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IN SEARCH OF REPRESENTATION OF A CONTEMPORARY CITY: ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TACTICAL URBANISM COMPETITION (2020–2024)

W POSZUKIWANIU REPREZENTACJI WSPÓŁCZESNEGO MIASTA: ANALIZA REZULTATÓW MIĘDZYNARODOWEGO KONKURSU TACTICAL URBANISM (2020–2024)

Abstract

Public spaces in cities have always been catalysts for change. The New Leipzig Charter states that the transformation of cities is based on the integration of social, ecological, and economic aspects and that this is to be expressed in just, green, and productive cities. The aim of the study was to analyse the design concepts of urban public spaces awarded in the Tactical Urbanism competition to determine to what extent the proposed solutions refer to patterns known from the past, and to what extent they propose new approaches. The conclusions of the analysis were used to outline an attempt to represent the contemporary city.

Keywords: analysis of the content, image, patterns of urbanity, public space

Streszczenie

Przestrzenie publiczne w miastach zawsze były pewnego rodzaju katalizatorem zmian. Nowa Karta Lipska głosi, że transformacja miast jest oparta na integracji aspektów społecznych, ekologicznych i gospodarczych, i że wyrazem tego mają być miasta sprawiedliwe, zielone i produktywne. Celem badania była analiza koncepcji projektowych miejskich przestrzeni publicznych nagrodzonych w konkursie Tactical Urbanism pod kątem określenia, w jakim stopniu zaproponowane rozwiązania nawiązują do wzorców znanych z przeszłości, a w jakim proponują nowe podejście. Wnioski z analizy posłużyły do nakreślenia próby reprezentacji współczesnego miasta.

Słowa kluczowe: analiza treści, obraz, wzorce miejskości, przestrzeń publiczna

1. INTRODUCTION

At the 19th International Architecture Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, the Golden Lion was awarded to the Bahrain Pavilion for the exhibition ‘Heatwave’¹.

¹ *The awards of the Biennale Architettura 2025* [in:] La Biennale di Venezia, <https://www.labiennale.org/en/news/awards-biennale-architettura-2025> (access: 12.06.2025).

The Arsenal building showcased a full-scale outdoor passive cooling system. The solution is scalable and adaptable to public spaces affected by rising temperatures. The award-winning installation is a new reimagining of passive-cooling techniques – a combination of a wind tower and shading devices using advanced engineering techniques. The ‘wind tower’ – bad-gir² is a traditional Persian building structure (pigeon house) that was used to ‘catch the wind’. Even in ancient times, they acted as natural ventilation systems and, when combined with additional passive-cooling methods, formed a system similar to air-conditioning. The bad-gir is a hallmark of the architecture of the Middle East. The Egyptian malkaf constitutes a comparable solution.³ The Bahrain Pavilion was evaluated as an inspiring example of how architecture can still connect the past and the future and that it still has a key role to play in shaping more resilient urban environments. It was important in this case to show a solution for public spaces that mitigates the effects of extreme heat while promoting social interaction.

The 19th Biennale presented more traditional solutions in a new way, in conjunction with new technologies. The following issues, which existed for centuries, were brought up: broadly defined safety, and places for people around the world to meet and interact.⁴ The slogan of the 19th Biennale – *Intelligens. Natural. Artificial. Collective* – aimed to bridge the gap between the past, present, and future. The search for new solutions for the future was aided by a fresh perspective on intelligence. In the main theme of the exhibition, Biennale curator Carlo Ratti referred to the specificity of Venice as a beautiful example of how human work has adapted to the natural environment. For centuries, people have used both nature’s intelligence to regulate the water levels of the Venetian lagoon and artificial intelligence to monitor and control these waters. They have also been able to act collectively and pass on knowledge from generation to generation. All this made it possible to live in the lagoon – a difficult and generally unfriendly place to live. The 19th Biennale also incorporates the city of Venice itself into the exhibition, as a laboratory of action and a place of chain reactions. The concept of authorship has undergone significant reinterpretation. The process of adaptation, as demonstrated by historical precedent, is a collective and participatory endeavour.

The question that arises from this is whether we are constantly moving between memory and imagination, and whether we are not truly able to see or know where the boundary lies. The fundamental question that needs to be addressed is whether we tend to produce more or fewer conscious returns in lieu of spectacular discoveries. Notwithstanding the statements of the classics ‘Panta rhei’⁵ or ‘Nothing Happens Twice’⁶, and the efforts of creators to strive for novelty, also in the name of the principle that everything is allowed, it is evident that we continue to go round in circles, merely modifying our masks to align with the prevailing circumstances.

