

## LOCAL TRADITION IN CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY TRENDS IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT BASED ON JAROSŁAW

### Abstract

According to the ideas of sustainable development, the city is perceived as a human-friendly area of residence, one that determines the directions of its development. One of these ideas is respect for the place and tradition which shapes the individual value of an urban center (its culture). This view is presented by the European Council of Town Planners in the New Athens Charter. Based on this document, as well as the territorial agenda and the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities prepared by the Committee on Regional Development, proper functioning of the cities and their quest for sustainable development can be considered a priority, one possible to obtain through the interaction of economic, social, and cultural development. Ideal cities, which are often dreamed of (especially during a crisis that mainly affects large urban centers) emphasize indisputable value of natural and cultural heritage, shaping local tradition and its individual character. This paper presents the city of Jarosław as a town center that strives to fulfill today's requirements – ones that consider the quality of living environment in medium-sized cities – while maintaining its unique, historical character.

*Keywords: city, local tradition, architecture, sustainable development, historical character*

### 1. The issue of tradition, culture, and identity within the city<sup>1</sup>

Tradition of the place, strongly associated with the historical development of cities, stems from the process of shaping urban fabric. In this process, a special role is played by the squares, streets, or parks, as well as so-called, strong forms – dominants and accents that, to a large extent, affect the image and character of the city.

Every urban center has its own tradition, individual atmosphere, and character, ideas resulting from the richness of the forms recorded in the history and culture. These aspects are deeply rooted in the mentality of the people, its citizens. The image of the urban landscape is created by its buildings, larger and smaller forms, and spaces for different purposes; and by its people, with their joys, successes, but also concerns and sorrows. Along with local tradition, the uniqueness manifested by simplicity or richness of architectural forms creates a story telling us what has survived or continues, and what creates an exceptional and true value.

Council of the Town Planners draws attention to similar aspects, and while determining the vision of the city, emphasizes the need to preserve the richness and cultural diversity stemming from the long history of the city. It skillfully combines the present and future with the past.

The city creates its history not only through specific architecture, but also because of its social and economic structure which distinguishes it among many other urban centers. Positive diversity makes the cities of Europe so different from those in other parts of the world. Those cities are becoming more difficult to interpret due to increasing social activity, which reaches beyond the boundaries

of urban centers in an uncontrolled range, and also affects rural areas and natural resources.

Urban sprawl stimulates the development of the transport networks, as well as the infrastructure necessary for the function and linkages of distributed operations. Harmful phenomena accompanying these processes negatively affect the perception of degradable sites. As a result, cities of all sizes create a network characterized by varying degrees of partnership. They can act supportively or remain in the shadow of the so-called “powerful centers”. To a large extent, it depends on the position of the center in the spatial structure of the country – or, on a smaller scale – of the region.

*Cities in the network* are therefore cities that form polycentric systems that maintain their nature, tradition, and culture, and determine the diversity opposing the unification of urban spaces. Due to the mobility of people – and quite common immigration resulting from the need to seek work – relationships between permanent and temporary residents of cities of different sizes seem to be particularly important. A *mixed* social and cultural nature – resulting on the one hand from the tradition of the place, and on the other from the dynamics that shape the modern image of the city – contributes to the diversity of cultural groups. This factor increases the attractiveness and variety of the city, not only understood as a place of residence, but also as a place of work, investment, education, culture, and entertainment.

The need to seek solutions that successfully and positively affect the functioning of the city is undisputable. It is connected closely with the idea of sustainable development, emphasizing, inter alia, respect for the place and tradition. A properly functioning city recognizes the value of its history and culture, while striving for self-development and progress. Those two should be based on the rational management of environmental resources, as well as provide the residents with appropriate living and working conditions; a psycho-physical comfort.

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Similarly, architecture supported by new technologies (in relation to the historical forms) have a chance to describe jointly created perspectives on tradition and progress, reflected, among other things, in the usage of the technological development. Complementary tendencies may create a coherent and harmonious image of the city. Then we can start the debate about the beauty of the city, whose essence is not only buildings – even those of particular importance – but also the intangible assets, such as people's lives, culture, place, and its traditions.

Cities considered to be beautiful include those that are accepted by residents looking for conveniences, comfort, quality, and beauty. They often require action aimed at urban renewal. However, this type of activity involves a conflict between two tendencies – adaptation to modern requirements, often dictated by up-to-date trends, or the highlight of the tradition and culture often associated with public objects of historical value.

