

way, shaping behaviour so as to show young people the nature of wrongdoing and its ramifications. At the same time, both families and schools ought to teach ways to deal with aggression from others. It was also postulated that violence-based behaviour should be countered with stiffer penalties.

Teachers usually react to violence by telling the aggressors off, notifying their parents, referring the matter to the headmaster or entering a formal note in the register. The respondents were critical of teachers' reactions towards violence. They know the nature of efforts taken, but find them to be below par and insufficient to tackle the issue.

The fact that multiple families are dysfunctional, that schools' actions are characterized by indecisiveness or frequently "clumsiness", that peer groups dominate in behaviour pattern determination on the school premises (and beyond), and that such patterns are not always in line with the existing normative system, altogether presents a rather gloomy picture.

The research results and suggested interpretations open the door for further discussion on the widely-recognized situation of Lodz school-goers, and the possibility of change in the direction of drives and interactions which might lead to increasing the sense of security, and, as a natural consequence, the quality of life in general.

It is worthwhile to conclude with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's thought-provoking claim that if the most innocent and vulnerable child cannot feel safe in a society, no other human can feel safe there either.

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PUBLIC SPACES AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION – THE CASE OF LODZ

Abstract: Owing to its turbulent and difficult past, Lodz is a city in which disintegration processes, in their social, economic and spatial aspects, are clearly visible. The socialist industry has collapsed, severely disturbing the economic foundations of the city, and so far its society and economy haven't fully recovered. Many urban dwellers have already moved out of the city. Among other reasons for the inability of the city to hold onto its inhabitants, the insufficient attractiveness of Lodz's urban space is mentioned. Despite the visible progress in this field since the fall of the centrally planned economy, many public spaces are still neglected, making them less capable of fostering social integration. In the era of progressing commercialization, to some extent their roles are being taken over by shopping malls. This article investigates these phenomena and confronts them with the principles of current urban planning policy in Lodz. Considerations are presented with reference to the results of a survey on the advantages and deficiencies of public spaces in Lodz.

Keywords: Lodz, public spaces, social integration.

Introduction

Lodz is a city which grew extremely rapidly in the 19th century due to the massive development of textile manufacturing. After World War II its economic structure remained petrified, lacking sufficient capital and structural adjustments. Nowadays Lodz it is a city of over 715,000 inhabitants, covering an area of 293 km². It is conveniently located in the centre of Poland. However, so far neither its economy nor its society have completely recovered from rapid downfall of its traditional economic base. Moreover, the side effects of the socio-economic transition to a market economy in Lodz overlap with the long-term underinvestment in technical infrastructure, communal housing and public spaces, the insufficient preservation of the cultural landscape, and the progressing commercialization. All these factors negatively affect the quality of life in the city and contribute to its intensive depopulation.

1. Objectives, materials and methods

According to many research findings reported by Gehl [2013], the quality of urban life depends to great extent on the quality of its public spaces. A high quality of a built environment draws people out of their places of residence and prompts them to perform attractive, non-obligatory activities. The design of the physical environment of public spaces can therefore influence the scope of human activities, the number of users, and the period of time spent in public spaces, which makes them an important factor in enhancing social interaction.

In Lodz, many public spaces still evoke those of the former socio-economic system, which might be attributed to their design and the long-standing negligence of them. In the city centre, there are many typical urban places for social integration, such as squares, passages and parks (Figure 1), whereas around the large high-rise housing



Figure 1. Spatial distribution of public spaces in Lodz

Source: Own elaboration based on [Atrakcyjne przestrzenie... 2013, pp. 61] and [Atlas Miasta Łodzi ... 2012].

units and blocks of flats, underinvested in and insufficiently separated from the outside, 'no man's spaces' prevail. While there are plenty of playgrounds, they are scarcely present in the old, densely developed city centre [*Atrakcyjne przestrzenie...* 2013].