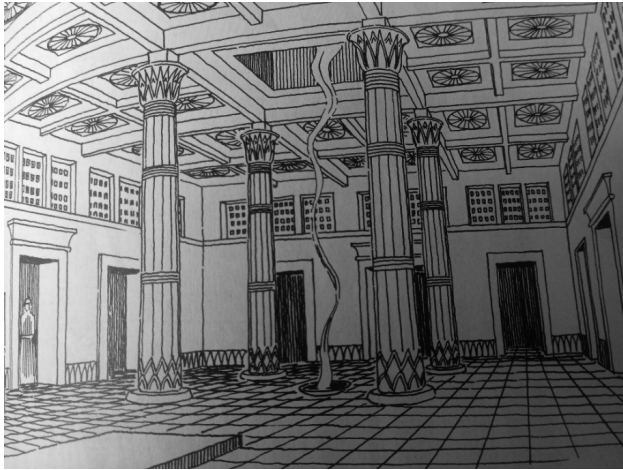
² E. Niemczyk, *Cztery żywioły w architekturze*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 2008, p. 167.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 160.

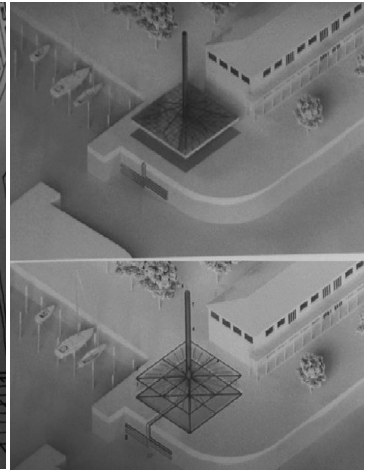
⁴ *19th International Architecture Exhibition. Biennale Architettura 2025* [in:] La Biennale di Venezia, <https://www.labiennale.org/en/architecture/2025/19th-exhibition> (access: 12.06.2025).

⁵ *Panta rhei* [in:] Encyklopedia PWN, <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/panta-rhei;3953893.html> (access: 12.06.2025).

⁶ W. Szymborska, *Nic dwa razy* [in:] poezja.org, https://poezja.org/wz/Wislawa_Szymborska/106/Nic_dwa_razy (access: 12.06.2025).



a)



b)



c)

The public cooling system is based on a natural source – water. Cold water is pumped through the system and flows through the metal wall of the heat exchanger, where it removes heat from the air. The air passes through ducts, is cooled and released into the public space, providing thermal comfort. The heated air leaves the system through the outlet. This type of system is energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable, making it suitable for tourist and historical sites such as Venice. Alexander Puzrin, 19th International Architecture Exhibition, poster: Intelligens. Natural. Artificial. Collective, May 2025, Venice, Italy (The Artiglierie section of the Arsenale, “Heatwave”). KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN Heatwave

II. 1a. The central hall of an Egyptian house from Achet Aton, Tell-el-Amarna. In the centre, a mal-kaf – ventilator – is visible in the ceiling, drawing by Ernest Niemczyk, source: E. Niemczyk, *Cztery żywioły w architekturze*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 2008, p. 161

III. 1b. Axonometric view of the potential implementation of the public cooling system on the island of San Giorgio, Venice, Italy, photo by A. Bocheńska-Skałecka

III. 1b, c. Bahrain’s pavilion at the 19th Venice International Architecture Exhibition, ‘Heatwave’, authors: Andrea Faraguna (curator and designer), Wafa Alghatam (researcher), Mario Monotti (engineer), and Alexander Puzrin (thermo-mechanics expert). This exhibition won the Golden Lion for best national pavilion, photo by A. Bocheńska-Skałecka

2. PURPOSE, SCOPE AND METHODS OF RESEARCH

Just as the first decades of the twentieth century, formulated demands and recommendations for shaping cities better for living, the beginning of the twenty-first century seeks prescriptions for healing urban life and making cities more resilient to emerging crises. Urban public space continues to function as a research laboratory and is regarded as an indicator of the quality of life in cities⁷. The objective of the present study was to analyse the design concepts of urban public spaces awarded in the 2020–2024 Tactical Urbanism competition⁸. The study sought to determine the extent to which the proposed solutions refer to traditional patterns and to what extent they propose new ways of shaping the contemporary city.

The study entailed a meticulous analysis of the visual elements, namely the posters that showcased the competition solutions, and an examination of the accompanying descriptions. These descriptions were located beneath the posters and encapsulated the content of the competition jury's verdicts. The analysis was based on the critical visual methodology⁹.

The analysis of the content itself supported this, as it made it possible to detect recurring patterns, such as the most frequently used words or emerging themes. The text data were visualised using a 'word cloud' (or 'tag cloud') tool. This is a tool that facilitates the expeditious identification of the most important themes or keywords within the material.

