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SOCIAL PARTICIPATION IN URBAN PLANNING IN POLISH CITIES

PARTYCYPACJA SPOŁECZNA W GOSPODARCE PRZESTRZENNEJ MIAST POLSKICH

Abstract

The methods of managing Polish cities have been changing since 1989, due to the principles of the new system: democracy and free market economy. Especially difficult are the changes that depend on customs and mentality of people – both those who manage and those who are managed. The reason why social participation in managing space is such a difficult realm. The subject of this article is social participation in Polish cities: the *status quo* of the concept, social and cultural circumstances, and methods and tools suitable for the Polish situation. The background to this relationship are the methods used in Great Britain, Germany, France, the United States, and Japan. Polish architects, urban planners and representatives of local and regional authorities usually believe that the Polish situation is especially difficult due to the historical considerations. Urban planning is slowed down and hampered with numerous conflicts, with the people participating against the intentions of the authorities. Comparison with other countries proves nevertheless the Polish situation to be unique, yet there is hope for improvement through education in social communication.

Streszczenie

Od roku 1989 metody zarządzania polskimi miastami zmieniają się w związku z nowymi zasadami ustrojowymi: demokracją i gospodarką wolnorynkową. Szczególnie trudne są te zmiany, które zależą od obyczaju i mentalności ludzi zarówno zarządzających, jak i zarządzanych. Partycypacja społeczna w gospodarowaniu przestrzenią jest właśnie taką trudną dziedziną. Tematem artykułu jest partycypacja społeczna w polskich miastach – stan rozwoju idei, uwarunkowania społeczno-kulturowe, metody i narzędzia odpowiednie do polskiej sytuacji. Tłem dla tej relacji są metody stosowane w Wielkiej Brytanii, Niemczech, Francji, Stanach Zjednoczonych i Japonii. Polscy architekci, planiści i przedstawiciele samorządu uważają zwykle, że polska sytuacja jest szczególnie trudna ze względu na uwarunkowania historyczne. Gospodarka przestrzenna jest hamowana i zakłócana licznymi konfliktami, w których społeczeństwo protestuje przeciw zamierzeniom władz. Porównanie z innymi krajami dowodzi jednak, że polska sytuacja jest specyficzna, ale istniej nadzieja na poprawę poprzez edukację w dziedzinie komunikacji społecznej.

INTRODUCTION

The change of the system in Poland in 1989 became a challenge for many professional leaders. Even the ones who supported the change with deep conviction, and participated actively in the struggle for it to occur, were not ready for change from the professional point of view. This situation was true also about the groups dealing with a comprehensive range of space-related questions: planning, conservation of nature, heritage and environment, architecture, and landscape architecture. The critical attitude to the content of the previous system was accompanied by the absence of a clearly defined concept of what everything should be like in the new conditions. Some representatives of the disciplines mentioned above knew the foreign standards coming from the countries that had long experienced the democratic system and free-market economy, yet that was theoretical knowledge of individuals. The throngs of civil servants, employees of spatial planning offices, managers of national parks, design bureaus, conservation services and many others in practice knew only what they had learned in communism. They simply had no experience of working in any other system. Worse, a fairly large group of professionals failed to notice initially that spatial management – both in its protective and developmental aspect – is very strongly determined by the social and economic system. The professionals long treasured the hope that everything would again be the same as it used to, with the exception of a handful of features of the *ancienrégime* that they considered negative.

After that memorable watershed, many Poles who for many years had lived and worked as planners and architects in the countries of Western Europe and in the United States returned to Poland. They brought back the knowledge of systems and methods used in the countries they were returning from, and wanted to be the pioneers of their implementation in Poland. Usually, however, the first attempts of transferring the methods ended in failure: the transplant was rejected. Usually they failed to estimate properly the fact that the models were planted upon an entirely different social and cultural background, and that the economy functioned at a different level and in a different manner. In other words, much like those locals who did not realise how profound were the changes required, the returnees did not appreciate sufficiently the power of social and economic circumstances of the here and the now, i.e. the Poland of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Twenty-five years have already passed since the transformation. Plenty things have changed in the meantime, which does not mean that what took place in the People's Republic of Poland in the previous 44 years ceased to be important. The Polish society, Polish cities, and the Polish system of managing space continue to struggle against the consequences of communism and this is why it is still justified to refer to them as post-communist. This is probably a dying characteristic, yet still present in the Polish life. Although carrying a brunt of the times of the communist rule (People's Republic of Poland), the Polish society has retained its specific character and its identity strongly rooted in the history of Poland.

"Nothing about us without us" – social participation is the implementation of one of the fundamental principles of democracy. It should involve many aspects of life where decisions made by public authorities have significant influence on the life of the citizens, and that includes spatial development. Participation is an aspect of spatial development, being a form of economy that is very strongly determined by the specific social and cultural situation predominant at a given time and in a given country.

The possibility of introducing the idea of participation in Poland depends on whether we can adjust it to the reality of Polish civic life, Polish customs and Polish cultural traditions. Knowledge of the ways and means used abroad is very useful in this case, yet insufficient. On the other hand, the Polish experience may be helpful to other post-communist countries that struggle with similar, though most probably not identical, problems.

The discussion about the justification of practicing participation in Poland frequently involves arguments about the specific traits of the Polish society, which for historical reasons lacks trust to public authorities. Worse: authorities quite often do not even try to win this trust but rather deepen the rift between potential partners in participation. Emerging here is an argument about immaturity, lack of education, and other bad traits of the Polish nation. Sceptics used to say: participation – yes, but later, once the society has matured, and now people need educating in matters related to spatial management from the earliest days. Whether this critical diagnosis is right or not, it must be said that the social and cultural situation in our country differs significantly from the status quo in countries with established culture and democratic customs. A way to overcome the difficulties is the establishment of a proprietary, independent model of participation, with education in social communication being a significant element. On the other hand, passive waiting for a better society is not an option at all.

The article presents experience from the practical implementation of the idea of social participation in space-related projects in Poland, while the methods used in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, the United States, Japan, provide a background for these considerations.

