



Revitalizing the Święty Marcin Street in Poznań

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DIPLOMARBEIT

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Abstract

The Święty Marcin Street (Saint Martin Street) in Poznań (Poland) is located in the heart of the city. It used to serve as the city's main high street, yet its importance in the urban life diminished substantially due to the arrival and rapid expansion of shopping centers, that had begun in the late 1990ties, coupled with a consistent infrastructural neglect on part of the authorities. The objective of the thesis is to demonstrate the street's potential for becoming an attractive center and propose a revitalization scheme by means of rethinking the urban structure. The theme is explored in three parts. The first part provides a theoretical basis for the project, legitimizing the attempt to renew this overlooked part of the town. It contemplates the architectural and social importance of centers in an urban setting as well as the gradual deterioration of high streets in European cities. It also introduces a number of examples of well functioning high streets. The second part opens with a brief presentation of the city of Poznań and goes on to summarize its current socio-economic dynamics. It further deals with a case study of the Św. Marcin Street outlining its role throughout history as well as its contemporary struggles in the context of changing urban patterns. The third and final part of the thesis contains the revitalization concept based upon the preceding analysis. It portrays the interventions introduced into the urban structure and the traffic organization resulting in a new plan of the street. The

drawings are followed by a set of renderings visualizing a journey through the revitalized Św. Marcin Street. The project illustrates the need to take action in this very central part of the town and seize the opportunity to create Poznań's new center. The thesis is meant to raise awareness to the fact that the city's main artery deserves a revival and to demonstrate the feasibility of such an undertaking.

Kurzfassung

Die Świąty Marcin Straße (Sankt Martin Straße) in Poznań (Polen) befindet sich im Herzen der Stadt. Früher diente sie als die primäre Einkaufsstraße der Stadt, aber ihre Bedeutung für das städtische Leben wurde stark vermindert durch die Ankunft und schnelle Expansion von Einkaufszentren, die in den späten 90er Jahren begonnen hatte, verbunden mit einer konsequenten infrastrukturellen Vernachlässigung seitens der Behörden. Das Ziel der vorhandenen Arbeit ist das Potenzial dieser Straße für die Verwandlung in eine attraktive Zentralität zu veranschaulichen und ein Revitalisierungsszenario vorzuschlagen, das das Überdenken der urbanen Struktur erfordert. Das Thema wird in drei Abschnitten untersucht. Der erste Abschnitt bietet eine theoretische Grundlage für das Projekt und legitimiert die Bestrebung, diesen übersehenen Teil der Stadt zu erneuern. In den Kapiteln wird die architektonische und soziale Bedeutung von Zentralitäten im urbanen Raum sowie die allmähliche Verschlechterung von Hauptstraßen in europäischen Städten betrachtet. Es werden auch Beispiele von gut funktionierenden Hauptstraßen vorgestellt. Der zweite Abschnitt beginnt mit einer kurzen Präsentation von Poznań sowie einer Zusammenfassung der aktuellen sozioökonomischen Dynamik der Stadt. Darauf folgt eine Fallstudie der Św. Marcin Straße, die die Rolle der Straße im Laufe der Geschichte und ihre zeitgenössischen Schwierigkeiten im Kontext der sich verändernden urbanen Mustern untersucht. Der dritte und

letzte Teil der Arbeit beinhaltet das Revitalisierungskonzept basierend auf der vorangehenden Analyse. Es schildert die eingeführten Interventionen in die urbane Struktur und Verkehrsorganisation, die zu einem neuen Grundriss der Straße führen. Die Zeichnungen werden durch eine Reihe von Visualisierungen, die einen Spaziergang entlang der revitalisierten Św. Marcin Straße zeigen, gefolgt. Das Projekt veranschaulicht die Notwendigkeit, in diesem sehr zentralen Teil der Stadt einzuschreiten und die Gelegenheit für die Erschaffung eines neuen Zentrums zu nutzen. Die Diplomarbeit soll auf die Tatsache aufmerksam machen, dass die primäre Hauptstraße der Stadt eine Wiederbelebung verdient sowie die Durchführbarkeit eines solchen Unternehmens zu demonstrieren.

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Introduction

Urban centers capture the essence of city life. They are filled with people, sounds, smells, colors and lights. Their unique ambience makes them into symbols of cities around the world. New York's Central Park, London's Piccadilly Circus, the Champs-Élysées in Paris, St. Peter's Square in Rome or the Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro are just a few of the iconic associations with world's great metropolises. Yet the urban atmosphere should also be sustained in smaller cities. This thesis deals with Poznań (Fig. 1) – a city of 550 thousand inhabitants located in western Poland – and the Św. Marcin Street at its heart. Despite its very central location, the Św. Marcin Street has been deteriorating for nearly the past two decades, while numerous shopping centers prosper and expand. When introducing this retail form new to Poznań in the late 1990ties, the authorities failed to consider the fate of the city's chief high street. No initiatives were put forth to hinder its fall. The decline of the high street is a common contemporary phenomenon in European cities mainly due to the change in shopping habits. However, well-functioning high streets remain and strategies are being developed to revitalize the high street. Thus, the objective of the thesis is twofold: to emphasize the significance of urban centers as well to distinguish the high street as a type of center worth preserving. These aims are to be realized in a project of revitalizing the Św. Marcin Street. The project is meant to demonstrate the street's value to the city and its potential to be reborn as

an attractive center. Furthermore, as the author, I have a personal motivation for devoting my thesis to the Św. Marcin Street. I was born and raised in Poznań and witnessed the street struggle throughout the years. I would like to see this central artery revitalized both as a citizen and an aspiring architect. The present project constitutes my personal contribution to this endeavor.



Fig. 1. Poznań, Poland.

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THEORETICAL APPROACH

Chapter 1. The importance of centers in an urban network.

1.1. Identifying centers in an urban network.

A city center is defined as „the central part of a city, esp. that which forms its main business or commercial district“¹. It constitutes the core of city life encompassing retail, business, gastronomy, culture, schooling, civil services, leisure and traffic. It defines the character of a city with its architecture and unique urban atmosphere drawing in citizens as well as tourists. Yet, the term urban center does not have to strictly apply to a single central area. There can be a composite of distinctive spaces or multiple independent locations in a city that possess an urban ambience often associated with particular districts. Such a pattern occurs in Vienna (Austria). The districts concentrically surrounding the central *1. Bezirk (Innere Stadt)* cluster around a network of main streets forming local identifiers which meander from the center. Their names are derived from the district names, e.g. *Wieden – Wiedner Hauptstrasse, Mariahilf – Mariahilferstrasse, Neubau – Neubaugasse*, etc.

¹ Oxford English Dictionary, entry: *city center*

Thus, for the purpose of discussing this category of spaces, the term crystallizing element² is more fitting. Crystallizing elements in urban planning are components that organize and define a city. They regulate the structure of a community and help determine spatial development trends. These dominant elements interact with a subordinate area of impact. Their characteristic features shape the human perception of a city. A comprehensive network of crystallizing elements promotes transparency in an urban environment. An element of urban composition fits the profile when its crystallizing property is apparent and disambiguous. A range of crystallizing elements can be identified in a city serving different purposes. Some are representative components of an urban network, other demonstrate a scenic value. A set of typological examples can best illustrate the versatility of these spaces:

- **A town square** is an open public space that constitutes a focal part of a city, where public as well as social gatherings or cultural events are being held. It often plays a representative role owing to its architecture or monuments displayed. City squares vary greatly in typology from grand monumental ones, e.g. the Red Square (Fig. 2) in Moscow to vibrant ones that pulsate with traffic, e.g. the Times Square in New York.

² Kazimierz Wejchert, *Elementy kompozycji urbanistycznej (Elements of urban composition)*, Arkady, Warsaw 2008, p. 50

- **A high street** is a city's primary business and commercial street containing shops, restaurants, services and offices famously exemplified by the Oxford Street in central London. However, residential districts may possess their local high streets that have a significant part in shaping a communal atmosphere, e.g. London's Kensington High Street (Fig. 3).
- **A marketplace** constitutes a social gathering for the purpose of trading in various goods. The typology of marketplaces is determined by the type of venue (indoor/outdoor markets, market squares, street markets) as well as the products sold (fresh produce markets, farmers' markets, flea markets). Their nomenclature³ differs as well across nations (Arabic *souk*, Persian *bazaar*, Spanish *mercado*, etc.). Many markets have historic significance, e.g. the Grand Bazaar (Fig. 4) in Istanbul.
- **A shopping center** is a large-scale architectural complex typically encompassing shops, services, restaurants, leisure facilities and a parking garage. It replicates the structure of a city center indoors providing a convenient venue for a gathering of people. Types of shopping centers include extensive out-of-town shopping centers and smarter urban shopping centers often referred to as galleries, e.g. the *Ringstrassen Galerien* in Vienna (Fig. 5).

³ Wikipedia, entry: *market (place)*

- **A park** is a recreational public green area in an urban setting. Parks vary in size and the type of vegetation. Next to a variety of trees and plants, a park often incorporates bodies of water, cultural or sport facilities, gastronomy and playgrounds. Well known large-scale urban parks include the Central Park (Fig. 6) in New York (341 ha) or the Hyde Park in London (253 ha combined with Kensington Gardens).
- **A beach** is a sandy or pebbly strip of shore. Urban beaches are commonly paired with a parallel ocean-front promenade occupied by hotels, restaurants and shops. A beach serves as a recreational social space typically associated with relaxation, sun bathing as well as water sports. World-renowned beaches include the Waikiki Beach (Fig. 7) in Honolulu or the Copacabana Beach in Rio de Janeiro.



Fig. 2. Red Square, Moscow



Fig. 3. Kensington High Street, London



Fig. 4. Grand Bazaar, Istanbul



Fig. 5. Ringstrassen Galerien, Vienna



Fig. 6. Central Park, New York



Fig. 7. Waikiki Beach, Honolulu

1.2. The social significance of urban centers.

A city and its citizens remain in a mutually dependent relationship, where both parties continuously shape each other's existence. People are in charge of urban planning and maintaining a structural integrity of their environment. However, the conceived concepts have their spatial manifestations, which in turn determine the quality of urban life. Random schemes leave parts of a town neglected exposing them to the risk of becoming troubled neighborhoods. Comprehensive and holistic urban planning poses a great challenge, when a wide range of demographic, sociological, economic, ergonomic and aesthetic factors have to be taken into account. Therefore, it is all the more vital to nurture centers as anchors in an urban network.

These urban centers are socially significant on a practical as well as emotional level. Their practical importance lies in the number of functions pertaining to areas of human life they accommodate, which require general accessibility:

- **Work/Education.** Urban centers are a hub of workplaces in retail, gastronomy and offices. There are central districts devoted to business referred to as down towns. Many universities and other educational facilities maintain urban campuses as opposed to out-of-town ones.

- **Trade/Services.** A variety of shops and services fill high streets, promenades and shopping centers. Goods are also being sold at marketplaces or street stalls. Another form of trade occurs in the gastronomy sector including restaurants, cafes, bars, etc.
- **Culture/Leisure.** Most cultural institutions such as the opera house, theatres, concert halls, museums or art galleries are located in central districts of a city along with popular forms of entertainment, such as movie theatres, clubs and cabarets. Urban parks provide a venue for sports and other outdoor activities.
- **Civil services.** The city hall, state and city offices as well as courthouses and the police have their headquarters in city centers to secure a transparent and equal public access in formal matters.
- **Public life.** Gatherings or events involving the general public are held in city centers. City squares serve for public addresses or festivities, whereas main streets often transform into a venue for city marathons or parades.

The emotional significance of urban centers is connected with the notions of community and identity. Discussing human nature, Aristotle surmised: „Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human.

Society is something that precedes the individual.“⁴ His words entail that human beings are naturally predisposed to live in a community. A city is a complex community built by people of different social and cultural backgrounds. These differences result in the formation of local communities associated with particular districts of a city. Local centers are focal points of everyday business and commerce. They constitute places of social interaction, thus strengthening the bonds of a community. This mechanism applies not only at the local level, but to the city in its entirety. The previous paragraph lists functions of urban centers concerning all citizens. The mention of public events bears special significance in the matter of social integrity. Social gatherings held in signature areas of a town help celebrate these spaces and promote community spirit.

Acknowledging one’s affiliation with a community creates identity. Citizens identify with their city through its uniqueness, which is precisely why urban centers carry emotional weight. They constitute a composite of the aforementioned crystallizing elements containing monuments and architectural landmarks. A human being needs this kind of unequivocal identifiers in order to build a personal relationship with his or her environment. These characteristic spaces become iconic images

⁴ Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by T.A. Sinclair, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1981

exemplified by the skyline of Hong Kong Island seen from the Victoria Harbor. One glimpse of I. M. Pei's Bank of China Tower or the Star Ferry suffices to make the immediate association.

A chapter by dr. Babette Scurrrell and Heike Brückner of the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation entitled *Dessau – an urban redevelopment concept connected with urban shrinkage: urban centers – landscape zones*⁵ illustrates a scheme of urban rejuvenation in an effort to counteract the process of urban shrinkage. The principal aim of the project is the integration of the 18th century Dessau-Wörlitz Garden Realm with the urban environment. The city of Dessau has been divided into units referred to as urban centers to remedy its surplus of surface area. A plan of controlled demolitions made way for a network of crystallizing elements in the form of green islands wedged into the urban landscape. The public has been involved in the decision making concerning utilizing these freed up spaces. The citizens and entrepreneurs have been offered the chance to develop their own concepts for their 20 x 20 m square modules bearing only the refurbishment charges. This initiative has yielded a number of new urban centers including a growing plant for experimental fast-growing

⁵ Babette Scurrrell and Heike Brückner, *Dessau – an urban redevelopment concept connected with urban shrinkage: urban centers – landscape zones* in Tomasz Strykiewicz (ed.), *Urban Shrinkage in East-Central Europe*, Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Poznań 2014, pp. 55-58

plants, a BMX track, a tai-chi and Nordic walking park or an apiary. The project exemplifies a direct public involvement in shaping urban centers and a society's need for a variety of shared spaces.



Fig. 8. The 20 x 20 m land plots in Dessau

1.3. The unique atmosphere of urban centers.

Steen Eiler Rasmussen devoted his volume *Experiencing Architecture*⁶ to the human perception of their surrounding and the tools that architecture has at its disposal including solids and cavities, scale and proportion, rhythm, texture, daylight, color and sound. In the opening chapter entitled *Basic Observations* he refers to the architect as „...a sort of theatrical producer, the man who plans the setting for our lives.“⁷ An urban center is one such setting. The present section constitutes an attempt to discuss the atmosphere of selected urban centers borrowing the listed tools as determinants in perceiving these spaces.

Color and texture in the streets of Lisbon are synonymous with the ubiquitous *azulejos* – the glazed blue-and-white painted ceramic tiles depicting historical or cultural motifs. They are present on the city’s facades, floors as well as ceilings. According to a BBC article entitled *The story behind Lisbon’s beauty*⁸, the art of *azulejos* suffered a setback in popularity among the cultural elite in the early 20th century after a five-century long presence in Portugal, but had a revival in 1950s when the tiles were used to clad the walls of Lisbon’s first metro station of many to come.

⁶ Steen Eiler Rasmussen, *Experiencing Architecture*, The MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge 2000

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10

⁸ David Whitley, *The story behind Lisbon’s beauty*, www.bbc.com/travel, 2014

Contemporary patterns of the tile work cover most of the stations today. The *azulejos* bridge history with contemporary art, while their distinct colors and shine create an unmistakable ambience in the city.



Fig. 9. A metro station in Lisbon clad with *azulejos*

Scale and proportion are the two most striking features of the Tiananmen Square⁹ in the center of Beijing. It dates back to 1651, but has been quadrupled in size to a 100 acres in 1958. The square is enclosed by the massive stone *Tiananmen* (Gate of Heavenly Peace) to the north, the Museum of the Chinese Revolution and the Museum of Chinese History to the east, the Front Gate to the south and the Great Hall of the People to

⁹ Encyclopedia Britannica, *Micropedia* Volume 11, entry: *Tiananmen Square*

the west. The center of the square is occupied by the Monument to the People's Heroes elevated on a marble terrace as well as the Mao Zedong Memorial Hall housing Mao's embalmed body to the south of the monument. Named after the Gate of Heavenly Peace, the Tiananmen Square hardly creates a peaceful ambience to an impartial observer. Being a hundred-acre-large cemented wasteland with mere specks of green, no benches and heavy police surveillance, it clearly manifests its purpose for military parades and massive public gatherings (up to 600 000 persons) of a non-leisurely nature. The lingering memory of the repressed 1989 pro-democratic student protests which claimed hundreds, if not thousands of lives, is especially daunting.



Fig. 10. Tiananmen Square, Beijing

A great number of factors contribute to the ultimate urban atmosphere of the streets of Manhattan. The tightly packed skyscrapers resemble a forest of concrete cuboids interspersed with gorge-like street cavities. The towering solids engulf the pedestrians and vehicles in that urban maze. Yet, the density is not threatening or overwhelming due to the transparent rhythm of the rigid right-angled grid plan consisting of main avenues and numerous cross streets. The grid structure originated from the *Commissioners' Plan of 1811* advertised by the commissioners as providing „beauty, order and convenience“¹⁰. Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, the authors of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for History winner entitled *Gotham: A history of New York City to 1898* refer to the *Commissioners' Plan of 1811* as: „a democratic alternative to the royalist avenues of Baroque European cities.“

Manhattan's strict grid plan has had an exceptional byproduct in the form of a natural phenomenon popularized by astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson as *Manhattanhenge*¹¹. It occurs twice a year (around the end of May and mid-July) when the setting sun aligns with the east-west streets of Manhattan resulting in stunning images of a ball of light suspended just

¹⁰ Edwin G. Burrows & Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, New York: Oxford University Press 1999, p. 420

¹¹ Wikipedia, entry: *Manhattanhenge*

over the horizon at the centerline of a street. This spectacle is topped off with the perpetual sounds of traffic and people in the city that never sleeps. Unlike the vast plateau of the Tiananmen Square celebrating power and dominance, the streets of Manhattan celebrate multiculturalism, tolerance and life.



Fig. 11. *Manhattanhenge*, Manhattan, New York

Chapter 2.

The high street – a fading center in urban environments.

2.1. The high street phenomenon.

The high street is defined as: „the main street of a town, especially as the traditional site for most shops, banks, and other businesses“¹². The term is associated with the United Kingdom and is deeply rooted into British history and tradition. In Old English the word *high* entailed excellence or an elevated status. Thus, the phrase *high street* came into use as a generic term describing chief thoroughfares. Medieval towns developed alongside these main roads providing a venue for trade and forging the name *High Street* in reference to an urban retail hub. In the late 19th century, when the railway facilitated the distribution of manufactured goods, family run stores and workshops gave way to high volumes of branded goods. During the 20th century the term *high street* began to also be used to describe affordable retail chains, especially in connection with *high street fashion*. There are over 5 400¹³ places in the United Kingdom named *High Street* and many more that fit the profile including London’s renowned Oxford Street.

¹² Oxford English Dictionary, entry: *high street*

¹³ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *Understanding High Street Performance*, GENECON LLP and Partners, December 2011, p. 4

Equivalents¹⁴ of the *High Street* include the *Main Street* in the United States, Canada and Ireland as well as the Dutch *Hoogstraat* or German *Hauptstraße*. Yet, even in the absence of a direct equivalent term, the concept of a high street is internationally applicable to a central artery being the focal point of business, commerce and social life.

