Between disorder and livability. Case of one street in post-socialist city

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Abstract
Livable places are highly desired localities in modern cities. In some cities of the world such areas are being created and, in others, authorities, urban planners and physical planners discuss their formation. In this article, the authors join the discussion about livable places and analyze the case of a single street in a large Polish city. In their research they seek to establish the potential of this street as a livable place and, in consequence, identify the mechanism responsible for the emergence of ‘livable’ or ‘disqualified’ places within the Polish urban conditions. They differentiate between starting spatial potential (SspP) and starting social potential (SSoP). By combining the two potentials, it is possible to determine the starting potential of a place (SspP + SSoP = SPP). Having completed the analysis, the authors distinguish three possible ways in which livable places can appear in a city: by maintaining a balance, by building barriers and walls and creating conflicts, and as a product of uncontrolled processes in the city.

Introduction
People have almost always considered creating congenial dwellings for themselves and conceived utopian visions of their immediate places of residence. At the close of the last century, the concept of sustainable urban development was a common idea. For several decades, the concept of sustainable development of urban structures has been invoked by scholars and politicians as well as representatives of associations, social organizations and neighborhood communities who strive to implement this idea. The term “sustainable city” embraces a philosophical view of the management of modern urban structures, theoretical and empirical reflections on the development of cities, political postulates for urban life and a search for practical possibilities of creating this type of environment in the city (Blowers, 1992; Haughton and Hunter, 1994; Cullingworth, 1995; Haughton, 1997; Adrianes and Dubbeling et al., 2005; Meijer et al., 2011: http://envroment.harvard.edu/related-programs/sustainable-cities). However, on a global scale, this idea still appears to be only a wish of planners, landscape architects, ecologists, urban planners, politicians and social activists. It is difficult to implement on a wider basis in most cities, whether for cultural, economic, or social reasons.

In addition to sustainable urban development, another term popular today is “the creative city.” In the first decade of the 21st century, the idea of a creative class gained great popularity both in scientific circles and among urban planners and policy-makers (Florida, 2002). As a result, a debate began about the role of cultural activities and creative and cultural industries in making cities and/or places creative (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002; Pratt, 2010; Collins and Fahy, 2011; http://www.nycfuture.org/content/articles/articleview.cfm?article_id=1270).

In discussing the future of urban structures, scholars sometimes seek a common denominator between these two ideas that describe the development of the modern city: sustainable and creative (Baycan et al., 2012; http://www.creative-city-challenge.net). Strategies resolved as a result of this common denominator are intended to emphasize care for the quality of places in the city and to investigate the relationship between creativity and sustainability in order to provide society and policy-making with the instruments and tools for managing creative cities as a key element of a new strategy for sustainable urban development” (Baycan et al., 2012: 5). However, the question arises whether the two terms and the opinions expressed in their context are too general and often used for political purposes. As for inspiring the authorities of most cities in the world, the two terms tend to draw attention away from devising strategies that enhance the quality of urban spaces rather than inducing authorities to develop such strategies. In the opinion of the present authors, one of the key ideas connected with the sustainable urban development and creative cities concepts is that of a livable place. It is perhaps used too frequently as a backdrop for a discussion of sustainable urban development and the construction of creative areas in the city and employed too rarely as a fundamental notion of theoretical discourse or, more importantly, of empirical studies and practical solutions.

The discussion about livable cities/places/communities appeared in the literature on the subject before terms such as “sustainable” and “creative” had become platforms for academic disputes and political debates on the forms of modern urban spaces and life in the city (Appleyard, 1982; Gehl, 1987; Hiss, 1991; Katz, 1993; Kunstler, 1994). Livable places in a city are thought to be spaces in which one can locate respect for the past as manifested in buildings, landscapes, the spatial layout of an area and care for the modern standard of living of a community and its individual members. This is a city in which common areas are hubs of social life (Salzano, 1997). Scholars advancing this paradigm emphasize the fundamental role of inhabitants, who not only spend their time in neighborhood and non-neighborhood spaces of the city, but also participate in social interactions and a broadly understood process of social learning. The spaces themselves are aesthetic, well-maintained venues of a variety of cultural events addressed to their residents (Crowhurst Lennard and Lennard, 1995; Lennard, 1997).

