

MODERN REVITALIZING INTERFERENCES IN THE HISTORICAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The purpose of the research work is to present the revitalizing projects made by date in the historical quarters of the city in the aspect of identity, restricted to the scale of a structure and street.

The subject of this paper is the search for a common genome of identity in revitalizing historical urban structures. Is there any urban identity genome and can it be similar or identical in different cities?

Main conclusions: cities tend to create their brand name, identity of location, but frequently, in addition to the positive revitalizing trends, tendencies to copy or just renovate without respect to the cultural heritage of a specific city, structure, identity of a city, structure or city identity are noticeable.

Streszczenie

Celem pracy badawczej jest przedstawienie dotychczasowych realizacji rewitalizacji w obszarach historycznych miast w aspekcie tożsamości z ograniczeniem do skali obiektu i ulicy. Tematem pracy jest poszukiwanie wspólnego genomu tożsamości w rewitalizacji obiektów historycznych w miastach. Czy istnieje genom tożsamości miasta, czy może on być podobny lub identyczny w różnych miastach?

Główne konkluzje: miasta dążą do wytworzenia marki, tożsamości miejsca, ale często oprócz pozytywnych trendów rewitalizacyjnych można zauważyć tendencje kopiowania, czy też jedynie odnawiania bez poszanowania dziedzictwa kulturowego danego miasta, obiektu, tożsamości miasta.

Keywords: Revitalization; Historical structures; City/building genome; Building/city identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The topic of revitalizing city centers, throughout the political system and economic changes in Europe, is a wide, comprehensive, interdisciplinary question to be analyzed.

The major issue discussed in this paper is the question of revitalizing quality, technological methods applied, maintained identity of location, but, most of all, the image of location in the scale of street space and that of individual structures.

The prerequisites to take up this topic, in addition to the academic interest in the identity, image of cities, methods of city center revitalizing, were, without limitation, the observations of the authoress visiting numerous renovated centers of historical cities in

Poland and Europe. During her travels a remark arose on the repeatability and similarities in the revitalizing projects of city centers, historical structures.

This paper contains an attempt to explain the similarities, their sources and search for possibilities to identify the identity genome of city center space and its elements. Does any urban identity genome really exist, could it be similar or identical in different cities? What is the reason for such phenomenon? What is the method that cities or their spaces use in the search for their own unique image, brand name?

The purpose of the research work is to present the revitalizing projects by date in the historical spaces of cities in the aspect of location identity questions, formation of image restricted to the scale of a structure and street.



Figure 1.
Specific situation of the Town Hall building; Kroměříž, Czech Republic, 2008 (own photo)



Figure 2.
Specific situation of the Town Hall building; Skoczów, 2012 (own photo)



Figure 3.
Specific arches between buildings, Olomunec, Czech Republic, 2008 (own photo)

The research method is to confront the selected examples of revitalized structures, sort them out by determined degrees of interference in the structure.

The research concerning this subject matter comprises a wide range of issues in various academic fields: from historical, architectural (qualitative, technical and technological, ecological, energy-saving), town planning, through sociological, psychological, economic or marketing studies. The authors carrying out research in the subject matter discussed: J. Gehl, K. Lynch, K. Wejchert, Ch. Alexander, J. Bogdanowski, A. Bonenberg, W. Bonenberg, Z. K. Zuziak, S. Gzell, N. Juzwa, K. Gasidło, Z. Gądek, B. Jałowicki, and numerous other scientists.

The paper includes application and adaptation of definitions from various sciences, including without limitation medicine, psychology, economics or marketing:

City / structure image – is the sum of knowledge about a location, the ideas of it, prejudices and emotional relationship therewith [3,4] The most important characteristics affecting the image include: the characteristics of individuals-recipients, the external features of a location, the characteristics of the location, its history, surroundings [3]. Types of image – numerous types have been distinguished, e.g.: versatile, inspired and accidental or ephemeral, open and closed, original, inspired and complex, current and promoted, present and desired, individual and collective, neutral or negative, strongly or weakly rooted [3].

This paper mainly points out such elements as: technical elements, street furniture, which form the image or deform it.

City / structure brand name – symbolic characteristics and attributes the recipient perceives the city through, thus determining its value [4].