A comparative analysis was subsequently conducted with the content of selected documents that have influenced the shaping of contemporary cities. These documents include the Athens Charter¹⁰, the New Athens Charter¹¹ and the Leipzig Charter¹², and the New Leipzig Charter.¹³ These are now regarded as starting points for contemporary urban strategies.

The concepts from the competition, in which the proposed solution is frequently of a 'bottom-up' nature, were deliberately selected for analysis because of the role that public participation now plays in shaping public space¹⁴. The findings of the analysis were used to outline a research sample representing the contemporary city.

⁷ A. Vargas-Tetmajer, *Nowa Karta Lipska – odpowiedź na nowe wyzwania dla miast [The new Leipzig Charter – a response to new challenges for cities]* [in:] Związek Miast Polskich, 18.03.2021, <https://www.miasta.pl/aktualnosci/nowa-karta-lipska-odpowiedz-na-nowe-wyzwania-dla-miast> (access: 10.06.2025).

⁸ *What is Tactical Urbanism?* [in:] Tactical Urbanist's Guide, <https://tacticalurbanismguide.com/about/> (access: 10.06.2025).

⁹ G. Rose, E. Klekot, *Interpretacja materiałów wizualnych: krytyczna metodologia badań nad wizualnością*, Wydawnictwa Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2015, pp. 31–48.

¹⁰ I. Mironowicz, T. Majda (eds), *Manifesty urbanistyczne. W poszukiwaniu współczesnego modelu miasta*, Towarzystwo Urbanistów Polskich, Warszawa 2017, pp. 14–17. <https://mostwiedzy.pl/pl/publication/manifesty-urbanistyczne-w-poszukiwaniu-wspolczesnego-modelu-miasta,202211112038204496521-0> (access: 15.06.2025).

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 34–67.

¹² *Ibidem*, pp. 116–122.

¹³ A. Vargas-Tetmajer, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Ustawa z dnia 27 marca 2003 r. o planowaniu i zagospodarowaniu przestrzennym (Dz.U. 2003 nr 80 poz. 717) [Spatial Planning Act], <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=wdu20030800717> (access: 15.06.2025); *The people's piazza: sharing the urban commons in Milan* [in:] Eurocities, 16.09.2020, <https://eurocities.eu/stories/the-peoples-piazza-sharing-the-urban-commons-in-milan/> (access: 10.06.2025).

2.1. TACTICAL URBANISM COMPETITION

It is estimated that by the year 2050, 70% of the global population will be residing in urban areas¹⁵. A significant consequence of urban development is the high concentration of people in one place. Therefore, the quality of public space will have a significant impact on the lives of city dwellers. In recent times, there has been an increasing focus in the field of urban planning and the urban activist community¹⁶ on the necessity of interdisciplinary strategic action. This action should combine expert and participatory (bottom-up) approaches to the shaping of contemporary cities. Tactical Urbanism, otherwise known as DIY Urbanism, Planning-by-Doing, Urban Acupuncture, or Urban Prototyping, is an organisational and/or civic approach to the creation of an urban environment. This approach utilises short-term, low-cost, and scaled interventions to catalyse long-term change.¹⁷ The implementation of Tactical Urbanism projects can be orchestrated by a variety of entities, including governments, non-profit organisations, grassroots groups, and even dissatisfied citizens. In recent years, Tactical Urbanism has evolved into an international movement, exerting a significant influence on the manner in which numerous communities approach the conceptualisation and execution of urban public space designs¹⁸. The Tactical Urbanism competition, which was organised from 2020 onwards through the TerraViva platform¹⁹, is an example of such an effort. The competition 'organisers' stated objective is to encourage creative and forward-thinking designers to propose new, original spaces that foster long-term and sustainable change. The main slogan of this competition is: "Tactical Urbanism NOW! The call is made to architects, planners, designers, and creative professionals from all disciplines to propose projects that redefine the role of public spaces in a dynamic and interconnected world"²⁰. Each edition of the competition has also presented a unique challenge to participants:

1st edition: "The challenge of this competition was to encourage participants to imagine a city where public space goes beyond the traditional conception of a park, a square, or a street."²¹

2nd edition: "The challenge of this competition was to reinterpret what is commonly known as traditional public spaces, such as parks, streets, playgrounds and squares, with a strategic vision capable of providing them with new features of multi-functionality and flexibility."²²

¹⁵ According to the latest United Nations 'World Urbanisation Prospects' report: Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), *World Population Prospects 2024. Summary of Results*, July 2024, https://population.un.org/wpp/assets/Files/WPP2024_Key-Messages.pdf (access: 10.06.2025).

