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(II) PUBLIC SPACES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY YOUTH – COMPOSITION, ARCHITECTURAL FORM, MODERN TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

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

(II) PRZESTRZENIE PUBLICZNE DLA MŁODZIEŻY XXI WIEKU – KOMPOZYCJA, FORMA ARCHITEKTONICZNA, NOWOCZESNE ROZWIĄZANIA TECHNICZNE

Wyniki sondażu przeprowadzonego wśród studentów Wydziału Budownictwa i Architektury Politechniki Lubelskiej

Abstract

This paper is an attempt to present views (ideas, observations, thoughts) and dreams of the youth interested in urban planning connected with public spaces. Students state that public space for the youth, as well as for other users, should have its own unique atmosphere, appropriate colours, good proportions and connections with the surroundings. They should also emanate with the beauty of designed forms and materials. However, there are specific features of the space which are of most interest to the youth. Young people value "architectural jokes". They dream about a possibility to meet in a group, in open spaces with places to sit, which are organized in a way that is suitable for them. People of this age appreciate public spaces with frontages which give them a feeling of shelter and privacy. They accept traditional ways of spending free time e.g. those offered by catering services, as long as the service is compatible with the surrounding architecture and composition that is cohesive with the surroundings. The youth dream about the introduction of new technological solutions to urban planning as well as innovative and partly interactive public spaces. They want to use green areas which would take them to a different, non-urbanized world where they could feel a mysterious atmosphere.

Keywords: *youth, public spaces, composition*

Streszczenie

Artykuł jest próbą przedstawienia poglądów (idei, spostrzeżeń, refleksji) i marzeń dzisiejszej młodzieży, zainteresowanej urbanistyką, na temat przestrzeni publicznych. Studenci sądzą, że przestrzeń publiczna dla młodzieży, tak samo jak i dla innych użytkowników, powinna mieć swój niepowtarzalny klimat, odpowiednią paletę barw, dobre proporcje i powiązania z otoczeniem, emanować pięknem zaprojektowanych form i użytych materiałów. Są jednak specyficzne cechy przestrzeni, które szczególnie podobają się młodym. Młodzi cenią żarty architektoniczne. Marzą o możliwości spotykania się w grupie w przestrzeniach otwartych z miejscami do siedzenia, zorganizowanymi w im odpowiadający sposób. Doceniają przestrzenie publiczne z pierzejami dającymi poczucie schronienia i prywatności. Akceptują tradycyjne sposoby spędzania wolnego czasu, np. oferowane przez usługi gastronomii, ale pod warunkiem lepszego zespolenia form tych usług z otaczającą architekturą oraz kompozycji spójnej z otoczeniem. Marzą o wcieleniu nowoczesnych rozwiązań technicznych w urbanistykę miasta oraz o innowacyjnych, a nawet częściowo interaktywnych przestrzeniach publicznych. Pragną korzystać z terenów zielonych, które przenosiłyby ich w inny, niezurbanizowany świat – działały na zasadzie kontrastu, stwarzały klimat tajemniczości.

Słowa kluczowe: *młodzież, przestrzenie publiczne, kompozycja*

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1. Introduction

The article is a summary of thoughts included in 39 essays[1] of 5th semester students of Architecture at Lublin University of Technology[2]. 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. Despite detailed guidelines concerning the rules of citing, students added bibliography at the end of their essays and they did not include any footnotes. It suggests that their written texts were "only inspired". None of the sentences in this article constitute personal statements of the author. They are students' shortened deliberations[3] or quotes taken from their essays. Grandiloquent quotations which express the authors' emotions are put in quotation marks. Footnotes were only used in originally quoted sentences found in students' essays (with three exceptions, where passages from the texts were put in quotation marks) but they were not used in individual students' phrases or metaphors put in quotation marks.

The paper includes students' own ideas for designing public spaces, proposals inspired by well-known and currently accomplished spaces, proposals inspired by projects and detailed descriptions of the most spectacular and successful public spaces created in the last few years[4].

The whole collection of thoughts, reflections and insights reveals different dreams of the youth as well as the imagination and preferences of future architects.

Such collected and grouped views of the new generation of the youth interested in the subject of urban planning, might be a hint for designing new public spaces as well as a stimulus to search and update already existing models and design trends.

2. The composition, water, green areas and philosophy of open spaces

Students presented a lot of insights and reflections which coincide with the general rules concerning public space design. Spaces which are very close to local communities and bring joy to the inhabitants are incredibly valuable for the identity of the city, also from a young

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

[2] The article is a continuation of the first part "Public spaces for the 21st century youth – needs and expectations". The results of a survey carried out among the students of Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture Faculty at Lublin University of Technology.

