

Rush to Become "Globally Relevant"- Culture Based Development as a Significant Factor Towards Sustainable Urbanization (Gdansk Case)

Introduction

In 1990's Poland's previous communist and centrally planned economy changed to liberal democracy and a market based system. These changes have transformed all aspects of the Polish society. Polish cities began a phase of dynamic economic, social and spatial restructuring made possible by an opening of market economy, growing global competitive pressures and the increased freedom to locate new activities.

Old hierarchy of economic, spatial and administrative planning system collapsed. The new paradigm of development is based more on the "borderless network" of economy and society than territorially arranged systems. Clearly the jump into rapid urbanization is confronted by contemporary shifts and global challenges. Often in the rush to become "globally relevant" cities forget about real aspirations of citizens, capacity for innovation and ability to build appropriate public infrastructure.

In Gdansk - the city with medieval history and many post-shipyard areas it was assumed cultural facilities and places can stimulate economic development. It is important that investments in culture must inevitably be beneficial to both economic development and cultural recourses producing profits not only for each other but also for the public urban life. With better public values, urban quality as a platform for public dialog and exchange can promote the economic livelihood of the city. For example boosting tourism, promoting an experience economy in Gdansk can play an active role in preventing the stagnation of city center. Furthermore, culture can take part in improving the competitiveness of cities.



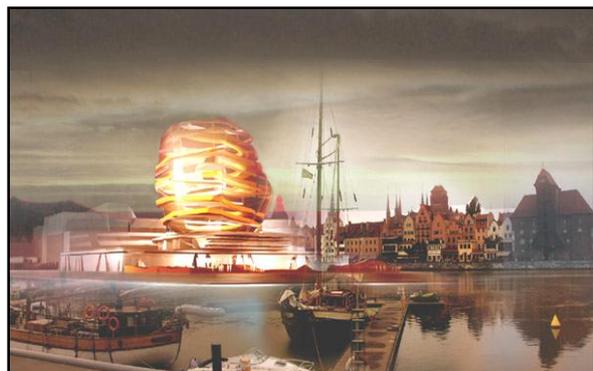
Solidarity Center Development, Young City, Gdansk Development Agency

New way of driving the activities in the city is confronted by contemporary challenges to create conditions for economic growth and improving quality of life, to attract either new enterprises or people to the city center. There are certain questions of one's identity and culture in the cities, alienation from the familiar living and erosion of distances in space and time. Dealing with daily problems like crime, unemployment, homelessness, pollution at the same time we can observe the increased divergence between cities and within them generating declining periphery areas.

The Roles of Culture in Economic Development

As implied above social, economic and environmental change of cities remains in Poland significant problem. Nowadays the role of culture is more and more used to reflect and accommodate the aesthetic productivity of the society, designing economic development

policies to improve competitiveness of cities within different economic fields. The analysis of temporary city development indicates many theoretical models to demonstrate the current nature and the relationship between components of culture and economy.



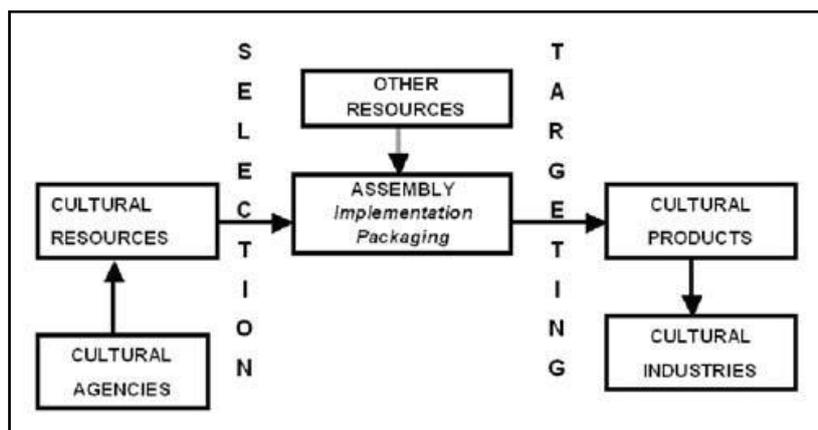
Development Projects of Granary Island, Gdansk Development Agency

According to Gregory J. Ashworth there is specific relationship between three different phenomena: culture, economies and places. The cultural facilities can attach the economic value to places, events, aesthetic, political or social uses sometimes at no extra cost. New economies can not overestimate the role of this kind of development that uses cultural products. Culture is worth money and culture earns money. Economic value appears even if this was not the reason for its creation. Abandoning the debates of contemporary functions of culture in the market and commercialization, many of cultural actives are inspired more by moral-aesthetic or socio-cultural motives then the search for economic gains. The economic value of culture is more and more utilized in order to provide return of profits, incomes, jobs and competitiveness of places within the city.



