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# TEORETYCZNE ASPEKTY TURYSTYKI

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## **ABOUT A SIMPLE METHOD TO EVALUATE THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF AN URBAN TOURISM SPACE (THE CASE OF THE HISTORICAL CENTRE OF THE CITY OF GDAŃSK)**

O PROSTEJ METODZIE OCENY ATRAKCYJNOŚCI MIEJSKIEJ PRZESTRZENI TURYSTYCZNEJ (NA PRZYKŁADZIE HISTORYCZNEGO CENTRUM GDAŃSKA)

### **Introduction**

Every geographical space, including urban one, is made up of a number of various subspaces. One of them is a tourism space. It can be found in a majority of Polish cities, not only in large and medium ones, but also frequently in small towns. By reason of the differences in their size, tourism spaces within urban areas differ in terms of their scale and content. This content is the larger the greater is the size of urban area and historical heritage localized within it.

A characteristic trait of the urban tourism space is its diversity resulting from the dissimilarity of the tourism attractiveness of various objects and places which such a space includes. Tourism attractiveness is a subjective characteristic determined by tourists. It reflects specific values tourists attribute to these objects and places by reason of the experiences and impressions they provide.

The subject matter of the paper is the historical centre of the city of Gdańsk. The aim of the paper is to present a method showing how people create their own cognitive images or mental maps of this area, and evaluate its tourism attractiveness.

### **Tourism space and the problem of its evaluation**

The problem of tourism space evaluation is a part of a broader issue – that of space evaluation in general. It concerns the space in the meaning which is used in geography.

From geographical perspective, space consists of “[...] natural components of the earth surface (natural environment), enduring results of human economic activity in this environment (economic environment), and a social environment being a result of the activity of territorial communities (nations, regional and local communities)”<sup>1</sup>.

“Tourism space is a functionally distinguishing fragment (subspace) of the geographical space. [...] It is the product of man activity that uses geographical environment for tourism purposes by discovering and adapting it for the needs of leisure, and experiencing diverse impressions and experiences<sup>2</sup>. [...] This means that every geographical subspace within which the tourism function develops can be considered as tourism space”<sup>3</sup>.

The problem of geographical space evaluation is connected with a trend that emerged in human geography at the beginning of 1960s of the last century, and is known as behavioural geography. It was the reaction to the preceding approach predominating human geography that tended to describe human activity in geographical space from a macro-scale perspective. In contrast, behavioural geography, stressed the role of individuals as main agents responsible for changes in this space. The changes they produced resulted in a specific spatial pattern of human activity. Comprehending this pattern was possible by answering individuals how they behaved and structured spatial organization of their life. According to behavioural approach, man was an active subject shaping the world around him through the process of decision making. His or her decisions found reflection in their spatial behaviour and activity. Explaining this individual behaviour and activity was not however possible without learning about how people imagined and evaluate their natural and social setting.

The first work concerning the problem of people imagination of the environment in which they lived, emerged in 1960<sup>4</sup>. Its emergence turned out a crucial factor stimulating the beginning and development of behavioural geography, and what is more important, facilitated later the applying its assumptions for the needs of tourism. The work concerned the city of Boston, and described how people imagined organization of the city’s urban space. Using a survey methodology, the author asked respondents to sketch basic point, linear and areal components of which according to them, the urban spatial pattern was composed. As Lynch concluded, the respondents tended to describe this pattern using the same elements, and as a result, the maps of similar fragments of the city’s space did not differ significantly in terms of their content. Differences concerned largely the proportions of elements used in the description, and to a lesser degree, their location<sup>5</sup>.

Lynch’s research initiated a fast development of empirical studies on cognitive processes underlying spatial behaviour of people. As it turned out, people formed their images, attitudes and preferences with reference to the setting where they lived and acted. “The

<sup>1</sup> S. Liszewski, *Przestrzeń turystyczna i osadnictwo turystyczne*, [in:] *Kompendium wiedzy o turystyce*, ed. G. Golebski, PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> S. Liszewski, *Przestrzeń turystyczna miasta (przykład Łodzi)*, “Turyzm” 1999, vol. 9, no 1, p. 53–73.

<sup>4</sup> K. Lynch, *The image of the City*, M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, MA 1960, p. 146.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

comparisons were made of the physical urban space with its subjective pictures having the form of sketches, paying attention to their spatial coverage, orientation, and elements testifying to the readability level of space, distance and directions<sup>6</sup>.

The research on mental maps emerged in Polish geography in the second half of the 1980s only. It was based on the assumptions developed earlier by Anglo-Saxon geographers. Similar methodology and attempts were used to apply those assumptions and methods to the conditions of the Polish geographical space<sup>7</sup>.

