

PLACE IDENTITY AS THE KEY DETERMINING FACTOR OF THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SPACES

Krystyna SOLAREK

Warsaw University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, Urban Design and Spatial Planning Department,
Koszykowa 55, 00-659 Warsaw, Poland
e-mail: krystyna.solarek@pw.edu.pl

Ewa GROCHOWSKA

Warsaw University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, Urban Design and Spatial Planning Department,
Koszykowa 55, 00-659 Warsaw, Poland
e-mail: ewa.grochowska@pw.edu.pl

ABSTRACT

The article examines the relationships between place identity, the cultural value of public spaces and the quality of open spaces in city centres. Particular attention has been paid to the features that allow the recognition of public spaces as areas of cultural value. The changeability of public spaces over time, resulting from both the transformation of city structure and civilisation changes, was taken into account. A selected fragment of the public space in the centre of Warsaw – Grzybowski Square – was examined, showing the adaptation possibilities of public spaces with a distinct identity.

Keywords: public space, place identity, city centre, square, Warsaw

L'IDENTITÀ DEL LUOGO COME DETERMINANTE DELLA QUALITÀ DEGLI SPAZI PUBBLICI

SINTESI

Nell'articolo vengono presentati i risultati degli studi riguardanti le relazioni tra l'identità del luogo, i valori culturali degli spazi pubblici e la qualità degli spazi aperti nei centri cittadini. Si guarda con particolare attenzione a quelle caratteristiche degli spazi pubblici che consentono di conferire loro valori culturali. Viene considerata la variabilità degli spazi pubblici nel tempo, risultante sia dalle trasformazioni della struttura urbana che dai mutamenti della realtà sociale. L'area pubblica esaminata nel dettaglio corrisponde a Piazza Grzybowski, nel centro di Varsavia. Tale luogo mostra le capacità di adattamento degli spazi pubblici caratterizzati da una forte identità.

Parole chiave: spazio pubblico, identità del luogo, centro cittadino, piazza, Varsavia

INTRODUCTION

Open urban spaces are the most significant elements of the spatial structure of cities – they include, among others, private territories, neighbouring spaces, and public areas. The latter are of special importance for cities – they are their “showpiece” and brand and create networks that allow for contact and communication. Thus, both the quality of living in the city and the aesthetics of the city depend on the quality of public spaces. Apart from urban dominants and architectural features, they are the main recognisable elements of the urban structure, and, this applies in particular to those referred to as civic spaces (Carmona, 2010). Since the dawn of history, squares and streets in almost every city create a space of interpersonal contacts that concentrates social, political and cultural life and where everyday existence plays a significant role – they are the stage and audience of urban life.

In the second half of the 20th century, we have acquired vast knowledge about relationships between the shape of the city and human behaviour. Designers pay much attention to open urban spaces, and inhabitants almost started demanding such kind of urban planning that would address the human being and his needs relating to urban space which was also noted by researchers (e.g., Carmona et al., 2006; Gehl, 1987, 2010; Sepe, 2013; Whyte, 1980; Madanipour, 2019). Due to the changing possibilities and interests of city inhabitants, urban public spaces also change. Relationships between these changes in the context of latest civilizational transformations have been analysed and published for over 30 years (e.g., Bell, 1973; Hillier & Hanson, 1984; Capanema-Alvares & Barbosa, 2018; Solarek, 2019). Some researchers notice tendencies to transfer interpersonal relations with diverse characteristics directly into cyberspace. The concentration of young people’s life around the virtual world leads to the redefinition of fundamental relations and changes the form and quality of interpersonal contacts. Others, like Lewicka, present research results substantiating Heidegger’s idea that relations between the human being and the place are unconditional and that the relation between the human being and the place is not only a response to its physical characteristics – the place is a social product created as a result of neighbourly bonds. Physical features of the place act as an inhibitor or facilitator of these bonds. Lewicka argues that it is a sufficiently strong founda-

tion for the justification of these architectural and urban projects that take the social character of the space into consideration, such as projects and theories of Jan Gehl. She also quotes numerous examples that testify to the increasingly huge and almost obsessive interest in the subject area of the place and, consequently, urban public spaces (Lewicka, 2012).

Alexander Wallis, a sociologist, proposed the adoption of an evaluative concept for public spaces; the spaces that focus the course of cultural processes of the municipal society – i.e., those that play a cultural role – are called ‘cultural areas’¹ in his work (Wallis, 1979). Public spaces of cultural value allow people to satisfy various social needs and create a sense of social integration and opportunities to develop thanks to the concentration of a group of material, aesthetic and symbolic values and integration existing between them and the specific community staying in them. According to Wallis, public spaces can belong to open spaces of cultural value, provided that we can recognise and name them and if a specific social group can satisfy spontaneously its various needs within such an area and, consequently, achieve a sense of social integration and opportunities to develop.

In such areas, which can be treated as a cultural environment, we can observe a feedback of crucial importance in culture. On the one hand, these areas – products of certain groups and communities – are an expression of taste, preferences, needs, lifestyle and abilities of users; on the other hand, they shape them continuously and reinforce a certain set of values within them. In addition, these areas are subject to changes related to political and economic factors, which are also indirectly a result of cultural changes of societies. Thus, the shape and function of public spaces are the determinants of time in which the given group lives. No social space becomes a cultural area automatically – they can lose some functions and are able to assume new functions that emerge during social development. They are not museum exhibits or synonyms of areas of highest artistic value – they are spaces with which cultural needs of specific social groups or communities are connected.

Therefore, a cultural area fulfils the right role towards its group (community) only when the latter can use it freely, intensively, and systematically and when it responds to the cultural needs of specific social groups or communities. One

1 From the anthropological point of view, each area shaped by a man is an expression of his culture. In the narrower, formal classification sense, different parts of the city can be given different cultural value, depending on the presence of cultural institutions and their significance. Here it is proposed to adopt a value concept above formal classification.

of the most important aspects of this issue is to develop and shape public spaces adequately to social needs.

According to Wallis, the most important conditions for public spaces in the city centre to belong to open spaces with cultural values are as follows:

1. the occurrence of material, aesthetic, and symbolic values
2. recognition and naming capability
3. the ability to satisfy certain social groups.

Alexander Wallis's conditions for the existence of public spaces with cultural values are also those that affect the creation of places with a distinct identity, which can be deduced from the extensive literature on this issue. Identity is an important feature of a place, distinguished in phenomenological analysis and readily described in the literature related to architecture and urban planning (Sepe, 2013; Lewicka, 2012; Beatley, 2004; Rossi, 1984; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Tuan, 1977). It is sometimes identified with 'separateness', 'genius loci' or 'sense of place'. The objective, and not just subjective, reality of 'genius loci' is an important theoretical concept in the works of place phenomenologists who enquire about the features of places that favour its unique character (Alexander, 2002; Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Wallis's approach helps in this assessment, providing a basis for the concretisation of research into specific urban spaces.

Finally, the research question may be posed: to what extent is the place identity the criterion of the public space quality, i.e. is the occurrence of features characteristic for cultural areas an important criterion for assessing public spaces? For many decades factors affecting the quality of public space have been discussed in a professional environments (Lynch, 1981; Carmona & Sieh, 2004), there are also publications presenting various methodologies for assessing this quality, but the above question has not been answered in them.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The research consists of two parts: 1. A comparison of the criteria for cultural public spaces and the criteria for assessing the quality of public spaces. 2. An assessment of the selected area in terms of the criteria for cultural public spaces.