Evans (2002: 2) states, “The coin of livability has two faces”: livelihood and ecological sustainability. For the city to be friendly to its inhabitants, or livable, it should offer high standards of both dimensions of existence: a suitable means of livelihood and a good-quality environment. Naturally, those
two dimensions of livable cities are highly general, but, defining them more closely, one can find several individual factors that can affect the quality of urban life, including the effect and importance of transportation options, the significance of walkability as a factor in developing a livable and healthy community, the importance of good open space enabling human activity and health, the importance of coordinated land-use and transportation planning, public participation in neighborhood planning, cultural objects and areas and green spaces (Wagner and Caves, 2012).

In attempting to define the term "livable place," one can resort to two creativity indices proposed by Landry (2011). One is "livability and well-being":

- A creative place has an exceptional quality of life. GDP is high and services work well and are of a high standard. People are generally happy to live and/or work here, appreciating the low levels of crime and violence and feeling generally safe. There is a good atmosphere and people help each other more willingly. While class barriers of course exist, there is less ghettoizing and the poverty gap is narrower than elsewhere. People enjoy the connectivity, accessibility and openness, the facilities and activities on offer, the first-rate transport and communications. The civic leadership is mostly respected and trusted (Landry, 2011: 176)

The other is "the place and place making":

- A creative place, as any other place, is made up of hard and soft elements. Here, however, both mesh well with each other, the one encouraging the other. The hardware, or built environment including the public realm and architecture in general, is human-centric and sensitively conceived and implemented: one is aware of the positive emotional effect of the buildings upon people. Human interaction and activity is encouraged by this physical environment rather than being blocked by physical barriers. It acknowledges and respects and blends well with its natural environment, its surrounding landscape and its green areas and is aware and responsible regarding its ecological footprint. There is attention to detail and the small things are done well, seamlessly creating a streetscape in which the software (the human activity) creates a real buzz and genuinely reflects the distinctiveness of the place. When you are there you want to be there, but its reputation drew you there in the first place - it has a critical mass and a magnetism which enables it to compete well with other places which have similar mass and attraction (Landry, 2011: 176)

Combined, the substantive scopes of both terms can describe livable places. In this reading, the city should offer its dwellers creating livable places. The case studied will be a street in Poznań. The area and identifiable social behavior patterns found there will be analyzed.

Methods and characteristics of the place

The analysis of empirical material focused on one street in Poznań, Poland's fifth largest city (its presentation can be found in Kotus, 2006; Parysek and Mierzejewska, 2006). The street in question, Szamarzewskiego, is approximately 3 km long and runs through the western part of the city (cf. Fig. 1). The city center’s proximity is first visible in the characteristic downtown tenement houses of the street’s eastern segment. The street and the adjacent neighborhoods can be regarded as an attractive location, primarily due to its good accessibility by transportation and the nearness of greenery. The city center or the railway station can be reached in approximately 10 minutes by public transportation, whereas the journey to the airport usually takes less than half an hour. An indisputable asset is its favorable location with respect to recreational areas: there are two wedges of urban greenery close by. As described later in the article, for purposes of this study, Szamarzewskiego Street is divided into three zones: I, II and III. The division follows from differences in the physical and social characteristics of the individual sectors and is intended to emphasize dissimilarities in, but also spatial nearness of, mechanisms at work within a single city street. The choice of Szamarzewskiego Street is dictated by its vital function at the local scale. Although it is not and has never been, an arterial road or tourist enclave, it has always been a significant central point for adjacent neighborhoods. Szamarzewskiego Street appeared towards the end of the 19th century as Keiser Wilhelmstrasse (the city was then in the Prussian sector). From the beginning, it performed the function of a central axis of the area in a variety of aspects—residential, commercial and social. It soon acquired what were then modern-style big-city tenement houses and a church as a central point of the neighborhood unit. The houses were adorned richly in the Italian Renaissance style. Many have survived. Today Szamarzewskiego is a secondary neighborhood street running parallel to two large arteries of the city, the streets Dąbrowskiego and Bukowska. For several adjacent quarters, the street features an abundance of services, many of them of a local nature and it possesses both old residential houses and newer housing units. It is also the location for such institutions as a hospital, a kindergarten, a crèche and a church. Therefore, the street is of greater significance on the local level than the city level. Even more importantly, the municipality has recently introduced a revitalization program for this area, in making it a place where dynamic changes are about to happen. So far, the program foresees preliminary diagnostic analyses of the current situation. It should be noted that the old part of Jeżyce, as the neighborhood is known colloquially that contains the street under study is one of the top-ranking places in the city due to the climate and a genius loci. For spring 2013, one of the Jeżyce-based theaters has implemented a project of four performances demonstrating the history and present realities of this quarter. Old Jeżyce is also the scene of a popular Polish book series for young people, “Jeżyćada” by Malgorzata Musierowicz.
For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that the initial conditions responsible for the development or decline of the area under analysis can be divided into:

