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THE ARCHITECTURAL PLACE IDENTITY – AN AUTHORIAL PROPOSAL OF A MEASUREMENT INDICATOR

TOŻSAMOŚĆ MIEJSCA W KONTEKŚCIE ARCHITEKTONICZNYM – AUTORSKI WSKAŹNIK POMIARU

ABSTRACT: The architectural place identity belongs to the historical and cultural heritage related to landscape architecture. It exerts a great impact on both the observers' perception of the given space and their emotional attitude. The authors' main goal was to create a tool that would enable objective assessment and measurement of the place identity phenomenon. Accordingly, the aim of this article is to present the result of accepting this approach – an architectural place identity indicator, as well as to discuss and promote conducting more research into this subject. It also provides the definition and clarification of the analyzed term. The measurement indicator of the chosen phenomenon has been presented against the background of the City of Wrocław and its urban public areas. The applied method allowed examining the analyzed issues within the given spatial range. The article comprises a complete theoretical description of the research and reveals all the options of its use in practice.

KEY WORDS: identity, place identity, architecture, place identity indicator

ABSTRAKT: Architektoniczna tożsamość miejsca należy do dziedzictwa historycznego i kulturowego związanego z architekturą krajobrazu. Ma ona ogromny wpływ zarówno na postrzeganie danej przestrzeni przez obserwatorów, jak i na ich stosunek emocjonalny. Głównym celem autorów było stworzenie narzędzia, które umożliwiłoby obiektywną ocenę i pomiar zjawiska tożsamości miejsca. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie rezultatu tego podejścia – architektonicznego wskaźnika tożsamości miejsca. Celem pracy jest podtrzymanie dyskusji i zainicjowanie kolejnych prób badań w tym temacie. Zawiera ona również definicję i wyjaśnienie analizowanego pojęcia. Wskaźnik pomiaru wybranego zjawiska został przedstawiony na tle Wrocławia i jego miejskich przestrzeni publicznych. Zastosowana metoda pozwoliła na zbadanie analizowanych zagadnień w zadanym zakresie przestrzennym. Artykuł zawiera pełny, teoretyczny opis badania oraz ujawnia wszystkie możliwości jego wykorzystania w praktyce.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: tożsamość, tożsamość miejsca, architektura, wskaźnik tożsamości miejsca

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Introduction. Architectural place identity

In the era of globalization, the sense of belonging to a place which we can identify with is truly important. The place idiosyncrasy influences the perception of the given space as unique and "ours". Architecture, as the demonstration of belonging and identification, place idiosyncrasy and identity, has been the subject of a great deal of research and analyses (Bierwiaczonek et al. 2017; Wrana 2011, 2012; Wrana and Fitta 2012; Włodarczyk 2011; Owerczuk 2017; Myczkowski 2003; Giddens 2001; Grzyś 2017). Due to a non-measurable, subjective character of architecture, scientific analyses face the problem related to the lack of common benchmark.

"Identity" as a term, is a multi-dimensional concept and it might gain a new, original meaning depending on its different use. While the wide use of "identity" comes from its fundamental, significant and critical nature, it is also one of the most essential elements of the human character. It plays a key role to meet the needs of belonging, recognition and self-actualization (Giddens 2001). Thanks to the sense of self-identity, related not only to individual, but also collective one, the individual has an opportunity to identify with a society of the similar personal code and locate himself/herself in the given time and space, considered as "theirs". The term "personal code" here relates to the same shared feature.

Identity is the construct largely shaped by the environment. The place where we live and work has an impact on human emotions and associations with certain features. "The identity of a city reflects processes taking place in the urban space. Being shaped in the given geographical and historical identity, it can be comprehended similar to genius loci, the guardian spirit of a place, associated with non-material values such as history, myths or superstitions. It is reflected in architecture which contributes to the landscape" (Owerczuk 2017: 43). The spirit of a place "shows itself" to people who use the space and creates the unique atmosphere that is difficult to define. "Identity is the deepest interdependence existing between the individual and the perceived environment, including its historical elements: substance (culture, tradition) and form (canon of a place)" (Myczkowski 2003: 24). This is the subjective "feeling", related by the given individual or the group to the given space and that is why, such a casus is difficult to analyze. However, it could be looked into on the basis of its foundations: historical events, the inhabitants' awareness of their town history, as well as the symbolic meaning and cultural life connected with its space.

