

## Justyna Mokras-Grabowska

University of Lodz, Faculty of Geographical Sciences, Department of Geography of Recreation, Lodz, Poland

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0994-5484>

e-mail: [justyna.grabowska@geo.uni.lodz.pl](mailto:justyna.grabowska@geo.uni.lodz.pl)

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# Recreational Space – Forms, Transformations and Innovative Trends in Development

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**Abstract:** The paper presents certain recreation-related phenomena and trends in contemporary urban recreational space. In the first part of the article, based on a literature review, the author classifies recreation phenomena, with reference to tourism and leisure. The analysis concerns theoretical relationships between the geographical and recreational space. The author points to the endogenous and exogenous functions of recreational space. The second part of the article is dedicated to innovative trends in contemporary urban recreational space design, including urban green areas and creative spaces. The author argues that urban recreational spaces are taking more and more experimental and unique forms, becoming better and better defined with regard to functionality, aesthetics or even identity.

**Keywords:** recreation, recreational space, urban recreational space, urban green areas, creative space

## 1. Introduction

The literature on the subject presents many attempts to classify aspects of recreation, where it is usually mistakenly identified with physical activity. At present, the semantic range of recreation is constantly expanding and it has been suggested that its meaning should encompass all kinds of activity occupying people's free time, stimulating their creative development and not focusing solely on entertainment or physical effort. Recreation phenomena occur in the physical and social environment called recreational space. Currently, urban recreational spaces are taking more and more experimental and unique forms. It is also important that this

particular space is being equipped with appropriate elements of infrastructure, making it more attractive.

The article presents major theoretical phenomena referring to recreation and recreational space. It is mainly an attempt to create an individual classification of recreation and to present the author's own concept of recreational space. The author also discusses the relationships between the recreational and geographical space. She points to the endogenous and exogenous functions of recreational space and discusses innovative trends in creating contemporary urban recreational space.

## 2. Recreation – controversies around the concept and its semantic changes

Recreation and leisure have multiple meanings based on individual perception. The understanding of the concepts of recreation and leisure is not always uniform and researchers struggle to agree on their meaning to society, individuals and culture. It should be empha-

sized that in the era of globalization and profound socio-economic transformations, recreation is gaining new meanings. The term *recreation* is usually associated with physical activity (physical recreation), but it has been increasingly suggested that its meaning should also

include creative activities, which occupy people in their free time (Napierała and Muszkieta, 2011; McLean and Hurd, 2012; Mroczek-Żulicka, 2018; Mokras-Grabowska, 2018). Creative activities can be understood as those including novelty, expressing oneself in an original and useful way or spending time doing artistic activities (Conner et al., 2018, p. 183). The idea of creativity is connected with various areas of human activities, regarding tourism and recreation (Richards, 2011). Creativity in turn means to develop distinctive places, landscapes and tourist destinations, transforming them into creative spaces. They are defined as places where creative production and performance occur. They are socially constructed products of physical facility, place, people and operational resources. They carry significant, symbolic value (Duxbury and Murray 2010).

The review of literature on the subject of recreation and leisure shows that the term *recreation* is commonly understood as the action of getting back to the original condition, recovery, regaining strength and recreating (Demel and Humen, 1970; Czajkowski, 1979; Drzewiecki, 1992; Toczek-Werner, 2007; Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2009; Napierała and Muszkieta, 2011). The term also includes free time activities, taken up for the purpose of restoring mental and physical powers (Warszyńska and Jackowski, 1978; Medlik, 1995; Kunicki, 1997; Bródka, 2004; Bachvarov and Dziegieć, 2005; Kurek and Mika, 2008; Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2009), as well as resting, spending time in a pleasant way, or even personal development (Dumazedier, 1972; Kunicki, 1997; Bachvarov and Dziegieć, 2005; Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2009). It should be also emphasized that outdoor and indoor recreational activity can be distinguished within entire concept of recreation (Tribe, 2011; Bończak, 2013) Recreation may be enjoyed along with thousands of participants or it can be a solitary experience. It may represent a lifetime of interest and involvement or consist of a single, isolated experience. It is a blend of physical, mental and emotional activity (Broadhurst, 2001, p. 2).

