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(I) PUBLIC SPACES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY YOUTH – NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

The results of the survey carried out among the students of Civil
Engineering and Architecture Faculty at Lublin University of Technology

(I) PRZESTRZENIE PUBLICZNE DLA MŁODZIEŻY XXI WIEKU – POTRZEBY I OCZEKIWANIA

Wyniki sondażu przeprowadzonego wśród studentów Wydziału
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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to present the views of today's youth (represented by the students of Architecture) on public spaces. Young people's needs are ignored or wrongly interpreted by urban planners. Young people want to be appreciated and noticed, that is why the space which is not entirely defined and which gives opportunity for self-creation is of most interest to them. The integration with people of various ages, from different social groups, has an educational influence on youths. Young people should have opportunity to present themselves and demonstrate their artistic skills because they need acceptance, unlike any other social group. The youth value multi-functional spaces which create opportunities to take part in different activities at the same time. Moreover, they often take the space which is not designed for them because of their need to be independent and original. The participation of the youth in the project makes them responsible for the space they created, in such a way that they take good care of it and do not allow others to devastate it.

Keywords: youth, public space, Architecture Faculty students

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest próbą przedstawienia poglądów dzisiejszej młodzieży (reprezentowanej przez studentów Architektury) na temat przestrzeni publicznych. Potrzeby młodych ludzi są ignorowane lub źle odczytywane przez urbanistów. Młodzi chcą czuć się docenieni, zauważeni, dlatego przestrzeń nie do końca zdefiniowana, dająca możliwość własnego jej kreowania jest dla nich najbardziej interesująca. Młodzieży służy wychowawczo integracja z ludźmi w różnym wieku i z różnych grup społecznych. Powinna mieć ona możliwość zaprezentowania się, wykazania swoich zdolności artystycznych, bo jak żadna inna grupa społeczna potrzebuje akceptacji. Bardzo cenione przez nią są przestrzenie wielofunkcyjne, które stwarzają możliwości brania udziału w wielu aktywnościach jednocześnie. Młodzież często zagarnia przestrzeń, która wcale nie jest dla niej zaaranżowana. Wiąże się to z jej niezależnością i potrzebą do bycia oryginalnym. Partycypacja młodzieży w procesie projektowym sprawia, że czuje się ona za urządzoną przez siebie przestrzeń odpowiedzialna, dba o nią i nie pozwala dewastować jej innym.

Słowa kluczowe: młodzież, przestrzeń publiczna, studenci Architektury

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1. Introduction

Architecture faculty students are an interesting survey group for research concerning the expectations of the youth towards public spaces. Because of their age, studies and future occupation, they are especially interested in this issue. The opinions presented by students, especially interesting sentences connected with the descriptions of eminent public spaces (based on magazines or articles available online), are the expression of their own views because they include essential justification of the authors' choice.

The students' task was to write an essay and present their subjective opinions (their own points of view) on "Public spaces for the 21st century youth". They were given a set of 10 questions in order to make them stick to the point. However, they were allowed to focus on other important problems of their choice which were not mentioned in the questions.

The undermentioned text is a condensed summary of gradually added thoughts included in 39 essays¹ of 5th semester students.

None of the sentences in this article constitute personal statements of the author. They are students' shortened deliberations² or quotes taken from their essays. Grandiloquent quotations which express the authors' emotions are put in quotation marks. The text includes all of the adjectives which were used by young people to express their feelings, or to characterize the desired future public spaces, or present state.

The aim of this article was to collect information about students' preferences and their expectations towards public spaces (especially students' own judgments, as well as thoughts which they identify with, although often copied from other authors³). The article reveals needs and expectations of young people as well as preferences of the future architects at the present stage of their life and education.

It is worth summarizing and taking a look at the insights of "architectural youth" interested in the subject. A picture received in this way is more reliable than the one resulting from the analysis of serious texts written by authors who are not necessarily young.

The author was considering whether to remove the commonly known content which sounded like slogans, but she decided not to do so because it would have damaged the picture of the respondent's consciousness (during their second semester of urban studies), and the initial effects of education.

¹ The size of a single essay (without photographs) – around 3 pages of texts written in 12 point font size.

² One sentence can hold opinions of more than one author. Therefore, names of students whose works have been used are listed at the end of the article.

