

# PIASTOWSKI SQUARE IN BYDGOSZCZ AS AN EXAMPLE OF A PUBLIC SPACE THAT KEEPS THE IDENTITY OF A PLACE

Public spaces, as elements of the city's structure and a reflection of its history, are images of city life and indicate a character of the city. Shaped in accordance with an urban concept and functions, they determine the identity of the city and become city-forming factors. City squares, an example of public places, are a forum showing urban and architectural changes taking place in the city by giving them a specific form and function in a changing reality.

Piastowski Square in Bydgoszcz is a space with a given, endogenous and commercial function. For over 150 years, this area, despite changes in the concept of development, has retained its architectural and urban structure and importance for this part of the city. As a place bringing together commercial and service activities of citizens, as well as having features and objects characteristic of the heritage of this place, it has preserved and still maintains the local identity of the urban space.

The aim of this article is to trace how the square changed functionally over the decades but still maintained its original urban layout and to indicate the factors that allowed the character and distinctiveness of this space to be maintained in a dynamically changing reality. The method of work is based on a comparative analysis of selected, similar squares in Poland, iconographic materials and in situ research. The main conclusions indicate that despite the functional, architectural and urban transformations of the square, from its foundation in the mid-nineteenth century to the present day, it was possible to create a spatially and socially valuable area. The preserved space and function of the square's retail trade and services still have a positive effect and enliven this part of the city's downtown area. From its beginning, the space of the square is invariably connected with the spatial system of Bydgoszcz through a clear urban layout, communication and greenery. Treated as a peripheral area for years and thus degraded, it is now regaining its importance for the city's identity and is partially revitalized.

The role of historical urban public spaces in the global world is to shape urban landscape in such a way that it retains its distinctiveness, reflects local history and individuality also on a local scale. A stable functional program and the contributing architecture allow to preserve the most valuable elements of the city, and renew the valuable urban fabric. The architectural and urban heritage, such as the area of Piastowski Square, skilfully fits in the contemporary needs of the citizens, and at the same time strengthens and creates an interesting, unique shape of the urban space, recommended in many contemporary scientific studies.



Figure 1. a - b Development of the square at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, divided into a recreational part with a decorative square and a multifunctional square. The space of the square is distinguished by careful green compositions, an orderly hardened part, and harmonious frontage buildings, source: own study based on <https://fotopolska.eu>, data access: 23.01.2022

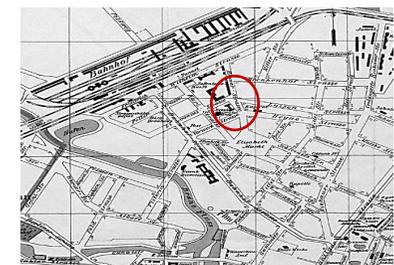
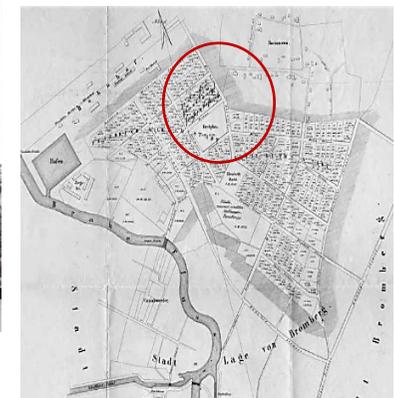
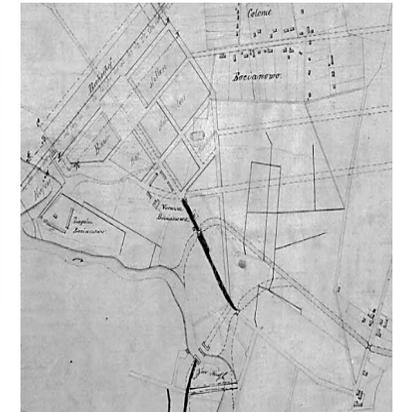


Figure 2. a - c Comparison of the concept of spatial development of the district from around 1850, 1852, 1905, source: own study based in (1) the collection of the State Archives in Bydgoszcz, <https://kpbc.umk.pl/dlibra/publication/148323/edition/151469/> content date of access: 23.01.2022

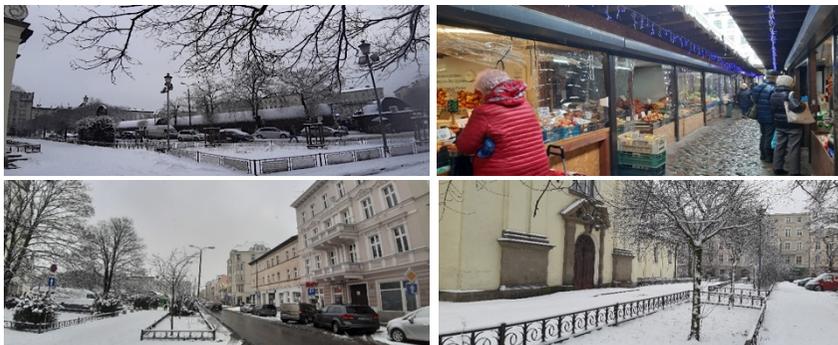


Figure 3. a - b Opening view to the market on the west side, constituting the local center of the downtown district of Bydgoszcz for 150 years. Trade space with preserved historic pavement. Low greenery compositions in the vicinity of the market square. Road communication dominates, numerous parking spaces do not leave space for pedestrians. source: photos by the author



Figure 4. a - d View of Piastowski Square from Śniadeckich Street towards the north-east, east, north-west and south. The space is dominated by the shape of the church. Heart of Jesus. Space surrounded by nineteenth-century multi-family tenement houses with services on the ground floors, source: photos by the author