Część I
Part I

Przestrzeń
Space

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Contemporary bottom-up tools for public spaces activation

Abstract

This article attempts to figure out the current understanding of public spaces and the contemporary tools for bottom-up activation of public spaces to make them more friendly and functional. The paper investigates contemporary public spaces' challenges and what tools can be used to improve them. In this research, the main issue will be the question: what kind of tools and actions can be offered to maintain the quality of public spaces? There are two basic approaches for bettering public spaces: 'bottom-up' and 'top-down'. The paper concentrates on the first approach and considers such methods as place-making and tactical urbanism in designing public spaces along with the community involvement. The work describes an increasing need for an architect, urban designer and planner to be involved in the process of city revitalisation as an interface between the local government and the inhabitants. This study attempts to answer the question of what is a connection between the architectural and social context of the public realm and the relationship between different types of public spaces, what makes public space friendly for users. How do public spaces help to strengthen social connections in towns, what is connection between architectural context and social context of the public realm. The presented study cases explain the different approaches and tools of place-making, including creative place-making.

Keywords: public spaces, designing tools for public spaces, bottom-up approach, place-making, tactical urbanism.

Współczesne oddolne narzędzia aktywizacji przestrzeni publicznych

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule podjęto próbę opisu wyzwań przed jakimi stają współczesne przestrzenie publiczne oraz narzędzi ich oddolnej aktywizacji w celu uczynienia ich bardziej przyjaznymi i funkcjonalnymi. W tym badaniu głównym zagadnieniem będzie pytanie: jakie narzędzia i działania można zaoferować, aby utrzymać jakość przestrzeni publicznych? Istnieją dwa podstawowe podejścia do ulepszania przestrzeni publicznych: „oddolne" i „odgórne". Artykuł koncentruje się na pierwszym podejściu i rozważa takie metody jak: placemaking i urbanizm taktyczny w projektowaniu i przekształcaniu przestrzeni publicznych wraz z zaangażowaniem społeczności. Praca opisuje rosnącą rolę architekta, urbanisty i planisty zaangażowanego w proces rewitalizacji miasta jako łącznika między samorządem a mieszkańcami. Niniejsze opracowanie jest próbą odpowiedzi na pytania: jaki jest związek między architektonicznym i społecznym kontekstem sfery publicznej a relacjami między różnymi typami przestrzeni publicznych; co sprawia, że przestrzeń publiczna jest przyjazna dla użytkowników; w jaki sposób przestrzenie publiczne pomagają wzmocnić więzi społeczne w miastach; na czym polega powiązanie kontekstu architektonicznego z kontekstem społecznym sfery publicznej. Przedstawione przypadki badawcze wyjaśniają różne podejścia i narzędzia tworzenia miejsc (placemakingu).

Słowa kluczowe: przestrzenie publiczne, narzędzia projektowania przestrzeni publicznych, podejście oddolne, placemaking, urbanistyka taktyczna.

Introduction

As Jan Gehl[1] mentioned, "the profound changes our cities have undergone during the industrial and technological revolution have modified the way people access and engage in the public domains". Public spaces were always created by people, for people. Richard Sennett[2] saw the main role of public spaces as giving the opportunity for diverse groups of people to meet, that otherwise, without the existence of the public realm, might not have such a chance. As an illustration, Sennett[3] gives the example of 18th–Paris. Historically, public places were of extreme importance and constituted space for meetings and exchanges of information. Greek agoras and Roman forums were areas for public speeches and later they also acquired religious and political meaning. In the middle ages, public squares were dominated by trade functions. Even this brief description of the evolution of public spaces shows, that they always played a central role

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[1] Gehl J., *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space*, Arkitektens Forlag, Copenhagen1996.

[2] Sennett R., *The Fall of Public Man Paperback*, Gardners Books, Eastbourne 2003.

