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ADVERTISING IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE AS A THEME FOR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE EXAMPLE OF A FIELD PRACTICE IN PABIANICE

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Abstract

The article describes possible practical educational activities aimed at respecting the landscape, in particular the cultural landscape, in which various types of advertisements appear in an uncontrolled form. The presented considerations are based on a field practice conducted in 2018 with students of spatial management, during which advertisements on the main street of Pabianice were inventoried. The collected material, conclusions, and recommendations serve as a starting point for a broader discussion on the advertising chaos in the city.

Key words

cultural landscape, advertising, educational activities, inventory, Pabianice.

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1. Introduction

In my daily work with students of spatial management, I notice considerable deficits in the earlier stages of education regarding awareness of co-responsibility for the surrounding space and the need to participate in the processes of its transformation. As a parent, I notice that during pre-school and school education there are no activities that stimulate curiosity and encourage learning about and consciously analysing elements of the immediate space around us.

Currently, much space in various policies is dedicated to public participation. Increasingly, local governments are being mobilised through

legislation, e.g. the Revitalisation Act (Ustawa ..., 2015a), to involve stakeholders in the ongoing processes of spatial change. We expect adults to be socially active and to participate consciously in various activities undertaken by the municipality without preparing them in advance, in the process of education, for such attitudes and without equipping them with the necessary knowledge to do this.

Landscape protection is a subject that should absolutely be discussed at various stages of education and which would help the user to consciously perceive the surrounding space. This issue could cover many interesting and current themes, including the one related to the appearance of advertisements in various spaces, often strongly

interfering with the cultural landscape, i.e. the one already transformed by man as a result of civilisational development (e.g. Kalinowski, 2023; Myga-Piątek, Nita, 2006; Pawłowska, Swaryczewska, 2002). It is possible, as in the article, to evaluate the degree and intensity of the distribution of messages in different spaces, or to analyse in detail the content they communicate to us and the reactions they generate in the audience (Aparecida Campos et al., 2021; Hoewe, Ahern, 2017; Hansen, Machin, 2013; Cronin, 2013).

The inclusion of the assessment of the quality of life related to the use of aesthetic landscape, despite its subjective perception, also remains incontestable (Kerebel et al., 2019). Also of interest are studies involving creators of outdoor advertising who transform space by segmenting and valuing specific areas of cities and the routes to and around them (Cronin, 2006). From H.Lefebvre's (1991) perspective, the advertising industry has become an important actor in spatial design, along with architects and urban planners.

An educator can create an opportunity to talk to young people about topics related to the above research and generate discussion about the ubiquitous advertising chaos that prevails in Poland. This could allow them to make their own observations, analyse and explore this subject matter during organised activities.

This article presents one such activity aimed at students. The presented considerations are based on specialised field practice conducted in 2018 in Pabianice for students of the master's degree in spatial management. They can inspire various educational activities covering the issue of advertising in the surrounding space. The publication also focuses attention on the possible practical dimension of conducting such activities, which definitely increases their participants' motivation and involvement.

In the case under discussion, the choice of topic and research area was made together with the Pabianice City Hall, and the results became the subject of a report prepared for the authorities (Masierek, Kurzyk, 2018). It was supposed to serve as a starting point for a broader discourse with the local community (especially entrepreneurs) on the advertising chaos occurring on the city's most important street and for planning the effective use of its potential, both economic and visual. The stocktaking done and the conclusions may serve as an example for other cities, especially those which are dealing with this important issue from the point of view of taking care of the aesthetics of space and creating effective instruments for its protection.

The Polish Landscape Act (Ustawa ..., 2015b) is of an optional nature. It indicates the preferred direction of the necessary changes with respect to the control and protection of space from advertising chaos and the possible instruments to be prepared. However, it does not require municipalities to prepare local advertising codes (Masierek, Piesiak, 2018). Additionally, taking into account the procedural problems accumulated during the adoption of resolutions and their different public perception, this topic is not easy and "politically attractive" for local governments.