³ Some authors' thoughts were copied by students and included in this text. Therefore, I ask those authors for understanding. We all know that intellectual property should be a priority in didactic work among the youth. It would be unreasonable to spend months checking which sentence was copied by the student and from which article because it would not bring anything new to the knowledge about preferences of the youth concerning public spaces. However, it would be valuable for other reasons.

1.1. The criticism of the present state

Students point out the failures and deficiencies in the present development of the open spaces. The public space, used by most of the inhabitants of small towns and suburbs in big cities, consists of streets and squares with traffic, surrounded by grey buildings and patches of monotonous, gloomy green belt. Scruffy common areas as well as old, dull and kitschy playgrounds for children deteriorate the landscape and repel people. The youth have no place to go, therefore, they use some parts of squares as sports fields and old railings as ramps for skateboarding. As a result, they often get chased away by elderly people who long for peace and quiet. They also wander around the shopping centres where they get accused of crimes and feel discriminated against. In most cases, however, young people who can't find any attractions stay at home and stick to the computer for most of their free time. Squares, yards and streets which were the previous meeting places for people, are losing their original sense. Hanging frames are no longer places where people can get to know each other or contact their peers. In most cities, there are no places to have a campfire or a barbecue – a favourite form of youth entertainment. There are schools and colleges with an access to the enclosed sports field, but there is lack of interesting integrative spaces around them.

The stereotypical opinion about young people, who exchanged interpersonal contacts for chatting online or sending e-mails, and who do not need any public spaces, apart from pubs selling beer, is untrue. In fact, it is the other way round. The lack of public spaces for the youth makes them spend most of their free time in front of the computer. It is even worse in the rural areas where dirty bus stops, undeveloped areas or deserted bathing ponds and sports fields are the meeting places for young people. Currently, squares and parks restrict the opportunities and comfort of the youth in large measure. The trend of playing computer games is gradually dying out and young people want to go out.

On the other hand, there is an opinion that 21st century youth do not have the need to leave home in order to be in the world because they have everything (multi-functional entertainment) on their computers, including: social networking service, Google and online gaming. Nowadays, the Internet plays the role of maintaining social bonds. Therefore, new public spaces have to be in real competition with the means of communication (but also shopping centres) in such a way that they will encourage youth to meet in the real space rather than in the virtual one. Instant messengers and online chats are easily accessed sources of passive entertainment and they have a negative impact on the development and health of the youth. Therefore, it is vital to drag people of this age group out of their homes by adjusting the space, in a functional way, in order to meet their needs for activity (fun, entertainment, sport) rest and meeting their peers.

According to students, catering services for youth do not take into account the financial affordability of their customers. Although young people prefer to be in cosy places with interesting interior design, they spend most of their time in crowded fast-food restaurants or outdoor bars which sell beer. Unfortunately, there are no alternative places because cafés, pubs and pedestrian areas with tea gardens, repel people because of their prices.

Those who are responsible for designing spaces for youth, neglect and misinterpret young people's needs. Urban planners often disregard young people. It is the main cause of isolation (spending time at home or in the back woods) of the youth from other social

groups. The lack of space for young people and the fact of pushing them aside, leads the youth to such offences as devastating the infrastructure, writing on the walls or drinking in the backstreets. As a result, they do not do anything creative. Students often ask a question: how can we deal with the generation gap, in order for the youth to integrate with each other, without causing damage to others?

2. What kind of public spaces are needed for the youth?

2.1. Specificity and “rules” of youth. The need for trust, acceptance, opportunity to choose and making decisions on one’s own

Students thoroughly characterise their age group, emphasising that youth is a time of psychological development and the creation of personality, interests, ways of perceiving the world as well as gaining knowledge and skills. Moreover, it is a period of seeking self-identity, acceptance and one’s place in life. The youth are creative and full of new ideas. Therefore, they do not like boredom and they expect new experiences and emotions. Development of the youth, in large measure, depends on the surrounding space and what it has to offer. When the space is well designed, it has a significant effect upon the social behaviour of the youth. It can also allow young people to relax, expel energy and at the same time, prevent them from social pathologies.

It is very difficult to meet young people’s expectations. “A bench under the tree or a swing with a sandpit is not enough for them”⁴. Young people constantly seek new ways of spending free time. They need places which will not let them go past indifferently or without noticing, but which will instead attract and spur them into action. Such places should also allow young people to develop their passions. Space for the youth (the social group which is especially interested in the world, culture and knowledge in a broad sense) ought to include educational elements. Such a place may only be organised by the use of unique ideas. These include: remarkable form, unusual connections in terms of composition and materials, multi-functionality, modern and surprising equipment, and appropriate location.