The ground floor units of a high street are usually occupied by shops, services, banks, restaurants, cafes and bars, whereas the upper floors typically contain professional services such as law firms or doctors' offices as well as residential units, hotels and hostels. The backyards, courtyards and neighboring alleys provide an extension of the retail space or function as delivery areas. The street itself is either open to traffic, limited to a particular type of transportation (e.g. the bus) or fully pedestrianized. Pedestrian zones contain vegetation, street furniture, food carts and other small architecture forms. High streets form versatile totalities open to a range of businesses differing in size, assortment, quality and revenue. Beyond the business and commerce sectors, they serve the public as venues for social events, parades, street markets or carnivals. The life of villages and smaller towns is literally centered around a single high street

whereas larger cities have many such streets forming a central urban network or independent local hubs.

High streets play an important role on the urban scene. Due to their commercial and communal nature, they constitute the heart of the city and are often recognized as true centers of urban life opposite public squares or plazas of a formal nature. A report entitled *Understanding High Street Performance* released by the UK government's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills mentions inter-changeability of definitions regarding high streets and town centers and suggests it being "easier to think of defining town centers/high streets through their characteristics and components, such as:

- leisure, retail, entertainment and cultural facilities;
- business, office and other employment opportunities;
- public and private services;
- residential opportunities;
- high density, mixed-use and sustainable developments;
- quality, design, sense of place and focus on public realm; and,
- a place for the local community."¹⁵

¹⁴ Wikipedia, entry: *high street*

¹⁵ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *Understanding High Street Performance*, GENECON LLP and Partners, December 2011, pp. 4-5

The listed components are significant typological indicators regarding the identification of high streets as well as city centers. Furthermore, these characteristics can be perceived as pointers relevant to the urban revitalization project undertaken in the present thesis.



Fig. 12. Oxford Street, London 1895



Fig. 13. Oxford Street, London 2014

2.2. The decline of high streets in urban environments.

The decline of high streets is an ongoing phenomenon relevant to all of the western world. However, the downward trend in high street performance has best been documented in the United Kingdom in multiple government and independent reports on the state of British high streets. Performance rates measured in the high street's homeland are the most telling contributions to the subject. The previously mentioned report by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills¹⁶ contains a collection of data concerning retail dynamics. According to the report, UK town center sales experienced a relative fall in proportion to total retail spending between 2000 and 2009 (Fig. 14). Town center sales rose by 13% in that period, but their share in total retail spending decreased to alternative channels, as depicted in Fig. 15. During the same time span there was an accompanying decline of 9% in retail floor space of town centers while out of town retail space increased by one-third. These changes were also reflected in the unit vacancy rates that were set at 7% in 2008, peaked at 16.3% in 2012 and fell to 13% in 2014 as reported in a review¹⁷ released by the University of Southampton.

¹⁶ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, *Understanding High Street Performance*, GENECON LLP and Partners, December 2011, p. 17

¹⁷ Neil Wrigley, Dionysia Lambiri, *British High Streets: from Crisis to Recovery?*, University of Southampton, March 2015, p. 16

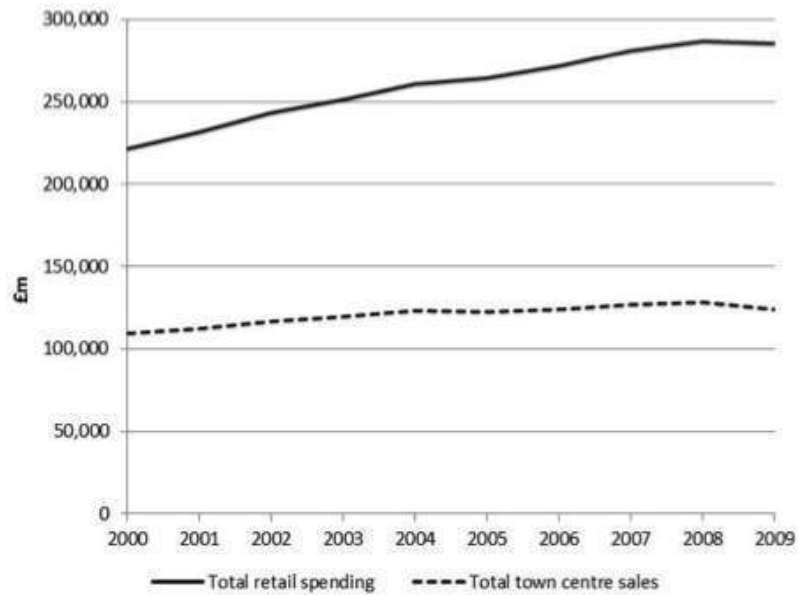


Fig. 14. Total town centre vs. total retail spending 2000-2009

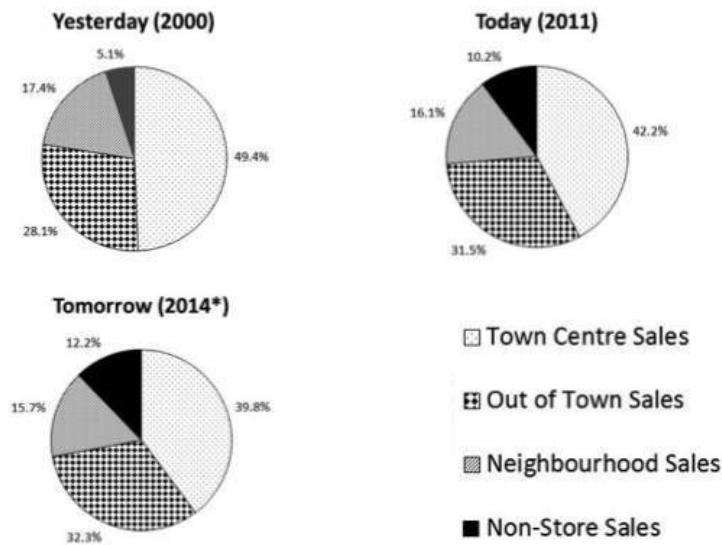


Fig. 15. Spending by location, 2000 vs. 2011 vs. 2014

The presented figures give a portion of evidence for the crisis of high streets in the United Kingdom. The magnitude of the problem in other economies cannot be extrapolated accurately on the basis of data collected in the UK, however the nature of the problem applies internationally. The most significant universal drivers of change, that have been affecting high street performance for the better part of the last two decades are the change of the retail scene and the resulting customer convenience.

The two major players on the retail scene jeopardizing the high street’s survival are both out of town and urban shopping centers as well as online retailing. Shopping centers contain a variety of shops, services, restaurants, cafes, supermarkets, leisure facilities, fitness studios and parking garages, all under one roof. They replicate the patterns of an urban network through indoor alleys, passages or atriums complete with street furniture and forms of vegetation. The constituent elements of a high street are assembled in a closed entity equipped in amenities, such as ample parking space, multiple restrooms and weather protection. This kind of miniature urban ecosystem can spring up in the center of a town or on its outskirts. Shopping centers offer *high street* goods off the high street, while online retailers offer them virtually anywhere. The only prerequisite is either a computer, tablet or smart phone with internet connection. The leader of the electronic commerce industry is Amazon, the largest internet-based retailer in the

United States shipping to more than 75¹⁸ countries, but most *high street* brands offer online shopping internationally. These two retail channels have led to a global change in shopping habits and enhanced consumer convenience. A shopping center eradicates the obstacles of having to search for a parking space or getting caught in the rain. It is a literal one-stop-shop catering to a wide spectrum of consumers' needs within a single venue. Meanwhile, online shopping does not even require a venue – just an electronic device with internet connection. Consumers can shop within the confines of their homes and have the order delivered to any given location. E-commerce suits people who wish to save time on shopping escapades, do not enjoy public spaces or those with reduced mobility. Both of these retail forms, possess advantages that have lead shoppers to sacrifice the urban atmosphere of a high street for the sake of convenience.

For all the advantages of shopping centers and e-commerce, much of their pull was fueled by their novelty. When the blowback of their success began to show, authorities as well as communities have grown concerned about the fate of high streets and launched campaigns to improve high street performance. Once again, the United Kingdom provides ample evidence. In May 2011, the British Prime Minister David Cameron appointed Mary Portas – a renowned retail consultant and broadcaster – to conduct an

¹⁸ <http://www.amazon.com>

independent review into the state of Britain's high streets. It was released in December 2011 under the title *The Portas Review*¹⁹. The gist of Portas's vision is "...to breathe economic and community life back into our high streets and town centre's."²⁰. The document sets out twenty- eight recommendations towards that end. The recommendations explore the following themes:

- "Getting our town centre's running like businesses.
- Getting the basics right to allow business to flourish.
- Leveling the playing field.
- Defining landlords' roles and responsibilities.
- Giving communities a greater say.
- Re-imagining our high streets."²¹

In response to the review, the authorities set up twenty-seven Portas Pilots and devoted £2.3 million to the program according to a report issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government entitled *The Future of High Streets*²². Moreover, the government launched the Future High Streets Forum to further the pilots' development and secure their

¹⁹ Mary Portas, *The Portas Review*, Mary Portas 2011

²⁰ Ibid., p. 15

²¹ Ibid., p.1

²² Department for Communities and Local Government, *The Future of High Streets*, July 2013, p.5

long-term success. The report mentions different approaches to high street rejuvenation tested by the pilots, such as²³:

- A variety of markets including evening markets and low-cost stalls for aspiring entrepreneurs.
- Initiatives for reduced-charge and flexible parking in city centers.
- Discounted business rate schemes.
- Short-term leases for empty properties – pop up stores.
- Focusing on consumer service and unique selling points.
- Benefitting the community by improving the public realm.
- Introducing governance structures.

The Portas Review and its progress have been described comprehensively in the present chapter to exemplify a process of high street revitalization involving the government as well as the community. The projects undertaken in the United Kingdom show, that the decline of high streets has been recognized and that the importance of preserving them has been acknowledged. Other countries facing similar struggles were given the opportunity to build on Britain's experiences.

²³ Ibid., pp. 14-19

Rotherham town centre offers a wealth of shopping opportunities, particularly for those looking for something different. Rotherham's high street national chains and over 150 independent shops together provide a range of products not found in mainstream shopping centres and malls; whether that is fresh, locally grown produce sold in the market and specialist food stores, or unique boutique clothing and gifts.

Rotherham Market offers a fantastic range of great value products and quality fresh produce providing **all you need in one place**. Providing a fantastic six – day shopping experience, which brings together an indoor market, covered outdoor market and weekly street market and specialist bazaar. Add to these, regular specialist markets and themed events and you are guaranteed to discover something different.

Rotherham is not all about our independent shops as we're home to a number of the regional and national High Street stores and organisations, providing the goods and brands that you know and love.

In addition to finding something special or different, Rotherham provides the opportunity to save money on shopping and meals out through the Shop Local discount card scheme.

Over 100 town centre shops and restaurants are members of the scheme, enabling shoppers to receive exclusive offers, discounts and other incentives. To find out more visit the town centre website and look out for the Shop Local window sticker in participating businesses.

Shopping Locally means much more than value for money. Local independent shops have a reputation for providing quality unique products and first-class customer service but above all your support really makes a difference to your town and Rotherham's local economy. So Shop Local and support your town.

Plus Rotherham's historic town centre with pocket gardens and public squares provides **the perfect setting for a few hours retail therapy**; with a selection of quality cafes, restaurants and bars you can choose from indulgent afternoon tea and cakes, delicious home-made lunch menus, traditional pub-grub or a taste of the exotic. So for an independent shopping experience choose Rotherham town centre; a wealth of quality food, gift and leisure options, in an attractive historic town centre setting.

shop local
Rotherham - YOUR Town

Fig. 16. An expert from Rotherham's (a Portas Pilot) *Shoppers' Directory*

2.3. Why keep the high street alive?

The present thesis rests on the premise that high streets are an urban entity worth preserving. This claim warrants a straightforward question: why keep the high street alive?

The aforementioned retail channels weakening the high streets' position grew in popularity mainly due to increased convenience. The previously discussed advantages of both shopping centers and e-commerce deserve to be acknowledged and customers should not be denied the right to choose their preferred form of shopping. In her review Mary Portas states: "The fact is that the major supermarkets and malls have delivered highly convenient, needs-based retailing, which serves today's consumers well. Sadly the high streets didn't adapt as quickly or as well."²⁴ In light of these words, one might surmise that the high street should be naturally succeeded, provided one perceives all retail channels strictly as competition. Yet, the key to understanding the worth of the high street is precisely to not view it only as a competitive player on the retail scene. High streets, shopping centers and online shopping admittedly serve a common function and their rates of success have become interdependent, but they differ greatly in terms of delivery. The only way to appreciate all those entities is to recognize their unique qualities.

²⁴ Mary Portas, *The Portas Review*, Mary Portas 2011, p. 2

In the spirit of emphasizing uniqueness, the high street should not be seen for what it is not in light of changing shopping habits, but rather for what it is and has to offer. For, there are plenty of reasons to keep the high street alive.

Well-functioning high streets contribute to the **economy** on many levels. Their economic environment is inclusive and flexible. It is open to international retail chains as well as local traders. The urban structure of a high street plays a significant part in shaping a diverse ecosystem. The street meanders into backyards, courtyards, side alleys and beyond the ground floor, providing a range of different spaces in terms of size, rent and exposure. Hence, a high street can accommodate high profile shops as well as small and medium-sized businesses or startup companies. International brands often locate their flagship stores along high streets in prime locations. A flagship store is a core store of a retail chain showcasing an extended inventory and unique display, most famously exemplified by the Tiffany & Co. on the Fifth Avenue in New York. The back rooms also operate as extensions or service areas whereas the upper floors house services and offices. As such, high streets create great numbers of workplaces across many sectors. This mix of functions allows for flexibility in dealing with the issue of vacant units, as they are not designated for a particular purpose. Finally, the performance of a high street impacts its surroundings. A report

entitled *Learning from London's High Streets*²⁵ released by the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, refers to this effect in the following words: "High streets are the economic equivalent of a canary in the coalmine – if the high street's struggling, you can be sure the surrounding area's also under pressure."²⁶ Therefore, high streets have to be kept alive to avoid a wider economic blowback.

What sets high streets apart on the retail scene is their worth to the **community**. Shopping is just one of the components they offer next to work, leisure or residence. Restaurants, cafes and pubs constitute meeting places for inhabitants, traders, employees and visitors. The shared public space of a high street and adjoining lanes, squares or parks forms the center of communal activity. Due to the mix of functions, a high street can operate day and night – once the shops close, the bars and clubs start to fill. On a local level, traders can enter into mutually beneficial relationships to promote a business theme pertaining to a region or heritage (e.g. a Chinatown). Living within the walking distance of a high street hugely improves the quality of life in terms of easy access to everyday needs and more importantly in terms of belonging to a community. High streets serve as gathering points in an urban network, that help people identify with

their neighborhood as well as their city. They are at the heart of a community both locally and in the general context of a city. An urban structure is impaired without these identifiable centers of human interaction.

Another feature of a high street worth preserving is the presence of **culture**. In central areas, the mix of functions often extends beyond retail, work or residence to include cultural institutions, such as museums, theatres, cinemas, concert halls, libraries or schools. These institutions contribute to the prominence of a city, but cannot thrive in a failing environment. The same applies to the architecture of a high street. Apart from their practical importance to the public, renowned high streets constitute landmarks. Their frontages bear historical meaning and help build the image of a city. Thus, keeping high streets alive does not only benefit the economy and local communities, but protects the cultural, architectural and historical heritage as well. Nurturing tradition expresses care for a city's identity rather than nostalgia.

These characteristics concerning the economy, community and culture refer to healthy high streets. Listing them illustrates what failing high streets have to regain in terms of values. The challenge is to update the delivery of these values without distorting them. In a diverse market

²⁵ Mayor of London, *Learning from London's High Streets*, Summer 2014

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.15

economy, endeavors have to be focused on reinvention rather than restoration. A feasible high street reinvention process requires the involvement of a number of parties including state and local authorities, retailers, entrepreneurs, communities, experts and finally planners. Their combined efforts lead to completion provided that they are guided by a comprehensive vision.

2.4. Examples of well-functioning high streets.

The previous subchapter was devoted to proving the importance of healthy high streets to the city and its inhabitants. The lengthy descriptions call for a visual backing. The following examples represent European manifestations of well-functioning high streets, which illustrate how versatile equivalents of a high street can be:

- Marylebone High Street, London (Fig. 17)
- *La Rambla*, Barcelona (Fig. 18)
- *Bahnhofstrasse*, Zurich (Fig. 19)
- *Mariahilfer Strasse*, Vienna (Fig. 20)
- *Piotrkowska Street*, Łódź (Fig. 21)



Fig. 17. The Marylebone High Street was named London's best street in a BBC Radio 4 survey (2002) for being: „a haven in the middle of the frantic city“²⁷. With its mix of high street retail, specialist shops, boutiques and fashionable eateries as well as Georgian, Edwardian and Victorian architecture, it is considered to be a smart high street and favored by celebrities.

²⁷ Britons name “best and worst streets”, <http://www.news.bbc.co.uk>, 2002



Fig. 18. The famous *La Rambla* in Barcelona is a tree-lined pedestrian promenade. It is studded with kiosks selling souvenirs, streets cafes and bars, which draw in crowds late into the night. La Rambla is known for street performers, artists, but also pickpockets. Its lively atmosphere attracts tourists and locals alike.



Fig. 19. On its website, the *Bahnhofstrasse* in Zurich is referred to as: „The most famous Bahnhofstrasse“²⁸. It contains a variety of shops from *high street* to *high end*. Almost a third sell watches and jewellery. Most of the street is traffic-free with the exception of the famously punctual trams.

²⁸ <http://www.bahnhofstrasse-zuerich.ch>



Fig. 20. The 1.8 km long *Mariahilfer Strasse* is Vienna's biggest high street. 40%²⁹ of the street's retail area is devoted to fashion. Its success is best expressed by its 1.7%³⁰ vacancy rate. A revitalization process has been launched in 2014, which entails limiting traffic or shutting it out altogether in parts of the street as well as installing new street furniture.

²⁹ Wikipedia, entry: *Mariahilfer Strasse*

³⁰ Ibid.



Fig. 21. The 4.2 km long *Piotrkowska Street* in Łódź may not be known worldwide, but it is Europe's longest retail street containing shops, restaurants, numerous pubs and many civil offices. It suffered greatly in WWII and its gradual revitalization process began in 1990. Traffic is limited in a lengthy part of the street, therefore, rikshas substitute public transport.

02

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Chapter 3. A picture of Poznań.