2. Theoretical background

Space is a mix of natural and cultural components. We see it every day in the form of landscape. Where the work of nature predominates, we speak of the natural landscape; where the work of man predominates – of the cultural landscape (Pawłowska, Swaryczewska, 2002). The cultural landscape of a selected space is a sign of values created by successive generations overlapping each other (Moore, Whelan, 2007). This contemporary understanding of the concept is connected to international discourse and the concept of the so-called historic urban landscape (Bandarin, van Oers, 2012). The processes that take place within a city and the interpretation of its heritage are a result of abrasion and implication of the activities of many actors (Domański, Murzyn-Kupisz, 2021). It is essential that all stakeholders engage in dialogue and cooperation to protect their common heritage and its potential.

The analysis of the landscape of any area can be conducted from a structural, functional, and material point of view, where the diversity of its components is assessed (Richling, Solon, 1994), or from a physiognomic point of view (Bogdanowski, 1972), where spatial relationships resulting from the perception of a given space and its composition are largely analysed (Pawłowska, 1994; Wojciechowski, 1994). Both of these approaches cross-fertilise and complete each other; therefore, it is worth taking lessons from their achievements while doing research.

Whether they want to or not, a person in the space of a modern city is surrounded by information. The forms of its transmission are rich and varied. From the user's point of view, it seems important to be able to control (limit) the information stream and create the best possible quality of that stream (Gamczyk, 2017). It is difficult to imagine today's space completely devoid of advertising, and the very

phenomenon of visual information seems to be as necessary as possible. According to R. Venturi et al. (1977), advertisements can reinforce or authenticate the message that is directed at us in space. However, this should be done in orderly and unobtrusive ways. Mature democracies have coped with advertising chaos (Gamdzyk, 2017). They have certainly been helped by a more informed civil society, as well as by the spatial planning and cultural landscape protection tools in place. However, they do not solve all dilemmas, such as the legitimacy of placing advertisements on urban infrastructure facilities or in public spaces in public-private transactions (Iveson, 2012).

In Poland, there is still a tendency to an exaggeration in the amount and intensity of advertisements appearing in space. We lack respect for our surroundings and landscape. There is a need for continuous education about space as a common and universally respected good. The legal issue of the location of advertisements and billboards in the Act on Spatial Planning and Development and then in the Landscape Act is supposed to help create rules for the use of space, but it does not ultimately solve the problem (Nowak, 2017; Fogel, 2016).

Even the biggest sanction for advertising screens on the facades of historic buildings will not make the advertising industry realise that this is not the way it should go...Along with the legal changes, we need to seriously consider how to teach about space and how to make our approach to it change from one full of ignorance to a sincere concern (Głogowski, 2017, p. 24).

Therefore, undertaking any educational activities with diverse audiences helping them to consciously observe the space and react to anomalies that appear in it seems crucial. Particularly, sensitising young people to the issues of surrounding them space and creating changes together with them gives hope for a better quality of the space in the future.

3. Study area and methods

The field practice was prepared for first-year students of Spatial Management Master's Programme. Its aim was to diagnose the intensity of advertising in the city's main street, and then to critically assess and formulate conclusions and recommendations based on the assessment. As part of preparation for the class, a lecture on the spatial structure and the most important conditions of Pabianice was given to the participants by a representative of the city hall, so that the students could become better acquainted

with the site of the field research. A research tool was then developed in the form of an inventory card which included a list of all the advertisements present in the study area, considering their location, type, volume and technical condition. In addition, space was left to mark where there was the highest concentration of advertisements and where they clearly did not suit the surroundings. Diverse types of advertising were selected, i.e. signboards, window films, banners, pieces of paper, billboards, posters advertising glass cases, trestle/posters, citylights, LED advertising, megaboards, totems. Forms of advertising were distinguished as single-sided and double-sided advertising and as four categories of advertising size:

- small, i.e. small billboards (up to 1 m² in surface);
- medium, mainly advertising banners hung on fences (1–9 m²);
- large, usually 6x3 system carriers (9–18 m²);
- very large, large-surface advertising media usually placed on facades of buildings.