A step forward in the study of the perception of geographical space (mainly urban one) was emerging the trend dealing with the evaluation of this space. It was initiated by two American geographers, P. Gould and R. White, who used maps showing the valorization of building plots that were already occupied or were to be occupied by housing development<sup>8</sup>. Respondents under survey were asked to make an appraisal of individual building plots on a specified scale, and the scale was then used to calculate a housing preferences rate. The rate was related to demographic characteristics of respondents, landscape traits or preferences people had to their own places in surroundings. P. Lewis and C. Geipel attributed values to individual elements of an imagined geographical space showing what was the role of stereotypes in forming these images or schematic cognitive structures simplifying the thinking about the complexity of surrounding environment<sup>9</sup>.

In Polish literature, works about cognitive evaluation of geographical space, and particularly tourism space, appeared much later and were less numerous. They concerned both natural and socio-economic space, as well as urban one<sup>10</sup>.

## Method used in research

The method applied in this article refers to the assumptions typical to the above mentioned literature on the cognitive evaluation of geographical space. The departure point of the research was to create a mental map of urban space, and then, on its basis, evaluate individual components of which the structure of this space was made up. According to the assumptions of K. Lynch's, the people's images of the same area did not practically differ in terms of the same elements, what meant that mental maps of a given urban area

<sup>6</sup> P. Tobiasz-Lis, *Geografia percepcji. Osiągnięcia, problemy perspektywy*, [in:] *Dorobek polskiej geografii po konferencji w Radzynie. Ocena krytyczna*, ed. W. Maik, K. Rembowska, A. Suliborski, seria "Podstawowe idee i koncepcje w geografii", vol. 8, Instytut Geografii i Gospodarki przestrzennej WSG w Bydgoszczy, Katedra Geografii Regionalnej i Społecznej UŁ w Łodzi, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2014, p. 129.

<sup>7</sup> M. Bartnicka, *Wyobrażenia przestrzeni miejskiej Warszawy. Studium geografii percepcji*, "Dokumentacja Geograficzna" 1989, no 2; B. Domański, H. Libura, *Geograficzne badania wyobrażeń, postaw i preferencji*, "Przegląd Geograficzny" 1986, vol. 58, p. 143–164; H. Libura, M. Bartnicka, J. Słodczyk, *Mapy mentalne i ich zastosowanie w badaniach geograficznych*, "Czasopismo Geograficzne" 1984, no 55, p. 73–87.

<sup>8</sup> P. Gould, R. White, *Mental Maps*, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1974.

<sup>9</sup> P. Lewis, C. Geipel, *The cognition of geographic space*, Tauris Publishers, London–New York 1989, p. 321.

<sup>10</sup> E. Szafrąńska, J. Kaczmarek, *Percepcja przestrzeni – pomiędzy prawdą a autentycznością*, [in:] *Percepcja współczesnej przestrzeni miejskiej*, ed. M. Madurowicz, Wyd. Wydziału Geografii i Studiów Regionalnych UW, Warszawa 2007, p. 47–62; *Wartościowanie współczesnej przestrzeni miejskiej*, ed. M. Madurowicz, Wydawnictwa Wydziału Geografii i Studiów Regionalnych UW, Warszawa 2010; J. Mokras-Grabowska, *Interpretacje, wyobrażenia, wartości – indywidualna przestrzeń turystyczna człowieka*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2011.

should be similar with each other as to their content. If so, any map could be recognized as representative of others. Relying on this assumption, only few mental maps of the urban tourism space were prepared.

The tourism space of the city of Gdańsk has been chosen as the subject matter of the research. Two city districts were included into the space, presenting the city historical centre – The Main City and the Old City, both containing almost the whole historical heritage objects of Gdańsk. The aim of the research was to create a mental map of the above area, and then, on its basis, identify the distribution of the values attributed by tourist to the objects situated within this area, to obtain the spatial distribution of its tourism attractiveness.

Five respondents were interviewed to provide a necessary empirical material. Three of them visited the city accidentally, several times in irregular time intervals (6–7 times a year in average). The rest (two respondents) came here regularly during their business trips (at least two times a month during the last year). The research was conducted during the first week of September 2017). Every respondents was asked to draw a map of the historical area using five simple elements:

- paths or the channels along which people moved, most often the streets,
- edges or barriers that separated one area from another, for example walls, shorelines,
- districts or areas with an identifiable character, most often parks,
- nodes or points and foci for moving in space such as street corners, city squares,
- landmarks or physical reference points as for example distinctive landforms, buildings or
- monuments.