Observations conducted within public spaces in Lodz, regarding the quality of land development and the number of its users [*Atrakcyjne przestrzenie...* 2013], as well as the reasons why people choose and how they perceive commercial spaces [Wójcik 2010; Rochmińska 2011, 2014; Chrzanowska, Rochmińska 2012; Mordwa 2012], lead to the assumption that public spaces are becoming less and less attractive in comparison to shopping malls. This seems to relate especially to the 'Manufaktura' mall (Fot. 1) – a commercial centre located in the heart of the city, with an abundant open space and entertainment possibilities. At the same time, Piotrkowska Street (Fot. 2), a unique public space which has traditionally been the landmark of the city, has lost much of its former splendour for some time, becoming less liveable and considerably drained of traditional economic activities.



Fot. 1. 'Manufaktura' shopping mall



Fot. 2. Piotrkowska Street

Source: I. Pielesiak, 2015 (Fots. 1-5).

It seems that progressing consumerism and the culture of fear, observed more or less everywhere in the country [Dymnicka 2008; Karwińska 2011; Szatan 2012], have considerably contributed to the phenomenon of draining people out of public spaces in Lodz, in favour of 'safe and cosy' commercial spaces. Such a situation negatively affects social integration within the city.

In order to investigate the problem of the failing performance of public spaces in Lodz, a preliminary survey was conducted, aimed at answering two basic questions: 1) How do urban space users feel about contemporary public spaces in Lodz; and 2) To what extent have commercial spaces become substitutes for municipal public spaces? The results of the survey were confronted with the objectives and implementation results of local urban planning policy in this sphere.

As the survey was limited in terms of the number of respondents, its results cannot be considered representative and may not be generalized to the whole population. Nevertheless a still rather considerable number of opinions was gathered and

they might be useful for municipal authorities who are responsible for shaping urban development policy.

The survey was conducted in the autumn of 2014 in 18 chosen squares, passages and parks of Lodz¹ (Fot. 3). Aimed at providing purposeful sampling, 350 public space users were asked to participate in a semi-structured interview. Public space users were chosen as the respondents because they could indicate the deficiencies of such places on the basis of their actual experiences, more accurately than, for instance, stereotypically judging non-users.



Old Town Square

Old Town Park

New Town Square

Fot. 3. Examples of public spaces in Lodz selected for the survey

The majority of respondents were young educated women living in the central part of the city or in its direct surroundings (Figs. 2 and 3). Only a few surveyed people were outsiders, the majority of whom came from the hinterland of Lodz.

The respondents were asked how often they use and how much time they usually spend in the public spaces where they were surveyed. People were also asked

¹ Squares: H. Dąbrowskiego, Niepodległości, Wolności, Słoneczny, Staromiejski; Parks: Helenów, J. Matejki, Ocalałych, J. Piłsudskiego, J. Poniatowskiego, H. Sienkiewicza, S. Staszica, Staromiejski, Szarych Szeregów, Widzewska Górka, Źródlika; passages: Schillera and Rubinsteina.

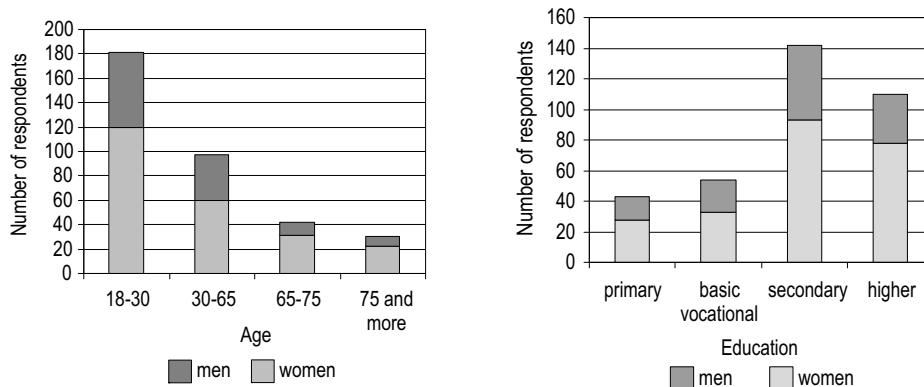


Figure 2. Respondents by age, sex and education level

Source: Own elaboration (Figs. 2-8).

whether that particular spot was the most frequently visited one in Lodz. The other questions concerned the range of activities performed in those places, as well as the reasons why they were chosen from the whole set of urban public spaces.

