Diversity and Inclusion as a Critical Factors in the Urban Revitalization Efforts – Community and Individuals Perspective

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Abstract

This article will explore the role of diversity and inclusion in the urban revitalization process, highlighting the benefits of a diverse and inclusive community for both individuals and the community as a whole.

The research method used to achieve the goal and answer the research questions is a critical analysis of the literature, as well as an analysis of secondary research.

The current paradigm of urban management including through revitalization seems to revolve around individuation and flexibility in combining technology with human needs. This perspective calls for policies for inclusion and diversity. By recognizing and responding to the diverse needs of residents in the revitalization process, the creation of open, tolerant, inclusive cities is achieved, which is conducive to reducing social exclusion. And by extension, it also promotes the elimination of discriminatory practices against its current and future residents.

Key words: *Inclusion, diversity, diversity management, revitalization, city, sustainability*

Introduction

Revitalization involves making changes in social space. Social space is defined as a specific territory inhabited by a social group that has marked it in a certain way, determined its functions and given it meaning. In recent years in Poland, numerous cities and towns have been making efforts to restore the vitality of the space, community, economy or environment. Successful social change requires a commitment to action at all levels. When cities identify good practices related to inclusion in the design, implementation and evaluation of city-level policies and services, municipal governments are better prepared to take timely and effective action to address exclusion (UNESCO, 2016). The revitalization of these areas is diverse in nature and usually tailored to the context of the problems and challenges that are considered most acute in a given center. Choosing the function of the area that is the subject of the intended activities for its socio-economic revitalization remains a challenging task. This is due both to the difficulty of "matching" functions to actual needs (existing and those that may arise in the future), as well as to the fact that the very concept of urban functions is ambiguous. Cities also play a key role in the fight against discrimination. Their level of governance is closest to the people and has the potential to significantly improve life. They share the responsibility for protecting citizens from discrimination, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders.

Urban revitalization is the process of renewing and revitalizing urban areas to create more livable, sustainable, and vibrant communities (Feng, Li, 2029; Liu 2022). The process of urban revitalization involves several factors, including economic development, social and cultural activities, and physical improvements to the built environment. One key factor that is increasingly recognized as important to the success of urban revitalization efforts is diversity and inclusion. This article will explore the role of diversity and inclusion in the urban revitalization process, highlighting the benefits of a diverse and inclusive community for both individuals and the community as a whole. To achieve the goal, a literature review was made, including a critical analysis of existing research and publications related to the research topic. The aim of the literature review was to identify gaps in existing research, highlight the strengths and weaknesses of previous research, and provide a basis for ongoing considerations.

The author wants to demonstrate that by taking into account the perspective of inclusion and diversity in the entire process of urban revitalization expressed by noticing and responding to the diverse needs of residents in the revitalization process, the creation of open, tolerant, inclusive cities is achieved. Moreover, diversity fosters creativity, which is unleashed with full force when the

diverse voices of residents come together. The absence of this perspective in the revitalization process risks remaining insensitive to the economic and social aspects of cities.

Revitalization - theoretical Aspects

Urban revitalization is a complex process that involves various aspects of urban planning, economic development, and community building. The aim of this process is to improve the quality of life for residents, attract investment and increase economic growth in urban areas. In recent years, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion in urban revitalization efforts.

The concept of revitalization (from Latin re + vita - literally: restoration, revival) should be understood as: "a coordinated process, social and investment, carried out jointly by the local government, local community and other participants, which is an element of development policy aimed at counteracting the effects of degradation of urbanized space, crisis phenomena, stimulating development and qualitative changes through an increase in social and economic activity, improving the residential environment and protecting the national heritage and natural environment, while maintaining the principles of sustainable development" (Noworól et al. 2009). This means that revitalization is supposed to solve the problems of an area related to all spheres, i.e. architectural-urban, economic and social spheres of an area, and not one of them. And the main goal of revitalization is to improve the quality of life of residents, restore spatial order, economic revival and rebuild social ties. The achievement of the above goals is planned through the development of new forms of economic activity, support for already existing business entities, increasing tourism and cultural potential, and giving degraded objects and areas new functions (Konior, Pokojska, 2020; Czupry, 2016, p. 61).