[3] Ibidem.

in the communities and reflected the needs of society. This trend of a "people-oriented" concept has changed in the 20th century, giving way to big-scale, top-down developments, which often created bad quality public spaces, with a lack of human scale and no involvement from the public. In the post-industrial era with increasing privatization, many of the public spaces lost their function of being the catalysts for creating and supporting social relations. The privatization in many cases led to social fragmentation and stratification, as the space was created to cater to only certain groups and exclude others, mostly lower socio-economic groups[4]. Many authors call this change co-modification of space because as it belongs to private owners and can be managed and sold just like other goods. Public areas are being sold out to raise the value of space and bring profits to the owners. This process is often leading to gentrification, happening now not only in countries of the global west but also elsewhere. Real public spaces can only emerge if they are planned, designed, developed and used with the involvement of as many people and a variety of groups as possible.

1. The types of urban space and different methods of their activation

As John Ruskin[5] said: "The measure of any great civilization is its cities and a measure of a city's greatness is to be found in the quality of its public spaces". Public spaces were designed to support human interaction. There has been much debate on definitions of public space – whether it is public or private, inside or outside, with limited access or free, democratic or exclusive, or otherwise. Some authors defined them as not controlled by private individuals or sectors and open to all public by focusing on the control mechanism. Other researchers focused on their access and use features rather than ownership and defined them as publicly accessible places where people go for their activities.

UN-Habitat[6] considers public spaces as "a vital ingredient of successful cities" and the places in a city that build a sense of community, culture, social capital, and community revitalisation.

Public spaces create liveable communities and facilitate the enjoyment of the higher-density neighbourhoods typically found in cities. Public spaces play a key role in achieving safe, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities and have been identified as a specific target. Public spaces are where people interact with the city, with the environment, and with their neighbours.

Public spaces could take a form of pedestrian pathways, streets, local and public markets, parks, public squares, and beaches[7], but also indoor spaces

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[4] Chakravaty S., *Is Public Space a Public Good? A Structure/Agency View of Narrative of Loss,* Working Paper 2008.

[5] The qoute of John Ruskin from the year 1873.

[6] The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is the United Nations programme for human settlements and sustainable urban development.

such as atriums[8] and spaces inside the buildings with a public function such as community centres, and shopping moles[9]. These spaces are named "external and/or internal quasi-public space" as, although they are legally private places, but they form a part of the public realm[10]. This category also includes what is commonly described as "privatised" public spaces.

According to the classification of Mathew Carmona[11] there are twenty urban space types, from clearly public to clearly private space that gives the full idea of understanding space division and what design methods can be used to revival space (Tab. 1). The distinction into positive, ambiguous and negative public spaces is connected with the opportunities, which they create for evoking social interactions. Some authors extend the list of ambiguous spaces by adding to it hybrid spaces[12].

Bottom-up approach help to analyse (examine) urban space from the point of the users who are most frequently trying out, appearing there, showing the needs of the community. In the space defined by Carmona as 'positive' (Tab1), the bottom-up approach seems to be successful.

To use the bottom-up approach a local community needs to be involved in the design process of the space, the community that is willing to participate in the process. The bottom-up approach is quite hard to implement in a space where the involved communities have antagonistic aims and interests (most of the ambiguous places Tab1.) In such types of spaces as shopping or leisure malls, university campuses etc. it is hard to find a consensus for the interests of all groups of users. Therefore, in this case, top-down or mixed approaches are more suitable in this case.

In private space, there is also hard to implement the bottom-up strategy as there is a dominant group ('owner') that has the most value and coordinates the design process. According to Henry Shaftoe[13] architects, urban designers

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[7] Lynch K., *The Image of the City,* Cambridge MA: MIT Press, Cambridge 1960; Wejchert K., *Elementy kompozycji urbanistycznej*, Arkady, Warszawa 1974. Gehl J., & Svarre B., *How to study public life: Methods in urban design*, Island Press, Washington 2013.

[8] Carmona M., et al., *Public space: the management dimension*, Routledge, London 2008.

[9] Carmona M., Heath T. Oc T. Tiesdell S., *Public Places – Urban Spaces,* Routledge London 2003.; Dymnicka M., *Przestrzeń publiczna a przemiany miasta [Public space versus city transformation],* Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2013.

[10] Carmona et al, op. cit., 2003, p.111.

[11] Carmona M., *Contemporary Public Space: Critique and Classification, Part One: Critique*, "Journal of Urban Design", 2010. 15:1, pp. 123-148.