In the ideal space, young people want to feel appreciated and noticed. While designing, one should use the ideas, potential and unlimited energy of the youth. Young people like it when the world around them is changing. It is worth providing them some “room for manoeuvre” (because the designed function, very often, does not suit the recipients). We should also give the youth opportunity to create spaces on their own, by the means of multi-functional street furniture, or moving modular elements of the equipment (which may be used by different age groups of various interests and allow them to create space in various ways). We should offer them sculptures which may be constantly modified, and create screens for painting graffiti. The possibility to create their own space is desired by young people. It also stimulates their imagination and sensitivity. The youth should know that a particular patch of the city belongs to them. In this way, they take care of it and contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in the city.

⁴ Quotation from student’s essay written by Iwona Kolak.

The space which is not entirely defined, but varied, in such a way, that the youth can be decision-makers, is of most interest to them. “Even an old, concrete swimming pool, with gates painted with spray, may become a favourite place for young people”⁵. Such a space is a rational answer to the unpredictable needs of future generations. Young people value such spaces which have their appearance redefined according to new trends or sudden impulses. “It can be a square or a labyrinth where you can paint the walls with spray or stick whatever you want – space – youtube, where you can present yourself”⁶. The space should attract everyone, regardless of whether the person comes with a bicycle, skateboard, ball, or whether the person wants to lie down and read a book. The youth should be given a choice when it comes to decorating their selected place. Young people want to be proud of unique public spaces near the place of their residence (especially, when the places contain their own ideas).

The youth influence the attraction of the space by their creativity, energy, inventiveness and courage to use what they are offered by the city. Paraphrasing: “Public space constitutes people who visit it”.

2.2. From activity to integration of generations

Young people not only need to be in motion, but they also need to experience constant and varied emotions. It is an age when “monotony or peace cannot take place”⁷. According to students, public space should provide the youth with the possibility to spend time and enjoy it, in an active and safe way, without causing danger to others. Public space ought to be organised in a way which does not make it difficult for inhabitants of different ages to use it. Young people have to feel comfortable in public spaces and they should have opportunities to speak, sing and listen to music loudly.

Various activities should take place in public spaces. They include: having a meal, reading, sleeping, playing team games, observing other people, talking, sunbathing and contemplating in solitude. People commit less crime if the activity in public spaces is more intense. The activity of some people encourages others. New activities are taken up with those which already exist and they they bring younger and older people together. In this way, activities integrate generations, overcome social divisions and develop culture. The proposals of activities, for the users, may be focused on a wider group or individual needs. Compound social behaviours may develop from many individual ones.

The integration of people of various age and social groups is educational for the youth. That is why public spaces should become places where people link spectacular events with the everyday lives of inhabitants, as well as multiculturalism with identity and individuality. Large numbers of young people have similar needs to other users of particular spaces. They do not want to be isolated, but they want to share the space with others. Young people also like popular places. Therefore, the purpose of the public space is to be lively and enable inhabitants to contact each other, unite and tighten the bonds between them. “Young people

⁵ Quotation from student’s essay written by Marcin Samorański.

⁶ Quotation from student’s essay written by Jakub Korona.

⁷ Quotation from student’s essay written by Aleksandra Grabowska.

do not need a ghetto. Being a young person is only a temporary state. Public space cannot be treated as campus which is left after graduation once and for all. Although, there are kinds of entertainment which people grow out of”⁸.

It is a good idea for universities to be open to the public in order to attract local communities and tourists – as is the case in Lyon or Hamburg, where university areas with congress halls coexist with the city, park or coastal areas, without being enclosed.