Most controversies are evoked by the division of recreation into active and passive. Many authors claim that passive recreation involves refraining from any mental or physical activity (Drzewiecki, 1992; Pilawska et al., 2003;

Bachvarov and Dziegieć, 2005; Toczek-Werner, 2007; Pawlikowska-Piechotka, 2009; Meeras, 2010). Active recreation, on the other hand, involves taking up such an effort. Active recreation is usually understood as physical recreation, whose basic component is physical effort. Quoting Winiarski (2011, p. 17), it is a sport, tourist or hobbyist activity, compensating for movement deficit (hypokinesia).

However, considering the fact that the main characteristic feature of recreation is activeness, it becomes a category of action, opposite to inaction, including activities such as running, sailing, but also playing board games, solving crossword puzzles or looking at pieces of art in a museum (Toczek-Werner, 2007, p. 10). Thus, it is always a form of action and recreational activity, which people take up in the time free of work and duties. According to Winiarski (2011, p. 13), the term *recreation* was already used in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century to refer to activities providing physical and mental rest after tiresome work. Amongst all leisure activities, which may be passive and active, recreation requires certain effort (physical or mental), so it should be analysed only in terms of active rest.

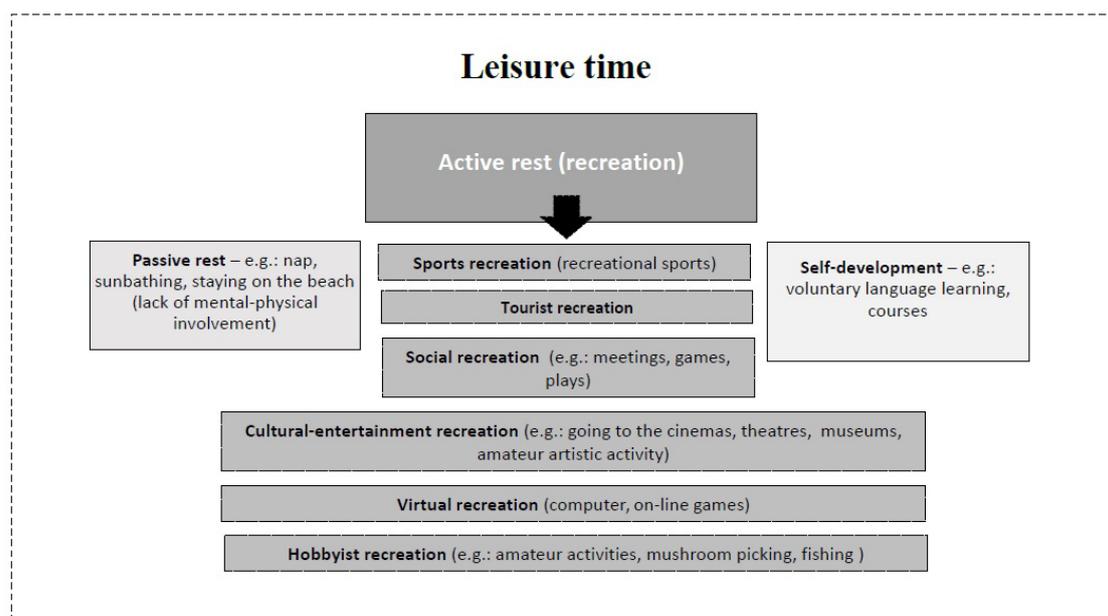
Recreation may be an equivalent of another English word – *leisure*. According to Dumazedier (1972, after Pilawska et al., 2003, p. 15), leisure involves a set of activities which an individual may indulge in voluntarily, to relax during the time free from work, family and social duties. The term does not have a Polish equivalent, is difficult to define precisely, has “blurred edges” and is based on a subjective sense of freedom. However, it is a qualitative phenomenon and reflects the feelings about the experiences and content which should characterise leisure time (Bachvarov and Dziegieć, 2005, p. 80). This is because subjective experiences expressing a given culture are the essence of recreation as a psychological phenomenon. Leisure (or free) time is time spent away from work and duties (work, study, sleep, caring for dependants, chores (Broadhurst, 2001, p. 2). It is time for satisfying personal needs, amusement, complete rest, creative labour and self-development. This is juxtaposed by occupied time. It is worth mentioning, that the same activities have different meanings in free and occupied time. For example sleeping as a biological necessity (occupied time) and as napping, relaxing (free

