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## IMPROVING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOWNTOWN AREA AS A DIRECTION FOR THE SPATIAL POLICY OF OPOLE

### POPRAWA ZAGOSPODAROWANIA TERENU ŚRÓDMIEŚCIA JAKO KIERUNEK ROZWOJU POLITYKI PRZESTRZENNEJ OPOŁA

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**ABSTRACT:** The city centre is a most valuable, historically formed area of living and commercial space. However, urbanistic policies of cities do not pay enough attention to maintaining or creating appropriate living conditions for the inhabitants of city centres, while still protecting and taking into account the aesthetic and design-related assets. A chaotic management of historic city centres and the lack of appropriate spatial regulations lead to frequent conflicts and eventual withdrawal of inhabitants from the area. This article aims to identify problems specific to city centres and to show that improving the living conditions thereof is possible, which will definitely lead to city centres keeping their housing function and encourage residents to settle within.

**KEY WORDS:** city centre, residents' living conditions, housing

**ABSTRAKT:** Śródmieście stanowi niezwykle cenny, historycznie ukształtowany obszar zabudowy mieszkaniowo-usługowej. W polityce przestrzennej miasta zbyt mało uwagi poświęca się jednak zachowaniu bądź kształtowaniu odpowiednich warunków życia mieszkańców śródmieść przy jednoczesnym uwzględnieniu i ochronie walorów kompozycyjno-estetycznych. Powszechny chaos w zagospodarowaniu terenów śródmiejskich i brak odpowiednich regulacji w gospodarce przestrzennej prowadzi do powstawania licznych konfliktów i w efekcie do wycofywania się funkcji mieszkaniowej z centrum miasta. Celem artykułu jest zidentyfikowanie problemów występujących w śródmieściu oraz wykazanie, że możliwe jest poprawienie warunków życia mieszkańców, co z pewnością wpłynie na zachowanie funkcji mieszkaniowej i zachęcenie do zamieszkania na tym obszarze.

**SŁOWA KLUCZOWE:** śródmieście, warunki życia mieszkańców, zabudowa mieszkaniowa

## Introduction

In the majority of city centres of Polish cities, there can be observed a successive transformation of residential development into a service sector. There is a widespread

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change in the way flats are transformed into various types of offices, commercial spaces, doctors' offices, etc. It can therefore be assumed that the housing function is gradually withdrawing from the city centre, while intense suburban development is taking place there. The commercialised and chaotically arranged downtown space becomes a less attractive place to live in. This is certainly a complex process, caused by a number of reasons, but there can be mentioned, among others, unsuitable living conditions resulting from a chaotic management of space, causing numerous conflicts and problems which arise in the city centre. Revitalisation schemes undertaken by the city authorities do not often bring the expected results, because too little attention is paid to providing better living conditions for residents through rational development of space. Most attention is paid to markets, main squares, major streets and, perhaps, the renovation of residential buildings. Families move out of the city centre and settle down even beyond the city limits, where they have better housing conditions, unlimited access to green areas, and where there is no shortage of parking space for cars, not to mention an abundance of possibilities to relax and live in relative isolation. The lack of services or of educational institutions in the neighbourhood, or the need to commute to work do not appear to be an obstacle.

The aim of this article is not to analyse motivations of residents who move out of cities to the suburbs, because this goes beyond the scope of this work. The main focus is on identifying spatial problems and conflicts that occur in the city centre, which result in the reduction of its attractiveness as a place to reside in. At the same time, it is assumed that with proper spatial policy, it is possible to improve the living conditions in the city centre, which may contribute to making the downtown more attractive as a place to live and to retain some residents in this zone, and maybe even encourage new residents to settle there.

The object of the research is the downtown of Opole. It is an area of about 300 ha, with quite clear borders and a historically shaped urban development system. About 30,000 people live in the city centre. The age structure of the residents of this part of the city is characterised by a large share of people at the post-working age and a small proportion of people at the pre-working age. The problem here is, therefore, the decreasing number of inhabitants. Among the people living here, a large group are students staying in the centre temporarily, young married couples renting flats for a specific period of time, or elderly people who live alone. The above-mentioned groups do not create a local community characterised by strong social ties.

The research and analyses were conducted as part of work on local spatial development plans, including the area of the city centre and developed since 2004 by the Urban Office of the City of Opole. The basic research method was the urban inventory, which allows determining the functions of the areas and assessing the condition of development, technical equipment, communication service, and the quantity and quality of public spaces, including green areas. Additionally, during the process of local plans projects, it is possible to follow the social needs of residents, which are expressed

in the form of applications and comments to draft plans and participation in public discussions.