PARTICIPATION VS. THE EVOLUTION OF THE POLISH LAW

The process of legislative changes adjusting the legal system to the new constitutional order has continued since 1989. Beginning with 2004, an additional impulse for changes has been Poland's membership in the European Union, whose directives must be introduced to Polish legislation. In this period, the acts of law concerning spatial planning, environmental protection, and guardianship of natural and cultural heritage have been changed repeatedly. The directions of the changes are lively discussed in the professional and political milieus, and the practical effects prove the true value of the assumptions made. Their synthetic image are the changes that take place in the cultural landscape and that, unfortunately, do not speak in favour of this evolution.

Changes in legislation as a rule react to developer demands to streamline investment. Indeed, burdened with excessive and sluggish red tape, these development processes are slow. Unfortunately, instead of improving the efficiency of management in public administration, the legislators gradually decrease the scope of control of public authorities over spatial management. Due to that, e.g. the decisions to put up buildings that depend increasingly less on extensive spatial context, and are more and more often issued without a zoning plan for the entire town or district. The degree of liberalisation of relevant law poses a clear threat to spatial order, which is aggravated by corruption, present in the country's economic life.

The balance between liberal spatial policy and a policy recognising norms and restrictions that lay down spatial order is the subject to be discussed most often. The subject to be discussed most often is the balance between the liberal spatial policy and the policy recognising the norms and restrictions that create the spatial order that corresponds to certain principles. The question of social participation enjoys a far lesser interest. Nevertheless, observing the evolution of law, one must state that there is an increasing number of regulations concerning participation present in the successive versions of the acts of law (Fogel, 2010). This process is fastest in the legislation concerning environmental protection, and slowest in the protection of culture heritage. The following amendments of the acts on spatial planning are also increasingly rich with provisions on participation. A very important factor in the changes is the legislation concerning access to public information.

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION VS. POLISH CUSTOM

Despite a significant improvement, the Polish society can still hardly be called civic (Siciński, 1996). Representations, stereotypes and habits shaped in the previous periods are still vested in the mentality and customs of Poles, which renders the implementation of the idea of social participation more difficult. Therefore, it is true that only few people, if any at all, come to design workshops on public space addressed to the residents, despite all the invitations. At the same time, protests against the construction of unwanted sites attract crowds. Most public discussions turn into public quarrels. True. In disputes, hardly ever a true consensus is reached, and legal enforcement may be resorted to. True. At times civic protests block investments that are beneficial. True. All the statements above are true, but the society is not the only one to blame here. Attempts at communication do not bring any success because they are misorganised: they occur not when and where they are needed, not with the people who need them, and in a wrong fashion. In other words, the organisers lack the skill in the scope of social communication. Worse: this is a lack that as a rule remains unconscious.

Economy of the space can be compared to a game (Bielecki, 2008), whose players are public authorities, owners of real estate, investors, designers, and the society, or especially this part of the society who are going to use the area to be transformed. They are all stakeholders in a given project. The methods of communication between

the first four players have long been considered necessary and improved through plenty of experiments. This is communication between people or small groups that is frequently formalised through legal regulations and procedures. The communication with the fifth player, that is the society, is a more difficult task from the very nature of this contact, as it means communicating with a large group of people; which, moreover, is an entirely new task in Poland.

In this situation, the strategy of proceeding should not be solely based on a waiting and teaching architecture to children. Education is necessary in social communication. First of all, for the representatives of public authorities and designers. The education-related claim is easier to meet, as the group is smaller and better educated than the society at large. Naturally, what is needed is also the education of experts in social communication (trainers, negotiators, mediators, moderators) to cooperate with architects, planners, conservation and preservation officers, and public authorities.

Waiting is no option in any case. Those who find the democratic idea of participation not sufficiently convincing should understand the argument pointing at realistic benefits or the inability to achieve certain goals without resorting to participation. The numerous events taking place in the world and also in Poland prove that an increasingly strong argument is the avalanche-like spread of electronic communication. The Internet favours many forms of direct democracy and makes the "brushing of uncomfortable cases under the carpet" and dishonest methods increasingly difficult. Moreover, the social networks and sites help the society to get self-organised in a very quick time on a very large scale. Which is why both protesting and cooperation are easier than ever before. The reason why participation cannot simply be avoided in a longer term: it needs to be learned as soon as possible.

SPATIAL CONFLICTS

An opportunity to offset conflicts is one of the many benefits that come from the idea of participation. Practice proves that it is the most convincing argument for the sceptics. Implementation of numerous projects conducted currently in Poland encounters the barrier of social conflicts that is difficult to overcome. We continue never-ending disputes about the right to use the land, the way of proceeding with nature, about the course of roads, the situation of burdensome yet necessary facilities, new architecture in historical cities, and many, many other questions pertaining to space. In the communist social and economic system, attempts were made to impose solutions to such controversies, and public opinion was not allowed to speak its mind, which could give the illusion that there are simply no conflicts. After the systemic transformation, it seems that everything suddenly turned into bones of contention, and nothing can be done without protests, conflicts, quarrels, and rows. It is only a semblance, however: coming to the surface are the supressed conflicts, ones that have always been there, and we – devoid of experience – are helpless while facing them.

Conflicts in social life, including also spatial management, are a natural phenomenon. They cannot be excluded, but must be counteracted, and – should they, nevertheless, break out – they must be managed and eventually solved. The scientific analysis of the nature of conflicts allows drawing general conclusions on the reasons for success or defeat. This in turn opens the path to the creation of methods for responding to conflicts and solving them (Deutsch, Coleman, 2005).

From this point of view, one of the most important features of interpersonal conflicts is their natural inclination to escalate. Even if it addresses a trifle, a conflict that continues violently and passionately without any attempts at alleviating it begins to increase with time. Even though the content of the controversy does not change, an escalating emotional conflict is developing on its ground. We should therefore know that attempts at mediation concerning substance are insufficient. Very important, if not more important, are the steps undertaken in the sphere of emotional relations. In this scope, one can usually achieve a good deal, first and foremost a slow-down in the escalation of the dispute, which in turn makes it easier to reach an agreement on the subject. Moreover, a skilful conflict management may provide a particular creative potential. To achieve that, instead of focusing on fighting, one needs to treat the conflict, first as precious information about the divergence of opinions, and later as an inspiration to seek the best, mature solution that satisfies everybody.

Investigation of the conflicts continuing currently in Poland (Pawłowska, 2002), allows the conclusion that there are five main and interconnected reasons that make success in solving space-related conflicts so difficult.