[12] Miller K. F., *Designs on the Public: The Private Lives of New York's Public Spaces,* Univ. Of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 2007; Zanni F., *Urban Hybridization*, Politecnica, Milano 2012; Krasilnikova E., Klimov D., *Design principles of hybrid spaces in terms of urban planning*, "WIT Transactions on The Built Environment", Vol 193, 2020 WIT.

[13] Shaftoe H., *Convivial Urban Spaces: Creating Effective Public Places*, Routledge, London 2008.

and urban planners cannot properly design a publically used "private space" without cooperation with users. Therefore the best strategy seems to be combining both the 'top-down' and the 'bottom-up' approach.

Tab.1. Urban space types according to Carmona (2010).

Category of urban space	Types of urban spaces	Characteristics	Examples
Public spaces	*"Positive" space*		
	Natural/semi natural urban spaces	Natural and semi-natural urban areas	Rivers, natural features, seafronts, canals,
	Civic space	The traditional forms of urban space, open and available to all	Streets, pedestrian pathway, promenades
	Public open space	Managed open space, typically green and available and open to all, even if temporary controlled	Parks, gardens, commons, urban forests
	"Negative "space		
	Movement space	Space dominated by modern servicing requirements needs	Main roads, motorways, railway, underpass
	Services space	Space dominated by modern servicing requirement needs	Car parks, service yards
	Left over space	Space left over after development	Space left over after planning (SLOAP), modernist open space
	Undefined space	Undeveloped space, either abandoned or awaiting redevelopment	Redevelopment space, abandoned space, transient space
	Ambiguous spaces		
	Interchange space	Transport stops and interchanges, whether internal or external	Metros, bus interchanges, railway stations, bus/tram stops
	Public "private" space	Seemingly public external space, in fact privately owned	Privately owned 'civic' space, business parks, church grounds, "hybrid" squares
	Conspicuous spaces	Public spaces designed to make strangers feel conspicuous and, potentially unwelcome	Cul-de-sacs, dummy gated enclaves

	Internalized "public" space	Formally public and external uses, internalized and, often, privatized	Shopping/leisure malls, introspective mega structures
	Retail space	Privately owned but publicly accessible exchange spaces	Shops, covered markets, petrol stations
	Third place space	Semi-public meeting and social places, public and private	Cafes, restaurants, libraries, town halls, religious buildings
	Private 'public' space	Publicly owned, but functionally and user determined spaces	Institutional grounds, housing estates, university campuses
	Visible private space	Physically private, but visually public space	Front gardens, allotments, gated squares
	Interface spaces	Physically demarked but publicly accessible interfaces between public and private space	Street cafes, private pavement space
	User selecting spaces	Spaces for selected groups, determined (and sometimes controlled) by age or activity	Skateparks, playgrounds, sports fields/grounds/ course
Private spaces	Private open space	Physically private open space	Urban agricultural remnants, private woodlands
	External private space	Physically private spaces, grounds and gardens	Gated streets/enclaves, private gardens, private sports clubs, parking courts
	Internal private space	Private or business space	Offices, houses, etc.

Source: Carmona M., Contemporary Public Space: Critique and Classification, Part One: Critique, "Journal of Urban Design", 2010. 15:1, pp. 123–148.

The bottom-up approach helps to examine urban space from the point of the users who are most frequently trying out, appearing there. It also shows the needs of the community. In most of the 'positive' spaces (Tab.1.) it is recommended to use the top-down approach.

In a term to use the bottom-up approach the existence of a community willing to participate in the design process is needed. Thus it is difficult to plan public spaces for people in case of 'green fields' developments, or when inhabitants are not interested in the environment they are living. In this case, pre-planning social activities are necessary.

The bottom-up approach is also hard to implement in a space, where the interests of several communities occur at the same time (case of most ambigu-

ous places Tab. 1.) In such type of space as shopping or leisure malls, university campuses etc. it is hard to balance interests of all groups of users. In private spaces, there is also hard to implement the bottom-up strategy as there is a dominant group ('owner').