## **Land development as a factor affecting the living conditions of residents**

Living conditions of people are influenced by a number of different factors, which make the subject of extensive sociological research. The Central Statistical Office, which has been conducting research on the quality of life of Polish residents for many years, refers both to measures of objective and subjective nature. In broadly understood living conditions, aspects such as material living conditions, health, education, economic activity, free time and social relations, personal security, the quality of the state, basic rights and the quality of the natural environment in the place of residence are all analysed. The measurement of subjective well-being covers such issues as satisfaction with various aspects of life, emotional states, and the system of values. Among the material living conditions, apart from income, expenses or poverty, there are examined, among others, flats and their area, as well as sanitary conditions. Among other factors of interest in this work, there is also a sense of security in the place of residence as well as exposure to excessive noise or pollution and dirt, and satisfaction with recreational areas and greenery (Bendowska, Bieńkuńska, February, Sobestjański, Wójcik, 2015). In addition to the factors related to spatial development, which have a clear impact on living conditions, the environment surrounding the living area is also of importance. Apart from noise, dirt, dust, water pollution, vandalism and crime, also the infrastructure is examined, which includes access to basic services and transport services (Łysoń, 2014).

A much wider approach to assessing living conditions is presented by Krzysztof Zagórowski, Grzegorz Gorzelak and Bohdan Jałowiecki, who – in the conducted research – treat access to individual networks (water, sewage, gas), street lighting, pavements, bus stops, railway, internet access and individual categories of services, e.g. the issue of technical infrastructure and services. Among the tasks of local authorities, the most important are, in addition to providing adequate services, care for cleanliness and aesthetics, water supply, gas, sewage collection, construction and renovation of roads and areas for construction, etc. (Zagórowski, Gorzelak, Jałowiecki, 2009).

Interesting results were also obtained by Eugeniusz Bagiński, while conducting research among the residents of Wrocław, regarding their opinions on the city. Wrocław residents positively assessed green areas, historic areas of the city, but negatively spoke of the levels of dirt, mess, disorder, neglected courtyards, squares, streets, crime, street noise, traffic pollution (Bagiński, 1998). Anna Karwińska, while analysing the satisfaction of the needs of the residents by organising the space, recalled the research carried out by CBOS (Public Opinion Research Centre) in 2005 on the initiative of the National Chamber of Architects. The research shows that most Poles are interested in organising space, architectural quality, aesthetics of buildings, squares and streets, as well as access to social, technical and green infrastructure (Karwińska, 2008).

It can therefore be assumed that among numerous factors affecting the satisfaction of residents' needs, and thus the living conditions, are those influenced by land development, including housing development, greenery and infrastructure. The development is primarily residential, with service and other accompanying buildings, such as outbuildings, garages, technical buildings. Diversification of buildings in terms of their functions, standards and locations meets certain needs of residents. People should be provided with housing, access to various services and workplaces. Christopher Alexander noticed that a flat (house) is a closed space in which people fulfil their basic needs. Therefore, it is necessary to strive for each family to have their own flat with an associated green area (Alexander, 2008). Housing conditions should certainly guarantee a comfortable life to families, allowing them to spend time together at meals and pursuing their interests. It is influenced by, among others, the standard of construction, its technical condition, which also translates into the safety of users and the comfort of people using it. It is also worth noting that buildings create urban compositions (layouts). Yoshinobu Ashihara pointed out that the space in which human life is integrated can be positive or negative. A positive space means such a layout, where a person feels good, which is experienced through a series of impressions and discoveries. The composition is a system of elements properly selected and positively affecting the observer (recipient, user), which form a coherent whole. In the urban composition, individual elements must match one another. If the selection of elements is wrong, it arouses a feeling of anxiety in people – something is wrong with the layout, there is no good composition. Kazimierz Ciechanowski devoted a lot of attention to creating compositions, writing about the right scale. The aesthetic, plastic, human and position scales refer not only to architecture, but also to urban planning. Thanks to the use of a properly selected scale – with good proportions, taking into account the material and construction, in harmony with the needs of people and the environment, they provide a sense of harmony. Urban compositions must be adapted to the framework given to them by the city. The situation is created by natural factors, such as topography, nature of the substrate, plant life, while the factor determining the scale of blocks, streets, houses, free spaces is the human (Ciechanowski, 1974).

Describing the urban planning perspectives, Edward Hall pointed out that one of the basic needs is to create rest areas, green areas and separate large spaces. In addition, old buildings and their surroundings should be preserved, because they give a sense of connection with the past and enrich the cityscape (Hall, 2005). It should also be remembered that the composition of the city influences the perception and behaviour of people, creates their relations with the environment and relationships with other people (Mironowicz, 2013).

In their works, Piotr Szarzyński (2012), Filip Springer (2013), Monika Kozień, Marta Miskowiec and Agata Pankiewicz (2015) pay a lot of attention to aesthetic values, colours, advertising, small architecture and compositions, making readers realise that, in Poland, the beauty of cities is not taken care of. The authors criticise the chaotic

way of land development, lack of spatial order, general disorder, lack of style, etc., using many examples. Jan Gehl also wrote about the aesthetics of the city, stressing that beautiful space, precisely designed details and perfect materials in themselves provide numerous sensations, and the key role is played by greenery, including trees and flowers (Gehl, 2014).