The revitalization model is a set of social and economic attitudes and behaviours leading to the revitalization of urban space, including four aspects. These are (Jadach-Sepioło, 2009):
- organizational and legal structures,
- funding,
- management,
- participation of entities outside the public sector.

In view of such an outlined definition before planning the process of urban revitalization, at the first stage it seems most important to determine the purpose of the activities carried out and the target group. Thus, two key questions should be asked at the very beginning: why? (what do we want to achieve and why is it worth doing) and: to whom? (who are the recipients and beneficiaries of the developed effects).

Diversity and Inclusion - Working Towards

Diversity is not a new phenomenon, rather it has always been present in societies, which means that it has also always been present in cities, organizations or local communities. People are different from each other, no matter how similar they are. The term diversity has essentially one meaning but many perspectives. According to P. Drucker (2007), diversity encompasses many demographic and socioeconomic aspects of society, including the aging of the population, the increase in the competence and knowledge of the workforce, the growth of immigration, the changing role of women in the labour market or the growing cultural differences and gender roles in organizations. Regardless of the reason for its presence and community interest in the concept, it is important to better understand what diversity is for a city and how to deal with it.

The literature on the subject provides many descriptions of the dimensions of diversity. It is assumed that the dimensions of diversity can be as many as dozens, which can change over the course of an individual's life, which only illustrates the multidimensionality of this issue (Gross-Golacka, 2018). The scale of diversity dimensions and their interrelationships means that there is no simple answer to the question: what is it/what is diversity? One of the primary barriers to defining

diversity is the language and terminology of those who name the issue. However, diversity considered from the perspective of two levels - this is the traditional and simplest approach - which include: the primary dimension of diversity also called secondary. The primary dimension of diversity is those differences between people that people are born with and/or that have a major impact on early socialization and human functioning throughout life. They shape the image and have a significant impact on the perception of the world. This dimension mainly takes into account biological traits, which are usually visible. Basically, they are innate and people cannot change them, and their importance is felt throughout life. Six primary dimensions of diversity are accepted: age, ethnicity, gender, (in)disability, race and sexual orientation. Secondary dimensions of diversity, on the other hand, are sometimes less visible or not visible at all, may be less important in a person's life and can be changed. These include education, language, physical appearance, marital status, lifestyle, value system, world view, attitudes, ethics and include psychosocial aspects, etc.(MorBarak, 2008; Litwin, 1997). V.R. Hayles (1996) defines diversity simply as "all the elements by which we differ." He points out that the concept of diversity is not limited to the issues usually seen by people, namely: race, gender and disability. For example, employee diversity in an organization focuses on the differences between employees (or potential employees) in terms of their membership in certain groups (race, gender, age, etc.). S.E. Jackson, K.E. May and K. Whitney (1994) and R.R. Thomas (1991) argue that diversity includes all possible aspects in which people differ from each other. I think it's worth adding: and/or are similar to each other. Focusing more on the workplace, one can adopt the definition that Griffin and Moorhead (2006) propose. Namely, they define diversity as pertaining to similarities and differences among an organization's employees.

The considerations presented above mainly refer to the perspective of the organization. Which does not mean that we cannot look at diversity from the perspective of revitalization. It is even advisable and necessary. Thus, within the discussion of urban revitalization, the term diversity has multiple meanings. Diversity and inclusion are critical factors in the success of urban revitalization efforts. A diverse and inclusive community brings a range of perspectives, ideas, and experiences that can help to drive innovation and creativity in urban planning and design. A community that embraces diversity and inclusion is also more likely to attract a range of businesses and investors, as well as talented individuals who are looking for an inclusive and welcoming community in which to live and work.

In addition to the economic benefits, diversity and inclusion also have important social benefits for individuals and the community as a whole. A diverse and inclusive community promotes social cohesion, which is important for creating a sense of belonging and connection among residents. A sense of community is essential for building resilience in the face of social and economic challenges, as well as for promoting social justice and equity.

