



## Street furniture in urban spaces, taking as an example, the city of Częstochowa

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### ABSTRACT:

The article, referring to selected examples, discusses the condition of public spaces in the center of Częstochowa. The author draws attention to locations found along the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the center of the city, as well as courtyards, open courtyards and town squares. The author undertakes a critique of the presented examples in terms of architectural and material solutions. In addition, it tackles the topic of perception and acceptance of urban space by individual groups of users. The rest of the article presents the program of workshops organized at the Częstochowa University of Technology. Workshops organized for students concerning the problems related to creating public spaces using small-scale architecture.

### KEYWORDS:

architecture; urban planning; public space; design

## 1. Introduction

Public spaces are an important element of a city's structure. Their quality directly affects the reception of the city by its residents and visitors. Public spaces create a "climate of the place", giving it identity and deepening the user's emotional bond with the place. The article, using selected examples, deals with the condition of public spaces in the center of Częstochowa. The author draws attention to public spaces located along the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as courtyards, open courtyards and town squares found in the city. The rest of the article presents the program of workshops organized at the Częstochowa University of Technology. Workshops organized for students concerning the problems related to creating public spaces using small-scale architecture.

## 2. Forms of street furniture in urban space

The author undertakes a critique of the presented examples in terms of architectural and material solutions. In addition, it tackles the topic of perception and acceptance of urban space by individual groups of users.

### 2.1. *Café gardens along the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

An important area of activity in the city of Częstochowa is its main axis - the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Due to the cultural and social value of this area, it is important to both

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improve the technical and functional values of urban tissue as well as to extract the diversity and vital capabilities of this urban structure [1].

The urban layout developed in the past has not lost its relevance. An avenue of trees borders a wide pedestrian thoroughway. Roads and pavements solve the issue of vehicle and foot traffic along the entire section of the Avenue [2]. This gives a chance to adapt the urban space to contemporary functional requirements and newly defined social needs.

Restaurants and cafes located along the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary use the wide pedestrian spaces to create so-called cafe gardens. They are a form of street furnishing. Their aesthetic is random, which introduces chaos to the street space. At the same time, it is an excellent example of the diversity and vital capabilities of the city (Figs. 1 and 2).



**Fig. 1.** A café garden on the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The random aesthetics of the place maintains the diversity of urban life through the offer for various social groups



**Fig. 2.** A café garden the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The built-up form of the premises enlarges the space of the café while introducing a cubature object to the street space

In winter, customers move indoors and commercial activity on the Avenue lessens, contributing to the creation of a monofunctional area. It is important to introduce additional functions to increase what this area has to offer.

## *2.2. Courtyard interiors*

A natural consequence resulting from the development of downtown areas in the city are courtyards, which can be found adjacent to the central axis of Częstochowa - the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The courtyards offer the public a commercial and cultural experience (music clubs, art galleries) increasing the diversity of the urban space. Projects aimed at slowing down passing traffic encourage tourists and residents to walk and discover new places. The courtyards can be developed by arranging surface elements and greenery to create a rich urban functionality, mainly by adapting the ground floor of outbuildings and organizing the space to maintain a diverse urban life for various social groups. The attractive looking courtyards are also visited by tourists who want to enjoy the historical climate of the city. The Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary No. 29 and No. 35 are good examples of courtyards that have been positively shaped. Forms of street furnishings, for example, stylishly arranged gardens emphasize the character and function of individual premises [3].

Renovated facades of the original tenement buildings, well-developed courtyard spaces, and single-story commercial premises emphasized by street furnishings all contributed to a public zone with high aesthetics and functionality.

However, not all courtyard spaces in this area encourage their use. This should inform the City Authorities that there is a need to create clear rules concerning development activities that increase the utility value of the facilities in courtyards [4].

## **3. City squares in urban areas**

Creating recreational squares is one way to improve the quality of urban space. Finding or creating optimal conditions for rest, recreation and social gatherings is a task that requires proper interpretation of the place itself and the community that uses it.

### *3.1. Bieganski Square*

As the city of Częstochowa evolved, opportunities to create a new city square arose. The designed space has become an integral part of the Avenue of the Blessed Virgin Mary, while at the same time preserving the historical layout of the city. The square has created the opportunity to organize social gatherings, celebrations, and cultural events [5].

An important element of the square is the inclusion of small architectural forms in the design, for example, seating constructions and greenery. Smooth wooden benches encourage residents to recreations such as reading books, meetings, discussions, relaxation, and the implementation of their own initiatives (Fig. 3).

