Orginal Article

Explicit and implied significance of contemporary public spaces. Part 2. Alternative spaces

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„People are deeply nourished by the process of creating wholeness" [1]

Abstract: This paper is a continuation of deliberations on the meaning (sense) of public spaces. It refers to unofficial spaces for informal activities, which could be called informal alternative spaces or maybe even a bit exaggeratedly "spaces-of-resistance". Their extremely important features include absence of control and lack of rules, which distinguish them from other spaces. The paramount advantage visitors gain from these places is the ability to give the space a meaning of their own, thus changing the user's position from that of a mere user into the user in possession. It also changes his/her relation to the space which ceases to be only a 'closed object'. It is brought into use, as it is created and linked only for the time of the actor-user's (own) performance. The experimental character of the game leads to a reinterpretation of the meaning (or even necessity to change it) that the space has. Such an approach breaks with the patterns embedded in a collective imaginarium, which promote safe, comfortable behaviours – an unofficial, alternative space must be created each time from scratch, such space is a process. It is not treated as a product, it becomes a space of commitment – it becomes a political space, but as such, it is a challenge and thus it is interesting only for a few people. By meeting each other and being with others we fulfill our basic psychological need, but simultaneously we enter into different roles in a social game in which our own "win" often counts above all. Our private satisfaction can also be valued by a sense of community, collaboration, having something in common, and this obviously can bring benefits to everyone. However, without deeper thought practices that seek and provide best possible conditions for staying in space can lead to a certain inertia, which can turn into "algorithmization" in satisfying space users, specialized only in passive satisfaction of thoughtless users.

Keywords: public space, control, experiment, self-determination, satisfaction, community

1. Introduction

This text is a continuation of considerations on possibilities and meaning (sense) of public spaces, which were triggered by my research on beach bars in Wrocław, conducted in 2018-2019[1]. Comparison with official public spaces led to a question not only about their form and their attractiveness, but first of all about the role they play – their community dimension. The conclusion in the first part showed the difference between their assumed/postulated affirmative meaning (ideology) and the practical side of their everyday operation, which in the current system produces a flattened offer, based on 'proven' and repetitive attractions. The city space thus becomes a space for using attractions ("space of *curiosities*") in which available choice is limited. The key challenge here is the incapacitating lack of possession (disposition and belonging) – causality and empowerment of contemporary city residents, who are forced to accept/adjust or resign/avoid the "system"[2]. By analysing two paths of such resignation/withdrawal, I pointed to the illusory nature of standing out, which de facto only reinforces undesirable results of the current status quo.

One of the questions about these considerations asked in the first part of the article is particularly interesting, as it refers to the future. It refers to advisability/rightness of the approach to create a space that follows the leading practices[3], which are used instrumentally when confronted with the current political and economic conditions, particularly with regard to main stakeholders, that is space users. Good practices are reduced to (aesthetic-)quantitative tasks and top-down (political-)expert projects. Moreover, in a broader systemic context, without solving several of today's pressing social (or perhaps more economic) problems, even best practices will lead to creating places for most (collectivity) but not all of them (community).

This text is an attempt to answer the question on what these needs are based on and how they are satisfied. Public spaces today focus mainly on providing experiences – direct experiences (aesthetics, offer), while human needs are treated only as a set of external behaviours (entertainment, pleasures). People's personal needs along with the resulting behaviour are influenced by many factors, the most important of which are psychologically conditioned internal stimuli, controlled by the desire to achieve state of satisfaction and happiness To achieve this state humans essentially strive at maximizing freedom and limiting control, in other words, to find/obtain authenticity, thus having one's own place, one's own (fragment) of space.

The second part of the article focuses on the needs of self-fulfilment and self-determination in urban space, which has been called "the escape down" or resignation from official spaces due to the lack of possibility to satisfy their needs. Semi formal public spaces, such as Słodowa Island in Wrocław, have become an exemplary point of reference. The aim of this study is to examine conditions and consequences of such alternative actions, including the issue of the lack of rules/control and the possibility of giving one's own meanings to the space. An equally important aim is to show the relationship between psychological conditions of achieving satisfaction from experiences in space and the possibility of community/cooperation.

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[1]   In 2018 I was observing dozens of beach bars in Wrocław, which have been established in recent years. In my research I evaluated the quality of their space and on this basis I compared them with urban public spaces [2, 3].

[2]   I use the term "system" in the text in two ways. First, to describe the current political, social and economic situation, which is the (integral) background for the spaces studied. Secondly, the term "system" is only an auxiliary name both for the definition of official public spaces, but also for all phenomena (procedures, design, implementation, use) within them.

[3]   The basic point of reference for me is the Copenhagen strategy – „Metropolis for people: more people to walk more' [4].

The indirect goal is to recognize the relationship between "games" and roles (old and new) in relation to space, and thus its meaning.

The article is polemical and thus doubts are brought to the foreground. They are not so much to challenge as to test some "obviousness" regarding the so-called "good practices" and shaping public spaces in general in the current, particularly simplified, schematic form. The work methodology uses study results from many years of observing urban public spaces (including beach bars), as well as numerous references to the subject literature (which are contained in footnotes). It is founded on questions, which, however, do not imply just finding a direct answer. The argument is conducted in the form of considerations developed around the individual and community sense of urban meeting places. This imposes a certain openness of form, allowing to present reflections on processes occurring in public spaces, indicating possibilities but also the existing threats. Similarly to the first part, the study is a qualitative research modeled on social research conducted in order to understand cultural (and social) phenomena – processes occurring in these spaces and in society in general.