The technical condition of the advertisement (good, average, bad) and its aesthetics (rated on a scale of 1 to 5) were also important elements taken into account. Additionally, an attempt was made to connect the analysed advertisement with the industry it represents. With this in mind, sections of the Polish Classification of Activities, introduced by the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of 2007 (Regulation..., 2007), were used with close reference to the European Classification of Activities.

The field trip itself was followed by a meeting at the Pabianice City Hall with representatives of the office and a detailed discussion of the specifics of the study area and the planned use of the analysis results. Archival photographs of the study area were reviewed. The fieldwork took place in pre-established groups whose collected data was finally aggregated into a single, coherent database.

The fieldwork was conducted in June 2018 in Pabianice, a town with a population of approximately 58,600 inhabitants (Raport..., 2022) belonging to the Łódź agglomeration. The research area involved a fragment of the city's main thoroughfare, known as Trakt Kapituły Krakowskiej, with a length of approximately 2.3 km (a sequence of Zamkowa, Stary Rynek, Warszawska streets), which was selected together with representatives of the Pabianice City Hall. It represents a characteristic axis of the urban composition of Pabianice with an east-west layout. It concentrates objects and functions related to the development of the city (Fig. 1). For the purposes of the field practice, the area was divided into 5 parts, each examined by a different group of students.



Fig. 1. Study area.
Source: own study.

The selected area is a showcase for the city and refers to its industrial traditions. It brings together objects and functions related to its development, including the Old Market Square, which, after the creation of the New Town, has definitely lost its importance, as is clearly visible both in the spatial structure of the city and in the inhabitants' perception of this place.

4. Advertising as a theme of educational activity – collaboration with practice and diagnosis

In 2015, the Landscape Act was introduced in Poland, which was supposed to unify the terms related to advertising and define the role and scope of influence of local authorities on the place and the way in which advertising is distributed in the municipality. Some local authorities have undertaken themselves to put advertising space in order, especially in city centre areas, while others rather observe the effects of these measures and wonder how to translate this rather difficult topic into reality in their municipalities. Unquestionably, however, in order to start thinking about any changes in this area, it is necessary to conduct a thorough baseline diagnosis, a real inventory of advertisements in the space and to identify the most problematic locations in this respect. In addition to looking for deficits, it is also worth pointing out good examples of advertisements occurring in the municipality that fulfil their role while integrating harmoniously into their surroundings (Masiererek, Pielesiak, 2018).

However, local authorities often do not have the time or human and financial resources for such work. In this case, it is useful to think about utilising students' potential and cooperating with universities. The benefit is usually mutual, as students are much more willing to do tasks whose results can be used in practice. Therefore, an important element in teaching (using different forms of classes) is to create opportunities to continuously link theory and practice and to «confront» students with the real challenges of planning, organising planning, organising and managing space. This is possible, among other things, by continuous contacts with various local authorities. One such example is the cooperation with the city of Pabianice undertaken by the Author of the publication in 2016 which resulted in various educational activities, including:

- completed M.A. theses addressing important topics for the city, e.g. *Influence of social infrastructure on the quality of life of residents of the Piaski housing estate in Pabianice* (2018), *Revitalisation of the*

Old Market area in Pabianice (2019) or *Aspect of the Green in urban revitalisation on the example of Juliusz Słowacki Park in Pabianice* (2020);

- specialised field studies, as part of which a research project was conducted with residents entitled «*How to change the Old Market Square in Pabianice?*» (Jak zmienić ..., 2016),
- specialty field practice, which included an inventory of advertisements, in the space of the city's main street (2018), which is the subject of this article.

The purpose of the latter was to lay the basis for a discussion about the city's advertising chaos and to begin corrective steps in this area. To start such a discourse, a good diagnosis is needed as a starting point for planning change. An effort to establish such a diagnosis was carried out by full-time master's students in spatial management. Their work consisted, among other things, of conducting an inventory of advertisements in a designated area. The students took stock of the types, volume, location and technical condition and aesthetics of the advertising media. The study also assessed the degree of intensity of the advertisements and how they inscribed themselves in the surroundings. Photographic documentation was made. The strengths and weaknesses of the area were analysed in terms of the advertisements present. In addition, a comparison was made between archival photographs and the state at the time of the inventory.

