

## **Creativity As A Tool Of A Spatial Activation Of A City Centre. Case Study Of Polish City Of Poznan.**

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### **Abstract:**

*The following paper deals with the idea of a city centre activation through the use of creativity and innovative potential. There is underlined that it is a desirable direction of spatial redevelopment and reorganization within a degraded parts of a city centre. The creative functions can be helpful to accentuate cultural values of a downtown area as well as they can be helpful in increasing a public space attractiveness and quality.*

**Key words:** *Creativity, spatial activation, city centre revival, public space*

### **City centre as space of attraction and attractiveness**

Downtown is a unique area that is distinguished by the highest spatial, social and economic values. In the scale of the entire city this should be a space of the highest spatial attractiveness that is to attract all the city users. This attractiveness is a determinant of social identification in terms of diverse needs satisfaction and multiple forms of city centre offer.

Sense of social attachment to specific places in a downtown area lies in adaptation processes. This statement applies to both: spatial values - especially material heritage with unique architectural forms and urban structures, as well as spiritual ones - outstanding visual and cultural values that determine the identity, prestige and uniqueness of space. This is an area of specific social values - a place of social activity concentration (culture, employment, trade, services), of special collective emotions and symbolic content (monuments, stadiums, public spaces, greenery), and of usual contacts and rituals forming a spatio-social ties.

City speaks with a language of iconography, which is a language of visual images. It helps to develop a continual interaction between a space and a man. This is area of permanent observation and visual exploration.

Form of city, its appearance, is a non-verbal language of architectural forms and urban iconography [which is a language of spatial patterns [Alexander, Silverstein, Angel, Ishikawa 1977]]. Spatial code of a city iconosphere allows the orientation in an urban space and helps to explore city in the material, social and symbolic meaning. This is particularly important in the context of public space attractiveness. The most important social processes that take place in the city are information and communication processes.

The phenomenon of a timeless duration and spatial dominance of downtown lies in the undeniable historic and cultural values, which seem to be a clear evidence of duration and evolution of the city and which resides in social consciousness. At the same time downtown is an area of constant spatial changes occurring in accordance to demanding contemporary social needs. A characteristic feature of the city center is its historical authenticity and high cultural value stored permanently in the urban and architectural structure and spatial reserves that can be applied to today's investments. In the context of a search for new architectural forms of different scale and purpose within a downtown area, the protection of its physiognomy and unique spatial code is particularly important.

Sensitive barometer of a city centre attractiveness and quality are public spaces. They play a special role in the context of meeting the diverse needs of city users, both in terms of spatial and social interactions and contacts. Hereby there are enumerated the most important factors of a downtown public space [Chmielewski, 2001]:

- general availability of ensuring viability and activity, including communication links,
- safety provided by the segregation of traffic, the existence of identification points in urban areas, the urban legibility, the protection of public order,
- information system of the city, the transparency of the architectural symbolism, urban harmony, spatial order and cognitive values.

### **Cultural values in terms of physiognomy and attractiveness of city centre**

City centre is a kind of urban product having the authentic and unique historical, stylistic, artistic, emotional and social characteristics. It's always a luxury good and thus high-priced value, especially in terms of free-market economy. Thus, there is an undeniable need to protect these values in a modern manner, answering the needs and preferences of contemporary city users.

Wise economy, having regard for the value of cultural heritage of a whole city centre, not only the market value of separate buildings, appreciates that uniqueness and helps to preserve and activate what is the most valuable of a city.

In the context of heritage planning it is important to treat a contemporary city space in terms of product, taking into account mutual relationship and impact between a city user - customer and a space. the proper management of a downtown area means not only managing its architectural dimension, but also function and spatial offer [Ashworth 1997]. According to this, it should be noted that it is needed to make every effort to strengthen the cultural identity of people and places, and take the best advantage of its historical

kernel and a heart of a city [Piccinato 2002].

Revitalization of the downtown area should be based on the good continuation rule so as to preserve the most valuable cultural resources on one hand, and on the other hand, to provide a possibility of new forms and modern spatial solutions introduction.