From the literature review, it can be concluded that many factors influence the living conditions of inhabitants, but among them there are spatial development elements that can be included in the following categories, which are fuzzy sets:

- housing development (residential and service buildings, their technical condition and aesthetic values),
- technical infrastructure (access, technical condition, functionality),
- communication service (accessibility, technical condition, security),
- recreation areas (green areas, squares, courtyards).

The occurrence of the indicated spatial development elements, their technical condition, quality, aesthetics and functionality affect other important issues, such as comfort of residents, the sense of users' safety, aesthetic experience, the condition of natural environment, etc. It is certainly worth considering how these elements are properly organised and meet the needs of residents, and to what extent they are a source of conflicts and problems.

## **Identification of problems and spatial conflicts in the city centre of Opole**

It has been proven that land development affects the living conditions of residents and has an impact on meeting their needs. Among the elements of this development, it is necessary to mention buildings, technical infrastructure, communication services and recreation areas. Whether these elements are the source of conflicts and spatial problems can be determined on the basis of terrain inventory and observation of certain human behaviours.

The city centre is undoubtedly an important, representative part of the city that stands out, and although many authors have defined this area, characterised it and indicated its boundaries and features, distinguishing it from other parts of the city, there is no formal authorisation of it in legal acts (Śliwa, 2012). Spatial development regulations, i.e. the Act of 27 of March 2003 on spatial planning and development, do not distinguish these areas and do not introduce specific regulations, treating the city centre equally with other areas of cities or towns.

There are numerous factors that can influence the perception of the city centre as an unattractive place to live. On the basis of observations, field studies, public discussions held in Opole since 2004, as part of the procedure of preparing drafts of planning documents, journalistic interventions, etc., one can notice the occurrence of a number of problems and conflicts (Table 1).

Table 1

## Spatial problems and conflicts in the city centre

Category	Problem identification
Housing development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– overly intensive housing development leads to population density (inhabitants and users)</li> <li>– widespread conversion of flats into service premises triggers neighbourhood conflicts</li> <li>– relocation of permanent residents to suburban areas is often associated with the closure of dwellings to people temporarily staying in the city, e.g. only on working days</li> <li>– the lack of comprehensive refurbishments and reconstruction of buildings causes poor technical condition, low standard of flats and premises</li> <li>– chaotic building (utility, garage, block, temporary buildings) is inadequate in terms of the form and scale of buildings to the city centre and constitutes disharmony</li> <li>– chaotically carried out thermo-modernisations often reduce the aesthetic value of historically-shaped buildings</li> <li>– the lack of comprehensive protection of the historically-shaped urban layout leads to the incorrect rebuilding of quarters</li> </ul>
Technical infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– outdated heating installations increase the cost of maintaining premises</li> <li>– heating premises with coal contributes to air pollution</li> <li>– unstructured utility grounds</li> <li>– poor technical condition of the infrastructure causes leaks in the pipelines, canal obstruction and failures</li> <li>– unregulated legal situation (infrastructure flow through private areas/communities)</li> <li>– lack of attention to design details (protruding manholes, chaotically arranged electrical boxes, hydrants)</li> </ul>
Communication service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– no priority for pedestrian traffic, including too few public pedestrian lanes, narrow pavements, lack of continuity of pedestrian lanes</li> <li>– lack of modern solutions in the field of bicycle infrastructure, insufficient number of bicycle routes, lack of parking lots for bicycles (e.g. roofed, guarded), lack of connection of bicycle routes into the system</li> <li>– inconvenient location of public transport stops, high travel costs</li> <li>– exaggerated communication solutions and facilities for car traffic, including expanding roads to increase the number of lanes, extensive nodes, large and complex engineering structures occupying large areas of land</li> <li>– intensive traffic, including transit and truck traffic, affects air pollution with exhaust fumes and increases noise</li> <li>– improper parking policy means the lack of parking spaces for residents, inefficient use of parking space in freestanding garages, absorption of green areas, squares, parking lots, results in parking on sidewalks, lack of conviction for the possibility of locating underground parking lots or built-in parking lots</li> <li>– chaotic economic and garage building complexes, lack of commuting, lack of access to premises</li> <li>– no marking of pedestrian and shared routes (roads with priority for pedestrians)</li> </ul>
Recreation areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the common space for residents (courtyards) is occupied by garage building complexes, and therefore there is no place for recreation and leisure, no playgrounds</li> <li>– chaotically developed areas around residential buildings, illegible transitions, crossings, accidental location of garbage bins</li> <li>– no distinction between public and private space</li> </ul>

Table 1 contd.

