Identification of the **genius loci** category in the process of recognition of the city landscape design issue

**Identyfikacja kategorii genius loci w procesie rozpoznawania przedmiotu projektowania krajobrazu miasta**

**Abstract**

City landscape design in the approach presented here is a process that combines the language of contemporary urban design, landscape and the phenomenon that the landscape represents. Using it allows the most important values, meaning and the identity of the space to be recognised, which gives the opportunity to accurately highlight its shortcomings and its potential. The method of city landscape design process presented within includes a distinctive landscape analysis and a system of results synthesis and interpretation. Three aspects have been presented: the general approach to the research process, the role of lighting, and the importance of urban furniture in the design of the city landscape.

**Keywords:** design, city, landscape, lighting, urban furniture, identity

**Streszczenie**

Projektowanie krajobrazu miasta w przedstawionym ujęciu jest działaniem odnoszącym się do łączenia języka współczesnej urbanistyki, krajobrazu i fenomenu, jaki krajobraz sobą reprezentuje. Pozwala rozpoznać najważniejsze wartości, znaczenia i tożsamość badanej przestrzeni, przez co daje możliwość dokładnego uwypuklenia jej mankamentów i potencjału. Przedstawiona metoda pokazuje drogę postępowania analitycznego oraz specyficzny sposób syntezy wyników i ich interpretację w procesie projektowym. Przedstawiono tutaj trzy aspekty: ogólne ujęcie procesu badawczego, a także rolę oświetlenia i znaczenie umeblowania w kształtowaniu krajobrazu miasta.

**Słowa kluczowe:** projektowanie, miasto, krajobraz, światło, meble miejskie, tożsamość
1. Introduction

The city landscape is directly experienced by the individual in a succession of views. Nowadays, urban planning designs fragments of the city structure; however, it is not involved in a comprehensive reception of its undertakings.¹

The definition presented by Czesław Przybylski says that “designing is first of all an intellectual work, which leads to satisfying the individual’s material and spiritual needs” [48]. This definition was expanded in the study by Bohdan Lachert [34], who formulated the intellectual process as a whole in five stages: starting from the intuitional recognition, moving onto the analytical process, then creating an intentional object, completing the object, and ending with an assessment of the work produced in this process. Lachert [34] based the expansion of his conception on the phenomenological model of the architectural work’s layered construction proposed by Roman Ingarden [23]. The phenomenological approach proved to be useful, as this trend of thinking allowed less measurable human needs to be taken into consideration in the design of the city landscape.

In the current state of research, the aforementioned concepts are complemented by the genius loci phenomenology developed by Christian Norberg-Schulz [45].

Taking into account the fact that the research achievements in Polish landscape architecture in the field of lighting and urban furniture are relatively insignificant, and at the same time they have great importance for the form, function and meaning of the city landscape, these issues will be presented in this article separately.

2. State of research

The notion of designing the city landscape is associated with spatial [61, 27, 77, 7, 60], social [38, 12, 21, 79, 15] and phenomenological [25, 43, 17, 29, 47] aspects².

This process assumes that a specific space has its own structure [61, 77, 38], meaning [12, 27, 71, 15] and phenomenon [43, 1980; 17, 47]. At the same time, the city landscape [54, 57] constitutes a metaphor for space and place [38, 17, 29, 47], which is the subject of a design study. It is essential to create a holistic vision of the landscape phenomenon in the design process, as it allows the genius loci of a space to be captured. The division of this process into five categories: things, order, time, light and character allows a complementary analysis of space [43, 28, 29, 53].

