

**(RE)CONSTRUCTING THE CITY CENTER.**

NEW PUBLIC SPACES OF KATOWICE IN THE EYES OF ITS USERS

**Summary**

The aim of the presented thesis is two-fold. Firstly, it is to see how the public spaces of Katowice center function in their social sense. Secondly, to see how the Katowice center is perceived by its users and how it functions in comparison to its state from before the process of its transformation was finished. With the relational approach adopted in this thesis, it was also to see how it functions in relation to the Culture Zone (a part of Katowice center) and to the malls in Katowice.

As presented in part II of the thesis, basing on research conducted in the previous years, the Katowice center was not a space that would be perceived as vital because of its social aspects. The last decade, however, marks a process of extensive and multidimensional change resulting in creation of a completely new public space, with market square established in the site of the roundabout. Because of the previous conditions Katowice center served as not much more than a space dedicated to transport and communication.

This inspired the author to devise the research presented in this thesis. It was conducted in the first half of the year 2017 and involved surveying 220 users of Katowice center. By 'users' there are meant people who live in Katowice, but also those who only visit the city, work or study here. The adopted technique was standardized interview, utilized almost exclusively in the main square or Floral Square, further completed with non-standardized observations. Main findings of this part served as a reference point for the next step, which is expert interviews. As 'experts' here served architects, city activists, city hall workers, people of cultural sector and others, who, due to their profession, could provide an insight on the researched matter. For all experts to some extent are 'public personas' who at some point observed the process of change in Katowice and were present in the discourse.

The thesis itself consists of five parts, each devoted to a different dimension of the problem. The parts are preceded by the introduction in which the author explains what inspired him to take on the matter, shows the general theoretical approach and intuitions, mentioning Aleksander Wallis or Florian Znaniecki, and presenting the main concepts of Lyn H. Lofland, Stephen Carr, Mark Francis, Leanne G. Rivlin and Andrew M. Stone and, once again, Wallis.

Part I serves to present the adopted relational perspective and the key concepts, as Martina Löw's "constitution of space" and Lofland's "public realm". While chapter 1 in most part discusses the concept of space, its perception and evaluation, chapter 2 focuses on public spaces. The latter shows how the concept of public space can be studied through such aspects as rights, needs or functions. The field researched also requires presenting how the term 'city center' is understood in the thesis. This also results in showing its specific functions – this is after Wallis.

Part II focuses on Katowice and its specific context. Chapter 3 is an attempt to show how the city center was gradually losing its social dimension over the years and also what were the results of selected sociological research conducted on Katowice center. It summarizes main findings in works published between years 1980 and 2015. The chapter ends with an attempt to show how the discourse on 'change' was developing in Katowice, as a context taking, among others, revitalization of postindustrial sites.

Chapter 4 in part II presents the methodology of original research. It shows the aim of the research, basic terms of the thesis, theoretical and methodological inspirations as well as approach, taken variables, main questions, adopted techniques and their sequence. It also shows how sampling was constructed and how the research was conducted.

Part IV is dedicated to show the detailed results of the study. It is divided into three next chapters (5, 6 and 7), which are, respectively, on perception and valorization, on spatial practices and relation between the elements of the center, and on selected social dimensions of Katowice center. These were examined through the concept of public realm, rights, needs, uses and functions, pleasures and the types of a relational web. This is the part, where the author relies on concepts developed by authors such as Lofland (public realm, uses, relational web, pleasures), functions (Wallis), Löw (relational approach and intrinsic logic of a city), but also Stephen Carr, Mark Francis, Leanne G. Rivlin and Andrew M. Stone (rights and needs). Chapter 8 presents the particular findings

in the fashion of responding to questions set in the part III. of the thesis. Part II and IV are also illustrated by photographs taken in the spaces of Katowice center.

Part V sums up the main findings and results of the study. It shows that the perception of Katowice center has almost completely changed, and the space now serves as a “place to meet” and the right spot for those who seek some rest on the Flower Square. It shows that what changed or was introduced in public spaces, is now perceived as prestigious and worth showing to those who visit the city for the first time. There also should be stressed that the negative reception mentioned in Nawrocki’s research (published in 2005), now has almost completely reversed. This part of the thesis also contains an additional section, in which the author shows what changed in the city center in a year after the conclusion of his research. This, along with pointing out what hasn’t or couldn’t have been taken into account, serves to show what should become the further aims of, and directions in conducting research in respect of Katowice public spaces.

The thesis also contains an annex with the questionnaire, tables with detailed characteristics of the respondents interviewed, and tables with detailed answers, as well as an example of the list of questions for selected expert interview.