City / location identity – characteristics proving the existence of uniqueness distinguishing the same and positive for the demanding recipient who identifies

him/herself with the surroundings by means of such features [2].

City / structure genome – basic information, values of a location, unique characteristics.

Structure / location genotype – local values, location phenomenon [5], a set of dependent and independent features conditioning the hereditary (cultural) properties of the structure

Structure / location phenotype – broader cultural context [5], a set of morphological, anatomic features of a structure formed as a result of development under specific environmental conditions, which generates the characteristics of a structure as a result of its “life” within the space and environmental effect thereon [6].

2. THE ISSUE – ITS COMPLEXITY AND CONTEXTS

The historical city centers under analysis are located in Central and Eastern Europe. They have been revitalized recently as a result, without limitation, of the political system changes.

The fact that the said buildings and structures are located in the same historical and cultural region may contribute to the impression of similarity of such spaces. There are similar town planning arrangements, spatial and building structures, etc. therein, which mainly result from the construction traditions of their time [1].

Among the trends of revitalizing of historical structures of the 19th/20th century, the following tendencies and various scales of interference in the construction development are distinguished:

- **exterior measures:** renovation of the structure and its adaptation to the current purposes through application of such construction technologies and materials that would not change the appearance and aesthetics of the structure; reconstruction of



Figure 4.
Example of external thermal modernization “from outside”, reconstruction of the facade and its decorative elements; Żary, 2012 (own photo)



Figure 5.
Example of an industrial structure after internal thermal modernization with renovation of the facade; Elk, 2013 (own photo)

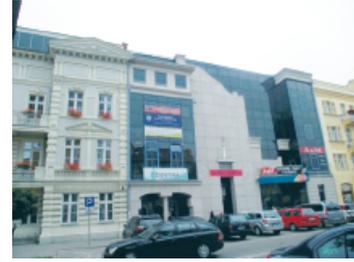


Figure 6.
Example of the adaptation of the preceding photograph, Elk, 2013 (own photo)



Figure 7.
Example of so-called “witness” of history in the facade of a tenement house, informing on other structures used in earlier phases of the structure, Toruń, 2013 (own photo)



Figure 8.
Similar example, but including presentation of large number of historical elements causes chaos in the perception of such façade, Vienna, 2012 (own photo)

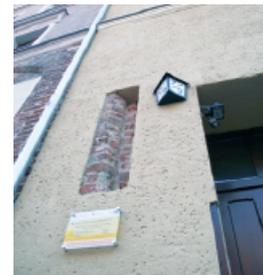


Figure 9.
Example of a single “witness” of the building’s history, Toruń, 2013 (own photo)

the façade and simultaneous thermal modernization, frequently based on photographic documentation, archaeological research, as in the photograph presenting the thermal modernization of a tenement house in Żary, located in the main town promenade, low scale of changes that do not affect the overall appearance of the structure;

- **interior measures:** renovation of the façade and internal thermal modernization, as in the photograph below presenting the structure with preserved historical façade and insulation applied inside the structure, exterior without modifications, functional changes of the structure interior;
- **other measures:** maintaining and protection of the historical part as a valuable element and construction of additional new structure that meets new technical-functional conditions, as in the photograph below where examples of preserving the historical façade have been presented with a new structure added, built according to new technologies, which has new functions; the appearance of the existing part of the structure, high interference with the structure;
- **other measures:** care about maintaining the

authenticity of the architecture of a building/structure, through preserving of so-called historic witnesses, relics, unique artifacts of the existing façade, covered by a newer one. It is applied in case of significant historical, archaeological or aesthetic value of the structure, mainly to facilitate understanding of the historical structure, making such historical element available, respect for the authentic structure and thus maintaining the significant traces representing part of the building’s history. The photograph below presents examples of applying such measures.

3. IMAGE, PHENOTYPE

Methods consisting in genetic algorithm may be used to classify the characteristics selected for building a phenotype.

The general foundations of the research method are: definition of the characteristics of a specific structure, place; selection of the features, according to determined conditions; creation of characteristics with a new value; creation of sample parameters, features (technical quality, aesthetics, composition) that determine the image of the structure.