2. Informal spaces / absence of control

In the space of Wrocław there are various unofficial/semi-official – informal, forbidden spaces for niche activities[4], various small manifestations of ad hoc/bottom-up activities within the so-called "tactical urbanism"[5], which can be called alternative spaces or maybe even a bit exaggeratedly "spaces-of-resistance"[6]. Examples include informal/semi-formal meeting places such as Słodowa Island[7] examined in the first part of the article, where in 2009-13 (and to some extent today) young people have their get-together point and "party" in groups according to their rules. Such places also include illegal "spots" for skateboarders on Świdnicka Street and by Renoma department store, bmx riding trails which the riders built themselves at Kilimanjaro Hill and by the railway track next to Agrestowa Street[8]. These are also places taken over by graffiti artists in the underpass under the viaduct in Dyrekcyjna/Pułaskiego Streets, under the flyover on Społeczny Square and Owsiana Street. There are some semi-formal, alternative yet more "ordinary" spaces, such as popular group barbecue spots by the river[9], which have also been organized by the interested parties themselves and thus have a modest form. There are various actions, too, for example creating gardens in parking spaces or flash mobs: reading books (IFLA) in the Market

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4   Various places where young people can spend their time in Wrocław, such as places for skateboarders, bmx riders and the like were described by Magdalena Mayer [6]. I examined such places in opposition to the public spaces of the city – meeting spaces for young people, e.g. places where stickers on walls are painted, in 2004-2007 [6].

5   *Tactical urbanism* is "above all an activity. Also known as *DIY Urbanism*, *Planning-by-Doing*, *Urban Acupuncture*, or *Urban Prototyping*, this approach refers to an urban, organizational and/or civic approach to building neighborhoods using short-term, low-cost and scalable interventions to initiate long-term changes" [7].

6   Słavoj Žižek identifies possibilities of adapting/using spaces where usefulness ends ("spandrel") and where we meet spaces in reflection ("parallax") [8, p.278]. Stavros Stavrides, on the other hand, points to many wastelands where informal, liberating activities may appear [9, p.236]..

7   Słodowa Island functioned from 2009 to 2013 as a free, vibrant place for informal meetings (mainly for young people). Regulations introduced (closing at night) and the new offer (floating pubs) strive for greater control (and order) [10].

8   Usually these are places organized by the interested parties themselves and information about them spread through social networks [11].

9   The largest number of barbecue places is located in the city meadows by the bridges, where there is no infrastructure [12].

Square, a festival of colour and the Park(ing) Day[10], whereby such actions are incidental and above all organized (called) by a group. These informal places have a conspicuously different formula and contain a certain imagined (symbolic) triggering power. They allow for something different to erupt, something outside the scheme and normally unavailable due to lack of offer for these groups and "rigours" (legal regulations) in (official) public spaces[11]. In these informal places users find a space for their chosen and thus limited action/activity[12].

All these places, however, are only seeming about something "less", as in reality it is about so much more – the absence of control. A state without control is more than a variety of *curiosities*. It satisfies (other) needs, much more important than any other even most comprehensive offer because it carries a specific and strong symbolic message – an imaginary promise to realize one's own personal possibilities. It is a promise of different experiences, which in such place depends much more only on users – these are experiences that they create/develop (at least in part) themselves[13]. It is no longer about the possibility to appear and stay in a (n urban) space. In contrast to a one-off matching and using the pre-prepared top-down offer[14], we are dealing with the adaptation (use) and adjustment of space – people mark their place[15], bring something in and add something from themselves.

Seemingly, if any unique gestures[16] are still possible at all in a world controlled by media[17], then in the commercialized city space only places of this kind can give a real opportunity to maintain at least a minimum self-control and allow to feel that there is something 'mine' out there. It is something that enables to tame – to give one's own meanings – individuation[18].

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[10]   These types of events appear relatively rarely, but they are always another, invigorating form of activity [13].

[11]   How a modern city "becomes a space of experiencing polyphony and otherness, a space of contradictions experienced in various spheres of life" shows Ewa Kębłowska-Ławniczak in From Concept-City to City Experience [14].

[12]   Marcin Bogusławski (after Michel Focault and Alain Tourain) believes that "I" is always shaped in relation with itself but also through resistance with what is outside. Subjectivity is born in resistance to the rules / law [15, p 84].

[13]   For Merlau-Ponty, real being in the world is one in which a thinking man in different situations discovers himself as part of the surrounding reality and is always connected to it [16, p.370].

[14]   Of course, it should be noted that what can be found there (in places/spaces of "resistance") is also a kind of offer, but organized by the interested parties themselves. As Frederico Savini and Luca Bertolini write, many places of bottom-up activity are also transformed into official ones, as part of the positive transition of the so-called „"better world" [17].

[15]   Individualised space-marking changes the dimension of urban spaces, and in a globalized reality, "spatial semiotics' takes various forms [18]. Marking one's place in a space is a form of communication – it is a language that people use to express themselves. As Ludwig Wittgenstein puts it, space (world) has for us such a dimension as the scope of our language [19].

[16]   I paraphrase the words of Milan Kundera – our behaviour and actions are more or less conscious repetitions. [20, p 13]. In Immanuel Kant's view, our own "gestures" are our way of expressing ourselves, our way of seeing ourselves – our identity and dignity, our individuality, our humanity [21, p.77].

[17]   Anthony Giddens [22, p.8] writes about the flood of information increasing the amount and diversity of experiences. In turn, according to Jürgen Habermas, information garbage resulting from the uncontrolled development of the mass media prevents a forum for a real debate, i.e. openness to individuality and otherness [23].

[18]   Gilbert Simondon proposed and developed the concept of "individuation" as a process of change of the individual, which also takes place in the environment. The boundaries of living beings in relation to their surroundings are fluid. (See Bogusławski) [15, p.99-100].

This opportunity to interact with space testifies to its true value – the value of the place, which can be influenced by leaving one's own imprint there (even in repetitive gestures). The place that allows one to give one's own meaning without spatial labels, which impose a top-down goal and purpose – after all, official public spaces have always been created for some purpose (were intended for something). Undoubtedly there is a creative element in it, but what is more important is the effort to constantly add new values, search and discover rather than comply.