time) or necessary home activities (e.g. sewing, gardening, raising children) and hobby home activities (e.g. playing with children). The subjective feeling of freedom and necessity is significant in that case.

Nowadays, recreation does not have to take place in “officially free time” (outside working time and place). It is becoming increasingly mixed with work (especially in the case of, so called, free professions, containing elements of creativity). Moreover, many authors suggest that recreation can involve limited economic effects (Drzewiecki, 1992; Winiarski, 2011). Whether something is recreation depends on the state of mind, and not on the form of activity (Broadhurst, 2001, p. 4; Meeras, 2010, p. 8–10; Winiarski 2011, p. 14).

The semantic range of the concept of recreation is vast. It is classified depending on the following: people’s physical, mental and social

condition, the body’s readiness for physical effort, the person’s age, sex, interests, the area where recreation takes place, the purpose, type and form of exercise, as well as motivation (Broadhurst, 2001; Baud-Bovy, 2002; Tribe, 2005; Napierała and Muszkieta 2011, p. 27; McLean and Hurd 2012, p. 3). A conventional classification of recreational activities was presented by Winiarski (2011, p.16). Based on that classification, the author has attempted to create her own typology (Fig. 1). She leans towards understanding recreation as a form of active rest. An additional category is self-development (e.g. learning foreign languages, participating in courses as a leisure time activity). It should be emphasized that currently, at the time of socio-economic changes, computer-based entertainment (virtual recreation) is also gaining significance (McLean and Hurd 2012, p. 4).



**Figure 1.** Classification of recreation and leisure phenomena (Source: Author’s own study based on: Czajkowski, 1979; Winiarski, 2011; Napierała and Muszkieta, 2011)

An important and very up-to-date issue is the notion of creative recreation. Distinguished by some authors in general classifications, it is presently gaining a new meaning. It is being more and more widely explored, particularly in the face of creative tourism development (Richards, 2011, p. 1227). For years, creative recreation has been perceived mainly as artistic activity pursued in free time, including fine arts, music, model-building, theatre, photography or film (Czajkowski,

1979; Napierała and Muszkieta, 2011). In the literature on the subject, activity of this kind has also been described as hobbyist, social, cultural-entertainment, or even DIY. At present, creative recreation is understood as any type of activity undertaken in free time, which is at the same time new, original and valuable in terms of organization, topic and location. With reference to the classification of recreation forms proposed in this article (Fig. 1), the term *creative recreation* can be used to

define any of the forms, on the condition it displays the abovementioned features.

Considerable terminology problems result from identifying or distinguishing between the terms *recreation* and *tourism*, which are overlapping concepts (Hall and Page, 2006, after: Meeras, 2010, p. 5). According to Pawlikowska-Piechotka (2009, p. 10), recreation controversially does not involve travelling and moving within a space, which makes it different from tourism. Many authors, however, tend to understand recreation in a way which encompasses forms of tourism. This, quite rightly, makes recreation superior to tourism (Warszyńska and Jackowski, 1978; Drzewiecki, 1992; Medlik, 1995; Broadhurst, 2001; Bródka, 2004; Bachvarov and Dziegieć, 2005; Iwicki, 2006; Kurek and Mika, 2008). It is worth stressing, however, that tourism requires a change of the place of stay (Tribe, 2011). Its special character involves movement, changing the natural, cultural or social environment as well as everyday rhythm of life. It signifies personal contact with nature, culture and people (cognitive aims). These features are not always necessary in recreation, which in its narrow meaning can

be practiced at the place of residence or in its nearest vicinity. Thus, we can assume that every form of tourism is recreation, but not every form of recreation can be identified with tourism (Bródka, 2004, p. 20).

