

Summary

Dissertation title: *Shaping the public space as a dimension of urban policy.*
A case study of Bydgoszcz

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The intensification of development of modern cities and its dilemmas pose a necessity for improving the functioning of agglomerations. In order to remove the main obstacles on the path towards ensuring sustainable development, it is imperative to express the future effects of a number of tendencies, as well as to better understand contemporary challenges. A strategic approach to city management thus becomes the essence of the issue. The condition for effective shaping of public spaces is, in turn, a realistic functioning of municipal governments as an emanation of the community of citizens. It is the social dimension of urban policy and the capacity for its practical implementation that become the most desired or commonly required way of managing a city today. The socialization of the process of shaping urban public spaces stems from the necessity of including citizens in the process of co-deciding about the reality that surrounds them, but also of sharing the responsibility for the space they live in.

Thus the research objective of the dissertation is to show such an effective way of implementing urban policy which includes all citizens' most pressing needs and expectations and contributes to improving urban spaces and their functional-spatial structures. This is why the research subject consists of the analysis of relations between shaping the space of modern cities and a broadly understood urban policy.

In order to study the interdependence between the concept and condition of implemented urban policy and the state of shaped public space, as well as to verify these relations on a city scale in Bydgoszcz it was necessary to properly and relevantly direct the

whole research process. The first issue was finding answers to the questions of: which city renewal paradigm has become the currently dominating model of development?, are the guidelines of Polish urban policy implemented in the realm of shaping public spaces?, is the current socio-spatial structure of Polish agglomerations a testament to the degradation and de-vitalization of urban public spaces?, to what extent are the rules of Governance taken into account in the implementation of Polish urban policy regarding shaping of spaces?

Attempting to answer these questions necessitated conducting theoretical research as well as analyzing literature, legal acts and existing data, but would still be highly incomplete without empirical research. The latter concerned the city of Bydgoszcz and concluded in verifying five hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H₁):

The direction of city development and the intensification of improvement activities undertaken within the city probably do not solve the fundamental problems and developmental challenges of Bydgoszcz when it comes to shaping space.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂):

The state of urban space in Bydgoszcz and its living conditions supposedly do not reflect the most pressing needs and expectations of citizens.

Hypothesis 3 (H₃):

The extent of citizens' real participation in the process of shaping spaces and real cooperation between the municipal government and the representatives of different urban communities probably prove the superficiality of social participation in Bydgoszcz.

Hypothesis 4 (H₄):

The level of sense of agency and empowerment of the citizens of Bydgoszcz may be an important barrier limiting the effective implementation of participative tools and methods.

Hypothesis 5 (H₅):

Decision-maker implementations and the effects of co-governing probably show the dysfunction of Bydgoszcz urban policy in regards to shaping spaces.

The dissertation includes research and analyzes conducted from a pragmatic perspective. The structure of the thesis consists of five chapters. The first three chapters are descriptive, explanatory and analytical. They provide the theoretical and conceptual framework for the case study conducted in the next part and prepare the field for empirical research. The research contained in the fourth and fifth chapter was conducted from October 2018 to September 2021. The author utilized various research methods. She used the review and critique of legal acts, reports and scientific literature. She analyzed the content of strategic

documents, as well as the definitions of public space. In many cases she utilized the method of existing data analysis, including statistical analysis and comparative method. The main role was given to system analysis. In the first chapter about urban policy the author shows key concepts, approaches and theories which describe the variety of themes that make up this broad issue. The second chapter is devoted to issues of structure and functioning of modern cities, directions of change in urban spaces and developmental challenges and problems. The third chapter shows the process of implementing urban policy in regards to shaping space in the conditions of Polish cities. All this allowed for the holistic structuring of a proper theoretical context in order to undertake the case study of Bydgoszcz, which begins in the fourth chapter. This study lasted from October 2021 to May 2023, although the gathering of empirical data began in October 2020. This part of the dissertation provides a characterization of the city itself, including its virtues and weaknesses, as well as an analysis of implemented urban policy. The fifth chapter is the operationalization of the empirical data. The author conducted her own research using mixed methods – both quantitative and qualitative. This allowed for the creation of a research project consisting of three sequential stages. The gathering of empirical data was done within the city of Bydgoszcz and lasted from October 2020 to May 2023. The first stage consisted of conducting a quantitative study of the citizens of Bydgoszcz using a polling technique. Its objective was to verify the citizens' position in regards to the quality of urban space in Bydgoszcz and their participation in shaping it. The sample consisted of 800 respondents in total. The studied group was chosen using quotas, taking into account age, gender and education level – adequately to the contemporary demographic structure of Bydgoszcz. The second stage of the research project was a qualitative study conducted on representatives of five city communities: activists and NGOs, local institutions, business, academy and creative sector. The objective was to verify the position of various actors of urban policy on the quality of urban space in Bydgoszcz as well as the analysis of the process of co-governing its shape. The author once again conducted an opinion poll, using a polling technique. The research was done on-line through a custom questionnaire. This time the author chose to select respondents arbitrarily, selecting two representatives of each sector. There were 10 respondents in total. The third stage was also a qualitative study which complemented the previous parts of the research project. This time the author used the method of individualized extended interviews with the technique of partially structured interview script. The objective was to learn the perspective of the city's decision-makers in regards to the process of shaping urban spaces. The selection method was arbitrary once again, choosing three representatives from the city's decision-makers.

The research shown within the dissertation proves the existence of a relation between shaping modern urban spaces and a broadly understood urban policy. Nevertheless it is the lack of coherence and the absence of a long term national development strategy that result in the deficit of a holistic thinking and integrated action towards urban public spaces. This has led to their quickly progressing degradation, generating a whole plethora of socio-spatial problems. The necessary condition today is preventing the domination of economically stronger actors and preventing the prioritization of their interests. Instead the universal right to a quality of life and development should be respected by giving voice to the society – the citizens and users of urban spaces – which in turn will trigger the spiral of development of polish cities.