¹ Slawomir Gzell, Lectures etc.
² The emphasis is here laid upon evolution in treatment of landscape in reference to urban layout, where starting from Rome layout authored by Gianbattista Nolli in 1748, through examinations of structure by Camillo Sitte [61] and perception of space by George Kepes, expanded later by Simon Bell [7] or Kazimierz Wejchert [77, 78], or finally the compiled mathematic formulas by Nikos Salingaros [60], to broadening a theme through social issues in sociological-spatial research in humanistic [38] or regulatory schools [21], up to observation of phenomenon of space, among others as a fragment of city landscape in postulates by Jane Jacobs [25], in-depth studies by Christian Norberg-Schulz [43, 44, 45], Jeremi T. Królikowski and Jan Rylke [31], or finally in perceptional remarks by Juhani Pallasmaa [47].
2.1. Lighting

Within the category of light, both daytime and nighttime states of space are analysed [45], including natural and artificial lighting as well as the influence of the latter on the image of the space [83]. The properties of natural light and weather conditions cause the reception of space to undergo constant changes [40, 9, 55, 26, 73, 70, 50, 80]. When dealing with the impact of light changeability on architecture, urban planning and landscape architecture, works by K. Lynch [38] G. Cullen [12] K. Wejchert [77] Ch. Norberg-Schulz [45] or P. Zumthor [85] are worth mentioning. The visual features and composition [38, 12, 42, 10, 13, 35, 11, 54], issues of meaning and spatial identity [45, 29, 81], environmental conditions [37, 35, 81] as well as functional and technical aspects [6, 74, 19], ought to be taken into account when dealing with the role of artificial lighting in the city’s image at night. Light has the potential to co-create the identity of the urbanised space and to influence its image, for example through introducing new spatial values. Ch. Norberg-Schulz [45] devoted much attention to the value of light in creation of a place. He attributed three types of light (which together create the character of place: romantic, cosmic, classical light) to three types of the genius loci of space [29].

2.2. Urban furniture

The role of urban furniture can be considered in the physiognomic context [1, 2, 76, 72, 84, 52, 75, 4, 12, 49] the social context associated with functioning of the space [25, 14, 20, 79, 41, 18, 3, 22, 17, 39, 67, 58, 68] as well as the phenomenological context related to the emanation of the identity of the place [41, 69, 8, 37, 75, 65, 5, 68].

3. Methodology

3.1. General issues

City landscape design is a process that shows, on the basis of thorough analyses, the condition of a given place [57] and through precise formulation of guidelines – directions and specific solutions to its desired transformations. Designing the city landscape is a process that reveals the condition of a place based on thorough analyses [57]. It also presents specific solutions to a desirable space transformation through the formulation of precise guidelines [27, 59, 15]. The analytical mode of landscape recognition, proceeding in stages, deals with issues related to the structure, meaning and the phenomenon of the place, considered one after another. As a result, the process reveals the values of each of the genius loci categories. The analysis of the Structure, apart from including the inventory of a space, can be made through the analysis of panoramas [77] or the analysis of values [43, 27, 71, 29]. Meaning, being the first interpretation of the structure, may use the analysis of the space in sequential viewing [12, 30] or the perceptual analysis [62]. Phenomenon contains an analysis of spatial values and a definition of the place’s genius loci [45, 43, 29]. The results give a synthesis of a three-stage analysis. They present the
project guidelines. The conclusion deriving from the guidelines constitutes the application in the form of a landscape change proposal. The above procedure remains open – one may use in it different partial analyses suitable to the space to be analysed [57].

3.2. Lighting

Considering the issue of lighting, the analysis of elements of the city composition may be indicated in the category of light [28], whereby studying its significance and selected spatial values [44, 29]. The method for perceptual analysis of space [62, 63], analysis of curve of impressions by K. Wejchert [77, 78] view morphology analysis by M. Lewin [36]; method for views evaluation [51]; analysis of the space in sequential viewing [30] or the analysis of the city panorama [57] can be useful to compare the spatial layer of urban interiors and their daytime and nighttime views. Lighting masterplans created in order to regulate the lighting of large-scale urban areas do not usually use a uniform method of lighting evaluation [83]. A typology of objects’ and interiors’ images changes at night, as well as the valorisation method of the visual transformations of the space at night [83] developed by K. Wlazło-Malinowska [83] may be applied in the analysis of night changes of the city.

3.3. Urban furniture

A multi-layered analysis of the cityscape that includes the elements of urban furniture allows a comprehensive understanding of the potential of the designed space [29, 54]. It is equally important to analyse the physiognomic layer, including a perceptual analysis [57], a morphological analysis [36, 66], and a colouristic analysis [33, 66] as well as a functional layer dealing with social issues [24, 39] and the semantics associated with the identity of the place [45, 31, 29].