(a) starting spatial potential (SSpP) and 
(b) starting social potential (SSoP).

Combining the two potentials results in the starting potential of a place (SSpP + SSoP = SPP). Starting spatial potential is understood as an urban environment with all its spatial attributes, but also as the spirit of the place and elements building a sense of identification with the place. Starting social potential, in turn, is the component of people and social groups inhabiting and using the area and their behavior in it. The elements SSpP and SSoP comprise the starting potential of the place, SPP, or its set of values upon which one can assess its decline or growth.

To perform the necessary analyses, the authors constructed their own set of indices (cf. Table 1).

Table 1. Set of indices describing places (SPP), with operational definitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of potential</th>
<th>Index</th>
<th>Description of index</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SSpP</strong></td>
<td>Age of buildings</td>
<td>describes the historical and architectural potential of an area (street), and its</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Function of buildings</td>
<td>potential climate</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location of services (kind and concentration)</td>
<td>describes potential function and activation of an area (street) in terms of shops</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rent prices (price levels and concentration)</td>
<td>describes the attractiveness potential of an area (street) on the real-property</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graffiti hot spots (number and content of</td>
<td>describes devastation of an area, indirectly the presence of potentially marginal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inscriptions)</td>
<td>or hooligan environments not caring for their area of residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City monitoring points (location of cameras)</td>
<td>describes areas threatened with hooligan and criminal acts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SSoP</strong></td>
<td>Trouble hot spots (through observation of</td>
<td>describes places potentially of ill repute where hooligan groups displaying</td>
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<td></td>
<td>behaviour and suggestions made by residents in</td>
<td>unacceptable types of social behaviour can gather and passers-by can be bothered</td>
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<td></td>
<td>interviews)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welfare beneficiaries</td>
<td>describes areas inhabited by poor, unemployed and socially deviant people (families)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pedestrian movement</td>
<td>describes areas chosen as safe, homelike, and those avoided by passers-by</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activity of a social organisation in the study</td>
<td>describes the attitude of residents towards the area inhabited, indirectly their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>area (type of organisation, kind of activity)</td>
<td>attitude towards the idea of creating livable places</td>
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</table>
Particularly in the case of SSoP indices, this set is a compromise resulting from the lack of access to or absence of sufficient qualitative data about social phenomena occurring in Polish cities. The authors did not succeed in obtaining figures for the following indices that may have served to describe SSoP: delinquency and crime rates (the police refused to reveal detailed data for such a small area), the demographic and social structure of residents (no detailed data were available on this subject) and the length of residence (no detailed data were available on this subject).

The data necessary for the analysis were gathered from various city documents and databases or through original observations. The age and type of the buildings were established using a recent study of preconditions and development directions of the Poznań agglomeration (Kaczmarek, 2012). Building types were additionally inspected during fieldwork. For the location of city monitoring and conservation zones, the authors used publicly available maps published by the Poznań City Planning Department. Rent prices were monitored during the three-month period from December 2011 to February 2012 using the three largest real-estate websites: "gratka.pl", "oferty.pl" and "otodom.pl" and studying a local newspaper, Glos Wielkopolski. During this period, 48 unique offers were identified and it was possible to pinpoint the exact building for 35 of them. To analyze the inhabitants' level of reliance on public assistance, data were requested from the Poznań City Social Care Centre and they were made available to the authors in the form of an anonymized database covering the three-year period 2009-2011. The amount and types of graffiti (Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004; Delaney, 2005 pp. 50, Gottdiner and Hutchinson, 2000 pp. 225; Knox and Pinch, 2010 pp. 216) as well as the location of trouble hot spots were established by field observations and, in the case of the latter, by interviews with local residents (Table 4). Comments about the Beautiful Jeżyce Association are based on activities listed on its website.