In order to explain the discrepancies above, it should be said that at present the word *recreation* has two meanings. The first one (broad) refers to all kinds of activity undertaken in free time (including tourism). Recreation understood in this way includes both, sport activities, performed recreationally in one's free time, and all forms of tourism. Thus, it is a superior concept in relation to tourism. The second meaning of recreation (narrow) refers to the area where the person who practises it lives – recreation understood in this way is pursued without the need to leave the permanent place of residence, which puts it in contrast to tourism. Hence, the understanding of recreation means the recreant is a person doing recreational activities in the area where they live and in its closest vicinity. It most often involves using sports and recreational facilities and areas, after work or other duties.

### 3. Recreational space as a part of geographical space

Despite the fact that recreation and tourism can be understood as partly separate phenomena, they take place within the same space, which is often referred to as recreational-tourist space (Bródka, 2004, p. 22). The author agrees with this statement, but due to the fact that recreation is superior to tourism, she suggests using the term *recreational space*.

Recreation develops in the physical and social environment, consisting of natural, objective and human components, developing as a result of their coexistence and cooperation. Toczek-Werner (2007, p. 41) refers to them as the recreational environment. Due to the spatial aspects of recreational behaviours, the term *recreational space* is more commonly used.

The most popular definition of recreational space is the one proposed by Drzewiecki (1992). He defines it as a part of geographical space displaying qualities that enable and favour practicing different forms of rest and involving socially and spatially significant recreational

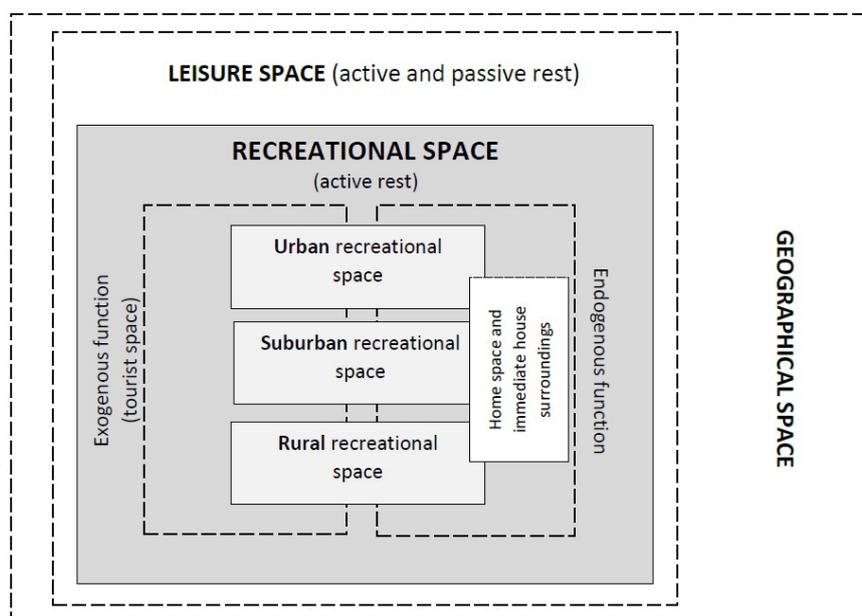
processes. Preobrazenski (1975) understands it as a part of social space, where natural and cultural elements are the basic factors determining its recreational potential and location of infrastructure. Włodarczyk (2009) suggests that it is an everyday life space (narrow sense), where people undertake activities reduced to routine behaviours (regular visits at clubs, swimming pools or gyms).