All the actions transforming downtown spatial structures should be based primarily on the use of existing reserves, serving contemporary social needs, improving technical standards and the creating a high-quality public space with a high degree of functional, visual and aesthetic attractiveness.

### **City centre activation in economic context**

In terms of attractiveness and competitiveness of Polish downtown in the European context, an essential course of action should be active protection of cultural heritage [Ashworth 1997]. It is a great tool allowing the proper use of the existing spatial values in accordance with contemporary social needs. It can be helpful so as to direct a city center transformation within revitalization programmes. It is a tool for a city space activation and restoration of the cultural landscape, helping to preserve the authenticity of heritage asset, as well as launching market mechanisms, including the principles of urban marketing.

Contemporary global economy has, on the one hand, the possibility of building higher and higher standards of living, on the other hand, is a threat to the centuries-old cultural traditions [Lindsay 2003]. Contemporary conditions of market economy force to look at the downtown area from an economic perspective. In this sense, the downtown is a product, because artefacts have their market price, and their exposure and promotion is necessary in the context of building a competitive and compelling spatial offer.

New challenges influence the development of modern urban trends and the new society - a society of knowledge, creative and intellectual

potential, exiges new forms of contacts and information exchanges. So, the downtown area should also adapt to meet these new objectives. Key factors in the development of modern economies are: knowledge, information, innovation and competitiveness. Information economy is also called knowledge-based or knowledge-driven economy. The essence of the new information economy are changes - technological, organizational, economic ones, achieved through innovations. Innovations are understood as a break with past practice, leading to a competitive position by increasing the efficiency of production and distribution, as well as the introduction of a new product or new technology. Currently, the importance of innovation also includes the production and dissemination of culture, both mass and elite. The attractiveness of the space is highly affected by the level of social interest, especially of creative class representatives [Florida, 2005].

#### **The role of creativity in a city centre activation**

Modern information economy begins to have a more and more impact on urban spatial structure. The accessibility of information results in rapid development of information services. The main factors of multilayered development is now knowledge and intellectual potential - science sector, as well as creative potential - creative class.

The historical context and cultural values of a downtown area create a perfect place for a development of creative functions. All the initiatives based on creativity and originality can be helpful in stimulation of a local entrepreneurship. They can also have a very beneficial effect on the social integration within a city centre.

The introduction of creative functions to a city centre contributes to the concentration of the best human capital, through the use of innovative industries and high technology. The idea of a creative city does not require a huge investments for it can base on degradad or depreciated spatial

resources. In this context, it may be a useful instrument of a city center activation promoting aesthetics and uniqueness of urban space, cultural offer and visual quality and attractiveness of space. Creativity refers to a wide spectrum of subjects including economy, policy, artistic, spatial planning, architecture, but also to daily activities and common life of a city. So, implementation of an idea of a creative city is an art that is based on the liberation of creative potential not only in the economic sphere, but primarily in social dimension. Cities aspiring to become creative ones be distinguished by a high level of organizational culture, which tends to release creativity and innovation in urban policy and city management [Landry 2000].

Creativity is defined as the process of new ideas "production". Innovation relates primarily to a manner of creativity implementation. Cities can be very creative, but if they have no ability of developing innovative solutions, they cannot maximize the potential of the city [Landry, Bianchini 1995].

The framework of activities carried out within creative industries is very broad, but always involves the creative individualism, often with innovation and interdisciplinarity. Creative industries include creative activities, the source of which is the formation of copyrights, patents, designs and trademarks. Creativity clusters formed by non-governmental organisations, public companies, business, cultural institutions and scientific research of different scale, importance and impact. Creative clusters are considered to be places to live and work where they are produced and consumed products made of intellectual and innovative potential [Klasik, 2008].

Creative city is vital and viable. In a social meaning, vitality and viability are directly related to the demographic, social culture and social activity. In economic terms, it means the economic condition of the city, understood as the ability to create a long-term economic stability, self-sufficiency and security. Promotion and

implementation of creative functions and activities seems to be the most important issue in this sense. So as to provide a suitable development of creativity and innovations the presence of well-qualified organizations with relevant expertise is needed to stimulate the proper management of creative functions.