To identify trouble hot spots and obtain samples of public opinion about Szamarzewskiego Street, the authors conducted a qualitative sociological research in the years 2009-2011 that covered the following points:

- Participation in the discussion panel of the Beautiful Jeżyce Association (2009). The meeting occurred at the initiative of the Association, intending to start a discussion about changes in Szamarzewskiego and adjacent streets as well as the improvement of the quality of life in this area and the renewal of this part of Jeżyce. The meeting was attended by representatives of the municipal government, police, inhabitants, associations and scholars.

- Counting pedestrian traffic along a selected segment of the street and taking note of behavior (2010) through systematized observation between 8 and 10 AM in May and June 2010 (first week: Monday; second week: Tuesday; third week: Wednesday; fourth week: Thursday; fifth week: Friday; sixth week: Saturday; and seventh week: Sunday). During the selected times, people on either side of the street were counted and then the proportions of pedestrian movement in the area of a trouble hot spot were calculated with reference to the remaining area of the street. The results are presented in the analytical part of this study.

- In-depth interviews (2011). A total of ten in-depth interviews that lasted 1.5 hours each were conducted with Szamarzewskiego Street residents, including long- and short-term residents and young and old residents. Respondents were selected based on their age, marital status and the duration of residence on or near Szamarzewskiego Street. Quotations of the most characteristic interviews are provided below, including one with a person who has lived on Szamarzewskiego Street since his birth, two with people who lived there for more than ten years, one with a student who has lived there for a year and one with a man who has lived there for three years. The interviews focused on perceptions of Old Jeżyce and living in this place. The questions also concerned Szamarzewskiego Street itself, such as the feeling of safety, its aesthetics and expectations for its development. Additionally, an opinion from the Beautiful Jeżyce Forum is quoted.

Starting spatial potential

Szamarzewskiego Street and the adjacent neighborhoods are three different worlds in terms of the age of the buildings, their spatial distribution, external appearance and state of repair. In Zone I, most buildings are old tenement houses erected in the late 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century (cf. Fig. 2). All buildings from this period are under architectural protection. The fronts of tenement houses feature interesting architectural details. Balconies, gate entrances and window tops are richly ornamented. Regrettably, most of the buildings reveal the passage of time and they have been greatly neglected. The building pattern here is dense and compact. Buildings are separated from the street by a narrow pavement and there is a shortage of parking spaces for cars, which compete with pedestrians for spaces on the pavement. Greenery is often vandalized and in a residual form. One can say that this is an area in spatial decline, although it definitely has its own specific climate and the spirit of epochs long gone. There is no doubt that the postwar socialist period has left a negative mark on this part of the neighborhood. The municipalities of those times generally neglected the historical fabric of the city and, without proper care, it steadily decayed. In Zone II, most buildings were erected in the Second World War or the periods before or after it. The street in this area is much wider than in Zone I and the buildings are farther from the street. This is mainly the result of the architectural principle of the time, when city planners emphasized the role and importance of open public spaces. The de-intensification of the building pattern leaves room for pedestrians and green areas. Therefore, there are extensive lawns between buildings and pavements in this zone. The pavements themselves are sufficiently wide to provide parking spaces for cars. On this part of the street, most old and vandalized buildings have been demolished and replaced with new housing units erected in the 1990s or later. This is the effect of uncontrolled gentrification of this area and the activity of housing developers, who buy the attractive lots left by the demolished tenement houses from the city. In the new buildings, flats are often available for rent and students are one of the main categories of tenants. Although the standard of buildings and public spaces is much higher than in Zone I, the subjective climate of the place is weaker. In this case, the new housing projects introduced in recent years are functional from a technical point of view, but they create neither spatial order nor a genus loci.
Finally, Zone III is the least urbanized area and the one with the lowest building density. Its isolated housing units were built in the 1960s. Blocks of flats are interspersed with urban villas. A considerable number of buildings are public facilities, such as two hospitals, the Faculty of Social Sciences of Adam Mickiewicz University, a dormitory and a secondary school. By contrast, in Zones I and II, most buildings are residential in function (cf. Fig. 3). Pavements are very wide in Zone III and there are also many lawns. This sector is often used by inhabitants of the nearby neighborhoods to walk their dogs. Zone III is the quietest and most peaceful segment of the street. It is potentially the most friendly area in terms of surroundings, but it is devoid of the specific downtown climate and a genius loci. With no defined user, it is a quiet walking and transit area, in contrast to the first two zones, which are full of inhabitants, passers-by and urban noise. The fact that Zone III is a communication route not leading to any major nodes, away from transit routes for pedestrians and vehicles may account for its quietness.