Recreational space gives space a sociological sense; it creates the concept of rest space. It is a space perceived by an individual from the point of view of their recreational needs. It encompasses behaviours connected with activities serving the purpose of getting away from it all, becoming free from an effort which requires mental engagement, relaxing, psycho-physical slow-down, the sense of joy and satisfaction.

The literature on the subject also distinguishes tourist-recreational space (Liszewski and Bachvarov, 1998, p. 40). Beyond any doubt,

then, recreational space is any space where recreational activity occurs (including tourist activity). It should be noted, that not every geographical space is connected with recreational

activities. Non-recreational space is a part of geographic area not used for recreational purposes due to its inaccessibility (e.g. industrial, military, contaminated areas)<sup>1</sup>.



**Figure 2.** The place of recreational space within geographical space, with regard to the endogenous and exogenous functions (Source: Author's own study based on: Drzewiecki, 1992; Winiarski, 2011; Napierała and Muszkieta, 2011; Meeras, 2010; McLean and Hurd, 2015)

In the author's opinion, recreational space is undeniably a part of geographical space in the physical sense, and at the same time a part of leisure space (Fig. 2). In this way, it refers to active recreation and is divided into urban, suburban and rural recreational space. It must be stressed that it may perform both the endogenous functions (in relation to the inhabitants'

recreation at the place of permanent residence and in the area of its direct influence) and the exogenous functions (externally, at tourist destinations). In the case of the endogenous functions, also home space and the immediate house surroundings are significant. This particular space lends itself to "rest of short and medium duration" (Bródka, 2004, p. 24).

#### 4. Urban recreational space – innovative trends

The transformations taking place in the urban space regarding the development of recreation infrastructure are very rapid. Cities are becoming creative and inspiring (Kowalczyk and Derek, 2015, p. 311). They are used not only in new forms of tourism, but also for their inhabitants' everyday recreation. Therefore, the role of public spaces in cities is more and more appreciated (Wantuch-Matla, 2009, p. 373). In times of globalization and growing consumerism, urban space is becoming a kind of "entertain-

ment machine." Along with the decline of the industrial function of cities, they are assuming new roles, based on their local specificity (e.g. cultural resources, natural assets, attractive public spaces). The element which is becoming increasingly important for the economic development of cities is leisure space, satisfying the sophisticated recreational needs of the city dwellers (endogenous factors of urban development). City inhabitants (especially young and well educated) want to live in places where

<sup>1</sup> It can be compared with non-tourist space distinguished by Włodarczyk (2014).

they can spend their free time in an interesting way. Hence, it seems essential to care about the public spaces in cities, including the form and aesthetics of recreational spaces. Cities which are attractive to their inhabitants are becoming more and more attractive to tourists (exogenous function). Leisure services turn out to be an important element of urban policy (Kowalczyk and Derek, 2015, p. 316). They include activities in the domain of culture, education, entertainment, sport and recreation, as well as taking care about the spatial order. The activities should also include improving the city transport system or the accessibility of urban green areas.

Such an attitude leads to the appearance of new urban planning conceptions, in which leisure time space, including recreational space, plays an important role (Kwiatkowski and Kryśkiewicz, 2018). One of them is the *Compact City* conception, which presents a city of “short distances”, where the urban design encourages walking and riding bikes. The conception also assumes an easy access to infrastructure, services and natural environment. Green areas are to be reachable within 10 minutes’ walk. Another conception – *Fair Shared City* – assumes equal access to public infrastructure, also recreational, for different social groups (e.g. access to pedestrian passages and places where the citizens can spend their free time). The idea of *Smart City* promotes spatial development of cities for the benefit of local communities, where public spaces lose their anonymity. It is a conception referring to the possibility for different social groups to choose places for everyday walks and leisure, as well as interaction with the surroundings. The idea of the *Green City (Eco-city)* is an attempt to find balance between the natural and the anthropogenic environment. According to the idea of sustainable development, cities are more and more strongly incorporated into their natural environment by building parks, water courses and reservoirs, community gardens, as well as recreation centres. All these activities contribute to the sense of neighbourhood community as well as a connection with the natural environment. The *Slow City* idea links to the conception of *Cittaslow*. Cities which belong to this group must meet certain socio-economic requirements, including those concerning the adequate size and quality of urban green areas.