Attempts at reaching a solution are undertaken to late

This is a particular "original sin": the reason that triggers further difficulties. The hopes for solving a conflict that breaks out at the moment of embarking on the project are very low, especially if the entire design and decision making process took place behind closed doors. In a discussion that begins at that moment, it is difficult to expect peaceful attitude and harmonious cooperation of the parties on the good solution. The party that issued the decision defends its position at any price, as a change carries a threat of wasting public money, effort and time, and the loss of the decision-maker's prestige. Opponents, whether right or wrong, are frustrated with the disregard of their opinions. In such circumstances a charge is very often brought up against the protesters that they are not capable of anything other than protesting. This, however, is a charge that is hard to be agreed with, as in that very moment the social stakeholders have no other way of claiming their rights than protest.

Conflicts are solved on the legal and not content plane

It is obvious that questions of the space that conflicts focus on are regulated by law, yet the quality of spatial solutions cannot be judged only through their conformity to law. Conflicts solved too late, i.e. after the decision is made, frequently move from the content-related plane to the legal one. The parties try to win by proving

that the opponent transgressed the law. This, as a rule, means a particular "hunt for the culprit", therefore there is no room for seeking content-based solutions. In such a game, even a slight legal flaw may be decisive for the victory of the party that is wrong both subjectively and socially. One comes to believe that it is only the question whether the project is legal or not that matters, and yet the question of legality should not be sufficient: the project simply should be good. Creative cooperation, content-based discussion, and negotiations of the disputable questions make sense only before the making of a decision. These should aim at looking for a solution that is subjectively good, which obviously should also abide by the binding laws.

Persuading the protesters is treated as the only and sufficient form of communicating with the society

An obvious reaction of the powers that be to a civic protest is an attempt at preventing it. In such circumstances, the authorities tend to assume automatically that these are the protesters who are a partner to talks. Worse, talks with protesters have acquired the rank of social consultations. Missing usually on behalf of the authorities is a reflection over the right of the protesters to represent all the social stakeholders. Sometimes the protesters may actually be stakeholders, yet only a small section, when compared to the whole society. At times they may secure the support of a larger group, or even all the stakeholders. Nevertheless, it does occur that the right due to the society is usurped by especially confrontational individuals, who have no legitimation to address the question. They provide the most difficult partners in talks. It is therefore useful to check the mandate of the protesters and – if doubtful – care for the participation of authentic stakeholders. There is an opportunity that their number will include partners more suitable to talks. It is quite possible that this group, previously silent, will include people of quite different views than the protesters.

Communication with the society is initiated as an enforced reaction to a conflict, and not as an initiative of public authorities

Communication that starts in such circumstances forces the authorities or designers to assume that imposed or chaotic conditions of the game that as a rule are unfavourable. This makes difficult the managing of the process and achieving a consensus through social participation, organised in a planned and professional manner. The organisers of enforced participation frequently do not know that it could be otherwise. They believe that there is no other way that answering pressure with pressure. Such forced struggle exacerbate the lack of trust between the powers that be and the society, and make the peaceful settling of this and successive matters increasingly difficult. The authorities would have far greater opportunities to solve difficult cases if they embarked on the initiative at an appropriate time and planned a rational process of participation.
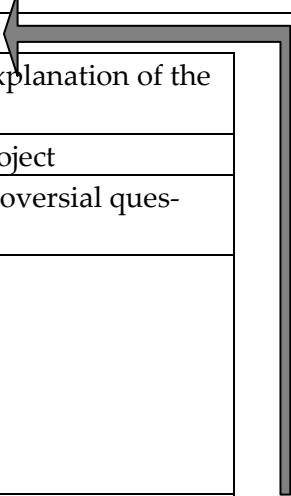
Lack of conflict management skills among representatives of public authorities and designers, and lack of professionals in conflict management specialising in questions of spatial management

Responding to conflicts and their solution requires skills in social communication. Without these skills, the initiative of participation – even if initiated timely – may bring no expected results, or even help conflicts to break out or aggravate. Bad experiences in this field are one of the reasons why participation is avoided. This is why the education of representatives of the authorities and specialist designers, much like the education in spatial questions is necessary for researchers and investigators of public opinion, researchers, moderators, negotiators, and mediators.

Social participation as a way of opposing conflicts

Social participation is a good way of opposing conflicts in space-related projects (Pawłowska, 2008). The condition for their success, however, is appropriate association of that participation to the course of the project and to the legal and administrative procedures binding in Poland. Corresponding to these conditions is the general programme of participation presented below, which can be applied to various goals and situations: from the drafting of spatial management plans to the completion of construction projects.

Tab. 1. Programme of participation and its links to the stages of the project

No.	Stages of the project	Phases of participation	No.
I	Programming	Informing the stakeholders	1
		Research of needs	2
II	Design		
		Presentations and explanation of the project	3
		Discussion of the project	4
		Negotiation of controversial questions	5
IIa	Introduction of the changes resulting from the discussion and negotiations of controversial questions to the project		
		Repetition of individual phases if necessary	3a, 4a (5a)
III	Decision making		
IV	Implementation	Possibility of participating in the implementation	6

The project is divided here into four main stages: I. Programming, II. Design, III. Decision making, and IV. Implementation. Planned correspondingly are six phases of participation that interlock or overlap with the stages of the project.

The first phase of participation is the efficient sharing of information with social stakeholders about the intentions, (photo 1) preceded by the drafting of their long list (1). It is the task of public authorities.

The second is the recognition of social needs that are to be satisfied thanks to the implementation of the plan by conducting social research (2). These two stages should be completed before embarking on the implementation of the project. At the stage of design, one needs to examine the option to develop more than one version of the design, as alternative solutions, as a rule, make it easier to conduct the successive phases of participation.

The successive phases include the presentation of the project to the stakeholders combined with explanations on behalf of the designers, so that the project could be correctly understood by non-professionals (3).

These should be followed by a discussion of the project (4) between the designers and authorities on the one hand, and stakeholders. Such a discussion may bring about the approval of the

Photo 1. Poster – invitation for residents to a discussion concerning the management of public space in Kraków.

design, which allows passing to the stage of decision-making, and then to the implementation of the project, in some cases with direct participation of the stakeholders (6). If, however, the discussion does not end in approval, it should generate the list of controversies.

In the successive stage (5), these questions should be negotiated until a memorandum of understanding is signed by the authorities, designers, and stakeholders.