This striving enables to achieve a different dimension, a dimension of a space defined by the user themselves and expressed in freedom of choice, an option to take another action than the assigned one – another activity of one's own choice. Through this choice, the space becomes tame, it becomes the "space of being" – the "space-of-living"[19]. Thus, the space gives the feeling of the "authentic" because it is created through an effort to define oneself, and that legitimizes calling it "the genuine place"[20], in contrast to places accepted passively, imposed from above, without the possibility of interacting with space and adapting it to your needs, where we are only guests

3. Meaningfulness / lack of rules

In individual actions/operations to meet our needs, we add value to the place through our own (conscious) action/operation – we mark (define) it or take it over while doing this action/operation. The quality of the place is not changed by prohibiting skateboarding on a public square or lighting a private (not always legal) barbecue on a meadow, even when several dozen other people around do it (it may even make it worse). Still, it changes the nature of our participation in this space, subjective self-esteem (personal dignity) of "who-decides-for-one-self"[21]. This decision, this possibility and effort of taking it changes our status/position – the relation with space changes from passive to authentic, open and spontaneous. Own actions are an activity in search of the alternative, ease, naturalness, spontaneity and immediacy, an act of freedom of choice, it can be read as a gesture of breaking with restrictions, willingness to feel independent, to decide about one's participation and role in public space. In this context, instead of dividing into formal and informal spaces it would be more appropriate to separate them into rigorous and free spaces[22].

Therefore, the question arises whether users' desire for the lack of control is in fact a desire to overthrow all rules in a space, a desire to free oneself from dependence – the dreamed-of promised (but illusory) land? This is undoubtedly the case, but it is not so much breaking dependences (control)[23] as the recognition that there are no dependencies in this

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[19]   According to Martin Heidegger, building- creating a place does not lie in technical possibilities only in the experiences of being and in questions about the sense ofliving, it means thinking (up endeavour, necessary effort), which is the essence of being. At the same time, I understand Heidegger's "inhabiting" as a (personal) connection with a place – being in close proximity to it (like at home, but not necessarily in it) [24].

[20]   In relation to *the place*, the phenomenological and hermeneutic perspective is taking on today in which "writing of your space" takes place, which is a form of annexing the space for oneself (de Certau) [25]. Action (*energeia*), as a kinetic act (action), being inscribed in the experience reveals the possibility (potential), which is something more than what we find (John D. Caputo) [26, p.91].

[21]   In public spaces of this value, at best, we can speak of pride in place – ownership, which we share by the mere fact of being city residents but not participating in creation. Paweł Kubicki is analyzing new forms of the middle class in New townspeople in new Poland [27]

[22]   According to Erving Goffman, the terms "rigorous" and "free" seem more appropriate because they give equal weight to each of the expressions [28, p.221].

[23]   This is a situation that Goffman describes as "self-engagement [28, p. 220].

particular moment and in this place – during this action (operation). Taking over the place does not mean annexing it, but only a temporary "right" (permission/prerogative), a temporary possibility of possessing[24]. This act is not about completely denying applicable rules, but about temporary, for the duration of a given action, suspension during the time of the operation, escaping the scope of their validity – suspending them, changing the rules according to the situation and current needs. An autonomous change of rules, even a momentary one, gives the feeling of breaking up with a given, imposed and binding order in which users are assigned specific roles. Thus, people (actors) choose the "game" they want to play themselves, they also choose the field of play themselves, and even, in a sense, they create it[25]. This is a choice that avoids top-imposed games proposed in spaces where we are only guests. The (social) need for participation and the (individual) desire to limit control are constantly clashing with each other. Getting rid of control and rules, however tempting, is not profitable in the long run because it forces consuming our natural forces, relying on instinct and even resulting in "fatigue and emotional distress"[26], which is certainly not beneficial, especially in the long run.

Users of public space often play the role of passive participants in an organized, dominant "game". They accept its (imposed) rules, although they do not necessarily realize the dependence on them, which is always to some extent limiting and incapacitating[27]. In today's city in which users are only the recipients (both comfortable and subordinate ones) who choose from the available range of impressions – the effects of this dependence can and often lead to a situation of paralysis and inertia. Of course people have always adapted the space to their goals, they have always imposed some rules on it for the games and rituals that take place there, which had to be followed in order to be able to stay there and take part in the assembly (social situation)[28]. In the complex life today, however, political, social, and thus spatial conditions (games) are incomprehensible and so far-reaching that they are often schematically limited only to superficial image purposes. They obscure the starting point, the essence of human relations in space – the essence of (real) human needs in these relations, including the inherent needs to participate in a community. This schematic simplification, often reduced only to aesthetics and order (image), impoverishes the deep sense of common behaviours or rituals (principles and norms) in urban space, even though at the initial stage and/or in good locations it could yield quite good results.

Users of space take up the assigned consumer-stimulated roles, which are to some extent one-dimensional. The lost meaning refers not so much to space as to these social roles. For they are passive and played today inertly, only for their comfort and pleasure. The dominant patterns of the top-proposed and unwittingly assimilated patterns based on mass offer and

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[24]   Many areas in the city are not subject to such a strong control as official spaces in central areas of the city or districts, while many so-called wastelands are not subject to any control at all [9, p.86].

[25]   According to George Canguilhem, "normativity" is "a state in which man is not afraid of challenges, can freely dispose of his abilities", it is "the ability to discover on one's own the best ways of responding to the situations encountered, especially those that are resistant". (See Bogusławski) [15, p.83].

[26]   Elisabeth Gowen points out the need to use natural forces that are not needed in established ritual situations [28, p.231].

[27]   Erving Goffman talks about "individual involvement within the situation" and about "idiomatics of group involvement", which is a learned idea, as well as the use of the so-called "Situational covers", the lack of which indicates an "ineffective" commitment [28, pp.43-45].

[28]   In Edward T. Hall's view, space is an element of culture –infraculture as an integral part of the proxemic classification system [29, p.131]. Lefebvre space is an objectification of what is social (Jałowiecki, Szczepański) [30, p.314].

generalized forms of activity (food services, walking, fixed/stationary seating, etc.) often cause glut, boredom and dissatisfaction in some users and forces rebellion and opposition, the desire to give up (withdrawal/escape) from such space.