[3] One sentence can hold opinions of more than one authors. Therefore, names of students whose works have been used, are listed at the end of the paper.

[4] 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.

person's point of view. The main public space in the city (market square, promenade) should be its heart and it should create conditions for taking up initiatives.

According to students, public space should be functional and attractive, as well as adapted to the way of life of its users. It should be also comfortable (in accordance with the principles of ergonomics), friendly, modern, original, cosy, elegant, lively and safe. It should have its own unique atmosphere, appropriate colours, good proportions and connections with the surroundings (appropriate communication). What is more, it should reveal the beauty of designed forms and materials used to build them, delight visitors, be a characteristic sign of a particular community, and be changeable and surprising. The space cannot be associated with boredom and greyness. A well designed public space should only contribute to positive behaviours and create conditions to express appropriate emotions and reactions. It should also provide psychophysical comfort – it cannot be the cause of frustration among its users, but it has to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of its residents. The space should be noisy and lively. It should represent the city and provide anonymity for its users. A friendly space provides shelter from climate severity and creates a feeling of safety which depends on the level of aesthetics, lighting, the presence of landmarks, monitoring and the clarity of the layout.

Students notice and agree with the theory that the space should be adjusted to 'human scale' and create a possibility to move comfortably. The scale of the open space must be adequate to the scale of the city. If it is disproportionate, it may be shocking and overwhelming by its size. Large, homogeneous spaces are tiresome and they do not surprise the observer with contrast. The buildings surrounding the open space should be proportionate to the interior. The central angle should be 25–30º (K. Wejchert, 1984). Views opening towards other elements of urban structures are very important.

A well designed public space completes and increases the value of its surroundings. Appropriate composition of the public space constitutes a cohesive whole and harmonizes with colour and material of the surfaces used for different functions. The decor of the space is adjusted to its context – inspired by the surrounding buildings whose details refer to street furniture e.g. walls, pergolas, manhole covers, flowerpots, benches, lamps and bins.

The composition of public space for the youth (or parts of this space dedicated to the youth) and street furniture used in it, should take into account the specific needs and expectations appropriate to this age group.

Young people have a sense of humour. They appreciate and enjoy different "architectural jokes" and metaphors. They are also open to modern designs. A variety of materials, greenery, street furniture and the introduction of art (sculptures, installations) triggers different feelings connected with the perception of the space. Artistic assets of the space help to recognize, memorize and create the atmosphere of the place, such as Mustangs at Las Colinas by Robert Glen. The use of creative solutions stimulates the imagination, widens users' intellectual horizons and creates new opportunities for them. However, they cannot interfere with their private sphere or restrict them in any way.

Aesthetic qualities of the space influence the creation of sensibility and beauty, among the youth. By its form and structure, the space should generate good emotional perceptions and provide strong experiences. It should also contribute to the reflections (sculptures, accents, thematic zones). Inspiring sculptures are those which impel to a wider interpretation

and can be used as playgrounds, seats or even exhibits on which murals can be made. The introduction of colour brings repelling buildings and other dull elements to life. However, it should be done with moderation in order not to live in a "naive, colourful and plastic world, full of strange forms that shock people"[5].

Young users of the space often look for places where they can find shelter because the monuments, the scale of surrounding buildings and their historical values or functions require official behaviour which makes young people feel "observed and uncovered".

The "edge effect" should be taken into consideration. People prefer to move and stand closely to the edge of the building because they have a better observation point and they feel safer than in the middle of the space. This is why frontages around public spaces should be formed, by creating cosy alleys, hollows, gates, alcoves, arcades and passageways in which young people eagerly hide. "If the edge fails, the space will never be lively" (Ch. Alexander, 1980)"[6].

A well-chosen and attractive location of the space for the youth is very important. It can be situated on a hill with a view over a beautiful urban landscape. Beautiful views or different events happening in the space guarantee that people will stay there – otherwise, the space will be deserted and useless. Integrative space for the youth, situated on a hill can be controlled by the environment. Such a space should provide discretion, but it should also be well lit and monitored by CCTV cams and municipal police (because some young people still have a drive to destroy shared property). Hgive a feeling of self-confidence and eagerness to observe. They are associated with leadership and they are perfect places for organizing picnics. However, it does not have to be a hill. Stairs are good enough – the Spanish Steps and the Barcelona Magic Fountain provide an example. The localization and seats should be chosen by the youth and modified according to their needs.