After drawing a map presenting a cognitive image of the city's historical centre, every respondent was asked to assign numerical values to individual objects (buildings, palaces, churches, monuments, parks, squares, fragments of streets) that according to him corresponded to the values of their tourism attractiveness. A scale was used ranging from 1 to 10 with the latter indicating the highest value.

The respondents could not help themselves by any cartographic picture of the area when drawing mental maps. These were constructed in the presence of the author, being sometimes improved several times before obtaining a final form. After creating his map, every respondent was asked to mark individual, historic objects on it with the digits from the 1 to 10 interval. As a result, a mental map came into being covered with a number of digits scattered among elements presented on it. The last step belonged to the author, who drew contour lines based on values marked by respondents. The lines illustrated how the subjectively defined attractiveness of the objects mapped changed spatially, presenting the spatial distribution of tourism attractiveness of the Gdańsk's historical centre.

## **The results**

Five mental maps have been obtained. Three maps were drawn by respondents who visited Gdańsk irregularly (irregular visitors), and the other two, by respondents who came

regularly to the city (regular visitors). In each group, maps were similar in that they included historic objects only. These were, as it has been mentioned earlier, historic buildings, palaces, churches, monuments, parks, squares, old tenements, and monuments, as well as other objects of historical value, as for example, defence walls and gateways. What made the two groups of maps different was the number of the objects they included. Their density was much larger in the case of regular visitors' maps, whereas the maps created by irregular visitors were poorer as to the number of objects they comprised. Everywhere, the objects were shown against a background of a street network. This network turned out to be the best remembered fragment of the historical centre. It had the form of a grate of perpendicularly oriented streets which was well visible on both groups of maps.

Mental maps drawn within each group (of regular and irregular visitors) differed slightly between one another, which supported Lynch's thesis that people interpret the same spatial pattern in a very similar way. The similarity of maps within each group was the reason that only one from among them was chosen. The criterion was the number of elements marked on a map, and the map with their largest number was selected from each group individually (one map from the irregular and one from the regular group respectively). They are presented in Figure 1 and 2. In Figure 1, the mental map is shown created by the irregular visitor, and in Figure 2, the map drawn by the regular visitor. Both were originally drawn by hand, but later, the elements presented on them were replaced by symbols introduced by the author to obtain more readable picture.

As can be seen from both maps, the similar streets pattern on each of them is presented. It includes three streets oriented vertically and two ones oriented horizontally on the irregular visitor map, and four and three ones respectively on the map by regular visitor. The streets marked by single lines in Figure 1 meant that the respondent had a general idea about their existence, directions and connections with other streets, but had at the same time no idea about what objects are situated along them. In other way, from among the streets he noted in his memory, most were empty for him. The only street known for the respondent quite well was what he called the Long Market (Długi Targ), which in fact consists of two streets: the Long Street and the Long Market, and is marked on the map with double lines. The respondent was able to show some famous objects that are localized along it (the Golden Gate, the Green Gate, the Town Hall and the Arthus Court), which proves that he was quite well familiarized with the place. Another double line street gone perpendicularly to the latter, and there were also a few historical objects marked, situated nearby. As the respondent admitted, he always used this way when he went to the train station, and this is the source of his knowledge about the objects.

A much detailed picture was obtained on the map in Figure 2. The larger than before, number of streets was presented, and all were drawn using double lines which meant that they were known well to the respondent. Much larger, as compared with the map by former respondent, was also the number of objects shown on the map. The respondent emphasized the fact that during his many trips to Gdańsk he had quite a lot of time to

visit places within the historical centre of the city. As a result, we received a full picture of the Royal Route (the Long Street and the Long Market), and accurately shown banks of the Motława River with the Granary Island, the Crane, Hilton Hotel, and Filharmony building. The larger was the number of churches, parks were added. and more distinctly the city's defending walls were also shown.

As richer in its details, the mental map in Figure 2 has been then subject to further research. The respondent was asked to assign numbers from the scale from 1 to 10, to each object he placed on his map. The assumption was that the value was the higher the higher was the attractiveness of the object in the respondent's eyes. Having obtained the numbers, the author has drawn contour lines connecting the objects with the same value of attractiveness, and what has been obtained, is the spatial distribution of tourism attractiveness of the historical city of Gdańsk. It is presented in Figure 3. The values of contour lines in Figure 3 are not marked one by one because not all of them cannot fit in the map.