2. Contemporary understanding of public spaces

Against the opinion confirming the decline of public spaces[14], some claim that contemporary public spaces are quite inclusive and revival[15]. The common features expected from all public spaces are to provide opportunities for social life, include various activities, be convenient to use, and have a unique identity. It is accepted that all these features contribute to the publicness of public spaces which increases the sustainable development of the city.

Kristine F. Miller[16], in her book "Designs on the Public", is concerned with how the current definition and perception of public space within the design fields is as publicly owned, open, democratic and accessible spaces, and how this definition does not necessarily have a basis in reality. She defines public space as a 'kind of hybrid of physical spaces and public spheres' and bases her definition 'on the assumption, that the physical space is important to democratic public life. She questions why urban designers, urban planners and architects' 'common sense' definitions and ideas about public spaces are 'so far from reality' concluding that a key reason is probably a 'preoccupation with the enduring physical qualities of public spaces'. By focusing on the tangible aspects designers and planners often ignore the intangible qualities (social, cultural, legal, economic, political, aesthetic), all of which influence on the user's perception of public space. Urban design of public spaces should be seeing more than simply the physical and visual form of development, but also "an integrative and integrating activity"[17].

Henry Shaftoe[18], referencing Carr et al. [19], asserts that good urban places are the 'heart of democratic living'. His discussion is based on a multidisciplinary approach to studying the perception and function of successful urban places, stating that the 'litmus test of conviviality [are] successful spaces have people lingering in them'[20] and that for a space to be a real public space it must

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14 Among the authors pointing to the erosion of the concept of cities, there were: David Harvey (2012) or Niel Brenner, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer (2012), and earlier Jane Jacobs (1961).

15 Authors who pay attention to the activation of urban spaces include: Jan Gehl and Ann Matan (2009), Carmona (2010), Małgorzata Dymnicka (2012).

16 Miller K. F., op. cit.

17 Carmona M., Heath T., Oc T.,Tiesdell S., *Public Places...*

18 Shaftoe H., *Convivial Urban...,* p. 5.

19 Carr S., Francis, M., Rivlin, L. G., & Stone, A. M. (1992). *Public space*. Cambridge University Press.

20 Shaftoe H., *Convivial Urban*…, p. 9.

be in use. He states that: places where people can be 'social and festive' are the essence of urbanity. Without such convivial common spaces, cities, towns and villages would be just jungles of buildings with no opportunities for casual encounters and positive interactions between friends and strangers. Without good urban spaces, we are likely to drift into increasingly privatized and polarized society, with all its concomitant problems.

3. Contemporary strategies and tools of "bottom-up" approach to the design of public spaces.

In the 'bottom-up' strategy place-making, tactical urbanism, public art, and participatory budget can be helpful tools to achieve the successful public space. Place-making combines philosophy and the process of transforming a space. The main idea of it is based on understanding the needs of people who live, work and play in a certain place by observing, listening to, and asking questions. It helps to understand their needs and expectations for that space and for their community together. Place-making is not only about to create a space but about making it alive and vibrant. Place-making is 'strengthening the connection between people and the places they share' and 'refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value'[21].

Method of **place-making** promotes strengthening the connection between people and the places, contributes users perception of public spaces as a heart of the community. Place-making is a collaborative process where people can shape the public realm in order to maximize the value of the space. It is not only about promoting better urban design but also about creating an identity of the public space. Place-making method gives value not only for residents, but also for investors, developers. Public space that is arranged in an interesting way is an effective promotion for the city. The new image of the restored places attracts tourists and future residents.

[21] *What is Place-making? What if We Built Our Communities Around Places?*
https://www.pps.org/category/placemaking [Access: 12.06.2022].