At its simplest - from an urban planner's perspective - it simply refers to types of buildings - a mix of tall and low buildings, streetscapes encompassing a range of architectural styles, diversity in the functionality and purpose of buildings or landscape space (Martins, 2021). An example here might be combining old townhouses with new residential buildings - achieving diversity. For planners, diversity can mean mixed uses of diverse buildings. And for sociologists, the issue of class and racial-ethnic heterogeneity will be important. Why are these perspectives important? Because they are complementary and urban revitalization requires the use of all these perspectives. The perspective of diversity and *inclusion* (inclusive policies*)* is not a new one and has not been explored before (Przytuła, Krysinska-Kośćinska, 2017). The mere fact, heterogeneous resources in the city is not enough. Another important step is the concept of inclusion (inclusion). Heterogeneity - as presented above - is a mixture of many loose, unrelated features/factors/components, and inclusion makes the individual components of this mixture work well together, complementing each other. Inclusion refers to the cultural and environmental sense of belonging. Inclusion is defined as

the degree to which people/residents feel part of the basic processes within a particular territory/community group, including through "influence on decision-making," "involvement in revitalization," and "access to information and resources" (MorBarak, 2008; Roberson 2006). The prerequisite for creating an integrated community - is not just having diverse residents, but rather causing diverse residents to be fully included and integrated into the so-called social fabric of, for example, a city/country (Nishii, Rich, Woods, 2006). In summary, a sense of inclusion and acceptance in a group is associated with many positive outcomes, such as increased loyalty, cooperation and trust. Essentially, inclusive cultures make people feel respected and valued for who they are as individuals or groups. And diversity stimulates creativity. American philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990), who was less interested in economic development issues in favor of social justice, suggests an interesting perspective. She suggested seeing the city as a place where these differences can "flourish." Of course, with her approach, she represented proponents of urban heterogeneity. At the same time, accepting the domination of individual neighbourhoods by individual groups, as long as the boundaries between neighbourhoods remain blurred. She sees diversity as the key to achieving benefits in the context of urban development (Young 1990, pp. 238-39). *With* regard to revitalization, diversity represents a certain imperative, understood as: diverse projects, different uses, an expanded public sphere and multiple social groups exercising their "right to the city" with regard to their needs in order to improve the quality of life in the city.

A Diversity and Inclusion Perspective in the Urban Revitalization Process

Diversity refers to the differences that exist among people, including race, ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status, religion, and sexual orientation. Inclusion, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which individuals and communities feel valued, respected, and included in decision-making processes. Inclusive urban revitalization recognizes and celebrates the diversity of the community, and seeks to involve all members in the process of revitalization.

Building inclusive societies has been a long-standing commitment of international organizations and a central element in the search for a new humanism. In 2019, reflecting on what he called the "inclusion imperative," the UN Secretary-General noted that "inequality creates economic distress, undermines public trust and undermines social cohesion, human rights, peace and prosperity... ". Certainly, the fight against inequality is linked and interdependent with the ambitions to eradicate poverty, protect the planet and achieve sustainable economic growth. Failure to ensure inclusive societies is identified as a cause of violence and insecurity and limits sustainable development (Economic..., 2019). Moreover, there are proposals to distinguish between growth and inclusive development (Rauniyar, Kanbur, 2010, p. 4) claim that inclusive growth refers only to economic growth measured by per capita income, while inclusive development applies to other dimensions of human well-being (such as, education or health). The importance of equal distribution of benefits, both material ones and those concerning well-being, capabilities, social and political empowerment are emphasized (Hickey et al., 2015, p. 5). This process should also include creating relationships and encouraging joint activities (Czupich, 2020, p. 642). Thus, the current urban management paradigm seems to revolve around individuation and flexibility in combining technology with human needs. It also revolves around improved communication, integration, collaboration and closer interactions and partnerships with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders. Attempts to create inclusive cities must therefore take individual differences into account, and create a place where residents feel valued and treated fairly. In the broadest terms, diversity and inclusion encompasses a group of unique individuals who get to know each other and integrate with each other, but each is a completely individual entity with separate benefits and needs. Such a tone is based on an approach that allows both to embrace the diversity contained in each individual and the needs arising from that diversity. However, there are questions worth raising, i.e.: can planned environments produce diversity or only "staged authenticity"? Does emphasizing diversity obscure the economic structure? Is there a link between diversity and