The first part of the research

In the first part of the research, an attempt was made to answer the question – what are the relations

between the criteria for belonging to cultural areas and the criteria for assessing the quality of public spaces? The relationships between the notion of cultural area and the notion of place identity were also analysed. This was carried out by means of literature studies and compilations of the approaches to: 1. features of public spaces with cultural values, 2. factors, which shape the identity of the place, and 3. criteria for assessing the quality of public spaces.

The output for the research was the theory of the Polish sociologist Alexander Wallis, who formulated specific conditions for the existence of public spaces with cultural values in city centres. Based on the author's own implementation experience related to urban design, specific features of public spaces were selected, which could be objectively assessed as a result of studies of functional, spatial and social changes taking place in a given period in a given area. These features reflect in detail three conditions for the existence of public spaces with cultural values, identified by Wallis (1-3) as:

1. material, aesthetic and symbolic values
 - the occurrence of specific forms of development
 - the presence of significant visual landmarks
 - occurrence of special features of the urban layout and composition
 - specificity of the location in the city structure and connections with the environment
2. recognition and naming capability
 - fixed name
 - historical connotations
3. the ability to satisfy certain social groups
 - buildings' functions
 - open spaces' function

Then, based on the results of the analysis carried out by Marichela Sepe (Sepe, 2013), the features most often attributed to the identity of the place were selected² and compared with the Wallis criteria.

In the next step, public space quality evaluation criteria were taken from the researches of Anna Wojnarowska (2016). In this method criteria were formed in the checklist, grouped into six areas:

- C: composition/legibility/image/character/continuity and enclosure;
- V: vitality/flexibility/adaptability/use and activities/diversity;
- N: comfort/fulfillment of needs/convenience;
- A: accessibility/permeability/linkages/ease of movement;

² Marichela Sepe discusses various approaches to understanding the concept of place identity, as well as the most important features that distinguish it (Sepe, 2013).

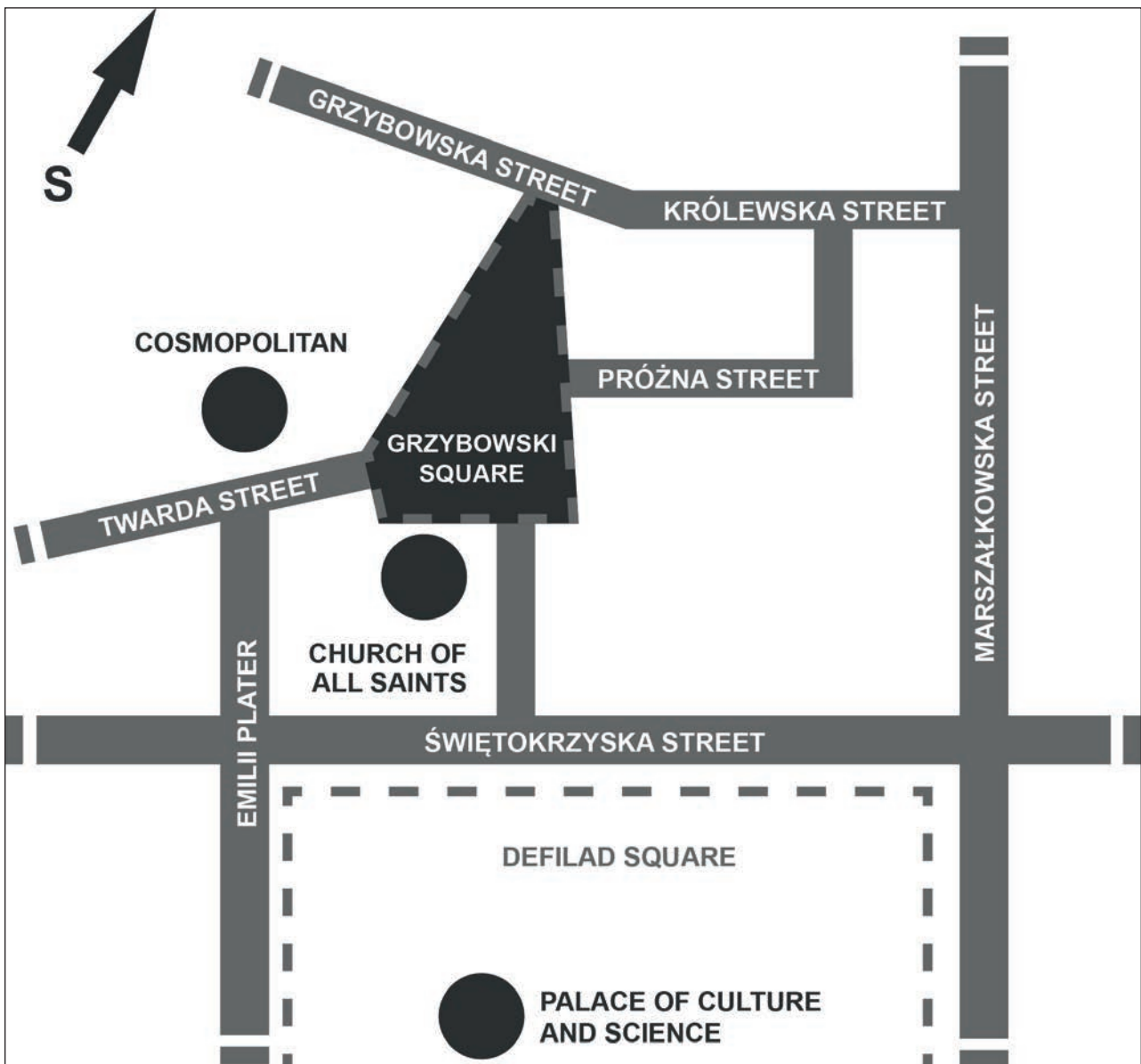


Figure 1: The most important buildings and streets in the surroundings of Grzybowski Square (Source: K. Solarek).

- S: safety/control;
- SD: consistency with the idea of sustainable development.

The relationships between individual concepts and assessment principles have been summarised, which allowed for the transition to the second phase of the study.

The second part of the research

The scope of occurrence of the above-mentioned features was examined in the selected area, using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The research covered the square named Grzybowski Square (Plac Grzybowski), situated in the very centre of Warsaw (Fig. 1). Even though it is not one of the most important public spaces of the city today, it used to be an important part of the group of seven interrelated squares focused around the 17th-century Baroque layout of the Saxon Axis in the pre-war period. These squares formed a constellation that marked the centre of pre-war Warsaw. Squares fulfilled trade and administrative functions and were centres of cultural life. The post-war housing development destroyed this system, but Grzybowski Square is still easily accessible from the side of main arterial roads in the city centre – Świętokrzyska and Marszałkowska Streets.

The scope of the detailed research included analyses of historical materials – published maps and photographs, as well as studies of the literature of the subject and detailed on-site observation. All the spatial and social transformations (forms and functions of the buildings surrounding the studied square and the square itself, as well as the ways of their usage) were analysed and juxtaposed with regard to four periods characterised by clear differences in the social, political and economic situation: (1) in the 18th–19th century, (2) in the interwar period (1918–1939), (3) in the second half of the 20th century and (4) the present state – in 2019. Changes of the spatial structure in the area of the square were also shown on simplified drawings for the same time intervals and on the illustrations.

In the qualitative part of the research the authors discuss the reasons for the functional and spatial transformation of the square and adopts a critical attitude to these changes. In the part of the quantitative research, the features of the square are listed. Specific features of public spaces were selected, which could be objectively assessed as a result of studies of functional, spatial and social changes taking place in a given period in a given area. These features reflect in detail three conditions for the existence of public spaces with cultural values that were identified by Wallis.

The results of the research are referred to the analysis of features of culturally valuable public spaces i.e. places with a distinct identity.