2.3. The need to commune with nature

The easiest space solutions which fulfil young people’s needs are large, green spaces with benches where people can lie on the grass, with a blanket, and have a place to make a barbecue, as with American campuses. “It could be fabulous in the campuses (but in good taste) where students would feel as if they were on a paradise island”⁹. Young people love giving parties to friends, dancing and painting. They need to have contact with nature i.e. beautiful gardens, separated from the noise, which would offer something for the spirit, e.g., contemporary art exhibitions. Green areas create retreats and shelters – places of rest. “An optimistic, internal life which is associated with youth, gives you the power to act”¹⁰. Thanks to the plants, the space becomes friendly, fragrant and more beautiful. “Public, green areas (parks, squares, riversides, city forests) have large potential as places for the youth, however, they have to include elements which will attract young people in such a way that they will eagerly organize parties and relax while reading a book there”¹¹. Apart from green areas, the park has to offer facilities for cultural entertainment such as stages, platforms and amphitheatres where people could give speeches and express their views. They should also have the opportunity to participate in music and dance festivals as well as theatre performances in green surroundings. The park should constitute the main azimuth for the youth. It should also be a place of play, individual or group expression, and contemplation. “It is a good idea to create “parks within a park” i.e. theme zones: e.g., a rope course, “love zones” (encouraging two people to spend time together) However, with this kind of solution, one has to be careful not to end up with kitsch”¹². The park should also include green gyms, and small squares for team sports such as basketball, or table tennis which are integrated with the green areas. There should also be skate parks in the summer and skating rinks, surrounded by “Christmas lights”, in the winter.

Such a closely situated park, with an interesting program, may prevent the youth from social exclusion and social anarchy. Young people are the most creative and troublesome group.

Young people are not carefree and playful only. They are also interested in the present time and they have deep respect for the past. Therefore, while designing parks, squares and promenades, one should refer to the past in a way which is not trivial but which frees emotions. (like e.g. Bohaterów Getta square in Cracow). One should also remember that despite undoubtedly inspiring western patterns, we have large cultural wealth in our country.

⁸ Quotation from student’s essay written by Jakub Korona.

⁹ Quotation from student’s essay written by Marcin Samorański.

¹⁰ Quotation from student’s essay written by Dorota Boguta.

¹¹ Quotation from student’s essay written by Anna Gąbka.

¹² Quotation from student’s essay written by Łukasz Buczek.

2.4. Spaces open to self-presentation and self-realization of the youth

Young people aspire to be self-fulfilled by participating in art performances such as playing music, acting in the theatre and dancing. Thus, they need a stage and possibility to organize these performances on their own, not by adults. Street dancers' performances require unfolding special flooring on the ground. In every public space there should be enough room for happenings, performances and flashmobs which are directed to passers-by and which attract many people interested in avant-garde art. "The youth should have the opportunity to present themselves and demonstrate their artistic skills because they need acceptance, unlike any other social group. Therefore, they have to be provided with the access to the exhibition space where their own masterpieces will be presented. Many young authors of graffiti, photography and painting would use such a space. (frequent fields of interests among students). Exhibitions would allow young people to spread their wings"¹³.

If young street artists were given places where they could present their works, the stereotypical way of thinking about graffiti, as an act of vandalism, would definitely change. Graffiti paintings would replace dull and grey walls with colourful and funny works of art. It would be a step forward in the creation of interesting spaces for the youth. Many buildings would stop being the signs of passing time and they would become a part of space which develops the observers' imagination. What is more, sectioning a space for the youth to create their art, would be an incentive to take care of this space. Teenagers find it very important to express their emotions and getting in touch with other groups by the means of graffiti. Street art may be a form of social action which inhabitants of the city participate in and which teaches them the acceptance of this art (like in Berlin or Milan, where the inhabitants have fun creating street paintings, eagerly photographed by tourists).

Aerobics and dancing in the open space is a very good idea, however, it is rare in Poland. There should be raised platforms, along the promenades and in the centres of night life (for local musicians and trainers), surrounded by places to sit and stalls serving drinks. Such disciplines are very often done outdoors, in the group spaces of the hotels – as if they were reserved only for holiday makers.

Young people are keen on following fashion and trying new things. They also like taking up modern and dangerous sports (skating, parkour, free running, climbing, modern dance, martial arts). Apart from skateparks, they also need walking and rollerblading trails, fitness clubs, gyms and sport fields because they create favourable conditions for meeting a wider circle of peers.