economic innovation? Does social diversity necessarily contribute to equality and an overall satisfying public sphere? Answering these and other questions is not easy or possible. It is worth noting, however, that instead of establishing diversity as the main goal of city planning, it is worth relying on the model of the just city, based on Nussbaum's concept of capacity (1992, p. 214). This approach [...] has emerged as an alternative [...] to theories that focus on economic growth as the main indicator of a nation's or region's quality of life. Nussbaum (1992) draws attention to social injustices and inequalities and obliges the state to improve the quality of life of its citizens. Which means recognizing the inevitable trade-offs between equity, diversity, growth and sustainability.

Thus defined, the reality makes it possible to see that creating an inclusive environment and valuing and promoting diversity in the city (and beyond) should be considered a useful approach leading to the shaping of a new environment. Empirical studies also show that by creating inclusive and diversity-inclusive environments, positive changes can occur in terms of shaping the cities of the future. The World Bank has identified three components of cities of the future (Delloite, 2021):

1. Spatial inclusion (provision of affordable housing, water and sanitation),
2. Social inclusion (equal rights and participation),
3. Economic inclusion (job creation and economic development opportunities for citizens)

The UN Sustainable Development Goals support inclusive initiatives. Goals 10 and 16 deal directly with inclusion: the first involves reducing inequality within and between countries, with an emphasis on inclusion, equal opportunity and better representation. The issue of inclusion is also a key principle in several other goals. In particular, the goals for education (Goal 4) and urban development (Goal 11) are intended to be inclusive, as are those for economic growth (Goal 8) and industrialization (Goal 9). Goal 5 focuses on a multidimensional form of social inclusion with regard to gender equality. The main idea adopted reads: "By 2030, ensure universal access to green and public places that are safe, inclusive and accessible, especially for women and children, the elderly and people with disabilities." With this in mind, inclusive services and planning should be an important pillar in building the cities of the future.

The answer to these challenges lies in the ability to put into practice the idea of integrated planning, which has been promoted in the European Union for several years. It is based on the concept of an integrated territorial approach (place-based policy), which opposes the sectoral approach and assumes the multidimensionality of development processes. Thus, it emphasizes combining social, economic and environmental aspects in the planning process, as well as the diversity of areas where these processes take place. It requires openness to other points of view and the ability to engage in dialogue with representatives of different communities. The planner (decision-maker) should be required to reliably identify the so-called stakeholder map, i.e. the potential groups that should be involved in the planning process, as well as to analyze the impacts of planning effects not only on the spatial fabric, but also on the social, economic and natural fabric of the city, both at the stage of developing plans and implementing the goals contained in them. Community involvement is therefore a key task in urban revitalization and change design. It is worth seeking what unites rather than what divides. It should therefore be emphasized that without participation there is no revitalization. Large-scale changes naturally raise many concerns in local communities about the immediate future. It is also hard not to understand the concerns of residents of areas undergoing transformation. Lack of information about the planned transformations, especially when they may include re-housing or impediments to communication, can create distrust or become a cause of conflict. On the other hand, the biggest challenge of the participation process is therefore the need to use the potential inherent in the residents of the revitalization area.