A comparison of the criteria for cultural public spaces and the criteria for assessing the quality of public spaces

Three main conditions for the existence of public spaces with cultural values, identified by Wallis (1. material, aesthetic and symbolic values, 2. recognition and naming capability, 3. the ability to satisfy certain social groups), translated into specific features of public spaces, are close in meaning to those characterising the concept of place identity. Among the elements of the concept of place identity extracted by the researchers, there are, for example: *“physical features or appearance, observable activities and functions, and meanings or symbols”* (Relph, 1976, in: Sepe, 2013, 18), *“territorial and landscape typology and the existence of a milieu, as the result of a long process of co-evolution between settlement and environment”* (Magnaghi, 2005, in: Sepe, 2013, 21), *“specificity and intrinsic values (history, culture, nature) as a basis form effective, sustainable local innovation process”* (Carta, 1999, in: Sepe, 2013, 21), *“[...] It must include considerations of the social, economic and cultural processes*

needed to successfully manage the evolution of the cities and neighbourhoods we design, allowing them to change and adapt to future condition, while maintaining their essence” (Southworth & Ruggeri, in: Sepe, 2013, 22).

From the review it can be concluded that, the concept of place identity includes several dimensions; however, in the case of public spaces in city centres, they are best characterised by factors diagnosed by Wallis. It can therefore be concluded that in such a situation public spaces with cultural values are places with a distinct identity. Wallis's conditions for the existence of public spaces with cultural values are the same as the elements which affect the creation of places with a distinct identity. This can help in locating and assessing public space in city centres.

The problem of assessing public spaces is complex, but for the purposes of this study, the checklist developed by the aforementioned Wojnarowska (2016) was adopted. The features of public spaces contained in areas C, V, N almost completely coincide with the previously mentioned features of public spaces with cultural values, i.e. those with a distinct identity. Observational experience and logical analysis shows that the occurrence of features from the groups C, V, N is a necessary condition for the functioning of public spaces of cultural values, and features from groups A, S, SD have an additional impact on the assessment of their quality. It should also be noted that the occurrence of only features from the groups A, S, SD can characterize public spaces of a technical nature which – in the proposed valuing approach – classifies them into public spaces of lower quality. To sum up, without S, V and N features, there can be no spaces with cultural values – those with a strong identity, although A, S and SD features affect their quality and are very desirable. In city centres this type of space is most needed, therefore the identity of the place is crucial for their quality. The range of occurrence of these individual features was examined in the selected area in the second part of the research.

The relations between the criteria for belonging to cultural areas and the criteria for assessing the quality of public spaces, as well as the relationships between the notion of cultural area and the notion of place identity, are therefore close and direct. High-quality public spaces in city centres must not only be safe, accessible and aesthetic, but also have a distinctive identity i.e. be “cultural areas”. While public spaces of cultural values that are located in city centres are sometimes neglected or poorly developed, they have the potential to obtain a high quality. Whereas, when the only qualities of public spaces are their technical features, when they do not have cultural characteristics, it is difficult to talk about their high quality (Tab. 1).

Table 1: A comparison of the criteria for identifying cultural areas and assessing public spaces.

key features of public spaces of cultural value ³		main features to be investigated	quality of public spaces evaluation criteria ⁴		
place identity	material, aesthetic and symbolic values	the occurrence of specific forms of development	C: composition/legibility/ image ⁵ /character/ continuity and enclosure;	criteria for eligibility of public spaces as those of cultural value	main requirements for high-quality public spaces
		the presence of significant visual landmarks			
		the occurrence of special features of the urban layout and composition			
		the specificity of location in the city structure and connections with the environment			
recognition and naming capability	fixed name				
	historical connotations and continuity				

RESULTS

Description of the functional, spatial, and social transformations of Grzybowski Square

The history of Grzybowski Square dates back to the beginnings of the 17th century, when the irregular space formed spontaneously at the crossroads assumed the role of the market square of the newly formed Grzybów settlement (*jurydyka*).⁶ Planned to be developed around the square and alongside streets adjacent to it, the building arrangement on designated normalised plots with dimensions of 23.6 x 41.3 never materialised due to the outbreak of the war with Sweden and the destruction of the suburbs of Warsaw. The plan of unified wooden row houses designed by Battista Gisleni was abandoned and the town was rebuilt quite quickly on largely diversified (particularly in terms of width) plots, which determined the character of the subsequent building arrangement (Sosnowski, 1930).

18th/19th century

In the middle of the 18th century, buildings of a small palace were erected at the area of Grzybowski Square. The outbuildings of the palace, situated parallel to the square frontage were one of the more important structures of that area for a long time. The

other frontages of the square were built up with poor wooden houses and small manor houses. In 1786, a small town hall designed by Karol Bogumił Szütz was erected in the middle of the the square, facing Twarda Street, with a well in front of the main entrance. In the course of time, Grzybów became an important centre of the brewing and distillery industry. In the first half of the 19th century, that place was incorporated into the municipal area of Warsaw, which prolonged the dynamic development of that district. Initially rented for the needs of a municipal prison, the town hall was dismantled in 1830. The square was laid with cobblestone for the purpose of obtaining space for the location of the marketplace. At that time, the square was named Rynek Grzybowski [*Grzybów Marketplace*] (Stępiński, 1988).

The Grzybów Marketplace, supported by local markets served as a food trade centre and survived till the end of the 19th century, when it was moved to another location. A building arrangement developed around the square and the trade function clearly dominated here. Former ground-floor wooden houses were replaced with brick tenement houses often designed by recognised architects, such as Corazzi or Lessel. In the second half of the 19th century, the entire surroundings of the square became occupied by small-scale trade located in ground floors of tenement houses and often in back-premises of backyards. In 1855, close to the

³ Author's interpretation of Wallis's theory.

⁴ After Cegłowska & Matykowski (2010).

⁵ "Whilst 'identity' is an objective thing (what a place is actually like), image is a combination of this identity with how a place is perceived. To individuals, the image of a place is therefore their set of feelings and impressions about that place (Spencer and Dixon, 1983). These feelings come from a filtering of information received and collected about the place. This filtering is partly based on individuals' values, beliefs and ideas" (Montgomery, 1998, 100). The aspect of the place image has not been studied as part of the research.

⁶ Jurydyka – privately owned tract of land within city area, surrounding the royal city, found from the 15th to the 17th century. There were 20 of them in Warsaw – with own legislation and management.