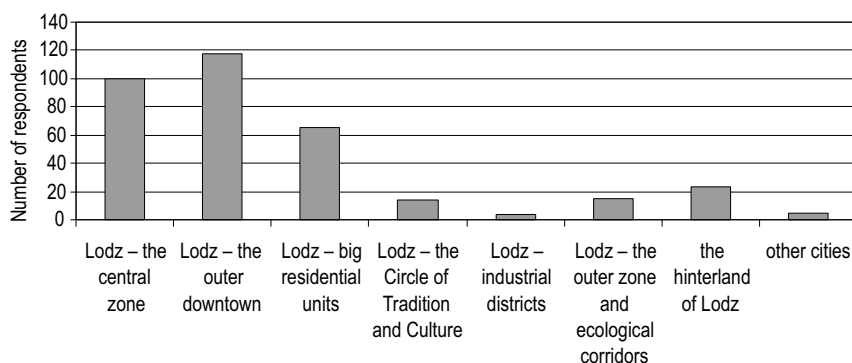


Figure 3. Respondents, by place of residence

Furthermore the respondents were encouraged to express their opinions on the quality and the deficiencies of the built environment within public spaces. The last question referred to their assumptions about places in Lodz which foster social integration.

2. The perception of public spaces in Lodz and their role in fostering social integration

In general, the respondents spend a relatively short period of time in the public spaces which were subjected to analysis. Only 15.1% of the sample declared that they stayed there for at least two hours (Figure 4).

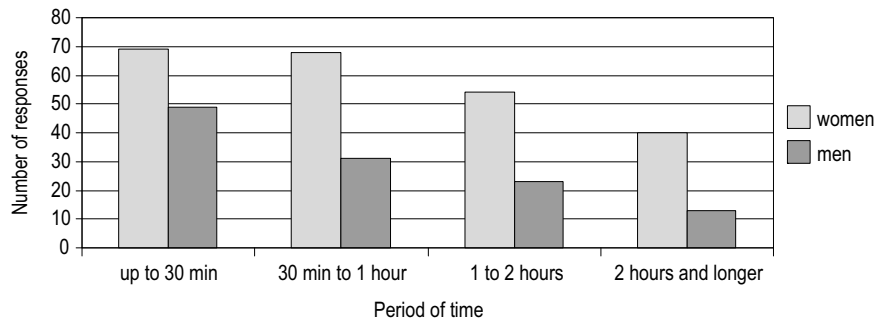


Figure 4. Average time spent by the respondents in the surveyed public spaces

For almost half of the respondents that particular square, park or passage was the most frequently visited public space among all others in the city. The highest share of such responses was given by older women, regardless of their level of education.

For the rest of the interviewees, the most frequently visited public places included mainly other urban parks and places with greenery, streets, and cultural centres (Figure 5). Of course, not all respondents were aware of the notion of the term 'public space', mentioning places which clearly do not fall within its scope.

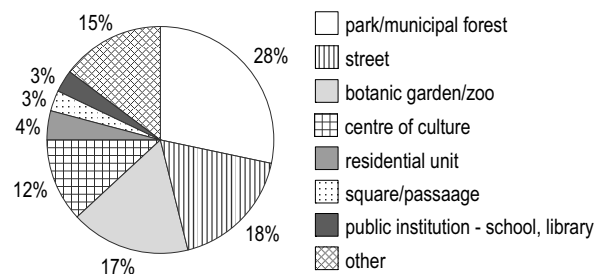


Figure 5. Other types of public spaces in Lodz preferred by the respondents

The interviewees declared that they use public spaces mainly for relaxation, which usually meant engaging in physical activities and meeting other people (Figure 6). The latter form was frequently associated with relaxation, which demonstrates the important role of public spaces for integrating local communities. Participation in cultural events was rarely indicated; however this was due to the fact that the cultural offer within public spaces in Lodz is generally very poor – both objectively and subjectively.