Festivals in Gdansk, Anna Kaczorowska-Fudala, City of Gdansk

Ashworth described culture as a commodity. Using a model he has demonstrated the nature of the relationship between component parts and creation of tradable commodities from recourses and selected elements from culture, which previously were not traded. "Windfall gain model" indicated that cultural facilities or places already existing to satisfy some purposes, could also accommodate economic uses as a supplementary demand generating supplementary income.



Culture as Commodity, Gregory J. Ashworth

Culture Based Development in Gdansk

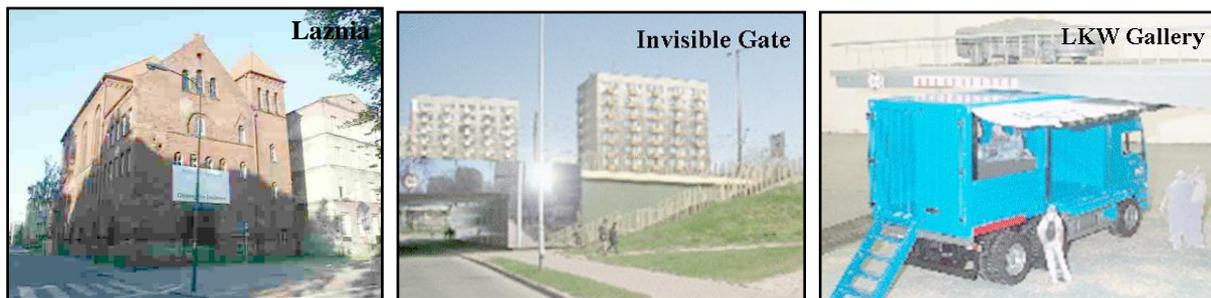
There are two types of culture based projects in Gdansk: temporary (although sometimes periodical) and the ones of more permanent bases (connected with certain organizations or infrastructure). In the first group there is a number of street fiestas and festivals. Probably the most important is Saint Dominic's Fair - the most important commercial event dating from medieval times, which now evolved into festive character. Another one which was established only twelve years ago but has already become important part of city life is FETA – International Street and Open-Air Theatres Festival. There are several other like the Night of Museums, Gdansk Carillon Festival, International Organ Music Festival at the Oliva Cathedral (where there are one of the most beautiful medieval organs) etc. This group also includes trade events typical for the city's maritime character such as Gala Amberif, Ambermart – amber trades (combined with exhibitions and showing the ways of its production) or fair connected with ship and yacht industry e.g. Polyacht. These events attract both tourist and citizens of Gdansk and often have equally strong influence just like more permanent projects.

In Gdansk there are several projects where culture can be a kick-off for revitalization programs. The first, called Hevelianum is a science and educational center in old Napoleon fortifications. This project as well as others, which will be mentioned in later part of this article, is situated in a very centre of the city of Gdansk on Gradowa Hill. The aim of the project is not merely a simple renewal of the premises (even though the one of significant historical value), but also utilisation of its potential and development of educational, tourist and cultural function. The Project was included in Gdansk Development Strategy as "a mean of revival of municipal areas". Project is strongly believed to have a considerable influence not only in local but also regional scale.

Another project, important to culture based development in Gdansk, is a community art and culture centre "Laznia" opened in the building of the old public bath, which is also a starting point for comprehensive revitalisation of the neighbourhood area. It is located in the Lower Town district of Gdansk - part of the historic inner-city. It is also one of the most interesting parts of the city, having regular urban grid and beautiful eclectic houses. Although or maybe because this part of the city stayed almost intact during the Second World War, no investments nor renovation took place there for nearly fifty years. Moreover in the 1980's the Lower Town was divided from the Main Town by a 6-lane highway. Most flats are owned by the community. With gradual degradation of the physical structure, social groups which stayed in this part of the city were in majority those who didn't cope with process of transition to free market economy. High rate of unemployment caused growing poverty and social exclusion led to criminal behaviours.