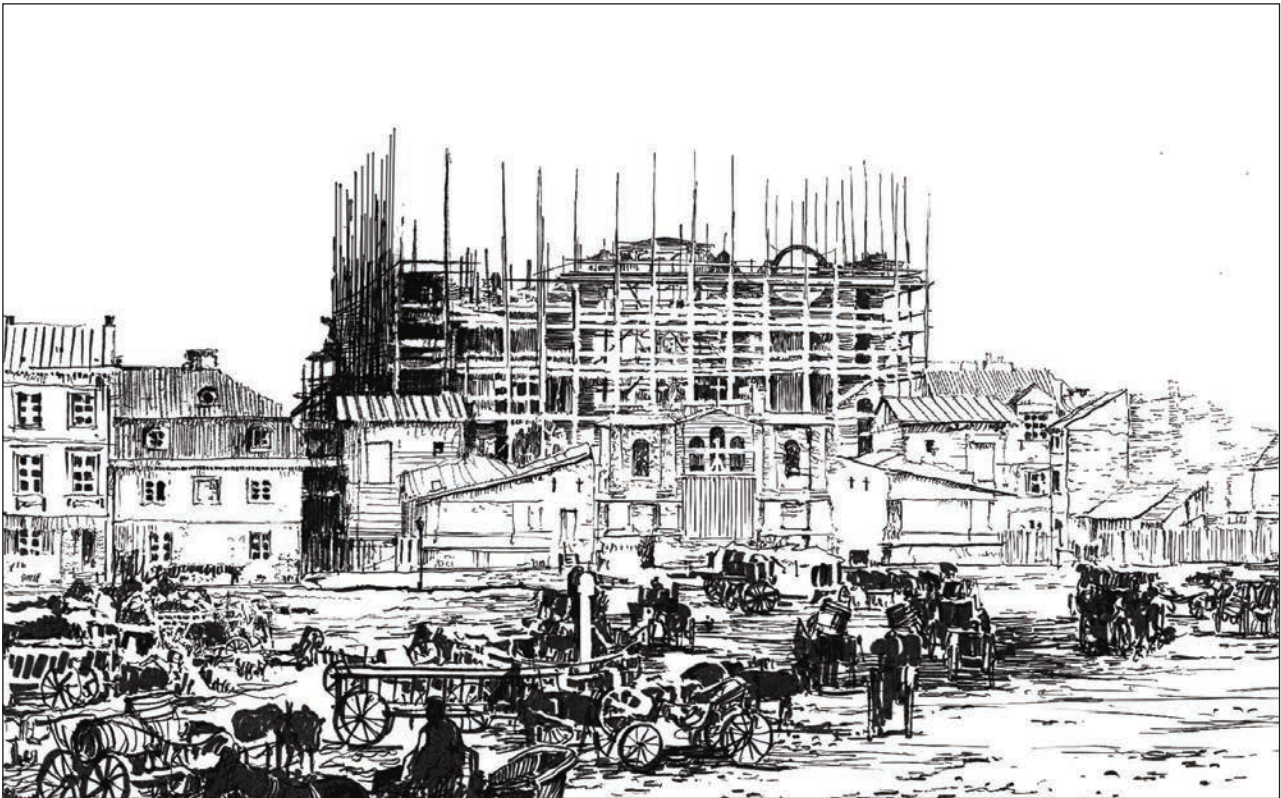


Figure 2: Grzybowski Square in 1867. Construction of the Church of All Saints. A square serving as marketplace (Author: Konrad Szumiński, based on: Jackiewicz, 2015, 55).

south-eastern corner of the square, a well was built, from which the first line of the Warsaw water supply system developed. In 1866, the Grzybów market square was the terminus of the horse tram line, which was replaced with an electric tram line in 1908 (Dziewulski & Radziszewski, 1915).

The spatial shape of the square was determined to the biggest extent by the construction of the Church of All Saints carried out on the initiative of Gabriela Zabiełło's foundation, according to Enrico Marconi's design, in the years 1861-1883 (Fig. 2). The imposing building of the church, with two towers, elevated with monumental stairs and flanked with symmetrically located gates in the form of three-bay porticoes, became a dominant object on the square due to its outline. This was particularly noticeable because other buildings on the square were relatively low, with the prevalence of two- or three-storey houses. The only exception was one four-storey house on the eastern side of the square. The second significant element having an impact on the shape of the square was the construction of a new street named Próżna in 1879, which connected the square with Zielna Street and further with Zielony Square. This made it possible to build new plots up with tenement houses with trade ground-floors (Kasprzycki, 1997).

Interwar period (1918–1945)

After the liquidation of the marketplace, a green area with gas lighting on decorative chandeliers was arranged in the middle of the square, which made the square a more attractive part of the city, used not only for trade, but also for walks and religious ceremonies. Trade still flourished in numerous little shops located in ground-floors of tenement houses. Land and premises were owned almost exclusively by the Jewish population. The parish priest of the Catholic Church of All Saints remarked that a large part of money needed to build the temple was obtained from Jewish shopkeepers and traders (Stępiński, 1988). The square was a public space vibrant with multicultural life (Fig. 3).

The first contemporary development plan of Warsaw, which was prepared in 1916 under the direction of Tadeusz Tołwiński – the so-called *Draft Sketch of the Regulation Plan of the Capital City of Warsaw* – assumed that a new street would be led out of the market square in order to open up the exit in the western direction with a route parallel to the narrow Grzybowska Street. This proposal was not repeated in the general plan for the capital city of Warsaw adopted subsequently in 1938. This plan, however, proposed



Figure 3: Grzybowski Square in 1936. Public space full of movement and well-managed (Author: Konrad Szumiński, based on: <https://warszawapozydowsku.wordpress.com/tag/warszawa/>).

the extension of Bagno Street towards Marszałkowska Street. There was also a proposal to create a small new square at the junction of Twarda, Graniczna, Królewska and Grzybowska streets.

At that time, Grzybowski Square played an important role in the course of Twarda and Graniczna streets, on which the tram line connecting the city centre with the Ochota district ran. Shortly before World War II, extension of the Marszałkowska Street to one of the *seven squares* mentioned above – released Grzybowski Square from a part of pass-through traffic, but it became entirely excluded from these passages only as a result of the reconstruction of the city centre transport system during the reconstruction of Warsaw after World War II. Part of the houses near the square was destroyed already at the beginning of the war. In 1940, its area was incorporated into the Warsaw ghetto. The ghetto uprising and the end of the war brought further devastation in the building arrangement surrounding the square.

The second half 20th century

In the early postwar period, Grzybowski Square was an oasis of private trade, mainly in iron products. Numerous small shops nested in the remains

of the building arrangement that survived the war or in ground-floors of ruined houses. Building works were carried out in the area of the square only at the beginning of the 1960s. The housing needs of Warsaw required the construction of new flats on a large scale. Due to the lack of developed areas on the outskirts of the city, fragments of the city-centre area devastated by the war were built up with new housing estates. These were complexes of buildings with a modern standard architecture and functional urban solutions, which did not respect the traditional scale of the place or urban composition (Fig. 4).

In the times of the new political and social system, numerous plans created after the regaining of independence did not induce decision-makers and designers to sanction the surviving remains of the previous epoch. Some buildings that had luckily avoided total destruction were qualified for demolition in order to make room for a new building arrangement. During works concerning the extension of Świętokrzyska Street and the construction of the Palace of Culture and Science in the years 1952–1955, part of the buildings was removed from the area of Grzybowski Square in order to open the view of the axis of



Figure 4: Grzybowski Square in 1961 (Author: Konrad Szumiński, based on: <https://warszawa.naszemiasto.pl/nieistniejace-ulice-warszawy-co-stalo-sie-z-ulica-gnojna/ar/c4-4737551>).

the new building and to make room for the building arrangement along Świętokrzyska Street. The next extension of Marszałkowska Street and its execution as the main broad arterial road at the turn of the 1960s caused the liquidation of the connection of Grzybowski Square with Próżna Street, which ultimately cut off the space of the square from the very centre of Warsaw and shifted it to the sidelines of pass-through routes (Stępiński, 1988).

The Six-Year Reconstruction Plan for Warsaw announced by Bolesław Bierut in 1949 envisaged a large expansion of Grzybowski Square towards ul. Marszałkowska. This conception entailed also the idea of diminishing the dominant role of the Church of All Saints in the square in favour of exposing the body of the first Warsaw high-rise building – the former seat of the Polish Joint-Stock Telephone Company (*PASTA*), erected in the years 1906–1908. For the same reasons, the second tower of the

church was not rebuilt for a long time, and there was no consent from the authorities to rebuild the dome. Built at the turn of the 1960s, the Grzybów housing estate assumed the ultimate demolition of tenement houses beside the square and their replacement with free-standing houses. Bagno Street disappeared from the plan of the housing estate, and historical lines of the building development near the square were disturbed.