Category	Problem identification
Recreation areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– lack of greenery composition both in public and private space, accidental selection of plant species not adapted to downtown conditions, including lack of plant resistance to pollution, trees with an overly extensive root system destroying surfaces, large trees obscuring the view, shadowing the flats</li> <li>– marginalisation of the role of greenery, consent to the liquidation of rows, gardens, transformation of green areas to hardened surfaces, lack of proper care of greenery (such as the replacement of unadapted, sick, unsafe species, cutting down branches, etc.)</li> <li>– lack of connection of individual green areas with one another and with the system of pedestrian and cycling routes, lack of proper ventilation of the city centre (covering ventilation corridors)</li> </ul>

Source: own study based on the inventory of downtown Opole.

Table 1 shows that there are numerous problems and conflicts in the city centre of Opole. As previously mentioned, the listed categories are fuzzy sets, therefore some of the problems may be in several categories and may be extended. Certainly the table can be extended and other problems can be indicated individually for each city. Many of the problems mentioned above result from the functioning of legal provisions, which unfortunately do not help in the rational management of the downtown space. An example of this can be primarily the provisions of the Act of 27 of March 2003 on spatial planning and development, which, for example, allow issuing decisions on building conditions without major restrictions. The lack of provisions adequate for the city centre in the act results in the fact that the development of a local plan for such a special area of the city is not different either in the procedure or in the construction of records from plans for areas free from buildings, agricultural areas, except historically shaped urban layouts. The lack of proper legal regulations is largely the cause of improperly conducted real estate management. As a result, the ownership structure is unordered and part of the property in the quarters of housing development is privately owned and belonging to the communal resources. Very often, private properties (housing communities) are only available under buildings. The most inappropriate approach is also the renting of real estate under detached parking lots, because it contributes to the fragmentation of valuable urban land. Garages are not only the wrong destination of the area, contributing to the formation of social conflicts, but they also blemish the downtown area, obstruct passageways and crossings, and contribute to the elimination of greenery and spaces that integrate residents.

The unstructured ownership system, along with the chaotically arranged economic and garage development, often causes a lack of access to the interiors of quarters even for emergency services. Conflicts arise between individual communities, where a resolution is later attempted through the provisions of local plans. This is not an easy task for urban planners due to the lack of effective tools, legal basis and support for institutions responsible for space management. The world's most popular shared zones



(single-spatial public roads, where pedestrians have priority), which would allow commuting to the property, passage or underground infrastructure, unfortunately are not provided in the Polish law or provisions of the Act of 21 March 1985 on public roads or the Ordinance of the Minister of Transport and Maritime Economy of 2 March 1999 regarding technical conditions that should be met by public roads and their location.

An important problem of the city of Opole is the lack of aesthetics in the development of the area in question. The historically shaped urban layout has a lot of charm, it is a city's asset, but there are a number of elements spoiling the spatial composition. Numerous disharmonic buildings, including utility-garage buildings, service buildings of temporary nature, block-type buildings from the 1970s and the 1980s negatively affect the perception of the city centre. Additionally, there is also the chaos associated with the accidental placement of advertising, the lack of regulations in the field of colour, the use of low-quality materials. As a result, this space can be perceived as devoid of style, of low standard and managed without proper care for design details.

There are numerous issues for housing conditions in the city centre. Some of them, such as the standard of flats or the aesthetics of buildings depend largely on the wealth of their owners, their preferences and individual perception, but the author's attention is drawn to the interior design of the quarters of the city centre buildings. The courtyards in the downtown area are underestimated by both residents and decision-makers of valuable space. Its value is not only the price of the land, but above all, the purposes for which it can be used. There should be strong social ties in this space, because these are places where the inhabitants of the surrounding buildings could realise their interests, meet and integrate. Unfortunately, this common space for recreation is not there, because it is occupied by chaotic development, including garage building complexes (Illustration 1). Such a yard system leads to the fact that the residents do not meet or socialize, so they do not know one another, and thus there is no social control.

In addition to numerous problems with parking vehicles in the city, the residents' parking problems have not been solved, because there is a very inefficient use of space. In place of two garages there could be three parking spaces, and a garage can only be used by its owner, while a parking space can have numerous users. Illustration 5 also shows that garages sometimes do not serve the purpose for which they were built. Parking in garages, limited only to selected residents, is not the only problem. It is worth adding that parking spaces very often are set up in various places that are not fit for this purpose at all. The most common parking spaces, both used and unmanaged, are set up in green areas or squares. It is also popular to approve of parking on pavements, and even to create designated parking spaces on them, regardless of whether there is enough space for comfortable pedestrian traffic, if there are existing rows of trees, etc. (Illustration 2).

An important communication problem in the city centre is the lack of priority for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, as well as collective transport, in lieu of the development and creation of facilities for individual communication. There is a lack of modern solutions, introduction of underground routes or car parks, priority for pedestrians. The





Illustration 1. Garage building complex in the centre of Opole

Source: photo – Krzysztof Śliwa.



Illustration 2. Designation of parking spaces on pavements

Source: photo – Krzysztof Śliwa.

intensive traffic of road communication causes not only a threat to security, but also a high level of noise and air pollution. This leads to deterioration of climatic conditions, while at the same time eliminating greenery in the city centre, where building of ventilation corridors contributes to aggravation of the problems of natural environment. It is important to keep in mind that people strive to provide themselves and their families with the best, healthy living conditions.