Fig.1. Examples of different design approach a) graffiti in Hong-Kong (China) as an example of informal actions and the 'bottom-up' strategy; b) graffiti in Reda (Poland) – a result of the open competition for street artists organised by the city authorities ('mixed' strategy); c) painting on the wall revitalization in Lisbon (Portugal) as a city authorities initiative, the 'top-down' strategy; d) implementation of art as developer's initiative Warsaw Brewery (Poland), the 'top-down' strategy.
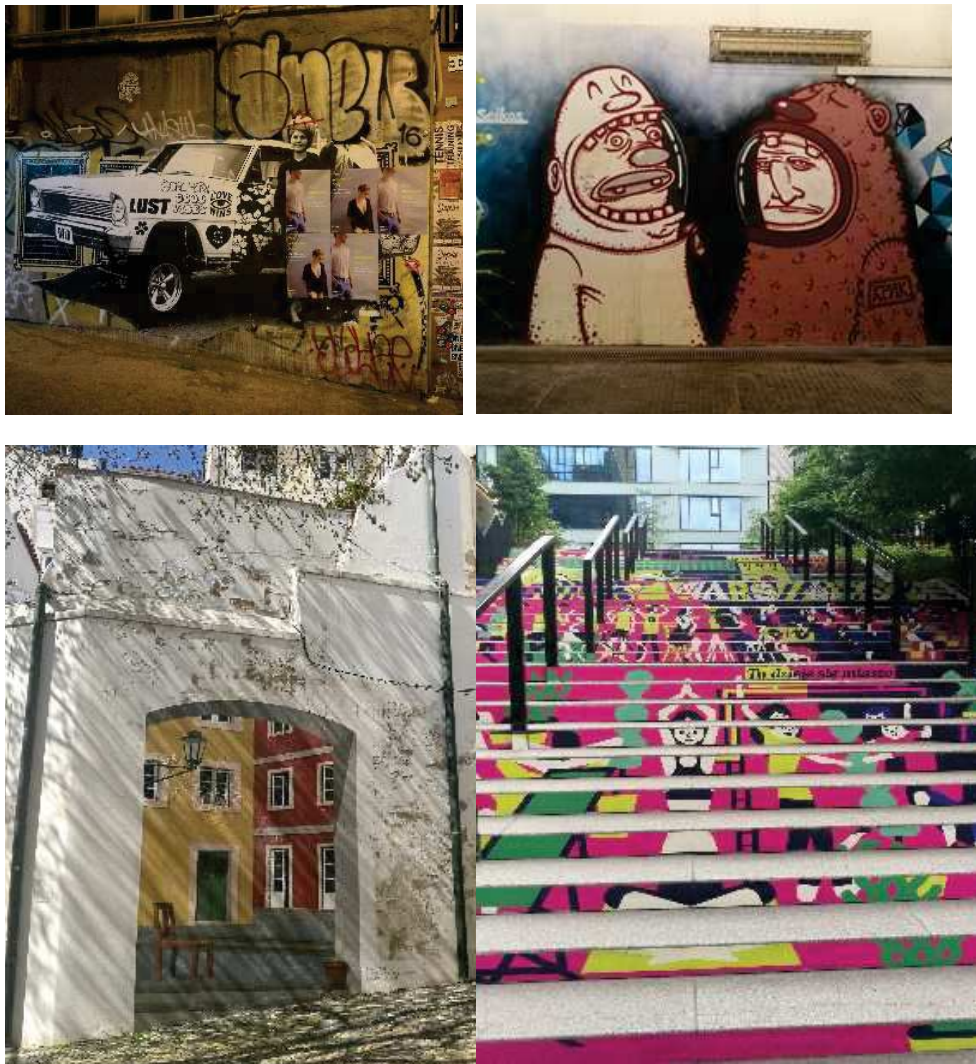
Source: Photos: authors.

Urban space designed according to the concept of place-making becomes a place that provides users with a friendly zone to live, work, rest, and relax, social and cultural meetings, recreation and many others. One of the successful examples where elements of place-making strategy' were used is a small coastal town Clonakilty (Cork, Ireland)[22]. Clonakilty exemplifies how meaningful community participation in the plan-making process can be encouraged, and how such participation can lead to better community gains within the development of a town. In the 1970s Cork County Council inserted a regular 'architectural planning advisory clinic service' in the Town Councils with the unique role of Town Architect. It was a unique system in Ireland at that days. A system of 'planning clinics' together with the function of a town architect was successfully working in all Cork county until Town Councils were abolished. In the county of Cork the role of the town architect was an interaction with different groups of stakeholders and consider interests of local users, local community as much as private ones. The architect had a possibility to engage, generate and promote a community willing to design vibrant urban spaces. The town architect introduced planning clinics, which not only gave the local community advice on applications for financing but also encouraged local people to become actively engaged and take responsibility for what their towns looked like and made them more aware of planning opportunities. These were a unique example of the public engagement process, where civil servant architects assisted the private sector design process using 'planning clinics', through informal architectural and planning advice[23].