¹⁶ L.N. Bråten, *Temporary temporariness? The (mis)use of tactical urbanism from the 'open city' framework*, "Urban Studies" 2024, no. 5, pp. 809–827, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00420980241263436> (access: 15.05.2025).

¹⁷ *What is Tactical Urbanism?*, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ L.N. Bråten, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ *TUN Tactical Urbanism Now!* [in:] TerraVita Competitions, <https://www.terravivacompetitions.com/tactical-urbanism-competition-2025> (access: 10.06.2025).

²⁰ *Ibidem.*

²¹ *TUN Tactical Urbanism Now Results* [2020] [in:] TerraVita Competitions, https://www.terravivacompetitions.com/tun2020_results/ (access: 10.06.2025).

²² *TUN Tactical Urbanism Now! II Results* [2021] [in:] TerraVita Competitions, <https://www.terravivacompetitions.com/tactical-urbanism-now-competition-results-2021> (access: 10.06.2025).

3rd edition: “The challenge of this competition was to imagine more inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable public spaces”.²³

4th edition: “The goal of this competition was to experiment with site-specific case studies that could work as open laboratories to test novel approaches on urban transformation”.²⁴

2.2. METHODOLOGY

The content analysis method is predicated on the calculation of the frequency of appearance of specific visual elements in a clearly defined sample of images, and the subsequent analysis of this frequency. The objective of the content analysis was to provide an answer to the following research question: To what extent do contemporary representations of urban public spaces refer to patterns known from the past, and to what extent do they propose a new approach? A further question was concerned with identifying which spatial solutions and elements were quantitatively dominant. The winning design concepts of urban public spaces in the international Tactical Urbanism competition were selected as the source of the images (representations). The award-winning design concepts met the requirement of representativeness through the use of stratified sampling, in which images were selected from each group identified in the source material (four editions of the competition) using a clear sampling strategy (award-winning design concepts). Following the selection of the sample, a set of categories was developed for the coding of the images. The term ‘coding’ was employed to denote the process of assigning a set of descriptive categories to the images. The coding categories were developed based on international urban manifestos from the 20th and 21st centuries. These manifestos presented a vision of urban development, criticised existing solutions, or proposed changes in the way of thinking about space. The coding categories were developed based on international urban planning manifestos from the 20th and 21st centuries. These manifestos present visions for city development, criticise existing solutions, or propose changes in the way we think about space. This led to the formulation of 26 categories. In line with the adopted methodology²⁵, a pilot study was conducted using five randomly selected awarded design concepts from the 1st edition of the competition (10 posters/images), where all 26 categories were applied. Following the analysis of the results, the number of categories was reduced to 10 to ensure greater clarity and avoid overlap, meaning each category would refer to a distinct issue. The next step was to apply coding to the entire research material: 1st edition – 15 presentations, 2nd edition – 17 presentations, 3rd edition – 17 presentation, 4th edition – 21 presentations (1 presentation = 2 posters = 2 images). Additionally, a simplified analysis of all awarded project concepts from the four editions was conducted using ChatGPT²⁶. The author formulated five general questions regarding the visual representations and used ChatGPT to obtain responses, including a quantitative summary. A textual analysis of the project concepts was also carried out, focusing on word and phrase frequency (tag clouds) using the cloudwords.com²⁷ tool.

²³ *TUN Tactical Urbanism Now! III Results* [2023] [in:] TerraVita Competitions, <https://www.terravivacompetitions.com/tactical-urbanism-now-competition-results-2023> (access: 10.06.2025).

²⁴ *TUN Tactical Urbanism Now! IV Results* [2024] [in:] TerraVita Competitions, <https://www.terravivacompetitions.com/tactical-urbanism-now-competition-results-2024> (access: 10.06.2025).

²⁵ G. Rose, E. Klekot, *op. cit.*, pp. 92–93.

²⁶ ChatGPT, <https://chatgpt.com/?model=auto> (access: 16.06.2025).

²⁷ Free online Wordcloud generator, <https://www.wordclouds.com/> (access: 19.06.2025).

Categories 1–10:

1. *Urban greenery and biodiversity* – new green areas, green corridors, urban agriculture, nature-based solutions (NbS), and blue-green infrastructure.
2. *New forms of space and development* – modern or historically inspired spatial interventions, new forms of housing, and spatial aesthetics.
3. *Safety and mobility* – traffic calming, pedestrian safety, experimental mobility solutions, integration of transport and land use, and accessibility and universality of public transport.
4. *Modern technologies and digitisation* – application of modern technologies in spatial design, and digital solutions.
5. *Functionality and multifunctionality of space* – multifunctional spaces fostering social integration and reducing the need to travel.
6. *Local character and place identity* – preservation of local character and cultural diversity of space.
7. *Participation and social inclusion* – residents' involvement, including vulnerable groups, in shaping space, and presence of social and cultural facilities.
8. *Health and quality of life* – solutions improving health and spaces accessible to all age groups.
9. *Places of activity and entrepreneurship* – spaces supporting new forms of urban activity and local entrepreneurship.
10. *Sustainable urban development* – CO₂ emissions reduction, building renovation, poly-centric urban growth, and resilient planning.