In the late 1960s, the building of the “Jewish Theatre” was designed near the square according to the plan by Bohdan Pniewski and Władysław Jotkiewicz. The theatre was put to use in 1970 and accidentally – ill-considered, formed the eastern frontage of the square. It was detached from the neighbouring building development and withdrawn from the historical frontage line, which disturbed the harmony of this row of buildings. The theatre referred to neighbouring houses only in respect of its height. With the main entrance situated aside, the building appeared to be incorrectly located.

Thus, the shape of the square was influenced both by the previous driving-through of Marszałkowska Street towards the north and the driving-through and enlargement of Świętokrzyska Street. As a consequence of these two projects, the square has lost its transport functions, a large part of building development and many functional features. Traders removed from buildings to be demolished were transferred to trade pavilions at Marszałkowska Street. In this way, the square became the centre of the Grzybów housing estate. This housing estate was formed of 16-storey and 11-storey residential high-rise buildings. Four buildings were erected from the side of Królewska and Zielna streets, and three were built in place of Bagno Street. From the eastern side, two houses with the trade function of ground floors were situated (one is 18 storeys high, and another is 5 storeys high), and from the south along the church façade, a building of similar height closing the corner of Twarda Street came into being. In spite of the planned demolition, a few tenement houses at Próżna Street survived, and two most valuable houses in the north-western frontage were rebuilt in their former shape. However, the frontage was not put in order. In the western part, another facility was located to supplement the random building development of the square – the ground-floor barrack of offices and a bookstore.

The functions of the square remained relatively unchanged during that last one period, although the standard and importance of the square have decreased. Commercial facilities continued to prevail, being connected mainly with trade specialising in hydraulic products and sanitary devices.

Old tenement houses still contained small shops whose owners kept a part of their goods outside on pavements due to the lack of space inside buildings. A huge problem was posed by direct trade from buses converted into mobile sales points, which occupied a fragment along the green area in the area of the outlet of Próżna Street. Bathroom furnishings, parking buses and trailers did not form a convenient neighbourhood for local inhabitants, also having a negative impact on the spatial aesthetics of the place. Because of such abundance of trade services and busy traffic, a part of the road along the green area facing the church was occupied by a car park for baggage taxis.

With so many spatial shortcomings of the square, opening a view of the axis of the Palace of Culture along the church fence was perhaps the least striking step, even though it had been controversial in the past. In spite of being located in the centre of Warsaw, the square contained no elements that could testify to its urban character, although specialised trade sporadically attracted customers from around the city. The square resembled a place situated among housing-estate buildings, being a backyard for local inhabitants rather than an urban public square. It was a bad time in the history of the square, however, it was still a place recognizable by the inhabitants of Warsaw.

Present state

Although Grzybowski Square is currently located in the “background” of busy streets running nearby – Marszałkowska and Świętokrzyska, it functions relatively well and has its own specific features. The first serious change for the better concerned a grassroots initiative aimed at improving the quality and attractiveness of the central part of the square. In 2007, an artistic project *Dotleniacz [The Oxygenator]* by the artist, Joanna Rajkowska was presented. In the middle of the green area, a 1 m deep pond with an area of around 140 sq.m. was arranged. It was laid with greenery, decorative shrubs and water lilies and equipped with special air ozonisation and fog production devices. The pond was surrounded with seats, and the site attracted many Warsaw inhabitants, not only those living in the neighbourhood. In 2010, the site was developed according to one unified plan, with a green area with a reservoir designed in place of the pond. Both installations largely improved the attractiveness of this place, especially because it is a relatively peaceful and pleasant area (Fig. 5).

The new investments that had a large impact on the new image of Grzybowski Square at the beginning of the 21st century included the resto-

ration of Próźna Street, the construction of the *Cosmopolitan*, high-rise apartment building (42 storeys) and the ongoing construction of a 26-storey office building in the area of the demolished “Jewish Theater”. The new facilities have attracted customers for nearby shops and restaurants, and the place has quickly become popular. The open branch of the Charlotte-Menora restaurant is filled with guests all day long. Not less popular are the others club cafés, where concerts are held, and also the bookshop or the record shop. Grzybowski Square has become a place of everyday and ceremonial meetings. For years, the Izaak Singer’s Warsaw Jewish Culture Festival has been held at Grzybowski Square and Próźna Street in summer to recall the old climates of Warsaw. The task of the festival is to promote Jewish culture on a high artistic level, both in its traditional and modern version. A new site of the “Jewish Theater” is to be located in one of the preserved tenement houses at Próźna Street. The other important elements of the square are: water, greenery and places to rest, as well as new floors, making it easier to reach services in surrounding houses.

Characteristics of the examined features of Grzybowski Square

The buildings surrounding Grzybowski Square have changed their form and location over the years. Although the frontage line of the square was interrupted and disturbed, it is still possible to read in the space the unchanging triangular form of the square and the bent line of the longest square frontage (Fig. 6). The buildings have been getting taller and higher quality but there are still several former tenement houses. The Church of All Saints has been the strongest landmark here for many years, although in short periods it disappeared from the landscape of the place or was mutilated.

The most unfavourable elements that affected the image of Grzybowski Square included the location of the Grzybów housing estate with 16-storey buildings that destroyed the old route of Bagno Street. The eastern side, although supplemented with buildings erected in the 1960s, basically maintains the line of development and its height. The construction of the *Za Żelazną Bramą* housing estate caused the liquidation of Graniczna Street,