A city, as the main spot of settlement networks, attracts people as it guarantees the development as well as a greater availability of goods and services. As an administration center, it usually possesses its own rich history and local tradition. The innovative building construction solutions prove that a city is a never-ending creation, constantly evolving, which can be seen in its urban state and looks, not only metaphorically, but also literally, in its "superstructure of meanings" (Grzyś 2017: 8). Similar to humans, a city includes a lot of different identities and creates the environment allowing their

modifications and adjustments. Consequently, such a diverse and complex organism cannot be defined as a constant, unchanging structure. A city is changing permanently not only because of aging, but also thanks to people living or coming there. "Identity is not given forever as it is changing together with the city and its inhabitants. A combination of internal and external factors causes the identity to never be given, achieved or adopted" (Rewers 2005: 294). A city is a never-completed structure and its constant development is the characteristic feature of its nature. It includes different aspects of already existing and future identities. As the heritage gives a city its present shape, so it constitutes the basis that should not be erased from the collective memory. The legacy and innovation constitute a balanced and complementary foundation of the city development.

Both cities and their public spaces are complex and unfinished structures. By definition they are places used by strangers (Bierwiaczonek et al. 2017). A certain kind of autonomy, non-appropriation, are important aspects of the creation of those spaces. They are characterized by values connecting and shared by inhabitants. Construction substance that surrounds space and refers to the symbolic events in the city history should reflect local patriotism. Public spaces (e.g. squares) are often the key indicators and creators of a city's identity. They determine uniqueness of a city not only due to their architecture, but also some symbolic meaning connected with the given events.

Place identity comprises both material factors (architecture, monuments, urban planning) and some intangible ones (genius loci). The first factors mentioned above are relatively durable. Since their completion they have been "spreading" messages which, thanks to their functions, symbols and places, pass certain contents to their recipients. Architectural objects are the mainstay of identity narratives and initiate a dialogue about a city and space they represent. They are "creators" of the identity, bring places closer to residents and visitors and allow them to identify with the given space. Since the moment of their existence, architectural objects have embodied tradition and history.

A city is a living organism and architecture is its language. Such a metaphor might lead to the statement that it is worth making this language understandable for the recipients – making the given building to be the word spoken in a language of the given region. It is necessary to understand the message that architecture communicates. The use of strange words and expressions always carries a risk of misunderstanding and rejection (Wrana, Fitta 2012).

The phenomenon of globalization creates a threat to the sense of place identity which is an important foundation of the personality and character. It is commonly seen that there is an increasing tendency to create "plain" architecture that, regardless of its location in a given region or country, looks the same everywhere and does not carry any cultural code. Despite the use of different forms and materials, solutions related to factors shaping a given place for years are getting less and less common. Ignoring the historical, social and cultural heritage results in the unification of building structures

all over the world (Bagiński, Damurski 2009). This is particularly visible in spaces intended for residential and office housing. The symbiosis of technological and innovative progress with the spirit of the place, preserved through its history, is a challenge to contemporary architects.

It is important to introduce the design into space, simultaneously keeping the identity continuity, while creating the potential to strengthen the image of a city. "One of the key factors of creative architectural creation is the architect's understanding of the specific features of space, which describes everything included in the notion of place identity. The correct comprehension should be the main guideline in finding design solutions which guarantee the right choice. […] that despite any […] architectural language, enters the space in the form of creative continuation. As a result, what is new is commonly seen as obvious and expected. Place background plays a leading role and, at the same time, motivates to respect identity and to solve problems resulting from local conditions" (Wrana 2012: 121).

To sum up, the concept of "architectural place identity", used in this article, is comprehended as an identity content coded in the elements of urban architecture, resulting from historical and cultural canons. It can be analyzed due to the visible stylistic elements and the knowledge of history and tradition associated with them, which allows generating some symbols that are important for the space where the given buildings were constructed.