## Proposals for solving spatial problems in the city centre through documents defining the spatial policy of the city

The spatial policy of the city is defined in documents that contain a number of findings and guidelines relating to land development issues. Such documents are studies of conditions and directions of spatial development and local spatial development plans prepared in accordance with them. In the Study of Spatial Development Conditions and Directions for Opole it was noted that the area of functional downtown should be shaped differently from other parts of the city.

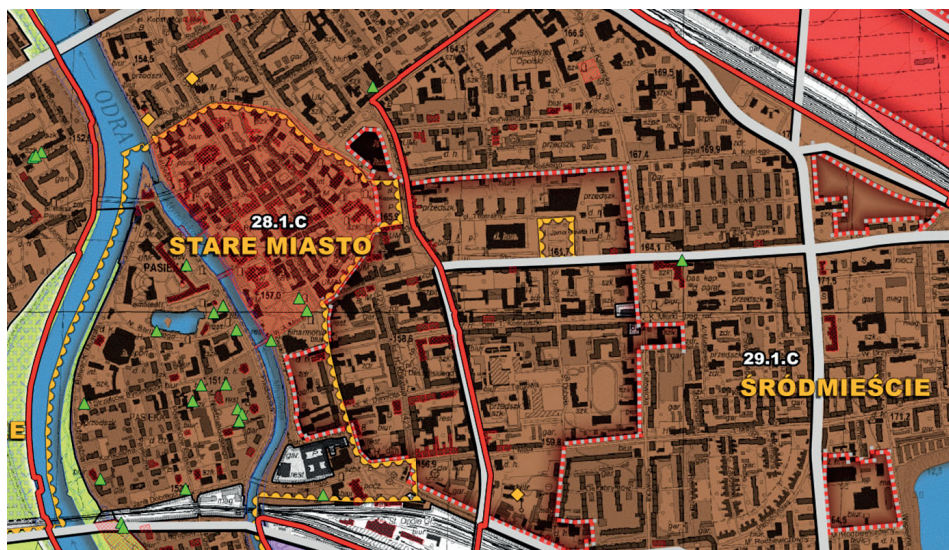


Illustration 3. A fragment of a study of the conditions and directions of spatial development in Opole

Source: [bip.um.opole.pl](http://bip.um.opole.pl)

The urban layout, which has been shaped over the centuries, requires skilful designing, combining historic and contemporary elements and ensuring the high quality of space, including urban and architectural details, colours, and finishing materials. The quality of life of downtown residents is demonstrated not only by the quality of construction, but also by interior design of building quarters, where one should endeavour to create safe places for integration of residents, managed by greenery. Therefore, assuming the ordering of the quarters as one of the most important goals, one should strive to regulate the ownership structure and separate public areas from group and private areas. Green areas, communication routes, technical infrastructure areas should not constitute private property and therefore require separation with demarcation lines and unambiguous determination of the land use. Illustration 4 depicts the model quarter of the city, in which there is a peripheral development, a separate common space of

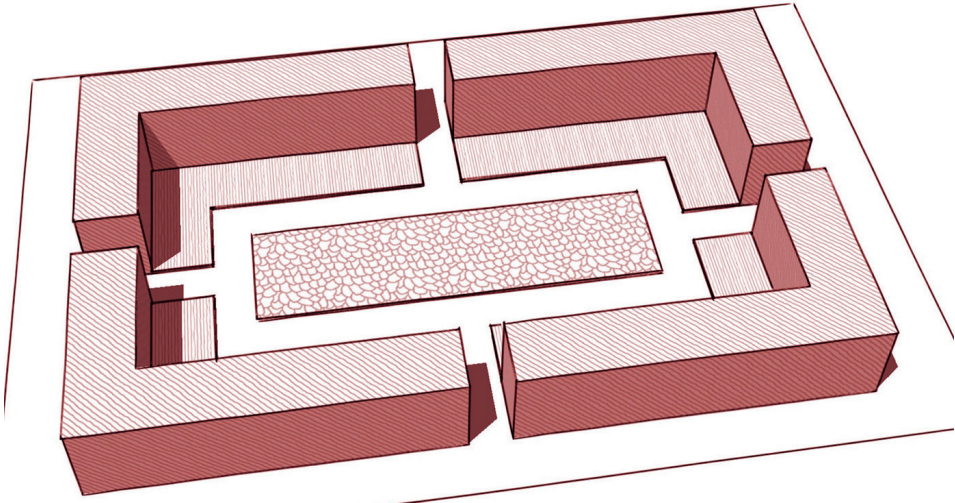


Illustration 4. Model of the quarter of downtown development

Source: own elaboration.

inhabitants of the whole quarter, designated for greenery and a communication route enabling access to the property.