General questions:

- a) What is shown in the images?
- b) Which architectural solutions are repeated in the images?
- c) Is there significant greenery visible?
- d) What recurring features of public spaces are depicted in the images?
- e) Do the images show references to architectural solutions from the past?

In evaluating the results, categories that were weakly manifested in the analysed representations (design concept posters) were also taken into account. This was due to the specific nature of the content analysis method and the associated difficulties in interpreting visual data using this technique²⁸. The methodology proposed by the author requires further testing. It is one of the tools that can be used in a larger research project on universal standards for designing public spaces in cities while preserving unique, local urban landscapes.

2.3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the conducted analyses, several key trends can be observed in the awarded design concepts:

- *social participation and activation of local communities – spaces for interaction;*
- *spatial forms and objects: temporariness and modularity;*
- *activation of neglected spaces – introduction of new functions related to greenery;*
- *sustainable development – strengthening local cultural contexts.*

²⁸ G. Rose, E. Klekot, *op. cit.*, pp. 94–97.

Naturally, these trends were influenced by the general competition guidelines. However, a difference in the intensity of visual expression of certain trends across different competition editions was noticeable. The guiding themes of each edition varied slightly, influenced by global events (such as experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic, population migration, and the effects of climate change). Differences were particularly visible when comparing the results of the analyses of the 1st edition (2020), 2nd edition (2022), and the 3rd (2023) and 4th (2024) editions. The latter two editions focused primarily on the adaptive and resilient capacity of cities, while the earlier ones emphasised community actions and resident interactions. A characteristic observed across all editions, though not dominant in quantity, was the scalability of the presented design solutions. In terms of the general research questions, the most noticeable categories in the analysed images were: (1), (2), (3), (5), (6), and (7) quantitatively. In the final formulation of the coding categories, their relevance to the research questions was considered, as well as the overarching future goal: a just, green, and productive city²⁹. However, during the analysis of results, some categories still showed overlap: e.g., (3) and (5), (3) and (4), and partially (5), (7), and (9), as well as (1) and (4). This may result from the very nature of the analysed images, although such overlap is also discussed by Gillian Rose³⁰ in her work on content analysis of visual representations. The answers to the general questions (a–e) and the tag-cloud results were helpful in formulating final conclusions and in attempting to construct a representation of the contemporary city. These findings confirmed the need to verify the proposed methodology in further studies on representations of contemporary urban environments.

2.3.1. URBAN GREENERY AND BIODIVERSITY.

In over half of the examples, greenery – or vegetation in general – was one of the main factors stimulating the entire design solution. In 90% of the project concepts where greenery was present not only as a backdrop, it functioned as a multifunctional element significantly improving the quality of urban space (aesthetics, biodiversity, microclimate, water retention, calming car traffic). Systemic use of greenery and vegetation was observed in nearly 50% of the examples, with a noticeable increase to nearly 70% in the 4th edition of the competition. The study sample revealed a change in the approach to shaping greenery in cities during the analysed period. Greenery ceased to play primarily a symbolic or aesthetic role and instead gained activating and adaptive functions. However, the dominant form (in terms of frequency) remained the traditional garden form. Other notable forms of greenery in the visualisations included ‘green roofs’ and ‘living walls.’ A noticeable trend, especially in the 4th edition of the competition, was the introduction of greenery as part of an adaptive and social strategy within cities. Greenery in both nodal (point) and linear structures also appeared in historic urban spaces where it had previously been absent. The presence of greenery (nature) in historic city centres (under conservation or UNESCO protection) was visible in examples from the 4th edition. This was presented and evaluated by the competition jury as a response to the urgent need for a more sustainable and ecological approach to city-making – moving towards “more liveable, healthier, smarter, and more human urban environments.”³¹

²⁹ A. Vargas-Tetmajer, *op. cit.*

³⁰ G. Rose, E. Klekot, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

³¹ From the design concept description of the 4th edition of the competition, *TUN Tactical Urbanism Now! IV Results*, *op. cit.*