4. Does space matter?

Contemporary urban spaces have taken up new activities, they have become a field of new "games". Their value, symbolism and spatial dimension, despite a different way of reading them, today seem to be just as important as they used to be. However, does the integrity of background and action have the same meaning as in the historical city? Is there any need at all for a space user who drifts between various "attractions" – prepared offers of *curiosities*, since he/she is focused primarily, or perhaps only, on experiences? So what is the user's 's true relation to space? What is the value – the space or the possible/available activities? Is it the place or what happens there that matters? If so, how to value it?[29] The question about what is more important, the space or the game, appears rhetorical, like the question about the chicken and the egg[30]. Yet it is not about any precise answer, but rather about options that arise from this question and what is the nature of the choice. With multitude of different definitions of space (idea/requirements) and inadequacy of existing models (possibilities / practice), and above all due to new conditions in today's world, the question of the meaning of public spaces – common spaces (for all), should be constantly reiterated. Here, apart from resolving eponymous doubts "whether space matters", much more important would be looking at urban spaces from a distance, freeing them from obligations imposed on them – from what should or could be done and what is right. And this is not possible when users are treated in terms of a populist success, in which only top-imposed meanings given by authorities, experts and business matter[31].

The dilemmas related to the meaning of space undoubtedly refer more to those places/situations where there are no rules – unofficial, informal, alternative spaces ("spaces-of-resistance"). Space as a place of embedding developed actions/attractions becomes (merely) something like a resource, a kind of a plane (field) on which they take place more than an insignificant background (as it has always been). The space is useful as long as it allows us to achieve specific goals/needs, otherwise it seems that we can simply resign from it. In a game based on searching, gathering ("collecting") experiences[32], other, always necessary and important (it would seem)

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[29] To answer these questions, Ignasio de Sola Morales proposed the concept of *representation* and *presentation* that explains the relationship between space (form) and user activity (event). Morales identifies the "mnemonic" (space as a metaphor) and "rhetorical" (space as a discourse) approach [31].

[30] As Manuel Castells puts it, social practices are always linked to a space that cannot be eliminated even in today's globalised world. [32, p.423]. However, here I am more concerned with the personal relationship, and thus the significance of space for its user. For many researchers who consider it in relation to aesthetics, function, and identification (identity), public space and its mission is treated as a special being (almost holiness), but "serving" a higher purpose, and thus a little detached from life. In my opinion, such a provision is represented by the *Public Space Charter* adopted by the III Congress of Polish Urbanism [33].

[31] Canguilhem showed that society ("social organism") has no internal purpose, which comes from the "outside". (see Bogusławski) [15, p.97].

[32] This phenomenon in detail (following Richard A. Peterson) is being analysed by Przemysław Kisiel: "contemporary culture, encouraging the viewer to constant searching and choices, definitely favors omnivore-type attitudes' – the viewer is willing to participate in many, and even all possible forms of culture (the „omnivore' viewer) [34].

values of space (its frame, expression, quality, depth, genius loci, and even symbolism and identity) are not so important – they can be created, matched, tailored, reproduced according to the needs/desires of the chosen (created) game[33]and thus, these values seem to be secondary. However, there is always something that attracts, such as a location itself (especially in attractive, well-established places, such as the Market Square in Wrocław).

Users of official public spaces seem to accept the rules of the "game" imposed on them. Their relation to space is subordinate – they use the space and move within it according to given rules as if on a ready playing field. The given field is important because here the space and the "game" are one thing (there is no field without a game). They should behave "as required", anything unsuitable in this place excludes itself[34], so their relationship with the space is subordinate/dependent on it, and at the same time not binding because it is not ours[35] – users are only guests. This situation takes place especially in official (commercially oriented) spaces. Some "games", such as beach bars, may of course leave certain areas of freedom, open up opportunities in which users define their own scope, for example, where there is a variety of zones or even the possibility of selecting a seat and its location. But they will also always be subordinate to the whole "game". This dose of freedom left at least in the possibility to arrange and use furniture affects our relationship with space. The place is more attractive so that it begins to matter for us, because at least in a small part it allows for one's own action.

Complete (or even half-way) exit from the pre-set "game" changes the situation radically – the space becomes more important but in a completely different dimension, as it has to be adapted to one's own game. A user who is both looking for and creating his or her own experiences treats the space as a "material"[36]. It is a fully-fledged "material", although limited to their duration – in so far as they can be used to create/establish his/her own "game". This material exists or rather appears only at the moment when the user carries out his or her activity and in this it is similar to the space with imposed rules. However, the act of imposing or simply adopting rules somehow automatically results in a strong link between an individual action and space – it creates a personal relationship. The user must be in a direct relationship with it, otherwise he/she will not make the takeover. A temporary, one-time possession of this fragment of space occurs through this relationship. At that time it becomes his/her space, which makes him/her feel a bond with it – it is important for him/her, is a "possessed" value[37].

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[33] User experience design has become a very important discipline today, going beyond the provision of goods and services [35]. On the other hand, parametric semiology tested in architecture (and urban design/planning) uses behavioural heuristics to create a space that becomes secondary, which reverses the way of design [36].

[34] Entering the public space (social situation) is always associated with the need to adopt conventions and rules [28, p. 213]. See also footnote 23.

[35] Edward Hall pointed out that this is culturally conditioned – it is different in the west (with some distinction between countries in Protestant and Catholic culture), where especially today the space is literally used, and in the Far East, where people refer to what is common with deep respect [29, p.189].

[36] Space is always treated in a subordinate and possessive way, but I am interested in a special relationship between man and space in which the actor-user does not even notice its presence, but uses it intentionally (he/she does not take it for granted). DeCertau writes about such relations (trajectories) [25, p.93]. A good example is the graffiti painting described by Roch Sulima, who expresses the aspect of appropriating space – it is an anti-structural action, directed against the binding norms and rules [37, p.65].

[37] Marcin Bogusławski points out the need to "capture the subject in such a way that it can be captured in the process of becoming connected with its surroundings. such a subject should be captured as embodied one and involved in the world through a living, motoric body" [15, s.99].

5. Experiment / self-determination

The space created in this way has to be viewed differently. It is a different kind of space than in the historical model of urban space, in which it was (past tense) an integral element, a necessary and indispensable background for every activity of the city community[38]. Formerly, without its specific purpose (program, function and activity) and its spatial configuration (form and symbolism), as well as without social relations (rules, roles and structures) related to it (building it) it would not be understandable, there would not be a unifying identity of the community. In this departing, historical model, in which "games" were/are recorded, the space was/is very well recognizable, and also more strongly bound/binds its users to each other (in a specific game). The more users' goals coincide with the shared, common goal (e.g. a fair)[39], the more the space can be/is the place of the community they are building together. However, when the goals only attract – binding temporarily without integrating users, the communities are apparent, random and temporary ("pocket communities")[40]. This applies equally to formal and informal spaces, for each of them, however, on a different basis.

