

Landscape Restoration as A Tool of High Quality Public Space Creation- Case Study of Wilda District in Poznan, Poland

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Abstract: In the paper authors deal with question of a downtown landscape restoration as an important part of public space renewal process. There is presented an urban proposal of alterations within public spaces concerning urban floor modernization in a chosen part of Wilda district in Poznan. The research conducted with students with a use of a brainstorming method as well as conclusions that were drawn out, were treated as a starting point of a discussion about possible and needed changes in existing public spaces of the district. The guidelines for future alterations were presented in a Municipality of Poznan and resulted in their practical use.

Keywords: downtown area, public space, urban floor, urban furniture.

INTRODUCTION

The preservation and activation of a public space is an important factor of a city renewal process. It is especially significant within downtown area which is distinguished by the richness of high spatial qualities and its importance as a city heart. Especially within this area it is extremely crucial to provide high quality and attractive public space. There is a need to treat this part of a city in a special way and to pay a particular attention to spatial and visual aspects of its restoration. It is observed that within a properly conducted renewal process, the importance of physiognomy and aesthetics of urban landscape protection is specifically underlined.

A landscape restoration is understood by authors as a process of underlining existing spatial values and their adaptation to contemporary needs. The issues of a landscape restoration can largely be attributed to problems of a spatial aspect of revival. The physical preservation of a spatial and architectural heritage is essential in the context of a local identity protection. The preservation of the past in the visual context is possible thanks to the protection of the image of an old inner-city tissue. However, so as to provide the right level of a aesthetic and contemporary understood attractiveness, the historic architectural and urban forms should be adapted to the new requirements and preferences of today's city users.

A restoration of the downtown landscape, combining functional, spatial and visual aspects, largely deals with the questions of changing the image of public spaces. It is important to take proper steps so as to convert public spaces within a downtown area for these are the pride of the city and a proof of a cultural level of a local community.

Case study of wilda district in Poznan – now and in history

The history of a Wilda district in Poznan dates back to the reign of Prince Władysław Odonica. Originally a village named Wierzbice in the fifteenth

century passed into the hands of the rich burgher named Jakub Wilda, who in 1529 sold the land to the city. The wars that took place in the area of Greater Poland in the eighteenth century completely destroyed the village with its medieval hospital founded by the Knights of St. Lazarus. That's when the city along with the Bishop of Poznan asked for help of German settlers in the area of Bamberg. Thus the famous Poznan "Bambers" contributed to the development of three contemporary inner-city districts of Poznań: Łazarz, Jeżyce and Wilda. By the end of the nineteenth century, these districts created three separate settlements within the Prussian fortifications. It was until November 3, 1899, when the authorities of Wilda decided to join the city of Poznan. It formally took place April 1, 1900. The twentieth century was a period of the most dynamic spatial transformations of this neighborhood. There were established, at that time, many buildings of public functions and industries - mainly deposited within the railway line between Wilda and Łazarz, as well as a lot of residential buildings designed, inter alia, by Joseph Leimbach. As a result of these investments Wilda became more modern part of a city of Poznan. Wilda during an interwar period used to be a wealthy district, where Polish and German people together with the descendants of settlers from Bamberg created the ethos of the Wielkopolska resourcefulness and entrepreneurship [1].



Fig-1: The Wilda market square – view from 1912 [picture by B.Kaźmierczak based on archival photographs]

The postwar history of Wilda drew completely different image of the place. There were created two large industrial plants: of Hipolit Cegielski and Railway Repair Works. As a result the beautiful secession buildings were settled by inflowing working class. Unfortunately, Wilda changed totally and became a common industrial district. This image of Wilda perpetuated within the decades as a district inhabited by the poorest and worst-educated population of Poznan, often drunks and criminals. The deterioration of industry plants in the nineties of the twentieth century, resulted negatively both in the steady collapse of a district and its residents. Next, a crisis in which Wilda was, began to go deeper and deeper. A poor condition of streets and buildings, green spaces and disordered space of Wilda effectively deterred investors from investing capital here [2]. The first signs of positive changes in Wilda are related to cultural events conducted by local art groups. It is also important for alterations that there are a lot of students who rent apartments at affordable prices and through their presence take active part in a social regeneration of the district. Thus a process of a spatial and social improvement is a complex and lengthy activity one

observe some desirable alterations. On one hand there is a particular trend for living in an old architectural tissue of a city centre which helps Wilda to be renewed, on other hand the lack of well-arranged public spaces is an important obstacle in a regeneration of Wilda district.

Existing problems identification of wilda district in poznan

A rapid increase in the number of cars per capita - observed in Poland at the turn of the nineteenth century, also affected a city of Poznan. According to statistics, in 2008, for each 1000 residents of Poznan there were almost about 500 cars. As an answer to existing problems, there was introduced a new document regulating a transport policy in Poznan in 1999. The document was created in accordance with general sustainable development principles. The more detailed decisions were made with reference to the resolution of the parking restrictions in the lanes - restricted parking zones, as well as gradually calming traffic in the city centre - zone 30 km/h and the promotion of public transport and cycling. Unfortunately, Wilda was the last of the central districts of Poznan, which were included in these activities.