3.1. Poznań in facts and figures³¹.

SURFACE AREA: 261.9 km²

POPULATION: 545 7000

- 0-17 years – 85 000
- 18-59/64 years – 346 100
- Over 59/64 years – 116 900

RATE OF NATURAL INCREASE per 1000: -0.2

GDP per capita: 82 300 zł

AVERAGE MONTHLY GROSS WAGES: 4538.60 zł (1085 €)

POPULATION BY MARITAL STATUS:

- Unmarried – 32%
- Married – 51.4%
- Widowed – 9.7%
- Divorced – 6.5%

POPULATION BY STANDARD OF EDUCATION:

- Higher – 30.4%
- Secondary – 36.6%
- Primary – 15.5%

³¹ Statistics obtained from Poznań's official website: <http://www.poznan.pl>

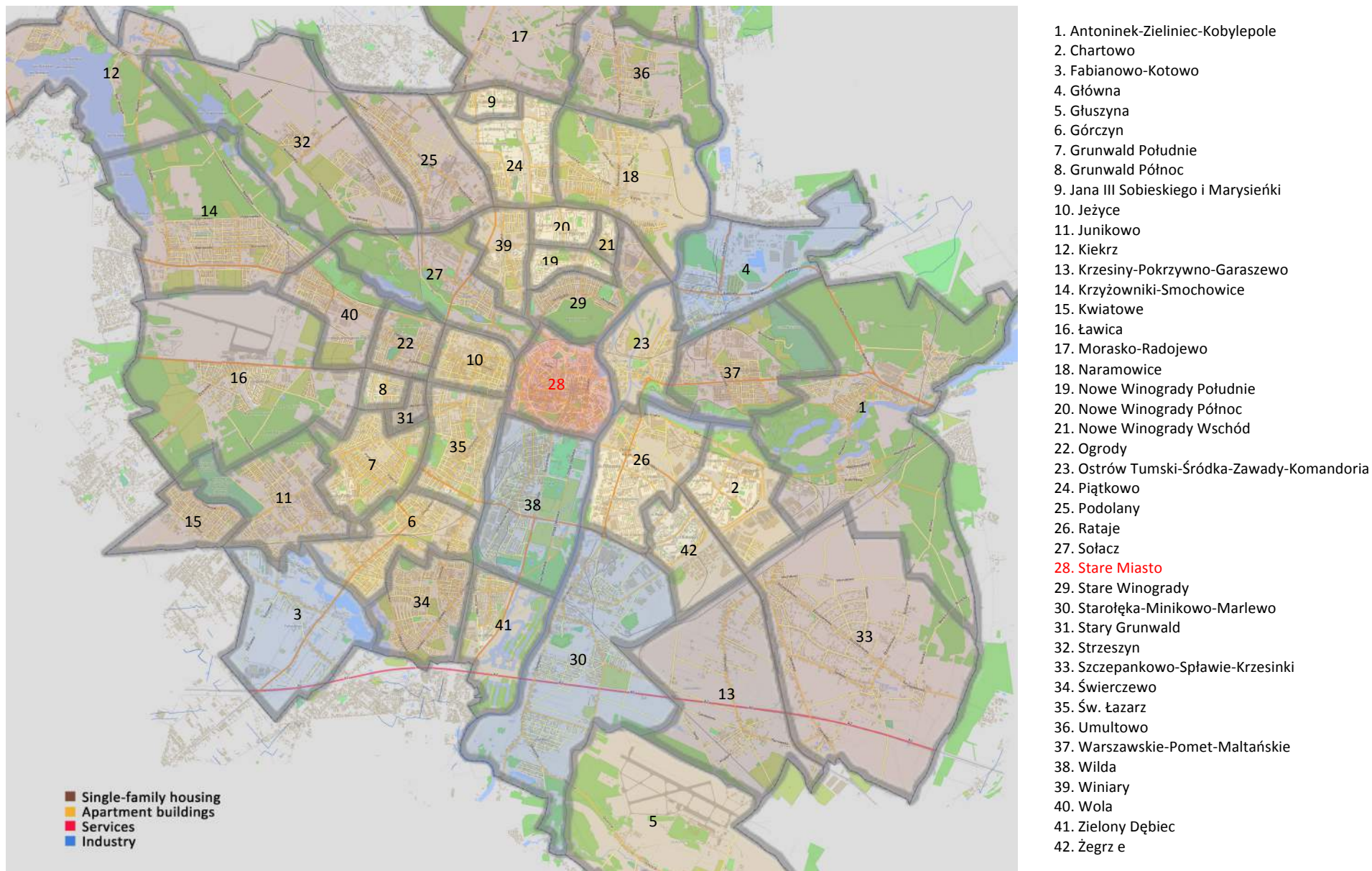


Fig. 22. Municipal map of Poznań

3.2. Socio-economic dynamics in Poznań³².

The previous subchapter provided a set of rudimentary statistical data concerning Poznań. The present one elaborates on what these figures entail for the socio-economic dynamics in the city. The distribution of the population by age suggests a tendency towards an aging society, yet close to 130 thousand students, of which 75% come from out of town, create an overwhelming atmosphere of youth. The distribution by marital status shows a low percentage of divorcees against a high number of married people (6.5 to 51.4% respectively). This proportion reflects the conservative nature of Poznań. While the influx of students is great, the net migration rate per 1000 inhabitants equals -3.45, which means that the emigration rate exceeds the immigration rate. These results may, however, be distorted by the fact that out of town students mostly remain registered in their home towns. The percentage of foreign inhabitants stands at less than 0.5%. Due to this low figure, Poznań can be characterized as a monolithic society in terms of nationality.

Higher education remains one of the chief priorities in the city's strategic development plans. With 8 state universities and 19 private colleges offering over 230 majors to 130 thousand students, Poznań gained the status of an academic town. The oldest and biggest university is the Adam

Mickiewicz University in Poznań (UAM) with 48 thousand students. Other universities include the Poznań University of Economics, Poznań University of Medical Sciences, Poznań University of Life Sciences, Poznań University of Technology and the University of Arts in Poznań. The city's dedication to academic development is reflected by the population's standard of education. The percentage of people with higher education in Poznań has risen from 6.3% in 1960 to 19.6% in 2002 and again to 30.4% in 2011. Poznań's five biggest universities are also among the city's biggest employers with a collective number of 12 thousand employees.

The economic development of Poznań must be considered in terms of the shift to a free-market economy in 1989 in course of the political changes. In 1989 there were 3.1 thousand registered business entities in Poznań. In 2015 that number amounted to 107.7 thousand. The number of business entities with foreign capital has also been on the rise from 1 887 in 2000 to 3 300 in 2013. The value of direct foreign investment since 1990, amounts to 7 billion USD. 99% of all registered companies are small businesses employing up to 49 persons. The city's biggest employers are lead by Volkswagen Poznań Sp. z o.o (7000 pers.) and the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (5 300 pers.). Poznań's labor force counts 228.9 thousand persons with 70% employed in services and 23% in industry and construction. At 3.3%, Poznań has the lowest unemployment rate in the

³² Statistics obtained from Poznań's official website: <http://www.poznan.pl>

country. The city's economic strength is shared by the entire Poznań Metropolis³³ consisting of 23 provinces with a collective population of 1 million people. This number constitutes 30% of the Greater Poland Voivodeship's³⁴ population cumulated within 11% of the region's land. The agglomeration holds 40% of Greater Poland's business entities as well as the work force.

The listed statistics illustrate Poznań's efforts to join the western economy. Considering the mere 26-year-long period since the fall of communism in Poland, the results seem satisfactory. A chief component of the socio-economic scene, which has not caught up with the speedy economic development of the city are the wages, even though Poznań's GDP per capita set at 82 300 zloty is the second highest in the country after Warsaw. The average monthly gross wages of 4538.60 zloty (1085 €) rank lower than the average minimum wages (approx. 1500 €)³⁵ in France, Ireland, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In a survey reviewing the quality of life in Poznań conducted in 2013³⁶, respondents

³³ Statistics obtained from: <http://www.aglomeracja.poznan.pl>

³⁴ Greater Poland Voivodeship (województwo wielkopolskie) is a province in west-central Poland with its capital in Poznań

³⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu>

³⁶ Poznań City Hall, *Jakość Życia w Poznaniu (Quality of Life in Poznań)*, Synergia Agency, 2013

where asked to evaluate their financial situation. 4% of respondents answered *poor*, 20% - *modest*, 57.2% - *mediocre*, 16% - *good* and only 2.8% - *very good*. In spite of these unsatisfactory results, the respondents assessed their working conditions as *good*.

A brief resume of the city's retail landscape is essential to the theme explored in the thesis. Poznań is the fifth largest retail market in the country. According to the latest count (as of 31.12.2012) performed by the Statistical Office in Poznań³⁷ there are 1580 shops in the city divided into the following organizational forms:

- **Department stores** (3) divided into multiple departments selling a broad assortment; 2000 m² and over.
- **Trade stores** (6) divided into multiple departments selling a broad assortment; 600 to 1999 m².
- **Supermarkets** (95) selling a wide assortment of perishable goods and non-perishable items of everyday use; 400 to 2499 m².
- **Hypermarkets** (18) selling a wide assortment of perishable goods and non-perishable items of everyday use; with an adjacent parking lot; 2500 m² and over.
- **General shops** (60) selling mostly perishable goods; 120 – 399 m²

³⁷ Statistics obtained from: <http://poznan.stat.gov.pl>

- **Specialized shops** (941) selling specific groups of products, e.g. clothing, furniture, cosmetics, etc.
- **Other shops** (457) up to 119 m².

Their collective retail surface equals 570 669 m² (over 1 m² per capita) and they create employment for 14 271 persons. The department stores as well as trade stores, which occupy more than half of the retail surface, are more commonly referred to as shopping centers. Among them are generic malls (Fig. 23) catering to the needs of particular districts as well as smarter urban retail galleries which will be discussed further in Chapter 4. The following graph (Fig. 24) depicting the distribution of shops in Poznań, illustrates the prevailing retail density in the city center. Beyond the variety of stores, there are 19 marketplaces in the city occupying an area of 200 000 m².



Fig. 23. King Cross Marcelin, Poznań

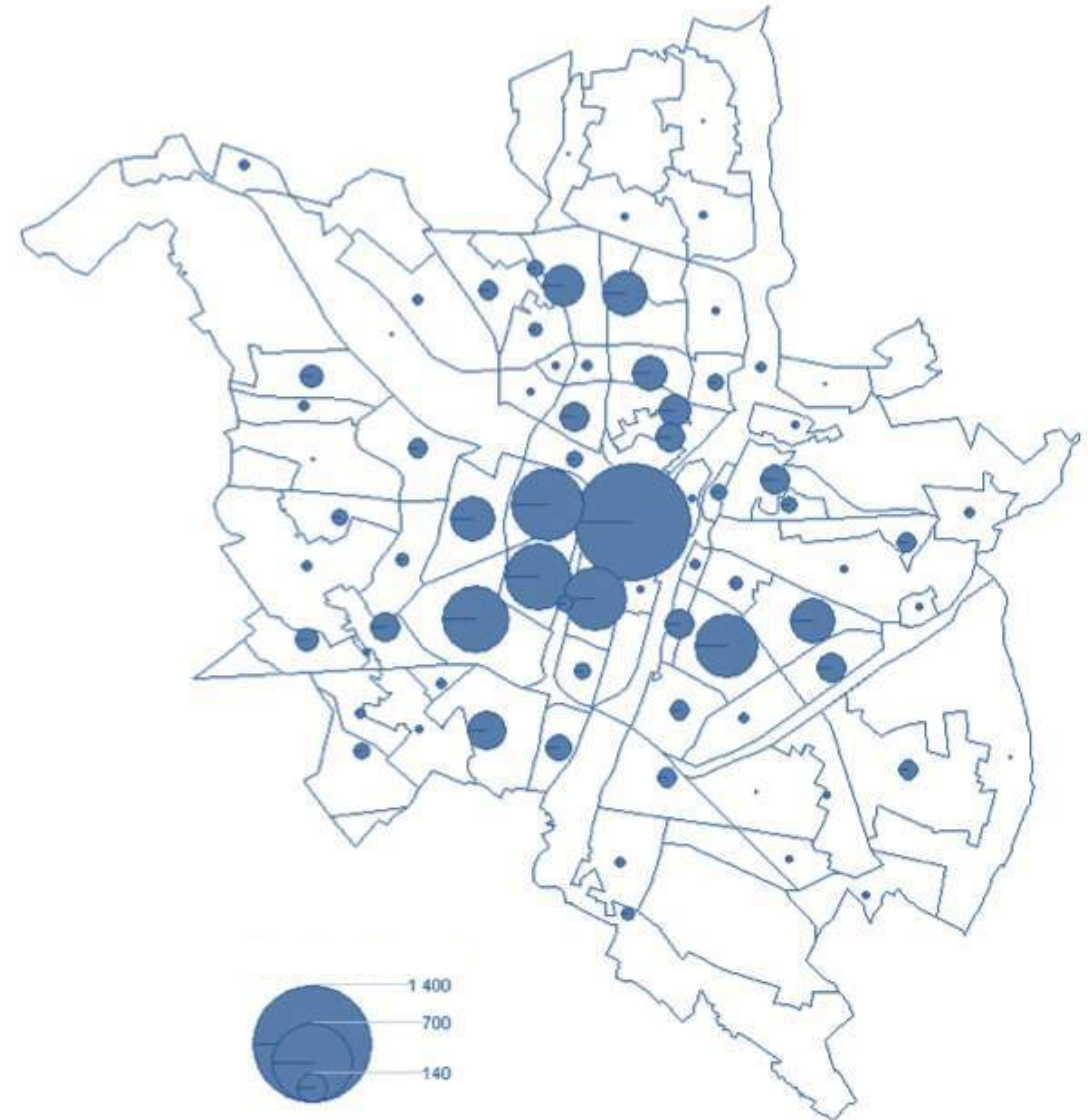


Fig. 24. The distribution of shops in Poznań, where a *shop* refers to an individual retail entity

3.3. A closer look at Poznań's center.

The origins of Poznań date back to the late 9th century when a local tribe leader – a prince named Poznan – founded the first borough at the Warta river. The new city of Poznań was officially located under the Magdeburg Law in 1253. Its urban structure was based on a scheme of two sets of parallel lines crossing to create a central market square (today's Old Market). The twelve streets traced from the market and around it formed a network of blocks. The city walls took the approximate shape of an oval rounding the corners of the quadratic scheme to optimize the defenses (Fig. 25). Throughout Poland's turbulent territorial history, Poznań's Old Town underwent many transformations. It suffered most during WWII that claimed 60% of all buildings. Its contemporary appearance is the result of a comprehensive restoration performed in the 1950s. The Old Town with the Old Market at its center, was reconstructed in accordance with the original renaissance and baroque forms from the 16th to 18th century.

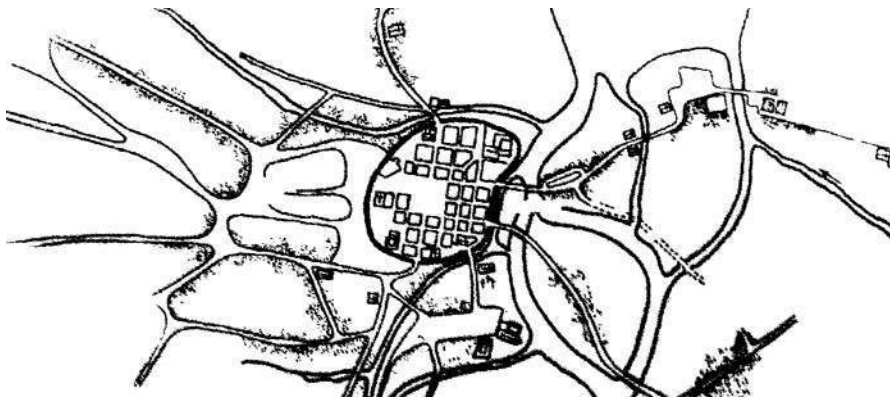


Fig. 25. Poznań from 13th to 17th century

The Old Market is a 40 by 40 m large square enclosed by four frontages of townhouses (Fig. 26). Its center is occupied by the Town Hall belonging to the most renowned examples of renaissance architecture in the country. The first documented mention of the Town Hall comes from the year 1310 corresponding to the gothic basements. The building underwent three major restorations: subsequently to a destructive fire in 1536, in the years 1782 to 1784 and finally after WWII, when the renaissance forms have been recaptured.



Fig. 26. The Old Market with the Town Hall

Located beyond the north wall of the Old Market lies the Former Jesuit College consisting of a church, a college housing the City Council since 1963 and a school (presently the State Ballet School). The *Fara* (parish church) is the most notable example of baroque architecture in Poznań. Its construction began in 1651, yet due to various conceptual complications,

the completion took approximately a hundred years. The most distinct element of the church's architecture are the symmetrical rows of grand columns leading up to the main altar and framing it in a theatrical manner (Fig. 27). In compliance with the baroque rule of contrast, the rich interior stands in opposition to the modest flat facade.



Fig. 27. *Fara* (parish church)

The Old Town remains the focal point of Poznań's center in terms of social affairs, the nightlife and tourist activity. The I. Paderewskiego Street leads west from the Old Market to the New Town. Its form was determined by a number of factors. In the First Partition of Poland in 1772, northwestern Poland was seized by Prussia. Room had to be made to accommodate the Prussian functionaries and military officials. In the years 1793-94, the first urban plan was developed with today's *Plac Wolności* (Freedom Square)

and the *Aleje Marcinkowskiego* (Marcinkowskiego Avenue) at the center of the New Town. *Plac Wolności* continues to serve for public gatherings, concerts and festivities (Fig. 28). The northern frontage of the square is occupied by The Raczyński Library completed in 1829, which is the oldest running library in the country keeping a collection of nearly 2 million books.



Fig. 28. *Plac Wolności* (Freedom Square)

The *Aleje Marcinkowskiego* built between 1794 and 1798 is the oldest public promenade in Poland (Fig. 29) inspired by Berlin's *Unter den Linden*. Many of the city's notable buildings are located along the street, such as The Bazar (founded as the center of political, economic and cultural life in 1838-1842), the Poznań National Museum (1900-1903), the headquarters of the Polish National Bank (1911-1912), the University of Arts in Poznań (1835-1838) or the District Court (1873-1875 rebuilt 1953-1955).



Fig. 29. *Aleje Marcinkowskiego* (Marcinkowskiego Avenue)

In 1828 Poznań was transformed into a stronghold. The defenses running along today's Kościuszki, Krakowska and Kazimierza Wielkiego Streets halted urban growth. The fortifications were finally removed at the beginning of the 20th century and in 1902 a renowned German urban planner – Josef Stübben – proposed a new design referred to as the *Ring*. Poznań received a representative avenue running along the route of the former moat. The crossing of the present Niepodległości Avenue (Independence Avenue) and the Św. Marcin Street became the central node of the plan establishing the importance of the Św. Marcin Street in Poznań's New Town. The green belt aligned with the Niepodległości Avenue includes parks named after great Poles: the S. Moniuszko Park (composer), the H. Wieniawski Park (composer), the A. Mickiewicz Park (poet), the K. Marcinkowski Park (doctor, social activist) and the J. and I.

Drwęscy Park (Mayor of Poznań 1919-1921 and his wife). The A. Mickiewicz Park sets a scene for the neighboring Grand Theater – Poznań's neoclassical opera house (Fig. 30).