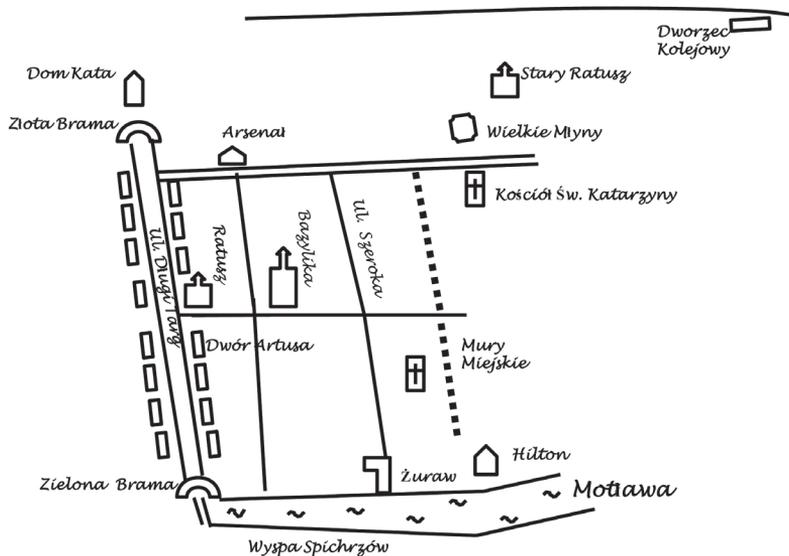


Figure 1. Mental map of the Gdańsk's historical centre by an irregular tourist

Source: based on the author's own research.

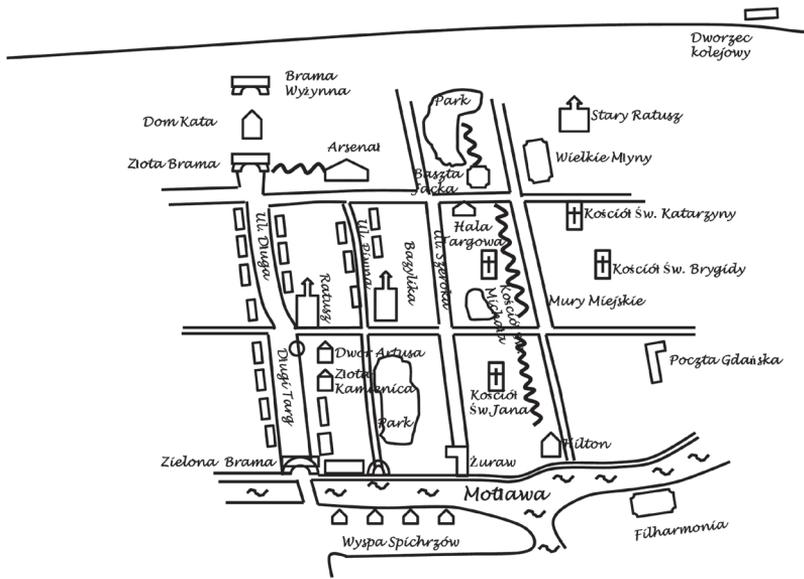


Figure 2. Mental map of the Gdańsk's historical centre by a regular tourist  
 Source: based on the author's own research.

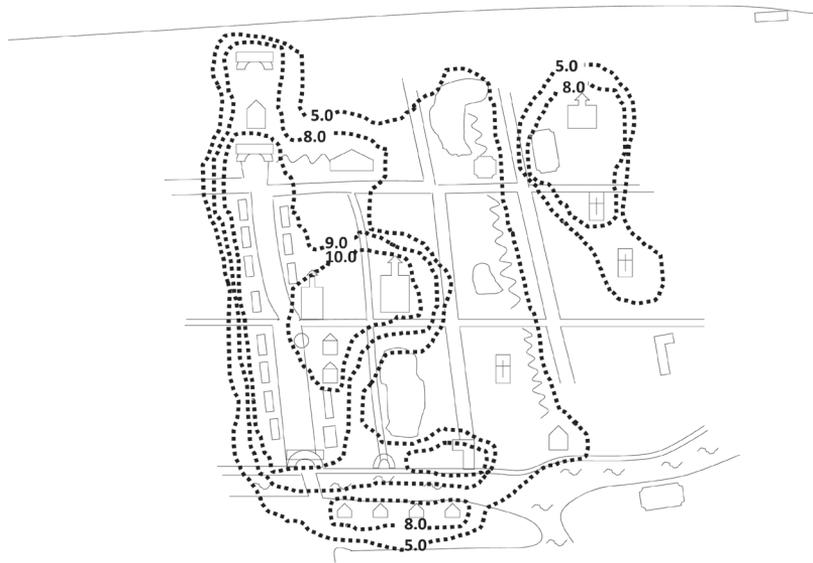


Figure 3. Spatial distribution of the tourism attractiveness within the limits of the Gdańsk's historical centre  
 Source: based on the author's own research.