Most services offered on Szamarzewskiego Street are concentrated in Zone I, the oldest area (cf. Table 2). Those that predominate are connected with everyday life in the neighborhood: groceries, butcher shops, hardware shops, restaurants, clothing boutique and hairdressers and beauty parlors. Zone III features fewer services and they are of a different, supra-local nature; there is a banking and insurance firm and a drugstore. The dissimilarities may be due to the smaller number of buildings in Zone III and differences in their functions. It is highly unlikely that the differences will follow the distance to the city center. The research on the location of services in Polish cities, including commerce, indicates that the relation between the number of services offered and the distance to the center can be non-linear (Kaczmarek, 2010 pp. 202-203; Murzyn-Kupisz, 2012 pp.95).

In terms of flat rentals, the least attractive flats are concentrated in the most densely built and oldest area, Zone I (cf. Fig. 4). This is an effect, among other things, of several social flats being located there. The city authorities relocate people there who cannot afford to rent a regular flat. Flats in this zone vary in size, from small (30 square meters) to very large, often with many rooms (100 or more square meters). This is due to the character of the bourgeois tenement houses, in which flats and the successive building floora reflected the stratification of society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Unfortunately, most of those flats are the housing stock of Poznań; unrenovated for years, they lose much of their market value. Prices slightly exceed the average only at the eastern end of the zone because it is near Kraszewskiego.
Street and its flats rented for business activity. In terms of the value of residential rental properties, an interesting situation can be found in Zone II, where housing units appeared after 1990. Due to the high standard of the new flats, rents in this part of town are among the highest in the city. This fact also boosts rent prices of flats in the neighboring older buildings. This “neighborhood effect” has emerged because of uncontrolled gentrification in Zone II. An attractive investment on the real-estate market, new housing units boost the economic value of flats in nearby buildings. In Zone II, one can find many flat rental offers, particularly in new buildings. With the appearance of this type of offers and potential customers, the adjacent area also becomes attractive and many people seek flats there, drawn to its neighborhood with attractive attributes (i.e., new, well maintained and safe). Usually rent offers in the new housing units in Szamarzewskiego Street and the adjacent buildings are addressed to four interested groups: Polish students at the nearby colleges and universities, families in need of a flat, but not sufficiently wealthy to buy one, foreigners, including students of Poznań colleges and universities and firms seeking an attractive location for their offices.

Fig. 3. Main functions of buildings.

Students are the dominant category of tenants. Their relatively large numbers prompt a change in the social profile of neighborhoods (a distinct student-type lifestyle, not connected with the place of residence) and their social structure. Here one can meet not only older native Jeżyce inhabitants and groups of young, sometimes rowdy, people but also many students. This alters behavioral patterns as well as the climate and reception of the street and its users.

Zone III is the most stable in terms of rent. Here there are either no flats for rent or the prices are at a low level. This is somewhat surprising because there are university buildings in the zone’s central part, so one might assume it to be a natural location for student flats. At its border with Zone II, rentals drop steeply, most likely due to the nearness of Przybyszewskiego Street, a busy transit route and the accompanying inconvenience, such as the high noise level. In sum, reflecting on the starting spatial potential of the study area, one can state the following:

- Zone I (Photos 1a, b, c) is an area featuring a high-density building pattern and a low quality of life. It is the oldest and most vandalized sector. It is an area of old tenement houses with interesting architecture and also one with a specific atmosphere of its own, a genius loci. The prices of flats are the lowest here. In terms of transport and infrastructure, this is a very attractive part of Szamarzewskiego Street, offering many basic services that cater to everyday needs of the neighborhoods. In terms of spatial development, some of its areas are turning into more disqualified spaces.