Illustration 4 shows that each building in the quarter should be allocated to a certain area. This area should be developed according to the residents' needs, and it should enable them to reach and situate small architecture, decorative greenery, etc. A transport route inside the quarter is needed so that every resident can reach their building. Provision of communication is possible from the fronts of buildings, but in the frontage buildings access is also needed from the back, because there are parking spaces, commercial lots, deliveries to services located on the ground floors, and they can be used for renovations, cleaning works in gardens, etc. The demarcation of such communication routes would certainly allow not only reducing conflicts by organisation of commuting, but also locating technical infrastructure underground and undeveloped land above it. The space inside the quarter should be the common property of all the residents of the surrounding buildings, and may have, for example, an underground parking. It would be difficult to introduce trees above an underground car park, but playgrounds, sports fields, lawns, etc. can function without any problems. Quarter residents should co-decide when designing the land, so that the space would serve them best and help them feel safe and well in it.

Modern communication solutions are necessary in the organisation of the city centre space. It should be kept in mind that the downtown space cannot be subordinated only to individual car communication. The access to the centre should be limited, but it is therefore desirable to develop public transport, cycling and walking routes. Current legal regulations often limit modern solutions in this area. It is not always possible to



follow a bicycle path in accordance with the regulations, and sometimes there are no pedestrian and road divisions as a road category.

The street space should be properly designed, taking into account the functions to be performed. It should not be allowed to park vehicles on pavements without preparing the road lane reconstruction project (Illustration 5). Sidewalks are intended primarily for pedestrians, and a significant part of parking spaces should be located in underground car parks, in multi-level garages or built-in, for example, in service facilities.

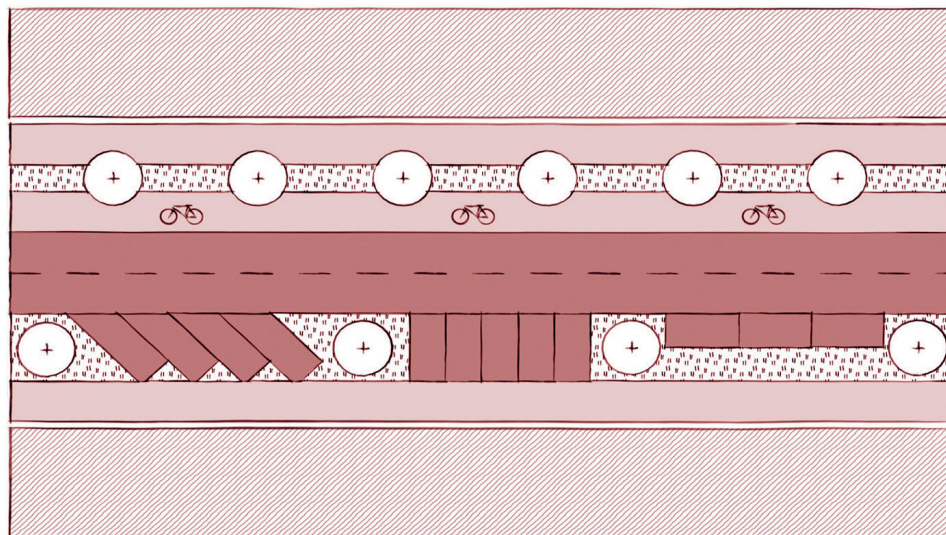


Illustration 5. Model management of the road lane

Source: own elaboration.

Illustration 5 shows that lanes of trees, bicycle paths and parking spaces can be located outside the road and pavement in the road lane. However, determining the development of a road requires a careful analysis. The organisation of parking spaces depends on how much space there is to be used. After such an estimation, it is possible to decide whether these places fit in parallel, perpendicular or oblique to the road axis. It is important to remember about greenery, which definitely improves climatic conditions as well as aesthetic values in road lanes.

The care of the quality of the natural environment is extremely important in the city centre. Each row and square constitutes an element of the urban greenery system. Interiors of building quarters should be developed with home recreation greenery for residents, and the greenery can be introduced on the roofs and walls of buildings. At the same time, restrictions should be introduced in the area of individual communication, which will contribute to the improvement of the environment, because there will be less pollution and less noise.

Illustration 6 displays the quarter of housing development located in the city centre of Opole, surrounded by the following streets: Ozimska, W. Reymonta, T. Kościuszko and S. Dubois. The existing development is typical of most of the downtown space. Surrounding buildings in the interior need to be supplemented, and the randomly distributed, substandard economic and garage buildings require liquidation. Greenery occurring sporadically in various forms does not perform recreational functions and requires adaptation to the needs of residents. In addition, communication service and organisation of parking spaces both require a complete reorganisation and reconstruction.



