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## TRANSFORMATION DIRECTIONS OF DOWNTOWN AREAS ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE CITY OF CZĘSTOCHOWA

### Introduction

The article contains issues concerning downtown areas of Częstochowa. Searching for transforming the central areas aims at improving the valuable space structure of this part of the city. Special attention is paid to areas along Saint Mary's Avenues. These interpenetrating areas have a chance to create a coherent, public zone enriching the downtown areas of the city.

### 1. First stage - from the times of market settlement to the fully-shaped urban organism

Historical plans of Częstochowa present processes which took place in the area of this agglomeration for eight ages. They confirm the continuity of development from the times of market settlement to the fully-shaped urban organism. An attempt of coming back to XIX century enables understanding of vital urban solutions which were the base of the present layout of downtown area. Setting the axis joining two independent urban organisms (in 1826) became the planning groundwork of the future city development. The designed route also took into consideration three squares called markets: Bright Hill Square, St. James's - at present - Biegański Square and New Market Square - at present - Daszyński Square. Each of them had specified functions. Their regular and clear form underlined the axis urban arrangement [1].

Setting the main line was the outlet out of the structure of the Old Town. The new market square at the connection of the Old Market and the square of St. Sigismundus' Church became an important element of the new urban organism (Fig. 1). The vast rectangular space of Daszyński Square created convenient conditions for exchanging and purchasing goods and moving around of horse carts.

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The northern and southern frontage around the square is created by a row of townhouses in late-classicist and eclectic styles. On the ground floors of these buildings trading and service functions dominate [1].

Along with capitalism industry development the next plots located up St. Mary's Avenue are filled with townhouses. New shops are opened on the ground floor. The trading function reflects the needs of financial and goods exchange. A rapid development of the downtown areas took place. At the same time there was shifted the gravity point of mutual social, commercial and service relations.



Fig. 1. The new market square at the connection of the Old Market and the square of St. Sigismundus' Church became an important element of the new urban organism [4]

## 2. Second stage - Częstochowa downtown development

Częstochowa downtown development took place in the second half of XX century was the reflection of earlier economic and social phenomena. Favourable conditions for iron ore mining and, as its consequence, the steelworks building transform Częstochowa into a big industrial centre. The second function (apart from the industrial one) which plays a vital role in the city development is tourism connected with the pilgrimage. Both the industry and the tourism influence positively on the trading and service in the downtown area. Appearing multi-stories department stores strengthens the functional-spacious concepts of the central area and presents new possibilities of their development.

“Puchatek” department store was a complement of the Old Market buildings (Fig. 2). It was erected in the seventies of XX century in the place of townhouses destroyed during the Second World War. The two-stories trading surface was the answer to contemporary social needs. The architecture of the building, characteristic for the seventies, differs from the previous building context of the Old Market

and the neighbouring St. Sigismundus' Church. The trading space of the Old Market and Daszyński Square was transformed into the department store floors in the convenient space of the building.

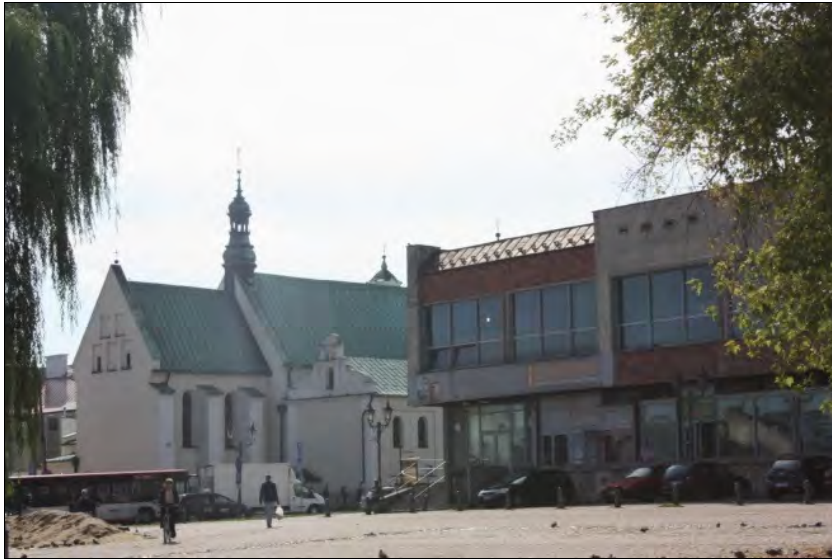


Fig. 2. "Puchatek" department store was a complement of the Old Market buildings



Fig. 3. "Merkury" department store. Located in the frontage of St. Mary's Avenue [5]

The next example of a building with a trading function, also realised in the seventies, was "Merkury" department store (Fig. 3). Located in the frontage of

St. Mary's Avenue, near the railway station, it was one of the city landmarks. At present it is waiting for revitalisation or liquidation. It was a complement of already existing urban tissue and it was the answer to the citizens' needs and evolving urban function.

The trading objects mentioned above, built in the very centre of the city, are the example of building with strategic location. They were to become catalysts of non-stop transforming downtown areas.

### 3. The third stage - the contemporary spacial problems of the city

The next stage of transforming of the downtown area concerns the present time. To solve the spacial problems in the city centre the Czestochowa authorities organised SARP (The Association of Architects of the Polish Republic) contest in 1999 [2]. Its aim was the "Concept of Czestochowa Downtown Development." Another contest referring to the issue of downtown area took place in 2008 (also organised by SARP) [3]. The arrangement of Biegański Square and Daszyński Square with the part of St. Mary's Avenue between them was the subject of the contest.