If this agreement is based on full approval of the project, or on insignificant changes that do not enforce a change of the original design concept, the decision allowing implementation (6) may be reached after negotiations.

If, however, the content of the agreement necessitates a change of the concept, the design (IIa) and participation (3a, 4a, and if necessary, also 5a) should be repeated, so as to bring eventually the final decisions.

Obviously, it is best for the final solution to be the corroboration of full approval and acceptance, yet despite any efforts, such final result cannot always

be achieved. If there is no consensus, the decision is made by the party responsible for it, that is public authorities. Making it, the authorities should nevertheless consider the long-term social costs of making decisions without social consent. Sometimes they pay to be incurred, for example, when the level of opposition is low, yet at other times such an exercise should be abandoned, as it produces the threat of aggravating the mistrusts.

In the programme presented above, countering the conflicts begins in the phase of research, when the contradicting interests, plans, and intentions of various stakeholders in the project are identified. This makes it possible to offset conflicts even before they begin and intervene in their early phases. This brings about a better opportunity of their peaceful solution, and facilitates avoiding of a wide array of losses. Opportunities to respond are vested also in all the other phases, yet it is the phase of negotiations that is especially significant. It is then that an attempt at solving the conflict that could not be liquidated earlier is made. The methods and tools for participation necessary for the implementation of the phases listed above that are adjusted to Polish social and legal conditions are presented in greater detail in the book, entitled *Zanim wybuchnie konflikt*.[1]

EXAMPLES OF PARTICIPATION IN POLAND

Despite the difficulties mentioned above, the number of cases of efficient inclusion of the public into the management of space is increasing in Polish cities. The process takes place with different intensity and on different rungs of the so-called ladder of social participation (Arnstein, 1969). Even though it is caused more by the mechanism of social coercion than the keenness of public administration and planners, participation is becoming a fact in Poland.

The number of projects whose assumptions include the prerequisite to conduct social dialogue in reference to space includes Local Revitalisation Programmes (*Lokalne Programy Rewitalizacji, LPR*), which in 2004-2006 belonged to the Integrated Regional Development Programme (*Zintegrowany Program Rozwoju Regionalnego, ZPORR*), and are now a part of the Regional Operational Program (*Regionalny Program Operacyjny*, RPO) 2007–2013 in all the 16 regions of the country.[2] In practice, this means the implementation of the policy for supporting regions in the EU as a part of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The LPR plans are documents

[1] Zanim wybuchnie konflikt; Idea i metody partycypacji społecznej w ochronie krajobrazu i kształtowaniu przestrzeni, ed. by K. Pawłowska, Vol. A, Dlaczego?, Vol. B Jak?, Kraków, available online at:http://www.tiny.cc/partycypacja, last accessed on 19th May 2014.

[2] "Poland. National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 in support of growth and jobs. National Cohesion Strategy", adopted by the European Commission on 7th May 2007, available online at: http://www.funduszeeuropejskie.gov.pl/WstepDoFunduszyEuropejskich/Documents/NSRO_an_20_0 7.pdf, last accessed on 19th May 2014.

of strategic character that define the potential and actions undertaken in degraded urban areas, post-industrial brownlands, and post-military land that requires rehabilitation. Revitalisation was designed as an entire set of operations going beyond the mere physical redressing of the architectural substance and embracing also social and economic activation (Skalski, 1996). Taking into account the objective of increasing the attractiveness of the land, involvement of various parties in its development, and sustainable growth, one finds here parallels with the Town Centre Management practice in the United Kingdom and in other European states (Coca-Stefaniak, Radomiński, Ryczek, 2009). It is, however, to be emphasised that LPRs do not establish local laws, and they are only there to define long-term goals. Unfortunately, they are frequently treated solely as documents that allow access to financing from European funds (Billert, 2006), because the requirement to have an LPR is a condition for submitting applications for subventions from ZPORRs and/or RPOs.

The research conducted on the implementation of LPRs in Polish cities proved that, despite the focus on the inclusion of the public into the creation of this type of documents, only few local authorities preparing the plans went beyond a limited informative operation (Siemiński, Topczewska, 2009). Worth mentioning, however, are a number of positive cases where a more comprehensive dialogue was embarked on. In Poznań and in Kraków (Staniewska, 2010), special units were established in Municipal Offices to deal with the questions of revitalisation and preparation of the plans. Intensive informative operation was conducted in both the cities: in Poznań, it began with polling of opinion in the streets and questionnaires, while Kraków developed coherent visual communication and ran a campaign through district councils and the media (posters, press releases, leaflets, website). In both cities, meetings with residents were organised in the subsequent stage. In Poznań, they brought more in-depth cooperation, as the residents of one of the districts participated in a pilot project formulating the local zoning plan. Moreover, a number of cultural events, including city games, workshops in architecture education, concerts, and summer guided tours were organised. The effect of the meetings in Kraków included NGOs submitting requests to the LPR, and the development of a website devoted to revitalisation.

Another scope of actions introducing new forms of social participation is the generation of zoning plans (locally known as spatial management plans). This entails expansion of the scope of contacts with the public beyond the requirements defined by the provisions of law, and including, e.g. providing comments and opinions, and participation in the presentation of the design and public debate.[3] While creating the *Studium kierunków i uwarunkowań zagospodarowania przestrzennego* (study of conditions

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[3] Act on Spatial Planning and Management from 27th March 2003, Official Journal Dz.U. 2003 No. 80 item 717, available online at: http://isap.sejm.gov.pl/Download?id=WDU20030800717&type=3 , last accessed on 19th May, 2014.

and directions of spatial development) for the town of Niepołomice, a survey of preferences was conducted at the introductory stage.

It was a comprehensive questionnaire-based examination concerning especially difficult matters and also the directions in the development of the city, individual interviews with leaders of public opinion, and focus interviews (Staniewska, 2010). Acquired in this way was constructive information on the residents' notions and opinions about the future of the town, which is far more than what is usually achieved (applications to change the purpose of land use submitted by owners, and protests against the situation of unwanted developments). The conclusions from the civic opinion polls conducted found their reflection in the development plan approved by the Council of the Town and Commune.