2.5. Commendation for multi-functional spaces

The best solution for the youth is to create multi-functional squares where, for example, flea markets could be organized, twice a week, whereas for the rest of the month, the square could be used by young people for rollerblading or skateboarding. The opportunity to ride with various sport equipment should be created in parks and along the rivers. A playground for the youth does not have to take a lot of space. It can be originally mounted e.g., in the fence surrounding the sports ground (climbing facilities, seats, slides). The architecture

¹³ Quotation from student's essay written by Aleksandra Grabowska.

for the youth should stand out with its form and include a wide range of functions. In “skateable architecture” the walls are created in such a way that they can be used as ramps for various tricks. The elevations may be also used as climbing walls (like e.g. Youth Factory, Merida). Desired public spaces (lively and with different users) have to be “flexible”: e.g., a wooden stage used for performances or skateboard manoeuvres, a street lamp with a basket and a little square for playing basketball, a square with benches, equipped with speakers and a megaphone (in order to play music), which can be used for dancing, playing the instruments, rehearsals and parties.

It is an art to design something which does not have only one function – e.g., include a skate park in the city space without wasting valuable surfaces – like in front of the MACBA museum in Barcelona or next to the Casa da Música in Porto. Multi-functional places come into existence when, at the design level, we think of several groups that will be using that space. In the case of skateboarding, stairs, pavements and barriers can be used. They have to be of suitable strength and texture (the space around the National Stadium in Warsaw, which is currently only a parking space, could have been longer used by rollerbladers who utilize it if the designers had thought about a suitable material for the street furniture. The form of stairs and seats which constitute the space for disabled people may be a good place for skateboarders. The skateboarder gives a new function to the already existing elements by his activity. In Barcelona, Berlin and Prague, skatetourists are attracted by the natural skatepots. A good skatepark should include various obstacles: walls, platforms, ramps, banisters, pipes made of stainless steel and lighting which enables people to skate at night. Skateboarders constitute a group of young people who are not always accepted by others. Thus, the creation of places where they will be able to fulfil their passions would take local residents to them. Such a space is the realization of the social aspect of protection from vandalism, e.g., devastation of walls and banisters not adapted for skateboarders.

In crowded cities, it is vital to locate entertaining and recreational functions in the city centre by revitalising the river banks, lakes, old harbours and wasteland. The space created for leisure activities must have other functions in order to attract residents and tourists. In this way, it plays an integrative role by becoming a meeting place. One of the impressive places might be a beach, located in the city centre, with the space for leisure and sport, for example, apart from sunbathing chairs, there might be cycling, rollerblading and skateboarding lanes, as well as walking trails enabling people to do sightseeing, an open-air gym, sports grounds for playing beach volleyball and other team sports. There might also be obstacle courses, running tracks, places for concerts, parties, open-air discos, mini-golf and solitary contemplation. On account of the increase of land value, the closer to the city centre the open space is, the better and more efficiently it should be used. Thus, the place will be ideal for leisure, on condition that the activities offered there will be varied.

The most desired spaces are those which can simultaneously accommodate a large number of users and give opportunities to take up many activities at the same time. There should be places created for as many kinds of activities as possible, in such a way that the participants would be able to observe each other. Multi-functional space should be open for changes and modernizations.

2.6. Introducing new traditions to forgotten places

“Young people who are adored by some and disapproved by others, constitute the main driving force of life in the urban spaces”¹⁴. They often take space which is not designed for them. It is connected with their independence and tendency to be original. Places (and designs) which often do not have positive associations among other inhabitants, may constitute one of the most attractive spaces for young people, for example, post-industrial areas which are perfect places for revitalization and adapting to „the youth’s functions”. Young people who constitute the most active users of the city are the quickest group to adapt to new places and give them a new lease of life. It is a good and cheap solution to adapt deserted and deteriorating buildings to paintball arenas. The buildings require some reinforcement, new composition of colours and greenery also on the walls in order to create a suitable climate, e.g., Jeong-Hwa pattern, with the use of old, painted doors. The introduction of ‘new traditions’ brings cities to life. Therefore, a new model of activity should be given to forgotten places whose previous function turned out to be unattractive.

The revitalization of old buildings and the use of recyclable materials is a very positive ecological, economical and social phenomena. Thanks to that, young people pay attention to environmental protection and the opportunity to create “something from the ground up”.

2.7. Access to a variety of functions

A large number of shopping arcades in the 21st century took young people’s attention away from the Old Town. Therefore, in the public spaces there should be something which attracts young people to the shopping arcades, e.g. cinemas. Outdoor cinemas, similar to the cinema organized near the brewery in Lublin, should be found in several places in every city that takes care of the entertainment for the youth. The introduction of outdoor cinemas would attract people back to the city centres. In order to encourage young people to be in the public spaces, it is vital to create the possibility of shopping – the same thing that is offered by the shopping arcades. “Public space has to be surprising and changeable. Moreover, it has to meet the expectations of a contemporary human and win with aggressive temples of consumption”¹⁵.