## 2. City's renewal

Urban renewal is the process that strongly influences changes in a city's image. It is difficult to improve the quality of the living environment and the quality of life while preserving local traditions. This is one of the essential revitalization issues.

City regeneration was, and is, necessary. Going back to the post-war period, it resulted from the massive destruction caused by the war. Urban centers were frequently built almost from scratch. People deprived not only of architectural objects determining the identity of the place, but also of homes, jobs or livelihoods, became the witnesses of their traditions.

Another case is a situation in which urban centers did not require reconstruction for a longer time. However, as the time passed by, they have undergone natural degradation. For this reason, the process of renewal has been centered on the restoration of historical units shaping identity, patriotism, and local memory.

Also, recent years have revealed the need for action in the field of urban renewal across Poland, especially in light of the deteriorating living conditions that influence the public's unwillingness to identify with the surroundings – the city or the nearest “neighborhood”.

The directions of urban renewal mainly focus on rehabilitation of blocks of flats built in the 60's, 70's, and 80's, as well as the restructuring of post-industrial areas. A major problem is an ill-fitting transport system, especially in the centers of large cities. This issue results from the residents' increased mobility due to cars. It also appears to be important in shaping disappearing open space systems, conducting activities to improve the technical infrastructure, as well as access to services and jobs.

According to the Institute of Physical Planning and Municipal Economy (Cracow branch), identification of the planned areas of activities is centered around: RW – revitalization; RH – rehabilitation of the “blocks”; RS – redevelopment of the post-industrial areas; K – redevelopment of the communication systems; TO – development of the open spaces systems;

ZZ – preservation of the permanently built areas that require regular repair and maintenance; WI – replacement of used infrastructure; IU – complementary investments.<sup>1</sup>

All such actions lead to an improved quality of life, encourage the desire to identify with the city, and thus the cultivation of its traditions. This is particularly important for cities of small and medium sizes.

Large urban centers are easier to promote. In general, they offer more attractive employment offerings and services. Their situation in this context is much more convenient. Small and medium-sized cities can distinguish themselves with individual character or local tradition, which can create development opportunities, such as the tourism industry. “Most frequently visited cities include those that can be proud of their respected architectural objects or valuable landscape features”.<sup>2</sup>

One's own place is not just a house or an apartment, but also one's surroundings, to which we want to identify and feel connected. It creates a tradition of the place, which arises due to architectural objects, events, and certain reoccurring phenomena. It is deeply rooted in the mentality and memory of the population. For this matter, the city is seen as unique.

## 3. Jarosław

Jarosław is an example of a medium-sized district town (41,000 residents) which, although located in the province recently recognized as an area of stagnation (Podkarpacie), is seen as an urban center of positive and significant importance for the southeast region of Poland.

The whole city is divided into four profile areas:

- Profile I has remained unchanged for centuries, a medieval, municipal layout with an historical street system and market square, as well as an historical town hall situated in the center of the market – now the headquarters of the Municipal Authorities.
- An important part of this system is the 19<sup>th</sup> century dense, residential development with service spaces on the high ground floors;
- Profile II was defined by modern multi-family buildings – blocks and detached buildings – houses located outside the historic area of the city;
- Profile III has an industrial character. It concerns the outskirts of the city – its eastern side. A number of industrial plants are located there;
- Profile IV are suburbs of agricultural character with farming buildings. This area is situated considerably farther from the city center.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Physical Planning and Municipal Economy, (Kraków branch) Ziobrowski Z., Ptaszyccka-Jackowska D., Rębowska A., Geissler A. (Eds.), *Revitalization, rehabilitation restructuring. Urban renewal*, Institute of Planning and Municipal Economy – Cracow Branch, Kraków 2000, p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> J. Kobylarczyk, *Evaluation of the quality of the living environment in selected cities of the Podkarpacie after the transformation in the first decade of the XXI century*, Cracow University of Technology, Kraków 2013, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> J. Kobylarczyk, *Quality of the living environment in the central zone of Jarosław*, Cracow University of Technology, Kraków 2008, p. 31.

From the point of view of the subject undertaken in this work, the central zone, and especially its historical sector, is of utmost importance. In its vicinity, there are also two important areas – one is Monte Cassino Park, located in the northeastern section of downtown, and the other is designated by the revitalized area of the former military barracks. Currently, there is a State Higher School of Technology and Economics.