Conducting an information campaign and taking into account the results of opinion polls, while creating local zoning plans is crucial for the Polish practice of participation. This is corroborated by the experience of city planning agencies, for example Biuro Rozwoju Gdańska (Gdańsk Development Agency) and Miejska Pracownia Urbanistyczna (Urban Development Agency) in Poznań (Weremczuk, Pudliszak, 2011. Here, even though not required by law, programmes of participation are in force. But planners acquiring this type of experience claim that running social consultations serves the better identification of interest groups and exclusion of designs that generate conflicts. The benefits, including civic education, mutual persuasion of the parties to the solutions approved, and the transparency of the process building the trust in decision-makers make up for certain losses resulting from the extension of the planning process.

Participation is a difficult task and is rarely embarked on, especially in the case of major public investments. This results among others from the concern about extending the designing and decision-making process. When the date of completion has previously been defined by powers that be, e.g. because of conditions of clearing a subvention from European funds.

Faced with a tendency to liberalise the law on spatial planning and pressure from the investors to exercise the right to disposing property at any price, urban planners and civil servants are frequently accompanied by the looming threat of losing the subjective control over the project and the fear that the opinion of the lay will have to be taken into consideration.

For these reasons, the programming of the process of public participation from the very first idea of the project is a success in experimental projects, where the minds behind the idea agree to overcome additional difficulties. It is so as the parties participating in experimental projects are convinced about their uniqueness, and jointly aim at the completion of the objective of the project. An example of such a success is the creation of the Park nad Balatonem by Warsaw's Praga Południe District. It must be mentioned that the district councils in the capital of Poland enjoy far more extensive rights than in other, smaller cities. Thanks to its competences, the district council was capable of conducting the entire investment process on its own, and embark on social dialogue already at the stage of the idea to institute the park.

Consultations with the residents accompanied all the stages: beginning with the formulation of the guidelines, via the competition for the design of the park, to participation in the implementation of the selected design. Accounting for the social needs helped in conflict-free management of the project and high popularity of the park among the users after its opening (Grzegrzółka, 2011).

A significant improvement is also visible in access to public information. The (Bulletin of Public Information (*Biuletyn Informacji Publicznej*, BIP) has become an obligatory part of websites. It facilitates contact with city institutions, and allows downloading of files and forms, submission of questions and comments, and also presentation of cities' intentions concerning spatial planning and key investments. Such websites feature texts, drawings, and information, including texts of legal decisions, deadlines for submitting applications, dates of presentations and public discussions, and also files showing the visual elements of the plans.

A solution that goes even further is development of specialised municipal units to conduct dialogue with the residents. Kraków's portal *Dialog społeczny* (social dialogue) was established in 2008, which coincided in time with the passionate discussion and a wave of protests concerning the situation of the municipal waste incineration plant, which attracted most attention in the portal. Included there was a catalogue of municipal investments, regular information about the generation of zoning plans was provided, and their drafts presented, moreover, an option to ask questions and post opinions in the forum was offered. Provided in a separate section are reports on public discussions, and architectural competitions concerning prestigious locations, etc. The service publishes also the answers to the questions asked during the consultations.

In 2009, the Centre for Social Communication of the Capital City of Warsaw began implementing the project under the name *Wzmacnianie mechanizmu partycypacji społecznej w m.st. Warszawie* (*reinforcement of the social participation mechanism in the capital city of Warsaw*). By now, a series of model social consultations have been conducted in a number of districts; they assumed the form of meetings, workshops, study walks, etc., and concerned a range of questions, including the restitution of a park, development of infrastructure, and cultural activity. The documented participation of 3500 people, makes it probably the largest undertaking of this kind in Poland.[4]

Another evidence of progress in participation is the establishment of the ever increasing number of non-governmental organisations eager to participate in the dialogue about space and quality of life in the cities. Their number includes the Ruch WspólnaPrzestrzeń (Common Space Movement)[5] stemming from an online discussion forum about skyscrapers, the Kraków-based Przestrzeń-Ludzie-Miasto (Space-People-City) Association [6], and the organiser of happenings: Grupa Pewnych Osób (Group of Certain People)[7] from Łódź.

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[4] http://www.konsultacje.um.warszawa.pl, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

[5] http://www.sites.google.com/site/wspolnaprzestrzen/home, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

[6] https://www.facebook.com/przestrzen, last accessed on 20th May 2014.

[7] http://www.gpo.blox.pl; https://www.facebook.com/grupa.pewnych.osob, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

For a number of years, students of architecture and landscape architecture have been told the principles and methods of social participation in design, with the most extensive programme being conducted for students of Landscape Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture of Kraków University of Technology (PK)[8] (photo 2, 3). Worth emphasising is the fact that it is one of the ways of implementing the postulates of the European Landscape Convention in matters concerning education.[9]

Photo 2. Design workshops for the Zakrzówek Park in Kraków.

Photo 3. Children's work in the project entitled *Temporary gardens* in Kraków.

WHAT SHOULD POLISH ORGANISERS OF PARTICIPATION LEARN FROM THE OTHERS

Experiences gained in other countries are and should continue to be a significant support for the Polish efforts to spread the idea of participation.

The Polish organisers and participants in participation can certainly learn the patience and endurance that finds its illustration e.g. in the redevelopment of the Roppongi Hills quarter in Tokyo (Pawłowska, 2009). The efforts of a major developer firm, Mori Building Company, to turn a quarter of low, chaotic development into an exclusive, metropolitan district with office towers and apartment buildings sporting

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[8] Programme developed in 2000-2010 under the supervision of K. Pawłowska and encompassing the following courses: Landscape Perception, Social Communication, and Landscape Management, integrated with a course in designing public parks; Pawłowska, K., Skrzyńska, A., 2007: Partycypacja społeczna dla architektów krajobrazu – komunikacja między projektantami a użytkownikami, negocjacje i konflikty [w:] Planowanie przestrzenne – szanse i zagrożenia społeczno-środowiskowe (red.): S. Kozłowski, P. Legutko-Kobus, Lublin: 167-180.

[9] European Landscape Convention with Explanatory Report, available online at:
http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/heritage/landscape/default_en.asp, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

gardens on the roofs, a commercial centre and a museum of modern art continued for no less than 17 years. Most of the time was consumed by negotiations and reaching an agreement with over 500 owners of the property that became shareholders of the project, as members of the especially established association. Most of the community still live in the radically changed district. The negotiated project took just four years to complete.