There are also longitudinal spaces needed (not only for the youth) where people would be able to go jogging or dog walking, like, for example, High Line in Manhattan, New York.

The ground, apart from being provided with a 'human scale', should be varied by the means of different ecological materials, water and non-schematic lighting e.g. in the form of lit flooring. The surfaces should be of high quality and the design must be comfortable for disabled people.

The lighting is of great importance. The most interesting lighting solutions are those in which the lights are built in the elements of street furniture: ledges, pools and fountains which can be used after dusk. Attractive lighting should have "innovative forms" or come out of the various shapes placed on the ground.

There are many ways of bringing life to urban spaces which should (simultaneously) affect sight, touch and hearing. "Playing" with texture, colour, and light stimulates imagination and introduces a new way of perceiving the reality. Temporary installations might be essential elements of the space. They create "a fresh breeze" and by touching upon important subjects, they make people think. One of the examples of such installations might be "Gdynia Playground" project – "PoCoTo", 2011.

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[5] Quotation from student's essay written by Iwona Kolak.
[6] Excerpt based on student's essay written by Marzena Bednarczyk.

Public spaces should be attractive in every season of the year, like in Paris, where city squares turn into ice skating rinks in winter.

Water in the public space constitutes an object of highest praise. "It has something in itself which attracts young people who want to spend their time in silence"[7]. It is a surprising element which never looks the same, reflects beautiful views and architecture, provides rest and relaxation in the "mist of refreshing fountain streams and cascades; soothes and calms by the swoosh", arouses people's interest and organizes the space. Water also provides the feeling of pleasure and incredible experiences. We can "play, fool around and run across unexpectedly bursting streams"[8]. Thus, water is one of the greatest attractions in the urban space. The ideal place for children and the youth are fountain streams which burst from the floor and invite people to come, touch and play. They are open, inviting and they do not create any barriers. If we turn the fountains off, we receive a space "ready" for other functions, e.g., dancing. Bath fountains as well as other interesting, modern fountains, in the form of water coming out of the crevice, are rare in Poland. Water in the city (fountains, streams, rivers, lakes) should be available: "in order to bathe and soak feet". Water attractions draw many people. e.g., (inspired by St. Mark's square) a square in Bordeaux, covered with a thin layer of water which evaporates and creates the effect of mist. Cities located along the rivers should be "turned to the side of the river" by creating boulevards, riverside parks and spectacular objects situated on water.

Public space should have informative function obtained by architectural symbolism. The marking of walking trails, by the use of different surface of the flooring, points out the beginning and the end of a trail. It also helps people to navigate. Public space needs to have lay-bys excluded from the main stream of traffic.

Catering services, in the form of popular tables with umbrellas, are essential and well functioning, if they do not take too much space. They cannot disturb the composition of the layout but they should constitute its essential part. Green areas "attract" young people on account of their functions but also because of beautiful compositions, vegetation richness and changeability, connected with seasons of the year. The strongest emotions are aroused by green areas which constitute contrast – when we move from a busy city to an oasis of calmness, with water and seats made of natural rocks (equipped with city signs, bins and lighting), designed in a way which refers to the character and history of the surroundings and creates a unique atmosphere. The youth would rather spend their time in parks and squares where the levels of flooring are lowered. Such a solution creates discrete meeting places for friends (designed for relaxation and elevenses) and alleys for couples, giving the feeling of closeness and safety.

In order to encourage people to visit green areas, the places must be given a unique character. There also need to be an "atmosphere of mystery" created by introducing various odd-shaped and puzzling sculptures. Such a place would win recognition, especially, if there was a possibility to climb on the sculptures. Objects and street furniture of unusual shapes arouse the curiosity of the youth, stimulate them to act and encourage them to spend time in public spaces.

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[7] Quotation from student's essay written by Aneta Kuć.
[8] Quotation from student's essay written by Anna Gąbka.

3. The form of street furniture

Street furniture, by its form and scale, should encourage active, young people to use it – an interesting solution is to create seats which are placed in the topography of terrain, e.g., retaining walls which can be used as seating. The youth are looking for a place where they could be in isolation, assume a secure position and do their activities in a group. In order for the youth to "feel at home", the places should be hidden, secluded and protected from wind and sun. Most of all, the space must offer opportunity for a large number of people to sit comfortably at the same time, in a way which gives them very little privacy. The fact that young people do not chat while sitting on the benches, situated in the housing estate area, results from a certain failure of the seating: they do not provide discretion, safety and attractive views. The users of such places are visible from all the sides but they cannot see anything. It is important to arrange the elements of equipment (seats, lighting, greenery) in such a way that they create favourable conditions for meeting a wider circle of friends. That is why well designed seating should be placed in a 90º angle or be oval-shaped (unlike the regular setting: one next to another), in order for the youth to be able to discuss and observe the space.