The importance of architectural objects for the city identity has been confirmed by Włodarczyk (2011: 464) who says: "Nowadays, one can speak not only about cultural integration, but also about identity comprehended as architectural heritage. In the era of unification and globalization, it is expected to spread the original, cultural elements and to strengthen the local familiarity and identity. Consequently, it is really important to notice the permanency of architectural objects. Such permanency manifests itself not only in physical actions […], but also in the historical memory of the past and cultural records related to architecture.

The importance of place identity is widely examined – the realities of Polish small towns and the issue of identity are subject of works of Wójtowicz-Wróbel (2009, 2022, 2014).

Identity measurement indicator

Place identity is conditioned also by the structural composition of particular elements of the environment and their symbolic meaning. Specific architectural units, which in human perception are often identified as a certain range of events, are the analyzed and described parts of space. The proposed method is to examine relationships existing in the given architectural interiors. The relation between symbolism of space and its realization in building structures is an important aspect to observe. The identity measurement indicator will allow to examine new designs and their influence on the environment.

In the scientific world, a lot of scientists made attempts to examine the landscape and among them were Lynch, Sörensen, Wejchert, Bogdanowski and Kowalczyk. In general, most methods proposed by them concentrate on concrete elements of the composition, ways of using space and its perception by the users. Entering the social area helps to demonstrate processes taking place in identity shaping. Here, questionnaires and interviews are most helpful tools (Sepe 2013; Frost and Catney 2019), being part of the multi-dimensional approach combining social aspect with expert assessments (Dovey 2009).

The method proposed by Wejchert (1974), based on an analysis of urban compositions and their influence on space observers, has served as the base of the suggested method. This author emphasizes the influence of an urban composition on the perception of the given place and subjectivity of concrete evaluations and impressions. Space generates various reactions and nature of its "experiencing". The strength of landscape impact depends on its individual features and the range of identification.

The research problem to measure the phenomenon results from its subjective character and that is why it was important to specify features corresponding to strictly defined point values. The method also covered historical and perspective aspects of the examined place due to the fact that identity is the concept of multi-meaning complexity. While creating the indicator, available knowledge and similar research methods were used. However, they were modified or inspired the improvement and necessary modifications.

The presented method is based on eight criteria which were selected to examine historical, perspective-related and contemporary aspects. They were chosen on the basis of analysis of the literature on the subject, which mainly clarified elements that genuinely shape identity affiliation to a specific space. It was also extended by components selected by the authors themselves.

The identity measurement indicator is based on historical knowledge, carried out architectural inventory and knowledge of The Study of Conditions and Directions of Spatial Development of Wrocław regulations. Cartographic studies which show the analyzed area are complementary to the research. To make it easy, the examined architectural interiors have been divided into four sections, where all the buildings influencing space are analyzed. The point scale is from 1 to 4 and the bigger the number of the points, the better. The method of assigning points is shown in Table 1.

It should be pointed out that the high score of historical buildings in the first four criteria is obvious, which will be considered in the further analyses. However, it was necessary to include those buildings in the study in order to present their influence on space and the area they cover, compared to the modern buildings and to show their relations to neighboring structures. The similar situation applies to the assessment of new investments in the criteria of perspective-related aspect and some unfinished projects were classified on the basis of available visualizations.