Fig. 30. The Grand Theater

In the period of the Partition of Poland, Poznań grew in size and population. Guided by their goal of germanization, the Prussian conquerors invested in construction and municipal infrastructure to meet the standards of German cities. *Wilda*, *Łazarz*, *Jeżyce* and *Sołacz* were absorbed by Poznań. The Prussian efforts paradoxically benefitted the city. When Poland regained independence in WWI following 123 years of partition, Greater Poland reclaimed a modern city of Poznań that had been financed by Germans. The city prospered in the first half of the interwar period. It grew from 3405 to 7691 ha. In 1929, to commemorate ten years of

independence, the city organized a *Polish General Exhibition* at the Poznań International Fair. The exhibition spanned over an area of 65 ha and encompassed 112 buildings. Among notable surviving examples are the Representative Pavilion in reinforced concrete (Fig. 31) or today's Collegium Chemicum representing the Government Palace at the time. The exhibition was a great success, but coincided with the beginning of the Great Depression lasting throughout the 1930s.



Fig. 31. The Representative Pavilion of the *Polish General Exhibition*

In 1939 Poznań was invaded by German troops. For the purposes of the military industry, the Germans incorporated 16 more municipalities. The city may have increased, but WWII left half of it in ruins. The great housing

deficit in the aftermath of the war brought about the *Plattenbau* making up entire districts. Central planning determined the urban landscape throughout the period of the communist regime. The architecture of these times raises negative associations with cheap materials, poor quality and the socialist rhetoric, yet in terms of style architects followed international trends of modern architecture. The most iconic building of the 1950s is the department store *Okrąglak* designed by M. Leykam (Fig. 32). The nine-storey-high cylinder-shaped solid was the first prefabricated building in Poznań. It has recently been renovated and became an office building.



Fig. 32. *Okrąglak*

A characteristic element of the city's panorama is the Collegium Altum of the Poznań University of Economics, which was Poznań's tallest high rise until 2001 (82 m). It was designed in 1974 by Z. Skupniwicz, L. Sternal and W. Milewski and completed in 1991 (Fig. 33). The cladding of red corrugated metal sheets is a demonstration of limited resources. All buildings of the socialist period follow a similar pattern: they aspire to modern architecture, but lack in quality and means.



Fig. 33. Collegium Altum

After the fall of communism in 1989 and Poland's reentry in the free market economy, authorities have not prepared a comprehensive plan for the urban progress of Poznań's center, but rather worked with localized

plans. As such, there are a number of spots in the city, which remain unsolved spatially. Nonetheless, contemporary architecture is developing and there are many examples to show for it. The 91 m high Poznań Financial Center and the 101 m high Andersia Tower are the two tallest high rises in Poznań both designed by E. and S. Sipińscy. They were completed in 2001 and 2007 respectively and are a first attempt at creating the city's downtown (Fig. 34). The buildings neighbor with the *Stary Browar* (Old Brewery) – a shopping center designed by Studio ADS (Fig. 35). The first part of the structure was completed in 2003 and the extension followed in 2007. Its architecture is based on the form of the 19th century Hugger Brewery and some of the original elements have been preserved. Apart from the retail function, the center promotes art through permanent and temporary exhibitions. The complex won many awards including the ICSC European Shopping Center Award. A contribution to Poznań's contemporary architecture scene was also made by the Adam Mickiewicz University. Its campus housing seven faculties is located in a northern district of town – *Morasko*. Yet a new building for the Faculty of Law and Administration – Collegium Iuridicum Novum – was erected in the city center on the previously mentioned Niepodległości Avenue in 2010. The listed examples are merely a small portion of the city's investments. A number of new projects are also underway, e.g. the Baltyk Tower Poznań – Poland's first building by MVRDV (Fig. 36).



Fig. 34. Poznań Financial Center and Andersia Tower



Fig. 35. *Stary Browar* (Old Brewery)



Fig. 36. Bałtyk Tower Poznań

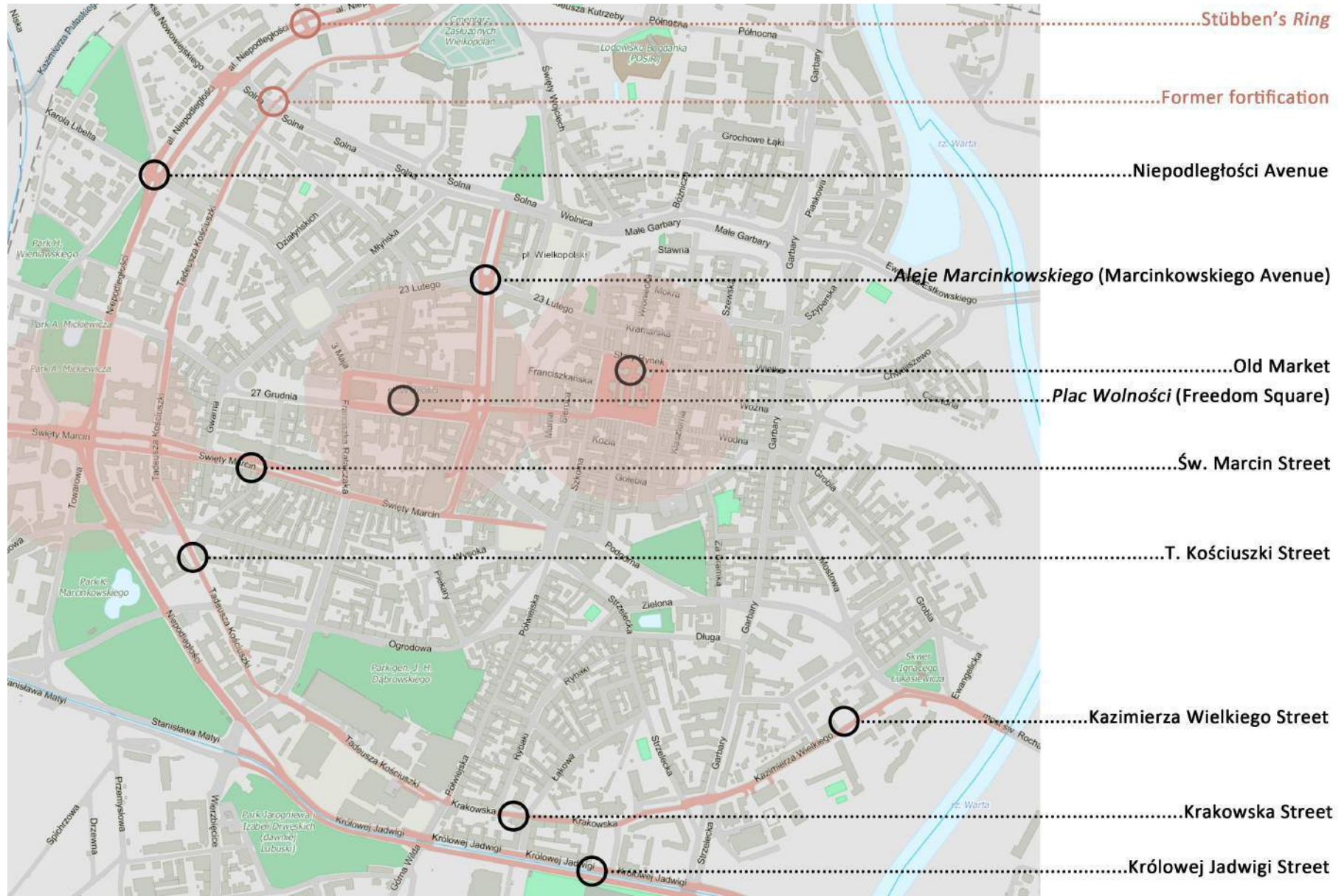


Fig. 37. Poznań's city center

Chapter 4. A case study of the Św. Marcin Street.

4.1. Introducing the Św. Marcin Street.



Fig. 38. Significant buildings along the Św. Marcin Street



Fig. 39. The Kaponiera Rounabout under construction



Fig. 41. The University Hall at the Adam Mickiewicz Square



Fig. 40. Collegium Iuridicum



Fig. 42. The Music Academy



Fig. 43. View from Niepodległości Avenue east



Fig. 45. The Post



Fig. 44. The Imperial Castle



Fig. 46. View from the Kościuszki Street east



Fig. 47. The Collegium Historicum



Fig. 49. A former branch of the Raczyński Library



Fig. 48. The former *Reichshoff* and *Posener Neuste Nachrichten*



Fig. 50. View into the *Garncarska Street*



Fig. 51. The *Centrum* complex



Fig. 52. View from Ratajczaka Street east



Fig. 53. The MM Gallery



Fig. 54. The St. Martin's Church



Fig. 55. The Wiosny Ludów Square

The Św. Marcin (St. Martin) Street is a 1.2 kilometer long street running through the central district of Poznań called *Stare Miasto* (Old Town), from the Kaponiera Roundabout to the Wiosny Ludów Square. The traffic in the Św. Marcin Street includes cars, buses (night lines), trams, bicycles and pedestrians. It varies in intensity across sections of the street and depending on the direction of traffic:

- from Kaponiera Roundabout to F. Ratajczaka Street – 2 lanes
- from F. Ratajczaka Street to K. Kantaka Street – 1 lane
- from K. Kantaka Street to T. Kościuszki Street – 2 lanes
- from T. Kościuszki Street to Kaponiera Roundabout – 3 lanes
- from Ratajczaka Street to *Aleje Marcinkowskiego* – 2 lanes
- *Aleje Marcinkowskiego* to Wiosny Ludów Square – 1 lane

The car traffic intensity is highest between the Niepodległości Avenue and the T. Kościuszki Street amounting to approximately 8 thousand vehicles daily. The Kaponiera Roundabout is currently under construction resulting in a altered tram traffic. The tram presently runs from the Gwarna Street to the *Aleje Marcinkowskiego* (one way). Otherwise, the tram also runs in both directions between the Kaponiera Roundabout and the Gwarna Street. There are seven tram lines carrying more than 22 thousand passengers through the Św. Marcin Street daily. There are three parking lots located along the street: in front of the Imperial Castle, between the Gwarna and Ratajczaka Streets and next to the St. Martin's Church.

In January 2015 the City Council released a report of a study conducted in the Św. Marcin Street in 2014³⁸. It concerns the demographic, economic and spatial situation of the street. The area under examination is limited to the 800 m long section between the Niepodległości Avenue and the *Aleje Marcinkowskiego*, which encompasses the street's entire business and residential volume with the exception of the block between the *Aleje Marcinkowskiego* and the Wiosny Ludów Square (see pp. 46-48).

Within the 82 344 m² large researched section, 3710 m² is owned by the city of Poznań, 7069 m² – by the State Treasury and 71 565 m² is owned privately. The site is occupied by 145 buildings with a collective usable surface area of 181 000 m². In terms of the buildings' functions expressed in usable area, 61 600 m² (34%) is devoted to residence and services combined, 114 287 m² (64%) – solely to services and 4710 m² (3%) – solely to the residential function. These figures translate to 679 apartments and 469 commercial units within the studied site. The rate of residential vacancies stands at approximately 13% and at 19.8% for commercial vacancies. In terms of economic activity, there are 356 registered business entities in the studied section of the Św. Marcin Street. The majority of

them – 108 (30%) – are active in retail, 61 (17%) in other services and 47 (13%) in gastronomy and the hotel sector. More specifically, among the leading businesses are 38 restaurants and cafes, 33 clothing shops, 27 other specialized shops and 21 banks and financial institutions.

The report also provides data concerning the demographic situation of the selected site. There are 1317 registered inhabitants living there. The distribution of the inhabitants by age is analogous to the one of Poznań's population. The number of registered residents fell by 8.35% from 2010 until the end of 2013, mostly among people between the ages of 18 to 65 (14.39%). The greatest population density (626) was measured between the Ratajczaka Street and the Piekary Street.

³⁸ Statistics obtained from: Poznań City Council, *Ulica Święty Marcin w Poznaniu. Raport z badań 2014 (The Saint Martin Street in Poznań. Study report 2014)*, Poznań, January 2015



Fig. 56. The functions of the buildings in the Św. Marcin Street

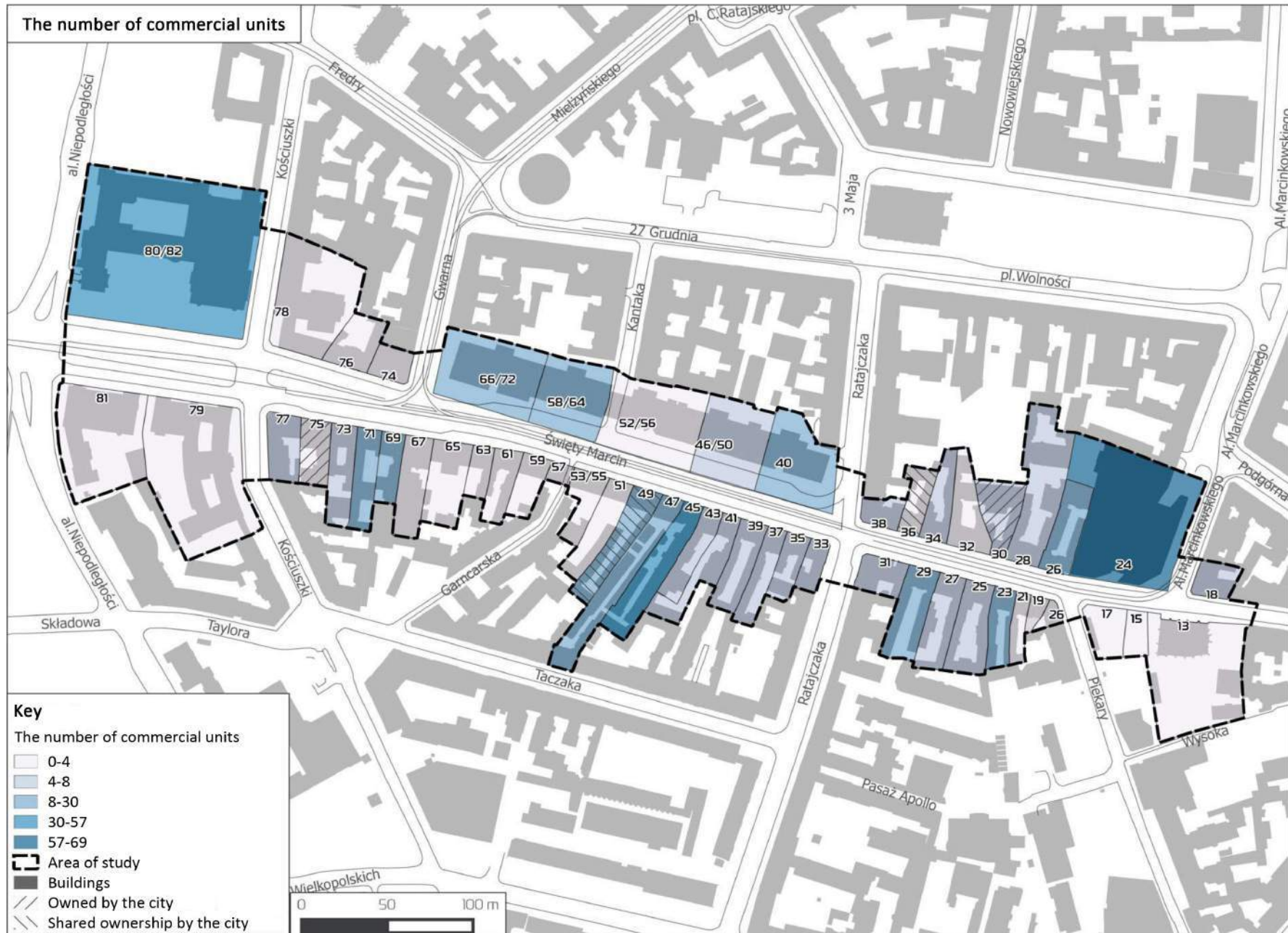


Fig. 57. The number of commercial units in the Św. Marcin Street

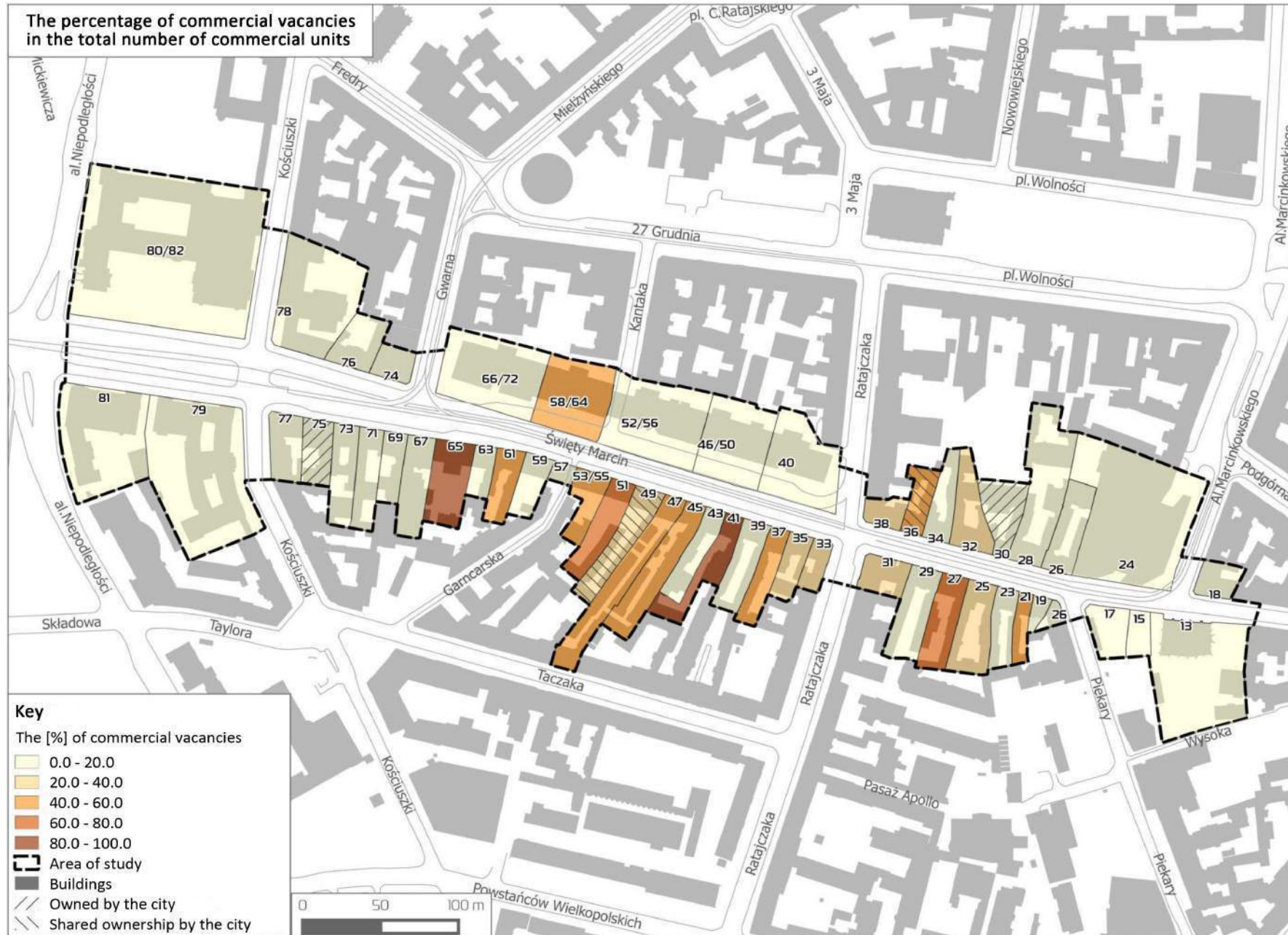


Fig. 58. The percentage of commercial vacancies in the total number of commercial units in the Św. Marcin Street

4.2. The Św. Marcin Street throughout history³⁹.

The importance of the Św. Marcin Street is rooted in its history. Alone the name is unusual in a linguistic context for it is not inflected as is otherwise the general rule of street naming. The name is derived from the settlement called Święty Marcin (Saint Martin) founded in the 12th century by the St. Martin's Church. In 1797 the settlement was incorporated into the city of Poznań as part of the New Town developed by the Prussian partitioners and its main street was named *Sankt Martin Straße*. The exact time of the church's erection is not known, but it is estimated to have been raised between the 11th and 12th century. There are also no records concerning the church's original presumably wooden structure. Construction of the brick structure began in the 14th century with the presbytery. The body of the three-ailed basilica was raised in the 16th century. The church underwent a restoration at the turn of the 17th century and again after WWII when its gothic forms have been recaptured.