Within a set of fixed "games"[41], the program is given/constant (although it can and must change to catch up with constant pursuit of changing desires). Yet above all it is always closely related to the space (field/background) and its inherent component elements that follow it. Through this binding the space acquires a meaning (sense), which establishes symbolism and identity at the same time, because it binds together certain social structures that are closely related to the "game" (what and how we do it) and space (where and when). However today, when games/actions do not require a link with any specific place because they look alike everywhere – they originate from globally driven consumption needs/expectations[42], the meaning loses its previous dimension and blurs. In multiplicity of possible meanings emerging from everywhere the symbolic layer changes, even at a dizzying pace, also social relationships and identities will be in constant motion, according to new needs and meanings[43]. The space

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[38] To a large extent, especially in European cities, this model is current, but at the same time it is a thing of the past. Paul Virilio describes such a model as 'structural conditions' and shows that today it is becoming a requirement for 'conditions of construction' [38], and Michel Foucault says about contemporary space that „is a moment of erosion, a fall, a questioning of the basic assumptions and frameworks within which drama can take place' [39, p.49], in turn Jacques Derrida speaks about a varied multiple where the static space changes into an „event' of a sudden configuration. [40, p.65].

[39] In the historical city model, space was closed, shared within territorial boundaries, which corresponded to a specific community of ordinary people. Concurrent objectives included (and as the remains of this model often do today) all the places of (co-)participation in what is common, such as city fairs, religious rituals, festivals, events, etc. [41].

[40] Variability, ephemerality and spontaneity of contemporary city space are identified by many authors, see e.g. Castells [32], John Urry [42], while the temporality of community ties is examined by Michel Maffesoli [43].

[41] Today, games established in the spaces of the historical model relate primarily to consumption. Mixing, complicating and especially making the strategy more flexible in the market system results in a loss of purity of roles, division of functions, etc. (Krajewski) [44, p.41].

[42] This is a situation in which the prepared, unified („commercial', „restaurant' and „tourist') offer of official public spaces results in a lack of choice. Zygmunt Bauman [45, p.83] and John Urry [46] write about the negative effects of this process.

[43] For Pierre Bourdieu, „space is a complex set of symbols (within the framework of the accepted thought system), depicting inequalities, irregularities, imposing multiple spheres of influence, desires, needs and necessity' [47, p.301]. According to Paul Virilio, this immaterial multiplicity is most easily noticed in images that are a visual representation of these different forces in society [48]. Jean

(its form/frames) no longer needs to change, after all decorations (mainly equipment and furniture) change – the space remains basically static. Actually rules understood as modes of behaviour (imposed roles), except for the necessary adaptation (organization, logistics) also remain the same, because they concern a similar, limited "game" (action) all the time. What is offered in space (program/offer) becomes a changing but essentially the same commodity product – contained (and closed) in a "space-object".

In informal alternative spaces, the "game" and thus the scenario and program at the starting point are not given, thus the playing field is susceptible to change and adaptation. When an interested space user takes their own actions (that is, in a way, a "game"), the symbolism is given by them. Social relations have to be developed and similarly, social structures have to be developed later, which is extremely difficult (and usually it works for a short time)[44]. In this new model, the space is not a top-down field (object) – it is a result of an action in a process of constant redesigning. The essence of such space is reconfiguration and constant change[45] – space becomes an infinite experiment[46], and its limits are determined only by our imagination[47] (and conditions of the place). Of course, not everything that looks new, fresh, glamorous and vibrant is like that – in such case repeatable choices[48] (gestures) brought from everywhere around overlap as well. Besides, this model is not acceptable for everyone, because it is not easy – it forces to make an effort (creation/confrontation), it requires courage and perseverance[49].

A good example is the temporary takeover of space appearing in various cities around the world, in which staying is hindered by the authorities, owners of neighboring facilities or

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Baudrillard calls this the precession of simulacra. According to him, we have moved from signs that hide something to signs that hide the fact that nothing exists [49].

[44] Usually, this type of activities related to some form of individual and / or group protest (resistance), after a period of spontaneous beginning, gradually dissipate their energy and once completed they are unable to move to something permanent (e.g. Occupy Wall Street movement) [50]. However, sometimes the initial actions are successful, as shown by the authors of the book *Urban Catalysts. The Power of Temporary Use* [51].

[45] It is not obvious for an architect, but for an anthropologist (sociologist) it is natural – as Ulf Hannerz puts it, space is „discovering something by chance', and its user is like Benjamin's vagabond [52, p.36]. For Tim Ingold, „the environments are never finished, but are constantly in the making', reversing the normal order of form in relation to process – life is a process in which form arises [53, p.35].

[46] Experiencing is an experiment and experiment is experiencing – trying, facing a new, unknown one. I understand the experiment, like Tim Ingold, not in the scientistic sense, but phenomenological – as „being-in-the-world' [53, p.152]. For Bruno Latour, in today's world, which is closed in procedures, restrictive schemes, experiment is a necessity [54]. In relation to space, it is a sign of creativity (self-agency) as the activities proposed by the Spatial Agency [55].

[47] Imaginativeness – "creating the possibility of questioning (...) the concepts of copy or model" is analysed by Kristupas Stabolius [56, p.168]. For the need and necessity of imagination (imaginativeness understood as a persistent, constantly repeated attempt at alternative forms of life to exceed the existing order and not to repeat its limitations, is raised by the Canadian cultural scientist Max Haiven [57].

[48] Marcin Napiórkowski indicates that repeated, uniform choices are produced in a common matrix of cultural capitalism [58].

