Creative Functions as a Tool of City Space Revival - Case Study of Spa City in Wielkopolska Region

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Abstract

In the paper author presents the idea of a spa area reactivation through the implementation of creative functions. Innovation and creativity seem to be a tool to revive and activate public space of a spa city. It is to underline the existing spatial values and to promote a new usage of a public space owing to a touristic offer widening. In the article there is presented a study example of spa city in Wielkopolska region.

Key words: functions, creative functions, spatial-social activation

Introduction

In the following paper there is presented an idea of innovative way of spa city revival with the use of creative potential. Presented case study of Wielkopolska region (Poland) is a research example that has been examined by author for several years within the cooperation between Faculty of Architecture of Poznan University of Technology and local municipalities. The general idea of a study is to look for innovative spatial and functional solutions aiding tourism development and city revival through the use of creative potential. Thus tourism development can be not only more friendly to environment but to people as well. The introduced tourism should be responsible, discreet, environment friendly, proper, soft and gentle. The idea is to maintain a balance between the requirements of environmental and cultural values protection and local population and tourists preferences. Urban and architectural solutions not referring to the character and tradition of a place are harmful and devastate local color, identity and spatial specificity.

Nowadays, it is known that touristic offer so as to have a real impact on a number of tourists coming to a reception place should be either attractive or competitive. It should correspond with modern needs and modern lifestyles, it ought to be inspiring, a little bit surprising, provoking city space users to interact with each other and with space. It is extremely important in the context of touristic functions development thus the idea of tourism is to make people be curious about a place, be fascinated by a place and be strongly attracted by a place so as to come back again and again. The idea of creativity as an important tool of city space activation is still very modern and on time.

In the paper innovation in a spa city development is understood in two aspects: an innovative, contemporary thinking about using existing space resources in favor of tourism development, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. In order to increase spa or touristic city competitiveness in the tourism market and so as to stimulate the local community to use development opportunities, it is needed to improve spatial and social attractiveness and a quality of life.

The development of tourism and spa functions could be a key factor of socio-economic activation of small settlement centers. It refers especially to the towns which are characterized by abundance of natural resources, and do not have another sufficiently developed functional facilities, which would ensure an appropriate level of economic development, competitiveness and quality of life. The proper development in the context of spas should be understood as local cultural identity protection, both material and immaterial, since it represents an important element of the assessment of the attractiveness of the area. This is particularly important in the context of a contemporary trends towards unification of the needs and products and mass production, so characteristic of the modern, globalized world. The sustainable development of tourism is an important impetus to the revival of socio-spatial and economic development, not only of the town but also in a scale of municipality or region.
Creative functions as a tool of spa city space revival

Spa functions development depends either on the degree of urban space attractiveness, quality and infrastructural facilities of the city or influence of neighborhood attractive areas, which supplement existing offer in terms of functional and spatial resources. It is crucial to preserve the urban composition of a city centre and to provide a high level of attractiveness to ensure the quality and viability of a city space. It is also important to provide attractive public space offer and equipment because of a significant spatial and social role public space plays in a city structure. The essence of urban tourism is its cognitive character, which is why it is so important to provide opportunity to explore historical values, monuments, museums, art galleries or participate in cultural activities. Usually, the biggest tourist traffic activity is focused on downtown and central area of a city.

Upholding a tradition of the place and protection of local cultural landscape requires conscious efforts to preserve diversity. These efforts should be made by local communities, professional milieus and non-governmental organizations. In this context it is very important to provide proper education about city space revival, to build a sense of relationship between place and city user, cultivate genuine traditions and reject indiscriminate imitation of foreign patterns.

A major problem in the context of maintaining the spatial and social tradition of spas, are investments related to the construction of large-scale spa facilities, rehabilitation centers, spa and wellness centers, where technical and structural requirements are often in conflict with local aesthetics or beauty of the natural landscape. This type of spatial activity contributes to a significant degradation of cultural and environmental resources, and often comes into conflict with unique regional values and characteristics. The adverse effects of tourism development is also the commercialization and unification of the offer, what leads to the departure of native traditions and creation of new quality, not related to the site (Ritzer and Liska 1997).