The market, as a prestigious and historical city center, is the area that best reflects the cultural value of Jarosław. It has witnessed the tradition cultivated by the function and character of historic buildings such as the Town Hall (headquarters of the Municipal Authorities); and Orsetti's tenement house, today a museum or open courtyard houses, whose history is linked to the city's period of splendor. Today, the town's unique past is reflected in the presence of those buildings.

The post-military area shows the adaptation of degraded and unused lands. New designations for the objects shape a fresh image of the city, fulfill its current needs, and creates the place's new culture and tradition (in this case related to education at the higher, academic level). For residents, especially students, it has a considerable value. Furthermore, the proximity of the university is important for the communities of villages adjacent to Jarosław, so numerous in this part of the country.

The problem of a place's tradition, hence its identity, can be understood in the context of the city of Jarosław in two ways. First, its distinctive identity shapes local tradition, focusing on individual perception. This problem begs the questions: If I identify with the city, which elements do I perceive as mine? Which has a timeless function associated with the place?

In order to create local culture and tradition, the city considered as a residential area adjacent to other centers must have sufficiently important elements facilitating the recognition and uniqueness of the place. Both approaches toward the perception of the local tradition recognize the Town Hall, tenements, and university in Jarosław as equally important.

The Renaissance building, which used to belong to the Orsetti family (Fig. 1) is the most recognizable structure in the city. In addition, as the museum, it promotes the culture and tradition of Jarosław. "As a cultural institution of the Jarosław county, run by local government, the museum collects, holds, develops, and maintains the monuments of art and culture depicting the history of Jarosław district, and Jarosław itself. It provides and promotes regional, historical heritage through exhibitions, publications, lectures, and conferences. It also cooperates in this field with other Polish and foreign museums, research institutions, associations, and schools".<sup>4</sup>

Town Hall (Fig. 2), which currently serves as the headquarters of the Municipal Authorities, is associated with the tradition of the place. The building dominates the market – a recognizable, visually attractive element. It has



Fig. 1. Orsetti's tenement

a historical value. "Integrated into the historical buildings of Jarosław, the Town Hall distinguishes itself with beautiful window framings and other decorative elements that prove great skills of the local masons. At the center of the roof there is a square tower with beveled corners to half the height, surrounded by Art Nouveau decoration, a metal balustrade, and magnificent dial clocks, which hands are moved by the clock mechanism made by the Austrian company Liebing. The tower is topped by a spire with a metal ball and flag. In accordance with its purpose, the Town Hall is the seat of the Jarosław Municipal Authorities."<sup>5</sup> It



Fig. 2. Town Hall

<sup>4</sup> [www.muzeum-jaroslaw.pl](http://www.muzeum-jaroslaw.pl) (date of access: 2014-05-30).

<sup>5</sup> R. Pawlak, *Poland, Historical Town Halls, Sport and Tourism*, Muza, Warszawa 2010, p. 199-200.

should be noted that the Jarosław Town Hall is evidence of the city's heyday period. Only respected and significant urban centers had a Town Hall located in the market area.

Other elements shaping local tradition are covered-courtyard houses (Fig. 3). In this context, they act as witnesses to the history of the city; their formation is associated with the flourishing of Jarosław. Currently they serve as residential properties with service spaces on the ground floor. Moreover, they also have an educational function. Rooms and corridors located in the basement are used as a tourist route. Arcades marked on the ground floors are characteristic features of the houses, along with the inside courtyards, which were once covered by skylights.



Fig. 3. Covered courtyard houses

“Courtyards – deprived of greenery, are reminiscent in their form of passages or shelters. These are caused by the location of the discussed interiors. They concern Jarosław houses clustered around the historic market. Once the courts took the form of sheds topped by the skylights in order to let natural light in. Those sheds were intended for trading purposes. They served as food storages. Covered-courtyard houses were, and partially still are, fitted into the multi-storey basements forming subterranean corridors that are currently being used as an underground trail. The phenomenon of those tenements is so important because it is not present on this scale in any other European city”<sup>6</sup>.

Adaption of the military barracks to meet the need of the State Higher School of Technology and Economics (Fig. 4) is a slightly different example, and proof that new measures – those aimed at modernization, renovation, or revitalization – can shape the identity of the place and, consequently, its tradition.