Cultural events and social life bring the space to life, especially at night. At weekends, young people eagerly spend their time listening to music, in pubs and in cinemas (rarely in theatres and museums). The youth should be given “easy access” to all the places which attract people by their architecture and repertoire.

There should be more places created in the open space, which would have a cultural and social function, e.g. open-air libraries – modelled on the Open-Air Library in Magdeburg.

In order for the youth to find their place in the urban space, there should be improvements made in the functioning of cultural centres, social and sport clubs. There should also be after-school activities. City centres, green areas, sport facilities and all housing estates should meet the standards in order for the youth to spend time there and feel good. According to

¹⁴ Quotation from student’s essay written by Łukasz Buczek.

¹⁵ Quotation from student’s essay written by Marzena Radkiewicz.

Ch. Alexander¹⁶, the bonds of activity should be located about 100 metres away from each other – especially in the open spaces of housing estates. If a space meets the expectations of young people, they will take care of its look and functioning.

Public spaces should generate profits. Catering is the driving force behind it. It should be adjusted to young people's financial situation. Public spaces should include places for the consumption of beer in order to enable people to drink beer which they previously bought in a shop. e.g., specially designed circles dug in the ground of a square. The new way of thinking about aspects concerning catering would enable a wider group of users to spend their free time in public spaces, especially those who cannot afford to use present services. It would also contribute to the withdrawal of ubiquitous umbrellas with breweries' logos.

There should also be well organized public transport with interesting routes for different means of transport in order for the youth to get to their spaces – the public transport should include information boards, road signs, bicycle stands, car parks and bus stops – easily accessible and well lit. Public transport is of great importance because a lot of young people do not have their own cars. What is more, it should be adjusted to the needs of disabled people.

3. Commendation for social participation

Public consultation (including the youth) in the design of the spaces, enabling them to create the spaces on their own, is the key to gain uniqueness and complete adaptation of the spaces to the needs of their users. Thanks to them, a beautiful and functional product comes into being.

The empty areas handed over by the city and the permission for future users to design spaces, ideally from the ground (under the watchful eye of a cultural institution), would have a very positive effect. Such cooperation between the users and the artists worked well in Polish cities while designing the backyards, for example in the "UNBLOCK" campaign which took place in the district of Rakowiec in Warsaw. That is why such experiences are worth using while designing public spaces. Young people who are engaged in the design of the space, invent places to sit or paint murals on particular surfaces, feel responsible for what they created, take care of it and do not allow others to destroy it.

In order to create a functional space for the youth, there should be an environmental (define time period and the level of the youth's wealth) and architectural analysis of the surroundings made. One should check the availability of cultural and sport facilities, as well as the crime rate. Users' individual needs, interests and expected functions, which the city has not been able to fulfil so far, should also be discussed. It is necessary to trust the youth – they should be allowed to create their own space in a way which most suits them. They cannot be deprived of creativity but they should be given the opportunity to develop their abilities and meet their needs. "People create the unique climate of a place. Therefore, it is in the architects and urban planners' interest to attract people to the designed spaces „from the beginning” by engaging them in the process of creation"¹⁷.

¹⁶ Alexander Ch., *Język wzorców: miasta, budynki, konstrukcja*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2008, 170.

¹⁷ Quotation from student's essay written by Magdalena Makaruk.

4. Summary for educational purposes

Students presented 189 Internet sources in the bibliography. Out of 33 written papers available in their electronic version, 18 web pages were repeated twice, 3 web pages – three times, 4 web pages – four times and 1 web page – five times. Students used 97 web pages written in English and 92 web pages written in Polish. They analysed (or quoted) 4 web pages displayed in Google on the first page (i.e. 1–10 position) – after they typed “public spaces”, 2 web pages after they typed “public spaces – the youth”, and 1 web page displayed in a position from 10 to 20. Despite detailed guidelines regarding the rules of citation, all of the students provided a bibliography at the end of the essay, without using footnotes, suggesting that their written content is only “inspired”. Students did not present the dates of viewing the Internet sources. Therefore, the author included a common period of time when the web pages were viewed – from 01.11.2011 to 31.01.2012 – i.e. the date when the abovementioned essays were set and the deadline when the students had to hand in their papers. There were 16 corrected and randomly chosen papers. They were written by the students on their own, therefore, plagiarism was not committed by the authors. However, it does not mean that they did not use “other people’s thoughts”.