As local authority structures evolved, the role of the town architect diminished. Only Clonakilty retained the role of the town architect and the monthly planning surgeries and actions to transform and improve the urban environment. This service has built a strong sense of collective urbanism and civic pride. It has also created a very democratic decision-making process. Over time, Clonakilty has attracted new people and ideas which has further supported the town's creative approach and broadened the town's horizons while maintaining a strong sense of history and place[24].

An interesting study case is Merano (Prov. South Tyrol, Italy) being an excellent example of how it is possible to maintain a spirit of community and keep involving people in the urban environment. Streets in Merano exemplify how

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[22] The Academy of Urbanism, *Clonakility* 2017. Available online at:
https://www.academyofurbanism.org.uk/clonakilty/ [Accessed: 4 March 2020].
[23] Vallone G., *Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing Local Government and Heritage*,
'URBAN REGENERATION 3 – REPAIR AND LEASE, CPO, DERELICTION AND VACANCY',
Re-inhabiting the streets, 2022.
https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/committee/dail/33/joint_committee_on_housing_local_government_and_heritage/submissions/2022/2022-01-25_opening-statement-giulia-vallone-senior-architect-cork-county-council_en.pdf
[Accessed: 21.06.2022.].
[24] Ibidem.

methods of place-making could be successfully pedestrianized, and make more vibrant and friendly for people. Merano suffered from air and noise pollution related to urban traffic, so the aim was to improve public transport as well as cycling infrastructure in order to promote other modes of transport. The main issue was residents' parking on the main square of the Obermais/Maia Alta neighbourhood so it transforms into a playing area for youngers through the construction of a skate ramp. This concept was the result of a co-creation process carried on in the previous 6-months by the municipality through several vision-building workshops, where children, parents and local inhabitants dreamt about more diverse use of public space[25]. The skate ramp was not a permanent solution, but a barrier to car access, showing the residents what the space could be like if not used as an illegal car park.

The place-making process is usually long-term and requires a lot of organization, **tactical urbanism** projects are done quickly and usually with no need for permissions or experts involvement (urban guerrilla, street painting). According to Lydon and Garcia[26] tactical urbanism is 'an approach to neighbourhood building and activation using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions and policies. There are some specific characteristics for the tactical urbanism that helps to recognize it from the 'top-down' approach:
–   deliberate, phased approach to design,
–   local community is an idea source for the local design
–   challenges, short-term actions, that led to realistic expectations,
–   the possibility of project success at minimal cost and risk,
–   third sector engagements (public, private, and non-profit sectors) and the development of social capital between them.

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[25] Wrighton S., *Metamorphosis Transformation of neighbourhoods in a child-friendly way to increase the quality of life for all citizens*, 2017. https://www.metamorphosis-project.eu/sites/default/files/downloads/
Metamorphosis_D7.2_Development%20of%20general%20dissemination%20and
%20communication%20material%20of%20the%20project_final.pdf
[Accessed: 21.06.2022.].
[26] Lydon, Garcia, *Tactical Urbanism,* Vol. 1, 2012.
https://issuu.com/streetplanscollaborative/docs/tactical_urbanism_vol.1,
file:///C:/Users/Prestige/Downloads/Tactical%20Urbanism%20Vol.%202-update.pdf,
https://street-plans.com/tactical-urbanism-vol-1-2/
[Accessed: 21.06.2022.].