[49] From a psychological point of view, obviously, any experiment, although it promises pleasure, is difficult, because it requires overcoming the internal psychologically (affective, cognitive and behavioural) conditioned resistance to change before losing convenience and comfort (Oreg) [59]. Even more difficult, as noted by Marcus Miessen, comes negotiation of conditions, discussion and perseverance in forging into something permanent, and especially common [60, p. 118].

developers of housing estates in which these spaces are located[50]. Artistic actions, happenings as well as various forms of expression or even rebellion of residents, such as those that took place during the 1992 riots in Los Angeles in 1992[51], the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011 or the Kiev tent town at the Maidan in 2014 are also such examples.

Certain areas of activity, and especially their consequential unpredictability do not fit within accepted, familiar everyday practices ("micro-everyday life")[52]. Familiarity with the place and predictability of its offer provide users with certainty of what they can get, and this often ensures above all convenience and comfort of use. The visible superiority of the traditional model in cities clearly proves that people often prefer the quality and comfort of official public spaces along with services they offer over freedom and possibility of creating something of their own. It is also true that the conceptual framework (term/meaning) of "public spaces", i.e. the awareness of what is and can be available and what we as users/participants can imagine, is set and reproduced in a common social *imaginarium*[53]. Jointly developed cultural patterns are formed by a specific time and processes, cumulative rebound assemblies that accumulate the same "ideas" for themselves – the same choices duplicated by us, which translates into the image of common spaces.

Social situations are governed by rules that allow individuals to easily find themselves in a gathering[54]. On the one hand, individuals are tangled with the need to belong and inter- act with others within the imposed and accepted roles (rituals, manners), while on the other the need to break free from social control and determine their subjectivity (their place and meaning) – the choice between rigor and freedom. As mentioned before, a formal situation, rigorously defined and ordered is more convenient as it does not require a constant mental effort. Unlike a chaotic, disordered but casual multifocal system. Therefore, despite their inertia schematic but simultaneously safe solutions of normative spaces, triumph over spontaneity. On the one hand it is tested only sporadically, on the other it seems to threaten the expected order (community) which gives protection (individual).

Irresistibly a question arises, which is a dilemma of the Western world, about how to reconcile the need to maintain order in public spaces with their dynamics and spontaneous character?[55] In other words, how to reconcile social requirements (community) with individual aspirations and desires?

6. Satisfaction of being in a space

With regard to public spaces, good practices aim at ensuring that people turn up there as often as possible, fill in these spaces and take part in what is happening there. The strongest

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50   In times of deep privatization, such actions became very popular. The series Life Size Cities presents many examples in many cities around the world, e.g. Telaviv, Montreal [61].

51   For Los Angeles, the whole situation was perfectly described by Margaret Crawford [62, p.151-155]

52   Antony Giddens points to the difficulty of finding oneself in a changing reality, which causes a constant need to redefine oneself (subjectivity / identity) [22, p.262].

53   Charles Taylor describes the Social Imaginarium as a way „in which we imagine the societies we live and maintain' [63, p.22].

54   According to Goffman the principles are a characteristic structural feature of gathering [28, p.219]. See also footnotes 23, 26, 27, 34.

55   This question has been analysed since the beginning of civilization, but in the Western world, which is taking the path towards ultra-liberalism, it is a dilemma of a special position. The Tradition of Spon- taneous Order: A Bibliographical Essay by Norman Barry shows different voices in the discussion, taking as a reference point the „spontaneous order'[64]. Krzysztof Wielecki analyses its influence on the subjectivity of people [65].

aspiration is to make people stay together as much as possible (interact). The most important goal (and sense) is meeting, meeting others (the need for contact) – 'being together' is our primary psychological need (the need for stimuli/cognitive)[56]. When being together with others we are a part of a group and a space/place at the same time – there we find and settle a part of our identity, joining something shared. We are connected with people and with the space around – we feel (even if only apparent and/or short-lived) the belonging to community (the need for social structures) and, incidentally yet inseparably, belonging to the space (the need for attachment/the need for space)[57]. Striving towards being together, co-existence and cooperation is anthropologically and psychologically conditioned. By fulfilling this important need in a specific place we achieve a state of satisfaction[58] which is connected with patterns of behaviour arising in and taken over from the collectively produced culture (imaginary *imaginarium*).

Spatial factors (and others related to them) that we find there, stimulate our senses and emotions – make us feel good in the place as they correspond to our expectations encoded in the psyche. The appropriate and attractive (for us) features of the space, its quality and the "game" embedded in it alongside the offered attractions make us want to (or not) be there[59]. Still, the reason for our satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) lies above all in the psychological layer and emerges under influence of several stimuli received (consciously and not) by the mind in which the assessment of circumstances is born. Our mind perceives the situation created under the influence of various stimuli as desirable/attractive and suitable for us[60]. Satisfaction with this experience is essentially temporary, and social benefits that determine the (true) dimension of compassion (community) do not necessarily have to be long-term. This place and specific conditions, this spatial configuration and events taking place in it stimulate/impel our sense of satisfaction, pleasure and even sometimes euphoria. If we co-share with others in time it becomes a shared experience – we experience intimacy, connection, unity. Irrespective of the form of this bond we will feel it according to the scale of our own experiences (stimulated by experiences of others).

It greatly matters how much we ourselves can be and are involved in this shared gathering/event, but it is only part of what builds this situation and satisfaction that comes from it. Also our mutual relations and the space around us are only one of many elements – one of many stimuli desired and received by the mind. Our satisfaction is a (random) combination of these factors, related to desires (needs) deeply encoded in the mind and our cognitive matrix. Because of our individual desires, which we are never able to fully control, in a pursuit of pleasure/satisfaction we are more apart than together, and while together we are a group of individuals rather than a community[61].

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[56]　Edward T. Hall indicates that culture is communication and space is a special product of culture [29, p.9].

[57]　For many, as for Ingold, the process in which we learn/mark space ourselves, and thus transform ourselves („man-in-world') has the other side – it is participation, and thus affects others [66, p.4].

[58]　The lack of such contact, as indicated by Eric Berne, leads to threats caused by social and sensory deprivation (craving for stimuli in infants, cognitive hunger in adults) [67, p.8].

[59]　This is perfectly illustrated by the works of Whiliam Whyte [68] and Jan Gehl [69].

[60]　The philosopher and neuroscientist Sam Harris points out that: "our mind is in constant motion, regardless of the context, and usually strives for pleasure (or its presumed source), avoiding pain' [70, p. 25].