### Creativity in public space of Poznan city centre

This part presents examples of a creativity introduction within a public space of a city centre. There is presented some studies conducted in cooperation with Poznan Municipality and during the academic year with students of Faculty of Architecture Poznan University of Technology. The revival and activation of Poznan city centre with the use of creative potential, particularly within public spaces, is also the subject of teaching programme realized by author at the Faculty of Architecture. There is presented work aiming at a division of existing public spaces within a city centre according to a possibility of a creativity and cultural functions introduction. The design proposals of spatial solutions and activities introduced to Poznan city centre and based on the use of creative functions are shown on an example of the research conducted with Polish and foreign students during the semester work [im.1,2,3].

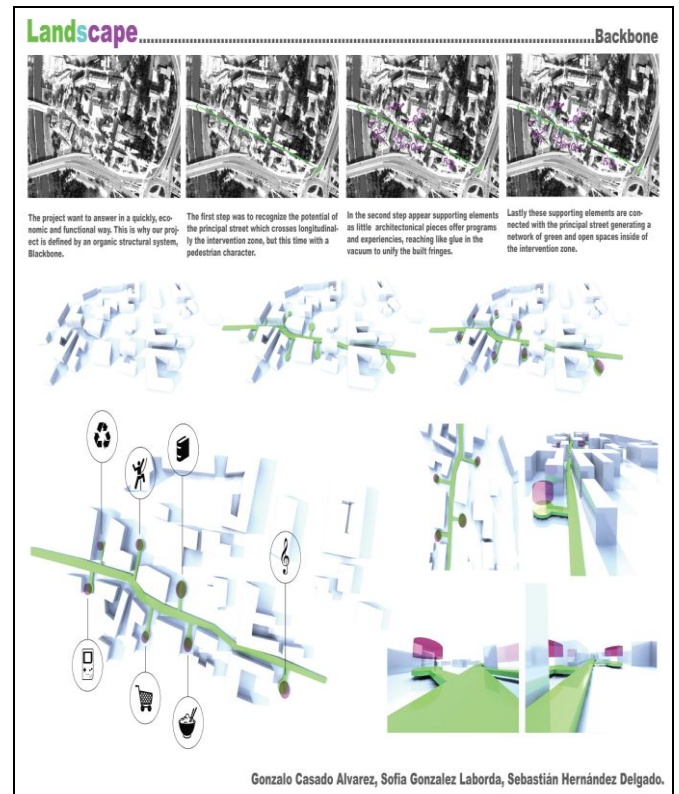


Image 1

An example of public space system creation for an introduction of creative functions within a city centre – students' semester project supervised by author