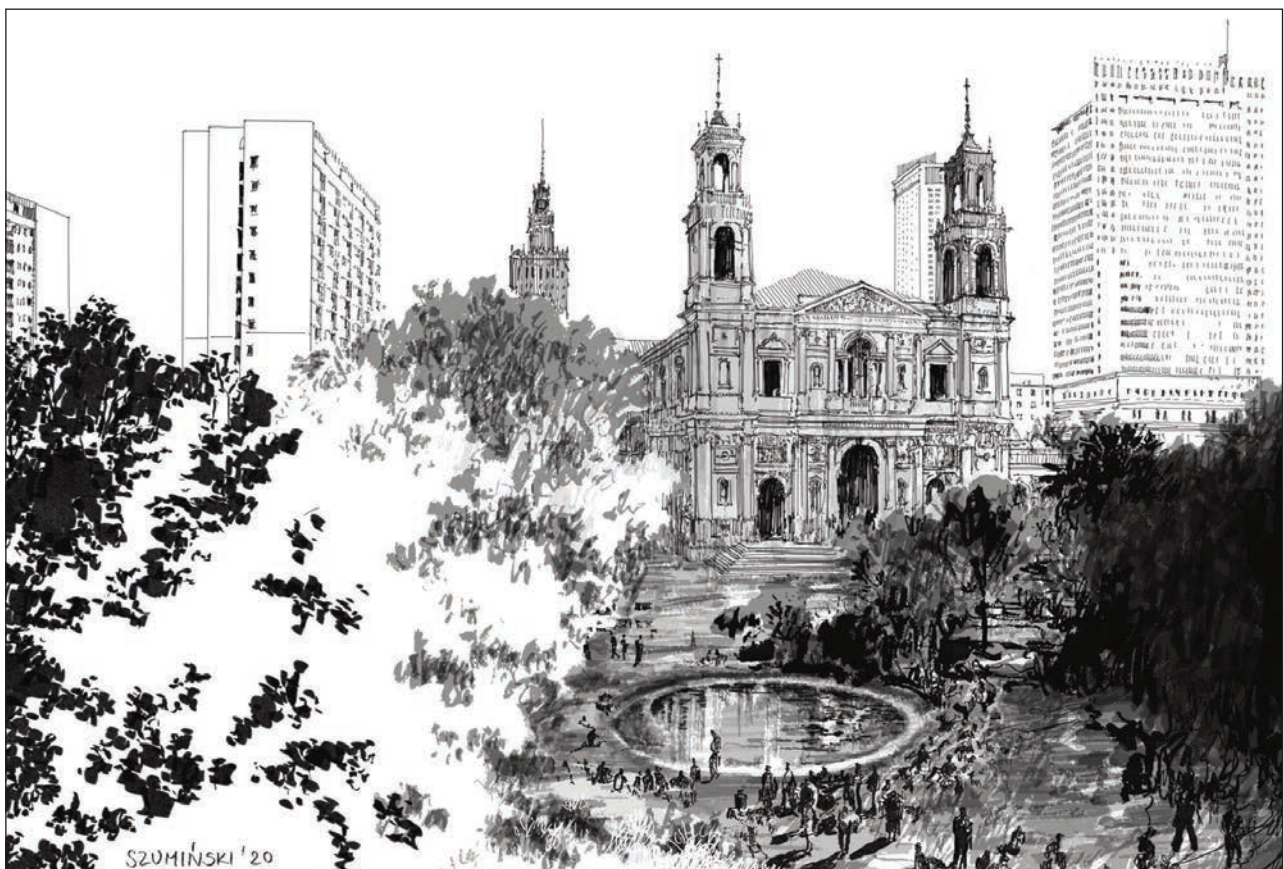


Figure 5: Temporary development of Plac Grzybowski as a result of grassroots social and artistic activities (Author: Konrad Szumiński).

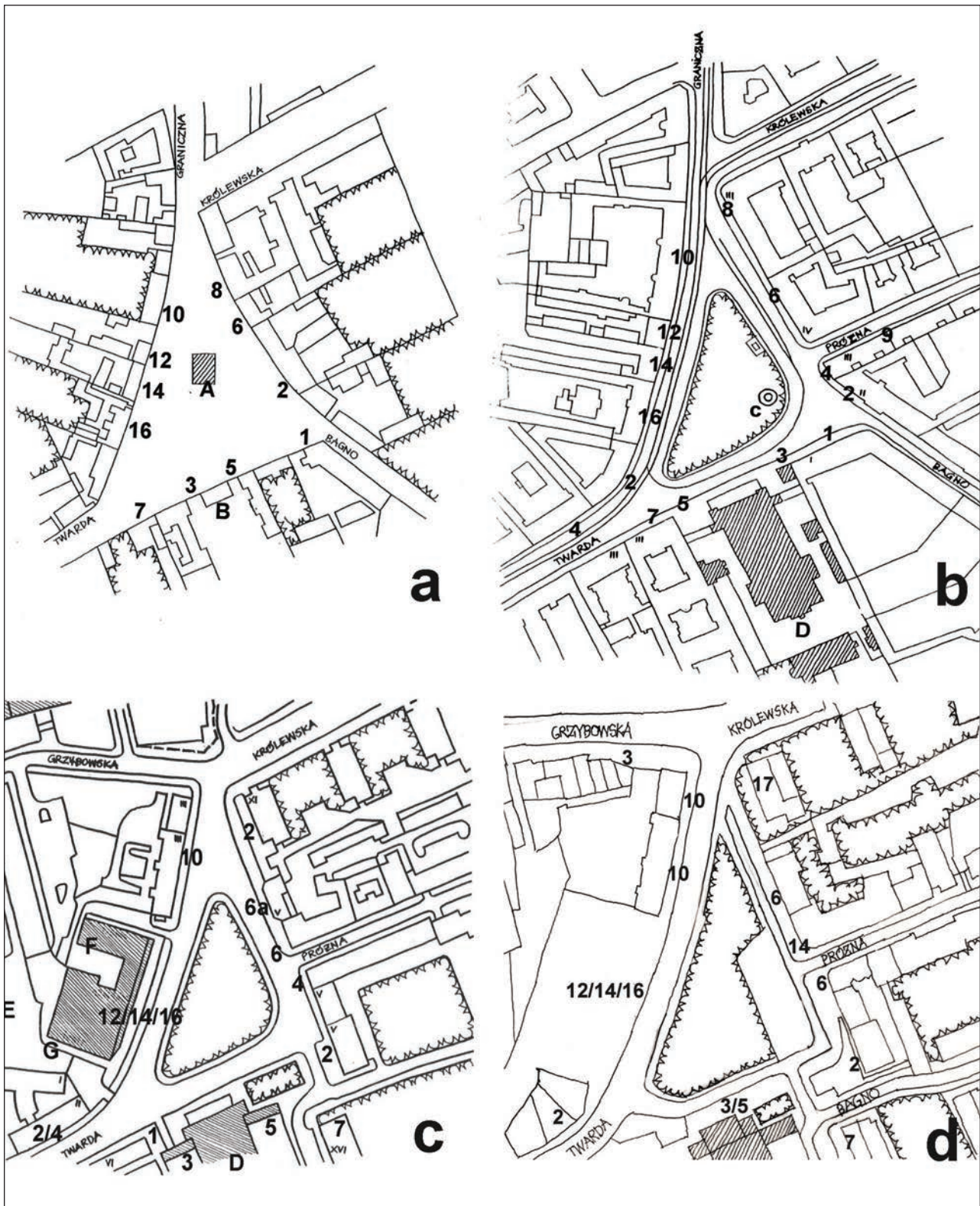


Figure 6: Changes in the layout of the Grzybowski Square and its functions: (a) 18th/19th century, (b) the interwar period, (c) the second half of the 20th century, (d) present state. A – town hall, B – palace, C – well, D – Church of All Saints, E – synagogue, F – bank, G – “Jewish Theatre”; the digital designations are described in the Table 1.

Table 2: List of the functions of buildings (or ground floor buildings) around the square at the studied time intervals.

No	18 th /19 th century (il. 2a)	The interwar period (il. 2b)	The econd half of the 20 th century (il. 2c)	Present state (il. 2d)
1	road hotel, small shop with metal products	furniture store	small shop, hairdresser, health clinic	housing, small services
2	furniture store	furniture store	laundry, restaurant	restaurant bakery
3/5	palace	catholic church	catholic church, library	catholic church
4		Nożyk house	empty building	„Cosmopolitan” housing tower, restaurant
2/4	-		medical center, small services	
6	small shops	small shops with plumbing and metal products, watchmaker	small shops with plumbing and metal products	bakery restaurant
14a	-	-	-	empty house – to adapt for new “Jewish Theater”
6a	-	-	small shops with chemical articles and paints	hairdresser
7	stores, services, shops with metal products	stores, services, crate factory, money exchange, laundry	housing	housing
8	paper warehouse	small shops with metal products, furniture store, pawnshop	bar	bar
10	shops with metal products, paper warehouse, small industry, commercial and forwarding offices	public limited company offices	small shops and services (electric tools, plumbing and metal products)	small shops and services
12	dormitory, baths, porcelain warehouse	small shops with metal products	“Jewish Theater”, Deutsche Bank	office building construction site
14	hotel, paper warehouse	small shops with metal products, hotel		
16	small shops	small shops with metal products		
17	-	-	housing	housing

the route of which was marked by the western frontage of the square. The erection of a new service & residential building at Graniczna Street, on the other side of Królewska Street, with a height of 11 storeys, closed the space of the square from the north, forming a competition for the currently dominant body of the Church of All Saints.