Illustration 6. Quarter of the city centre development in Opole

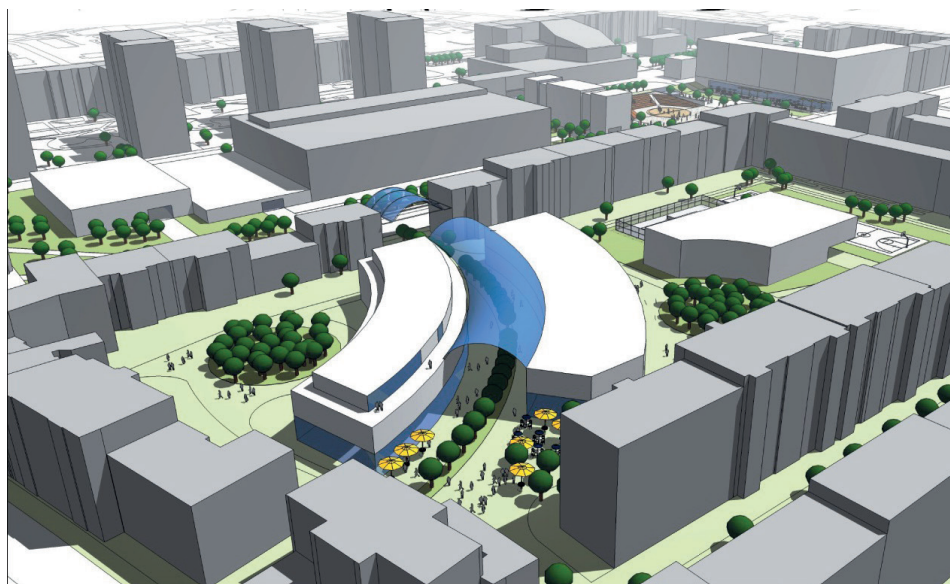
Source: <http://opole.ukosne.pl>

Before the commencement of works on the local spatial development plan, a contest was organised to help work out conceptions on how the analysed space could be reconstructed in a comprehensive way. One of the submitted works is presented in the image shown in Illustration 7.

Taking into account the results of the competition, the assumptions adopted in the Urban Bureau and the existing studies of the present condition, there was created a draft local spatial development plan "Downtown IVa" (Śródmieście IVa, Illustration 8).

Based on Illustration 8, it can be stated that the designers' intention was primarily to introduce a new ownership division and a decisive separation of public and shared spaces. For the residential communities, there are intended areas in the vicinity of the buildings, while the roads inside the quarter are designed to serve the whole population. Numerous walking and pedestrian routes show that it is very important to ensure access to the quarter's interior and free movement around it. Regulatory lines indicate the need





## WIZUALIZACJA - PASAŻ HANDLOWY

Illustration 7. A fragment of the winning competition work (Wizualizacja – Visualization, Pasaż handlowy – Shopping arcade)

Source: archival materials of the Opole City Council.

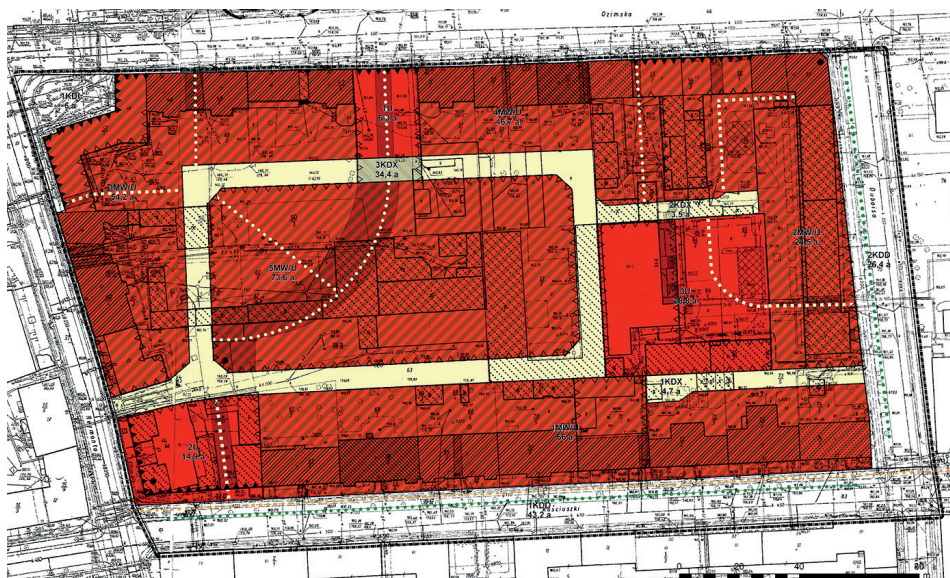


Illustration 8. Local spatial development plan "Downtown IVa" in Opole

Source: [bip.um.opole.pl](http://bip.um.opole.pl)

to supplement gaps in buildings, and a significant part of disharmonious objects are destined for liquidation. The plan takes into account historical conditions and protection of many historic buildings, as the entire system is situated within a conservation zone. Considering that residents usually do not understand the provisions of local plans, designers have prepared a concept of land development (Illustration 9).