To determine the characteristics of a location, the following city center structure elements have been analyzed: proportions of main passageways, squares; façades of town planning interiors (façades of tenement houses, color range, finishing materials, vertical gardens); finishing elements, color range, texture, method of using building materials in paving of streets, squares; dominants: specific structures, structures of various scale, important for specific space, e.g. fountains, monuments, symbols, plaques (characteristic elements related to specific space).

The selection of features consists in finding elements characteristic for a specific location, able to create the image of the said location. The selection should be carried out using the criteria determining the features that a phenotype creating element must meet.

The conditions are determined through criteria that shall lead to finding, out of the multiple characteristics of a structure, the features responsible for creation of image based on the cultural heritage and identity at the same time.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF ELEMENTS – SIMILARITIES

The said elements of the spatial structure affect the perception of such space and if they are like the elements used in other cities, they are not characteristics for the specific area (they are not part of the cultural heritage) and may be negatively perceived and, later on, difficult to be identified with a given city.

4.1. Proportions of main passageways, squares

Due to the period of creating the building structure in turn of the 19th/20th century, its proportions depend on the size of the city and most frequently result from its genesis (the European cities built as a result of industrial development). The similarity does not negatively affect the space quality, it is individualized, with characteristics distinguishing it from other cities.

For example the development of the major passageways in Kielce or Gliwice proves high spatial similarities and very low individual characteristics. Similar elements of street furniture have been used, such as: advertisements, lighting.

4.2. Paving of streets, squares

Presently various types of paving are used for revitalizing the streets. These are mainly new materials with

various forms of mosaic shapes made from porphyry, marble and granite cobbles.

The small streets are paved in an almost identical way, with similar arrangement of the paving materials, their joining, method of arranging, which results in identical streets with very similar appearance of the street spaces and similar street cross-section, as shown in the photograph below: a street in Bielsko-Biała and a street in Zielona Góra, they also exist in other cities, such as: Racibórz, Kielce, Żary, Kromieryż (Czech Republic), Olomouc (Czech Republic), Vienna (Austria), Żary, Krakow.

The squares, market squares, large surface with various cobblestone colors applies, sometimes various kinds of stone, e.g. in Olomouc (Czech Republic), Kromieryż (Czech Republic).

4.3. Facades of urban interiors

For example, the application of a green belt along the frontage of a street, as in Forst and Guben, Germany is much alike.

4.4. Dominants and characteristic elements: buildings, fountains, advertisements, symbols, plaques

The frequently applied street furniture elements in the form of fountains built in the street pavement or turning granite balls also have a similar form.

For example, the fountains in Guben, Germany, Żary, Poland, Opava, Czech Republic (built into the pavement level), or as shown in the photograph below in Racibórz (spinning ball fountains) that may be a tourist attraction, but being a popular aesthetic form, they do not play the role of a landmark in the city. The advertisements used in urban space do not harmonize with the surroundings, there are added, foreign elements “spoiling” the space, such as: antennas, ventilators, roofing, which does not create the positive image of the city as in Tarnowskie Góry, Gliwice, Zielona Góra (some selected characteristics examples have been presented here).

Similar elements used in the spaces analyzed contribute to the unification of space, depriving it of attractiveness, exceptionality and unique characteristics typical for such space only.

5. FEATURES OF ELEMENTS – CUSTOMIZED, SPECIFIC

The elements of city center structure, through their individual aesthetic values become identifiable, cul-



Figure 10. Fontanna Narodów [The Fountain of Nations] in Racibórz. Similar spheres are in other towns: Polanica Zdrój, Kołobrzeg, Zielona Góra, Zamość, Chmielnik, Tarnów; Racibórz, 2012 (own photo)



Figure 11. Similar street division, similar materials to those in the preceding photograph; Zielona Góra, 2012 (own photo)



Figure 12. The Market Square in Opole. Similar arrangement of the cobblestones and slabs to that of Gliwice, Olomous and other cities. Opole, 2010 (own photo)

turally valuable. Their uniqueness guarantees the space user's identification with the same, association of specific structures with a place positively perceived, a place that creates the city image.

5.1. Proportions of main passageways, other passageways, squares space

As in cases mentioned above, the proportions of streets and squares have been formed in a similar way, like in all the cities founded in the same periods. However, there are elements correlated with such spaces (e.g. individual, untypical formation of a square size, street shape), that contribute to creating the image and brand name of a city.