Innovation and creativity in the context spa city activation

Spatial quality factor in modern conditions is becoming increasingly important. Building a competitive and attractive, that is, corresponding to different tastes, tourist offer and a strong brand of a given spa city is very important in terms of increasing the attractiveness of the area. A varied range of services, complementary activities to spa function and location in a beautiful entourage can be a tremendous asset to attract not only patients, but also tourists. The attractiveness and aesthetics of a place is also an argument for which it is worth to return to the place. An important advantage is the presence cultural offer that provokes some interesting experiences as a result of multisensory perception of a space.

The attractiveness of spa city is understood as the high quality of the package of services not only concerning a narrow range of specialized health-oriented ones. More broadly, all activities aiming at the health improvement can be understood also in a spatial dimension. The emotional relationship with the environment have been for a long time the subject of research of various fields specialists inter alia environmental or behavioral psychology or sociology. It is widely known that beautiful, well-kept, functional, uncluttered places with interesting functional and spatial offer evoke positive emotions, soothe and stimulate people to interact and continuous exploration. The joy of getting to know the city and its values can enhance modern spatial solutions of different purposes and scale that are based on the use of creative and intellectual potential.

Introduction of creative and innovative functions and forms into a spa area can cause its spatial, social and economic revival. Especially the urban areas are the perfect places to implement creative solutions, based on relationships of innovation, culture and business. It is a very good way to activate the degraded, insufficiently competitive and unattractive for investments areas. It is because creative potential do not require such large amounts of money to complete projects, which are implemented from a scratch. The advantage of these features is easy adaptation and not too exorbitant starting conditions. As pointed out by Florida, the creative potential has tended to concentrate in certain areas, for they have to offer the unique atmosphere, originality, authenticity and a spirit of place (Florida, 2010).

Creative and innovative functions as a tool for spa city activation can bring many benefits. They represent a significant impetus stimulating the development of local entrepreneurship and complement spa offer with additional range of services. Creativity encourages protection of cultural identity through the adaptation of degraded built tissue, enhancement of a spatial attractiveness of spa, promotion of local products as crafts, folk art and handicrafts. Creative functions mostly are
well adapted in places with a unique atmosphere and of a unique architectural form, which is degraded, neglected and creative potential is necessary to give the space a new meaning and underline existing qualities and character of a space.

Creativity in the urban space can also be understood as landscaping elements that enliven the public space and emphasize its individual characteristics. Introduction of new aesthetic quality is characterized by high formal and artistic merit. Innovative technological solutions or spatial, interactive, sculptural forms, visually appealing, can highlight the architectural distinctiveness and semantic meaning of a space. Referring to the urban identity and its specificity they give a space a new attractiveness and strengthen the power of attracting and retaining city users.

Case study of spa city in Wielkopolska region

Appropriate use of existing values and proper profiling of touristic and spa offer allows prudent stimulation of a spa city development and wise management of space. It is also important to integrate the activities of supra-local scale in order to promote and strengthen brand of a spa city, as well as to activate other settlements of a region in a socio-economic dimension. The development of the spa functions gives impetus to extend the offer also in the field of water tourism, cycling, motor and horse riding etc.

The idea of spa functions development including service facilities in the form of an offer creative functions within Wielkopolska region makes perfect sense, because it is well-known that the scope of services offered by spa cities are not only limited to health-related functions, but a wide offer of culture and entertainment services as well. Regeneration of vital powers better runs in the spa that is attractive spatially, providing not only a comfortable rest, but also encouraging social interactions and contacts. The spa towns, thanks to the wealth of spatial and functional values may also develop other branches of tourism: urban, cultural and congress. It is because urban space activated through the use of creative features is a perfect place to host various types of exposure, exhibitions, meetings, musical or artistic competitions. A good solution which supports a spa development is the inclusion of spa areas in the urban structure of the city, giving residents the opportunity to take advantage of offered treatments, rehabilitation and recreation without having to leave the place of residence (Kaczmarska, 2002).

Research work – creative functions in favor of spa city activation

Presented research focuses on the exploration and development of spa function in a city of Miedzychód in Wielkopolska region. The idea is to introduce the creative functions and forms so as to direct spa function development in the way that Międzychód becomes an attractive, innovative and competitive spa. The ability to create the first in Wielkopolska spa in city of Miedzychód will strengthen its brand at the regional level and help to improve the quality of inhabitants’ life. Promotion of the idea of Miedzychód as an innovative - the first in region and based on local creative potential, spa city increases the chances of promotion of existing spatial and environmental values, the development of spatial and social potential, as well as multiplying the economic benefits flowing from the touristic offer. The implementation of this idea must be done in an evolutionary and balanced way.