Based on new urban planning conceptions in cities, new recreational spaces are appearing, and public space is becoming an important element of the cityscape and the suburbs. It is important to shape spaces which blend well into the landscape, with a heavy load of symbolic content (Wantuch-Matla, 2009, p. 373).

Innovative trends in the development of recreational space include new solutions as regards its infrastructure, as well as forms of urban greenery as “urban decor” (Wantuch-Matla 2016, p. 143).

Urban green areas, performing significant recreational functions, have a positive influence on the aesthetic assets of the city and its inhabitants’ standard of living. They have a strong impact on the spatial composition, shape the city’s physiognomy, as well as introduce the additional asset of, so called, “deeper views”. The innovative solutions include elements such as vertical gardens, gardens arranged on the rooftops (also those where economic activity used to be conducted, e.g. growing vegetables or bee-keeping), city meadows or green walls (Michniewicz-Ankiersztajn, 2014, p. 135). Other new components of urban space include observation decks and platforms, waterfronts, pocket parks or parks above streets, set up on former rail viaducts (Mokras-Grabowska, 2018, p.2). Examples of such investments are the vertical gardens at the Market Square in Katowice, University Gardens in Warsaw, an apiary on the roof of Eurocentrum in Warsaw, flower commons in Warsaw, Poznań and Wrocław, the pocket garden called “Butterfly Garden” in Krakow, or The High Line in New York.

Urban gardening is also gaining significance. It includes ideas like community gardens, Family Allotment Gardens, as well as innovative social movements, such as *landsharing* or *guerilla gardening*. Apart from important recreational, social and ecological functions, these concepts are of great aesthetic, educational or creative value (recreational spaces shaped by the users themselves) (Fritsche et al., 2011; Lovell et al., 2014; Eidimiente et al., 2016; Nix, 2016). It is worth mentioning that in the case of community gardens and Family Allotment Gardens, there have been more leisure initiatives raised in recent years, aiming at the animation of local communities by family or neighbourhood recreation (e.g. gardening

and culinary workshops, concerts, exhibitions, picnics and community fairs). In accordance with the Open Program of Social Development, it is postulated that complexes of Family Allotment Gardens (FAG) should be a part of green recreational systems of cities and in this way become recreational areas, used not only by the allotment owners. Examples of such initiatives include holidays for senior citizens on the premises of the “Rakowiec” FAG in Warsaw or “Polanka” FAG in Łódź, as well as creating educational trails and health paths in the “Jutrzenka” FAG in Radzionkowo or A. Mickiewicz FAG in Jarocin.

One of the innovative recreational spaces in cities is the creative space. The essence and value of creativity was noticed in the late 1960s (Gawron and Suchacka, 2013, p. 82). According to Richards (2011, p. 1225), modern creativity is a key to economic development, as well as to creating the uniqueness of places. Creative industries (e.g. art, film, music, gastronomy, design, advertising) are becoming the driving force of post-industrial cities. This phenomenon is connected with the broadly understood experience economy (Stasiak, 2013, p. 29), where in order to intensify the impressions and emotions, augmented reality is created, new spaces appear, new infrastructure is created in public spaces, and the creative products are “consumed”. The process includes building new recreational facilities (swimming pools complexes, sports and recreation grounds, theme parks, science centres), as well as huge shopping-cultural-recreational centres (malls).