³⁹ Historical data researched in:

1. Janusz Pazder (ed.), *Poznań: przewodnik po zabytkach i historii (Poznań: a guide to the monuments and history)*, Wydawnictwo Miejskie, Poznań 2010;
2. Piotr Marciniak, *Doświadczenia modernizmu. Architektura i urbanistyka Poznania w czasach PRL (The experiences of modernism. Architecture and urban planning in Poznań in the period of the People's Republic of Poland)*, Wydawnictwo Miejskie, Poznań 2010;
3. Poznań City Council, *Ulica Święty Marcin w Poznaniu. Raport z badań 2014 (The Saint Martin Street in Poznań. Study report 2014)*, Poznań, January 2015 and
4. <http://www.poznan.pl>

After the fortifications had been built along the Kościuszki Street in the first half of the 19th century, the existing section of the Św. Marcin Street started to fill up with densely packed townhouses. The house at nr 11 was built between 1859 and 1860 for its architect S. Hebanowski as well as renowned medical doctors T. Matecki and B. Krysiewicz. The building at nr 26 hides in its backyard a former girls' school run by sisters Danysz, which had educated three thousand students before it was closed down by the Prussian authorities in 1909. The building at number 65 erected as the city's first modern elementary school for boys in 1876 to 1878 housed a branch of the Raczyński Library until recently. At the beginning of the 20th century the decision was made to remove the fortifications and allow the city to grow. In 1902, the aforementioned German planner Josef Stübben began to develop his concept of the *Ring*. The outer arc of the Niepodległości Avenue has been lined with a green belt of parks. The intersection of the Niepodległości Avenue and the Św. Marcin Street became the center of his design, where Stübben chose to locate the Imperial District creating a representative entrance to the city from the direction of the train station. The most prominent buildings of the scheme were raised along the Św. Marcin Street including the Imperial Castle, the headquarters of the Post, the former *Neue Kreditverein für die Provinz Posen*, the former *Königliche Akademie zu Posen* and the former *Evangelisches Vereinhaus*. The Imperial Castle along with its grounds

occupies the block enclosed by the Św. Marcin, the Kościuszki and the Fredry Streets and the Niepodległości Avenue. Construction began in 1905 and was completed in 1910. The castle was built for Emperor Wilhelm II and designed by Franz Schwechten in a Neo-Romanesque style. The clock tower constitutes the architectural dominant of the building. In the interwar period (period of Poland's independence) the Imperial Castle served as the residence of Polish presidents as well as the headquarters of the Poznań University (predecessor of the Adam Mickiewicz University) founded in 1919.

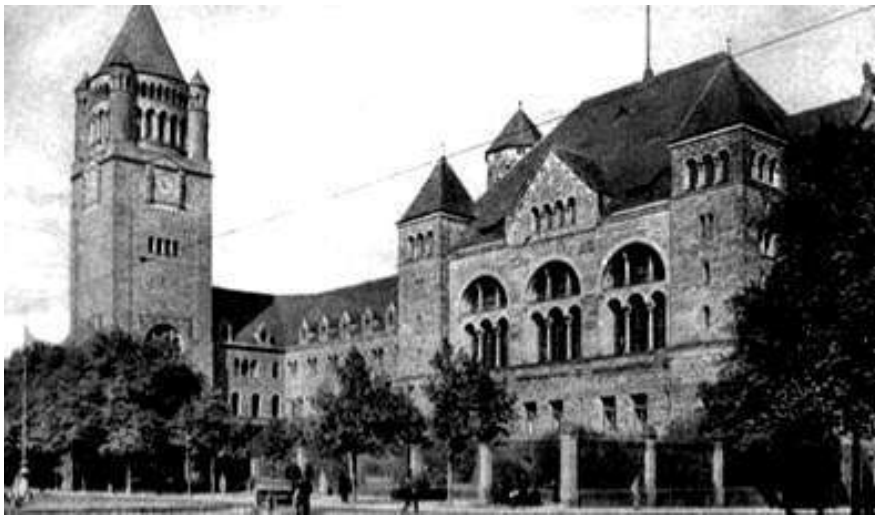


Fig. 59. The Imperial Castle after completion

During WWII, Hitler's architect Albert Speer introduced comprehensive changes to the building's interior in resemblance to the interior of *Die Neue*

Reichskanzlei in Berlin. The castle's chapel was turned into Hitler's cabinet which he never visited. Towards the end of the war, the clock tower was significantly damaged. Communist authorities proposed to demolish the Imperial Castle symbolizing, in their view, the years of oppression, but settled for leaving the clock tower at 2/3 its original height in the restoration. While the Old Town was being reconstructed, the castle served as an interim "New Town Hall". The Imperial Castle plays its current role of a culture center since 1962. It contains a cinema and hosts exhibitions, concerts, plays and talks. The buildings of the Post and the *Neue Kreditverein für die Provinz Posen* (currently housing the Poznań Philharmonic) were also designed by Franz Schwechten in a Neo-Romanesque style to create a context for the Imperial Castle.

To the west of the castle lies the Adam Mickiewicz Square displaying a statue of Adam Mickiewicz created by B. Wojtowicz in 1960 as well as a monument dedicated to the victims of the anticommunist manifestations in June 1956. It was designed in 1981 by A. Graczyk and officially unveiled on the day of the 25th anniversary of these events. The western frontage of the square is occupied by the University Hall and Collegium Minus designed by Edward Fürstenau in a northern renaissance style and built between 1905 and 1910 for the purposes of the Prussian *Königliche Akademie zu Posen* (1903-1919). Both buildings belong to the Adam Mickiewicz

University since 1919 (the Poznań University at the time). The university authorities preside in the Collegium Minus, whereas the University serves for academic festivities and concerts. It is also the venue for concerts of the Poznań Philharmonic Orchestra. The University Hall neighbors with the Collegium Iuridicum built in 1907 to 1908, which originally constituted the German Cooperative Bank. The building belongs to the Faculty of Law and Administration of the Adam Mickiewicz University. The opposite side of the Św. Marcin Street is occupied by the former *Evangelisches Vereinhaus* and today's Music Academy built in 1910 to 1912. An extension of the building was designed by Jerzy Gurwaski in the 1990s. He is also the author of the adjacent concert hall – *Aula Nova* – completed in 2006.

The close vicinity of the train station created an incentive to open hotels along the Św. Marcin Street at the turn of the 19th century. Those existing to these day include the former *Reichshoff* at nr 67 built in 1910 (NH Poznań at present), the Hotel Royal (HR) at nr 71 built in 1905, which served as headquarters for the command of the Greater Poland Uprising of 1918-1919 and the *Residenz* on the corner of the Gwarna Street (*Lech* at present). The townhouse between the NH Poznań and the Hotel Royal is the former editorial office of *Posener Neuste Nachrichten* (issued 1899-1926) built in 1902 by Oskar Hoffmann. Owing to its architectural detail, it constitutes an example of the Secession in Poznań.



Fig. 60. The Św. Marcin Street prior to WWI



Fig. 61. The Św. Marcin Street in 1941

Within the first half of the 20th century, the Św. Marcin Street possessed a harmonious urban structure, but heavy fighting towards the end of WWII took its toll on the townhouses. Many were damaged, yet the socialist authorities banned the restoration of these buildings and even demolished a portion of the well-preserved ones, which was met by protests on part of the inhabitants. Nevertheless, between 1964 and 1965, a collective volume of 45 000 m³ was torn down in the Św. Marcin, Gwarna and Kantaka Streets to make way for the *Centrum* complex designed by J. Liśniewicz. Construction began in 1965 and was completed in 1972. The complex consists of five evenly spaced 12-storey-high buildings connected by a 2-storey-high base with an underpass at the Kantaka Street. The high rises are dedicated to offices, whereas the base contains shops and services. The buildings' structure consists of a reinforced concrete skeleton and curtain walls of aluminum and wood. The *Centrum* buildings were inspired by international designs (e.g. *Höturghusen*, Stockholm) and meant to upstage the Imperial District. The complex effectively disrupted the urban composition of the Św. Marcin Street, yet solidified its significance to the city center of Poznań. Another important building of the socialist period located along the street is today's Collegium Historicum built in 1949 for the Provincial Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. It was designed by W. Czarnecki in a style reminiscent of the pre-war classical modernism. Despite the controversy surrounding it, *Centrum* remains the

last large-scale concept for reinterpreting the Św. Marcin Street. The most recent addition to the street is the MM Gallery completed in 2013 and designed by Studio ADS. It is an urban shopping center with more than 70 commercial units.



Fig. 62. The Św. Marcin Street in 1965

4.3. The contemporary struggles of the Św. Marcin Street.

The previous subchapter illustrated the rich history of the Św. Marcin Street and how it grew to be a significant element of Poznań's center. In terms of performance, the street needs to be considered in two parts: the representative part of the Imperial District as well as the commercial one combining business, retail and residential units. Since its foundation at the beginning of the 20th century, the Imperial District continues to perform the role of a cultural and academic hub, whereas the commercial section east of the Kościuszki Street constituting the factual high street, struggles.

Since its incorporation into Poznań at the turn of the 18th century, the Św. Marcin Street had developed to achieve its urban character within a hundred years. The archive photos presented beforehand show the ground floors lined with shops already prior to WWI. In spite of the extensive changes introduced into the city's urban fabric in the socialist period, the street retained its economic importance. Its share in the city's life began to diminish in the late 1990s. The aforementioned report on the state of the Św. Marcin Street issued in 2015⁴⁰ lists a vacancy rate of commercial units of nearly 20% and that of residential units of 13%. Yet, more than the statistics, it is the atmosphere that evokes a feeling of loss. It seems as

⁴⁰ Poznań City Council, *Ulica Święty Marcin w Poznaniu. Raport z badań 2014 (The Saint Martin Street in Poznań. Study report 2014)*, Poznań, January 2015

though people rush through the street without acknowledging it. These changes are apparent to an inhabitant of Poznań who had seen the Św. Marcin Street prosper.



Fig. 63. An example of a vacant unit on the Św. Marcin Street

Both external and internal factors have been influencing the street's performance. The universal external factors discussed in Chapter 2 (2.2. *The decline of high streets in urban environments*) apply to the case of the Św. Marcin Street, yet the specific retail environment of Poznań needs to be elaborated on. Poland's reentry into the free market economy in 1989

brought about the arrival of new economic ventures. Poznań experienced a shift on the retail scene through the emergence of shopping centers in the 1990s. Investors must have recognized a receptive market and the capacity for growth, because the said commercial form rapidly spread. There are 18 shopping centers in the Poznań Metropolis at present. Four of them are located within the city center: Poznań City Center, *Stary Browar*, MM Gallery (on the Św. Marcin Street itself) and *Kupiec Poznański* in order (Fig. 64).

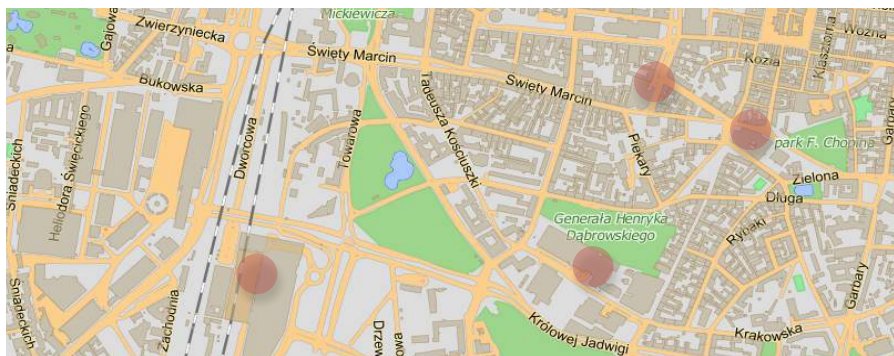


Fig. 64. Shopping centers in the city center

These central shopping centers have a combined usable area⁴¹ of 330 000 m² to approximately 130 000 m² of commercial usable area⁴² in the Św. Marcin Street. While the urban retail landscape was rapidly changing, the

⁴¹ <http://poznancitycenter.pl>, <http://www.starybrowar5050.com>, <http://galeriamm.poznan.pl>, <http://kupiecpoznanski.pl>

⁴² Poznań City Council, *Ulica Święty Marcin w Poznaniu. Raport z badań 2014 (The Saint Martin Street in Poznań. Study report 2014)*, Poznań, January 2015, pp. 9-10

street seized to develop. City authorities neglected to prepare a strategy for protecting the heritage of the city's chief high street amidst the inflow of shopping centers. Without a simultaneous support plan aimed at reinvention, the street could not keep up with the evolving economic scene and increasing rents. Tenants can apply to city authorities for a rent reduction, but less than 25% of units are owned by the City of Poznań.

In terms of customer convenience, shopping centers have dealt with two major aspects: parking and weather. The three parking spaces located at the Św. Marcin Street offer 170 parking spaces⁴³, hence, the visitors must also rely on the parking zones in neighboring streets. The four mentioned venues offer 1500 (Poznań City Center), 1000 (*Stary Browar*), 280 (MM Gallery) and 150 (*Kupiec Poznański*) parking spaces⁴⁴. Weather conditions influence decision making and shape urban habits. Poznań's annual weather conditions are listed in the table below (Fig. 65). The frequency of precipitation constitutes a factor working for the benefit of indoor shopping venues due to its limited predictability. However, in the wettest month – July – an average of 70 mm of precipitation distributed over 13 days translate to 5.4 mm per day. A precipitation rate between 2.5 and 7.6

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ See footnote nr 41

mm per hour is classified as moderate rain in terms of intensity⁴⁵. Thus, the rainfall in Poznań cannot be considered a disqualifying factor for outdoor activities.

Month	Jan	Mar	May	Jul	Sep	Nov	Year
Record high °C (°F)	15.0 (59.0)	24.1 (75.4)	34.0 (93.2)	38.2 (100.8)	34.1 (93.4)	20.2 (68.4)	38.2 (100.8)
Average high °C (°F)	2.3 (36.1)	8.3 (46.9)	19.4 (66.9)	24.6 (76.3)	19.3 (66.7)	6.7 (44.1)	13.4 (56.1)
Daily mean °C (°F)	-1.2 (29.8)	4.0 (39.2)	14.9 (58.8)	20.1 (68.2)	15.3 (59.5)	4.4 (39.9)	9.6 (49.3)
Average low °C (°F)	-4.6 (23.7)	-0.3 (31.5)	10.3 (50.5)	15.5 (59.9)	11.3 (52.3)	2.1 (35.8)	5.7 (42.3)
Record low °C (°F)	-28.5 (-19.3)	-21.3 (-6.3)	-3 (26.6)	4.7 (40.5)	-3.8 (25.2)	-15.2 (4.6)	-28.5 (-19.3)
Precipitation mm (inches)	25 (0.98)	30 (1.18)	45 (1.77)	70 (2.76)	35 (1.38)	37 (1.46)	492 (19.37)
Avg. precipitati on days	14	11	11	13	9	14	142
Mean monthly sunshine hours	56	118	230	236	171	55	1,74

Fig. 65. Annual weather conditions in Poznań

The causes of the Św. Marcin Street's struggles are not limited to external variables. The street's shortcomings provide an additional push towards alternative retail channels. Its current urban composition creates an

unfavorable atmosphere. The heavy car and tram traffic constitute a functional barrier for pedestrian visitors. Only 31.47% of the street's surface is dedicated to pedestrians⁴⁶. The green belt running through the center from the Gwarna to Ratajczaka Street sandwiched between traffic lanes cannot be appreciated by passersby and only takes away from the sidewalk width (Fig. 66).



Fig. 66. Functional barriers on the Św. Marcin Street

⁴⁵ <http://www.glossary.ametsoc.org>

⁴⁶ Poznań City Council, *Ulica Święty Marcin w Poznaniu. Raport z badań 2014 (The Saint Martin Street in Poznań. Study report 2014)*, Poznań, January 2015, p. 21

The *Centrum* complex disrupted the original integrity of the northern frontage. The building alignment was interrupted and five dominant vertical elements appeared, but captured in a rigid horizontal slab. The surface won by setting the buildings back did not benefit the pedestrian zone, but intensified the traffic. In terms of aesthetics, a renovation of the complex is long overdue. Individual repairs have taken place, yet no comprehensive effort. The previously cited report on the state of the Św. Marcin Street describes the buildings' ownership structure as transparent, contrary to general opinions⁴⁷. As such, it should seem feasible for the city authorities to help broker a deal with an investor and launch a revitalization of the *Centrum* complex.

Another problematic area of the Św. Marcin Street is the backyard zone. In their current state, the backyards do not contribute to community life, leisure or the street's greenery, but rather contain additional parking spaces, garages and various auxiliary buildings. The same applies to the Wiosny Ludów Square which offers a chaotic combination of an unkept park, a parking lot and a group of food stands. Finally, it is the treatment of the street's monuments, which diminishes its status and aesthetic quality. The St. Martin's Church as well as the Imperial Castle, both rooted deeply into the Św. Marcin Street's history, are obstructed by parking lots and

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 4

food stands (Fig. 67). Their role of historical sights and potential tourist attractions goes unseen without a proper setting.



Fig. 67. The St. Martin's Church obstructed by food stands

The struggles of the Św. Marcin Street have recently been acknowledged by the city authorities. On August 14th 2015 a competition has been launched by the City of Poznań aimed at creating an urban development plan for Poznań's center with a particular attention to the Św. Marcin Street⁴⁸. The results of the competition were scheduled to be announced at the end of November 2015 following a public viewing of selected proposals.

⁴⁸ <http://poznan.sarp.org.pl/konkurs-centrum-poznan>

4.4. The potential of the Św. Marcin Street.

The same question posed in subchapter 2.3. *Why keep high streets alive?* may be asked in connection with the Św. Marcin Street. The previous pages demonstrated its significance to Poznań's history and urban fabric. Despite its current struggles, the street remains at the city's center and as such, cannot be ignored. Hence, the Św. Marcin Street's heritage legitimizes the attempt to revitalize it. Under that premise, one should consider the street's potential in terms of what it could offer and to whom.