Fig. 4. The revitalisation of "island" terrain included a demolition of XIX century paper mill and replacing it with "Galeria Jurajska" shopping centre [6]

Such actions are an attempt of specifying the best architectural and urban solutions of chosen downtown areas. The particular place in the city space is the complex of the Old Town along with the area of an "island" surrounded by Kohn's river canal. The revitalisation of this terrain included a demolition of XIX century paper mill and replacing it with "Galeria Jurajska" shopping centre (Fig. 4). This

multifunction object housing trading, services, gastronomy, cinema, large car park with a convenient access has created “a new centre” willingly visited by Częstochowa inhabitants. The commercial-service space along the main thoroughfare of the city gets dispersed. The function and form of the media popular object located in post-industrial area has become a new space for social, commercial and cultural relations.

#### **4. The fourth stage - sustaining of the valuable structure of Częstochowa downtown**

The rich structure of downtown area, its history, urban form, architecture of buildings is an unique culture value of every town community. The feeling of responsibility for the proper functioning of this complex urban organism makes us protect it and reinforce its further development.

An early recognition of problematic issues and pointing to transformation directions are to prevent their degradation. The function of “Galeria Jurajska” Shopping Centre transformed the urban area into one of the main service-trading and recreation attractions. The shopping centre increased the value of the surrounding area through creating the public space.

An attempt of creating revitalisation programme for the central area of the city implies reinforcement of public, commercial and recreation functions (Fig. 5). The programme of the downtown development should be prepared by the city authorities taking into consideration the space concept of the whole Częstochowa centre: the historic resources, squares, streets and parks. The function of public space is to be an answer to social needs, adjusted to the place unique character and local values.

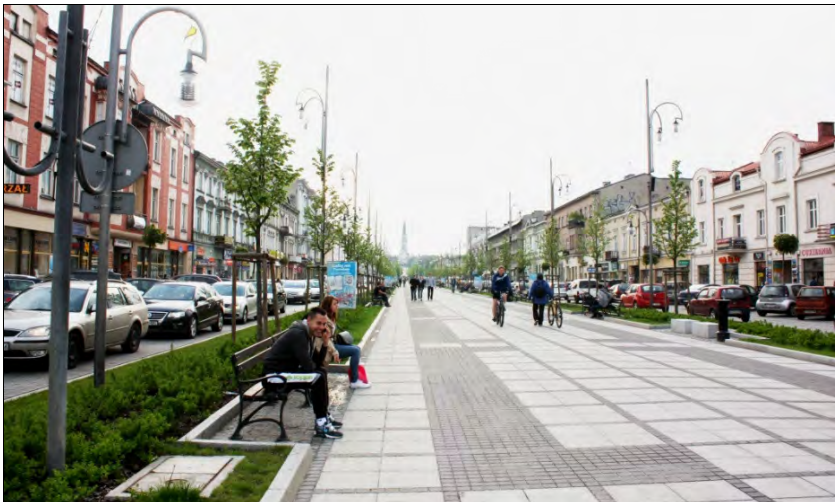


Fig. 5. St. Mary's Avenue. An attempt of creating revitalisation programme for the central area of the city implies reinforcement of public, commercial and recreation functions

## Conclusion

Searching for ways of the downtown area transformation aims at sustaining and enriching this precious space structure. Determining the directions of public space shaping through architectural and urban contests indicates the city authorities' right demeanour. The choice of the best conception guarantees creating public space of high qualities. Such actions are to be a counterweight to new complex-shopping centres distracting people from using a functional offer of historic downtown areas.

## References

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## Abstract

The issue of the development of urban areas includes spatial phenomena concerning downtown areas. To preserve them in good condition requires constant action. This includes the creation of socially acceptable spaces which would stimulate development processes of central areas of cities. Częstochowa is an example of a city looking for right relations between modernity and the future. This requires delicate and precise decisions related to the introduction of center-forming functions within the historic city center. As a result, it has a chance to adapt to modern functional requirements and changing needs of the society. This multidirectional search aims at improving the value of urban environment and is a reflection of the relation between cultural, commercial and service functions. Selected stages of downtown development include both historical period and contemporary one. They are an attempt to illustrate the transformational activities that stimulate the process of the urban environment development at a given time.

**Keywords:** urban planning, architecture, sustainable development

## Kierunki przekształceń terenów śródmiejskich na przykładzie miasta Częstochowa

### Streszczenie

Problematyka rozwoju terenów zurbanizowanych obejmuje zjawiska przestrzenne dotyczące terenów śródmiejskich. Utrzymanie ich w dobrej kondycji wymaga ciągłych działań. Obejmują one tworzenie przestrzeni społecznie akceptowanych, stymulujących proces rozwoju centralnych obszarów miast. Częstochowa stanowi przykład miasta szukającego właściwych relacji pomiędzy współczesno-

ścią a przyszłością. Wymaga to delikatnych i precyzyjnych decyzji związanych z wprowadzeniem funkcji centrotwórczych w obrębie historycznego centrum. Dzięki temu ma ono szansę na dostosowanie do współczesnych wymagań funkcjonalnych i zmieniających się potrzeb społecznych. Te wielokierunkowe poszukiwania zmierzają do podniesienia wartości środowiska zurbanizowanego i są odzwierciedleniem relacji pomiędzy funkcją kulturową, handlową i usługową. Wybrane fazy rozwoju śródmieścia obejmują zarówno okres historyczny, jak i współczesny. Stanowią próbę zobrazowania działań przekształceniowych stymulujących proces rozwoju środowiska miejskiego w danym czasie.

**Słowa kluczowe:** urbanistyka, przestrzeń miejska