As for the reasons why the interviewees chose particular places, the proximity of a space to their place of residence, work or education proved to be a major determining factor (Figure 7).

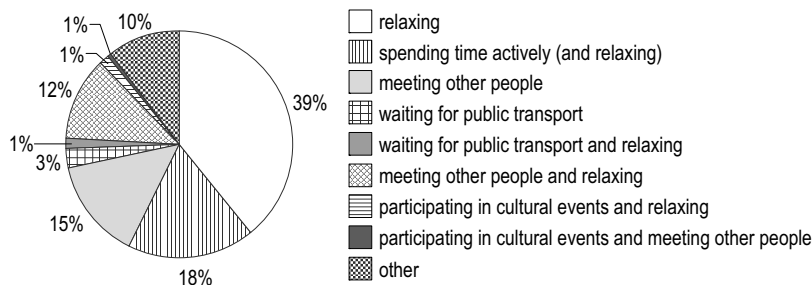


Figure 6. Respondents' activities in the surveyed public spaces

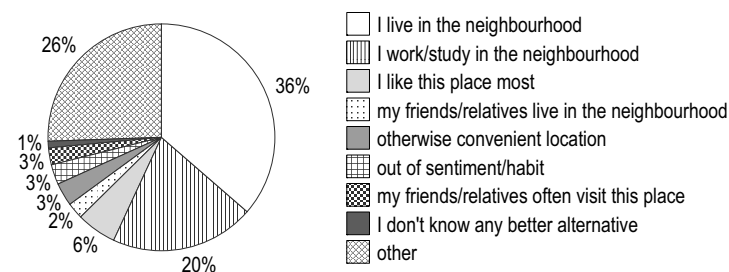


Figure 7. Respondents' motivations for choosing the surveyed public spaces

The respondents were attracted to the analysed public spaces by small forms of architecture, greenery and the general order of the place (46.9% of the total number of responses to the question: *What do you like the most in this place?*). On the other hand, the poor aesthetics in the analysed places was strongly criticised. Over half of the interviewees expressed the need to change the built environment in the place he or she frequented (Figure 8). This referred in particular to, again, small forms of

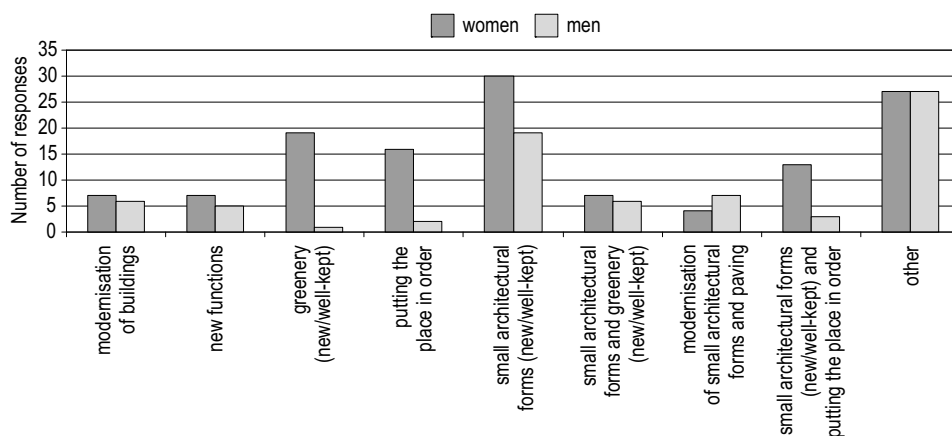


Figure 8. Respondents' opinions on the improvements required for the surveyed public spaces

architecture (there were suggestions for installing new ones and the modernisation of existing objects), putting the whole place in order (including the paving and the greenery), renovating the surrounding buildings, expanding the functional structure of the place (services, mainly referring to trade and gastronomy), as well as providing basic facilities (benches and public toilets).