Table 1

Scoring scheme of particular criteria in the identity indicator

		4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point
Historical criteria	A – attempt at stylistic histori-cizing	Historical building	Building with clear historicizing elements	Building with minimal reference to history	Building with no historical reference
	B – attempt at stylistic histori-cizing – mate-rials used	Historical building	Building with structural/mate-rial elements re-lated to historical solutions present in the given area	Building with structural/material elements slightly related to historical solutions present in the given area	Building with no historical reference
	C – attempt to refer to the past cubage / shape of the building	Historical building	Building clearly related to histori-cal shape, cubage	Building slightly related to historical shape, cubage	Building with no historical reference
	D – use of buil-ding remains	Historical building	Building mostly composed of the existing historical content	Building slightly composed of the existing historical content	Newly constructed building
Contem-porary criteria	E – building uniqueness as a recognizable city landmark	City landmark	Characteristic, yet not symbolic building, not associated with a city, area	Building as an important point of reference but not characteristic in the given area	complementa-ry building
	F – reference to neighboring buildings	Building related to environment contributing to space order	Building mostly related to the en-vironment (not in all aspects, here--style, esthetics, material, cubage)	Building slightly related to the environment (in one or two aspects like style, esthetics, material, cubage)	Building not related to the environment
Perspecti-ve criteria	G – consisten-cy with the Study vision function	Building to-tally matching the Study vision	Building almost totally matching the Study vision	Building slightly matching the Study vision	Building not matching the Study vision
	H – consisten-cy with the Study vision – style, esthetics, harmony, materials, cu-bage, technical condition	Building matching the Study vision in terms of style esthetics, material, cu-bage, techni-cal condition	Building ma-tching the Study vision in terms of three chosen aspects: style, esthetics, har-mony, material, cubage, technical condition	Building matching the Study vision in terms of two cho-sen aspects: style, esthetics, harmony, cubage, technical condition	Building not matching or matching only one aspect of the Study: sty-le, esthetics, harmony, cu-bage, technical condition

Source: own elaboration

Case study – Dominikański Square

The concrete urban area of Wrocław, symbolically called Dominikański Square was chosen to present how the indicator works. It is located in the former city fortification areas, not far from the city's historical center – The Old Market – from the east. In addition, the Study defines Grunwaldzka axis as one of the city's main traffic routes "which […] quite clearly leads from the north-east to the center […] stands out in the spatial structure of Wrocław and, at the same time, plays the roles of composition, service and communication […]. It has been assumed that, in terms of identity and composition, one should aim at:

— enhancing city representative features and spatial humanization to the scale and needs of different users,

— creating an image of an attractive, urban public space,

— forming multi-functional and diverse in composition space that pays attention to its important objects and areas."
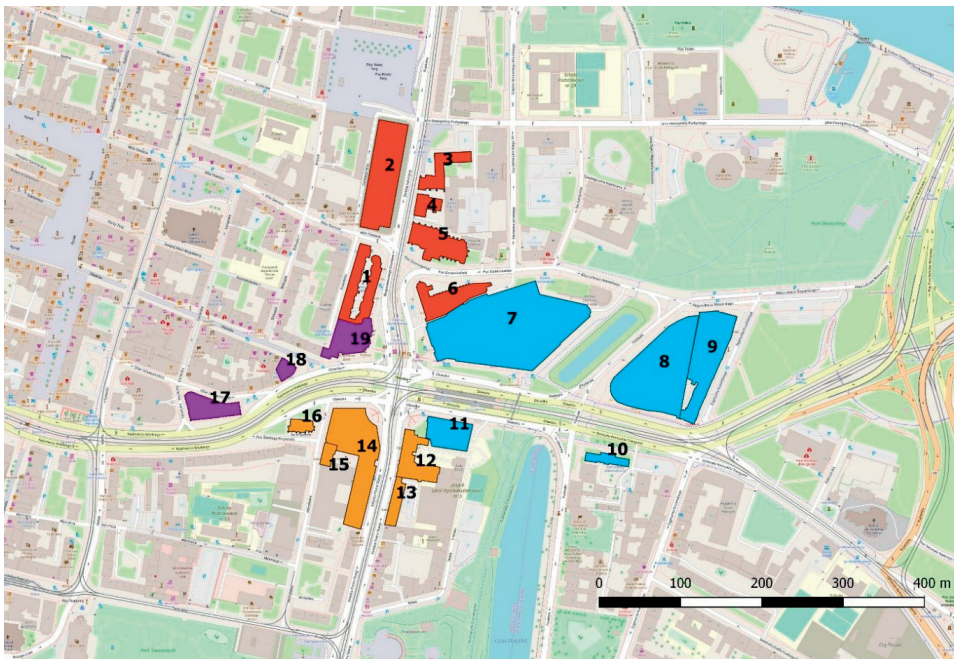
Picture 1. Individual areas of Dominikański Square (northern area: 1 – Just in Center, 2 – *Nowy Targ* office building, 3 – Dominican Sisters' former convent complex, 4 – St Catherine Street 16 Centric office block, 5 – St Adalbert's Church, 6 – The Mercure Hotel; eastern area: 7 – *Galeria Dominikańska* shopping center, 8 – OVO, 9 – Post Office, 10 – ZREMB office building, 11 – PZU office building Oławska Gate; southern area: 12 – IX LO, 13 – B&B Hotel, 14 – Dominikański office building, 15 – Oppersdorfs' Palace, 16 – St Christopher's Church; western area: 17 – headquarters of the National Bank of Poland, 18 – headquarters of the Central Statistical Office, 19 – Just in Center (original sources)