In The Local Program of Revitalisation are mentioned several projects connected with regeneration of physical structures: starting from infrastructure and public spaces improvement which are important for the quality of life of the inhabitants. However the

degradation of this district won't be stopped by only improving build environment. Probably the most important aim would be the integration of local population and combating social exclusion. The social and economical problems are addressed by several different projects, which would allow to activate local community, strengthen neighbourhood and cultural ties and upgrade economic vitality of this area. The most important is the aforesaid "Laznia", which provides place for art and educational activities for all age groups. From its beginning in 1997 there were different exhibitions (prepared by both professional and amateur artists – in some projects participated the inhabitants, in others student of the nearby art school), artistic events (such as "Public spaces – dialog with pedestrians", project inspired by urban space in Gdansk, "Unwanted heritage" – rediscovering modernistic building in central Europe), meetings, workshops and lectures. "Outer gallery" is the project where works of art are placed directly into the Lower Town district.



Laznia and "Outer gallery" project, Gdansk Development agency, Website of CSW

Gdansk Music and Congress Center - Localization and Interactions

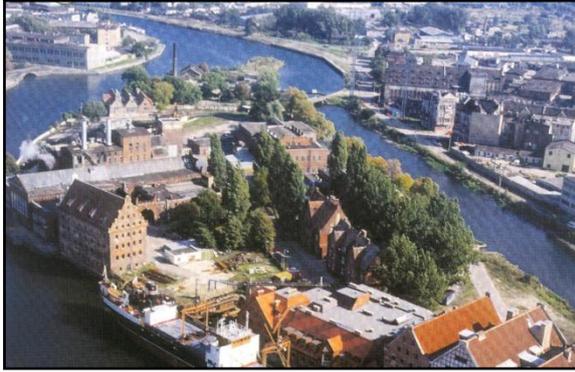
One of the most interesting projects is the Gdansk Music and Congress Center, situated on the Olowianka Island in the inner-city, close to the Main Town. It is also the new seat of Polish Baltic Philharmonics, which fact will strengthen its metropolitan character.

This project is fulfilling regional and local policy for sustainable development of Gdansk Metropolitan Area and is included in strategic and planning document such as: Local Development Plan and Regional Investment Plan. It is financed by European and national funds as well as regional government private sponsors (foundations, societies and local industry) and its own activity.

Gdansk as one of the biggest cities of Poland and in future would wish to become a European Metropolis. New localisation for Polish Baltic Philharmonics (previously this institution shared building with Baltic Opera) and Congress Centre (the only one of this size existing in Northern Poland) are important facilities for metropolitan area.

The Olowianka Island, localised in Srodmiestecie district in Gdansk, is closely linked to the medieval heart of the city of Gdansk. The Main Town is a busy commercial and tourist area with administration and commerce buildings. The new seat of Polish Baltic Philharmonics will strengthen its metropolitan character. It only lacks quiet green space for leisure in a walking distance. The Gdansk Music and Congress Centre can fulfil also this function. This favourable site imposes the decision of choosing this localization for the new Philharmonic Hall for Gdansk Metropolis.

The complex of the Gdansk Music and Congress Centre consists of the ancient XVI century Granary and old power plant buildings. It was built by Berliner company Siemens and Halske in 1898. It has not only been a very modern, in that époque, but also beautiful neo-gothic brick building with towers and two stained glass rose windows. In the last months of the Second World War the main building had been badly damaged. After the reconstruction, the power plant has been operating until 1996. Since then, in the complex, which consists of the buildings already on the list of monuments, investment has begun.



