

## **Abstract of the doctoral dissertation:**

**Title: "Green areas as elements of public spaces, providing small towns of in Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship with identity."**

Town as the environment for most today's population should perform different functions and meet collective and individual needs of the residents. Many of them boast of remarkable green areas which perform multiple functions and highlight characteristics of the place. They provide good conditions not only for relax and recreation but also encourage social contacts in a safe and esthetic environment. Acknowledgement of the fact that urban green spaces play a very important role in the life of a town is a condition necessary for its space planning and management of its social behaviors. Green spaces also create the town specific character as they provide it with individual, frequently unique identity. Plants play a very important role in structuring the natural environment in towns. The practice of taking over green spaces to perform other functions and neglecting the above mentioned ones has become an impulse to undertake research on green forms in urban spaces. The major research problems include analysis and determination of significance of green areas functions in the process of urban structure revitalization in selected towns, leading to its population life quality improvement, and determination of its identity.

Studies of literature have shown that there has been but little research on greenery and its spatial-structural role in urban spaces, particularly in relation to small towns in Kujawsko – Pomorskie Voivodeship. Degradation of urban green areas, use of random solutions with no respect for history and specificity of those towns, indicated the need to undertake such research in five towns of the voivodeship. the research covers: Rypin, Chełmża, Więcbork, Wąbrzeźno, Golub –Dobrzyń and Kruszwica. The towns are characterized by similar history (city rights were granted in XIII century, with seats of local and church authorities), well preserved historic spatial-architectural systems, similar location within the landscape and similar developmental conditions and population not exceeding 17 thousand inhabitants. Detailed research to be performed in these towns include: town parks, squares, boulevards, flower beds and other plants within the space of plazas and streets, taking into consideration projects implemented after 2004, that is the year of Poland's accession to the European Union.

This choice enabled to formulate a thesis that thanks to their original compositions, green spaces co-create systems of public spaces, providing small towns with individual characteristics, thus contributing to their spatial, social and economic development.

Proving the formulated thesis is started in the second chapter of the study with presentation of general information concerning definitions and meaning of the concept of identity. From among many works which deal with this subject, those were selected that, in reference to different cultural and social contexts, focus on the problem of its loss, starting with family experiences through social processes, finishing with global phenomena. The role of green areas in creating a town identity, as an element building its character and image, has been indicated as well as the importance of urban space planning in harmony with green areas. Green spaces which are based on an appropriate composition and are consistent with the natural environment protection and cultural heritage, through revitalization of existing green terrains and designing new ones, provide a town with individuality and uniqueness.

The next chapter includes an analysis of the concept of an urban public space in terms of architecture and urban planning, providing its different definitions.

The idea of a public space has always been based on the need to identify with a given space and accepting it to be a place of residence. As a major component of an urban structure it blends the town tissue with its social organization. At the same time it is a common property where history, culture and lifestyles characteristic of a given town, are recorded. The next chapter presents information about the history, development of public spaces in big, medium and small towns throughout ages.

The fourth chapter analyzes the role and importance of urban green areas within the public spaces, on the basis of a number of studies. According to the cited authors, by developing urban and architectural systems in harmony with the natural environment and filling empty and degraded spaces with plants, provides community spaces which meet contemporary social needs and expectations. Moreover, the functional- spatial structure of towns is getting more and more oriented to green spaces. Being a component of the town landscape, green areas perform a number of functions and are divided into many categories. Further, in this chapter, they are analyzed in the historical approach. The next chapter includes different concepts of green spaces development in towns, basing on the local natural environment, climate, and functional- spatial conditions. This part of the chapter is associated with greenery, as an element of town public spaces, and allows to analyze the solutions used from ancient times till now. In turn, modern approaches to urban green space management and green systems, including application of different innovative projects, are analyzed on the basis of selected examples from Europe and Poland. In all these examples, in public areas containing plants and green public spaces, application of urban composition rules allows to combine the double nature of urban green spaces, that is: natural elements with the manmade environment.