The above-quoted passage of *The Study of Conditions and Directions of Spatial Development of Wrocław* (2018: 225) is essential due to the location of Dominikański Square as an element of Grunwaldzka axis (across Społeczny Square, along the streets of Powstańców Warszawy and Oławska) and presented goals in relation to the given, research area.

The chosen research area (new architectural assumptions included) is an element permanently associated with the city and its identity and it is related to connotations that are implemented in the collective memory. Furthermore, it is a permanent city landmark. It not only includes historical continuity of the place, but also has some new values added to its structure. Except the possibility of defining the place as the meeting point, it is also one of the main transport hubs. People's migration across the given architectural system results in implementing it in the memory and identity. Thanks to this fact it plays an important role in the inhabitants' social integration, allows them to identify with their city and its heritage and consequently, creates a unique non-material value-genius loci.

Dominikański Square has been divided into four composition segments, according to parts of the world (northern, eastern, southern and western panoramas). This is presented in Picture 1.

Dominikański Square – the northern area

This examined area has been marked red. Its panorama is a combination of several photos due to its vast architectural area. A specific point value in the given criteria is presented in Picture 2.

The northern area of Dominikański Square, despite a few historical buildings, has a modern and urban character. The attached graph presents a certain relationship. While dividing the area with a street of Blessed Czesław/St. Catherine, it can be noticed that the left part is of more modern character, whereas the right one – of more traditional one, with its historical buildings and modern ones, such as the project of Centric office building or the Mercure Hotel. It is also reflected by the given points as the right part got a better score. In the background, one can see blocks of flats built in 1960, but they were not considered significant enough to be examined. St. Adalbert's Church should be regarded as the local space dominant which, in the current Study, is said "to form the city. silhouette". The same document defines the Dominican Sisters' complex as "hierarchically important space".

Dominikański Square – the eastern area

This area has been marked in blue in Picture 1. Its panorama and the concrete point score is presented in Picture 3.

The eastern part of Dominikański Square is characterized by, similar to the northern one, a modern city style but in this case we deal only with large-scale assumptions,

Picture 2. Dominikański Square – the northern panorama (original study)

including mostly office spaces. No visible historical spaces have survived there and although in the past, one of the main city gates – Oławska Gate (a new office building owned by PZU was named after it) was located in this area, its remains are not presented in any visible way to the average space user. The enclosed graph shows certain relationships. In its center, there is a visible growth in the point score, but moving towards its edges, the axes decrease to increase again. In this case, the panorama shows a big differentiation among the adjacent buidings in relation to the identity indicator. In the background, one can see the silhouette of St Maurice's Church and nearby buildings but because of the distance they are of no importance to this study.

Dominikański Square – the southern area

The area examined in this part of the work is marked in orange in Picture 1. The panorama, which is a composition of two photos due to the vast urban space and point value in the given criteria is presented in Picture 4.

The southern area of Dominikański Square is the area of the modern, urban space (despite some existing historical buildings sited there). The enclosed graph presents a certain relationship. The axis is aligned with the letter "V", which emphasizes that the