Pictures from 1998, Polish Baltic Philharmonics, Sławomir Nienartowicz

Aims and Structure of the Project

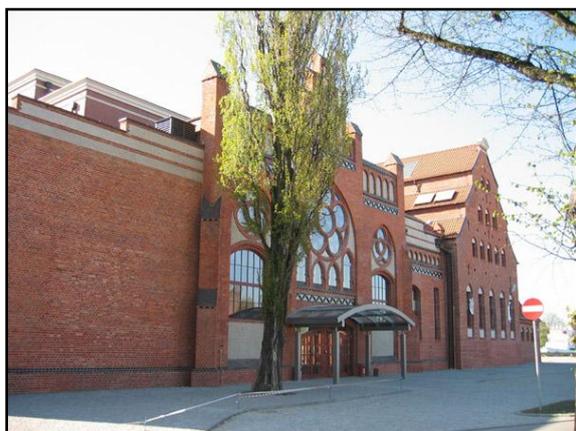
The main project aims are: providing Gdansk with cultural and congress facilities - in that case, the seat of the Baltic Philharmonic Hall and giving a new function to the old power plant complex. As for today, this is the only hall of this size in Gdansk metropolis, where the majority of the biggest indoor events take place. Apart from that, project has two other aims of equal importance. First, and perhaps the most important in the long run, is to increase the attractiveness of this part of the city, which economic and social degradation has already started. The other bout is to integrate the island with the other bank of Motława River, a goal that can be achieved by creating a boulevard along the river bank and also by connecting the Main Town by high frequency ferries. Big scale open-air concerts are performed in the amphitheatre stage on the waterfront to the audience gathered on the Fish Market Square on the other side of the river. There is only a small covered tribune at the right side of the stage. The project logic, founded on the principles of restoration methods as well as external integrity of the complex, started from a very detailed surveys of all spaces and technologies of the complex, methods of renovation of historic facades and redesign of the green spaces. The project assumption is to sustain the beautiful neo-gothic brick building with its turrets and two rose windows. Elevations and the body of the building remain unchanged, whereas the newly designed contemporary architectural details stay in harmony with the monumental building. Unfortunately, the spatial integrity of interior post-industrial halls and its strong, rough character wasn't preserved. Mono-spatial halls are divided by ceilings and walls. This was probably due to the complexity of the new function – Philharmonics Hall. In the heart of the old plant the concert hall for symphonic orchestra and seats for the audience of 1000 was created.

The acoustics of the Main Hall was designed with special care. The project was far from typical, because of the shape of the Main Hall, which is based on a central plan referring to Greek amphitheatre stages. It refers to the Hall of Berlin Philharmonics. The construction of the Main Hall was very challenging because of the poor state of old construction and high level of groundwater. The restoration methods had to be re-examined. Specially constructed moving screens were placed under the ceiling and acoustics interior material allow configuring the Main Hall acoustic in the most suitable way to the every kind of event, which will be taking place there. The Hall is multifunctional, so it can also be used for non-classical music concerts, seminars and congress purposes.



Gdansk Music and Congress Center, Dorota Kamrowska-Zaluska

The new Music and Congress Centre consist of the Philharmonics and congress building with 3 halls: one for 1000, and the other two for 200 people, two hotels (one in the old granary and the other in old school building with beautiful Viennese Secession style staircase), restaurants and pub, with sufficient parking spaces. The parking spaces from economic and geological reasons (the high level of groundwater) are situated on the ground level. The project is open to the historic centre of the city. Along the waterfront, the promenade will be created – a public space that will lead up to a nearby marine.



Gdansk Music and Congress Center, Dorota Kamrowska-Zaluska

Model of Financing and Organization

In the year 1993 the search of the Baltic Philharmonic Hall new localisation was started. The project was commissioned to the arch. Marcin Kozikowski. As the project is very complex and consists of several different buildings it was divided into several main phases. The first phase, which lasted from 1996, was programming and design. It is when the permission of construction was given, then the reconstruction of the Krolewski Hotel, administration offices and amphitheatre. Phase 2 between 2001 and 2003 was adaptation of the main building. The first concert in the Main Hall took place in autumn in 2003. The reconstruction of the second hotel, restaurants and pub is bound to be finished until 2009.

The Polish Baltic Philharmonics is managing the investment directly with supervision of Regional Government Office, which is the organization responsible for coordination of the greatest part of the project funds. The project is financed by both public (European Union, national and regional government) and private partners (sponsoring enterprises, societies, NGOs). The provisional budget of Gdansk Music and Congress Centre is 73 millions PLN.

This project, if successful can be a kick-off for not only Olowianka Island, but the whole part of the city situated on the other bank of the Motława River. It can be an asset to the change of its negative image. From an urban and architectural point of view the Island constitutes a cohesive entity with the medieval City Centre. Although separated from land by Motława River, when connected by high frequency ferries, it can become a leisure inner-city public space, so necessary in this part of Gdansk.

Conclusion

Culture based development could be a significant factor towards sustainable urbanization. Education and culture plays important role in revitalisation projects. Inner-city public spaces (especially the ones with strong cultural, social or historical connotations) full of events and festivals could compete with uniform suburban space created in the outskirts. In some way it could provide an answer how to discourage inhabitants from leaving city centres and how to counteract the sprawl of residential and service area outside the city.

Being a useful economic activity for the city, culture can support local economy and generate windfall marginal gains. There are cities where the authorities introduce new culture activities on the post-industrial areas as a direct solution to economic failure of other city sectors. Some cities with interesting and unique heritage can use the opportunity to create policies for culture with high public profile and urban design improvements and restructuring of public spaces can be a tool for stimulation of local economy and city promotion. Cities like Gdansk have already become the "international culture tourism city".

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