The function and manner of using the square coincided with the functions of the surrounding buildings (Tab. 2). Initial use for industry and trade has evolved towards services better adapted to the needs of the centres’ residents – small shops, religious facilities and financial institutions. After the destruction of the war period, the continuity of development was disturbed because although the function of small

trade returned here, the rank of these services was degraded, and the square assumed rather the role of open space on the scale of the estate. This situation changed significantly after the political transformation of the 1990s, and the turning point was the implementation of a grassroots initiative improving the image of the square – “Oxygenator”. Later, the square was redeveloped, giving it more greenery and recreation, which was the result of a good assessment of the temporarily operating installation and an expression of the need for greenery in the city. Currently, it is a rather quiet place for meetings and recreation, which turns into a bustling city theatre on the days when major cultural events are being organised.

Table 3: Key features of the Grzybowski Square – a final checklist with comments.

EXAMINED FEATURES	YES (+) NO (-)	COMMENTS
1) material, aesthetic, and symbolic values		
the occurrence of specific forms of buildings	+	Around the square there are several buildings, preserved since the nineteenth century. It is both a series of characteristic tenement houses and a characteristic church building. Also, new buildings become icons related to this place.
the presence of significant visual landmarks	+	The most important visual landmark is the Church of All Saints; there are also other semantic and architectural dominants.
the occurrence of special features of the urban layout and composition	+	The triangular form of the square and the bent line of the longest square frontage is well-established. The compactness of the square with the character of an urban interior is a fixed feature of the place.
the specificity of location in the city structure and connections with the environment	+	Direct connection to the most important public spaces in the centre of Warsaw – streets: Marszałkowska, Świętokrzyska, Królewska.
2) recognition and naming capability		
fixed name		Permanent name, unchanging, associated with the tradition, history and cultural heritage of the area – Grzybowski Square (Grzybów Marketplace for a short time). It has symbolic significance, further emphasising the character of the place.
historical connotations		Relatively continuous historical development since the beginning of the 17th century. The most important historical buildings and symbols are reconstructed or cultivated through art.
3) the ability to satisfy certain social groups		
buildings' functions	+	Most of the buildings were characterised by variability of functions, according to the needs of users in various historical periods. The newly constructed buildings also met the current needs.
open spaces' function	+	The way the square has been used has evolved: initially a marketplace, towards a lively square between different services, through the square in the housing estate and shopping facilities of the shops with a car park, up to the green square for recreation and a space for occasional large public events.

DISCUSSION

The presence of all the features of public spaces with cultural values at Grzybowski Square confirms that it can be considered as such. In further in-depth studies, an attempt can be made to assess the degree of completion of the criteria and the extent to which they are met. Which features have the greatest weight? How important is referring to the historical context? Preliminary research shows that the square has easily adapted to current, current social needs, changing its functions and equipment due to the fulfillment of the first two conditions specified by Wallis: material, aesthetic and symbolic values as well as recognition and naming capability.

However, a significant feature of the square is clearly visible – namely its susceptibility to adapt to certain needs and social expectations. It was, in turn, a large market, a place of small trade and services, a

place of worship of various religions, a place of war dramas, a residential square with several shops with a general city function, a place of memory, rest, artistic creation, and a place for festive and everyday meetings. The issue of its aesthetic values had the least impact on the importance of this place, and more important was a fixed, recognisable name, location and connections with the neighbourhood, the occurrence of semantic dominants, a wide spectrum of impact – from local to national – and finally the ability to change. It all adds up to the identity of the place, which is the main determinant of the quality of public spaces.

The analysed case of Grzybowski Square in Warsaw shows that public spaces with strong identity located in city centres are able to assume new functions that emerge in the course of social and technical development (Fig. 7). The steadiness of the area occupied by them, network connections with other public spaces and their characteristic history support the processes



Figure 7: Present state of the Grzybowski Square – greenery and water, which is currently one of the most desirable elements of the city (Author: Konrad Szumiński).

of adaptation to new needs and the current situation. The example of this square is also a good reflection of changes occurring in modern cities that are subject to strong political and economic fluctuations and, consequently, social changes.

The relationships between the identity of the place and the quality of public spaces are also interesting. Research shows that Grzybowski Square has remained an important public space with cultural values, despite the fact that for a long time in its history the square's equipment and infrastructure were of a low standard, security requirements were not met, buildings were demolished and replaced, and some services were at a low level. Today it is also not a particularly beautiful space. And yet the square is present in the minds of Warsaw residents and many people visiting the city; it is also willingly used. The social activity and creativity of the artists led to the renovation of the square and its development to the highest standards. Therefore, it is now also an accessible, safe place that meets the requirements of sustainable development. It can be assumed that this was possible due to the identity of

the place, although its aesthetic value left much to be desired. The cultural value of the square decided that it is still an important public space in Warsaw. Therefore, it can be considered that this is a key factor in shaping high-quality public spaces. This knowledge can help city authorities in conducting spatial policy. Identification of public spaces with cultural values, regardless of whether they are historic sites protected by law or not, can be the first step to shape continuous systems of public spaces in city centres and to stage activities to improve their standard – and a proposed checklist based on Wallis criteria can assist with this. It is important to analyse all aspects from a historical perspective because it is the continuity in time that is important for the assessment of individual factors.

CONCLUSIONS

Grzybowski Square is a place where relics of former epochs meet signs of modernity and where buildings with various architectural styles exist alongside traces of various urban planning visions. It

is a public place marked by contrasts in many ways – it is both close to and outside the main stage of the city centre. History blends with modernity here – one can see a fragment of the old western frontage and the high-altitude centre of Warsaw rising in the background. The square looks like a place with local features, at the same time being a popular urban public space. It is a space where various social groups meet. In the nearby area, there is a synagogue, a Catholic church, corporate offices, residential high-rise buildings and the last small shops with metal items. Around the square, thousands of people live in unified and monotonous blocks that used to be symbols of modern postwar Warsaw. Amongst them, we can see new symbolic architectural objects – office buildings and financial centres of the capitalistic capital, and luxury apartment buildings spring up in the neighbourhood. The area attracts also those who recollect the pre-war Jewish community and the tragedy of the ghetto. These layers physically overlap

with the same space, although they are not coherent. However, all of them shape the identity of this place together and make it unique and popular among inhabitants and visitors.

Despite the co-existence of so many mutually disharmonious buildings and structures and traces of contradictory urban concepts, the turbulent history and changes in internal relationships, the square retains its function as an important public space. It was possible due to the location in the public space system, durability and symbolism of the name, historical connotations, fixed spatial form, occurrence of significant visual landmark. As a result of the appearance of new social requirements as to the function and standard of development this square had to be adapted to current social needs. This shows that the adaptability of public spaces with a distinct identity is huge. In the future, the square under analysis is very likely to assume some other functions, and its surroundings will be again transformed adequately to civilization challenges.