5.2. Facades of urban interiors

The facades of tenement houses, mainly shop windows not disturbing the space with aggressive and large-size advertisements, embedded in the neighborhood, specific, unique, brand signs, as in the examples in Vienna (Austria), Cieszyn, Bielsko-Biała, Krakow or Tarnowskie Góry.

5.3. Paving of streets, squares

An interesting example is the application of construction materials, due to the method of their application to reconstructed plans, foundations of old structures in the drawing of street paving cobblestone arrangement. As in the photograph below, a simple, but legible arrangement and material was used for reconstruction of the old development in Zielona Góra and Vienna (Austria). This method is individual and characteristic for a specific city.

5.4. Dominants and characteristic elements: buildings, fountains, statues, advertisements, symbols, plaques

The dominants occurring as landmarks and characteristic structures are important element in a city structure.

Most frequently, these are structures with social functions, generally accessible, such as city halls, stores as in the photograph below in Gliwice, but also there are other, such as residential houses, distinguishing with aesthetics, function, characteristic for a given city in Vienna (Austria).

There are numerous examples of customizing urban space in human scale, e.g. statues of local heroes, writers, musicians (e.g. in Żary – harassed children, in Zielona Góra – elves, in Łódź – a musician and composer), memorials marked by plaques (e.g. in Opava – the last tram rails, in Międzyzdroje – plaques with the handprints of famous actors, directors and in Zielona Góra – plaques commemorating events and renown people), symbols and other wall decorations, characteristic for specific structures, space that distinguish a space, e.g. customized shop signs in Cieszyn, Tarnowskie Góry or mock cities or mock city centers.

Delineation of specific passageways for cyclists, disabled people, with the use of color restrictions or by means of posts, spheres or other stone elements, like e.g. in Vienna (Austria), Budapest (Hungary). Other elements are also used, such as: characteristic benches in Guben (Germany), Vienna (Austria), Kielce, hydrants (Toszek, Gliwice, Vienna).

Some selected, characteristic examples have been presented below.

The photographic documentation analysis, “on site” research proved that the final perception of urban space depended on various factors, such as: observer's features, features of the perceived environment,



Figure 13.
A characteristic structure with interesting ceramic facade, so-called Okraglak [Roundhouse] (not existing any more), Gliwice, 2012 (own photo)



Figure 14.
Street pavement – now a passageway with preserved elements of historical development, reconstructed thereon; Zielona Góra, 2012 (own photo)



Figure 15.
Characteristic bench, Forst, Germany, 2012 (own photo)

other cognitive – feeling dependencies.

Similar element applied in the spaces analyzed contribute to the unification of space that should at the same time be clear for most of its users thanks to the means applied, but it also should be distinctive with features of high historical, cultural value.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Cities tend to create their own brand name, location identity.

Frequently, in addition to positive revitalizing effects, copying or tendencies are noticeable or renovation without respect to the cultural heritage of a city, structure or identity.

Similarities occurring in the elements result from either historical morphology of the elements, engineering structure or application of typical, catalog technical solutions without their customization, adaptation to the features existing in the environment.

The features that form the image of a city, structure should correlate with historical and cultural values, considering the conditions of the environment they occur in.

The correlation of revitalizing measures and research over the structure identity, the elements affecting the overall image of the historical development of the city, may contribute to building a strong, positive image that leads to the growing economic and cultural attractiveness of the urban structure.

The practical application of research to the subsequent measures tend to improve the city image and customize the revitalized structure

The contribution in the further development of research in a given area is to determine in the scale of a structure and street, square, the features (phenotype) important for the further development of a city,

area in correlation with the environment and respect to the cultural heritage.

Cities reach their image through creation of new or restoration of existing symbols, legends, characteristic construction materials, elements contributing to the space identity, which enables the generation of the city image and in consequence lead to economic and cultural development of the city.

The authoress' studies have proven that the cities that have their own image or distinct elements thereof, identity and are unique in terms of their own brand, are distinctive among other cities, are recognizable. There is a clear tendency in the cities analyzed to apply individual aesthetic means to achieve the most distinctive and unique image (e.g. Vienna, Bielsko-Biała, Cieszyn, Opava, Olomouc and other).

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