## Conclusions

A simple method has been presented in the paper to obtain the map of tourism attractiveness distribution within the limits of the historical centre of the city of Gdańsk. The method was based on the procedure of attributing values to the cultural heritage objects localized within the centre. A starting point of the method was to construct a mental map of the above area. Maps of this kind were usually applied to present a spatial structure of cultural or natural content of any territory, from the point of view of how it was seen by people. At the same time however, they were used rather infrequently to illustrate how this content is evaluated by those who perceived it.

The paper has been an attempt to identify the distribution of the values assigned by tourist to the objects situated within the Gdańsk's historical centre. As a result, the map was received in the form of three dimensional contour picture presenting the spatial distribution of tourism attractiveness of the above area.

This final map has been constructed using a survey approach. It showed a subjective picture as it was seen by one of the respondents being chosen to take part in the survey. What was obtained, presented only a small fragment of the possibility that the proposed method provided. Its merit lies in constructing many maps of this kind with the help of different respondents, and then putting them one on another to obtain more and more detailed intersubjective picture presenting an outcome spatial distribution of the tourism attractiveness of the area under research. The larger the number of overlapping maps, the more this intersubjective picture is similar to what exists in the reality, although to receive the objective result is impossible by reason of the indeterminate nature of human behaviour.

There are however two different situations when applying the method. On the one hand, the most valuable tourism spaces are situated in the largest cities, that is, within a relatively small territories. If we want to overlap a number of different subjective pictures of tourism attractiveness distribution within the limits of such a small territory, the underlying mental map should be made in a relatively large scale. This will make it possible not only to get out as many details as possible, but also keep an appropriate distance between them to fit many different-in-shape contour lines, that are included in various subjective pictures. The larger the spatial scale the more detailed the outcome attractiveness distribution map is obtained.

On the other hand, there are many interesting objects of the cultural heritage outside the largest cities, scattered over sometimes, a large territory. In this case, maintaining a large spatial scale is rather impossible because it might be difficult to grasp the interesting content of the whole territory. Thus, a middle spatial scale is better but this does not permit to receive a fully detailed picture. For example, larger centres of attractive, historical objects like towns and smaller cities can turned out to be too small to identify the morphology of their tourism spaces in detail, but at the same time the areas separating them, less rich in cultural heritage objects, can be shown with a larger precision.

The problem of constructing maps of tourism attractiveness with reference to various places and areas is still a relatively rarely presented and discussed subject in the Polish tourism literature. As so far, what has been presented were maps concerning mostly a static situation, being characteristic of one point of time. At the same time however, far more interesting seems to be showing how a tourism space changes in time. This is a far more complicated task, which requires to start with an initial map of tourism attractiveness at a given point of time, and then add new maps of tourism attractiveness of the same place, presenting the changes in successive points of time. The further development of the method proposed in the article towards a dynamic approach is undoubtedly more interesting than focusing on making static pictures of spatial distribution of tourism attractiveness.

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## Streszczenie

Przedmiotem artykułu jest historyczne centrum Gdańska, na terenie którego znajduje się znakomita większość jego historycznych zabytków. Ich zbiór określa zasięg miejskiej przestrzeni turystycznej. Zadaniem artykułu było ustalenie wartości jakie poszczególnym zabytkom przy-

pisywali turyści z uwagi na ich turystyczną atrakcyjność. W oparciu o rozkład tych wartości sporządzono mapę atrakcyjności miejskiej przestrzeni turystycznej w obrębie historycznego centrum Gdańska.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przestrzeń turystyczna, atrakcyjność przestrzeni turystycznej, ocena atrakcyjności przestrzeni turystycznej, mapy wyobrażeniowe

### **Abstract**

The historical centre of the city of Gdańsk is the subject matter of the paper. The centre is full of historic objects which localized within a relatively small area create an urban space presenting its own, characteristic tourism attractiveness. The attractiveness is not homogeneous. There are differences in its intensity, and as a result it presents a specific spatial distribution. To describe the distribution, a method has been proposed in the paper based on the concept of mental map, which was used as the basis to evaluate how the tourism attractiveness is distributed over the area of historical Gdańsk.

**Keywords:** tourism space, tourism space attractiveness, evaluation of the tourism space attractiveness, mental maps

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