Fig.3. a) Art intervention in the scale of the public square in Athens (Greece); b) Creative and simple small-scale initiative for transforming public space in Lisbon (Portugal).
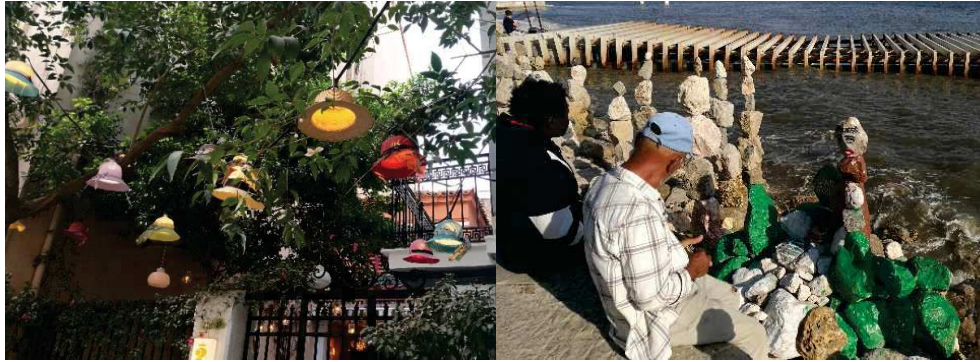
Source: Photos: authors.

Tactical urbanism let us understand how short-term action could create a permanent change. Tactical urbanism is using short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions to catalyse a long-term transformation of an area. Tactical urbanism projects can be led by governments, non-profits, grassroots groups, or active residents who want to change life in their cities for the better. Projects share the common goal of using low-cost materials like paint, tires and planters to experiment with and gather input on potential street design changes. Tactical urbanism is a quick way to get ideas off paper and test them in the real world, to pilot infrastructure and collect feedback before making permanent changes to a street or community. It is about doing as opposed to analysis paralysis (long-term stages of the project, gathering information, lead to unnecessary extension of the planning process) when in some cases local authorities, and governmental institutions making the decision process an extremely long that can lead to slowly development of the design process or sometimes even blocking it. Compared to 'analysis paralysis' tactical urbanism is an action-oriented low-cost way to change a space. Examples from Portugal and Greece (Fig.3. a, b) shows how with the help of simple creative actions public space can be transformed into vibrant space.

Fig.4. Variety of scales of art implementation in public spaces a) Transforming unpleasant street environment with 'low- coast tools' in Bilbao (Spain). b) post-industrial art integration into streetscape of Warsaw Brewery (Poland).

Source: Photos: authors.

Public art in space can play a role in celebrating cultural strengths, defining and reinforcing a sense of place, and illustrating cultural history. Public art has a huge diversity. It can range from an artists' integration of ideas into streetscape, open space and built forms, to the creation of independent sculptures (Fig 3 a, b). This special case of place-making connected with art creation is called creative place-making[27].

The inclusion of public art may influence the design and layout of the open space and connections. Strategically public art should be located within public open space, for example, to mark an entryway, at the end of view corridors to reveal important views or gateways, as a means to focus attention into the space or as a means of allowing the public to interpret the meaning of the space. (Fig.4. a, b).

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[27] Rembeza M., *Creative place-making in Poland. Can art become an effective tool of urban regeneration*?, Social Sciences & Arts Segm", 2018, 5(6.3), pp. 191–197.

Fig.4. Public art located within public open space a) Ghetto Heroes Square on Kazimierz in Kraków (Poland). b) Sculpture in old docks of Antwerp (Belgium).

Source: Photo: authors.

Public art may also help to identify open spaces as being publicly accessible – its location and visibility from the public street can encourage the public to access the open space as it draws them in, high quality public art is important to the enhancement of cities' urban fabric. It can create landmarks throughout the city and contribute to the identity and character of many neighbourhoods and districts.

Summary

Public spaces are an integral part of the culture of cities, often shaping a city's image and identity. It is important to pay intention not only to the physical aspect of the public space (its cityscape), but also nonphysical (intangible) qualities, sense of the place, users' perceptions, and their relations with the urban space. Thus, the optimal approach in the process of city transformation is the simultaneous use of bottom-up and top-down strategies, various urban scales and the use of short and long-term activities. The transformation of the city can be carried out as part of temporary and short-term (tactical urbanism) as well as long-term planned activities (most often with a top-down approach). Place-making and tactical urbanism are considered as the main methods for activating the social potential of the public space. The scale of changes introduced as part of place-making may take the form of activities in the field of urban landscape, clothing, architecture and individual objects of art.

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16. Rembeza M., *Creative place-making in Poland. Can art become an effective tool of urban regeneration?*, Social Sciences & Arts Segm", 2018, 5(6.3),

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