Fig-2: The streets of Wilda overcrowded with cars not people [picture by B.Kaźmierczak based on archival photographs]

The problem of uncontrolled parking in the Wilda district intensified particularly strong after the creation of the restricted parking zone within the Old Town district. A big part of Wilda became very attractive, because of its localization in the close neighborhood of the Old Town, as free parking zone serving visitors coming to the city center by car. This phenomenon could not have surprised anyone because it is obvious that the drivers decide to cover on foot the distance up to 500 m to the city centre, rather than to pay a fee for parking in the restricted area. The only response to the situation of the authorities was to send the municipal police to lock the cars' wheels. This did not solve a problem of a traffic congestion caused by poorly parked vehicles. The nuisance associated with uncontrolled parking influenced the author's decision to examine and diagnose this problem from two points of view – as a scientist and as a member of a local community. The main aim of the study was to determine a demand for parking spaces for residents and compare these data with the actual number of parking spaces available in the public space.

The first analyses were conducted by students of Faculty of Architecture on Poznan University of Technology in July 2012 as a part of a summer workshop. An outcome was not a surprise because, as anticipated, there were only about 85% cars of

inhabitants within all properly parked vehicles. After adding badly parked vehicles, this ratio decreased to 65% of the parked cars. These studies have only confirmed a thesis that a Wilda district is treated by city users as a buffer car park.

Proposed renewal of public space in the area of wilda district in poznan

The author conducted a number of complex analyses in a spatial aspect so as to diagnose the existing situation. The research was conducted within classes with students as well as during an individual examination. The results of the study were in a field of parking and car problems were presented to the Board of Municipal Roads in Poznan - the organizational unit of the City of Poznan responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads in the city. The outcome of the research was used as a basis of a design work on future communication alterations in the Wilda district. The conclusions of these studies have thus become one of the main arguments in a debate on the subject and make an initial concept of public space arrangement for the introduction of calmed traffic to 30 km and restricted parking zones. The design work was entrusted to a group of professionals from the Faculty of Architecture of Poznan University of Technology under the direction of the author.



Fig-3: The analysed part of Wilda district [picture by B.Kaźmierczak based on Google Earth]

The design work covered the area from the Old Town up to the Wilda market square. The main objectives of the project were to calm traffic within the area and promote pedestrian precincts. Another very important aim of a conception was to provide such a regulation and arrangement of parking spaces to minimize a negative impact on the perception of space by pedestrians and to arrange existing and newly

designed squares for public use. The project introduces innovative solutions: one communication space used by various forms of transport and pedestrians, such as the intersection with the lock for people walking, pedestrian crossings at the same level as a pavement, as well as already known in Poznan traffic calming elements such as harassment with greenery or elements of a small architecture.



Fig-4: The urban floor patterns in Berlin and in an analyzed part of Wilda district [photo by B.Kaźmierczak]



Fig-5: The urban floor patterns in Berlin and in an analyzed part of Wilda district [photo by B.Kaźmierczak]

The aim was not only to regulate traffic but also improve the quality of urban floor while maintaining and accentuating the historical parts of the

pavement. The historical pattern on paving complemented with granite and basalt elements was characteristic for many German cities and those in

Poland which during the partitions were under Prussian rule. In Poznan, the debris of this kind of pavement patterns can be found in the imperial district and central districts from the late nineteenth century. Within the

project this characteristic feature of an urban floor was recognized as a crucial element of a public space which plays an important role in maintaining the identity of Wilda.

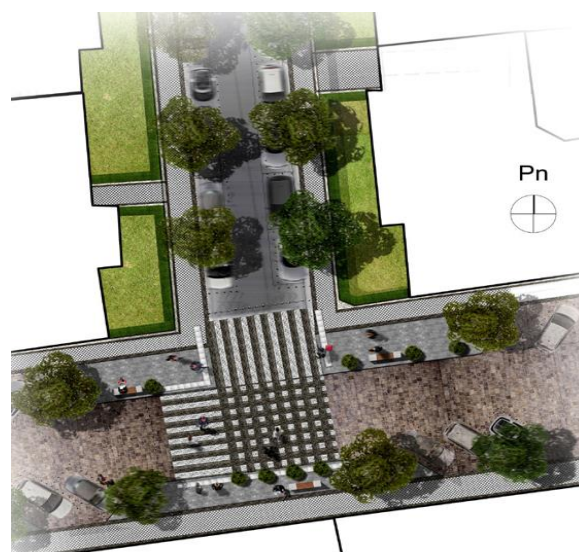


Fig-6: The design conception of a renewal of an urban floor in Wilda district with the use of characteristic historical patterns of a plot [picture by B.Kaźmierczak]



Fig-7: The design conception of a renewal of an urban floor in Wilda district with the use of characteristic historical patterns of a plot [picture by B.Kaźmierczak]

Similarly, it was decided to reuse the existing elements of pavements only adjusting the width of roads for traffic. According to the author, an incorporation of historical elements to the newly designed solutions contribute to a preservation of an unique image of the district as well as to create a new quality without compromising the city's budget on unnecessary expenses.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed in the project spatial changes of Wilda district have the opportunity to be realized in

2015. The main obstacle to the implementation of the presented solutions is on one hand costs and on the other hand a low awareness of the need of alterations and a complete lack of social engagement in any kind of public actions of Wilda residents. The residents lost confidence in the government's power and intentions. It is important to promote the idea that the proposed changes are intended to improve the quality of public spaces and not just another way to draw money out of people's wallets.

In this situation, a proper program of public consultations and public debates seems to be a great hope to convince the community that the most important alteration needed to improve the image of Wilda is to calm down the traffic and provide well-organized and well-equipped public spaces.

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