- In terms of the quality of spatial development, Zone III (Photo 1f) is most valuable. However, this part of the street has neither a specific atmosphere of its own nor everyday services. This is most likely the reason for its low attractiveness to students, despite its proximity to the university. It is stable in its spatial dimension, but it lacks a genius loci.

- Zone II (Photos 1d, 1e) is a sector of dynamic, but not fully controlled changes in spatial development in which new housing units have appeared. With the new housing investment, the social fabric of this area keeps changing. In terms of spatial order, this area is becoming more friendly to reside in (to be a livable place), at least by appearances. Presumably, this is partly due to the attractive climate of the neighboring Zone I and its better SSpP.
Starting social potential

The starting social potential of an area is a component of people and social groups using the area. It consists of the social profiles of its dwellers and visitors as well as their behavior. In this article, SSoP will be established based on an analysis of stigmas that attach to spaces and manifest themselves either in the form of observed behavior patterns or space marking.

One of the indices employed was the amount of graffiti on building walls. In November 2011, an inventory of all the graffiti in Szamarzewskiego Street was taken. Most graffiti was found on the walls of old tenement houses in Zone I (cf. Fig. 5). Mostly there are single tags, but there are two places where the amount of graffiti is large. Those graffiti hot spots are on the walls of the two perhaps most vandalized tenement houses. Highly offensive inscriptions directed against the police are predominant among the graffiti at one of the concentration points (Photo 1a). Both graffiti hot spots are located in Zone I and coincide with places where young hooligan groups meet to drink alcohol, bother pedestrians and so on (cf. Fig. 6, Table 3). Interestingly, there is a police monitoring system (CCTV) installed near the two places, but the proximity of cameras does not seem to prevent acts of vandalism, meetings in gates, or the appearance of trouble hot spots. The other place where graffiti is concentrated is the walls of the Faculty of Social Sciences of Adam Mickiewicz University in Zone III. However, the content of the graffiti here differs radically from that in Zone I: instead of anti-police graffiti, there are tags and political inscriptions and slogans.

Fig. 5. Location of graffiti.
Fig. 6. Comparison of the amount of graffiti against the location of city monitoring points and trouble hot spots. Graffiti instances were interpolated for presentation purposes on the assumption that they influenced their immediate neighborhood; the density estimation was conducted using a normal triangular kernel with a 50-metre radius.


|--------|--------------------------------------------------|

About one of the places in Szamarzewskiego Street where the largest number of graffiti are concentrated (also ones highly offensive to the police) and identified by the authors as one of the trouble hot spots, one can read the following opinion on the forum of the Beautiful Jeżyce Association:

"You wonder, perhaps, why street crime has grown over the last 10 years. There is only one answer, and one exceptionally easy to find, too. 21 Szamarzewskiego St. - this tenement house is a collection of the greatest social deviance in entire Poznań. The people who live there are responsible for most of the robberies in the area you investigate. Those people got social flats from the city; then, left to themselves, they soon got acquainted with the rest of the demoralized youth and formed a gang. No controls of the City Guard, who are afraid to enter this gate even in the daylight, will help. You want order? Then evacuate this tenement house and transfer the pathological specimens to barracks, where they rightfully belong."

The trouble hot spots on Szamarzewskiego Street identified above provide another social index of its starting potential. As has already been mentioned, two of the meeting places are located in the old tenement-house part of Zone I. The third place, stigmatized by the presence of groups of young people drinking alcohol and behaving aggressively, lies in Zone II. This is a less frequently vandalized place and one where normal pedestrian traffic occurs. Some passers-by are children going to and from a nearby primary school, often with parents. There are also shops supplying residents of the nearby buildings with daily products and the many customers of those shops. Finally, a large proportion of passers-by are inhabitants of the new housing units. Therefore, perhaps this trouble hot spot is less distinctive, the place itself less frequently vandalized and, unlike in the other places, the young people gather only in the evening hours. It was interesting to observe the behavior of passers-by in Zone I because they tended to avoid one of the trouble hot spots by crossing to the other side of the street, which is almost identical in every other respect (cf. Fig. 7, Table 4, Photo 1b).