Impatience, anticipation of immediate results, and haste are enemies of real dialogue, which is why the case where understanding between so many shareholders was negotiated for such a long time – and with a great benefit for the form of the project and the current functioning of the district – is such a good educational example.

The example discussed above illustrates also the laborious process of building trust, without which application of many useful forms of action would be impossible. Such a form, for example, is entrusting non-governmental organisations with selected tasks of the state and city authorities (examples include the National Trust being the guardian of British built heritage, and Central Park Conservancy managing a park in New York). The priceless capital of trust allows also carrying out public-private tasks: a group whose number includes revitalising operations (e.g. the revitalisation of small historical towns conducted by the French Association PACT–ARIM).[10] Moreover, the climate of trust brings a powerful positive involvement of non-governmental organisations in the public life, also in the field of arranging space (e.g. Project for Public Spaces in the US[11], and Groundwork in the UK[12]).

A good custom that is worth imitation in Polish circumstances is employing independent moderators, i.e. individuals who are not parties to the project, to conduct social consultations. This is a widespread practice in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the US, where the profession of the facilitator, i.e. moderator of group processes, has already gained acknowledgement and recognition thanks to its efficiency in business (e.g. the operation of the International Association of Facilitators).[13]It must be remarked that only a few firms specialise in such activity in Poland. As a rule, the tasks related to moderation and communication are included in the duties of civil servants in cities and employees of planning offices. In fact, this is a true opportunity for sociologists, architects, urban planners, and psychologists to establish joint ventures, which will let them find employment and efficiently help to solve conflicts in spatial management. In Germany, companies specialising in organisation of participation boast numerous successes. Citycom. Planung im Dialog[14], an office operating in Munich, is run by three women mediators collaborating with

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[10] http://www.pact-arim.org, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

[11] http://www.pps.org, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

[12] http://www.groundwork.org.uk, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

[13] http://www.iaf-world.org, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

[14] Website of the association: http://www.citycom-muenchen.de/index.htm, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

architecture studios. It successfully organises mediation, workshops, and roundtable meetings. The problems solved concern revival of important city streets (Forum Innenstadt Augsburg, Maximilianstraße = Forum of Augsburg City Centre, Maximilian Street), development of the strategy emphasising landscape values of a river in the city (Stadt-Fluss-Landschaft Regensburg = city and river landscape of Regensburg), and building a vision of city development in future (Munich 2030).

Extremely important is the development of permanently operating institutions of self-government established to organise the social dialogue. Useful in this scope are tested standards, e.g. the position of the planner in the UK, the civil servant answering the so-called public queries in France, and the Japanese Kyoto Centre for Community Collaboration (Staniewska, 2010).

Equally significant is earmarking funds for participation already at the stage when the investment is at concept stage, and the awareness that it is on the value of these funds that the possibility of conducting operations and the variety of the methods apply will depend. Majority of these funds prove justified, especially when juxtaposed against the costs of conflict solving.

Common among Polish urban planners is the conviction that social consultations mean distributing a questionnaire or organising a meeting with local residents, which, takes place too late as a rule. Yet neither the dependence on quantitative methods of opinion polling nor summoning of public gatherings without an appropriate plan or preparation can bring about the expected results. Realistic benefits may come only from the methodically planned and conducted programs that account for the large number of different forms, including designing workshops. The ample German experience in the field is summed up in the publication "Informieren. Beteiligen. Kooperieren. Kommunikation in Planungsprozessen" (Bischof, Selle, Sinning, 2005), which contains descriptions and guidelines for organisation of communication concerning spatial matters. The review encompasses nearly 40 various methods of establishing contact and furthering collaboration between urban planners and local communities concerning the planning of spaces, supported with case studies and examples. A good practice worth following is the establishment of a realistic contact with the community by professional designers. This takes place among others, during the American Charrette workshops (Lennertz, Lutzenhiser, 2006). Their essence is the work of the designers in the direct contacts with people, and persistent development of the concept repeatedly verified at the successive meetings between professional designers and workshop participants. This is how a good project accepted by all the parties develops.

The Internet, together with the developing visualisation technologies and geospatial information systems (GIS), poses new opportunities for conducting fruitful dialogue in matters related to space. The likelihood of the success of electronic participation in Poland depends to a great extent on the growing accessibility of the Internet and the expanding group of its users (if the group is too small or fails to include certain social groups, it is hard to speak of representative quality of such information and the whole participation processes). A pilot project of civic

consultations based on online tools was conducted in Germany, and concerned landscape planning for Königslutter am Elm in Lower Saxony (von Haaren, Warren-Kretzschmar, 2006). The entire process of developing the plan lasted for four years and covered a range of actions, including informative meetings, publication of a flyer, launching a website and a discussion forum, publication of an online planning and landscape glossary, writing of an article about landscape planning, organisation of debates and bicycle tours, and an online information newsletter. The especially innovative actions included publication of maps presenting the landscape resources on the website of the portal built especially for the purpose, which let its users share their planning ideas. Moreover, it also produced an online educational module visualising landscape changes on photographs and images understandable for the untrained. The project proved that interactive online tools and the use of spatial information systems may help in better understanding of the goals of planning, and – at a later stage – also in respecting the decisions made in the document whose provisions became local law. Nevertheless, the Internet itself is no key to success. The accomplishments and efficiency of the process of social consultations depend primarily on the motivations of process initiators, and time and human resources.

Moreover, the availability and widespread use of digital tools (including cameras and navigation systems in mobile telephones) allows to enrich professional studies of space with the viewpoint of the non-professionals. In this way it is possible to investigate space and its evaluation so as to include these aspects later in planning. Such studies would most likely support the process of renovation and protection of the most precious Polish historical towns and cities that yield to the pressure of developers and tourist traffic, yet at the same time, in the eye of their residents, retain their unique character and climate, worth saving from commodification. An example of such "public participation GIS" are the studies of experts from Ritsumeikan University Kyoto, who developed a database about the *machiya*, i.e. the traditional merchant houses in Kyoto (Iizuka, Matsumoto, Seto, Yano, 2009). Thanks to the coordinates and GIS software, all the data collected was transferred to the planning maps of Kyoto, used by urban planners and made available to the developers. The project comprises an inventory over 50,000 sites, whose valuation is based not only on expert opinions (of architects and historians) but also on the community opinion represented by the inhabitants of the city participating in the project. Their task was to accompany the experts in field studies, and to make photos of what they believe to be the most beautiful views of streets and houses. This question was the core of specially organised meetings of local residents and scientists running this project, combined with presentation of the photographs made. Thus, the studies concerned also the perception of the cityscape and its evaluation by the community. From mid-October 2008 to March 2009, 3000 people participated in the study, with residents of individual quarters covered by the study being included in their number. The project made the problem of preserving the traditional cityscape more familiar to a wider group of Kyoto residents and showed that the care for traditional landscape is material, and may count on support of professionals and local authorities.