[61]　David Riesman in The Lonely Crowd analyses how ties fade, degrade and instrumentalise in modern societies, and are often manipulated [71].

The proxemic approach seeks to reduce the distance and establish close (intimate) social relations – it seeks to build a "culture of contact"[62]. This psychological and anthropological dimension provides the basis for proper functioning of space and it can be found in many official spaces. However, they rarely result from an in-depth analysis and matching achieved by co-determination – from a real *placemaking*[63], in which social needs are decisive. Oftentimes it results from using solution patterns which fortunately attract crowds of people to attractive locations (like the Market Square and beach bars), especially in combination with private business and mainly thanks to it. This raises the key question, is quantity sufficient to prove the meaning of public spaces and common spaces (communities)?

7. COMMUNITY/ COOPERATION

In liberal ideology public space is to be an "agora" to which everyone has access on equal terms. In practice, however, since it is treated as a commodity, most people do not allow it – they do not want everyone[64]. The top-down proposed formula/offer adjusts to the majority, while the majority adjusts to it (standardisation). Simultaneously, in late-modern society hyper-reality liberates the need for "uncommonness", realised in a constant search for new experiences and sophisticated sensations. The individual wants to treat reality and all its content as a material that can be freely shaped (individualization/self-realisation)[65].

Proxemic principles are helpful in creating comfort for customer satisfaction, but not enough to satisfy the wide range of needs for everybody, especially when applied superficially and mechanically for an aesthetic or symbolic effect. When public spaces become a substitute for missing private spaces (lack of ownership), the tendency to create a more capacious and simpler offer is predominant, which involves the process of "levelling down". This state of affairs neither serves the purpose of communal integration (the right-wing aspirations) nor provides opportunities for a shared use place (the left-wing postulate). Only those who are condemned to public space remain there – the "folk class". For them it replaces the missing (non-possessed) private space (also in the dimension of semi-private/semi-public local spaces)[66].

A community is not only created by merging imposed rules (constructed community), as truly common spaces are not a simple result of many (different) aspirations, either. Community/feeling-of-community requires thinking about others[67], responding to the need to unite,

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[62] This is how Słownik Terminów Encyklopedycznych (*the Dictionary of Encyclopedic Terms*) defines it [72, pp.231-233].

[63] Placemaking rules were defined by Project for Public Space (PPS). I use them in my research of public spaces (Place Diagram) [73, p. 92].

[64] Even in the most inclusive vision by Jurgen Habermas, equal rights and obligations for citizens are only a theoretical postulate. A state of equality is only possible if institutional restrictions can be introduced to protect the public sphere against market and policy colonization [21].

[65] In this quest, the needs generated by consumption mechanisms are combined with the "narcissistic" search for authenticity by individuals, and autonomy is the path to self-fulfillment. (Riesman) [71, pp. 333-334], while discussing the reaction to the popular iconosphere, Drozdowski states that it can be very easily used as a material for constructing any scenarios [74, p. 271].

[66] For several years, local spaces of a different type have also been created in the city. Users had a greater range of possibilities (e.g. in the form of sports activities) there. Such places appear barely like drops in the sea of needs and to a small extent change the whole situation when all the "unnecessary" elements of living space are eliminated in residential places [75].

[67] As Jonanna Hańderek writes the concept of community is very much associated with responsibility, which is synonymous with thinking about others [76, p.21].

be together and cooperate (the common cause). Except that when faced with a multiplicity of attitudes and in particular the disappearance of institutions that used to be responsible for them (discussed in part one), cooperation seems neither possible nor necessary today, at least not on a large social scale. It would be more realistic and useful to accept this multiplicity of individual "micro-worlds" entering into various, mainly temporary relations – "micro-communities", in which it is easier to obtain authenticity and obtain real commitment and joint effort.

Public spaces as spaces of attraction (*curiosities*) are places for individuals that replace everyday life (private space), yet are deprived of their freedom/familiarity due to imposed patterns. A simplified set of rules, different from the old conventions, breaks down the whole (community/space) into many independent systems – a multifocal system[68]. The rules resulting from the commercial model steer this system towards individualisation of individuals, which is illusory anyway, because the majority adopts the same patterns.

Experiments in urban space are a search for "uncommonness", but at the same time they are "micro-everydayness" which escapes the illusory, non-authentic structures of the community. Alternative, informal and especially illegal activities are exceptions – they are not solutions changing the status quo of public spaces or the general socio-economic situation. However, they are important for the stakeholders themselves and their "micro-communities", which they build themselves due to the lack of other possibilities (their own spaces)[69].

Regardless of whether the resignation from what is official happens due to the mismatch between the offer and the lack of other options, or whether it comes from the need of self-realisation (experiences/resistance), the decision anyway leads to choosing (sometimes unconsciously) "inconvenience" and accepting difficulties. As history shows, this state of mind promotes openness to others and greater readiness to build what is shared. Difficult situations and individual's weakness/disabilities "trigger" ego weakness, thus reducing isolation[70].

8. Summary / conclusions

Contemporary urban public space is static – it is an object. Its offer is flattened (imposed patterns of activity) and its operation is focused on direct experience (user satisfaction). The choice to participate in it does not necessarily occur in a conscious (thinking) act of embracing (living), and certainly it is not a (consciously) binding act in the spatial dimension, nor in the social community dimension in particular[71]. Actions within informal alternative spaces ("spaces-of-resistance") only seemingly change the status quo in this respect, but they have an incredible potential to politicize such acts. These actions are a manifestation (not necessarily quite conscious yet important) of a disagreement to the absence of choice (possibilities of use) and above all the lack of possession (disposition, belonging). Through its spontaneity and authenticity this attitude is a way to regain subjectivity (dignity).

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[68]   Contemporary public space is homogenised, but the order of the social situation is not formalized, with less commitment to the whole – as Goffman puts it, the whole situation is broken down into many smaller outbreaks [28, p. 232]. See also footnotes 23 and 27.

[69]   Alain Touraine speaks of communities based on the agency of actors, which, unlike constructed communities, does not objectify social effects [77, pp.32-35].