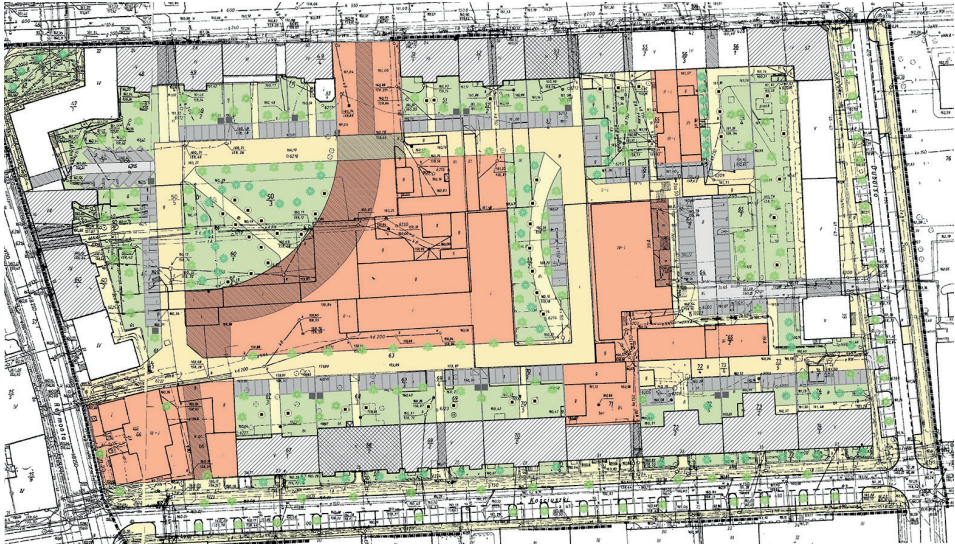


Illustration 9. The concept of land development

Source: [http://www.bip.um.opole.pl/download/image/bu/wylozenie/SIVa\\_projekt.jpg](http://www.bip.um.opole.pl/download/image/bu/wylozenie/SIVa_projekt.jpg) (access: 02.12.2015)

Illustration 9 shows that by complying with prohibitions, orders and permits, the area can be developed in a number of ways, but the interior must certainly be cleared of disharmonious elements, and part of the area must be arranged as greenery. The location of new buildings was often dictated by previous decisions, while underground parking places or roads were not possible everywhere.

On the basis of the analysis of the developed documents, it can be stated that a properly shaped spatial policy can contribute to the improvement of the development of the inner city area.

## Summary

The conducted research proves that there are numerous conflicts and spatial problems in the city centre. Their source is most often an ill-conceived, irrational spatial policy, which is characterised by a lack of cohesion. It might seem that the coverage of downtown areas with a revitalisation program should solve many of these problems, but there is no systemic, comprehensive approach to this process.



One of the main problems is that both city authorities and residents do not realise that every action in space has a specific effect and can be a source of new problems and conflicts. Inappropriate real estate management, liquidation of green areas, covering passages with garages are the examples of small changes in space, but they generate large losses. Limiting or even eliminating green areas is definitely a negative direction of any spatial policy, because greenery should be maintained at all costs. Numerous studies confirm that it has a positive impact on the city climate and human health, social contacts, aesthetic values, etc. Greenery is still an underestimated element of land development. Contemporary reconstructions of public spaces are often deprived of greenery or have it in insufficient amounts. It should also be remembered that the necessary condition for the performance of the relevant functions by the greenery is to keep it in a proper condition. Greenery in the downtown area cannot grow chaotically, it must be maintained and nurtured.

In the real estate economy there have also been made numerous mistakes. Quarters of city centre buildings are sometimes divided in terms of ownership without any logical design, e.g. under the buildings. Unfortunately, there are still tendencies to separate properties for chaotic, temporary development, e.g. with garages, kiosks, and transformer stations. Real estate management should be guided by the principle of division into private, group and public space. Private real estate in the city centre should be a subject of discussion. Here, single-family housing is rare and it is usually the group (community, several communities) who manage the space. Most conflicts arise when private spaces are created within building quarters, for example concerning private garages. Utility and garage buildings, single-storey service facilities are not only a source of neighbourly conflicts, but they also blemish the spaces of downtown quarters. Residential and utilitarian space should be beautiful and buildings should create harmonious compositions. Monuments should be protected, and new buildings should be designed to fit the existing, historically-shaped layout. Thanks to cultural monuments, aesthetically integrated architecture creates a unique atmosphere of the city.

It should also be added that communication solutions must be modern. Since communication solutions dating from the 1970s and the 1980s have not worked, they should be changed. In a rationally managed spatial economy, the areas cannot be used for parking lots, and it is inadvisable to constantly expand roads or agree to unlimited development of individual communication.

A number of the above-mentioned statements seem obvious, but there is still a lack of comprehensive solutions offered for housing development. Systemic changes are needed, e.g. in legal regulations that allow for planning the city centre in a different way, so that residents do not leave the area in search of better living conditions.

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