The Polish experience with participation has so far additionally proved that dialogue is far too insufficient to prevent a conflict that has broken loose. This is why the key standard of good practice may be the operation of the institutions that find social participation an element of philosophy of action furthering the sustainable strategic growth of the cities. The London Development Agency (LDA)[15] found the essence of its existence and operation in seeking creative solutions adjusted to time and space, acquisition of strategic partners for completing significant projects, and building of social coalitions, organisation of exhibitions, festivities and workshops preceding the making of the decisions. This helped to develop a message that design and planning are extremely important, worth being devoted attention to and discussed so as to reach the best solutions in quality (aesthetics) and use[16]. Worth following is also the way the Agency cared for revival and maintenance of green, recreational, and leisure areas. Many Polish cities struggle to attract investors, and there is no interest in green issues – so important for the quality of life of city residents. What must be counted among the unquestioned successes of the LDA is the revival of London's historical Crystal Palace Park.[17] A steering group and a number of working groups that meet regularly – each of them separately, and frequently all of them together – were established to conduct the revival in collaboration with the local residents in 2004. Altogether over 80 meetings had been held by the end of 2008, with the process being coordinated by Nigel Westaway and Associates. Moreover, beginning with 2006, after the selection of the main subjects for consultations, the process of including the broad ranges of society into the process of building master plan was initiated.[18] Local Dialogue LPP in collaboration with the LDA used workshops and social actions to involve groups that are frequently excluded from participation: unassociated locals, the elderly, children, immigrants (BAME), and the disabled. The campaign gathered over 3000 people in public workshops and weekend projects. Participating in the 13 meetings for the excluded groups of immigrants were over 300 people. Visits in schools made it possible to include children into the design process through drawing competitions, games, and visits in the park. Thanks to the collaboration with the directors of nine primary schools, 3000 children and 250 parents became familiar with the questions of park revival. Moreover, meetings with the elderly and the disabled were conducted to learn better their needs, and make adjustments in the park to cater for them as well. Organised in the neighbouring

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[15] http://www.lda.gov.uk, website was active until early 2012 due to LDA closure – its last version is archived at http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120326141511/http://www.lda.gov.uk/ (last accessed on 21st May 2014).The tasks of LDA and its mission are continued now by the GLA – Greater London Authority (http://www.london.gov.uk/who-runs-london/greater-london-authority, accessed 21st May 2014), which gradually took over the projects initiated by the LDA.

[16] Interview with Peter Bishop at LDA, May 2010.

[17] http://www.crystalpalacepark.org.uk , last accessed on 21st May 2014.

[18] "MASTERPLAN– Statement of Community Involvement, Crystal Palace Park" (For London Development Agency, by: Latz + Partner, Landscape Architects Lux, Highgate Business Centre, Studio 1A, Local Dialogue LLP, Brent Design Unit), source:
http://www.crystalpalacecampaign.org/MasterPlan/CPP_SCI.pdf , last accessed on 21st May 2014.

residential areas was a travelling exhibition portraying the first drafts of the master plan. Following the generation of the document, an exhibition was organised– in the park, and more precisely, at the Crystal Palace Station – to present the idea and its visualisations, with the comments made by the people watching the exhibition being included in the draft before it was finally submitted to the authorities.

The entire campaign was conducted in four stages: the first was the introduction (informative campaign conducted from October to December 2006) later inclusion (work-shops and meetings from January to June 2007), followed by the explanation of the project (meetings and campaigns in the park and in the streets, and finally the final amendments introduced to the plan – from June to Midsummer 2007), to close off with the collection of conclusions and comments (among others during the exhibition and other meetings – until autumn 2007). Finally, the master plan document was made and submitted in 2007 to the proper authorities to acquire permits for embarking on the practical revival of the park. The permits were acquired early in 2009. LDA contributed greatly to the creation of the Crystal Palace Masterplan and vibrant social dialogue which accompanied this process. Yet still the park needed effective management, which could not be secured by LDA because of its closure in 2012 and transfer of projects to GLA. Therefore, looking for successful model of management, the London Borough of Bromley decided to form a "not-for-profit" organisation with the sole purpose of caring for the management, development, protection and restoration of the park. In late autumn 2011 a Crystal Palace Park Community Stakeholder Group was established as part of the Crystal Palace Park Management Board. The Board will be implementing the masterplan to successfully manage and redevelop the Park for the benefit of the local people and visitors alike. What is necessary in Poland is the rejection of the culture of social protest and the ethos of adamance for the sake of the cultural dialogue and creative focus of all the interested parties on the achievement of the solution that is best and tolerable for everyone. What is needed instead of "walling yourself in a besieged fortress" is trust, and a win-win strategy in negotiations (Fisher, Ury, 1981). Everyone needs such a change: planners, urban experts, civil servants, non-governmental organisations, and the Polish society at large.

CONCLUSIONS

In spite of difficulties, a clear though slow development of the idea of social participation in managing space is observed in Poland. Comparing Poland to other countries, one can ask a question what point Poland has reached on the democracy building journey, assuming that the level of social participation and its popularity may be considered a certain measure of development of democracy.

From the Polish perspective, it is difficult to state whether the critical diagnosis of the state of our society mentioned above is only a myth that justifies the inactivity, or do we really have plenty to catch up with. Many accounts on practical participation projects running in the countries that have long been democratic focus on numerous obstacles that must be overcome to achieve success. The Polish organisers

of participation frequently hear from the West European consultants and advisers that these processes are difficult not only in Poland, and that it is not only in Poland that failures do occur. Nevertheless, it is the fact that the direction of flow of standards and patterns of participation leads generally from the West eastwards (photo 5). Some American research methods – e.g. the workshops developed by the National Charrette Institute in Portland[19] and the methods of animation of public spaces ("placemaking") used by the Project for Public Spaces[20] – are treated as certain touchstone solutions and disseminated all over the world. Another, quantitative proof for the disproportion is the percentage of Poles involved in the operation of non-governmental organisations, which is a number of times smaller than the analogous ratio in countries that have long enjoyed democracy.[21]

Photo 4. Exhibition of works by children and young people developed in the project entitled m*y space*, and concerning the Mużaków – Bad Muskau Park on the Polish German border.