The fifth chapter concerning green areas in the towns of Kujawsko – Pomorskie Voivodeship, starts with presentation of the region characteristics. It is noted that its present area includes places with different histories, different cultures and economic growth levels, resulting from historical events and administrative divisions. The natural environment of the towns located in this area is rather similar, and consists of many geographic regions and historical- ethnical territories such as: Kujawy, Pałuki, Kraina, Bory Tucholskie, Dobrzyński Region, Chełmiński Region and borderline fragments of Wielkopolska. However, a beneficial location of the voivodeship in the north- central part of Poland and relative proximity of The Baltic Sea are its advantages. Old important trails, along the Vistula, Noteć and Drwęca, create natural division borders into geographically and historically separate regions. Next, the geographic -biological environment of a given voivodeship is discussed as well as its location, shaping, hydrology, climate and environment protection conditions. The history of the region is characterized in the light of its natural environment and its beneficial influence on the development of settlement in the area of present voivodeship; its history reaching back to the stone age is characterized. The next part of this chapter presents general characteristics of the towns located in this voivodeship in terms of development of its spatial structure. It has been proved that the distribution of towns was non-uniform. Most towns were situated in the – south west and east parts of the region, that is, in Kujawy, Pałuki i Kraina, whereas, the fewest towns were founded in the area of Bory Tucholskie, Ziemia Dobrzyńska and Ziemia Chełmińska. The still present diversification of their spatial structure results from the geographic location, history and most importantly, from social-economic development factors depending on different conditions of life in these areas, related to the changing history of the region. It has been proven that the territories of Ziemia Chełmińska and places inhabited by Teutonic Knights differ with regard to the urban planning, development style and civilization facilities from the towns of former Polish Kingdom which were influenced by Warsaw classic style, or from the towns of Kujawy, Ziemia Dobrzyńska and Kraina, founded in effect kings' and princes' grants, whose urban planning was based on the main transport axis used for trade exchange.

Basing on the analyzed conditioning, the last part includes the main goal of the study. Determination of the role of green areas in the process of developing the functional- spatial structure of small towns, affecting their identity, was carried out with the use of an analysis of their forms and functions in public spaces. By means of field experiments and surveys, the author's own images and documentation, prepared maps and projections as well as observations and analyses of the present state, and on the basis of source materials (literature and planning documents), a detailed assessment of green areas has been performed for each of the listed small town. Field experiments involved selected spaces of the analyzed locations and were performed mainly in the historical centers of the towns. They were supposed to determine clarity and quality of the town urban composition in reference to green areas and the functional program of public spaces resulting from these dependencies. Assessment parameters for the obtained results were accepted to be good (++) and very good (+++) and they are presented in a table. The obtained final results are presented in a graphic form, in comparative tables and charts.

In the summary, it is said that the carried out analyses enabled to achieve the main goal of the study, that is, define the importance and role of green areas in urban public spaces of small towns, in the process of identity shaping, search of methods for the town structure renovation and improvement in the quality of life of their inhabitants. Presentation of the criteria and results shows that assessment of the obtained results differs significantly for particular towns. Rypin, Chełmża, Więcbork and Wąbrzeźno have developed features of individual character through application of the solution involving using greenery with reference to the already existing features of the area, spirit of the place and respect to the cultural and natural heritage. However, in Golub –Dobrzyń and Kruszwica, the public spaces with plants do not make up harmonious urban compositions which would highlight the individual character of these places. Both towns own their identity to the historical urban system and architectural objects. Greenery of public spaces in the structure of Golub - Dobrzyń and Kruszwica, based on these values, requires to be given appropriate function.

Presentation of all the results of research including six small towns of the voivodeship does not provide a fully satisfying picture of the possibilities of green areas to be used for creation of the image of these towns. At the same time these results show where and how changes should be made and confirm the thesis accepted in this study, that thanks to an individual spatial composition and cocreation of urban public space systems, small towns are provided with unique characteristics and separate identity.

*Key words: small cities, public space, green areas, Kuyavian-Pomeranian voivodeship.*