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PhD thesis title: *The usage and perception of urban public spaces in two cities of different cultures – the example of Poznań and Glasgow*

Public spaces are among the most important components of the contemporary city. They are supposed to be places of vibrant social life, where a broad set of activities and behaviours can be observed. However, the role of public spaces as well as their spatial features can differ in various societies. The built environment, as a human creation, is affected by many social factors and one of them is culture. Thus, cultural conditions can have an impact on how urban space is created, perceived, and used. Those differences are most clearly visible in distant cultures, but they may occur to a greater or lesser extent within a single culture circle. Public spaces, because of their accessibility, egalitarianism, and wide range of users are especially useful as an area of research on the relationship between space and culture. The thesis presents differences between Glasgow (United Kingdom) and Poznań (Poland) in the perception and attitude towards urban public space concerning cultural conditions. There is an assumption, based on results from existing cross-cultural research, such as Hofstede's model of culture that British and Polish cultures are different. According to the model, Poland and the United Kingdom are characterized by different values of such dimensions of culture as power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and indulgence. The dissertation aims to demonstrate that these differences are also manifested in the usage and perception of urban space. During the fieldwork social research methods (interview, survey, autoethnography) were used, as well as statistical and cartographic methods. The questions concerned topics such as activities in public spaces, norms and rules regulating behavior, and the perception of public spaces.

Research results indicate that differences in the use of public spaces can be observed in three main aspects. These include the role of various types of public spaces, the approach to norms, rules, and regulations (both formal and informal), and local cultural specificity as well. The spaces whose roles varied the most include home, pub, museum, and public utility facilities. Many activities that Poznań residents associated with home are conducted in the other types of spaces in Glasgow. These activities included, for example, socializing and eating. In the case of pubs, there is a different approach to pub culture, as well as different user profiles. Pub patrons in Glasgow are more diverse, and those kinds of places often fulfill the role that usually traditional public spaces do - they are centers of local social life. The role of museums is also

an interesting issue. Museums in Glasgow were indicated by the respondents as the most representative facilities in the city. Because they are free and open to the public, they play a role similar to shopping malls - offering a safe, friendly space, however, they are not focused on consumption. In the case of public facilities, it is noticeable that in Poznań, respondents indicated that such places are important for social life, but at the same time, they do not fulfill other functions that characterize public spaces. Rather, public facilities seem to be seen as important only because they are the symbols of power, which corresponds with the high level of power distance in Polish culture.

In terms of the approach to norms and rules, there is a noticeable tendency according to which Poznań residents felt more bound by both formal and informal rules regarding public behavior. People surveyed in Poznań more often indicated the existence of rules regulating behavior, and these rules were also more strict. Research conducted in Poland showed, that Poles accepted deviation from norms to a lesser extent. The difference was also noticeable in the approach to the law - Poznań residents have more doubts related to not complying with the formal regulations, even in the case of socially harmless issues. Research shows that a wider range of behaviours is socially accepted in Glasgow and people there can behave more freely in public spaces. Differences are also noticeable in the approach to spaces with traditionally assumed functions. For the respondents from Poznań, facilities such as cemeteries or churches had a strictly defined role. In Glasgow, there are examples of cafes or pubs located in the former church, and it is not controversial at all, but in Poznań, people reacted negatively to such actions. Poles also approach strangers in public spaces with greater reserve, and they don't like the situations that make them feel insecure or precarious. This corresponds to a very high uncertainty avoidance level that characterizes Poland in Hofstede's model of culture.

In addition to certain general trends that can be observed in the research results, it is also worth to focus on the local context. The surveys gathered in Glasgow included issues such as the football-religious conflict and the Orange marches. In Poznań, respondents emphasized that the constant renovations make it difficult to use public space. These are the issues that cannot be called universal and which can vary in the case of conducting research in other cities.

Searching for common features and understanding differences is particularly important nowadays, in the era of mobility and migration, which make the populations living in individual countries more and more diverse. Understanding this diversity may be a key to maintaining the smooth functioning of urban public spaces.