Creative industries are currently becoming the leading branches of new economy, as well as an element creating new cultural (including recreational) urban spaces. In the opinion of Florida (after: Gawron and Suchacka, 2013), in order to ensure a high level of innovativeness of the economy, it is necessary for the creative class to exist. Alternative public spaces are emerging – cultural meetings places, which more and more often become the Third Place, a space of hybridity, or even “cool” places, where creative industries form their characteristic, alternative atmosphere (*genius loci*, creative milieu) (Richards, 2011, p. 1241; Memarovic et al., 2014).

Creative spaces encourage their users to take up a variety of educational, cultural, sports or artistic activities. Through their multifunctional

character, they develop the need for exploration; they typically entail a dialogue between the user and the physical elements of space. Creative cities are unconventional, tolerant and open, as well as offer an opportunity to follow a proper lifestyle (Gawron and Suchacka, 2013, p. 96). They feature commercial spaces of consumption, which are an important element of the city image and its identity. Highly significant here are “food and drink spaces”, which support the process of revitalizing neglected city areas, or even cause the development of gastronomic tourism. What is consumed in these spaces is the style of living through eating, drinking, music and atmosphere. Creative spaces also include solitary buildings, which are a kind of “spatial marks”. According to O. Frey, creative cities may be called “amalgamate” cities, where various structures and elements (constructions, socio-psychological components) functioning in the city are mixed. We can also observe a diversification of communications and ways of living within one space, which constitute the phenomenon of temporal use of the city (after Gawron and Suchacka, 2013, p. 98).

Creativity gains particular importance in post-industrial space, where the revitalization of neglected areas is a way to restore the sense of security to the inhabitants and a stimulus to spend free time in an active way. It also brings positive changes in the quality of life and the well-being of the city-dwellers. The tool used in the process of improving the city image is revitalization, which increases its attractiveness. Creative activities in the spaces of former factories, mines and other post-industrial facilities are provocative, challenging, witty; they stimulate senses, force interactions (a kind of game between the space and its user) (Wan-tuch-Matla, 2016, p. 118). Such a space ceases to be anonymous and mute – it begins to speak its own, new language, often playing with tradition and modernity.

Examples of activities of this kind are found in the post-industrial spaces of Łódź. The city of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century textile industry often surprises us today with daring revitalization and creative use of post-industrial architecture. It flourishes as a centre of fashion, design, film and creative industries. The economic basis of this post-industrial city in recent years has been culture, including the particularly rich

traditions of film-making and Łódź Avant-garde. Many of the cultural services of the city are directed towards niche users. Following the assumptions of the brand management strategy for 2010–2016, the city intends to promote itself through modern economy based on creativity, independent culture and art education. A characteristic feature of Łódź culture, and at the same time the spaces related to it, is its

“off” character (so called “off” culture), understood as avant-garde, staying outside the main stream, directed at a small group of recipients. Numerous projects involving the revitalization of former industrial complexes include OFF Piotrkowska, WI-MA Creative Industries Complex (former Widzew Manufaktura), or the Księży Młyn Creative District.

## 5. Summary

Over the last years, the semantic range of recreation has changed significantly. Identified mainly with physical recreation, it is understood today also as creative activity, which has an impact on human personal development. In this way, recreational space, which is a part of geographical space, has acquired new meanings and dimensions. The background for these activities are social, economic and cultural transformations in the increasingly globalized world. Leisure services are treated as an important factor of urban development, forming recreational space. There are more and more activities related to investing in the archi-

tectonic tissue and in elements of small architecture, arranging urban greenery or introducing art into public spaces. Unique, well-defined, functional, creative and well thought-out leisure space arrangement in the city, which more and more frequently refers to the identity of the place, stimulates, develops and activates the users intellectually and emotionally. In this way, it improves the city inhabitants' quality of life. Recreational space as a public space is a common good, a part of the everyday life of urban communities, whose needs should be taken into consideration at the planning stage.

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