The shopping centers surrounding the Św. Marcin Street contain a wide selection of international retail chains. Among the commercial units located in the street, only 92 (25,84%) belong to commercial chains (lead by 46 retail units and 21 banks and financial institutions)⁴⁹. Furthermore, 30 of those chain stores are located in the MM Gallery. As such, the Św. Marcin Street offers an unusual commercial scene in Poznań. This trend could develop to include local businesses and newcomers becoming an attractive profile. The city has seen an inflow of new independent ventures. Revitalizing the urban structure of the Św. Marcin Street would create an incentive for businesses to set up there and become a part of an alternative channel to the many shopping centers.

⁴⁹ Poznań City Council, *Ulica Święty Marcin w Poznaniu. Raport z badań 2014 (The Saint Martin Street in Poznań. Study report 2014)*, Poznań, January 2015, p. 25

The street's potential lies also in the residential function. The Central Statistical Office predicts that Poland will depopulate by 20% in urban areas between the years 2013 and 2050⁵⁰. Suburban living is favored by people of a working age raising families. Between January and June 2014, nearly twice as many apartments were completed in Poznań than in the same period of 2015⁵¹. Creating new apartments in a prime location would contribute to the promotion of urban living and attract customers who value being at the center of events. Residential investments are a rarity in the city center in contrast to investments on the office market. The city center has the highest concentration of office space across Poznań including such structures as the Poznań Financial Center (16 600 m²), Globis Office Center (12 000 m²) or Szyperska Office Center (15 900 m²). More projects are underway, among them the previously mentioned Baltyk Tower Poznań by MVRDV at the Kaponiera Roundabout. The development of office space illustrates the city's economic growth. Yet, before taking on new projects, city authorities should consider the existing *Centrum* complex on the Św. Marcin Street. Following a comprehensive renovation, the high rises could also become modern office buildings in the heart of the city.

⁵⁰ Central Statistical Office, *Population Projection 2014-2050*, Warsaw, 2014, p. 114

⁵¹ Statistical Office in Poznań, *Poznań Statistical Bulletin*, Poznań 2nd quarter 2015, p. 65

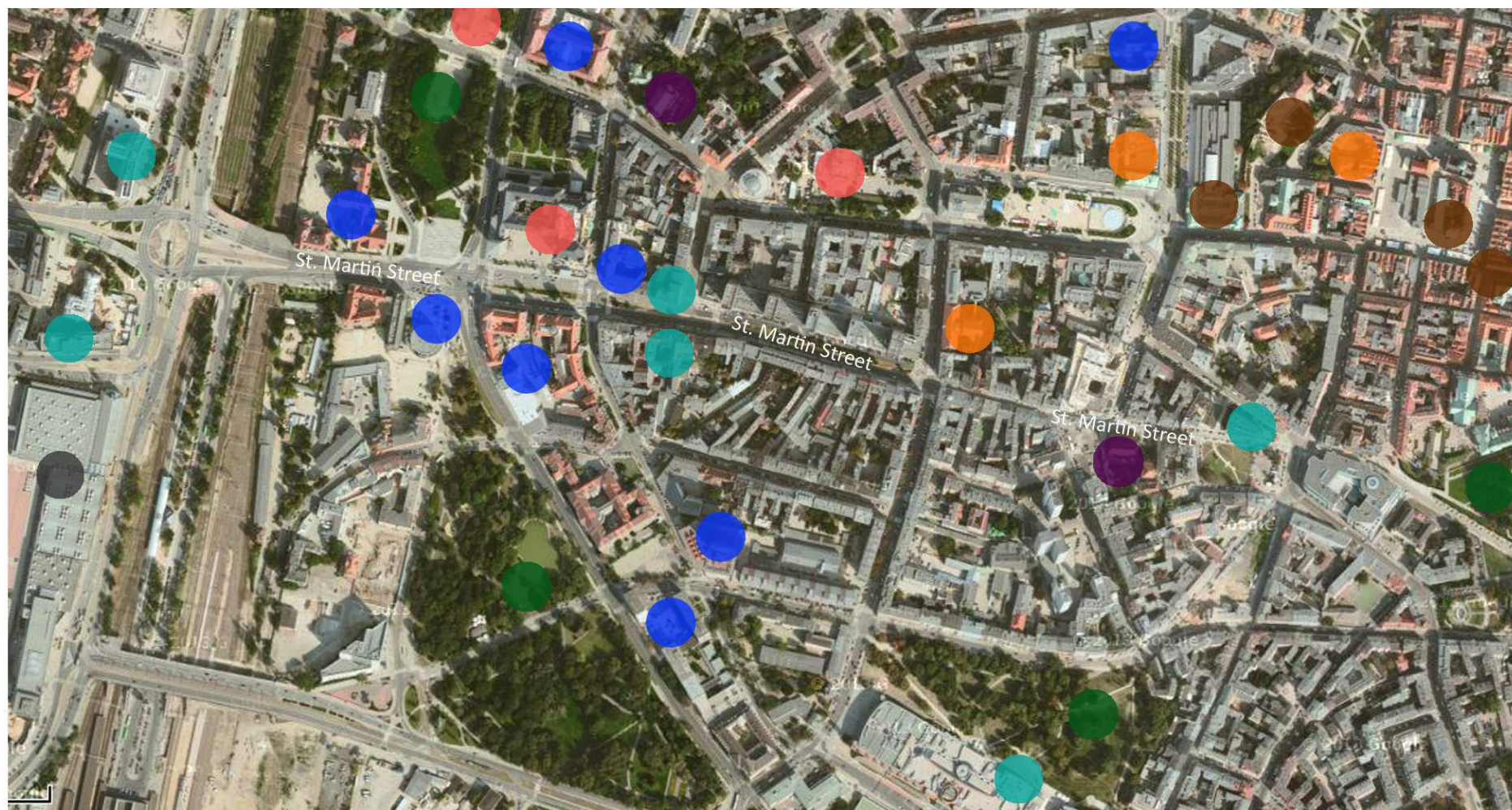
Apart from accommodating different functions, the Św. Marcin Street has the potential of becoming a social space, where people live, work and spend their free time in a genuine urban atmosphere. The inhabitants of Poznań have grown accustomed to the convenience shopping centers offer. Yet, through a revitalization scheme, the Św. Marcin Street could be rediscovered as a high street and provide an alternative to the otherwise homogenous commercial scene. There is an aspect of a high street, that supersedes the retail aspect, namely the feeling of neighborhood and community, which can be found in the British tradition.

Each year on November 11th – Poland’s Independence Day, a parade is being organized on the Św. Marcin Street to celebrate the name-day of its patron – Saint Martin (Fig. 68). On that day, people gather in the street to take part in the festivities and enjoy a local delicacy dedicated to the holiday – *Rogal Świętomarciński* (a traditional croissant-shaped pastry with a poppyseed filling named after Saint Martin). To achieve the quality of a shared space all year long it is necessary to consider the street’s traffic as well as parking organization and the possible advantages of a pedestrian zone. A social potential also lies in the inner structure of the blocks – the backyards which remain hidden and disconnected, but could be transformed into connecting pathways or enclaves to reshape the Św. Marcin Street beyond its frontages.



Fig. 68. The parade held on November 11th 2015 to celebrate the name-day of Saint Martin and the traditional pastry – *Rogal Świętomarciński*

The Św. Marcin Street’s potential must also be explored through its diverse target groups including residents, employees, students or others running various errands in the city. The street lies in the city center surrounded by workplaces, residences and public institutions (e.g. universities, museums, theatres, hotels, parks) holding possible visitors as illustrated in Fig. 69. Moreover, there are 8 thousand cars accumulating between the Niepodległości Avenue and the Kościuszki Street everyday.



- | | |
|--|---|
| ● University Buildings | ● Churches |
| ● Libraries | ● Hotels |
| ● Museums | ● Theatres |
| ● Parks | ● The Poznań International Fair |

Fig. 69. Public institutions surrounding the Św. Marcin Street

The attractive sight of a reinterpreted high street would likely prompt the travellers to visit it instead of just passing by on their way from A to B. The same goes for the approximate 22 thousand people who travel daily by tram through the Św. Marcin Street. Among them, some of the 130 thousand students distributed among the many university buildings in the city center. Furthermore, the users of public transportation are not bound by the parking issue. A pedestrian-friendly Św. Marcin Street could benefit the city center by promoting the culture of urban strolls instead of catering to the needs of drivers. In terms of traffic politics, Poznań does not follow European examples such as London or Vienna where cars do not constitute a priority. It remains subordinate to vehicular traffic and any proposals to limit it are widely unpopular. Nevertheless, an intervention to the advantage of pedestrians would most likely be appreciated in the long run.

The present subchapter illustrates the potential of the Św. Marcin Street by offering many hypothetical mechanisms. It is based on the observations made by an inhabitant of Poznań who appreciates the importance of having a high street in the city. However, what could or would happen requires a visual representation. The following part of the thesis presents a possible scenario drawing on the performed analysis. It puts forth a proposal for revitalizing the Św. Marcin Street, that attempts to outline its features and build on its potential.

03

PRACTICAL APPROACH

Chapter 5.

The concept for revitalizing the Św. Marcin Street.

5.1. The spatial concept.

The starting point to developing a spatial concept for the revitalization of the Św. Marcin Street was establishing the scope of the intervention into the existing structure. A revitalization can entail a set of small-scale interventions, a landscaping scheme or a reinterpretation of the urban tissue. A decision had to be made, what measures to employ in the case of the Św. Marcin Street. A 1.2 kilometer long stretch offers a large field for imaginative ideas. The challenge lies in channeling these ideas to produce a consistent design.

A number of aspects to remedy surfaced in the subchapter 4.3. *The contemporary struggles of the Św. Marcin Street*. Among them is the issue of ill-placed parking lots obstructing the street's historical buildings: the Imperial Castle and the Saint Martin's Church (see Fig. 67) as well as the Wiosny Ludów Square. Replacing these parking lots with a representative Castle Square and Church Square respectively would exhibit these buildings and allow them to be viewed as historical sights. The Wiosny Ludów Square would benefit from turning the unkept green area into a small park. The

need for the described „clean-up“ operation makes itself apparent after a superficial glance at the pictures. Therefore, it could constitute the first step towards revitalizing the Św. Marcin Street, yet merely as an auxiliary improvement. Reintroducing the street into the city's life as an urban center requires the consideration of all the mentioned struggles leading to the discovery of a new quality.

A framework for developing the project was set up by the selection of a focus point (Fig. 70): the 280 meter long central section of the Św. Marcin Street between the Gwarna Street and the Ratajczaka Street. The area of study extends beyond the street's interior to include the backyard zone reaching to the 27 Grudnia Street to the north and the Taczaka Street to the south. The selected block is meant to become a catalyst of change, which would improve the performance of the entire Św. Marcin Street. It holds a great potential for creative solutions containing the problematic *Centrum* complex which is in urgent need of not just a renovation, but more importantly, a reinterpretation. It is necessary to consider how and to what extent the complex could fit into a new vision in order to initiate a spatial reorganization of the studied block. The following pages offer a visual representation of the thought process leading up to the revitalization concept.