Renovated and modernized buildings have been adapted to modern requirements. Among other things, they were altered to the needs of people with disabilities (ramps, handrails, etc). The degraded area today serves as the site of the university, and the city itself can be proud of its success – it is seen as an important center due to the development of education, particularly important in this part of



Fig. 4. State Higher School of Technology and Economics

the region. Jarosław does not remain in the shadow of Rzeszów. It is a developing, medium-sized city which proved that it deserves investment. For several years, conservation activities have been underway on its territory. The process of restoration included a renovated market with unique objects of historical significance (Orsetti's tenements, Town Hall, Market Hall, town houses, and others).

Jarosław can be also perceived as a city able to meet the contemporary expectations and requirements of a high quality residential environment, without losing its individual character, one partly defined by the tradition of the city.

Apart from the architecture of the historic, and aesthetic values associated with individual characteristics (often connected with regionalism), local traditions are also shaped by people – the residents. They look for “their places” within the spatial structure of the city – favorite sites with which they identify, and are a part of their lifestyle.

Those places are important areas of the city, and are seen as a “local code”; they are not only connected with the urban center, but often with the entire region. Attractive spatial and functional solutions, high aesthetic values of architectural objects and their individual character (shaped by, among other things, architectural detail, scale, or characteristic parameters), create “strategic places”, or identical architecture, inscribed in the local tradition of the city, and even the whole region.

In the case of Jarosław, the identity of the place is determined mainly by residential housing that creates facades for the market. The presence of the two-storey houses point to the city's heyday. Characteristic elements include out-of-scale arcades that occur in the front facades facing the market; inner courtyards; and a multi-storey underground.

Just as it is possible to distinguish the specific architectural elements of Jarosław (scale, detail, etc.), it is difficult to create a rigid framework and parameters that accurately define the cultural life in Podkarpacie, and the lifestyle of its inhabitants.

In a sense, it's related to the conditions imposed by the city and its surroundings, where people engaged primarily in agriculture recognize the value of natural elements such as open space and landscape, woodlands, or protected wildlife. They are distinguished by their concern for green spaces, those in their backyards, or located in public

<sup>6</sup> J. Kobylarczyk, *op.cit.* p. 83.

places, as well as the peaceful small-town lifestyle. All these features coexist with local tradition and the style of life of the residents.

#### 4. Final remarks

Local tradition shapes the individual character of cities of different sizes. It is also important for the proper development of urban centers, as it provides diversity, acceptance of the living environment, evokes a sense of identification with the city, and also establishes a stable position of the city in the spatial structure of the region or country. It is a particularly important phenomenon in the era of uncontrolled globalization and uniformity of space.

“Social and personal activity aimed at the search of identity is constantly increasing. Using the privileges and amenities of the digital era, man stubbornly, and even desperately, is looking for his place in the world. He wants to find his “nest” where he would feel safe and comfortable, focused on the preferred parts of his city”.<sup>7</sup>

Jarosław can serve as an example – a small town located in the province of the underdeveloped region of Podkarpacie. Despite its belonging to Podkarpacie, Jarosław is a city whose development has been apparent in the recent years. Its manifestation is visible in its investments, including the establishment of the State Higher School of Technology and Economics on a revitalized

post-military area. It also reinforced the significance of the city in the spatial structure of the region due to its development as a center of higher education.

Another important action undertaken by the authorities included the renewal of the market and accompanying facilities, residences such as covered-courtyard houses, Orsetti’s tenement, Market Hall, and Town Hall. Objects of historical value adapted to modern requirements emphasize the tradition of the place. They are also elements with which the residents wish to identify.

The importance of the local tradition is highlighted by the Council of Town Planners, which sees it as an opportunity for the development of cities of different sizes. They help provide growth for small urban centers which are often overshadowed by big cities.

“We still hope that the often forgotten small towns, with their own individual character, will experience a renaissance protecting themselves against further urban and architectural degradation (...) Today, we want to cherish small towns for the comfort they offer, as well as valuable cultural treasures in the form of numerous monuments. Nowadays, the central areas of the towns thrive with life, and are attractive for tourists, creating at the same time its image – a representative space of irreproachable architecture”.<sup>8</sup>

It should be mentioned that the possible success of small urban centers depends largely on the traditions of the place. Jarosław meets these criteria.

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