"Anxiety about the empty space on a design paper" dominates many of the designs. Thus, benches are placed randomly without psychological analysis. They should be sheltered and placed not in the middle of the space but along the facades, in building alcoves, or in the surroundings of greenery. "A safe rear" is very important. There should be protective alcoves, in the rear and above the place, created in order to provide good visibility – without unnecessary exposure. The alcoves should be away from the main walking trails in order for the youth to feel that these places are designed especially for them[9]. Seating should be comfortable, aesthetic, useful and it should provide a place where people could stretch out and lay their books. Places for study and contemplation should be situated in beauty spots and retreats to help people focus. In the summer, traditional hammocks hung between the trees or places on the grass, equipped with elements enabling people to lean, would be very popular. Moreover, rocks with smooth surfaces, heated by the Sun, would be also of great interest. Young people are attracted by unique forms. For various meetings and chatting in a group the "super – bench" would be a great solution (furniture made of wood or other material, with seats on different levels and in different positions – sitting, lying, half lying – giving a lot of possibilities when it comes to the creation of its form, modelled on benches which are placed along the beach or the new pedestrian area in Barcelona). The bench can be used by several friends at once, or a five-member family with a dog. In urban spaces, it is worth promoting furniture such as the "Meeting Bowl" in New York. It is a great substitute for well worn tables in the cafés. One of the students proposed an idea for a seating which is always exposed to the Sun[10]. It is a deckchair accessible from all sides – a flat, wooden figure with a pyramid in the middle used as a chair back. The number of possible shapes and ways to design seating is infinite. That is why they must be unique and intriguing. There is only one aim: "when you go there once, you will have the need to come back and invite your friends there".

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[9] Excerpt based on students' essays written by Marzena Bednarczyk and Dorota Tarkowska.
[10] The idea of the student – Aneta Kuć.

Apart from specially arranged seating, there should be other elements of architecture such as steps, fountain edges, flower pot edges, monument plinths and small walls which would allow people to sit. Young people like to gather in one, characteristic place (e.g., at the Maria Skłodowska-Curie monument in Lublin) instead of sitting on benches designed for that purpose, because the benches are often "scattered" which prevents people from meeting in a bigger group. The places which are occupied by the youth (e.g., plinths of monuments or steps) should be adapted to sitting by covering them with comfortable fabric.

A better adaptation of the space for sitting and other activities may be achieved by: an appropriate roof e.g. canvas; barriers; differentiation of levels which gives a feeling of being under or inside of something – depending on the activity which takes place there. The differentiation of levels in meeting places and the division of space to fragments, by building roofs, steps or arcades, gives a feeling of participation in solving a mystery, entering the unknown and curiosity. It also encourages people to observe and discover. The space becomes organized when it creates the opportunity for its users to observe, be in a safe position, stay protected from the sun, be isolated from the noise, and create a feeling of place and identity. Dimmed and partly uncovered places as well as enclosures, contribute to the emergence of the feeling of possessing a particular space. Different characters of neighbouring places trigger different behaviours of the users. There should be different facilities created in order to attract attention and encourage people to come. These might be: ice cream stands, advertising columns and exhibitions which cause a discussion or meeting.

Street furniture (seats, couches, rubbish bins, flower pots) and details should be original, different from each other, but in the same style. A thoroughly designed urban planning detail (such as a bench in the form of a meandering ribbon along the creek in Kirchsteingfeld, Potsdam) is beautiful, comfortable to use and "resistant" to vandalism.

4. Fascination for technology and modernity

Young people desire "a fresh breath of new ideas and experiences, a shot of positive energy emerging from a designed place". The desire for modernity, originality, and sensations might be fulfilled by laser shows with music and appropriate choreography. Such shows turn out to be successful in public spaces and buildings. Modern equipment and lighting effects, visible from a long distance, attract the young and the old alike. Lasers are perfect for advertising (it is possible to display companies' logos and coats of arms of the cities). Thanks to that, the cost of a laser quickly pays for itself[11].