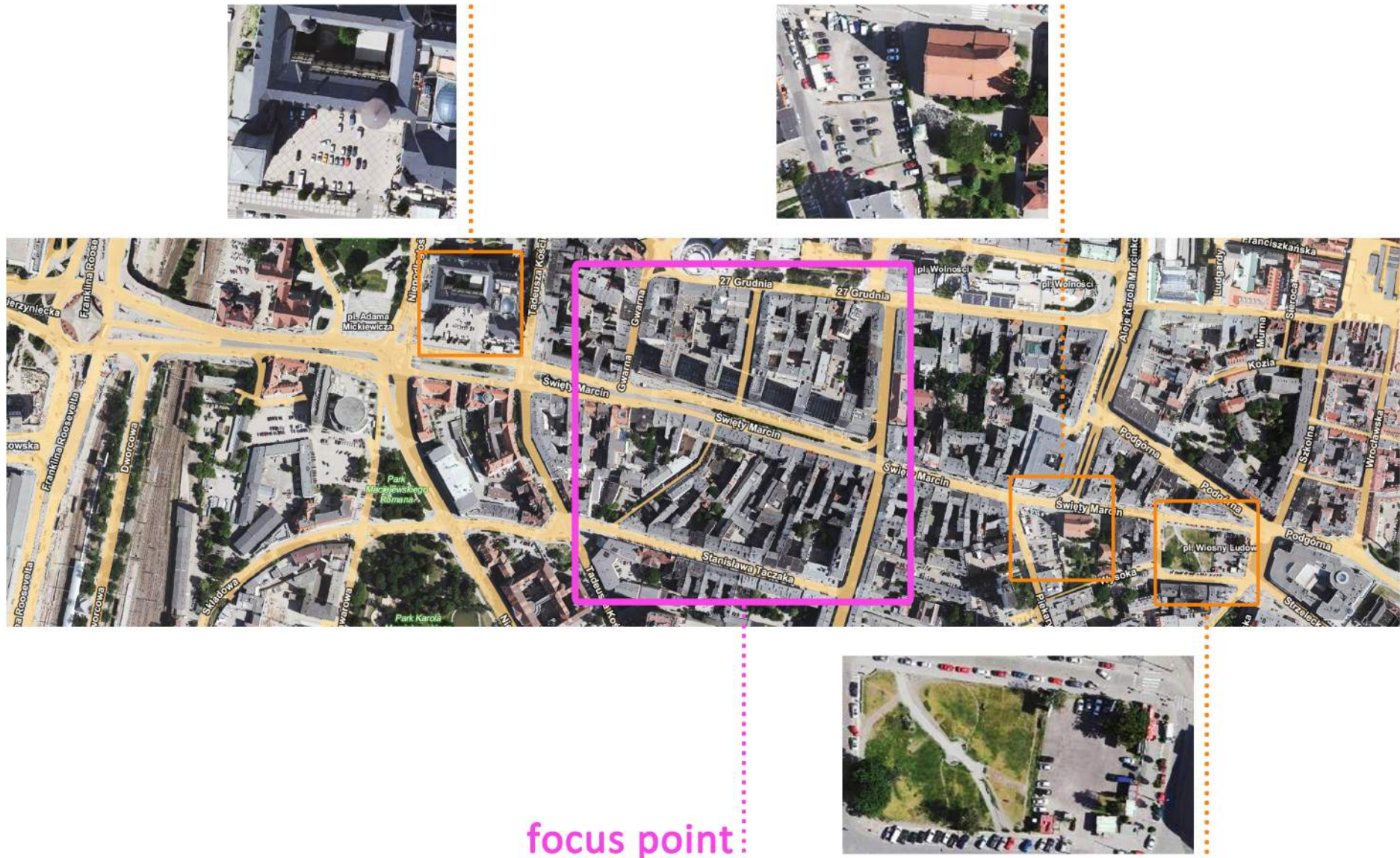


Fig. 70. The selected focus point accompanied by the „clean-up“ points

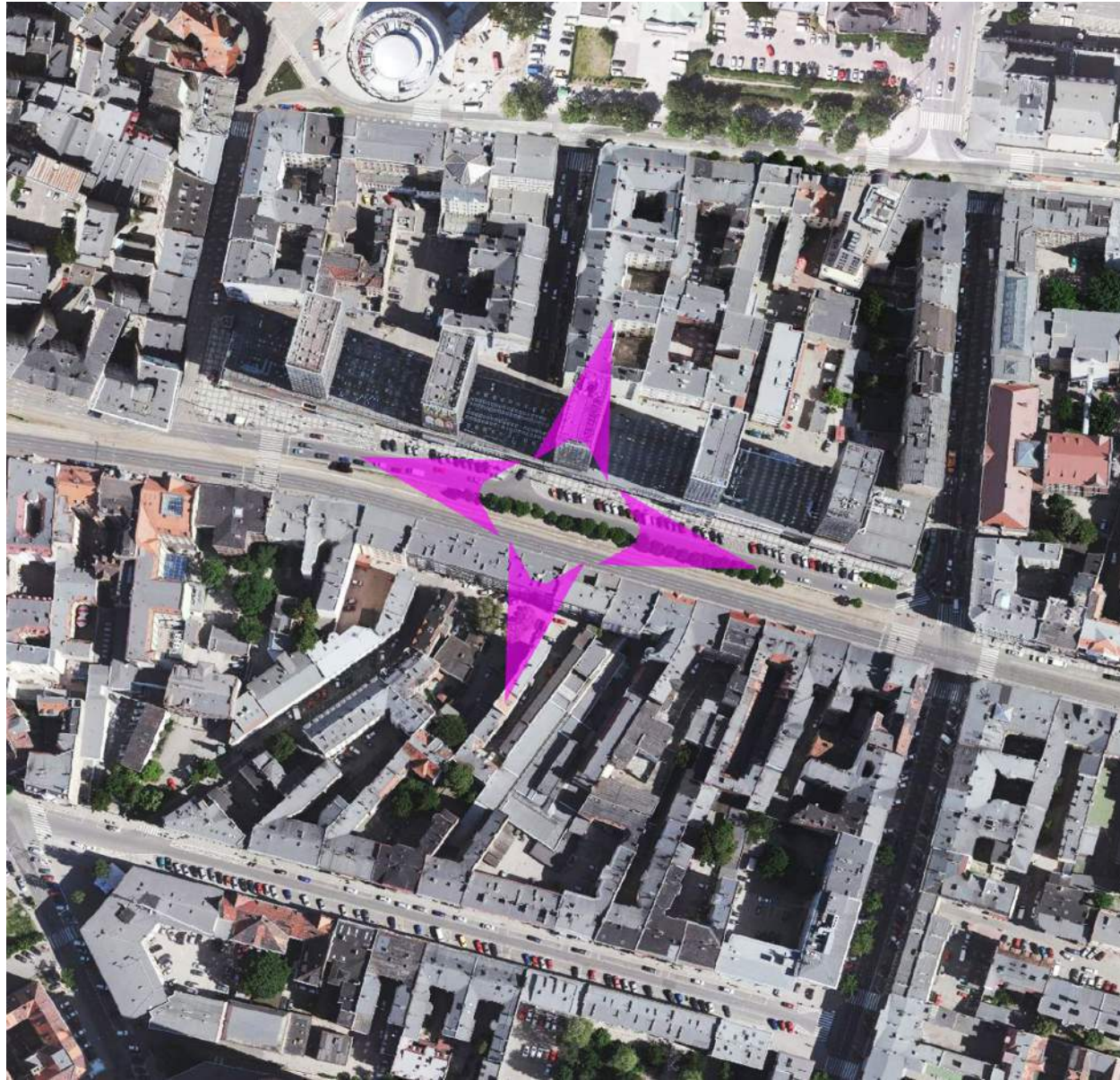


Fig. 71. The directions of study

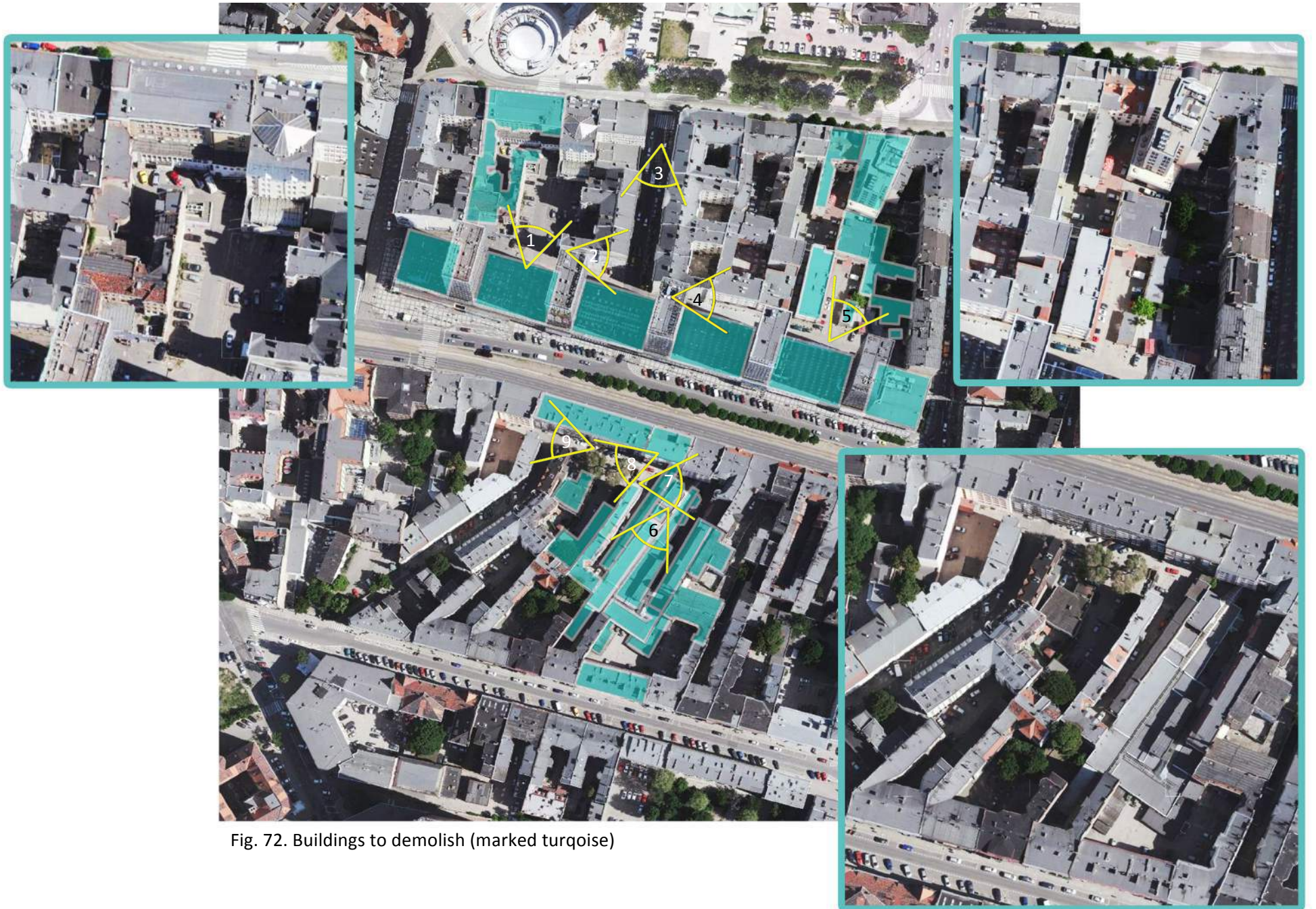


Fig. 72. Buildings to demolish (marked turquoise)



Fig. 73. A walk through the street's backyards

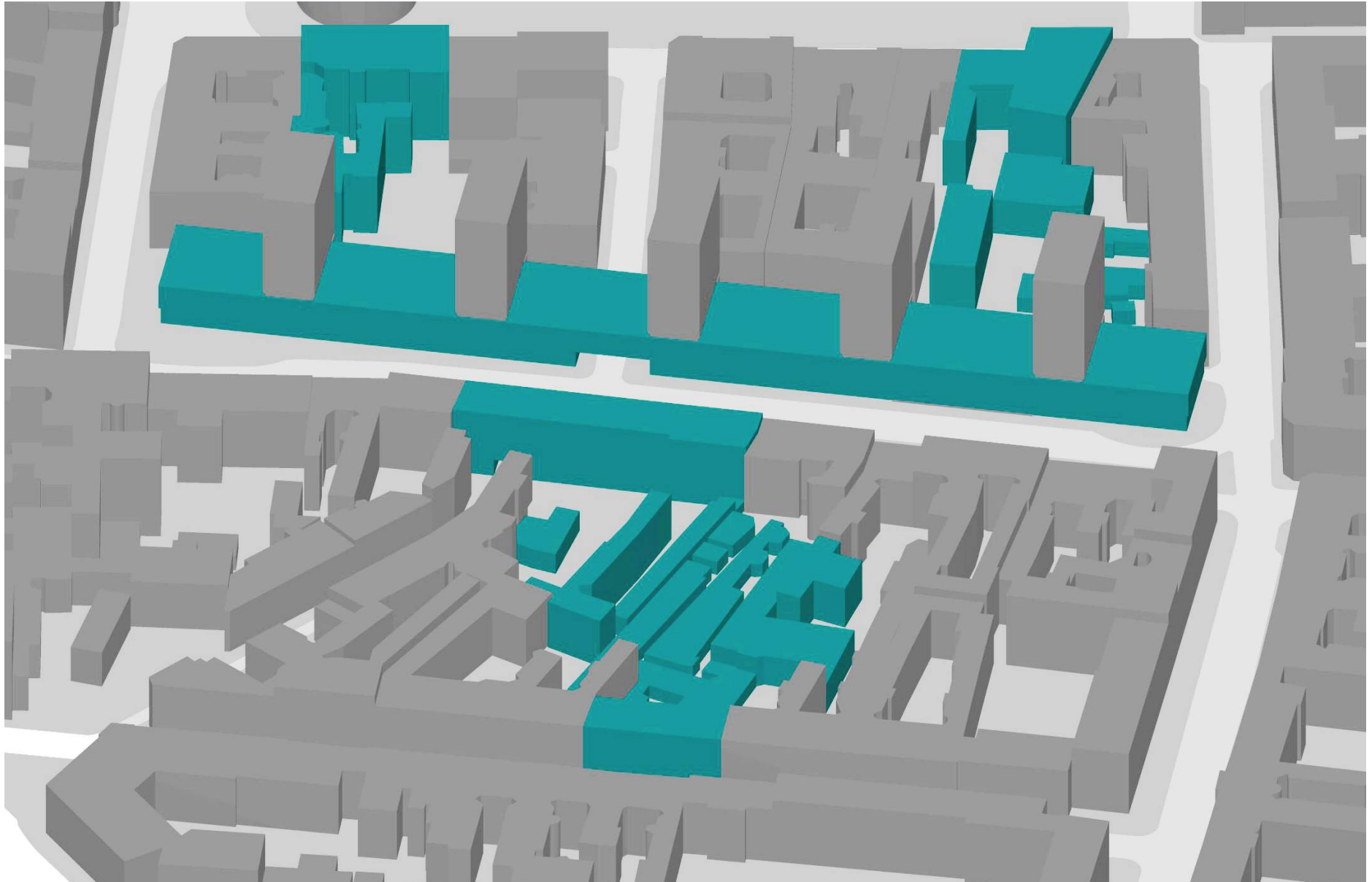


Fig. 74. An axonometric representation of buildings to demolish



Fig. 75. An axonometric representation of the new spatial concept

The goal of the intervention into the existing urban tissue of the Św. Marcin Street was a spatial reinterpretation of the selected focus point aimed at venturing into the street's backyard zone. A look behind the *Centrum* complex (see Fig. 73/1-5) revealed lost spaces that could be taken advantage of to benefit the Św. Marcin Street. On the opposite side, a set of pavilions constituting an outdated shopping passage (see Fig. 73/6-7) disrupts the original courtyard structure of the town houses. Claiming these spaces would allow the studied section to expand vertically and offer a new take on the Św. Marcin Street. The wish to transform the selected area into an urban center implies a unification of the entire block for the benefit of pedestrian visitors.

The described approach to dealing with the Św. Marcin Street led to the spatial concept presented on the previous pages. The scope of the demolition plan may seem extensive, yet it is not random. It follows a clear pattern of breaking through the urban structure in order to create new connections to neighboring streets. The 27 Grudnia Street – parallel to the Św. Marcin Street to the north – is a significant street adjacent to the previously mentioned *Plac Wolności* (Freedom Square). Establishing two new connecting streets in addition to the existing Kantaka Street is aimed at facilitating a bigger flow of people between the two parallel arteries. As for the Garncarska Street – leading away from the Św. Marcin Street on the

opposite side – it is important to reconnect it visually by means of removing the building hiding it from view. The northern block of the revitalized area confronts the proposed modernization attempt with that performed in the 1960s. The five high rises of the *Centrum* complex have been included in the revitalization scheme as an identifying element inherently associated with the Św. Marcin Street despite controversy. However, the base of the structure is unfavorable to an updated image of the complex. Freeing the towers from that horizontal anchor gives them a fresh setting and opens up the rigid structure. New buildings line the introduced connectors and force their way in between the high rises, which is emphasized by their vibrant colors. These two-story-high cuboids stretching out over the street are placed on tall columns to ensure an adequate light access to all buildings. Hence, an opportunity arises to create urban living rooms underneath suiting various outdoor activities. The southern block within the focus point gains a coherent layout through the removal of the cluster of pavilions followed by the introduction of new buildings forming a network of courtyards stretching from the Św. Marcin Street to the parallel Taczaka Street.

These two blocks are joined by a 35 meter wide pedestrian strip won by rerouting the tram traffic through the 27 Grudnia Street and the car traffic through the Taczaka Street.

Fig. 76. The plan of the revitalized Św. Marcin Street (to the right)



1:2000

-  NEW BUILDINGS
-  NEW PUBLIC SQUARES
-  NEW GREENERY
-  NEW TREES



5.2. The functional concept.

The previous subchapter illustrated the spatial organization of the revitalized area. The present one focuses on the functions of the newly introduced elements. The northern block of the studied site is devoted to business in the proposed scenario. The new buildings as well as the renovated high rises all contain office space with a total area of more than 60 000 m². The ground floors with 3 300 m² are occupied by services and retail units. The four outdoor urban living rooms underneath the horizontal structures are supposed to cater to a social function. They offer a covered space for seasonal initiatives organized by the City, such as summer activities including an urban beach, outdoor dining or skimboarding (see Chapter 6). Citizens may also register their own events to contribute to the community.

The feeling of community is also a component of the new functional arrangement within southern block of the revitalized site. The newly planned buildings contain apartments occupying a total area of 10 000 m² as well as shops and services in the ground floors with more than 2 400 m². Introducing a residential complex as part of the revitalization concept is aimed at promoting life in the city as an alternative to the many settlements being raised on the outskirts of Poznań. The buildings enclose a network of green courtyards centered around a marketplace with fresh

produce. These spaces offer a retreat from the busy high street for the residents and visitors. The generous number of balconies and loggias is meant to inspire a sense of connection to the Św. Marcin Street.

The main strip of the revitalized area is studded with benches, honey locust trees and the so called „umbrellas“ which provide shelter from the rain as well as shade. These „umbrellas“ consist of a steel frame fitted with patterned ETFE panels. They are supposed to offer a sense of security to those who frequent shopping centers for fear of the weather conditions, but also add an aesthetic value. After dark, they transform into colorful lanterns lighting up the night scenery of the Św. Marcin Street. The purpose of the 35 meter wide pedestrian section is to revive the atmosphere of a high street and to promote the lost art of an urban stroll. In addition to shopping, eating and drinking, the revitalization concept incorporates a range of otherwise scarce non-commercial spaces accessible to the general public, primarily the urban living rooms. The selection of activities mentioned above exemplifies spending a summer vacation in the city as one of the many ways in which the street could benefit the citizens. Other possible initiatives could include outdoor concerts, performances, sports, dance classes, parties, seasonal markets, workshops, exhibitions, etc. The new urban center is dedicated to a theme of spending time outside and enjoying the city.

The revitalization plan encompassing a spatial and functional concept also requires an outline of a business strategy to go along with it. The retail scene on the Św. Marcin Street needs to follow a theme that sets it apart from the collection of international brands replicated among multiple shopping centers across the city. Hence, a hypothetical course of action giving local and national brands preference has been taken in the present proposal. The selection of brands would include a range of national chain stores, local medium sized business, small businesses and pop-up stores. A diversified rent policy set by the City could constitute a measure regulating the street's performance. The graph below gives a rough representation of a possible municipal rent structure over time.

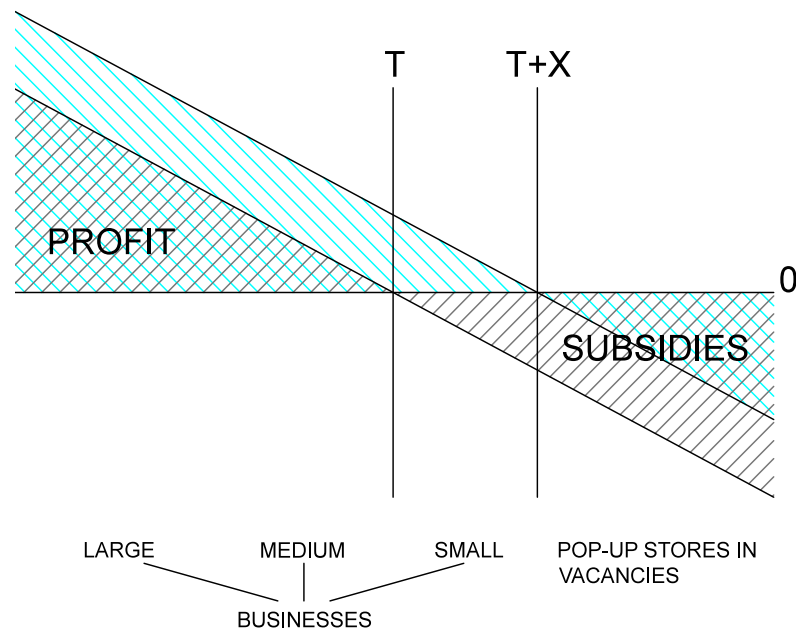


Fig. 77. A proposed municipal rent structure over time

The strategy is based on long-term economic incentives aimed at fuelling the street's growth prior to generating profit on part of the City. Big businesses renting larger retail units would balance out the subsidised small businesses and pop-up stores settling in in vacant units. With time, the profit curve would move proportionately to the street's commercial success.

Extra incentives for visitors

Shops, services & eateries:

- customers may apply for a universal customer card accepted at all shops, services and eateries
- customers receive a discount on their next purchase at any of the shops and services when picking up an online order at the high street location
- all eateries offer a student and senior discount as well as a resident discount
- all shops, services and eateries offer free and unlimited wi-fi
- customers may order a home delivery of items purchased on the high street

Transportation:

- customers of the Św. Marcin Street are eligible for the parking discounts offered by all shopping centers in the vicinity
- users of public transport holding a validated ticket or card gather discount points with each purchase

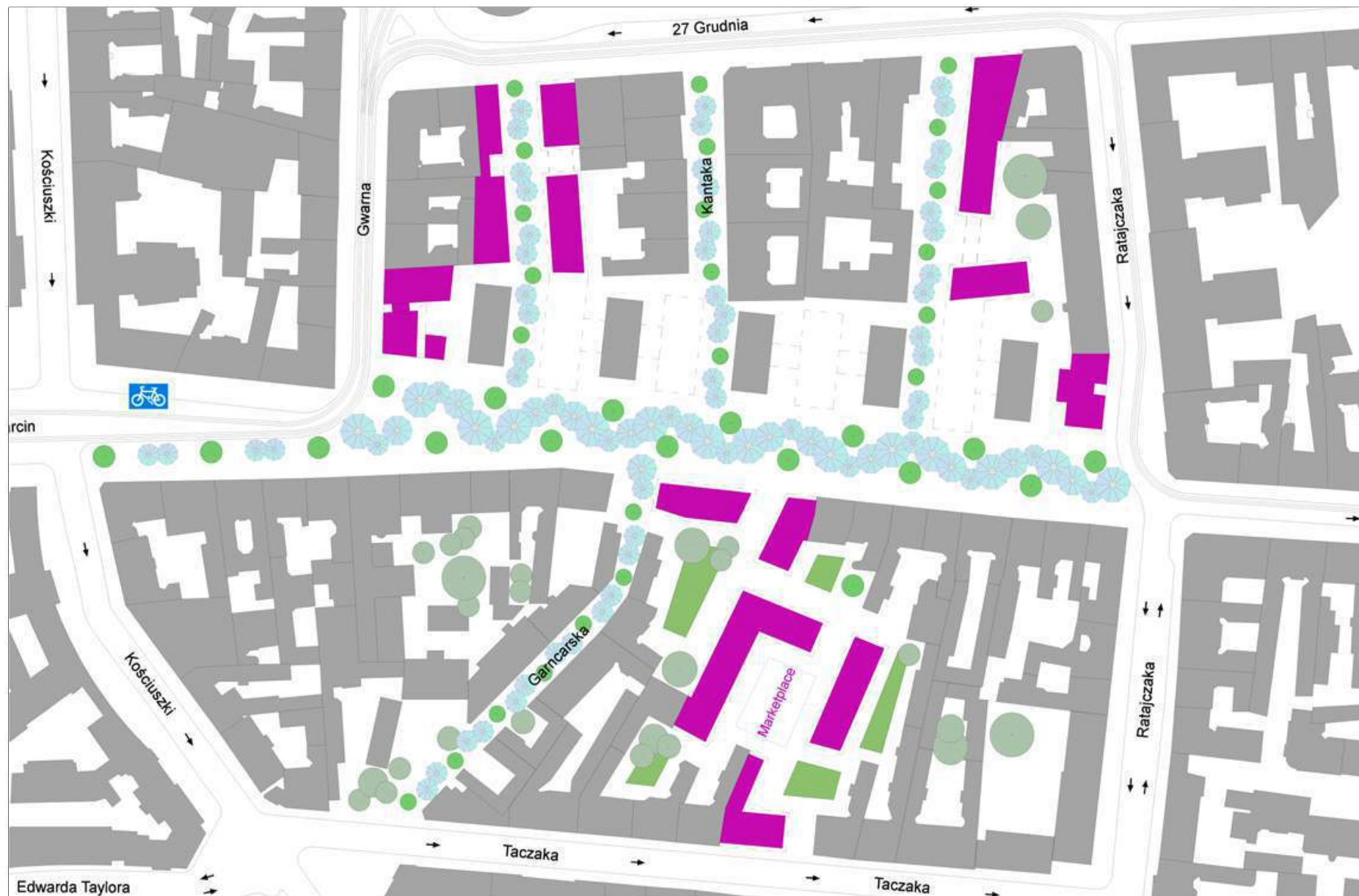


Fig. 78. Shops and services in the ground floors of the new buildings (marked magenta)