The respondents were also asked to indicate which public places in Lodz foster social integration. The majority of them chose streets (32%), mainly Piotrkowska Street and the adjoining OFF Zone (98.5% responses in this category), which is a post-industrial plot occupied by functions associated with culture, art and gastronomy. There were only four different places indicated in this category – 6 Sierpnia Street (the first ‘woonerf’ in the city), Kościuszki Street, Konstytucyjna Street and Piłsudski Avenue. The last three mentioned streets/avenues are wide streets that canalise much of urban traffic, but at the same time there are an abundant range of service facilities located on them.

What is particularly interesting is that almost the same number of responses (32%) appreciated the integrative role of shopping malls. Among these objects the leaders were the malls ‘Manufaktura’ (41.1% in this group) and ‘Galeria Łódzka’ (10.6%), which belong to the oldest and the biggest such spots in the city. Both of them are also conveniently located. ‘Manufaktura’, with its vast open space and proximity to Piotrkowska Street, is particularly distinctive and recognizable, even nationwide. There were only several respondents who mentioned ‘Port Lodz’, a huge but peripherally located shopping centre with an IKEA store. However, ‘Port Lodz’ was always coupled with ‘Manufaktura’.

Municipal parks were seen as another important type of integrating place (indicated by 23% respondents). They were followed by squares and passages (5%). Among the remaining group of inclusive spots (9%), the zoo, botanic garden and other places with vast greenery were also pointed out, together with pubs and restaurants, respondents’ neighbourhoods, cinemas and theatres.

3. Contemporary policy toward public spaces in Lodz

As regards the panacea for the desertification of public spaces in the city of Lodz there exist a few municipal programmes aimed at improving infrastructural performance, as well as the quality and liveability of the central parts of Lodz. The key ones are local urban renewal programmes, ‘The New Centre of Lodz’ and ‘Attractive Urban Spaces 2020+’ programmes, and the ‘Strategy for The Development of Piotrkowska Street’ (Table 1).

The realisation of these programmes relies to a great extent on loans and EU co-funding. A doubt may therefore arise as to whether this will not overburden the municipal budget in the future. Despite this doubt, it needs to be emphasized that

Table 1

Priorities for urban space in Lodz
in contemporary municipal development programmes

Programme	Objectives	Improvements provided for the urban fabric
Urban renewal programmes	Social, economic and spatial revival aimed at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – combating pathologies, social exclusion and negative demographic trends, – arousing entrepreneurship and stimulating employment by supporting local entrepreneurs and offering enhancements for investors, – modernisation and adaptation of neglected buildings, rearrangement of their surroundings 	Renovation, reorganisation and introducing new functions to neglected tenement houses in the city centre (47 buildings already finished, 18 in progress, over 30 objects which are supposed to be tackled soon)
The New Centre of Lodz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – creating new safe and attractive public spaces for urban dwellers and tourists, – urban renewal of post-industrial and post-rail areas, – creating new space for investment, – strengthening metropolitan and cultural functions, – securing crucial elements of historic urban tissue, – creating a multifunctional transport node 	Large-scale urban renewal covering 100 hectares of the neglected central part of the city, construction of the new main railway station (almost finished at the moment) and the underground diameter line, renovation and introducing new functions in the former thermal power plant complex, including the arrangement of a large square
Attractive Urban Spaces 2020+	Creating accessible, safe, aesthetic, and liveable places which offer possibilities for social interactions within public spaces	Modernisation of the built environment, rearrangement / introduction of greenery, introduction of new functions in the city centre
The Strategy for the Development of Piotrkowska Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improvements in the quality of public spaces, transport accessibility and public order on Piotrkowska Street, – strengthening social relations and the economic revival of Piotrkowska Street 	Modernisation of road surface, numerous social events (fairs etc.), promoting entrepreneurs who take care of spaces they use for commercial purposes

Source: Elaboration based on [Strategia rozwoju ulicy Piotrkowskiej... 2009; Zintegrowany program rewitalizacji... 2012; Miasto kamienic...; Program Nowe Centrum Łodzi 2012 and Atrakcyjne przestrzenie miejskie... 2013].