The presented study aimed at defining principles for the development of innovative spa functions in Międzychód city using existing resources, functional, spatial and environmental values and local creative potential to activate spa and city offer. The design work in this context was conducted at the Faculty of Architecture, Poznan University of Technology in cooperation with the authorities of Międzychód city. Miedzychód promotes the idea of development as an urban center of a rest and healing, along with a complementary range of creative offer but also innovative thinking about the existing potential, which can have a significant impact on the creation of a new city brand.
Pic. 1. The areas of functional activation: services, public offer, commercial functions and key area in terms of spa functions development in Międzychód city: subcentres, public space systems, city gates, protected and degraded areas. Design work by students of Faculty of Architecture, Poznan University of Technology – E.Baraniak, A.Browarska, J.Balcerzyk, M.Ratajczak, academic year 2014/15 under the direction of D.Pazder.

Pic. 2. The proposal of crystallization of the public space system within a city centre of Międzychód city and idea of incorporation of unbuilt tissue into one homogenous offer of built and unbuilt areas of different functions and destinations. Design work by students of Faculty of Architecture, Poznan University of Technology – E.Baraniak, A.Browarska, J.Balcerzyk, M.Ratajczak, academic year 2014/15 under the direction of D.Pazder.

The idea of the use of creative offer to activate a spa city of Miedzychod and to produce a new quality of space was the subject of research and design work, which was also conducted during an academic year with students of Faculty of
Architecture at Poznan University of Technology. Semester projects were devoted to the study of local land-use zoning plans and the development of spa city of Międzychód in terms of creation a network system of innovation and creativity flows. The overarching slogans in the process of design guidelines formulation for the development of the spa city were: innovation, creativity, synergy, competitiveness and cooperation.

Pic. 3. The synthesis of spa function development in Międzychód city: basic functional destination of identified areas, planned activation of unbuilt peripheral areas, new elements introduced to existing urban structure, existing urban – functional and compositional skeleton, key functions, protected areas.

Design work by students of Faculty of Architecture, Poznan University of Technology – E.Baraniak, A.Browarska, J.Balcerzyk, M.Ratajczak, academic year 2014/15 under the direction of D.Pazder.

This study and design work contribute to start discussion between Międzychód Municipality and local society about an innovative development of the spa with the use of existing local potential in a creative way and in accordance with modern requirements of competitiveness. Research includes extensive analytical part devoted to the study of existing functional and spatial resources, as well as the provisions of existing planning documents prepared at various levels of planning system. The analyzes were assessed so as to indicate potentials and barriers of the future development. The work resulted in a set of design proposals aiming at the existing potential accentuation and at an innovative and creative planning solutions. The idea was to build competitive advantages and consider them in future local plans in favor of attractive and modern spa offer and tourism development.

Conclusion

In order to define desired development of spa city of Miedzychód, the initial objective was to provide innovative solutions, creativity on offer around the spa, synergy of actions at different levels of development and the creation of a new competitive brand of Miedzychód through the promotion of local resources and strengthening the local identity of the space. Touristic offer in economic meaning heavily interferes local identity which is the largest value of tourism. It is necessary to strive to balance the natural and cultural environment. The needed condition to ensure harmony and wisdom of development is appropriate incorporation of introduced elements with existing landscape and spatial unique features, taking into consideration topographical, geological, demographical characteristics with attention to protect and create an appropriate aesthetic appeal of the new tourism infrastructure.
It is also extremely important to protect local material and immaterial culture, identity and nature of the place, as well as the products of arts and crafts of the given area. The development is conducive to the promotion of spa offer and associated functions, affecting the socio-spatial activation of the city and surrounding area, related to the use of local creative potential and creativity in various fields of arts and crafts. Proper development of tourism, conducive to the development of spa cities and surrounding areas is possible through the use of existing assets and their transformation into innovative, attractive and competitive touristic products stimulating development and competitiveness.

References

[19] Kosovo country data compiled based on source: (1)Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011-2016, Republika e Kosovës, Ministria e Arsimit Shkencës dhe Teknologjisë; (2)Torino Process 2010, Kosovo under UNSCR 1224, ETF.
[20] Source; Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011-2016