The correction of papers by the leading architect might create a misleading sense of wasted time. Yet, more flexible education – in circumstances, when every year only 20% of Architecture graduates find occupation where they work with projects¹⁸ – is a new and necessary duty.

The written assignments given to students reveal the deficiencies and shortcomings in students’ education. Despite the fact that the best way to present the skills is project work, written texts might be the supplement to projects and an exercise in the field of eloquence, synthesis of knowledge and presentation of ideas. Written assignments represent a wide variety of student’s mental interests. Project work concern particular field and it is impossible to demonstrate all the issues as a whole because some problems do not concern any subject. The picture of sensitivity and imagination received in the project, is the most important one, but it does not have to be the only one. Because of too large number of graduates who enter the job market, it is recommended to prepare them to be the critics of architecture, researchers, clerks and politicians who deal with architecture, urbanism and spatial planning. It is, therefore, essential to have the ability to use professional, appropriate, and beautiful language of architecture and urbanism which should be the result of education.

One should work on students’ occupational ethics – the lack of remorse (also awareness) in the use of the others’ work is not surprising in the face of ACTA, but it insults the ethos of a highly educated person.

¹⁸ Data not supported by research – information taken from the conversations with students of Lublin University of Technology, reporting on the success of their older colleagues who had already left the university.

5. Conclusions¹⁹

An appropriately designed public space gives huge value to the space itself and its neighbourhood. It also presents the standard of the area and the culture of its residents. It cannot constitute the required element of the land development only, but it should become a landmark of the city. When the space is of a specific nature, it can influence the whole area of the city or dominate it. If it is well thought out, it will be full of life after the completion of its construction.

Public space should provide: the integration of young people with their peers; contact with nature; the possibility to do various sports; leisure; entertainment; modern education (also from the historical aspect); participation in various cultural events; available catering. However, most of all, it should enable:

- participation in the process of the creation of space,
- demonstration of one's uniqueness and inventiveness by creating the space and deciding about the way it is used and arranged,
- presenting one's attitudes and creative skills.

The space expected by the youth should be flexible and multi-functional.

Well-designed public spaces for the youth may revolutionize their lives and the lives of their family, create a dialogue between different age groups and prevent generation conflicts.

There should be a balance between the spaces which aim to integrate people in the surroundings of architecture, and green spaces allowing for privacy in the surroundings of nature.

One should work on the awareness of young people and make them cognizant of the fact that the contact with real friends is much more valuable than the contact with virtual ones, and that being in the natural environment contributes to the improvement of physical and psychological health.

The above-mentioned text may constitute an outline for a lecture on public spaces and it may appeal to students because it was created on the basis of their own thoughts or the thoughts accepted by them.

The names of 3rd year students (academic year 2011/2012) of Architecture and Civil Engineering Faculty at the department of Architecture at Lublin University of Technology – **authors of the essays on which this article is based:** Marzena Bednarczyk, Katarzyna Bezpałko, Dorota Boguta, Anita Broda, Łukasz Buczek, Barbara Dąbkowska, Anna Dudzicz, Agnieszka Dziechciaruk, Mateusz Eciak, Anna Gąbka, Ewelina Goljanek, Aleksandra Grabowska, Ewa Hermanowska, Jakub Jasielski, Marcin Jasielski, Katarzyna Jaszczuk, Iwona Kolak, Jakub Korona, Aneta Kuć, Iwona Ligęza, Magdalena Makaruk, Ewa Miłobóg, Alicja Paluch, Urszula Paluch, Aleksandra Pizoń, Ewa Popko, Marzena Radkiewicz, Marcin Samorański, Igor Sankowski, Marcin Semeniuk, Katarzyna Stępnia, Magdalena Szal, Klaudia Szpak, Dorota Tarkowska, Izabela Turkiewicz, Joanna Wasilewska, Joanna Wójcik, Anna Woźniak.

¹⁹ Conclusions constitute author's summary of students' deliberations and include key thoughts from students' essays.

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