When observing pedestrian traffic along the studied segment of the street, it was discovered that:
- on weekdays, 14 out of 20 passers-by crossed to the side opposite the trouble hot spot;
- on Saturdays (work-free shopping days), when there was more pedestrian activity in the hours observed 15 passers-by out of 20 went along the safe side of the street; and
- on Sundays, when the traffic is mainly traveling to the nearby church for morning masses, 9 people crossed to the safe side whereas 11 walked on the side with the trouble hot spot. It should be added that people walking on the same side as the trouble hot spot on Sunday are usually part of a larger group commuting to or from a mass.

Those proportions were different on an adjacent segment of the street free from trouble hot spots that was observed simultaneously. Regardless of the day of the week, 9 out of 20 passers-by walked on its southern (i.e., "safe") side. One can also identify the social potential of a place based on the reliance of its inhabitants on institutional forms of public assistance. To analyze this aspect, data from the City Social Care Centre on the number of households registered for its various welfare measures was used. The differences among the zones were presented by means of an interpolated three-year average number of households (cf. Fig. 8). It should be emphasized that the use of absolute values rather than a ratio of the total number of households, for example, was deliberately intended to highlight the differences in the potentials of the three zones. In Zone I, many families regularly rely on social assistance. This is most likely a result of social flats being located there, which means inhabitants have low incomes. The low values of the index in the middle of the zone are not due to a departure from the general trend but to the presence of buildings with commercial and service
functions (cf. Fig. 2). As the distance from Zone I increases, the number of households relying on help from the City Social Care Centre steadily decreases. It is only at the border of Zones II and III that there are visibly more of them, but still much fewer than in Zone I. The lowest figures can be found in Zone III, where there are only isolated and irregular cases. As observed, this pattern corroborates the significant differences in the social potentials of the Zones.

Fig. 7. Pedestrian routes observed near one of the trouble hot spots.

Table 4. Selected opinions of Szamarzewskiego residents about their street.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married female, aged 43, higher education, one child, living in the street for 18 years: “When I go to the marketplace I always choose the right pavement. When I go with my daughter she tells me even earlier we should better not go on the left side of the street from Polna Street. Why? There are often young and old men standing in the doors on the left, drinking beer. I fear being hassled. There are also quite often persons, secondary-school boys, swearing, bothering people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male, aged 45, higher education, single, living in the street since birth: “I avoid going on the left-side pavement when you face the centre. From times immemorial people have been accosted here and asked for a cigarette, a few cents for a beer. I am a man and I could handle such a situation, but I prefer avoiding this type of occasions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married female, aged 38, secondary education, one child: “What side do I walk? Of course the right one. On the left there are a lot of louts. They should pull down this part of the street. They are loitering in the doorways, both older and younger ones. That side is less friendly and less safe.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student, male, aged 22: “I have lived here for a year. The street has a climate of its own, although it is uncared-for. At first I knew nothing about its residents. The owner I rent the flat from said something about there being worse gates, with petty drunkards loitering in them. I don’t think about it. Here you can feel the city’s atmosphere, only a pity there are no smart places to lounge in. Although there have appeared some, like a pizzeria.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male, aged 30, higher education, living in the street for 3 years: “I have never given it a deeper thought. I have always passed along the right side [the safer one, authors’ note] of the street. On the opposite side there are always people standing, they can bother passers-by, so it is only natural that I choose the other pavement.”</td>
</tr>
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When analyzing the starting social potential of Szamarzewskiego Street and its neighborhoods, one cannot disregard an initiative launched by its residents (http://www.pieknejezyczepoznan.pl/index2.html). In March 2009, the Beautiful Jeżyce Association started to operate in the so-called Old Jeżyce quarter, which occupies, in terms adopted in the present analysis, the central part of Zone I. Its members are interested in improving the quality of life in this part of the city. On the initiative of Beautiful Jeżyce, meetings of Jeżyce residents with the city authorities are arranged to advise physical planning in this area, workshops are organized to educate the inhabitants in physical planning, actions are launched to revitalize green areas and backyards and the authorities are urged to install a monitoring system. Due to the Association's efforts, the authorities have demolished a vandalized and abandoned tenement house. The activity of Beautiful Jeżyce has also led to a change in the character of the building designed to replace the demolished tenement house. The building originally was intended to contain social flats for families that fail to pay rent in municipal housing buildings in other parts of the city. The association protested strongly against erecting a social building in this area occupied by poor and marginal families. It feared an accelerated and intensified degradation of the old part of the Jeżyce streets and adjacent neighborhoods. After talks with Association representatives, the authorities withdrew their decision. Through its activity, the Beautiful Jeżyce Association seeks to monitor the socio-spatial situation in this city quarter, improve the quality of life there and promote positive thinking about this neglected area.
In conclusion, the residents on this street have created one of Poznań's more active associations and they take steps to improve living in this area, thus becoming, perhaps unconsciously, popularizers of the concept of creating livable places. It is only regrettable that the city authorities rarely take note of their activity.