3.4. City landscape design as a process of the space identity recognition

The analytical part of the project led as part of the classes “City Landscape Design” taught in the course of M.A. studies in the field of Landscape Architecture at the Faculty of Horticulture, Biotechnology and Landscape Architecture at the Warsaw University of Life Sciences is embedded within five categories of genius loci. These methodological foundations are designed to fully analyse and understand the city as landscape; to overcome classical schemes of space analysis; to teach students independence in the choice of preparation of suitable analyses. Students select the methods presented by themselves and adjust the way of conducting their analysis to the characteristics of the project theme and their own sensitivity. The following list of analyses possible to be conducted within the analysis of the genius loci constitutes an open list and may be complemented with other procedures relevant to the perspective of the studied area [Fig. 1]:

1. Within the things category related to the construction and structure of interiors:
1. Within the **identification** category of public space [57],
- general inventory,
- communication analysis [56],
- inventory of green infrastructure,
- inventory of urban furniture [67], including lighting [83],
- colouristic analysis according to Lancaster’s method [33],
- tracking down traces based on the method of **placemaking** [24].

2. Within the **order** category that includes composition issues:
- analysis of panoramas [56],
- perceptual analysis by J. Skalski [62],
- analysis of space in sequential viewing, based on Cullen’s theory of sequence viewing [12, 30],
- morphological analysis by M. Lewin [36],
- composition analysis [56].

3. Within the **light** category:
- description of the character of natural light and artificial lighting according to the light category of the **genius loci** analysis [45, 28],
- analysis of night cityscape including: comparative analysis of space visibility [daytime vs night-time]; comparative analysis of changeability of the objects’ and interiors’ images at night; comparative analysis of the composition of selected views [daytime vs night-time] and, consequently, results – composition & physiognomic analysis of the space carried out for daytime and night-time [83].

4. Within the **time** category related to social and cosmic time as well as to the rhythms of time [seasonal exploitation, diurnal cycle]:
- functional analysis of space and objects,
- studying the flow of users [24],
- behavioural mapping based on the **placemaking** method [24],
- counting people and vehicles [24].

5. Within the **character** category related to the spatial values:
- analysis of spatial values [31],
- historical analysis – historical and monumental values,
- individual in-depth interviews – social values [32, 16],
- informal interview – social values [24, 16],
- filling in questionnaires or user surveys – social values [16],
- tracking down traces – social values [24].

The foregoing methods and categories refer directly to the recognition of the structure, meaning and phenomenon, which in turn allow the identity of space to be found in a complementary way [45, 29, 57]. They all refer to the scope of research and its context [45, 38, 12, 3, 7]. At the same time, it is worth mentioning that by interpreting the pattern

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3 Including application of categories of changes of a day’s object image at night, developed by K. Wlazło-Malinowska [83], that is disappearance, reflection, isolation, completion or transformation of the picture of objects by night.
and the genius loci categories the form of a place is found in such a way that the description of the identity of a given place is most accurate. Selection of methods depends on the local or planning scale of study. The analytical process presented here is characterised by openness and flexibility, which makes it possible to select the method depending on the specific characteristics of a studied space as well as the designer’s sensitivity and competence. It allows, based on results of respective analyses, design guidelines to be defined in a complementary way, which through an expected accuracy of in-depth field of study should make the designing process easier.

4. Summary

City Landscape Design is a process that underlines the meaning of analyses in the diagnosis of space. The open model of design presented in this article refers to the legacy of philosophy, urban planning, landscape architecture, environmental psychology and sociology. It refers as well to interdisciplinary studies of the landscape phenomenon. In the suggested
depiction, attention was paid to the importance of light and urban furniture, elements often underestimated, but vital in cityscape design. This research procedure can also be used in universal design, where it can influence the reduction of conflicts by its holistic character expressed in the psychological, social and spiritual dimensions of the *genius loci* categories.

It is, however, worth remembering that in a phenomenological method a close, attentive observation of the landscape and the designer’s intuition are both crucial. Distinction, perception and finally identification of the landscape elements linked to specific *genius loci* categories present the significance of this method.

**References**


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