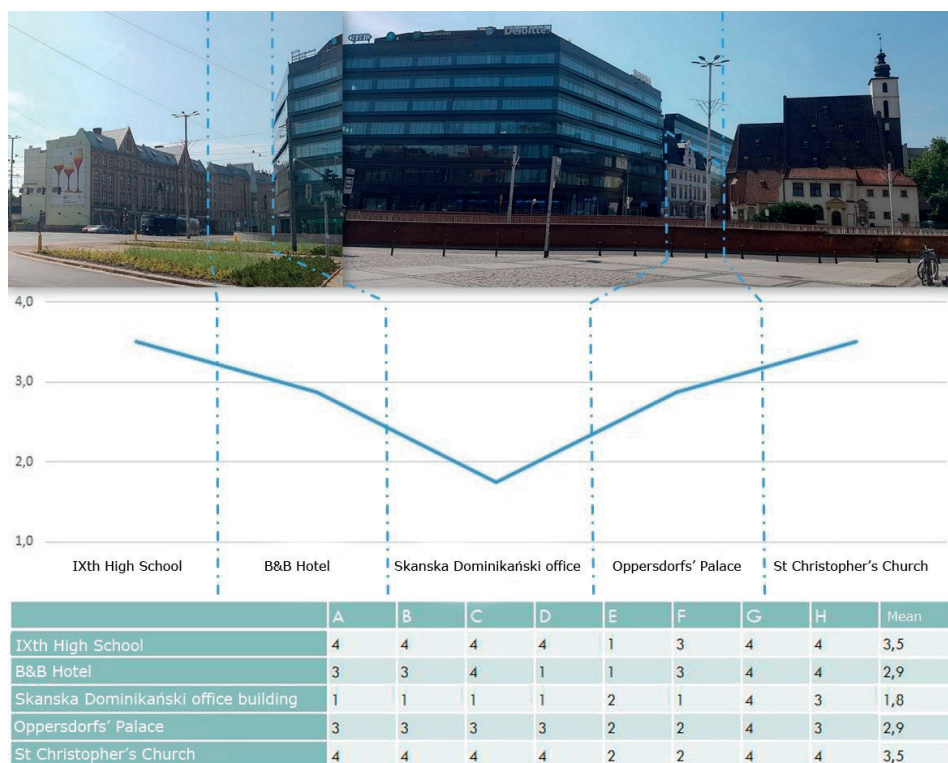|	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Mean
Galeria Domikańska shopping center	1	1	1	1	4	3	4	3	2,3
OVO	1	1	1	1	3	1	4	3	1,9
Post Office	4	4	4	4	3	1	2	2	3,0
ZREMB office building	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	3	1,6
PZU Office building Oławska Gate	1	1	1	1	1	2	4	3	1,8

Picture 3. Dominikański Square – the eastern panorama (own sources)

panorama center has fewer points of the selected indicator than the edges. It should be emphasized that the Dominikański Office, the object of the biggest cubage and a facade contrasting with the surroundings, is this center. It would be great to run the project in a more efficient way, according to the historical aspect. Of course, one should not forget about the Opperdorfs' Palace which, as a memorial monument, increases the space value and shows architects' respect for the existing content. The building itself could match the surrounding space in a better way and symbolize more accurate semantic context, referring to its place of origin, than to "a pile of books".

Dominikański Square – the western area

The examined area has been marked in violet in Picture 1. Its panorama and point value in the given criteria is shown in Picture 5.

The western area of Dominikański Square is characterized with the biggest number of historical buildings which are also visible in the background, along Oławska Street leading to the Old Market. Except for them, the apartment blocks located at 69-75 Kaziemierza Wielkiego Street should also be marked out. The graph shows that the

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Mean
IXth High School	4	4	4	4	1	3	4	4	3,5
B&B Hotel	3	3	4	1	1	3	4	4	2,9
Skanska Dominikański office building	1	1	1	1	2	1	4	3	1,8
Oppersdorfs' Palace	3	3	3	3	2	2	4	3	2,9
St Christopher's Church	4	4	4	4	2	2	4	4	3,5

Picture 4. Dominikański Square – the southern panorama (own sources)

relatively consistent building area received much higher notes than Just in Center, that is seen in the second part of the photo, located on the left side of panorama.