If one expands the scope of research on participation to reach beyond the realm of Western culture, one will certainly perceive even more clearly the differences resulting not only from the level of democratisation, but also from the varied customs binding in different cultural realms. Very helpful here is what can be defined as the contrastive background. The authors of this article had an opportunity to conduct such observations participating in a Polish-Japanese research project.[22] The content scope of the project included, among other questions, the issue of social participation. The substantive scope of the project covered, among others, the questions of social participation. Comparison between the Japanese and Polish societies is beyond doubt

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[19] http://www.charretteinstitute.org, last accessed on 21th May 2014.

[20] Project for Public Space, How to turn a place around; Handbook for creating successful public space, available online at: http://www.pps.org, last accessed on 21th May 2014.

[21] http://www.klon.org.pl/, last accessed on 21th May 2014.

[22] A Comparative Study of the Preservation and Utilization of Historical Cities Kyoto, Kanazawa, Krakow and Warsaw, project financed by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science and the Polish Academy of Sciences, Krajobraz kulturowy Japonii (2010), ed. by K. Pawłowska, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Krakowskiej, Kraków, available online at:
http://suw.biblos.pk.edu.pl/resourceDetailsRPK&rId=4423, last accessed on 21st May 2014.

one that produces numerous contrasts. One of the most characteristic features of the Japanese society, differentiating it from the western societies is the so-called groupism: the principle of the group being dominant over the individual (Benedict, 1946). It is the reverse of individualism, which is frequently listed as the distinctive feature of Poles. From this point of view, one could believe that the Japanese should find no obstacles with the promotion of the idea of social participation. And indeed they encounter no difficulties, yet only those that make this process so difficult for Poles. Nevertheless, they have others, resulting from features and traits characteristic for their culture, including its self-restraint in expressing own opinions, and waiting for the judgment of someone standing above them in the social hierarchy. This context becomes visible e.g. when public discussion of a project is organised. Poles are very difficult to be enticed into coming, and the group who finally arrive very quickly turn discussion into a quarrel. As the Japanese organisers of participation claim, the Japanese come eagerly, but it is very difficult to make them speak their minds.

The level the development of democracy in Poland is varies strongly in the country. There are communes (municipalities) where local authorities successfully implement its principles, which is expressed among others by the repeated election of the same mayors and councillors for many successive terms. There are also communes that are drowned in torpor, where corruption is rife, together with other pathologies of civic life. Moreover, the level of affluence of the communes is highly differentiated. There are towns, villages, and districts where social consultations are treated as an obvious form of relationships between the governing and the governed, and there are ones where nothing is done in this area, or if any action is required by law, it is only superficial.

Certainly, what influences the idea of participation in Poland is the country's economic level and the level of affluence of individual territorial authorities. True participation requires appropriate financing. One cannot, however, claim that the current economic condition of the country renders the fulfilment of this idea impossible, and that one must wait for a wealthier society. Most probably, the lack of financing curtails the potential, but there are also numerous examples of wasting funds earmarked for actions that are purposefully superficial or on activities that fail due to the lack of competency on behalf of the organisers. The success and scale of the forms of participation applied do not depend solely on the level of financing. One can act efficiently on a small scale, as well as waste large budgets efficiently (see photo 5 and fig. 1).

Falling back on the observation of the situation in Poland and comparison with other countries mentioned above, the following claims, which at the same time provide conditions for progress, can be made:
1. to educate representatives of local authorities, and architects, urban experts and planners in social communication;
2. to educate specialists in social communication (moderators, mediators, negotiators, public opinion researchers and pollsters) so that they tackle tasks related to spatial management;

3. establish public institutions – in local and regional authorities, and non-governmental – to support the civic involvement in spatial management;
4. amend the acts of law concerning human right to participate in deciding about spatial management;
5. promote and disseminate the culture of dialogue and build trust between public authorities and the society.

Photo 5. The New Dębnicki Park in Kraków, established as a civic initiative.
Source: designed by K. Pawłowska, K. Dąbrowska-Budziło, A. Zachariasz, K. Fabijanowska

Fig. 1. Development plan for Castle Hill in Będzin based on consultations with the society.
Source: designed by K. Pawłowska, A. Zachariasz, M. Bogdanowicz, K. Fabijanowska..

These claims concerning directly social participation must be accompanied by important external circumstances. The barriers that, even though they may not make the progress impossible, render it difficult include:

- irrational system of spatial planning
- relatively high level of corruption
- relatively low level of wealth in society.

The subject of the development of the idea of participation in post-communist states is interesting from the point of view of the development of democracy as such. It would certainly be interesting to expand the research on participation to embrace countries like Russia and China, where the state of democratic relations is the subject

of criticism of the international public opinion. Even despite that, information on development of forms of participation, especially in environmental protection projects, comes regularly also from those states (Bo-sin, Siu-wai, Milton Chi-hong Lau, 2008). Other interesting cases could also be provided by the countries that are to accede to the European Union, e.g. Croatia.

The comparison should be conducted on a number of planes: theoretical (state of research on participation), legal (pertinent regulations to be found in acts of law and other legislation), institutional (number and operation of institutions serving participation), and last but not least – practical (analysis of case studies described according to a standard pattern). This research should encompass both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the question. The analysis of practical examples allows the avoidance of hasty conclusions based on false stereotypes.

The space in itself is a value, and a vehicle of many natural and cultural values. It is a commodity that we – the society – must share. It is difficult, and at times even very difficult, especially in the places where human beings are densely concentrated. The shared use of space is rife with many controversial matters and numerous conflicts, and always will be. This is why we need to learn to seek consensus, counteract and solve conflicts, and consciously use the options and opportunities that come from the art of social communication. If we do not learn to do it, we are threatened with stagnation or standing by authoritarian methods of spatial management, whose harmful consequences are very well-known in the countries that have experienced communism.

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