For example, inclusive design could include building gender-sensitive urban centers to provide safe spaces for caregivers and installing wheelchair-accessible facilities for people with disabilities. It could mean creating greener and safer neighbourhoods for all residents and investing in happy and safe places for children to play (Ferilli, Sacco, Tavano, Blessi, Forbici, 2017). It would

include accessible locations for the elderly, making cities more attractive to the silver generation. It can further combat gentrification by providing an inclusive welfare system that integrates migrants and provides them with services tailored to their unique needs and circumstances, and the same opportunities as others. Transportation, too, matters - it is a key function of a city that not only enables the movement of its users, but by attracting them, enlivens public space and generates external benefits that lead to an increase in its utility and value. Offering its residents a quality of life by developing a suitable environment for a heterogeneous community. Among the benefits of social integration for cities and citizens are important issues. First, this integration improves quality of life and cohesion. Inclusive cities eliminate spatial fragmentation, embrace mixed development, respect differences and create infrastructure that ensures everyone thrives. This is the foundation of a dynamic, safe and innovative city, taking advantage of agglomeration and diversity.

Second, it is important to note that competitiveness and productivity in cities are increasing. In a more inclusive and well-integrated city, there is more interaction between stakeholders, which increases productivity and economic growth in all communities. There is a positive correlation between integration and economic health in American cities . In order for cities to move in this direction, there needs to be an appropriate level of de facto awareness among all stakeholders in the revitalization process. And it is especially important that the level of awareness of decision-makers at the local level (national too), who - by initiating, creating and making decisions - can give revitalization the right direction. In favor of creating cities that take into account the diversity of residents and their needs. They apply a pro-inclusionary perspective and in favor of diversity. Thus, the creation of added value, innovation, inclusion and teamwork should be considered a useful principle leading to the formation of a new environment of organizations open to diversity.

Strategies for Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Urban Revitalization

There are several strategies that can be used to promote diversity and inclusion in the urban revitalization process. One key strategy is to involve a range of stakeholders in the planning and design process, including community members, business owners, and other key stakeholders. By involving a range of perspectives in the planning and design process, urban planners can ensure that the needs and interests of all members of the community are taken into account.

Another strategy is to invest in programs and initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion, such as cultural festivals, community art projects, and language exchange programs. These initiatives can help to promote cultural understanding and respect, as well as to celebrate the diversity of the community.

Another challenge is ensuring that the benefits of urban revitalization are shared equitably. This requires targeted efforts to address the needs of low-income and marginalized residents, who may be at risk of displacement or exclusion from the revitalization process. This can include providing affordable housing, job training, and other resources that support the needs of these residents.

Finally, it is important to promote policies and practices that promote diversity and inclusion, such as anti-discrimination laws and policies, affordable housing initiatives, and community development programs that focus on underserved populations.

Conclusions

In conclusion, diversity and inclusion are critical factors in the success of urban revitalization efforts. A diverse and inclusive community brings a range of perspectives, ideas, and experiences that can help to drive innovation and creativity in urban planning and design. A community that embraces diversity and inclusion is also more likely to attract a range of businesses and investors, as well as talented individuals who are looking for an inclusive and welcoming community in which to live and work. By promoting diversity and inclusion in the urban revitalization process, we can

create more livable, sustainable, and vibrant communities that benefit all members of the community.

In the process of revitalization and building inclusive societies, an important role is played by local revitalization strategies, which, at the local level, improve living conditions and quality of life in the community with broad participation of diverse stakeholders of stakeholders and concern for the environment. It is important that these documents and activities are based on genuine dialogue with civil society and take into account the real needs of these groups. And ultimately for them to be implemented. In general, to ensure success in creating an inclusive city, the following initiatives are worthwhile:

1. Implement proactive multi-sector solutions, both preventive and curative.
2. Promote an integrated approach to planning instead of a fragmented one.
3. Follow a capital-centered design approach.
4. Improve technological solutions - adoption and digital skills, supported by adapted regulations.
5. Strive to ensure equal access.
6. Create inclusive "living" laboratories for urban planners and planners.
7. Use a variety of methods to respond quickly and anticipate citizens' needs.

In conclusion, urban revitalization is today a subject of interest and activity on the part of local leaders. However, the effectiveness of urban revitalization without context - diversity, *inclusion* and *equality (diversity, inclusion, equality)* policies - can lead to polarization, stigmatization or exclusion. Urban revitalization should address both growth and leveling the playing field.

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