The area of Dominikański Square – summary

Dominikański Square is the space with many representative, innovative and modern buildings. All the described objects (exept for churches) are multi-storey ones and most of them are large area buildings (due to their cubage "taking over" and dominating the space of the square). There is a visible trend to refer to facade stylistics (e.g. subdued colours) of the former Dominican Order and St Cristopher's Church, which over the years spread to the nearby buildings. However, modern buildings do not relate to the rich history of the place and are the unified creations with no visible character but with facades minimalistic in the form. In this case the number of them is quite significant in comparison with newly-formed buildings / projects which were created with respect to the existing space. The exceptions mentioned are the Oppersdorfs' Palace and the project of Centric Office building. It is worth noticing that they are also substantially smaller and due to this fact – less influential. Places of historical significance are not

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Średnia
NBP	4	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	3,6
GUS	3	4	4	3	1	4	4	4	3,4
Just in Center	1	1	3	1	1	2	4	3	2,0

Picture 5. Dominikański Square – the western panorama (own sources)

visibly exposed. All that results in perceiving this space as modern and in process of creating its new identity, in opposed to having one. Contemporary creators should always benefit from existing potential and use it to emphasize space's character instead of hiding it. However, it must be taken into consideration that innovative, stylistically universal projects do not always bring a bad quality aspect into the space. Each place should be analyzed separately and treated as a unique one.

The whole area was severely damaged during the Second World War. Until recently it abounded in vast open, undeveloped areas, where the remains of historical buildings could be seen. Apart from the negative influence on the general city image, we can easily notice the chance that was given to designers of a new generation to develop the space "starting from scratch". Having used the space, one of the most recognizable, innovative, modern and trendy areas of Wrocław was created. Currently, it attracts foreign tourists and is developing dynamically. Every next project of a large area office building, constructed in the analyzed space, does not change the area characteristics but fits in the space. Nowadays, this area is gaining a new urban identity. After post-war damages, its characteristic has changed for good and nowadays the square potential is used in

accordance with the needs of a 21st-century urban center. The communication aspect, the neighbourhood of the historical center and a good connection with Grunwaldzki Square also play the key role.

Still, in 2000, Dominikański Square looked totally different and most buildings that are creating this space, did not exist on the city map. The area is diversified by single, historical objects, including the bastile of St Job and the memory of Oławska Gate, which once the main city gate, now can become a symbol of the area. This, in turn, is necessary to reach progress and innovation. Thanks to its urban architecture, Dominikański Square reveals Wrocław as a developing metropoly, worth being invested in and a good place to live in. Społeczny Square has a similar potential which nowa-days, underdeveloped, still might become a representative part of Wrocław. The newly defined space together with Dominikański Square might become an integral meeting point for both the inhabitants and tourists, which would intensify the place identity and make this space commonly recognizable.

Summary

The presented place identity indicator turned out to be useful in the evaluation of the described place. The chosen context required a method which would allow an efficient categorization of the analyzed object in the most objective and concrete way. This method made the point evaluation and, consequently, the comparison and analyses of given places fairly easy, consistent and repeatable. Thanks to this, it is possible to answer the questions concerning an influence of the new architectural projects on identities of the analyzed areas and whether and in what way contemporary designers refer to the place identity and its tradition. It allows examining idiosyncrasy of the given area. The created method is based on a comprehensive spectrum of aspects. This is why it can be useful to research any space of choice. The only condition is to select a place which consists of a significant number of buildings.

In the age of globalization, identity narrations have gained new importance and meaning. The significance of heritage, local cultures and regional legacy have become a matter of debates. Architectural place identity is a relatively new and trendy topic. It is a complicated matter, covering a lot of different, interdisciplinary issues and phe-nomena. Construction of an appropriate indicator, which is able to measure the identity phenomenon related to architectural objects, is a great challenge and still requires some improvement. As we can read in the work A *City Space Identity* "discussions about iden-tity, just because of the research subject itself, that is the city, are going to be followed by irreducible to one pattern attempts to find conceptualization of identity. All this results from the intensification of modernization processes and the complexity of the modern world" (Bierwiaczonek et al. 2017: 4). The complex nature of potentially analyzed space and dynamic identity narrations are research problems for many fields of knowledge. The issue of identity, which is, on the one hand – intangible and multi-dimensional, on the other one, forced into a closed frame, requires not only an approach concerning

social field, but also knowledge of space construction and development (Kalandides 2011). That is why it is worth trying to specify a wide range of meanings of the issue, which should be developed and continued in other works.

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