The results of the survey confirm that advertisements are present in the selected area in high concentration and, moreover, they often clearly contrast with the surroundings (Fig. 2) or cover up monuments (Fig. 3).

A total of 1,609 different cases of advertising were inventoried. Signboards and film on glass are the largest in number, accounting for 30% and 22% of all advertisements, respectively. So-called "pieces of paper" (8.1%) were also found in relative abundance, often pasted on trees or lampposts being small advertisements. The open category "other" included advertisements occurring on vehicles or umbrellas in beer gardens and outdoor restaurants (Tab. 1).

93% of the inventoried advertisements related to the activities carried out at the location. 88% of the media were on buildings. Most were small advertisements with a surface of less than 1 m² (Fig. 4). Overall, the technical condition of the advertisements in the study area was assessed as good. However, 1/3 of the media received the lowest score in terms of aesthetics.

According to the classification of economic activities adopted in the study, the most frequently



Fig. 2. Examples of high-volume advertising.
Source: own study.



Fig. 3. Historic church covered by advertising.
Source: own study.

advertised industry is retail and wholesale trade and repair of motor vehicles excluding motorbikes. Apart from these, there is numerous advertising media reporting on financial, insurance and catering activities. A high proportion of advertising was also attributed to other service activities (e.g. repair of electronic equipment, watches, jewellery or shoes, hairdressing or beauty services). This shows the clearly service-oriented nature of Pabianice’s main street (Tab. 2).

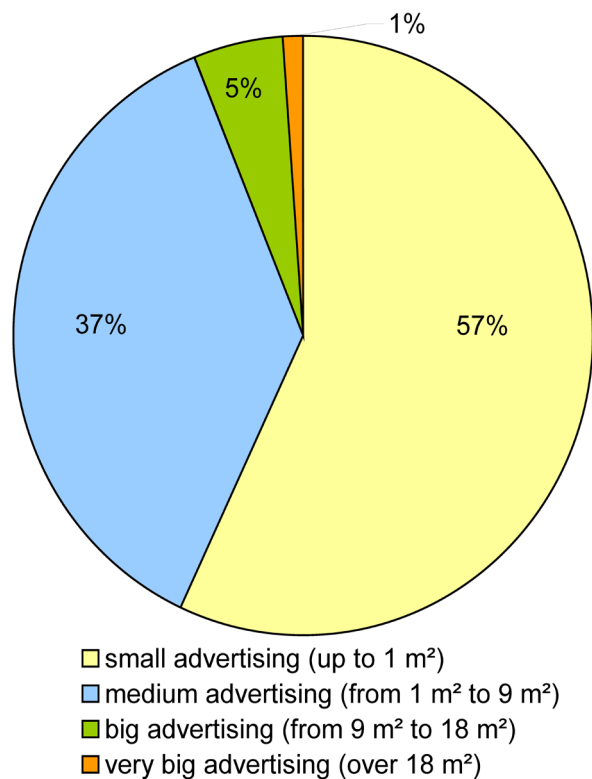


Fig. 4. Size of advertisements.
Source: own study.

Tab. 2. Types of economic activities in the study area

Types of advertising	Number	[%]
Signboard	484	30.0
Film on glass	370	22.1
Banner	157	9.0
A piece of paper	131	8.1
Advertising board	128	7.9
Poster	119	7.4
Billboard	52	3.2
Advertising glass case	47	2.9
Stamper	40	2.5
Citylight	34	2.1
Other	33	2.0
LED advertising	33	2.0
Megaboard	10	0.5
Totem	4	0.2
Total	1609	100.0

Source: Own study.