The attractiveness of the new square with its exceptional cultural overtones and enriched by the available street furniture facilitates and encourages residents to interact with local art, cultural, and social activities and events.

### *3.2. Town Square fountain*

The search and creation of new „places” in this narrow area of the city has become a necessity to compensate for the space deficit [6]. An attempt to redefine the place is often associated with the connection of cultural spaces through the help of a square and street furnishing. The discussed square has three elements of street furnishing, wooden seats integrated with greenery, a hanging sculpture made of copper and a water feature consisting of a fountain in a square of granite slabs. The use of precious materials emphasizes the character of the place,

enriching the urban space. An example of how a city square can use elements of street furniture to create a shared urban space.



**Fig. 3.** Bieganski Square. An important element of the public space is the design of small architectural forms such as seats and greenery

#### 4. Competition work

Design activities carried out as part of the “Architecture Scientific Circle” at the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the Częstochowa University of Technology concerned the design of street furniture in order to create new public spaces. Street furniture in urban spaces slows the pace of life in the city and becomes an integral element. The designs needed to be a useful feature, such as a seat, roofing, a form of separating space, etc.

The completed designs showed a variety of students' approaches to solving and shaping public space. The competition to design small-scale architectural forms was also to draw students' attention to the strong impact of small-scale projects on the surrounding cultural environment (Figs. 4 and 5).



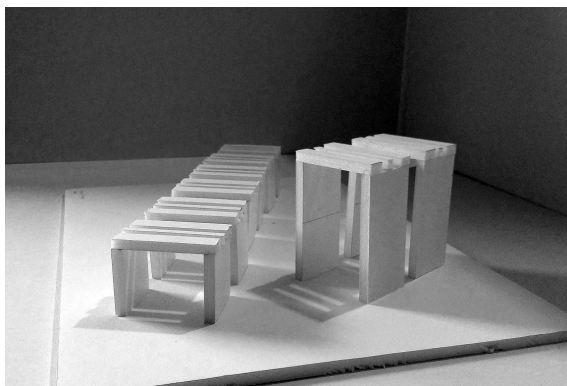


Fig. 5. Student work completed as part of the Architecture Science Club workshops. Author of the work: Kinga Kiepora

## 5. Conclusions

Creating urban spaces enriched with street furnishings is a way to improve the quality of the city's urban structure. Finding or creating optimal conditions to provide a place for rest, recreation and social gatherings is a task that requires proper interpretation of the place itself and the community that uses it.

Urban planning activities in downtown areas force architects to develop innovative solutions for the management of tight, intermingling spaces (Square at the City Hall) and the creation of large public spaces (Biegański Square).

An important element of the development of a contemporary city are the unique places that give the opportunity to use them creatively. In the design of such places, street furnishings becomes an important element.

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## Mała architektura w przestrzeniach miejskich na przykładzie miasta Częstochowa

### STRESZCZENIE:

Artykuł dotyczy wybranych przykładów przestrzeni publicznej na terenach śródmiejskich miasta Częstochowa. Autorka zwraca uwagę na przestrzenie publiczne położone wzdłuż głównej arterii komunikacyjnej miasta - alei NMP. Tworzenie przestrzeni miejskich wzbogaconych o formę wyposażenia ulic jest sposobem na poprawę jakości struktury urbanistycznej miasta. Znaleźcie lub stworzenie optymalnych warunków do zapewnienia miejsca do wypoczynku, rekreacji i spotkań jest zadaniem, które wymaga właściwej

interpretacji samego miejsca i społeczności, która z niego korzysta. Działania urbanistyczne na obszarach śródmiejskich zmuszają architektów do opracowania innowacyjnych rozwiązań w zakresie zarządzania ciasnymi, przenikającymi się przestrzeniami (plac przy ratuszu) i tworzenia dużych przestrzeni publicznych (plac Biegańskiego). Elementem rozwoju współczesnego miasta są charakterystyczne miejsca, które dają możliwość ich kreatywnego wykorzystania. W projektowaniu takich miejsc ważnym elementem jest forma wyposażenia ulic. W dalszej części artykułu przedstawiono prace studentów wykonane w trakcie warsztatów w ramach „Koła naukowego architektury”. Tematem zadania było tworzenie przestrzeni publicznej z wykorzystaniem małej architektury.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:**

architektura; urbanistyka; przestrzeń miejska