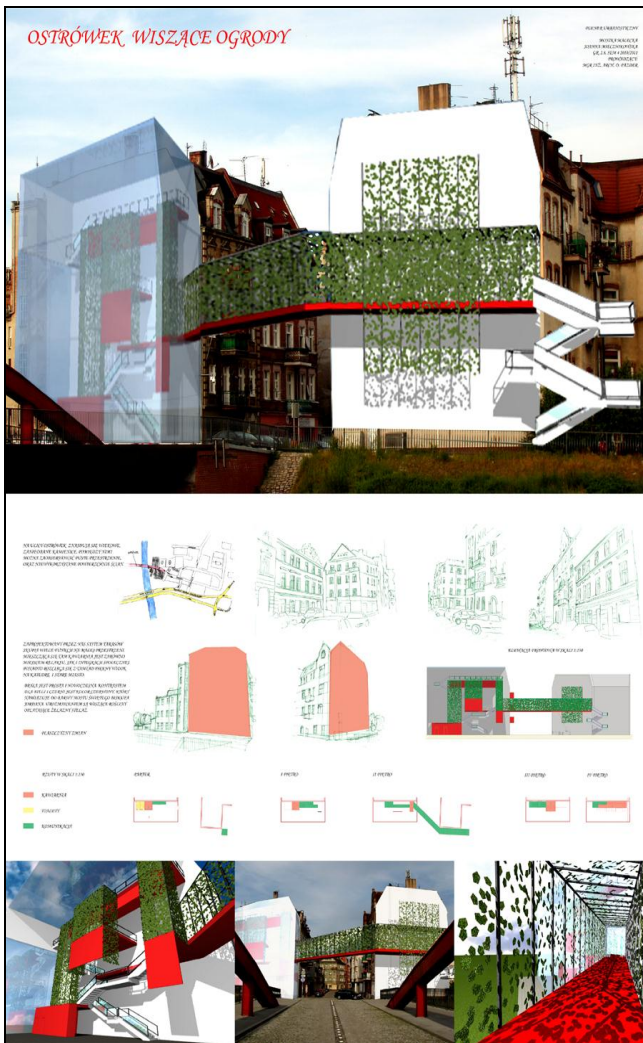


Image 2

An example of a creative function location in a degraded part of a Poznan city centre – *Hanging garden* – students' semester project supervised by author

There was also organized a number of undertakings aimed at promoting the creative potential in the soft actions of Poznan centre revitalization like organization of design and educational workshops devoted to the issues of an inspiring public space creation with the use of small architecture elements. There were also organized some meetings with city users, inhabitants and representatives of local non-governmental organizations, as well as a number of exhibitions and presentations of student projects were held. The main idea is to promote all the soft undertakings devoted to the questions of a Poznan centre renewal through the activation of a

local creative potential<sup>1</sup>.

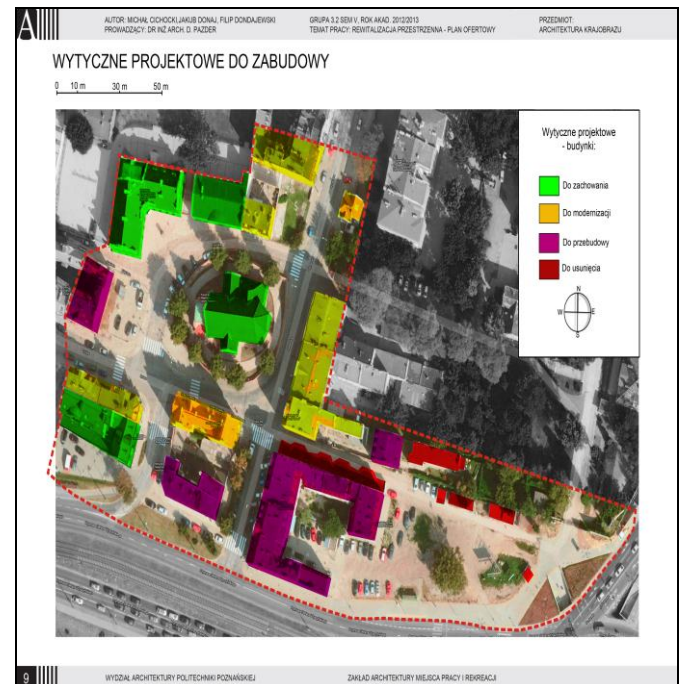


Image 3

An example of an existing urban tissue valorization – observations of a spatial potential within a city centre – students' semester project supervised by author

### Conclusion

All kind of creative activities taking place within a city centre should play a cultural role. Activation of inner-city areas through innovative and creative activities carried out in the form of creative clusters synergistic can support the diversification of local economy, and thereby contribute to an increase in the number of new jobs, providing growth opportunities for young people.

An important element of the city centre activation is the presence of an intellectual and creative potential. The role of creative functions in degraded tissue of a downtown is very significant. It can help to increase the aesthetic value of a city tissue and its immaterial ambience, while maintaining a minimum spatial interference. In

<sup>1</sup> B.Kaźmierczak, M.Nowak, S.Palicki, D.Pazder, *Oceny rewitalizacji. Studium zmian na poznańskiej Śródcie*, Wyd. WNS UAM, Poznań 2011

terms of reviving a city centre space, creative functions are desirable for they contribute to give a space a new spatial, social and economic quality, especially in the context of degraded urban areas development.

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