As part of the summary of the work, the strengths and weaknesses of the study area were identified in the context of the observed advertisements (Tab. 3). Among others, the presence of good examples (Fig. 5), the relatively low proportion of large-size advertisements and the considerable service potential of the analysed area were noted. Unfortunately, the list of weaknesses prevails, including too many advertisements covering building facades, their aggressive colours, repeated advertising information.

After the field practice, a report was prepared on the conducted research and analyses which was submitted along with recommendations to the Pabianice Municipality. Unfortunately, in the end, the decision to discuss the issue more widely in the city was not taken. Perhaps the clearly stated diagnosis did not particularly correspond to the political image of the authorities, and the previously mentioned negative experiences of other local authorities did not encourage them to take up the topic.

Tab. 2. Types of economic activities in the study area

Sector	Number of advertisementst
Agriculture, forestry, hunting and fishing	1
Industrial processing	1
Electricity, gas, steam, hot water and air conditioning supply	1
Construction	10
Retail and wholesale trade; repair of motor vehicles, except motorbikes	479
Transport and storage	10
Accommodation and catering	138
Information and communication	24
Finance and insurance	201
Real estate services	53
Professional, scientific and technical activities	40
Administration and support services	53
Public administration and defence	17
Education	21
Health care and social assistance	44
Culture, leisure and recreation	76
Other services activities	481
Households with employees or producing goods and services for own use	2
Extra-territorial organisations and teams	11

Source: Own study.

Tab. 3. Strengths and weaknesses of the study area

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High proportion of advertising relating to economic activity in the study area (90%) • Low proportion of very large (1%) and large (5%) advertisements • Good technical condition of most advertisements (60%) • Examples of good practices in the use of advertising (19%) • High service potential of the Krakowska Kapituła Route 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many advertisements on building facades and their negative impact on the landscape • Repeated signs with the same information on facades of some buildings • Aggressive colours of advertisements (bright colours, high contrast between colours) • Lack of coherence between the colours of advertisements and the colour of building facades • Lack of correspondence between the size of advertisements and the size of buildings • Inappropriate location of advertisements (on balconies, fences) • Advertisements covering entire shop windows or windows of buildings, limiting the flow of daylight into interiors • Poor quality of advertisements • Prevalent average (27%) and poor (22%) aesthetics.

Source: Own study.

5. Conclusions

Undoubtedly, in every city it is beneficial to take educational actions about space that reach different groups (Fogel, 2016; Głogowski, 2017), including those drawing attention to the advertising chaos around us. It would be worth supporting and promoting good examples of the use of outdoor advertising (Masierek, Pielesiak, 2018).

The results of the research presented in this article may inspire a broader discussion on the subject. A good diagnosis of the existing situation should always be a starting point for any initiated actions and plans. The conducted analyses show that, as a rule, this should at least:

- eliminate poor quality advertising,
- minimise the content and form of advertisements and avoid repetition,
- establish the proportions of advertisements in relation to the objects on which they are placed,
- match colours to the surroundings (Szymygin, 2015; Masierek, Kurzyk (eds.), 2018).

However, each space has its own individual endogenous conditions, so it is worth getting to know it very well (its strengths, weakness and opportunities) so that the recovery programme can be adapted individually to it and to the needs of its users.

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Students participating in the described activities, in addition to practicing the skills associated with doing their own inventory work and analysing it, also had an opportunity to meet representatives of the Pabianice City Hall and participate in a project directly responding to the needs of the placement. This was certainly additional motivation to complete the task reliably and to present themselves at their best to a potential employer or client. The fact that the final study was not used by the office is, despite appearances, another interesting issue to discuss with the students and explain the often non-obvious reality. Thanks to this exercise, the participants learned about the cultural landscape and the legal conditions for its protection, and they became familiar with the study area and its conditions. When inventories of specific advertisements were made, the students actually had to ask themselves many questions related to them and then to make their own critical analysis and evaluation. Thanks to this educational exercise, they have become sensitive to the issue of advertising chaos, and their perception of space has probably been influenced. Hopefully, they will put to use the knowledge and experience they have obtained in their current work or life in various spaces and, as citizens, they will not remain indifferent to the ruination of the landscape.

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