2.3.2. NEW FORMS OF SPACE AND DEVELOPMENT.

A general conclusion was that 70% of the design solutions selected for the research sample were deliberate spatial-functional ‘quotes’ from the past. However, due to their embedding in a contemporary context, they were not nostalgic returns to the past but, in most cases, attempts at creative reinterpretations of historical forms and spatial structures. The use of the ‘principle of citation’ in many analysed examples – combined with new technological solutions (category 4) – enabled the creation of original ideas that were locally rooted yet adaptable to other locations. Traditional architectural elements repeated in more than half of the examples included: gazebos, porches, or verandas, as well as classical colonnades, and arcades. Temporary structures known since medieval times – such as marketplaces and fairs – were also noticeable. As for public space types, most (70%) were also traditional: squares, courtyards, or avenues. Overall, the designed spaces served as places for meetings, debates, and rituals – just like in traditional communities. In more than 50% of the projects, a linear structure was applied, referencing modernist solutions characterised by modularity, variability, and flexibility, also made possible through prefabrication.

2.3.3. SAFETY AND MOBILITY. FUNCTIONALITY AND MULTIFUNCTIONALITY OF SPACE.

The nature of the presented spaces allows residents to fulfil their recreational and social needs locally. This, in turn, significantly reduces mobility requirements. The multifunctionality of spaces promoting social integration leads to a reduction in the time needed for mobility. The application of polycentric functional-spatial solutions and modularity further reduces the need for travel. A significant number of the visual representations showed multifunctional spaces referring to the traditional form of the street. However, combined with digitisation, these spaces reduced car traffic in favour of pedestrian, cycling, and public transportation. The development of ‘dead’ areas contributes to improved safety. Moreover, in over half of the examples, activation of neglected places led to shifting activity from the streets to ‘reclaimed’ or new spaces, which became pedestrian-only zones. Urban mobility in the analysed design concepts appeared as a hybrid of classical garden city³² ideas and contemporary *15-minute city*³³ and *smart city* concepts³⁴.

2.3.4. LOCAL CHARACTER AND PLACE IDENTITY.

The local character of the proposed urban spaces was emphasised through the use of traditional construction methods (low-tech techniques). Preserving the local character also involved the use of locally sourced materials, such as wood, straw, bamboo, sun-dried brick, or clay.

There are noticeable examples (not dominant in number, but qualitatively significant) in which the cultural diversity of space was highlighted through references to historical architectural forms, traditional colours, patterns, names, and even rituals.

³² I. Mironowicz, T. Majda (eds), *Manifesty urbanistyczne...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–13.

³³ L.M.F. Fabris et al., *How 15-min city, tactical urbanism, and superbloc concepts are affecting major cities in the post-Covid-19 era?* [in:] Z. Allam (ed.), *Sustainable urban transitions. Research, policy and practice*, Springer Nature Singapore, Singapore pp. 163–187, <https://uvadoc.uva.es/bitstream/handle/10324/60528/How-15-min-City-Proof.pdf?sequence=1> (access: 19.06.2025).

³⁴ A. Laska, *Idea smart city – między innowacyjnością publiczną a technokratycznym zagrożeniem* [in:] A. Kaszukur, A. Laska (eds), *Innowacyjność w warunkach współczesnych miast*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego, Bydgoszcz 2017, pp. 13–31, <https://repozytorium.ukw.edu.pl/bitstream/handle/item/7243/Idea%20smart%20city.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y> (access: 19.06.2025).

2.3.5. PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSIONS.

Socio-spatial solutions promoting participation and inclusivity were evident in all analysed representations. In the project concepts presented in the images, these aspects were not only ideological assumptions derived from the competition guidelines, but also visible spatial and narrative elements. Therefore, an additional evaluation was made of how this category was visualised in the images.

The dominant visual elements in this category were modular structures with open access for all age and social groups. Grass-roots social infrastructure (e.g., pop-up spatial objects) enabled a variety of user activities, both collective and individual: reading, playing board games, physical exercise, gardening, cooking and eating, or simply resting. The main participatory idea was the city as a bottom-up community. This was visualised primarily through the presence of diverse human figures (varied in age and gender) engaged in various activities: scenes from everyday life, and close-up depictions of human eyes and hands. Also noticeable were specific graphic conventions for depicting urban spaces – for example, in comic strip form with a user-perspective narrative. Qualitatively significant, though not frequent, were also symbolic forms of participation: re-integration with the city's cultural heritage or history through revitalisation – shaping 'places of sharing and integration' connected with traditional cultural and spatial elements and a return to local rituals.