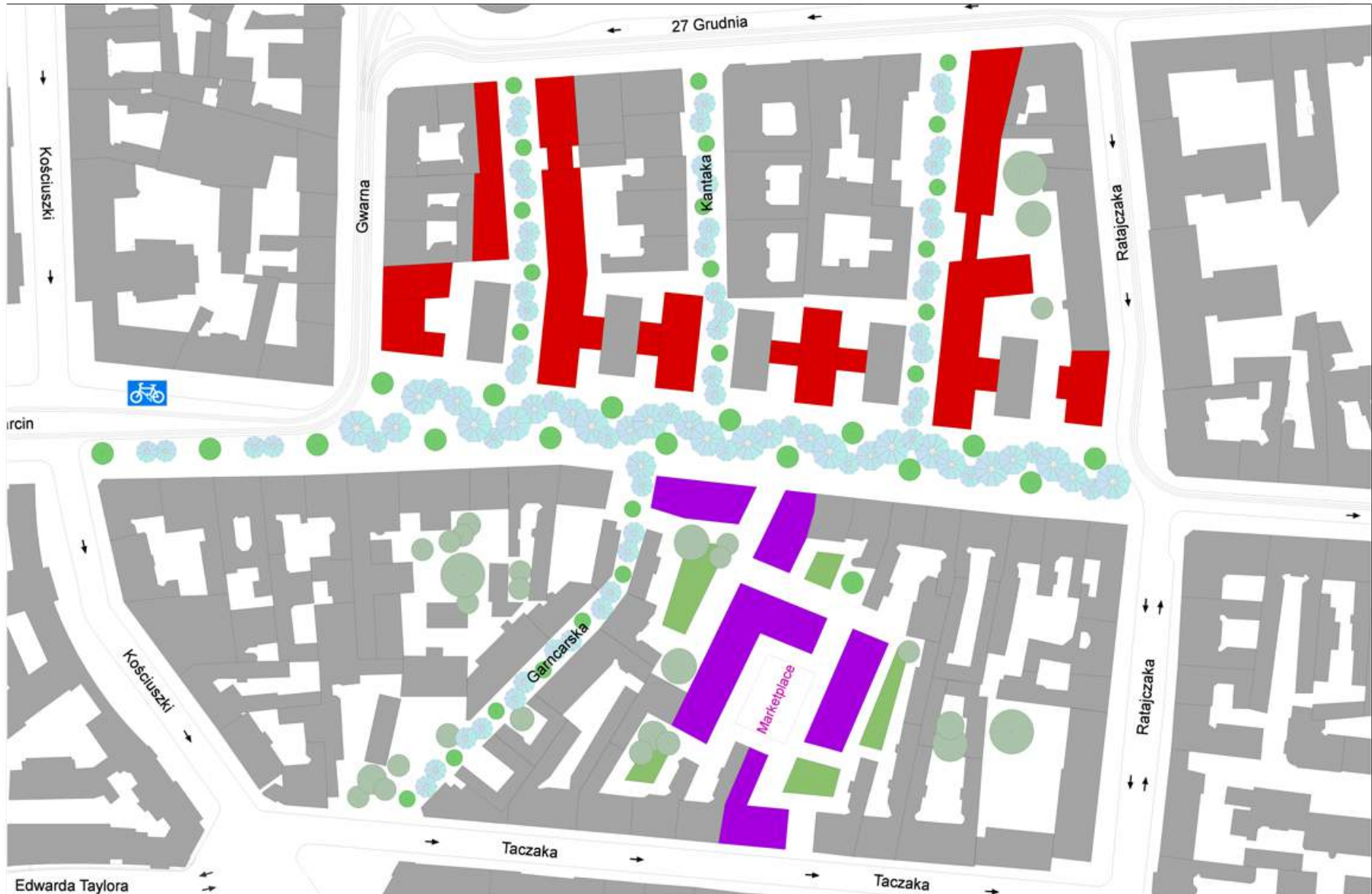


Fig. 79. Offices (marked red) and apartments (marked purple) above the ground floor

Chapter 6.

A journey through the revitalized Św. Marcin Street.

The following pages present images of the revitalized Św. Marcin Street, which showcase the vision for a new urban center. The aim of these images is to convey the atmosphere of a shared space through a selection of scenes playing out on the high street. The summer season has been chosen to present the Św. Marcin Street most advantageously. Summer is a time when being outside is most attractive and solutions for spending vacation in the city are much needed. The proposed urban living rooms answer to those needs and are available to all. Proposing temporary initiatives suitable for each season could be put on the city's social agenda and encourage spending time outdoors all year long.





Fig. 80. A view of the pedestrianized strip

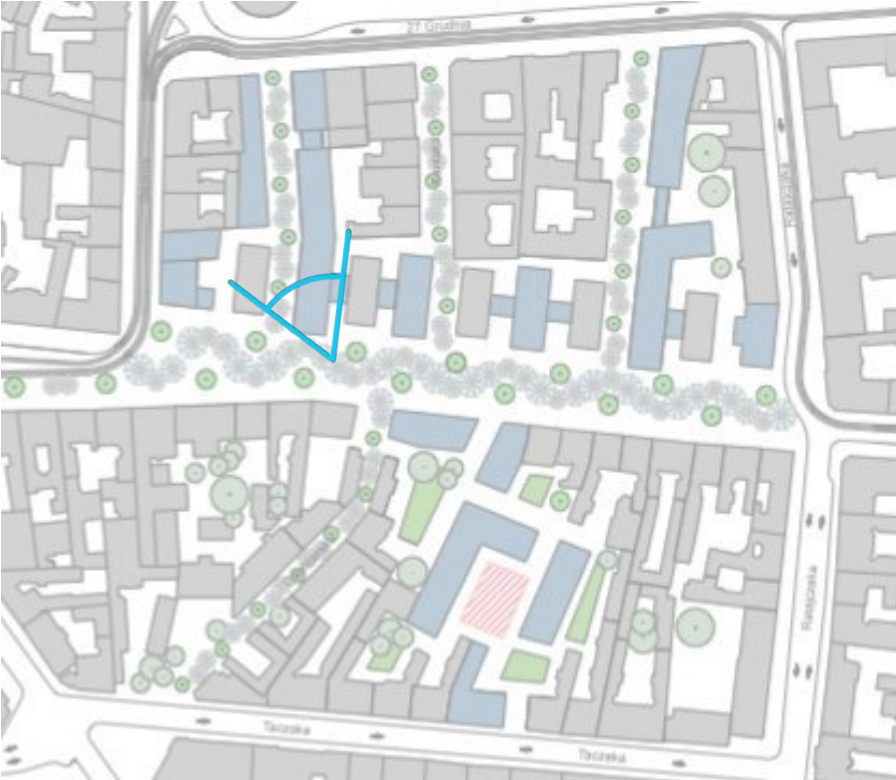


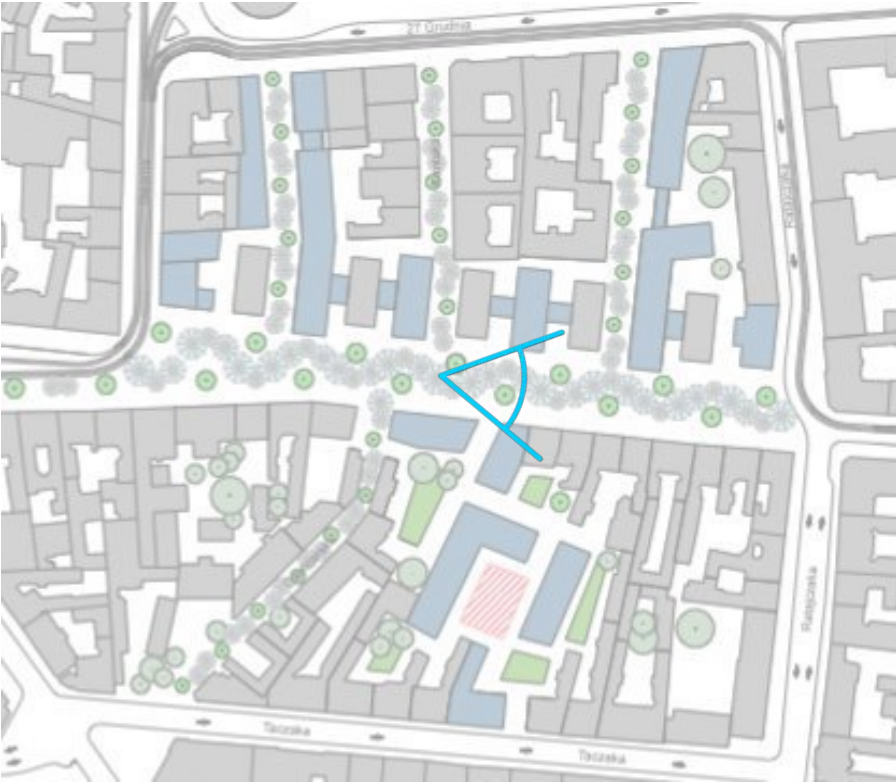


Fig. 81. An urban beach at one of the urban living rooms





Fig. 82. View of the Kantaka Street



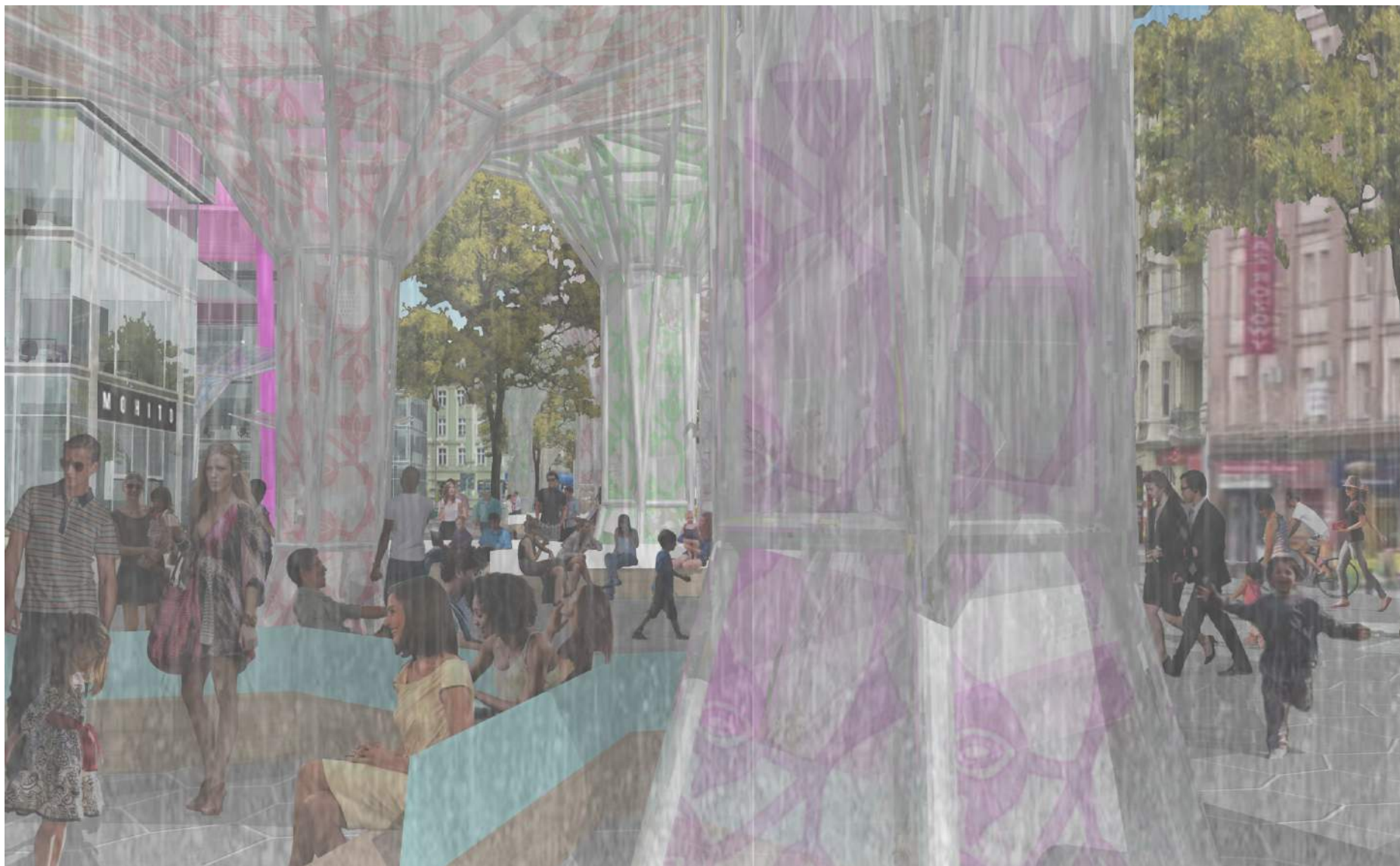


Fig. 83. People hiding from rain under the “umbrellas“





Fig. 84. A view towards the market within the green courtyards

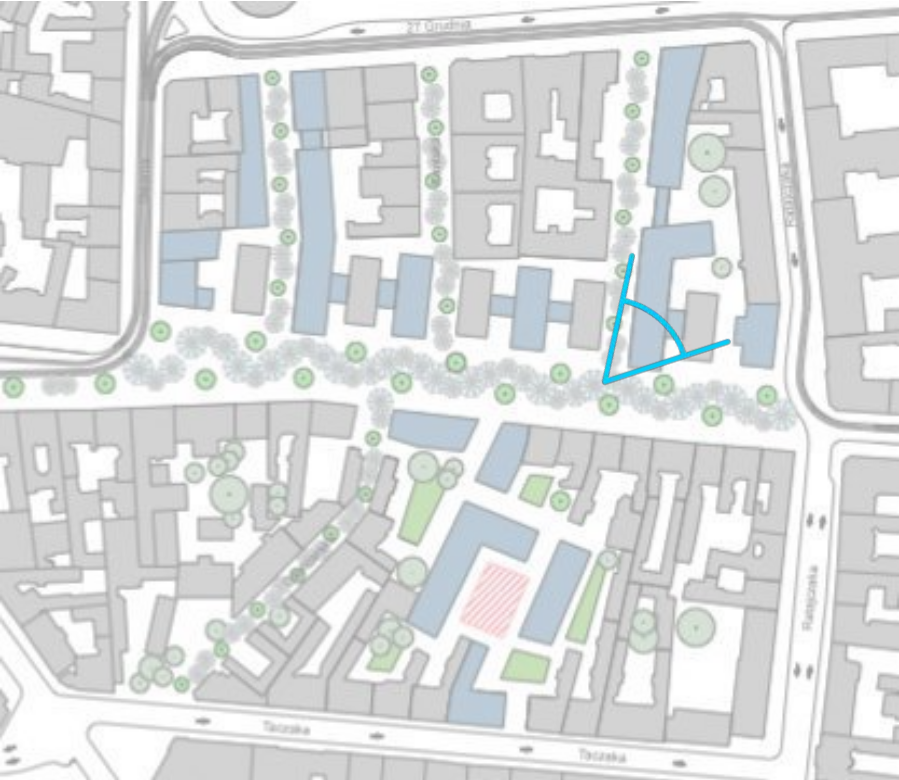




Fig. 85. A skimboarding track at another urban living room

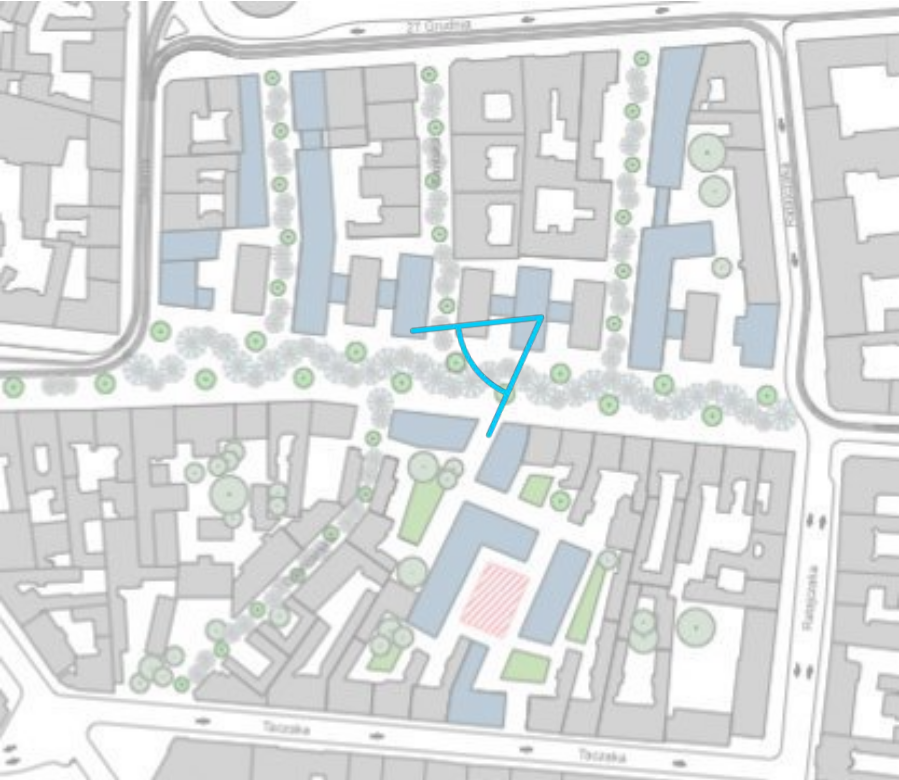




Fig. 86. A food alley at another urban living room at night

Conclusion

The present thesis offers a vision for revitalizing the Św. Marcin Street guided by the motivation of creating a new urban center. The theoretical as well as analytical parts preceding the practical one constitute a necessary prelude to the project. The first chapter contemplates the importance of centers in an urban environment setting the premise for the chosen topic. The second one is devoted to the notion of a high street to outline its value and provide arguments for keeping the high street alive. The analytical chapters introducing the city of Poznań and the Św. Marcin Street build a context for the project, which is vital for the understanding of the setting's character and the proposal that follows in the final part of the thesis.

The proposed concept puts forth a possibility for reshaping a section of the Św. Marcin Street to let it be experienced in a new light. A revitalization must go beyond a refurbishment to include a new quality. Hence, the project does not stay within the bounds of the street, but extends into the blocks. The reclaimed spaces are meant to become places of social interaction, which combine the commercial scene with much needed non-commercial areas. Furthermore, the controversial *Centrum* complex may continue to be identified with the street in a positive manner. These changes include a pedestrian zone to prioritize the visitors' and residents' comfort instead of the heavy car traffic.

The ideas presented in the proposal are simple and yet missing in the urban environment of Poznań. The rapid expansion of shopping centers in the city center has clearly been a product of Poland's reentry into the free-market economy. However, assigning blame has not been the objective of this thesis. Shopping centers as well as online shopping serve the community and customer convenience is their great asset. The point of the present project is to revive a high street as an alternate platform for commerce, business and pleasure, which also celebrates the city. The revitalized Św. Marcin Street is dedicated to all who wish to enjoy Poznań's urban atmosphere.

Hypothetically, the concept would pose a bureaucratic challenge in connection with the existing ownership structure. Yet, imposing formal restrictions already at the stage of an imagined vision would hinder a creative process and limit the scope of the project. Creating a pedestrian zone alone might not be enough to catalyze a revitalization. Should a starting point be selected within the proposed scheme, it would have to be a strong accent: the reinterpretation of the *Centrum* complex to break through its rigid frontage in spatial terms and populate the office spaces in functional terms. However, the presented concept does seem feasible in its entirety and does manage to demonstrate the potential for rediscovery that lies in Poznań's Św. Marcin Street.

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The brand names visible in Fig. 80-86 have been used in the present thesis to exemplify the retail scene in Poznań and are in no way an advertisement.