considerable effort has already been made to restore many tenement houses, as well as to improve the image of Piotrkowska Street. The latter includes paving reconstruction, installing new attractive street furniture, and introducing greenery. However, the most spectacular transformation was observed in case of 6 Sierpnia street (Fot. 4), which has been re-configured according to the Dutch and Danish experiences in ar-



Fot 4. The first woonerf in Lodz
(6 Sierpnia Street)



Fot. 5. Recent rearrangement of public space
(Kilińskiego Street)

rearranging public spaces. Previously, it was an unwelcoming street which was mainly occupied by traffic. Now pedestrians are given priority. The built environment of the street has been completely rearranged in order to enable relaxation, social interaction, and to make it liveable again. This project has been highly appreciated by urban space users, and its success has encouraged local authorities to implement the idea in subsequent locations within the city centre.

Visible changes in the quality of public spaces are also observable around the currently developed the New Centre of Lodz, too. This refers especially to the zone stretching between this spot and Piotrkowska Street, as well as south to Narutowicza Street. Formerly neglected passages and squares in that location, which used to be occupied by ugly and chaotically located trade facilities, are being successively reorganised and brought back into public use (Fot. 5). If this project is successfully realized, Lodz will regain a considerable part of its formerly 'lost' public space. However, at the same time great attention needs to be paid to what happens to the neighbouring Piotrkowska Street. It is also necessary to ensure that it isn't once again heavily drained of its economic activities and visitors.

Conclusions

Among the places that foster social integration in Lodz, the respondents saw Piotrkowska Street and municipal parks as the most crucial, which is rather unsurprising. However, the survey has also demonstrated a relatively strong conviction that shopping malls are also key places which perform that role. In particular the 'Manufaktura' mall seems to have become a commercial substitute for the neglected municipal public spaces. This might be attributed to its convenient location and strong relation with local cultural heritage, abundant number of commercial offers, as well as the lack of an alternative, well maintained and liveable municipal square. The situation observed in the survey exemplifies the relations between public and commercial spaces which

Celińska-Janowicz [2011] referred to. Commercial spaces imitate public spaces, but since they are attractively arranged, cosy and secure, they compete with them more and more often successfully. Shopping malls act as functional substitutes for underinvested public spaces. As a result, they take over urban space, both physically and symbolically.

It must be noted that places which are focused in the first place on consumerism enhance social inclusion only illusorily. People gather in shopping malls, but they don't interact enough, instead remaining individuals among the crowd [Szatan 2012]. Serving the temporary individual needs instead of the collective ones makes them the 'non-places'. They are anonymous transition places where the possibilities for developing and strengthening social relations are impaired [Augé 2010; Dymnicka 2011]. Due to the multiplying unwritten rules and suppressions, they provoke homogenous behaviour, which makes them particularly unwelcome for people who find difficulties in 'fitting in' (e.g. for the poor) [Górniak 2014]. Therefore, the process of replacing non-commercial public spaces by shopping malls needs particular attention. This refers especially to researchers – sociologists, geographers, local authorities and urban planners.

Among the main attractions offered by public spaces in Lodz the crucial factors in making such places more liveable are sufficient maintenance and the presence of small forms of architecture and greenery, while the still significant number of shortcomings of the built environment ought to be tackled. Another important factor is the necessity to enrich the cultural offer of such places.

Since local authorities clearly have noticed the negative processes affecting public spaces in the city, this gives hope that at least some of them will be reversed in the nearest future. The benefits of such investments are manifold. In the first place they lead to improvement of the general quality of urban space, which stimulates tourism and in turn the local economy. This should, at least to some extent, contribute to reducing the outflow of the young and the educated from Lodz. Moreover, there is evidence that advancements within the public space result in improving mental and physical health, well-being, and social inclusion [Lee, Maheswaran 2010]. They might lead to reducing crime as well [Cozens *et al.* 2005]. People need places that strengthen their sense of belonging, and public spaces are by definition predestined to foster it.

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