2.3.6. ATTEMPT TO REPRESENT THE CONTEMPORARY CITY.

The starting point for the conducted research was the issue, raised in academic literature, of the 'merging of seeing and knowing'.³⁵ Broadly accepted principles for shaping cities as just, green, and productive³⁶, as well as universally accessible and welcoming public spaces³⁷, are worth subjecting to tests of representation in the search for contemporary urbanity. This is important, if only for the reason that representations (meanings) created by people can take many forms, and regardless of form, they shape human behaviour in daily life³⁸. The following compilation (Ill. 2, 3, 4), selected by the author from photos and posters (images), based on the analysis results, was an attempt to visualise the key features that should characterize the contemporary city.

3. SUMMARY

The urban public space, regarded as a sort of laboratory, remains an ideal location for the implementation of solutions that will eventually lead to an enhancement in the quality of life throughout the city. The question of what should constitute liveable and inclusive urban landscapes, and how such landscaping can be integrated into the strategic planning of the city, still requires interdisciplinary research³⁹, also through RtD (Research through Design). The discourse

³⁵ C. Jenks, *The centrality of the eye in western culture: an introduction*, [in:] C. Jencks (ed.), *Visual culture*, Routledge, London 1995, pp. 1–25, https://www.routledge.com/Visual-Culture/Jenks/p/book/9780415106238?srsltid=AfmBOoq45AciR1hhveM4AtS-mqgK_8ZHb_gBTcGAtPoieQSxhZ-JHA9V8 (access: 19.06.2025).

³⁶ A. Vargas-Tetmajer, *op. cit.*

³⁷ Ustawa z dnia 27 marca 2003 r. o planowaniu..., *op. cit.*

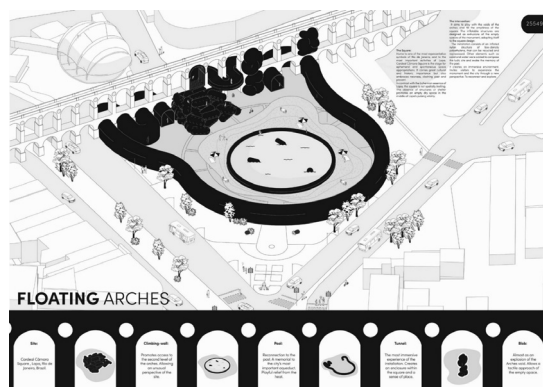
³⁸ G. Rose, E. Klekot, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

³⁹ Z.K. Zuziak, *Ekologiczne definiowanie urbanistyki*, "Czasopismo Techniczne. Architektura" 2007, no. 7-A, pp. 9–20, <https://repozytorium.biblos.pk.edu.pl/resources/34951> (access: 15.05.2025).

concerning the establishment of contemporary orientations and visions for spatial planning underscores the imperative to modify its prevailing paradigms. It also points to the need for an ‘interpretive’ approach, which is characteristic of research in the humanities. The incorporation of an ‘interpretive’ approach within the contemporary spatial planning model facilitates a reinvigorated and amplified utilisation of ‘utopian’ concepts⁴⁰, thereby contributing to the evolution of ‘post-growth’⁴¹ concepts and the formulation of novel solutions that complement those of the past. The evolution of all domains of human existence is driven by new factors or those that have emerged, albeit in a different form, such as the fourth dimension – time. It is evident that the 19th Biennale has adopted a watchword that prioritises the significance of positive and negative phenomena as the primary criterion of progress. This approach is characterised by the recognition that human thought has undergone a substantial expansion in recent decades⁴². The notion of a participatory approach to shaping contemporary cities, guided by an ‘expert spirit’ drawing from the past, represents an ambitious direction that aligns with the principles of praxeology⁴³. Should this course of action prove effective, it will constitute a creative act because it will establish a new state of affairs: namely, fair, green, and productive cities.

The transformation of cities is based on the integration of social, ecological and economic aspects.

A JUST CITY



III. 2a. Honorable mention (III edition), authors: Gabriela Mello, Sofia Leonardos (Brazil), source: *TUN Tactical Urbanism Now! III Results* [2023] [in:] TerraVita Competitions, <https://www.terravivacompetitions.com/tactical-urbanism-now-competition-results-2023> (access: 10.06.2025)

⁴⁰ J. Koning, T. van Dijk, *Rehabilitating utopias: the importance of imagination to confronting our spatial challenges*, “Planning Practice & Research” 2021, no. 1, pp. 136–155, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02697459.2021.1954750> (access: 15.06.2025).

⁴¹ I. Mironowicz, R. Skrzypczyński, *Od zrównoważonego rozwoju do dewzrostu-paradygmaty krytyczne wobec wzrostu i ich implikacje dla planowania przestrzennego*, “Samorząd Terytorialny” 2022, no. 7–8, pp. 80–97, <https://mostwiedzy.pl/pl/publication/od-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-do-dewzrostu-paradygmaty-krytyczne-wobec-wzrostu-i-ich-implikacje-dla-plan,158568-1> (access: 15.06.2025).