[70]   Richard Sennett in Flesh and Stone identifies this relationship by analyzing urban communities in various historical periods [78, p. 450].

[71]   Contrary to what, according to Martin Heideger, space makes „inhabited' or its own – „owned', the residents have no right to the city and its space, which provokes new „urban revolutions' described by David Harvey [79].

It is not important whether it happens as a result of unconscious reactions of participants or within the framework of precisely planned actions, instead the desire for change and the change itself are essential. The space ceases to be accepted as something granted, where users are only guests and are only required to adapt. The space changes its dimension into 'being-in-creating', changes from an object to process and is associated with a continuous change and adaptation – "redesigning", which means political action[72] and that makes it a "common concern". This dimension allows for an authentic openness to others – brings acceptance and willingness to cooperate. It can also appear and appears today in urban spaces[73]. In my opinion, however, it is not a necessary condition, rather a supportive/auxiliary one[74]. Definitely more important is an attitude that gives people the opportunity to get involved – their willingness to interact with others. On the other hand, the space and its physical, especially defined, closed dimension may even interfere[75], mainly because it is secondary to culture we live in – subordinate and imposing, thus limiting.

In this context places such as the abovementioned Słodowa Island where users have more freedom become very promising (thought-provoking) places of "escape down". Based on this example we can see the fundamental difference which determines the choice of these spaces – the difference resulting from the possibility of self-deciding and self-determination. This possibility can affect strengthening of their own position, it can be liberating for the users themselves, but can also change their relationship with the space[76]. Consequently, in these different, "uncomfortable" conditions of naturalness /authenticity there is a chance for a different pattern of relations between people – openness to others, which is crucial for creating something truly common (community) [77].

Informal alternative spaces, which above all are another way of searching for places for own experiences – psychological satisfaction in (own) activity (self-determination), are at the same time experiments which allow to test new layers of imagination and may help to develop a new model, a new dimension of urban spaces – a place "in-between", in a kind of *Thirdspace*[78]. For the time being, these experiments do not significantly influence the change of public spaces and relations occurring within them and thus in society. They do not seem to be able to change the character and mode of operation of these spaces, neither[79]. Will the enclaves – places of

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[72] According to Bruno Latour, only constant „redesigning', which is a permanent part of the process of making a space, causes its socialization – its political dimension [54, p.15].

[73] Such a dimension is shown by the grassroots urban movements, which in Poland are becoming more and more important [80].

[74] In general, it concerns the public sphere, which is not necessarily spatially oriented. An interesting analysis of what conflicts in space and thus blocks cooperation (community) is presented by Marek Nowak and Przemysław Pluciński [81].

[75] I refer here to the space on which various requirements of order are imposed, which in the name of preventing conflicts, blocks freedom and diversity [82, p.40].

[76] Michel Foucault argues that the possibility of change is a constitutive element of the relationship connecting the individual with the environment – the embodied 'I' with his world (Bogusławski) [15, p. 84].

[77] According to Sennett, discomfort, difficulties, suffering as a state of "cognitive dissonance" are helpful in accepting the imperfections of what is different, common, and removing obstacles often results in emptiness, apathy [78, p 446-447]. See also footnote 66.

[78] Edward T. Soya defines *Thirdspace* as "an-Other way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life, a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality–historicality–sociality" [83, p.57].

[79] As Mara Ferreri points out, common actions within tactical urbanism can also only be „seduction of temporary urban planning in saving the city' [84].

"resistance" be only, as it happens now, a choice for a few or will they become (by assimilation) "normative"[80] – common, accepted form of being/participating in space, and at the same time, will they allow us to activate social interactions? Will official meeting places for people in the city be places like the 'brave new world'[81] just like the whole reality around us, systematically reorganized by algorithmization, and satisfying all our needs yet leaving us in blissful inertia? From the perspective of a (semi-)provincial city like Wrocław these questions seem quite abstract, but they will not be answered there, either. Nevertheless, all the mentioned experiments are very interesting and at the same time important, mainly because they allow us to ask questions that open the way for deeper analysis and understanding how urban space functions and evolves.

In the context of the presented considerations, the issue of community/feeling-of-community seems to be the most problematic, especially when compared to the most recent conclusions on late-modern/post-modern society which point to the need to redefine the perspective of evaluating public spaces as places for community. The finding that we lack the category of "micro-everydayness", in other words the category of "micro-community", is particularly important here. It results in an indication for research to appreciate the "new citizen's" involvement which fully consciously chooses small narratives of individual actors or small groups[82] rather than focus on fragmentation that leads to breaking higher order bonds, which fits into the multifocal arrangement of contemporary public space (and sphere).

As the final conclusion, which would be at the same time more practical, the postulate of legitimacy and the need to create a variety of forms and characters of spaces with varying degrees of intimacy/privacy can be pointed, as well as the postulate of diversity and multidimensionality, openness and flexibility of their programs. It is noteworthy to recall herenew hybrid typologies of public spaces from cities such as Copenhagen or Antwerp[83], which introduce dynamic activities (sport, play, etc.) and combine different forms of use. This combination changes the static character of the space, not only thanks to new devices, but especially thanks to ways of interaction, which strengthen the sense of bond. In Wrocław, apart from a few attempts, there are no such spaces, but there are some bottom-up places which resemble these examples.

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[80]   For Canguilhem, "normativity" ("normalizing") is a flexible response, is a challenge to what is found, it is a possibility to take on a challenge or even a risk – it is free to dispose of its capabilities (Bogusławski) [15, p.101].

[81]   Alduxley Huxley's *Brave New World* describes an ideal social organization where all needs are met but at the cost of civic inertia. An individual escape from this system is theoretically possible but requires life outside the society – alone [85].

[82]   Rafał Drozdowski suggests such a diversion from the ideological approach and normative approach, referring to the "situational specificity" of limited individual and collective efforts [85, p.301].

[83]   I am thinking of, for example, IsraelsPlads in Copenhagen, where sports fields, project: COBE were implemented next to the marketplace [86], as well as Dageraadplaats in Antwerp, where in addition to the restaurant gardens, a playground and sports fields were introduced, project: T.O.P office [87].

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