tests of items produced in the factory).

Figure 1. The modernist building of the Ammunition Factory tool-shop No. 3 (source: Archives of the Zakłady Metalowe Dezamet S.A. in Nowa Dęba)
After the war, ammunition was still produced in the plants, and the factory residential development was developing. The housing development was completed with socialist realist buildings. This concerned urban planning, where arrangements of formal quarters and meander building blocks were applied, as well as architecture. High School building (the first high school in this area) was built in 1954 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Socialist-realist building of the High School in Nowa Dęba (1967-69) (source: fotopolska.eu [accessed: November 8, 2018], author T. Hermańczyk, published by M. Brzeziński)

Nowa Dęba became a town in 1961. New residential buildings are facilities made "from a large panel", initially continuing the historical layout, later becoming more and more scattered. During the period of political transformation, the structure of plants has changed and the factory was transformed into a joint-stock company and is now part of the Euro-Park Wisło-San sub-zone [9].

3. Public spaces of Nowa Dęba
In an existing structure of the town (in the area of a relatively compact urban fabric), several clearly identifiable public spaces can be identified (Figure 3):
A - main interior with an axial composition between the block-and-quarter layout of buildings from the 1950s and 1960s,
B - an area located north of the previously mentioned urban layout which is connecting the Major Jan Gryczman Square (formerly Zwycięstwa Square) and the northern, undeveloped part of the City Park,
C - market square around the Market Hall PSS Społem
D - small space in front of the Nowa Dęba City and Municipality Office Building, not spatially separated
E - an area of the communication and commercial centre: bus station, shopping centre, hotel, large grocery store/food discount store of the nationwide commercial network, area developed for transport purposes - bus depot and car parks.
Figure 3. Identification of public spaces in a dense urban fabric of Nowa Dęba. Designations: 1-landmarks: services/services located on ground floors of residential buildings, 2-public spaces (urban interiors) shaped at the early stage of city development (1950s, 1960s), 3-public spaces shaped in the later period of the city's development, 4-directions of creation of boundaries (service) of public spaces, 5-direction of integration and creation of new public spaces, letter designations: A, B, C, D, E - description in the text (own work)

When analyzing the layout and development of public spaces in the city, one can notice a change taking place over time concerning the location of the main representative squares. In a modernistic arrangement there were no such places. During supplementation of the fabric and birth of a defined urban layout, southern and northern squares connected with a directional interior between the building quarters (A) played a representative role (Figure 4), while at the end of the 20th century this space began to move in the northern direction, beyond orthogonal structure of building blocks (B). A key moment for this transformation was the construction of the Inter-organizational House of Culture and Technology in 1980 - a cultural institution in which the Local Government Centre of Culture is currently located. This building has become a subjective frontage for a new urban space that originally preserved the character of Urban Forest. The area has been revitalized in recent years, giving it a more municipal form (Figure 5)
The aforementioned space "A" was not formally transformed, however, increased car traffic and a need to provide a car park have changed the character of the interior. Another area that is significant for the layout of the city is the market hall and market square territory (C). It is a typical place of this type, not distinguishable from other located in various urban units.

Figure 4. Interior of Jana Pawła II street, on the top photograph in 1960-70, on the bottom photograph today (source: top photo: fotopolska.eu [accessed: 08.11.2018], author unknown, published by M. Brzeziński, bottom photo: google maps street view [accessed: 08.11.2018])
Figure 5. Major Jan Gryczman’s Square (formerly Zwycięstwa Square), on the top photograph, in 1988, on the bottom photograph today (source: top photo: fotopolska.eu [accessed: 08.11.2018], author R. Chmielowiec, bottom photo: nowadeba.pl [accessed: 08.11.2018])

Public space in front of the City and Municipality Office (D) is very small, it is actually a widened pavement. It is located on a border and its development is limited by the national road no. 9 (Rzeszów - Tarnobrzeg) which is passing very close to building blocks. On the opposite side of the road, based on the buildings of the Disabled Cooperative “Zjednoczenie” established in 1957, a potential public space (E) has been created. This area has many advantages: it is a point, which is generating activity (bus
station, trade), it is located in an immediate vicinity of the City and Municipality Office, it is a “gate to the city” and it also has large area reserves, currently used as parking lots (Figure. 6).

![Figure 6. Area of the communication and commercial centre, (source: photo by the author)](image)

4. Conclusions
The described public spaces were created in a way that was not fully controlled throughout the period of city development. The period immediately after the war was the time of formation of first squares located in the vicinity of basic services located on the ground floors or arcades of buildings (in Nowa Dęba, differently as in the case of small towns with conventional structure, this period was dominated by socialist realist design). During this period attention was paid to composition, symmetry and axiality of the system. Due to the fact that existing urban fabric was intense and compact, the next space was located outside its area. Originally it had the character of a Municipal Forest and was limited in a subjective manner: frontage of buildings with services on the ground floors from the south and remote isolated objects of the socialist realist school and modernist building that was part of the pre-war company housing estate. Over time, eastern and western quasi frontages have complemented each other, but only in 1980 construction of the Inter-organizational House of Culture and Technology (now SOK Local Government Culture Centre) has defined the main representative space of the city. Further concentration and arrangement of edges would significantly improve the quality and perception of the city centre (downtown). In recent years, the surface of the square has been rebuilt, giving it a more municipal character. Increased significance of this place due to its central location in relation to the entire urban fabric of Nowa Dęba is a very important factor affecting the integration of urban functions [10].

From the point of view of creating new public spaces, a group of joined areas deserves our attention: representative square in front of the City and Municipality Office and newly created communication and commercial centre. Apart from the national road crossing this complex, it is a strictly defined objective interior potential of which is not used. Changing the way of usage, segregation and prioritisation of functions (separation of representative and communication functions) and creation of spaces with high architectural values would allow improving the position of this place, which is particularly important in
the context of location (gate to the city). It would also improve the functionality and comfort of using this, undoubtedly, a crucial area for the entire municipal unit.

Existence and functioning of public spaces in a small town affect the quality of life, social identity [11], perception of the town by its residents, users and visitors. High compositional and aesthetic values of squares and streets determine social activity and integration as well as counteract crisis phenomena.

In a small town with traditional construction [12], the existence of a centrally located market square, cohesion of streets emphasized with firmly lined frontages of buildings is something obvious. The situation is different in urban units, which evolved from company or garrison (military) housing estates located in cruda radice at the beginning of the 20th century. If the first construction activities were undertaken during the time of the domination of Le Corbusier's modernist dogma, it is likely that there is no defined public space because, according to the rules, the old urban fabric was to be replaced by a monumental architecture situated in an open space [13]. Places of social (public) activity intensified in the vicinity of important objects, often used by residents: shops, offices, schools, and cultural centres, which influenced the spatial and compositional development of areas that were former markets and squares. This phenomenon is also visible in other, similar urban units [5], which proves that the existence of public spaces is a natural consequence of the development and expansion of a small town.

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