⁴² Z. Radziewanowski, *O niektórych problemach regionalizmu i ekologii w architekturze i urbanistyce: pomoc dydaktyczna*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Krakowskiej, Kraków 2005, pp. 64–65.

⁴³ *Prekseologia* [in:] Słownik języka polskiego PWN, <https://sjp.pwn.pl/slovniki/prakseologia.html> (access: 12.06.2025).



b)



c)



d)

III. 2b–d. Multi-functional and public spaces: b) Venice, Italy, c), d) Cartagena, Spain, photos by A. Bocheńska-Skałecka

GREEN CITY

The Ephemeral Park

53147

Itinerant Landscapes Generator

Infinite pcs/pzs

Can our historic landscapes take part of the sustainable transition without losing its identity?

A versatile approach towards a sustainable heritage

The Playground: a district of wonder and discovery
The case study of Milan, Italy

Shape-shifting landscapes

Towards sustainable futures

A modular approach
Assembling fast and dynamic ecosystems

1 Aggregative and metamorphical

2 Mobile and adaptable!

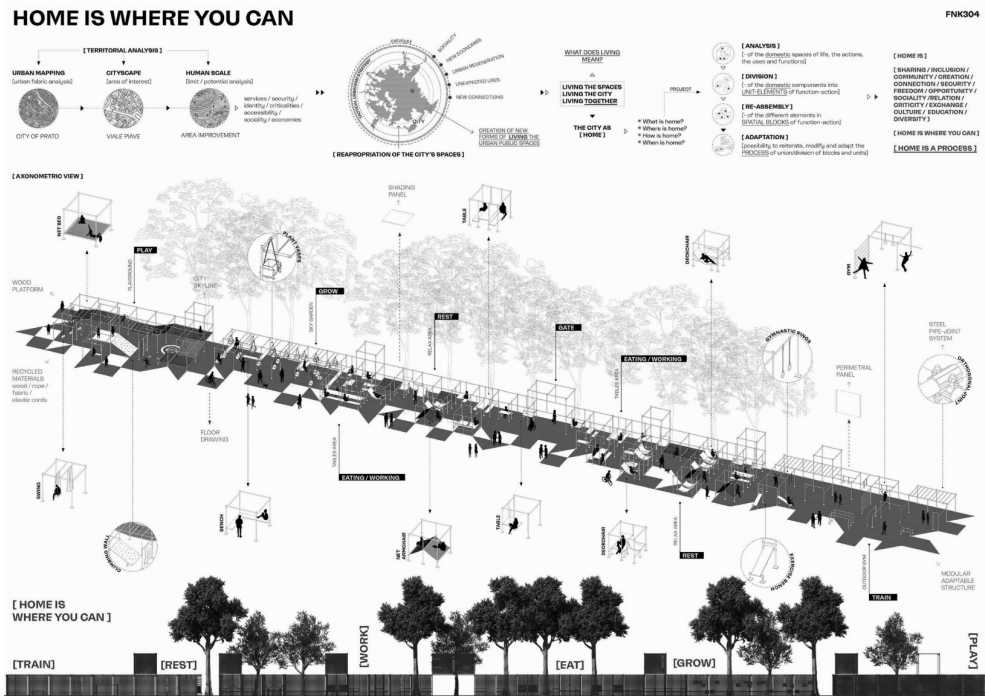
3 Flexible and respectful!

4 Plant Nature-based Solutions

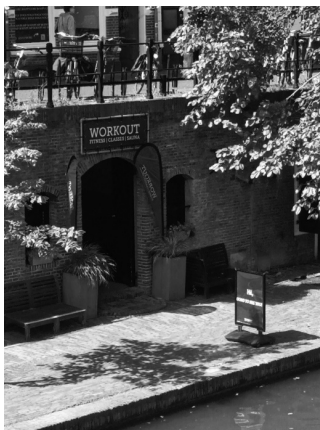
53147

III. 3a. Golden mention (IV edition), author: Virgillio Diaz (Mexico), source: *TUN Tactical Urbanism Now! IV Results* [2024] [in:] TerraVita Competitions, <https://www.terravivacompetitions.com/tactical-urbanism-now-competition-results-2024> (access: 10.06.2025)

PRODUCTIVE CITY



Ill. 4a. Honorable mention (I edition), author: Emma Neri (Italy), <https://www.terravivacompetitions.com/tactical-urbanism-now-competition-results-2020>



b)



c)



d)

Ill. 4b–d. New functions and activities in historic buildings: b) Utrecht, The Netherlands, c) Florence, Italy, d) Venice, Italy, photos by A. Bocheńska-Skałeczka

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