"Dancing fountains" also fulfil people's expectations. They are of many different shapes and heights – they can be also illuminated by the use of different colours which give phenomenal effects while the water moves according to particular choreography and music (sometimes played live). Even small, one meter high fountains with green areas may be attractive places for meetings and performances. Water cascades flowing down the multi- -level, repeatable modules (the side of the module might be from several to several dozen metres) which create a cohesive and harmonious whole are very exciting. The modules

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[11] Excerpt based on student's essay written by Igor Sankowski.

might have various functions. They might differ in colour of the light, material, texture and the greenery (its arrangement and height). The modules must also have certain weight and they have to be protected against theft[12].

Many people would enjoy visiting modern "animated – entertaining – recreational" spaces which offer access to culture – areas of grass regenerating eyesight, enormous screens for showing movies of various genres and a place to lie on the grass or "long, meandering benches".

The youth enthusiastically accept new things, therefore, the designers of the space should not stick to existing schemes. An innovative kind of game is laser paintball, in which a laser beam is used to shoot instead of paint. It is a stunning game after dusk. Squares for playing play-station games would also be very popular. Young people would like to participate in the games which take place in public squares, in a way which is proposed by Greet Street Games KMA Creative Technology Ltd. in Gateshead and Sunderland.

For individuals and people who prefer to read, learn, listen to music and play computer games, there should be open air places created. Such places would provide peaceful leisure, silence, beautiful views, protection from being observed by others, feeling of safety and discretion. Such a group of people require only one or two-person benches which protect from the Sun and have solar panels installed in their roofs, in order to provide energy. The benches should be equipped with Wi-Fi (such as a bench in the shape of a flower in New York). There should also be a speaker built in the bench in order for the people to listen to music. The bench should be situated near coffee machines.

Young people should be given access to libraries, youth centres, digital libraries and other places with Internet access (thanks to that, the youth will have access to the press, literature, music and films) so that education will no longer be associated with long and dull evenings at home or in the dormitory.

Residents should be aware of the fact that there is always something happening in the main urban squares. City squares may be brought to life by introducing certain change and unpredictability. There should also be elements which increase people's interest and provide light shows reacting to person's movement. There might be 3D mapping on the elevation of neighbouring buildings or on the surface of the square. During the day, the changeability of colours on the elements of the square or buildings should be introduced. The squares would function throughout the day and during the night. They would surprise with changeability. The squares would be ideal places for installations which integrate residents or provoke people to stop and reflect – an "incessantly lasting" festival of kinetic art of light, such as the "Light Move Festival" in Lodz.

5. Conclusions[13]

Students are "greedy" for innovations. Words: "new, modern, innovative, surprising, original, unique, untypical, non-schematic, unusual, intriguing, changeability, unpredictability,

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[12] *Ibidem*.

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

curiosity" are repeated several times in each essay. The youth crave for having a possibility to use the newest technological achievements, e.g., Wi-Fi available in every place of leisure, but also ecological solutions such as solar panels.

The essays contain the praise for simplicity connected with technology. Students try to prove that the innovative solutions they desire are not costly for the city but their cost will pay for itself quickly, or it will be compensated by social benefits.

To come to the conclusion that young people want "cosmic" modernity and incredible sensations like in science fiction movies, would be hasty. Students emphasize that the form cannot be close to kitsch.

In order to meet young people's expectations, new functions and elements of public space equipment need to be introduced. It has to be done according to recent trends of spending free time which change quickly. What is attractive for the youth nowadays, will not be interesting for their successors (who are children now).

It is typical that students rarely mention the historic spaces in their papers e.g. Lublin Old Town (they only mention Po Farze square – as a good place for meetings in a beauty spot). It is surprising because for an elderly observer, Grodzka Street is full of cafés and clubs and appears to be the youth's favourite place[14].

The youth crave for: 1) safety, 2) individuality allowing to find the identity of the place, 3) flexibility and possibility to modify the solutions, 4) architectural jokes and unconventionality, 5) modern design, 6) introduction of modern, interactive solutions to city's urban planning.

The names of 3rd year students (academic year 2011/2012) of Architecture and Urban planning 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, Wojciech Cizio, Barbara Dąbkowska, Anna Dudzicz, Agnieszka Dziechciaruk, Mateusz Eciak, Anna Gąbka, Ewelina Golianek, 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 Stępniak, Magdalena Szal, Klaudia Szpak, Dorota Tarkowska, Izabela Turkiewicz, Joanna Wasilewska, Joanna Wójcik, Anna Woźniak.

References

References are common for two papers by M. Siestrzewitowska, avaiable on pages 111-113.

[14] The paper about the reflections of students on public spaces for the youth, in Lublin (place of study), is planned to be published in Research Bulletins of Lublin University of Technology.