IDENTITETA PROSTORA KOT KLJUČNA DETERMINANTA KAKOVOSTI JAVNIH PROSTOROV

Krystyna SOLAREK

Tehnološka univerza v Varšavi, Fakulteta za arhitekturo, Oddelek za urbanizem in prostorsko načrtovanje,
Koszykowa 55, 00-659 Warsaw, Poljska
e-mail: krystyna.solarek@pw.edu.pl

Ewa GROCHOWSKA

Tehnološka univerza v Varšavi, Fakulteta za arhitekturo, Oddelek za urbanizem in prostorsko načrtovanje,
Koszykowa 55, 00-659 Warsaw, Poljska
e-mail: ewa.grochowska@pw.edu.pl

POVZETEK

Bistvo javnega prostora je določeno z vlogo, ki jo ima le-ta kot kraj družbene dejavnosti in kot kraj, s katerim se prebivalci jasno istovetijo. Vredno je opozoriti na dejstvo, da tako opredeljeno bistvo javnih prostorov ostaja nespremenjeno, navkljub civilizacijskim spremembam, povezanim s funkcionalnimi in prostorskimi spremembami. Lahko celo postavimo tezo, da je za kakovost javnih prostorov ključni dejavnik identiteta kraja, razumljena v smislu mocne poistovetenosti s krajem, dejavnik identitete kraja pa se vedno pojavlja v prostorih s kulturno vrednostjo. Identiteta kraja ima svojo arhitekturno in urbano razsežnost, ki je v obstoju določenih oblik gradnje in urbane postavitve, ki so značilne za območje, ali v posebnosti njegove lokacije v strukturi mesta in povezav z okolico. Čeprav lahko takšni prepoznavni javni prostori izgubijo nekatere funkcije, lahko prevzamejo nove funkcije, kakor se pojavijo tekom družbenega in tehničnega razvoja. Stalnost območja, ki ga zasedajo javni prostori, omogoča večkratno najdenje istih mest, zgodovinske konotacije pa še dodatno okrepijo identifikacijo z njimi. Članek predstavlja rezultate raziskav, ki dokazujejo pravilnost tako postavljene teze. V prispevku so predstavljeni rezultati raziskovanja razmerij med identiteto kraja, kulturnimi vrednotami javnih prostorov in kakovostjo odprtih prostorov v mestnih središčih. Posebna pozornost je bila namenjena tistim značilnostim javnih prostorov, ki jim omogočajo, da se jih razvrsti med prostore s kulturnimi vrednotami. V prvem delu raziskav smo poskušali odgovoriti na vprašanje, kakšne so relacije med merili pripadnosti kulturnim območjem in merili za oceno javnih prostorov? Analizirane so bile tudi relacije med pojmom kulturnega območja in identitete kraja. To je bilo storjeno na podlagi študija literature in kompilacije v njej predstavljenih pristopov do: 1. značilnosti javnih prostorov s kulturnimi odlikami, 2. dejavnikov, ki oblikujejo identiteto kraja, 3. meril za oceno javnih prostorov. Obseg pojavnosti zgoraj omenjenih značilnosti je bil preučen na izbranem fragmentu območja z uporabo kvalitativnih in kvantitativnih metod. Študija je zajela delček varšavskega javnega prostora - Grzybowski trg (Plac Grzybowski). Posamezne raziskave so zajemale analizo zgodovinskega gradiva - objavljenih zemljevidov in fotografij ter literature na predmetno temo. Preanalizirane so bile funkcije stavb, obdajajočih izbrani trg, nakar so bile predstavljene glede na štiri zgodovinska obdobja, za katera so značilni različni, specifični družbeni, politični in gospodarski pogoji. Raziskave so pokazale, da se je omenjeni trg, čeprav so velike spremembe teh pogojev močno vplivale na njegov razvoj, vedno prilagajal trenutnim potrebam in možnostim. Te odvisnosti so bile dvosmerne, saj je tudi način prostorskega razvijanja trga vplival na to, kako ga je mestna skupnost uporabljala. Čeprav so bile funkcije preučevanega trga v zgodovini različne, je ves čas pomemben javni prostor mesta.

Ključne besede: javni prostor, identiteta kraja, mestni center, mestno središče, trg, Varšava

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, C. (2002):** *The Nature of Order. An Essay on the Art of Building and the Nature of the Universe. Book 1 – The Phenomenon of Life.* Berkeley, Center for Environmental Structure.
- Beatley, T. (2004):** *Native to Nowhere. Sustaining Home and Community in a Global Age.* Washington, Island Press.
- Bell, D. (1973):** *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting.* New York, Basic Books.
- Capanema-Alvares, L. & J. L. Barbosa (eds.) (2018):** *Urban Public Spaces. From Planned Policies to Everyday Politics.* Springer International Publishing, Switzerland.
- Carmona, M. L. & L. Sieh (2004):** *Measuring Quality in Planning. Managing the Performance Process.* London and New York, Spon Press.
- Carmona, M. (2010):** *Contemporary Public Space, Part Two: Classification.* *Journal of Urban Design*, 15, 2, 157–173.
- Carmona, M., Health, T., Oc, T. & S. Tiesdel (2006):** *Public Places – Urban Spaces. The Dimensions of Urban Design.* Oxford, Architectural Press.
- Carta, M. (1998):** *L'armatura culturale del territorio. Il patrimonio culturale come matrice di identità e strumento di sviluppo.* Milano, FrancoAngeli.
- Cegłowska, A. & R. Matykowski (2010):** *Przestrzenie publiczne i ich znaczenie w dużym mieście: przypadek Poznania. Studia miejskie Funkcje miast jako czynnik kształtowania przestrzeni miejskiej*, 2, 219–230.
- Dziewulski, S. & H. Radziszewski (1915):** *Warszawa, tom II: Gospodarstwo miejskie.* Warszawa, Lublin, Łódź, Kraków, Geberthner i Wolff.
- Gehl, J. (1987):** *Life between Buildings: Using Public Space.* New York, Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Gehl, J. (2010):** *Cities for People.* Washington DC, Island Press.
- Hillier, B. & J. Hanson (1984):** *The Social Logic of Space.* Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press.
- Jackiewicz, D. (2015):** *Fotografowie Warszawy. Konrad Brandel 1838–1920.* Warszawa, Dom Spotkań z Historią i Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie.
- Kasprzycki, J. (1997):** *Korzenie miasta. Warszawskie pożegnania. Śródmieście północne i śródmieście południowe.* Warszawa, VEDA.
- Lewicka, M. (2012):** *Psychologia miejsca.* Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe SCHOLAR.
- Lynch, K. (1981):** *A Theory of Good City Form.* Cambridge, MIT Press.
- Madanipour, A. (2019):** *Rethinking Public Space: between Rhetoric and Reality.* *Urban Des Int* 24, 38–46.
- Magnaghi, A. (ed.) (2005):** *La rappresentazione identitaria del territorio. Atlanti, codici, figure, paradigmi per il progetto locale.* Firenze, Alinea.
- Montgomery, J. (1998):** *Making a City: Urbanity, Vitality and Urban Design.* *Journal of Urban Design*, 3, 93–116.
- Norberg-Schultz, C. (1980):** *Genius Loci Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture.* New York, Rizzoli.
- Relph, E. C. (1976):** *Place and Placelessness.* London, Pion.
- Rossi, A. (1984):** *The Architecture of the City.* Cambridge, MIT Press.
- Sepe, M. (2013):** *Planning and Place in the City. Mapping Place Identity.* London and New York, Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Solarek, K. (2019):** *Urban Design in Town Planning. Current Issues and Dilemmas from the Polish and European Perspective.* Warsaw, OW Politechnika Warszawska.
- Sosnowski, O. (1930):** *Powstanie, układ i cechy charakterystyczne sieci ulicznej na obszarze wielkiej Warszawy.* Warszawa, Zakład Architektury Polskiej PW.
- Southworth, M. & D. Ruggeri (2011):** *Place Identity and the Global City. In: Urban Design: Roots, Influences, and Trends.* London, Routledge.
- Stępiński, Z. (1988):** *Siedem placów Warszawy.* Warszawa, PWN.
- Tuan, Y. (1977):** *Space and Place, the Perspective of Experience.* Minneapolis, Univ. Minnesota Press.
- Wallis, A. (1979):** *Informacja i gwar.* Warszawa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy.
- Whyte, W. H. (1980):** *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces.* New York, Project for Public Spaces.
- Wojnarowska, A. (2016):** *Model for Assessment of Public Space Quality in Town Centers.* *European Spatial Research and Policy*, 23, 1, 81–109.