Summarizing the reflections on starting social potential, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Several types of deviant behavior overlap in two spaces of Zone I and this concentration gives the place a negative reputation. It is possible to identify two spots with a greater amount of deviants and offensive graffiti, which are frequently vandalized meeting places for groups indulging in this type of anti-social behavior. Ordinary inhabitants and passers-by usually avoid these places. Although there is a police monitoring system installed near both places, it does not serve its purpose and is only a passive form of protection.

- In Zone II, uncontrolled gentrification processes occur and one can deduce from the number of new housing investments that the social structure of its residents is more heterogeneous in terms of: economic status, duration of residence, level of education and behavior styles.

- Zone I is also a sector of activity of a citizen association seeking to improve the social situation in Jeżyce and renew its spatial fabric. Unquestionably, this social capital is a substantial counterweight for the deviant behavior.

- In addition, the policy of the city authorities in this area foresaw the location of a building with social flats for marginal and poor people near the stigmatized places. Implementing this idea into practice undoubtedly would only increase the probability of a decline of the old part of Szamarzewskiego Street or even create a type of ghetto.

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creating livable places:
- by maintaining a balance,
- by building barriers and walls and creating conflicts
- as a product of uncontrolled processes in the city.

Hypothetically, the first is the best and most desirable solution, with mutually complementary top-down initiatives by the local authorities and bottom-up actions organized by inhabitants. The authorities' steps in urban space management follow the wishes and ideas of the inhabitants. Then and only then, can one expect that every resident and social group will find a livable place in the city. If creating livable places is a mechanism implemented from above, the most probable situation is one in which only selected social groups are able to accomplish their plans—groups that can control those in power and lobby for their own interests. As a result, the city might be full of spaces fenced off in various forms and degrees and social groups will be in conflict with one another, whereas the city authorities might be considered a representation of urban elites. It is a scenario of a lobby action with top-down processes predominating over bottom-up ones.

Fig. 9. Starting potential of Szamarzewskiego Street against the observed mechanisms of change and its current state.

Finally, it is also possible to imagine a situation with action taken from below. In an uncontrolled way, inhabitants, associations or investors may take initiatives that lead to a change in the development of particular places. In such a grassroots action, there may be a multitude of uncontrolled bottom-up processes creating in the city structure a chaotic mosaic of areas of activity and development versus those of passivity and decline. In this case, however, livable areas can also be created, but at the cost of other places inhabited by those who are less educated, less wealthy, or less influential in the matters of their surroundings. Thus, the right mechanism of creating livable places is one involving cooperation between the authorities and the inhabitants, among whom residents of places that feature in the physical development plans should form a large, if not the most significant, proportion.

Sometimes (or perhaps quite often) the authorities of Polish cities treat the slogans of “sustainable development” and “building creative areas” as a front for top-down management of the city—political and lobbying practices in which the inhabitants of the areas in question do not participate. In this case, those slogans are just words with no consequences in the form of real changes in the development of urban spaces. To speak of creating livable places, it is necessary for all the interested entities, particularly inhabitants, to participate in the process. An area becomes a livable place in the minds of its users and not by a decision of city officials or investors. It is understandable that in creating livable neighborhoods and communities, residents become the main partners of city authorities. In Poznań, as in other Polish cities, the creation of livable places for all inhabitants will only be possible when all the conditions of collaborative planning have been satisfied.
Photos 1a-f. Photographs of Szamarzewskiego Street: a) Tenement house no. 21, one of the trouble and graffiti hot spots; b) The left side of the street, less frequently used by pedestrians and its more popular, safer, right side. End of Zone I; c) Newly opened pizzeria at the border of Zones I and II; d) Zone II with a wide pavement, a bike route and a lawn; e) Local services in Zone II; f) Start of Zone III—single-family houses and blocks of flats.

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